

MYTHPRINT

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Review

By David Bratman

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF C. S. LEWIS, by Thomas Howard. 193 pages. Harold Shaw Publishers, 1980. \$5.95, trade paperback.

Thomas Howard was Guest of Honor at Mythcon VII in 1976. I remember him as a lean, intense, captivating speaker, and he has written a book which reflects those qualities of his speech. The chapters have the qualities of transcriptions from a good lecture series--it's fast reading in an easy, free-flowing style. Tucked in there is a lot of sound reasoning, such as his explanation of the meaning of THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH's title.

The book also has some of the defects of transcriptions. The specific subject matter wanders around in an unordered way with numerous digressions. I catch an almost intangible sense of self-superiority, something I never feel with Lewis himself, although he has often been accused of it.

I'm not entirely certain what audience the book is aimed at. The plot references are too abstract for the beginner, but the structure and the concepts are deliberately simple and basic. Overall, this is not really a book about Lewis at all, but Thomas Howard's interpretation of Lewis' thought patterns in several of his novels. A reader can learn something about Lewis from this book, but will, I think, learn more about Howard. The highly personalized style will probably delight those who agree with Lewis' and Howard's philosophical views, and may well offend those who don't.

I recommend giving this book a quick skim, which should leave you with a good idea of whether you want to read the whole thing or not.

I have gained new respect of the variety of literary criticism by reading this book right after THE LITERARY LEGACY OF C. S. LEWIS by Chad Walsh (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979, hardcover), a detached, analytic, and comprehensive study of Lewis' fictional creations. Both books succeed in their ways, but they are very different ways.

Editor's Mailbox

By David Bratman

A lot of interesting letters and publications thread their way to MYTHPRINT through devious postal channels. This column is the first of an occasional series introducing you to some of it that might be of interest.

MYTHPRINT receives a fair number of letters, but most are simple inquiries, and few so far have been real letters of comment. We aren't a big hefty journal like MYTHLORE, but we are interested in readers' comments and suggestions, which will be read cheerfully and may find their way into this column.

This first time around will be quick reviews of three newsletters. Two of them are not strictly speaking about fantasy, but they are all good serious publications of closely-related interest, and I think MYTHPRINT's readers will find them useful.

THE RAMPANT GUINEA PIGLET, edited by Mary Ann Hodge, is intended to appear sporadically between issues of her light-hearted fantasy fiction fanzine, THE RAMPANT GUINEA PIG. PIGLET #1 features good descriptive reviews of Allen & Unwin's boxed volume of Tolkien's STORIES AND POEMS and of Joan Wyatt's A MIDDLE-EARTH ALBUM. No price is given, so it may be free for the asking. While you're asking, you might also inquire about the PIG itself, currently \$1.75 an issue, featuring reviews and stories. Number 3 features a wonderful little farce, "The Seven Bad Pigs Try to Be Good," by M. Ramirez. Mary Ann Hodge,

STAR LINE, edited by Suzette Haden Elgin, is the bimonthly newsletter of the Science Fiction Poetry Association, a group of interest to practicing poets, from novice to polished, in both the SF and fantasy fields. The issue I have, May/June 1980, is crammed (neatly) with Association news, reviews and market reports; a good selection of short poems, of which I found works by George Clayton Johnson and Gene Wolfe particularly fine; and a very lively letter column, featuring Paul Edwin Zimmer on the question of cliché and originality. Subscription (includes membership) is \$6/year. In my estimation, definitely worth looking into if you're seriously

Editor's Mailbox cont.

interested in fantasy poetry. Suzette HaGen Elgin, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

THE INSTITUTE OF CELTIC STUDIES is a San Francisco Bay Area group. Its specialty is teaching classes in many aspects of Celtic civilization--language, mythology, literature, calligraphy, music and dance among them. The classes are offered on a quarterly basis, and are listed in the Institute's monthly newsletter, which also covers news such as films and concerts. A sample issue will be sent on request. The Institute has varying scales for memberships and for class fees. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

One suggestion: when writing for information or samples, it's usually a good idea to enclose a stamped self-addressed legal-sized envelope.

Discussion Report

[REDACTED] NARGOTHROND

THE DARK SIDE OF MIDDLE-EARTH
Report by Lisa Cowan

Nargothrond is a new Mythopoeic Society discussion group located in [REDACTED]. At our first meeting, the moderator and founder, Susan Lanoue, asked each of us what topics we would like to discuss at future meetings. One member said he was tired of always hearing about the "good" side of Tolkien's Middle-earth, and that he wished to discuss the "bad" side, the evil characters who abound in the realm. His idea was quickly picked up, and our July, 1980 meeting was a rousing discussion of "the dark side" of Middle-earth. We hope this report will prompt other discussion groups into following suit.

We began by discussing and defining "evil" in epic fantasy. In most fantasy, evil is caused by the quest for power and the corruption of that power. Once characters gain power they are not about to relinquish it, and thus fall prey to it. The "good" can and do become corrupted, such as Saruman, and once they "go bad" rarely repent and become good again. The basic reason Gandalf and Caladriel refused the Ring was that they would both have been tempted to use the power, and thus fall. Hobbits (in general) are not power hungry, and thus take much longer to be corrupted by the will of the Ring.

We then asked who or what was the most evil being in Middle-earth after Morgoth and Sauron. Most thought of the Nazgul King, again due to the power he held. The Balrogs got several votes because they were once good (Maiar) and chose evil. We noted that the Nazgul and the Balrogs instill similar reactions in the reader: horror, fear and pure loathing. Sauron and Morgoth also instill these feelings, but somehow on a different level, perhaps because Tolkien does not describe them so vividly. Saruman fell short of being as bad as the others because he does not really cause this fear or horror in the reader; hate and dis-

gust, yes. Still, he was far more evil than Orcs, Trolls, Goblins and the like. If one can choose between good and evil, and chooses evil, that makes him much worse than those like the Orcs who were born into evil ways and have no real choice.

This lead into discussing the evil animals, beasties and things that go chomp in the night. We ended up deciding that the spiders, dragons, wolves, and even Shelob, while "bad" and repulsive in the eyes of the heroes and reader alike, were not really "evil," but only following their instincts for survival. We had quite a few defenders of "poor Smaug" only trying to guard his treasure (true, he did steal it, but that is the way of dragons).

Tolkien has another recurring theme: that old age is bad. Old Man Willow, the Huorns, Denethor II, even Theoden were all victims of old age corrupting them. Only when Gandalf shows Theoden he is not really so old and feeble does the King become great again. Tolkien seems to say even if you are old you must feel young, like Tom Bombadil.

Age and mortality are the main foes of men in Middle-earth, and often the underlying cause of their downfall. Men can be seen as the worst of the bad, and the best of the good. They rose farther and fell farther than any other race. Could Sauron have gotten as far as he did without the help of so many men?

We then got into a discussion of The Ring as an evil entity. Does the Ring have a consciousness of its own? The consensus of opinion was yes it did, though we heard arguments from both sides. An interesting analogy was mentioned: if the wearer of the Ring was a rat, then the Ring would be a flea carrying the plague.

What if sometime after the Ring was forged, Sauron had been killed, and the Ring survived? If someone else found, used the Ring, and logically became a Dark Lord, who would really control whom, the Ring or its wearer? Another hypothetical question: if Sauron had gained back the Ring, would the Valar have allowed him to rule forever over Middle-earth? Would they have sunk Middle-earth beneath the waves like Numenor? And if Sauron had the ring and ruled, what would he have done with his vast powers? Would he grow tired of ruling over Middle-earth, and seek to challenge Iluvatar, and take the Undying Lands? We open these questions to all Mythopoeic members!

Myth Con

MythCon XII will be at [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] on Aug. 7-10, 1981. The theme is "A Festival of Faerie". The guests of Honour are Joe R. Christopher and Elizabeth Pope. Memberships are \$10 until March 1, 1981. Memberships and requests for information should be sent to: MythCon XII, c/o Diana L. Paxson, [REDACTED] [REDACTED].

Editorial

By David Bratman

Readers of fantasy are always having to deal with other people's vague feeling that fantasy is somehow not worth reading or writing--"Oh, so you read that stuff, eh?" We sometimes forget that fantasy's writers have the same problem, both while they are alive and in their posthumous reputations. I've come across a number of printed examples of this lately, and I'd like to share some with you.

J.R.R. Tolkien was a professor of English, and was frequently criticized by his university of not publishing enough research, particularly after the world discovered he'd been spending his time writing THE LORD OF THE RINGS. In 1955 he opened a lecture on the Celtic elements in English by apologizing for its tardiness, saying that he'd been busy with "a large 'work', if it can be called that, which contains, in the way of presentation that I find most natural, much of what I personally have received from the study of things Celtic."

The entry on William Morris in THE READER'S ENCYCLOPEDIA second edition, a work relatively hospitable to fantasy, describes his roles as designer and socialist thinker, and details his epic medievalist poetry. At the end, among his "other works" are listed, by name only, just two of his fantasy novels.

THE MYSTERY OF KING ARTHUR, by Elizabeth Jenkins (Coward McCann, 1975), is a history of the Arthurian legend. She traces the threads from their misty historical beginnings via Geoffrey of Monmouth, Chretien de Troyes, and many others, down to the end of the 19th century. She closes with a quote from Tennyson's "Idylls" and the words, "These are the last great lines written about Arthur in our literature." I might believe that Jenkins doesn't care for Charles Williams' Arthurian poetry--her research is too thorough to have missed it altogether. But dismissing T. H. White without a word is, to choose a word, incredible, especially from such an otherwise exemplary work.

To close on a more pleasing note, I have

MYTHPRINT is the monthly bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society, a nonprofit educational organization devoted to the study, discussion, and enjoyment of myth and fantasy literature, especially the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams.

The address for all mail concerning MYTHPRINT is [redacted]. Subscription, including membership in the Society is \$4 for 12 issues (one year). Please add \$1.80 for first class delivery, if desired. Checks should be payable to The Mythopoeic Society. Submissions of news, reviews, discussion group reports, letters, and art work are always wanted. Classified ads will be accepted at a later date.

found a worthwhile if out-of-date supplement to Jenkins--KING ARTHUR TODAY by Nathan Comfort Starr (University of Florida, 1954). It covers the use of Arthurian materials in 20th century literature (up to 1954, that is). Starr has many kind words to say about both Williams and White--and also C. S. Lewis, who is admitted as an Arthurian for bringing Merlin into THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH. Such a pleasant perspective on fantasy literature surely deserves updating.

ACTIVITY CALENDAR

Deadline for Activity Calendar is the first of the month preceeding the month of publication, i.e. February issue information will be due the 1st of January. March issue information will be due the 1st of Feb. Thank You.

NEW GROUPS

If you are interested in forming a new Discussion Group, please let us know and you will have your name and address published here. P.S. When you start having regular meetings, don't forget to send the information to MYTHPRINT.

[redacted], Mass./ [redacted], Conn. area
Contact: Jean Delaney, [redacted]
PH: [redacted]

[redacted] area
Contact: Marjorie Malcolm, [redacted]
PH: [redacted]

[redacted] Tolkien Society
Contact: Steve Pillinger, [redacted]
PH: [redacted]

[redacted]: THE COUNCIL OF LOGRES
Meets every third Tuesday
Contact: Terrie West
PH: [redacted]

The Mythopoeic Society also publishes MYTHLORE, a quarterly journal of fantasy studies. Subscription is \$10 per year from Lee Speth, [redacted]. Checks payable to The Mythopoeic Society.

--STAFF--

EDITOR: David Bratman
MANAGING EDITOR: Lisa Deutsch
ASSISTANT EDITOR: Sallijan Snyder
COMPUTER WIZARD: Harold Harrigan
TEXT EDITOR: UCSD Pascal
MASCOT: "The Widget"

Discussion Group Meetings

CALIFORNIA: [REDACTED]

THE ANNUAL YULE MOOT will be held on JANUARY 10, 1981 at 7 PM at the house of Harold and Lisa Harrigan, [REDACTED].

PH: [REDACTED] We will have a topic of Solstice in Fantasy Literature. Please bring munchies and drinkables and your holiday spirit. Sleeping space is available, but please call ahead.

[REDACTED] AVALON

Kim Lucien, [REDACTED]

PH: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] KHAZAD-DUM

Pat Witham, [REDACTED]

PH: [REDACTED]

*Jan. meeting, see YULE MOOT

*Feb. 7, 1981 (Saturday) 1 PM
THE SNOW QUEEN by Joan D. Vinge
at Amy Falkowitz's home, [REDACTED]

PH: [REDACTED]

*Mar. 8, 1981 (Sunday) 1PM
UNFINISHED TALES by J.R.R. Tolkien
at: Eric Rauscher, [REDACTED]

PH: [REDACTED]

CALIFORNIA: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] MYDGARD

Dolores Espinosa, [REDACTED]

PH: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] NARGOTHROND

Susan Lanoue, [REDACTED]

PH: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] LOTHLORIEN

Anne Wilson, [REDACTED]

PH: [REDACTED]

*Jan. 17, 1981 (Saturday) 8PM
THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES
by A. Conan Doyle. Location to be announced.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

[REDACTED] KNOSSOS

PH: [REDACTED]

HAWAII

[REDACTED] SAMMATH NAUR

Stephen L. Brown, [REDACTED]

PH: [REDACTED]

*Jan. 4, 1981 (Sunday)

BULFINCH'S MYTHOLOGY: The Age of Fable

*Feb. 1, 1981 (Sunday)

RIDDLE OF THE STARS TRILOGY by McKillip

*Mar. 1, 1981 (Sunday)

THE DIVINE COMEDY by Dante Alighieri

All meetings start at 2 PM and are located at: Ken Burtness, [REDACTED]

PH: [REDACTED]

ILLINOIS

[REDACTED] MINAS AERON

Renee Arwen Alper [REDACTED]

MICHIGAN

[REDACTED] GALADHREMMIN ENNORATH

Please contact their secretary:
Dave & Grace Lovelace [REDACTED]

PH: [REDACTED]

MINNESOTA

[REDACTED] RIVENDELL

David Lenander, [REDACTED]

NEVADA

[REDACTED] CRICKHOLLOW

Joanne Burnett, [REDACTED]

OREGON

[REDACTED]: TOLKIEN SOCIETY OF MARSHALL

Marshall High School, [REDACTED]

WASHINGTON

[REDACTED] EREBOR

James Wallace and Ginger Johnson, [REDACTED]

PH: [REDACTED]

*January topic:

THE CHRONICLES OF THOMAS COVENANT
By Stephen R. Donaldson. For date and place contact secretary.



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