Reviews

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Abstract


The Ring and the Cross: Christianity and The Lord of the Rings. Edited by Paul E. Kerry. Reviewed by Harley J. Sims.


Tolkien and the Study of His Sources: Critical Essays. Edited by Jason Fisher. Reviewed by Mike Foster.

Authors

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Evelyn Underhill wrote three fantasy novels—The Grey World (1904), The Lost Word (1907), and The Column of Dust (1909)—and three books of poems—The Bar-Lamb’s Ballad Book (light verse, 1902), Immanence (1916), and Theophanies (1916). She also wrote about twenty books of non-fiction. She knew Charles Williams and exchanged a few letters with C.S. Lewis.

The first novel was about reincarnation; the second and third dealt with dual worlds—with the invisible world being what is usually called spiritual—and the third novel added the Grail legend to its mix. All of this makes Underhill sound like a proto-Inkling of sorts. Of course, that she stopped writing novels and, after a decade, stopped writing poetry limits the parallels.

The collection of letters under review unfortunately adds little information about her novels and her poems (except that she depreciates her ability as a poet [189]) or about her writing processes and techniques generally.

What then is of interest in the collection? Underhill is best known for two books: Mysticism (1911) and Worship (1936). The first has a Neo-Platonic bent, with an emphasis on Plotinus—although many Christian mystics are discussed; the second was written after Underhill had become a believing and practicing Anglican. (The 1930 revision of Mysticism gives it more of a Christian bent.)

Thus, one might come to her letters wanting to know about her own mystical experiences. She describes two “visions” in letters here. First, a vision of “exalted & indescribable beauty”:

I still remember walking down the Notting Hill main road & observing the (extremely sordid) landscape with joy & astonishment. Even the movement of the traffic had something universal & sublime in it. Of course that doesn’t last: but the after-flavour of it does, & now & then one catches it again. (29 July 1908, to Marjorie Robinson, 128)
And, second, a vision of an evil world providing "a piece of the evidence of the
existence of the devil":

I saw it once for 24 hours [...] & it was awfully like that [in a story by May
Sinclair], allowing for difference of landscape. You reminded me of it
again with horrid vividness!!! (30 May 1911, to May Sinclair, 192)

But these passages are isolated; Underhill does not often reveal her mystical side
to correspondents. And she makes a distinction between the mystical experiences
and the mystical way of life, in a letter to a Quaker, discussing an essay he had
sent:

I agree with you as to the sharp distinction between mystical experience
(i.e. the transitory & intense consciousness of union) & mysticism [...].
[The latter] seems to me [...] a whole system of life, a description, as true
as we know how to make it, of the soul’s growth toward God [...]. (29 May
1915, to Dr. Rufus Jones, 214)

The latter topic is one of the major concerns of these letters—but not at the first of
the volume.

The reader of her letters will begin with her notes from school to her
mother, her letters from Europe to her fiancé (“my darling boy”) and later to her
husband (the same man, who had become a lawyer—a barrister, in their terms).
Business letters appear after she becomes a successful writer. Those readers who
enjoy C.S. Lewis giving religious advice to his correspondents will find two
extended series of letters from Underhill as spiritual director: early, those to
Marjorie Robinson; later, those (in some of the letters) to Darcie Otter. Occasional
interesting names of correspondents show up—a letter to G.K. Chesterton (29
November 1932, 265), thanking him for an essay on St. Thomas Aquinas, written
for *The Spectator* during the fairly short period she was its religion editor. Several
letters go to T.S. Eliot (258-59, 260 [two], 343-44, on 25 June, 7 October, and 28
October 1931, and 3 April 1941)—the first three about her writing an essay for
*The Criterion*, which he edited (and which essay she wrote), and about his writing
an essay for *The Spectator* (which he never got done); the fourth letter, a praise for
the first publication of part of *The Four Quartets*.

Carol Poston, the editor, provides a biographical introduction and
briefer introductions to the five sections of her book:
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The Early Years: 1888-1905
Toward Mysticism: 1906-10
A Dark Time: 1911-23
The Retreat Years: 1924-34
Worship unto Death: 1935-41

The “Dark Time” is that of World War I. “The Retreat Years” are those in which Underhill was leading many spiritual retreats, usually with one theme per year, with a book worked out of the year’s theme afterwards. Still, most readers may well feel that most of the letters are very external. This book should be supplemented with Underhill’s letters to her first and most important spiritual director, Baron Friedrich Von Hügel, a Roman Catholic theologian—three of these letters appear as appendices to Dana Greene’s *Fragments from an Inner Life* (1993). (Not letters, but two notebooks make up the basic part of Greene’s book; these also show Underhill’s internal side.) *There*, in Greene’s book, is found the Underhill who struggles with her faith.

This is not to say that this book itself does not have interesting moments. When Underhill writes Sir James Frazer—of *The Golden Bough* fame—with praise for his *Folklore of the Old Testament* (12 December 1918, 215-16), one is reminded that, although Underhill was baptized and confirmed in the Church of England, her home upbringing was basically secular and that she was not bothered by views which no doubt upset the very conservative and the literalistic.

Of even more interest to members of the Mythopoeic Society are her letters to C.S. Lewis and her knowledge of Charles Williams. To begin with her letters to Lewis: the first two are about *Out of the Silent Planet* and the third, *The Problem of Pain*. The first (26 October 1938, 323-24) is an appreciation of Lewis giving “a new slant on reality”—with “beauty, humour & deep seriousness”: “I wish you had felt able to report the conversation in which Ransom explained the Christian Mysteries to the eldil, but I suppose that would be too much to ask.” It is typical of Underhill to call them “Mysteries.” Lewis’s reply of 29 October is found in *Collected Letters*, Vol. 2, 234-35. He politely says that it is good of her as an authority on the Christian mystics to write to him, regretting the loss of the earlier, positive meaning of *condescension*, and explains his worry about some of his “scientific” details. Underhill’s reply (3 November 1938, 324) refuses his refurbishing of *condescension*. “It sounds as though you suspected me of being a terrestrial Sorn, instead of just an elderly mouse.” She offers a religious reading of the Cosmic Rays in *Out of the Silent Planet* and brings in a two-sentence discussion of Purgatory. She ends with an invitation for him to see her in London (which he must not have taken up, from the third letter; indeed, he does not seem to have answered this second letter).
The third letter is the longest (13 January 1941, 340-42). She begins by reminding him that they have corresponded before. She praises Lewis’s treatment of suffering due to a cosmic fall, of Original Sin and the Fall (especially as it was tied to “our total experience of life”), of the Paradisal Man, and of Heaven and Hell. But she disagrees with Lewis’s treatment of the tame animal as “the only natural animal”—she instances the cow as “a milk machine” and the hen as “an egg machine” and “the wild beauty of God’s creative action in the jungle & deep sea.” “[...] I feel your concept of God would be improved by just a touch of wildness.” Lewis’s reply is in the same volume of Collected Letters, 459-460. He begins with the statement, “Your kind letter about the Silent Planet has not been forgotten and is not likely to be. It was one of the high lights of my literary life.” If one takes this not as politeness, but as a factual statement, it explains why he kept her letters, unlike his usual practice of destroying correspondence. He goes on to discuss the question of animals, saying that their essential “wildness wd. not be lost by the kind of dominion Adam had,” with some examples of what he meant in The Problem of Pain. One wonders if this discussion did not influence the reiteration of Aslan not being a tame animal in the Narnia series.

The relationship with Williams is more complicated. Early on, Underhill was a member of (as Carol Poston says) “the Hermetic Society of the Golden Dawn, a Christian Rosicrucian Society” (2), where she was friends with Arthur Machen. Underhill dedicated her third novel to Machen and his wife. At this point, more information is necessary. Christopher Armstrong’s Evelyn Underhill (1975) explains that she probably joined in 1903, and she was therefore a member after the split in the Golden Dawn: she was a member of the branch led by Arthur Edward Waite (34-38). Armstrong does not use the title, but this was The Independent and Rectified Rite, established by Waite in 1903 (Ashenden 238 n24). Gavin Ashenden says that Underhill joined the group in 1905 (242 n29). Waite dissolved this group in 1914, when it became embroiled in internal dissensions (Ashenden 31). The next year Waite started the Salvator Mundi Temple of the Rosy Cross (Ashenden 32). The Independent and Rectified Rite seems to have been using the Golden Dawn rituals, but with mystical, not magical, applications; the Order of the Rosy Cross had the same levels, but used strictly Rosicrucian-cum-Christian terminology (the Golden Dawn used Rosicrucian imagery only in some of the advanced levels). If Poston is right that Underhill belonged to “a Christian Rosicrucian Society,” Underhill must have stayed a member into 1916, at least. But certain knowledge about secret organizations is difficult to come by. Armstrong describes two 1905 letters from Underhill to Waite, but they seem not to have been available to Poston, for they are not in her collection of Underhill’s letters. (Underhill has many citations of
writings by Waite in *Mysticism*, and seems to have been greatly influenced by him at the time.)

Williams joined the Salvator Mundi Temple in 1917. Were he and Underhill members at the same time? The odds seem against it, but until a precise date for Underhill leaving Waite’s order(s) is established, it cannot be completely ruled out. Armstrong says it is unlikely (37), but he writes from an ignorance of when Williams joined: presumably if he had known the date, he would have been more certain of its unlikelihood. The usual assumption seems to be that she was a member only for a short time—but the same thing was said about Williams until his membership dates were found. Armstrong admits one’s decision about her length of membership depends in part on how one interprets her “A Defence of Magic” (*The Fortnightly Review*, November 1907), which can be interpreted as a farewell to occult groups generally or as a denial of the validity only of those that practice (or attempt to practice) magic (38).

Williams will be cited below about only meeting Underhill a few times—but he would have been silent about meetings in a secret society. So that does not prove anything either way.

Underhill’s first reference to Williams in these letters comes in a note to Darcie Otter on 3 November 1937, about one of Williams’s plays:

[I] mean if possible to go to “Seed of Adam” on the 27th with Lucy [Menzies]. I long to see it! & think even for reading tho’ queer it’s very fine. But I’m not surprised it makes the country clergy a bit worried. They will have to stretch their minds quite a lot to receive Charles Williams’s ideas, & of course he does nothing towards letting the poor things down easily. (315)

(By the way, this reference to Williams does not appear in the index to Poston’s book.) Whether Underhill got to see the play is not known.

The other reference to Williams appears in two later letters to Darcie Otter: in the first she calls Williams’s *The Descent of the Dove* “exciting” and offers to send Otter a copy—intended for her for Christmas—early (24 November 1939, 332); in the second letter, of 23 December 1939 (closer to Christmas), she writes: “I’m glad you like the look of the Charles Williams—it is ‘your sort of book’ I’m sure. I revelled in it myself though I can imagine many wondering what he means by coinherence! He is not always clear though always suggestive” (332). Perhaps the comment about the meaning of *coinherence* was meant as a stimulant to Otter to pay close attention.

If this were all of the significance of Williams, the passages would be interesting but minor. But Williams was the editor of the first collection of Underhill’s letters: *The Letters of Evelyn Underhill* (1943). Several things can be said about it. For example, that it prints all three of the letters to Lewis but not
the two that mention Williams. A matter of propriety on the part of the editor, probably. Second, that he writes in his introduction of “one of the few occasions” he met Underhill, saying that she corrected a passage he had written in a novel about one person bearing another person’s spiritual burdens—corrected him on the basis of an offer by St. Catherine to bear another’s *sins* (21). Third, that Williams’s edition is not entirely replaced by Poston’s new collection. Specifically, because Williams cut the introductory and concluding phrases (and sometimes more), Poston does not reprint any of the letters he includes unless she can reprint the whole letter. (A number that he printed are now lost.) Once Williams has a brief passage that is not in Underhill’s manuscript; Poston includes it in brackets (128). It certainly sounds like legitimate Underhill material. Once Poston includes (in her very useful endnotes to each letter) a “see Williams” citation (166).

Poston quotes from Williams’s letters to his wife, which suggest that Williams did the editorial job of Underhill’s letters simply for the money (xvi). But his long biographical introduction to his edition (7-41) suggests he was not turning out a quickie job. Williams’s discussion of Underhill’s conflict between her early desire to become a Roman Catholic and her upset over the encyclical of Pius X against modernism says that the conflict created for her “an Impossibility—something that could not be, and yet was” (15). This is the same type of language that he used when he, as a married man, fell in love with Phyllis Jones. The point is that Williams is writing as involved in his material. Quite possibly he had to write to his wife about finances to reassure her about his taking on a new job, but it was not (for him) the full truth.

Poston says that she hopes to post Underhill’s complete correspondence—these letters, Williams’s edited letters, and others—in electronic files at King’s College London and Virginia Theological Seminary (xviii). Brief checking does not reveal the files available yet (although King’s College London has a large Underhill collection).

Despite not being the complete correspondence, Poston’s *The Making of a Mystic* is a good book. It has Underhill’s correspondence with Rabindranath Tagore, for example, that is not hinted at in Williams’s book. Its letters are nicely annotated—besides the end notes, the source is given in small print, in brackets, beneath each letter. The book is important in the history of the Church of England. Michael Ramsay, Archbishop of Canterbury, said Underhill was vital in keeping that church alive between the world wars—with her leading of retreats as well as her books. Poston’s collection is also important in its contribution to the understanding of mysticism and of religious counseling and directing. (The final section of Williams’s collection, “To a Friend, 1923-41,” is more emphatic in this aspect, but Poston has letters in a context, with the people identified, not some disguised by initials only as in Williams.) Perhaps one does not think of

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mystics in a modern period, but Underhill not only was a mystic but a correspondent with other mystics—and, like some of the medieval mystics, she was very effective in this world—not in the founding of monasteries and nunnerys but with her retreats, her books, and, yes, her letters.

Works Cited

—Joe R. Christopher


*Anyone who has steeped their imagination in myth has undoubtedly encountered Joseph Campbell’s famed account of the hero’s journey, as described in his The Hero with a Thousand Faces—the pattern of the hero’s separation from his home, initiatory adventures, and gift-bearing return found in tales and stories from around the globe. As deep and compelling as Campbell’s work is, however, many female readers have felt it lacks something—specifically, an understanding that the heroine’s journey is something different, perhaps parallel in many ways to the hero’s journey but still not entirely explained by Campbell’s theory, with quite different challenges along the way and with a different ultimate goal. In the introduction to her compelling new book, Valerie Estelle Frankel describes it this way:*

The heroine’s journey is a path of cleverness and intuition, buoyed by water and earth. It is a path of circular logic, of kindness, of creativity so forceful that the world shapes itself to a wish. It is a path of birth and
patience, or guardianship, but never of passivity. Women’s work, nowadays devalued as folk craft and biological urges and time wasting, is the work that has conquered and preserved nations. It is as White Buffalo Calf Woman told the Lakota women: The work of their hands and the fruit of their bodies keep the people alive. “You are from the Mother Earth,” she said. “What you are doing is as great as warriors do.” This is the path of the great mother goddess, destroying mountains and creating civilizations. And each woman journeying toward insight, toward adventure, toward motherhood, toward wisdom is following this path, just as great Astarte, valiant Judith, passionate Isolde, and even sweet Cinderella once did. “It is important to realize we are not women channeling the goddess or pretending to be her—we are the goddess pretending for a single lifetime to be a mortal woman.” (10)

*From Girl to Goddess* is an attempt to remedy this lack in Campbell’s study by providing a template for the woman’s hero journey through a broad-ranging study of female-centered myths, stories, folktales, and the occasional historic archetype. Other books have also offered insightful analysis of female-centered tales and religious history—for example, Jean Shinoda Bolen’s *Godesses in Everywoman*, with its Jungian take on seven key archetypes based on the Greek goddesses; Riane Eisler’s *The Chalice and the Blade*, analyzing the significance of the historical shift from partnership to dominator societies that accompanied the displacement of early goddesses; or Clarissa Pinkola Estes’s *Women Who Run With the Wolves*, focusing exclusively on the “Wild Woman” archetype—and Frankel draws upon these sources and many others in this area. But her book differs from these in its organization and its inclusiveness. Drawing of a lifetime of voracious and decidedly multicultural reading, she harnesses the world’s folktales and myths to illustrate the heroine’s journey step by step, delineating the “universal journey of women” (9).

The first half of the book is organized around the stages of this journey, with chapters on growing up, the journey through the unconsciousness, meeting the other, facing the self, and goddesshood and wholeness, with each chapter further broken down into that step’s individual phases or likely variants and each illustrated with one primary and usually several secondary tales. For example, one of the phases or variants of “meeting the other” is the lover as shape-changer; Frankel first tells the Scottish tale of Tam Lin, whose lover Janet must win him from the queen of the fairies, then investigates the similar stories of Cupid and Psyche and Beauty and the Beast, gleaning from all of them lessons about questing for the animus and accepting the other in another person or lover.

The second half of the book deals with archetypes and relates them to the cyclical nature of the woman’s journey—the journey as circle or spiral. The familiar Maiden, Mother, and Crone are joined by a fourth image, the Spirit
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Guardian, represented by the dark of the moon. Particularly useful and intriguing is Frankel’s pairing of each phase of these archetypes with their mirror-opposites—princess with destroyer, seductress with trickster, wife and mother with widow. As with the book’s first half, a primary story illustrates the archetype, bolstered by additional tales and analysis; thus the seductress, the woman who chooses her own lover(s), is primarily illustrated by Aphrodite and Freya, but also by the Loathly Lady.

Does From Girl to Goddess succeed in addressing the neglect of the feminine in The Hero with a Thousand Faces? I think it is the best attempt that I have seen so far, and a book that will repay re-reading and meditation at least as well as Campbell does. If nothing else, her charts of the parallel elements of the hero and heroine quests on page 5 and of the woman’s life journey and the cycle of female archetypes mapped onto phases of the moon on pages 176-7 provide an excellent compact framework for the visually-minded for the study of the feminine in myth.

I recommend From Girl to Goddess highly. Frankel’s truly global choice of tales and her analysis of them is outstanding. It is a book to turn to for deepening one’s understanding of myths and stories about women and their underlying structures, or more personally to better understand one’s own journey or the journeys of the women in one’s life. The extensive bibliography is a great service to readers interested in this topic in itself; I greeted old friends with delight while highlighting item after item to track down later. I look forward to more from Frankel; this book could have been twice as long and still not exhausted its subject or the reader’s desire for more, more, more stories.

—Janet Brennan Croft

THE WIZARD OF OZ AND PHILOSOPHY: WICKED WISDOM OF THE WEST

The Wizard of Oz and Philosophy: Wicked Wisdom of the West is a collection of essays on philosophical issues raised by various aspects of—mostly— “The Wizard of Oz” (the MGM movie), or The Wizard of Oz (L. Frank Baum’s book), or “The Wiz” (the play and movie), or Wicked (Gregory Maguire’s book), or “Wicked” (the musical). It’s a mixed bag.
Some of the essays, particularly those that don’t try to be funny, are excellent. The four essays on *Wicked*, mostly focusing on Maguire’s interest in feminist issues, “Wicked Feminism,” by Pam R. Sailors, “I’m Not That Girl,” by Richard Greene, “Wicked? It’s Not Easy Being Green,” by Kevin Durand, and “In the Merry Old Matriarchy of Oz,” by Randall E. Auxier, are especially noteworthy. Also noteworthy are “Freeing the Slaves of Oz,” by Jason Bell and Jessica Bell, which examines Dorothy’s role in Baum’s *Wizard* as a liberator (of Munchkins and Winkies from Wicked Witches, and of the Emerald Citians from the humbug Wizard) in the context of the “Kansas” that Baum would have known most about as a child (born 1856): “Bleeding Kansas,” the territory where the battle between South and North over whether the territory should become a slave state or a free state led directly to the Civil War; and “When the Wiz Goes Black, Does it Ever Go Back?,” by Tommy J. Curry, which examines “The Wiz” in relation to Black experiences of oppression and of hope for change.

Many of the essays, however, insist on trying to be funny—a bad idea, partly because it is so easy to make lame jokes on material as familiar as the best-known lines and images from the MGM movie, and correspondingly hard to make genuinely amusing jokes on over-familiar material, but also because the lame jokes, most of the time, seem to be there to express contempt for the readers, who will not pay attention to philosophical issues unless invited to laugh at them, and/or out of contempt for the stupidity of MGM (usually, or sometimes Baum, or a vague mixture of both) for not including more direct discussion of the issues the essayists find in the action of the story and perhaps therefore for stupidity in presumably not understanding the issues.

Several of the essays devote much humor to such stupidities as: including a yappy little dog in the story when everyone really hates yappy little dogs and no right-thinking child would want one; having Dorothy want to go home when Oz is so much more colorful and interesting and fun than Kansas, where her economically stressed aunt and uncle can’t manage to stand up against rich Miss Gulch to save the yappy little dog; having Glinda ignore the legal rights of the Wicked Witch of the West as her dead sister’s next-of-kin in favor of giving the Ruby Slippers to Dorothy; and letting the Wizard claim to be a “good man,” when he had been so wicked as to send a kid and three bumblers off to see the Wicked Witch, when it must have been obvious to him that the likely upshot would be the deaths of all four..

If these complaints about the stupidities of the story sound stupid themselves—well, they are. Some of the essays come round to arguing that Dorothy does have good reasons to want to go home, but the sarcastic question seems to be put so sarcastically in order to demonstrate the essayists’ philosophical wisdom, so much greater than Baum’s or MGM’s. To non-philosophers, it is more likely to be obvious from the beginning that Dorothy
wants to go home because her family is there. Baum leaves this motivation implicit; the MGM movie spells it out at the start in Professor Marvel’s crystal-ball analysis of Dorothy, in which he leads her to realize that her aunt does love her, and the movie makes the point again (if anything, too obviously), in Dorothy’s realization that “There’s no place like home.”

The real answer to the odd behavior of Glinda in the MGM movie is that the script-writers were making changes for dramatic effect. (In Baum’s version, the Wicked Witches are not sisters, Glinda is not the one who hands the Silver Shoes to Dorothy, she and the Wicked Witch don’t appear until much later in the story; his Wizard does, however, claim to be a “good man.”)

Did the MGM script-writers make their changes being too stupid to realize that their changes raised legal or ethical issues? Perhaps so. Then again, they might have had answers in mind that they expected to be obvious without stopping the action to insert explanations. “Philosophical” discussion of these issues would be more effective if the essayists started from the assumption that the script-writers (and Baum) might have had some understanding of the issues, and asked what that understanding might be and whether it was valid, instead of assuming that there could be no validity to the changes.

In the Wizard’s case, the character’s self-justification would probably have been something along the lines of “But I didn’t think they’d actually go out and try to kill the Witch—I was just trying to scare them off to avoid getting exposed as a fraud.” No doubt a philosopher would scorn such a defense as a “mere rationalization,” and probably rightly so. But on a scale of good-to-evil, someone tipping that far toward evil might nevertheless have some justification in believing himself to be more good than evil. A scale with some gradations of grey would yield a subtler analysis than simply dismissing the Wizard’s claim to be a “good man.”

Glinda could probably offer a solid case for her “theft” of the Ruby Slippers. The Wicked Witch is making threats against Dorothy (“I can cause accidents, too . . . I’ll get you, my pretty”), and as a restraining order would probably be unenforceable, stealing the loaded-gun-equivalent is probably ethically defensible. Then, too, the Wicked Witch herself doesn’t seem to think that she has a next-of-kin right to the shoes. Her justification is “I’m the only one that knows how to use them—they’re of no use to you!” The first part of the claim is true, but the second is false. On that basis, Dorothy’s claim to the shoes is rather better than the Witch’s.

The more serious (in both tone and approach) essays make the collection worth getting, in spite of the shallowness of the more frivolous ones.

—Ruth Berman

That C.S. Lewis had a very high regard for the *Aeneid* by Publius Vergilius Maro is obvious from the many laudatory comments upon it to be found throughout his writings from early to late in his career. He re-read it often (in Latin, of course). I used to find this a little puzzling, for it is more common to prefer Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (which indeed Lewis also read in the original language and prized, just not as highly), but this book explains his fascination. For it is not only a translation but a study of Lewis’s use and understanding of the *Aeneid*.

Lewis approached his translation similarly to the method he praises in the fifteenth-century Scots translation by Gavin Douglas in his volume in the Oxford History of English Literature series: not to render every word literally, but to capture the overall meaning and spirit. This is evident from the beginning, where the famous “Arma virumque” is given as “Of arms and the exile” rather than the literal “of arms and the man,” the better to indicate the plight of Aeneas (or Eneas, as Lewis spells the name throughout). That he chose the alexandrine (a twelve-syllable line) in place of the Latin hexameter (with its six metrical feet), and in rhyming couplets at that, initially seems quirky. But it works. As classical scholar D.O. Ross (Emeritus Professor of Latin and Greek at the University of Michigan) puts it in his preface, this approach “attempts to clean Virgil’s canvas of the surface grime of classicism […] while it restores the archaism and poetic diction of our pre-industrial literary inheritance” (xix). There are passages in Lewis’s letters describing why he thinks an alexandrine line in English can catch much of the poetic effect of a hexameter in Latin. As Prof. Ross further explains: “The rhyming alexandrines immediately give us the sense of a classical poem, and the diction is essentially simple, yet poetic” (xxi). Prof. Ross compares a passage in Lewis’s version and three other modern translations, showing that all have the literal meaning pretty well, but Lewis best captures the mood and even the stylistic technique.

There is no definite record of when Lewis began his translation, but references in his letters show he had done considerable work on it by the early nineteen-thirties, and he read parts to the Inklings in the forties. His holograph survives in two notebooks (facsimiles of five pages are reproduced), but these are plainly fair copies (though with some handwritten changes) and there must have been earlier drafts. For instance, the fair copy has the reading, regarding the goddess Juno’s hostility to the Trojan refugees:
“Leading them far, for-wandered, over alien foam  
— So long was fate in labour with the birth of Rome.”
[Aeneid Book One, lines 32-33; Lost Aeneid 39]

But in A Preface to Paradise Lost (1942), while Lewis has the same first line as above, he gives the second line rather as “So mighty was the labour of the birth of Rome” (33). Since the notebooks are not dated we cannot really tell which was the later, emended translation, but we can tell that he expended much thought and care on this project.

Lewis apparently worked on his translation off and on as the spirit moved him. We have all of Book One and substantial portions of Books Two and Six, and occasional passages from the other nine books mostly taken from Lewis’s other writings where he used a quotation from Virgil and translated it (so we see how very often he did that). This edition provides the Latin text with Lewis’s rendering on a facing page, along with summaries of the parts not translated. It makes for a very good reading experience: something more than a summary of the Aeneid along with Lewis’s quite engaging poetry. Those who have no Latin will be able to experience a good epic poem, while those who do (or, like me, have some) will have the additional pleasure of watching Lewis at work.

There is an invaluable “Introduction: C.S. Lewis and Virgil’s Aeneid” by A.T. Reyes, who teaches Greek and Latin at Groton School, Massachusetts, and who helped Fr. Walter Hooper with the numerous classical references in his edition of Lewis’s Collected Letters. It is easy to see why Fr. Hooper thought Dr. Reyes a good choice to prepare this edition, for he is very knowledgeable about Lewis’s work as well as Virgil’s. He has made note for us of every reference to Virgil in Lewis’s essays and letters (no small task) and illuminated the regard this great scholar and lover of literature had for the classical poet. His argument that “Virgil, in fact, is the link that unites Lewis’s life as a Christian apologist and his career as a professor of English literature” (1) is not something I had noticed before, but I think he is right. Lewis thought that there was something more than coincidence in the medieval notion that Virgil’s fourth Eclogue prophesies the birth of Christ (then in the near future), and appreciated the symbolism of his serving as Dante’s guide in the Commedia. And in A Preface to Paradise Lost he makes a substantial case for what he calls “secondary epic” (Virgil’s adding to Homer the idea that an epic should deal with some mighty theme) as a crucial development in literature, and thus (as Dr. Reyes puts it) “central to his [Lewis’s] work as a scholar of medieval and Renaissance English” (9). Moreover, what he saw in the Aeneid was not only the grim depiction of war and death, and not only the idea of Rome as bringer of civilization and peace (supposedly, anyway), but the theme of the “immense costliness of a vocation with the complete conviction
that it is worth it” (11, quoted from a letter to Dorothy L. Sayers dated 29 December 1946, Collected Letters, vol. 2.750), and the shared Virgilian and Lewisian theme that in the trials and tribulations of life “One can do no more than trust in divine will” (1). Hence one can see why Fr. Hooper begins his Foreword to this book by saying that “Of all the literary remains of C.S. Lewis published since his death, this is the one that would have pleased him most” (xi).

Works Cited

—Richard C. West


The Ring and the Cross is a collection of fifteen papers—plus a dense historiographical introduction—dedicated to exploring and debating the Roman Catholicism of J.R.R. Tolkien, and most especially its place in the analysis of his fantasy writings. It should be noted that the subtitle of the book’s cover and that of its cover page differ; the former gives Christianity and “The Lord of the Rings,” while the interior has Christianity and the Writings of J.R.R. Tolkien. The latter affords the more accurate scope, as the essays involve a range of works from Tolkien’s legendarium. Details from his critical and personal writings are also brought in, as well as a great deal of biographical information. The purpose of the collection—perhaps a little misrepresented by the categorical air of its title—is described by editor and contributor Paul E. Kerry as “a personal effort to bring together opposing views” (7). The Ring and the Cross by no means purports to offer a definitive or exhaustive examination of its topic, something that might easily fill several volumes and fall short even so; as Kerry writes, “[t]his collection is not designed to close off discussion and debate, but rather is an effort to show how lively, engaging, and productive the question of Christian influence on Tolkien’s literary works remains” (46). The civility of the
discussions—another of Kerry’s aims, and not something easy to achieve with such a controversial topic—is for the most part well kept.

Ranging in length from four to twenty-two pages, the papers are relatively concise; several were originally conference presentations, and one was a newspaper article. As is to be expected with any collection, there is a certain amount of overlap and repetition, as well as variation among depth of insight, quality of argument, and commitment to documentation. Use of secondary sources is generally modest. The editor’s own Introduction is by far the most informative paper in *The Ring and the Cross*, though as a survey of past positions, as well as 60 pages in length—almost thrice that of the longest essay—it has the advantage. Used in conjunction with the volume’s index and collective bibliography, it affords a commanding overview of the many issues, quandaries, and opportunities of Christianity-centered Tolkien scholarship. Kerry’s coverage includes the place of the collection’s own papers within existing debates.

The essays are divided between two eponymous sections. The first three papers of “Part I: The Ring” represent an exchange between Ronald Hutton and Nils Ivar Agøy—fundamental to this collection—concerning the presence of Tolkien’s own Christianity in his imaginative works. The instigator is Hutton’s “The Pagan Tolkien,” which was originally delivered at the 2005 Tolkien Society conference. It is deft and provocative, arguing that, while Tolkien is Christian, his fictive mythology is not; Hutton even goes so far as to discredit Tolkien’s own claims about the Christian content of his stories, arguing that “apparent allusions to the Virgin [Galadriel] or to the Host [lembas] were detected by other Catholics, and he seized upon them as useful ammunition in his defense of his book against accusations of atheism or agnosticism” (59). Agøy’s “The Christian Tolkien: A Response to Ronald Hutton” represents a Lutheran theologian’s attempt to refute a thesis that, he claims, is “built on sand, and therefore [...] must fall” (85). Though Agøy agrees with Hutton that Tolkien’s letters are often misused as evidence to support positions about his fiction, he argues that Christian elements were deliberately and clearly worked into Tolkien’s *legendarium* from the beginning, and not simply alleged or reworked. This prompts a concluding rebuttal, “Can We Still Have a Pagan Tolkien: A Reply to Nils Ivar Agøy,” in which Hutton reiterates his original position and claims that Agøy is exemplifying how Tolkien’s works “can be made to seem compatible with Christianity in general, and Catholicism in particular, by a process of argument based on emphasis and interpretation” (91). Hutton’s response seems overly exasperated with some of the formal aspects of Agøy’s essay, especially since Hutton’s style in his second paper—though this time composed for print—adheres to the more casual style of his original.

Following these is Stephen Morillo’s “The Entwives: Investigating the Spiritual Core of *The Lord of the Rings*,” which attempts to argue that “the
spirituality in J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, and for that matter in the rest of his Middle-earth fiction, even *The Silmarillion*, is not, in any significant or specific way, Christian” (106). Morillo professes himself a lifelong atheist, something he claims to have allowed him to approach Tolkien in an impartial fashion; a few sentences later, he declares, “I am not a Tolkien scholar” (107), and that, as such, he will not be referring to any secondary sources. Such disclaimers seem to have excused the author from dedicating any appreciable effort to his task. With all due respect to Morillo as a scholar of Anglo-Norman history, this particular paper is so superficial, impressionistic, and—to pun on its title—hasty, that the editor would have done better to drop it from the collection altogether.

Setting the collection back on track is John R. Holmes’s “‘Like Heathen Kings’: Religion as Palimpsest in Tolkien’s Fiction,” which investigates the meaning of “heathen” as it appears in *The Lord of the Rings*. Readers will recall that the word is uttered by Denethor just before his self-immolation (and attempted burning of Faramir), and repeated by Gandalf in his rebuke of the steward. Surveying etymologies available to Tolkien, Holmes argues that its use in the text is not anachronistic, as has been charged, nor even necessarily religious. On the contrary, it can be understood to refer simply to “the predecessors of the Gondorians who burned their dead rather than burying them like respectable Third-Agers” (122). Though well-structured, Holmes’s position is highly debatable, especially given the Numenoreans who worshipped Morgoth. The numerous philological parses also do well to remind us of the exhilarating intricacy of the web of words, but in speaking of words as palimpsests, we must acknowledge that we cannot often read what has been written over—that connotations have been lost, not simply replaced—and that this absence serves as a most tantalizing canvas for our own semantic projections.

Affording a modest meditation is Ralph C. Wood’s six-page “Confronting the World’s Weirdness: J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Children of Hùrin.*” In considering the nature of the Anglo-Saxon value *wyrd* (‘fate’) and its pertinence to Túrin Turambar, Woods argues that “life is woven through with both chance and necessity,” and that “a prudential humility [...] is the only faithful way to engage these often weird processes” (150). The essay is short and sweet, though in this case an etymological element might have proved enriching. As strange a force as it may seem, *wyrd* is not a lexical alien; it is cognate with the Old English verb *weordan* ‘to become, turn out,’ as well as the Latin *vertère* ‘to turn [around], change, alter, overthrow.’ Such a consideration reinforces Wood’s position that fate in Anglo-Saxon literature, as well as in *The Children of Hùrin*, seems something impersonal and perfunctory—more so than, for example, the Roman *fortuna*, a force so fickle and malicious as to be often personified. In pre-Christian Old Norse–Icelandic cosmology, however, *wyrd* is, in a sense, personified—in the form of the Norn Urðr.
Catherine Madsen’s “Eru Erased: The Minimalist Cosmology of The Lord of the Rings” argues that “the theological underpinnings of The Silmarillion were deliberately omitted from The Lord of the Rings,” something Madsen declares is “relatively easy to show” (152). As with some other papers in the collection, Madsen’s argument is oriented by an extremely confident opinion about the quality and position of The Silmarillion vis-à-vis Tolkien’s earlier (that is, pre-humous) works—essentially that it is marginal, confounding, and even to an extent artificial and disappointing. As she admits, the position is one held by many people who awaited publication of The Silmarillion in 1977 as an explanation for The Lord of the Rings. She argues that

[i]f The Silmarillion in some form had been published along with The Lord of the Rings, as Tolkien wished, the cosmological underpinnings would have been available to his readers from the beginning; there would now be no debate about their relation or relevance to the tale of the Ring. (156)

For those who were born to find both books on the shelf, however, there never was a debate to begin with; The Silmarillion and The Lord of the Rings do indeed coexist, and sing to each other harmoniously enough. This will be the rule as time progresses, suggesting that Madsen’s position is more generational than conceptual.


The theologically oriented second part of The Ring and the Cross—“The Cross”—begins with Carson L. Holloway’s “Redeeming Subcreation,” a patient, articulate attempt to show how sub-creation is “compatible with and even informed by Tolkien’s faith” (178). Holloway’s paper implicitly addresses what Kerry calls in his Introduction “The Trap” (19-20)—the theological dilemma Tolkien faced as a Christian when he invented a non-Christian secondary world. Apart from making a strong case for sub-creation as something Tolkien hoped would be redeemed and accompany him into the afterlife (as allegorized in “Leaf by Niggle”), Mooney’s paper is also important for demonstrating straightaway—and in the face of some of the smugger skepticism of the first section—the great sensitivity and finesse of which Christian interpretations of Tolkien’s works are capable. Jason Boffetti shares Mooney’s position in “Catholic Scholar, Catholic Sub-Creator,” arguing that, “[a]lthough Tolkien’s inspirations for the stories might have been pre-Christian, his aspirations were thoroughly Christian” (198). Where this particular paper shines is in its conceptualization of fictional reality, especially the relationship of secondary worlds with the primary: “alleged
novelty is impossible as the fodder for even the most radical and distorted flight from given reality will still be founded in the only reality we know. Imagination will forever be grounded in experience” (199). This position supports Boffetti’s argument that the *legendarium* represents manifestations of Tolkien’s own engagement with the gift of Creation.

Michael Tomko’s “‘An Age Comes On’: J.R.R. Tolkien and the English Catholic Sense of History” considers the influence of English Catholicism—in particular that of Oratorian thinkers—on the sense of history and passage of time in *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien himself claims to have looked upon history as a “long defeat,” a phrase originally found in a speech by Galadriel, and which serves so well to describe the attrition of goodness and beauty in Middle-earth. Tomko not only examines how this perspective informs the ubiquitous sense of loss and ruin in *The Lord of the Rings*, but also argues that a revival of sorts—analogous to the English Catholic revival of Victorian England—dawns during the journey from Weathertop to Isengard. Thus, while the efforts of Frodo, Gandalf, Aragorn, and their allies must even in success cause the world to dilapidate, there remains, as with the English Catholic experience, a hope and will to “transform the age through acts of faith, hope, and love” (222).

“The Lord of the Rings and the Catholic Understanding of Community” by Joseph Pearce considers the potential influence of G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc’s ‘distributist’ philosophy on Tolkien’s “sociopolitical and sociocultural vision” (225). Pearce’s contention is that Tolkien’s pre-mechanical romanticism corresponds to the anti-industrialism of Chesterton and Belloc as conveyed in their respective *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* and *The Servile State*, works which were published “during the formative years of Tolkien’s life” (225). This influence is alleged to inform even Tolkien’s perspectives on reality and sub-creation.

Next is editor Paul E. Kerry’s own “Tracking Catholic Influence in *The Lord of the Rings*.” Addressing the major issue of his Introduction, Kerry contemplates the very idea of looking for Catholicism in Tolkien’s greatest work, challenging in particular the aversion many critics—even some Catholics—have towards the idea. His appeal is in favor of looking for and identifying such influence, especially for those inclined to do so, arguing that

> [d]etermining influence is difficult and complicated. But such complexity does not mean that influence cannot be shown, much rather it carries with it the challenge of careful reading, skilled scholarship, and sensitive analyses when staking such claims. (244)

Ultimately, however,—and Kerry’s opening paragraphs show he is well aware of this—the debate has little to do with Tolkien and *The Lord of the Rings* specifically.
Instead, it begs the place of real-world faith and religious orthodoxy in the practice of literary criticism, particularly that involving fictional worlds. The critics who read this paper will likely feel a strong inclination toward one side or the other; Kerry’s appeal to both lies in his composure and his eloquence, as well as his recognition that “[r]eaders are informed by who they are” (244).

Marjorie Burns’s “Saintly and Distant Mothers” was originally presented as the Scholar Guest of Honor speech at the 2008 Mythcon. A source analysis, it considers the potential influence of Victorian fantasy writer George MacDonald’s *The Princess and the Goblin* and *The Princess and Curdie* on Tolkien’s portrayals of Varda, Galadriel, and Éowyn. Though the paper is thoughtful, its inclusion in this collection seems tenuous, lying in a somewhat peripheral consideration of the Virgin Mary’s correspondence to MacDonald and Tolkien’s female characters. Altogether, Madsen emphasizes these woman as remote and impersonal matriarchs, as opposed to the domestic variety of maiden Éowyn too disdains to become.

The last paper of the collection is Bradley J. Birzer’s “The ‘Last Battle’ as Johannine Ragnarök: Tolkien and the Universal,” a look at the eschatology of Tolkien’s various mythological sources, as well as an analysis of how Tolkien’s understanding of the Apocalypse in his own *legendarium* changed over time. It is a confident and wide-ranging piece—of all the collection’s papers, it is also the one most fully intended for a Catholic audience. It must be said that some of Birzer’s positions on Old Norse–Icelandic poetry, particularly the meaning of *edda* as “soulful utterance” (267, 279), are rather whimsical according to established scholarship. His affiliation of the word with the mythological poems most fully contained in the Codex Regius manuscript is also misguided, since the *Elder Edda*, as it is still often known, seems only to have been named *edda* in the seventeenth century because of some of the material it appears to share with the thirteenth-century (prose) *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*.

As a contribution to a—if not the—polemical area of Tolkien studies, *The Ring and the Cross* is commendable not only for looking at both sides, but also for reflecting those many shades in between where most opinions fall. The collection’s civility and single-volume format more than likely belie the true friction and disparity of opinions on its topic, but the willingness to publish together is at least a willingness to engage one another, and that can never be a bad thing.

—Harley J. Sims
In a field which one might consider to be growing over-crowded with scholarly journals, it is encouraging to find that in fact there is plenty of high-caliber material to go around, and even a surprising amount of previously unpublished source material to give scholars more to work with. May it continue to be so!

I reviewed the first issue of Fastitocalon in Mythlore #111/112, and it is living up to its initial promise. While we do not share exactly the same focus, Mythlore readers will find much of interest here. The lead article, by Bruce Wyse, is “Consuming Life: Narcissism, Liminality, and the Posthuman Condition in Bulwer-Lytton’s A Strange Story.” In this tale, a man who acquires bodily immortality loses his soul in the process and becomes quite literally post-human—“he is what remains when what is reputedly the essence of the human is withdrawn from the rational animal” (93). Wyse reads a “gothicized” (103) response to Darwin in Bulwer-Lytton’s depiction of the utter self-centeredness of the soulless, once-human Margrave. Roger Bonzetto and Fanfan Chen continue the theme of immortality with “The Evolution of the Quest for Immortality in Science Fiction and the Fantastic: Spirituality, Corporeality, Virtuality.” I found it a rather disjointed survey of the history of mankind’s quest for immortality, and felt it didn’t quite work to lump mythological and religious stories in the same category as gothic and science fiction tales. One valuable observation, though, concerns the gradual historical identification of the potentially immortal spirit of the human being with the brain rather than with another organ or permeated throughout the body. Anna Caiozzo follows this with “Some Notes on Depictions of Immortals in Medieval Oriental Manuscripts,” oriental in this case meaning Islamic, and these notes, while also somewhat disjointed, do provide
some interesting insights into a religious and mythological system not well known to many Westerners.

Thomas Scholz’s “The Making of a Hilarious Undead: Bisociation in the Novels of Terry Pratchett” disproves the truism that critical analysis of humor tends to kill its subjects; this article manages to leave Pratchett’s undead still kicking at the end. Scholz uses Arthur Koestler’s concept of bisociation to show how Pratchett’s humorous undead achieve their effects through the intersection of “two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference” (142), here primarily standard social conventions and the expected behavior of the undead. As readers become accustomed to this intersection, Pratchett is then able to use these characters as “part-time protagonists” (147). Scholz then demonstrates what happens when these frames of reference fuse but do not collide, in the less successfully humorous ghosts of J.K. Rowling’s Hogwarts.

Eugenio M. Olivares Merino continues his article from *Fastitocalon* 1.1 with part two of “Reporting the Stubborn Undead: Revenants and Vampires in Twelfth Century English Literature.” He summarizes and discusses a number of stories of revenants from this time period and analyzes elements they have in common with later vampire folklore and literature. In “Arthur Conan Doyles [sic] Dracula,” Robert Eighteen-Bisang presents plausible evidence that the Sherlock Holmes tale “The Adventure of the Illustrious Client” is a retelling of Dracula, with the supernatural elements rationalized away in Holmesian style. Doyle and Stoker were known to be friends and had collaborated more or less closely on such projects as a serialized novel and a Doyle play produced at Stoker’s Lyceum theatre. Douglas A. Anderson concludes the issue with “A Note on M.R. James and Dracula,” some clever literary detective work tracing a reference by James to a possible source for Dracula through a misleading claim by Peter Haining and back to its actual publication. It is unlikely this was an actual source, but it has certain parallels with the novel. Anderson’s “Notes on Some Neglected Fantasists” column for this issue provides bio-bibliographical information on James Dickie (Yaqub Zaki), editor of a collection of vampire stories, and C. Bryson Taylor, author of two novels and many magazine stories.

*The Journal of Inklings Studies* is a collaborative project of the Oxford University C.S. Lewis Society, the Charles Williams Society, and the Owen Barfield Estate, and the editorial board plans to focus on the theology, philosophy, and literature of Lewis, Barfield, Williams, and Tolkien, and their “intellectual and literary peers and forbears.” Subscribers to the print edition also have full access to an electronic version online, and reviews are open access online. This is a promising new journal, though its mission and audience will nearly duplicate that of *Seven*. But *JIS* has scored a bit of a coup with its initial issue, printing some hitherto unpublished Lewis material. Paul Tankard, following up a lead in the papers of
theatre critic and producer Kenneth Tynan (who had been Lewis’s student at Oxford), gives us “C.S. Lewis’ Brush with Television.” He describes two hitherto unreported filmed interviews with Lewis for Tynan’s short-lived program Tempo, the first dealing with “Eros and the Arts,” and the second, titled “The Oxbridge Octopus,” with the influence of Oxford and Cambridge on the arts. Footage has not survived for either program, but the article is followed by a transcript of the interview for the former. Some of the topics Lewis covers are the differences in technique in drawing and in writing about a nude, some historical examples of erotic writing, the morality of depicting the sexual act, even between married partners, in writing, and the value of the dirty joke. As the editor points out, Lewis has used some of the same arguments and examples elsewhere.

J.G. Bradbury, in “Charles Williams’ Arthuriad: Mythic Vision and the Possibility of Belief,” explores Williams’s use of myth, in T.S. Eliot’s words, to make “the modern world possible for art”: a world in which religion is no longer as accessible as a system to arrange and present symbol and meaning in poetry needs an alternative organizing principle. The Arthuriad’s organization around the Grail as a mythic object provides a bridge allowing a modern view of the world to approach the religious. Don W. King, in an excellent companion piece to his article in this issue of Mythlore, considers “The Early Writings of Joy Davidman”—the poems, fiction, and non-fiction she produced before she began writing for New Masses. In particular, he examines several poems and two short stories in her college’s literary magazine, her master’s thesis, and two poems in the literary journal Poetry.

The issue concludes with two lengthy review articles. Kenneth McLure, in “Owen Barfield and the Poetics of Salvation: A Review of Two Barfield Novellas,” uses the recently reissued Night Operation and Eager Spring as the basis for a discussion of the “imagination of disaster” in modern literature and how this ties in with Barfield’s defense of poetic logic as a path for balancing reductionist materialism and anti-material spirituality, or rational truth and poetic truth. P.H. Brazier reviews William Gray’s Fantasy, Myth, and the Measure of Truth and Phillip Pullman’s The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ in “Truth and Fantasy, Reality and Fiction.” I found this disappointing; Brazier engages primarily with his own distaste for atheism and for Pullman as a representative atheist, and has little to say beyond that; it impressed me as disappointingly narrow, bitter, and poorly written and edited.

VII: An Anglo-American Literary Review, or Seven, is a well-established journal now on its 27th annual issue. We have reviewed it off and on over the years in Mythlore. Like JIS, this issue includes some previously unpublished Lewis material; Steven A. Beebe has located a fragment of a Lewis manuscript thought to be a draft of the introduction for the never-completed collaboration between
Lewis and Tolkien, *Language and Human Nature*. In “C.S. Lewis on Language and Meaning,” the concepts developed in this fragment are compared to Lewis’s other writings on language and meaning and to both contemporary and current linguistic theories on written and oral communication. The fragment itself follows the article.

Owen A. and Adelene Barfield share “In Search of Lucy: The Life of Lucy Barfield,” a brief biography of the adopted daughter of Inkling Owen Barfield and dedicatee of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. They speculate that Lewis took into account his spiritual duty as her godfather in creating the character Lucy Pevensie, with all her strengths and flaws. Tom McAlindon follows this with a similar personal reminiscence, “C.S. Lewis Remembered: Cambridge, 1957-1960.” McAlindon studied for his PhD under C.S. Lewis’s direction, and describes his lecturing style (contrasting it with that of F.R. Leavis) and thesis supervision style (comparing him to Muriel Bradbrook, who joined Lewis in mentoring his work near its completion). The author was not personally close to Lewis, but in retrospect developed a deep appreciation for Lewis’s teaching abilities and work ethic in spite of the joys and sorrows of his personal life during that period.

John Rateliff introduces and footnotes the next previously unpublished document in “Introduction to ‘Woodland Prisoner’: Clyde S. Kilby Speaks on Tolkien.” He describes the circumstances surrounding the never-printed proceedings of the 1983 Tolkien Conference at Marquette University, and provides some background for Kilby’s speech, his last major talk on Tolkien before his death in 1986. The text of “Woodland Prisoner” follows: while the talk primarily consists of memories of Clyde Kilby’s association with J.R.R. Tolkien in the latter years of his life and working with him on organizing the materials of *The Silmarillion* in the summer of 1966, Kilby also uses “Leaf by Niggle” as a central metaphor for discussing Tolkien’s constantly delayed and deferred work on *The Silmarillion* and other projects, and finds the line from “Mythopoeia,” “We make by the law in which we’re made,” to sum up Tolkien’s creative philosophy.

Next we have two poems by Owen Barfield, “Rust” and “She” (the latter previously unpublished). Brett Foster introduces and explicates them, and reflects on the place of poetry in Barfield’s entire literary output. The introduction does lack somewhat in failing to provide dates that would help place the two poems properly in the evolution of Barfield’s development as a poet. Samuel Joeckel’s useful article, “C.S. Lewis and the Art of the Apologue,” proposes that considering *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce* as apologues (works “organized as a fictional example of the truth of a formulable statement or a series of such statements,” quoting Sheldon Sacks, a sort of “moral allegory” [72]) rather than novels or fantasies can correct certain critical misunderstandings about their structure, characterization, and plot, and provide
the reader with a better set of criteria by which to judge their success against the rules and conventions of this specific genre.

Two review essays round out the issue. Ralph C. Wood, in “The Argument from Joy: G.K. Chesterton as Thinker and Theologian,” considers a number of recent books in which G.K. Chesterton is read as a theologian, not just an aphorist, essayist, and author of fiction, poetry, and drama. Notable among the works considered are Stephen R.L. Clark’s _G.K. Chesterton: Thinking Backward, Looking Forward_ (2006), Alison Milbank’s _Chesterton and Tolkien as Theologians_ (2007), and Aidan Nichols’s _G.K. Chesterton, Theologian_ (2009). Kirsten Jeffrey Johnson summarizes the history and trends of George MacDonald criticism in “A Critical Reinstatement: Dearborn’s The Baptized Imagination,” asserting the importance of his influence on Lewis, Chesterton, Tolkien, and Sayers in particular. She considers Kerry Dearborn’s _The Baptized Imagination: The Theology of George MacDonald_ (2006) the best exploration so far of “MacDonald’s pivotal role in the development of a theological understanding of the Imagination” (96) and a much-needed corrective for recent mistaken critical trends.

_Tolkien Studies: An Annual Scholarly Review_ 7 is an intimidatingly thick issue, clocking in at 401 pages. As usual, it is rounded out by David Bratman’s “The Year’s Work in Tolkien Studies” for 2007 and the “Bibliography (in English)” covering items published in 2008.

The issue starts with Vladimir Brijak’s “The Book of Lost Tales: Tolkien as Metafictionist,” demonstrating the value of taking Tolkien’s metafictional framing strategies—most notably the _Red Book of Westmarch_, with its evolution through various translators, redactors, narratizers, annotators, and copiers—seriously as a literary device linking to techniques used in both _Beowulf_ and postmodern fiction. In Borges’s terms, this structure of pseudo-editorial conceits would serve to “increase, rather than undermine, its mimetic potential” (20), and certainly the frame imbues _The Lord of the Rings_ with the qualities of “verisimilitude, depth, credibility, and so forth” (5). Péter Kristóf Makai contributes “Faërian Cyberdrama: When Fantasy becomes Virtual Reality,” which applies concepts from Tolkien’s “On Fairy-Stories” to ludology or game studies, and specifically to fantasy-based computer games, whether narrative-based or immersive virtual reality worlds. The concepts of Escapism and Faërian Drama are particularly useful in understanding the appeal and legitimacy of virtual reality games, and how the player functions within the game. Michael Milburn, winner of the Alexei Kondratiev Student Paper Award at the 2010 Mythcon, examines how Tolkien’s conceptions of imagination and human creativity agree or disagree with another well-known theory in “Coleridge’s Definition of Imagination and Tolkien’s Definition(s) of Faery.” Milburn draws not just on the published essay “On Fairy-Stories” but also its various drafts and
the introductory essay to *Smith of Wootton Major* to show how Tolkien’s ideas evolved.

Thomas Fornet-Ponse weighs in on the elves/fate—men/free will debate recently revitalized by Verlyn Flieger’s 2008 Mythcon talk with “‘Strange and free’—On Some Aspects of the Nature of Elves and Men.” He considers the difficult problem of reconciling fate and free will in Tolkien’s Middle-earth, where the differing origins and ultimate destinies of Elves and Men confuse the issues further. The author investigates Tolkien’s writings on the *féa* and *hroa* (roughly, soul and body) of Men and Elves, examples of free will exercised by Elves and incidents of providence acting through Men and Hobbits, the nature of Ilúvatar’s foreknowledge and the lesser foreknowledge granted to the Ainur, and the differing ways in which the souls of Men and Elves are bound to the world and their attitudes towards bodily death. Fornet-Ponse agrees with Flieger that the free will of Men is a powerful thing that can affect fate, but concludes that Elves have free will too, though it is impacted by their binding to the circles of the world.

Mary R. Bowman takes a look at Tolkien’s professional involvement with *Maldon* throughout his career in “Refining the Gold: Tolkien, *The Battle of Maldon*, and the Northern Theory of Courage.” She shows how his thinking on Byrhtnoth’s actions and the courage of his followers evolved, demonstrated through his fictional critiques in *The Hobbit*, *The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorthelm’s Son*, and *The Lord of the Rings*. Especially useful is her analysis of the chapter “The Choices of Master Samwise” as she shows his choices paralleling and criticizing those made by Byrhtnoth’s men. Thomas Honegger’s “Fantasy, Escape, Recovery, and Consolation in *Sir Orfeo*: The Medieval Foundations of Tolkienian Fantasy” is an eye-opener; while there has been some work on the influence of specific aspects of *Sir Orfeo* on Tolkien’s depiction of Faërie in *The Hobbit* and *Smith of Wootton Major*, this is the first major discussion about its broader influence on the concepts Tolkien outlines in “On Fairy-Stories.” Fantasy, recovery, escape, enchantment, eucatastrophe, and consolation can all be found in this relatively short work, and medieval commentaries that interpret it as a Christian story also bear a strong resemblance to the epilogue of “On Fairy-Stories” and its relation of fairy stories to the Gospel.

Sherrlyn Branchaw points out a classical source in “Elladan and Elrohir: The Dioscuri in *The Lord of the Rings*,” comparing the twin sons of Elrond to other sets of twins in Indo-European mythology, and concluding that Tolkien’s conception of Elladan and Elrohir owes the most to Castor and Polydeuces, the twin sons of Zeus and Leda and brothers of Helen of Troy, and secondarily to Amphion and Zethos, the sons of Theban Antiope. In “Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* and His Concept of Native Language: Sindarin and British-Welsh,” Yoko Hemmi applies Tolkien’s ideas about “native language”—that language or group
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of languages which feels like “home” to an individual through ancestry and
personal preference—to the linguistic history of Middle-earth and specifically to
the curious incidents of Sam and Frodo speaking poems and invocations in
Sindarin that they do not consciously know. “English and Welsh” and The Notion
Club Papers are the “epitexts” most useful in understanding Tolkien’s theories
and providing a way to read their application in The Lord of the Rings.

Tolkien has been accused of simplistic depictions of race in the attitudes
of his Northern men to the Easterlings and Southrons, and by extension of
having racist attitudes himself. Margaret Sinex’s “‘Monsterized Saracens,’
Tolkien’s Haradrim, and Other Medieval ‘Fantasy Products’” demonstrates both
that these depictions have ample historic precedent in Tolkien’s classical and
medieval source influences, and that what Tolkien did with these sources was in
the end far more nuanced than might be expected from a superficial reading.
And in “Myth, Milky Way, and the Mysteries of Tolkien’s Morwinyon, Telumendil,
and Anarrina” Kristine Larsen proposes possible real-world star and
constellation identities for three astronomical terms from the legendarium, based
partly on Tolkien’s own knowledge of amateur astronomy and his reading in
medieval literature.

This issue of Tolkien Studies also provides us with some previously
unpublished or very difficult to obtain source material—in this case, Tolkien’s
‘The Story of Kullervo’ and his essays on Kalevala, ably edited by Verlyn Flieger.
“The Story of Kullervo” is a retelling in prose and verse of a tale from Runos 31-36
of the Kalevala, following the original closely but with a number of names
replaced with Tolkien’s own inventions. The story bears some resemblance to his
later tale of Túrin Turambar. The essay is transcribed from two versions,
manuscript and undated typescript, from 1914/1915 and at least three years later,
and its purpose appears to be to interest the audience in reading the Kalevala,
praising its “race of unhypocritical scandalous heroes and sadly unsentimental
lovers” (247) as the sort of undergrowth too often pared away and discarded
from more polished collections of tales.

Contributing further to Tolkien’s biography, John Garth’s “J.R.R.
Tolkien and the Boy Who Didn’t Believe in Fairies” springs from an anecdote
related in one of the manuscript versions of “On Fairy-Stories,” recounting how
the young Tolkien once tried to make conversation with a small boy about the
probable inhabitant of a poppy flower, and was roundly put in his place by the
scientific lad, who told him it contained only “Stamens and a Pistil.” Garth
identifies the boy as Hugh Cary Gilson, half-brother of Tolkien’s close friend
Robert Quilter Gilson, and the year as 1913 or 1914, based on corroborating
evidence from Christopher Tolkien and from Gilson family papers. The article
includes biographical information on Hugh’s later life; he was a noted freshwater
biologist and taught Zoology at Cambridge.
Finally, this issue’s last major piece is Tom Shippey’s lengthy review of Tolkien’s *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún*. Shippey considers not just Tolkien’s retellings of *Völsunga Saga* and the *Nibelungelied* and related materials—his techniques, his aims in retelling these stories, and the success of his version in capturing the “daimonic force” (293) of the originals—but also the textual history of Tolkien’s source material and the various influences working with these texts may have had on Tolkien’s *legendarium*.

—Janet Brennan Croft


**EDITOR JASON FISHER PREFACES THIS COLLECTION** of eleven essays by reiterating Tolkien’s famous quotation of Sir George Dasent as it appears in “On Fairy-Stories”: “We must be satisfied with the soup that is set before us, and not desire to see the bones out of which it has been boiled” (1). Indeed, the thick, rich soup of Tolkien’s *legendarium* and minor writings has been scrutinized, it would seem, down the very last pinch of this, sprig of that, and spoonful of everything else. Critical books and scholarly periodicals and journals, some devoted solely to the author, have proliferated for nearly fifty years with no cessation in sight.

In his “Introduction: Why Source Study?”, Tom Shippey, one of the most artful practitioners of that craft, argues that Tolkien’s dismissals of source-criticism from 1938 on does not illegitimatize volumes like this one:

All literary works bear some relation to the milieu in which they are composed and received, but we often do not realize how quickly the elements of those milieux are forgotten. One generation’s common knowledge becomes a later generation’s historical footnote [...]. [A]s [Jason] Fisher says below, to turn one’s back on source study is “to risk stripping a text of its context” [...]. (9)

Shippey and Fisher are correct. While many of Tolkien’s readers are familiar with, for instance, *Beowulf* and J.M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan*, only a few have mastered the works of John Buchan and H. Rider Haggard, subjects of superb essays by Mark T. Hooker and John D. Rateliff, respectively. William Caxton’s *The Golden Legend*, his fifteenth-century English translation of the thirteenth-century *Aurea
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Legenda, may be common fare for medieval scholars who study stories of the saints, but those unfamiliar with the work will find Judy Ann Ford's chapter illuminating.

"Source Criticism: Background and Applications" by E.L. Risden, the second item in this anthology, is exactly that. Dealing more with the Bible and with Shakespeare than Tolkien, it presents a survey of the history of this kind of scholarship. Concluding, Risden states that

[The dangers of source criticism lie in uncertainty: the critic must assemble evidence, of course, but must often rely on guesses. [...] Even a mistaken guess can lead to insight, as long as we as readers fairly distinguish between what author and text do and what we do as respondents. (26-27)

Nicholas Birns offers a study of "Biblical mythopoeia" in the "consciously mythic" "first nine or so chapters of Genesis" (45). This leads to a disquisition on both similarities and differences: the Creation account in the Ainulindalë exemplifies the former; the Akallabêth, the latter. "Númenor was not Eden, [...] a primal place of innocence, but a restorative land of gift that went awry" (48). Likewise, the Cain and Abel story evokes the kinslaying at Alqualonde but is not the same thing; Birns delves into Mesopotamian myth (the "stones" referred to in his title in "The Stones and the Book") and links the Gilgamesh epic to King Eärnur, the rash, bold last king of Gondor in the Third Age.

The stellar essay "Sea Birds and Morning Stars," contributed by astronomy and physics professor Kristine Larsen, looks at the Greek myth of Ceyx and Alcyone and discovers eleven similarities to Eärendil and Elwing. She traces the older legend from Ovid to Chaucer to John Gower: "Given Tolkien's classical education, and his expertise in medieval texts, it is all but certain that he would have not only been familiar with the basic story [...] but [also] with its various retellings" (77). As the title indicates, Larsen deals expertly with the metamorphoses of Elwing and Eärendil in astronomical and avian incarnations. "Finally, there is the possibility that Tolkien also connected this couple with well-known weather patterns," she appends (82).

Byzantium and Gondor are linked in Miryam Librán-Moreno's contribution. "Byzantium, New Rome!" brings the troubled history of the Goths, the Langobards, and Constantinople into the stockpot of Tolkien's stories. "In this I follow the lead of Tolkien himself, who found the comparison with Byzantium historically appropriate: 'In the south Gondor rises to a peak of power, almost reflecting Númenor, and then fades slowly to decayed Middle Age, a kind of proud, venerable, but increasingly impotent Byzantium'" (86). She cites ten Gothic names, two Langobardic, and three in Byzantine Greek (all
hobbits) in the *legendarium*. Constantinople had its Argonath, a bronze equestrian statue of Justinian I looking east with his hand raised in warning to invaders. The Emperor Heraclius’s Hellenization efforts, reverting to Greek from Latin, is analogous to the abandonment of Eldarin languages by the last kings of Númenor once they had rejected the Valar. Justinian’s great general Belisarius’s noble semblance to Aragorn, as well as Attila the Hun’s terrifying similitude to the Witch-king in the battle of the Pelennor Fields, deserve attention.

“The Rohirrim: ‘Anglo-Saxons on Horseback’?” by Thomas Honegger looks once again at a source long-known to be one of the stronger flavors in Tolkien’s stockpot of story, despite the author’s contrasistent claims to the contrary. “The idea [in 1942] of equating the Common Speech with modern English and, as a logical conclusion, to represent Rohirric by Old English, also suggested the solution to his problem of how to accommodate the ‘rabble of Eddaic-named Dwarves out of Völsúspá’ that he had inherited from *The Hobbit*” (120) by using Old Norse. He links the courageous code of Anglo-Saxon poetry, especially *The Battle of Maldon*, to Rohan. But, he concludes, “the Rohirrim are primarily the embodiment of the common Germanic ideal of the northern heroic and as such not to be identified with any historically known (Germanic) peoples [...] in the same sense that orcs are Huns without horses” (128). Nonetheless, “they remain [...] the people most dear to Tolkien and to all medievalists” (129).

Medievalists will likewise delight in Judy Ann Ford’s essay on William Caxton’s translation of the legends of the saints, *The Golden Legend*. With witful brevity, she cites examples: a posthumous story of St. Stephen and a corrupting fatal ring that, like Tolkien’s Ring, can desert its owner of its own accord. St. Martin’s and St. Bernard’s powers over weather suggest Tom Bombadil. Legends of St. Amande, St. Julian, St. Basil, and St. Michael the Archangel also enter Ford’s commentary. Dragons appear in no fewer than nine [ten, by this reviewer’s count] saint’s tales, including the Eowyn-like feats of Sts. Margaret and Martha: “they [...] offer medieval models in which women on the side of good overcome evil beasts” (143).

John D. Rateliff’s “*She* and Tolkien” returns to an essay on H. Rider Haggard Rateliff first published in *Mythlore* in the summer of 1981. The opening of *She* resembles the first two chapters of *The Fellowship of the Ring*. The affinities between Galadriel and Ayesha, “*She*” herself, are “the most obvious parallel.” (148). *She*’s setting, the ruined city of Kôr, presents “the clearest case.” (150). Leo and Ayesha parallel Beren and Lúthien. Rateliff’s study of less well-known works has an ancillary benefit: the reader will want to seek out and read these works as well: “*The Lord of the Rings* is a greater work than anything Haggard ever wrought, but Haggard deserves mention for having contributed his bit to the overall edifice” (157).
Mark T. Hooker’s “Reading Buchan in Search of Tolkien,” at thirty pages the longest essay in Fisher’s collection, does for John Buchan, best known as the author of 1915’s The Thirty-Nine Steps, what Rateliff does for Haggard. The wartime experiences of Buchan’s redoubtable Scotch spy Richard Hannay and Tolkien are similar but “there are no discernible, uniquely Hannayesque resonances in The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings” (163). As with his other works on Tolkien, Hooker emphasizes names and languages. Plot and symbolism also connect the two writers. Midwinter’s title character evokes Tolkien’s attempt to explain Tom Bombadil. “By comparing the two [authors],” Hooker concludes, “the story elements of both come into sharper focus. What may be missing in one is found in the other” (190).

The last chapter, “Biography as Source: Niggles and Notions” by Diana Pavlac Glyer and Josh B. Long, who was a research assistant on Glyer’s 2007 study of the creative influences of Inklings, The Company They Keep: C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien as Writers of Community, is an addendum to that book. Enriched by unpublished letters from Tolkien, this essay includes observations on The Lost Road, The Notion Club Papers, and “Leaf By Niggle” and serves as a satisfying coda to this collection.

As Fisher observes in his essay, “most of the low-hanging fruit has long gone” (37-38). Scholars including Shippey, Rateliff, Douglas A. Anderson, Verlyn Flieger, John Garth, and Janet Brennan Croft may have climbed higher up the Tree of Tales to harvest, but this book proves that, like Niggle’s Tree, plenty of fruit still remains for the picking. Studies like these, in Larsen’s words, improve “our individual chances of holding our own, if only for a brief moment, in a lively discussion with the Good Professor in whatever version of the Eagle and Child [sic] awaits the Second Born beyond the Walls of the World” (82).

—Mike Foster

About the Reviewers

Ruth Berman (berma005@umn.edu) is the author of numerous articles on fantasy which have appeared in Mythlore, F&SF, Extrapolation, Children’s Literature in Education, Science Fiction Studies, etc. She has also published fiction and poetry in many sf/fantasy magazines, literary magazines, and general magazines, and is one of the several authors of a group science fiction novel, Autumn World, by Joan Verba et al. Books she has edited include Sissaqig and Other Surprises (a collection of short fantasy works by Ruth Plumly Thompson, L. Frank Baum’s successor in writing the Oz books), The Kerlan Awards in Children’s Literature, 1975-2001 (a collection of the award recipients’ speeches), and Dear Poppa, The World War II Berman Family Letters. Forthcoming from FTL Publications is her fantasy novel, Bradamant’s Quest.
JOE R. CHRISTOPHER is Professor emeritus of English at Tarleton State University, Stephenville TX. He has published two books (one in collaboration) on C.S. Lewis, published one chapbook of Tolkienian verse, been an assistant editor of Truths Breathed Through Silver: The Inklings’ Moral and Mythopoeic Legacy (ed. Jonathan B. Himes, Cambridge Scholars, 2008), and edited three books and one issue of a journal. He also has published essays on Lewis, Tolkien, Charles Williams, Dorothy L. Sayers, Anthony Boucher, Ellery Queen, John Dickson Carr, Poul Anderson, Robert A. Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Gene Wolfe, and various other popular writers—as well as such standard authors as the Pearl Poet, Shakespeare, Coleridge, Hawthorne, Tennyson, and John Heath-Stubbs—and well over 100 poems. He had one play—a farce about a vampire—produced at his university, and he has signed a contract for the publication of a book of poems from The Edwin Mellen Press, possibly out later this year.

JANET BRENNAN CROFT is Head of Access Services at the University of Oklahoma libraries. She is the author of War in the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien (Praeger, 2004; winner of the Mythopoeic Society Award for Inklings Studies), has published articles on Tolkien in Mythlore, Mallorn, Tolkien Studies, and Seven, and is editor of two collections of essays: Tolkien on Film: Essays on Peter Jackson’s Lord of the Rings (Mythopoeic Press, 2004) and Tolkien and Shakespeare: Essays on Shared Themes and Language (McFarland, 2006). She also writes on library issues, particularly concerning copyright. She is currently the editor of Mythlore and book review editor of Oklahoma Librarian, and serves on the board of the Mythopoeic Press.

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. His 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 18 to 71 based in Washburn, Illinois, now in its forty-ninth year. He is currently collecting essays and editing a scholarly anthology on J.R.R. Tolkien and the Bible.

HARLEY SIMS received his Ph.D. in English from the University of Toronto in November 2009, specializing in Medieval Literature with Aspects of Theory. He has an article on Old Norse-Icelandic symbolism forthcoming in Saga-Book of the Viking Society for Northern Research (2011), as well as a chapter in The Mythological Dimensions of Neil Gaiman (2012). Apart from numerous scholarly reviews, he has written popular articles on Batman, Beowulf, and the Twilight series. He is a contributor to the Sun Media national news chain in Canada, and recently appeared on television to discuss Frank Miller’s graphic novel Holy Terror. His website is at www.harleyjsims.webs.com.

RICHARD C. WEST’s background is in medieval English, French, and Scandinavian literature, as well as in modern fantasy and science-fiction, and in librarianship. He has graduate degrees in English and in library science. He is on the Board of Advisors of the
Mythopoeic Society and the editorial board of *Tolkien Studies*. He has published articles on such authors as Peter S. Beagle, C.S. Lewis, Mervyn Peake, T.H. White, and J.R.R. Tolkien. His *Tolkien Criticism: An Annotated Checklist* has gone through two editions (Kent State University Press, 1970, 1981). He is currently Senior Academic Librarian and Head of Serials at the Kurt F. Wendt Commons Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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