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Reviews

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Abstract

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REVIEWS

PLANET NARNIA: THE SEVEN HEAVENS IN THE IMAGINATION OF C.S. LEWIS. Michael Ward. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. xvi + 347 pp. \$29.95. ISBN 978-0-19-531387-1.

THE THESIS OF MICHAEL WARD'S *PLANET NARNIA* can be stated briefly: C.S. Lewis, although keeping it a secret, used, one by one, the seven planets of medieval astronomy/astrology as artistic themes for the seven Narnian books – basically one planet per book:

Jupiter: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*

Mars: *Prince Caspian*

Sol: *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"*

Luna: *The Silver Chair*

Mercury: *The Horse and his Boy*

Venus: *The Magician's Nephew*

Saturn: *The Last Battle*

The most obvious reason for that qualifier *basically* is because the latter part of *The Last Battle*, in the New Narnia, is no longer Saturnine. Of course, the Sun and the Moon are not today considered "planets," but the Ptolemaic terminology is useful here.

Ward has framed his argument with two opening chapters, the first of which argues that (1) Lewis was a secretive man and (2) he believed that literary romances should have special atmospheres or tones, beyond their plots (i.e., as he argued in "On Stories"). Obviously, these set up the book's approach. Ward has three concluding chapters; the most interesting is the argument of the antepenultimate, saying that the Lewis-Anscombe debate perhaps led Lewis to restate the thesis of *Miracles* as a children's fantasy. Ward's argument for this connection is based on Samuel Alexander's distinction between Enjoyment and Contemplation in *Space, Time, and Deity*, which indeed Lewis said was an essential distinction. Since Ward has a running use of this distinction in his book (see his index), it seems odd that Alexander's volume is not in his bibliography;

perhaps he simply used Lewis's citations. (This reviewer has argued elsewhere that Lewis would have stopped his apologetics with *Miracles* anyway, whatever Anscombe advanced, for Lewis had three arguments for the existence of God, and *Miracles* presents the third; but this reviewer's argument is not in essential conflict with Ward's position.)

The bulk of Ward's book is his seven chapters on the planets and the Narniad. The chapters have this commonality: discussions of (1) what Lewis says about each planet in his alliterative poem "The Planets"; (2) what he says about them in *The Discarded Image*; (3) in the five appropriate chapters, what appears in connection with the descent of the planetary Oyeresu in *That Hideous Strength*; and, with a distinction between (4) *Poeima* (artistry) and (5) *Logos* (ideas) from *An Experiment in Criticism*—how the planetary influences appear in each individual book. In addition to these materials, Ward also discusses—as Lewis as provided him matter—Lewis's use of individual planets in his other poems and other non-fiction. Mars and Venus also bring in comments about *Out of the Silent Planet* (*OSP*) and *Perelandra*. In short, Ward is attempting by an elaborate presentation—and successfully in this reviewer's opinion—to show that the astrological tradition of the seven planets had a deep and long-lasting influence on Lewis's imagination.

One of the discussions of a book can be used to show the effect of this approach. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (*LWW*) is as useful for this purpose as any other chapter would be. Ward writes,

the change from winter to summer [...] conveys the peculiarly Jovial spirit, for Jupiter brings about 'winter passed' ('The Planets'), 'winter overgone' (*The Allegory of Love*); he 'overmatches' the 'freezing wastes' and 'unendurable cold' of Saturn and defeats Frost, Wither, Winter, Stone, Steele, *et al*[], producing 'torrents of melted snow' (*That Hideous Strength* [*THS*]). (57)

In other words, the plot chosen for *LWW* is one that reflects a major motif that Lewis has earlier used in connection with Jupiter. Aslan also is treated in terms of Jupiter as a King with a crown and a standard. ("Nowhere else in the Narniad is he 'royal'" [60].) Likewise, the Pevensie children are crowned as kings and queens of Narnia. (Later, Ward will contrast that with the treatment of Caspian in *Prince Caspian* (*PC*)—no coronation ceremony, for *PC* is ruled by Mars, not by Jupiter.) Ward gives seven other, lesser significant ties of the book of Jupiter's schema. When he turns from *Poeima* to *Logos*, Ward discusses four ways in which Lewis does a better job of presenting Joviality in *LWW* over against *THS*. Finally, he suggests that Aslan in this books is Aslan-as-Jove (as he becomes Aslan-as-Mars in the next, *etc.*), with some examples of Aslan's Joviality.

The process of going through all seven books may seem structurally repetitious, but Ward is able to present some surprises in content at least. For example, he notes, with a classical citation, that Mars was an agricultural and nature god before he became a war god (cf. 82-83). This explains the emphasis on trees and grapevines when Aslan-as-Mars appears. (Another surprise is the explanation of the flaws of *PC* in endnote 67 on pp. 275-76.) In connection with *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader,"* Ward writes:

Sol's forerunner, the Greek sun-god, Apollo, was famously a killer of dragons. He was known as 'Apollo Sauroctonus', Apollo the Lizard-slayer. 'Saura' is the Greek word for lizard or serpent or worm or dragon (a 'dinosaur' is a monstrous lizard); it gave Tolkien the name of his chief villain, Sauron, in *The Lord of the Rings*. Lewis is clearly enrolling Sol in his capacity as Apollo Sauroctonus in the defeats of the four dragons encountered during the course of the story. (113)

Four dragons? The old dragon Eustace sees die. The dragon Eustace becomes. The sea-serpent. The *Dawn Treader* itself, which has a dragon's head, wings, and tail. Ward has a clever argument about the fourth.

Luna, in the medieval scheme, is at the borderline between the unfallen Heavens and the fallen Earth. Ward suggests this is why Aslan appears only in Aslan's Country, not in Narnia, in *The Silver Chair*—to avoid Aslan-as-Luna becoming fallen. (The appearance before he blows away Narnia near the end is part of the process of bringing Aslan's Country to Jill and Eustace, not an appearance in Narnia *per se*, Ward argues [132-33].) Mercury, in astrology, rules the constellation Gemini, the Twins. Thus, *The Horse and His Boy* is about twins, Cor and Corin. Ward suspects that Dar and Darin and Cole and Colin are twins also, although they are just identified as brothers (153).

In the chapter on Venus and *The Magician's Nephew*, one surprise is one of Ward's rare blunders. He refers to Charles Williams's "The Figure of Arthur" as an "unfinished poem" (175)—it is, of course, an unfinished essay, or perhaps more properly said, an unfinished book-length piece of non-fiction. Ward discusses the Wood of Broceliande based on Lewis's discussion of it in *Arthurian Torso*, arising from Williams's "The Calling of Taliessin" (not "The Figure of Arthur"). Ward, of course, emphasizes the tie of the Wood to the Third Heaven, or the tie of Nimue to Venus. In *The Last Battle*, Ward takes the last part (the New Narnia) to be going beyond Saturn (in the Ptolemaic System) to Heaven. Actually, the Stellatum, the Heaven of Fixed Stars, is the first step beyond Saturn, although Ward does not say so at this point (but see his note on the diagram of the Heavens on p. 126). Perhaps the placement of the Stellatum is why Lewis emphasizes the stars leaving the sky in old Narnia—perhaps it is a way of saying that the saved do not have to go though the Stellatum also.

As long as the point is surprises, perhaps it should be mentioned that Ward, in one of his introductory chapters, does an excellent reading of "The Man Born Blind," which makes sense of that short story as part of the "Great War" with Owen Barfield; it is "a cautionary tale about pursuing to its end the logic of realism" (34), the cosmic logos being symbolized by the light that the character Robin wishes to see, rather than seeing by (33-35).

Two final matters. Ward asks why Lewis never told anyone what he was doing with the Seven Planets (see the section on pp. 239-243). This reviewer does not find the issue as complicated as Ward does. If Lewis had explained his use of the Ptolemaic planets' influence, his books would have been dismissed as a scholarly game, having nothing to say to the modern world.

Also, Ward asks about Lewis's purpose in his planetary emphasis. His answer is in two sections: "The Septet Acquires New Literary-Historical Depths" (234-236) and "The Septet Acquires New Theological Depths" (236-39)—the titles suggest his approach. This reviewer sees it somewhat differently. Ward mentions A. Kent Hieatt's *Short Time's Endless Monument* as discovering 24 stanzas = 24 hours in Spenser's "Epithalamion"—as an example of a literary secret being discovered after many years (5). But Hieatt's numerology (which went beyond the number of stanzas) is not the best parallel. William Spencer's "Are Chaucer's Pilgrims Keyed to the Zodiac?" is closer. Chaucer in "The General Prologue," besides organizing his pilgrims roughly by social rank, organized them by the influence of the Zodiac. This is not a great surprise since Chaucer's prose works include *A Treatise on the Astrolabe*. He starts with the Knight, under Aries ruled by Mars, goes through the cycle to the Shipman, under Pisces, ruled by Jupiter; the second cycle begins with the Doctor, under Aries again, and ends with the Pardoner, under Sagittarius, ruled by Jupiter—three persons short of a full second cycle. (This reviewer wonders about the Host, coming a few lines later, perhaps fitting, like the Franklin, under Capricorn, ruled by Saturn; but Spencer does not discuss the possibility.) Chaucer presumably used the influence of the Zodiac in order to get a variety of human types, not to write just out of his own personality.

So here, in a general way. Ward quotes Aslan's statement in *PC* that "things never happen the same way twice" (Ward 97; *PC* ch. 10). Likewise, Lewis turns down chances to repeat his previous ideas, as when he writes to Roy Lee of the British Broadcasting Company on 15 December 1944, refusing an opportunity to give a series of talks over the radio: "No. [...] [Your scheme] overlaps too much with talks I have given already" (*Collected Letters*, Vol. 2, p. 633). If Lewis had not seen a way to vary the approaches in the Narnian books, presumably he would not have written more than *LWW*. (This is why a spaceship was not used to get Ransom to Venus, why *THS* has a double plot after the single plots in *OSP* and *Perelandra*.) Yes, Ward is good on the effects—the Literary-Historical and

Theological Depths that developed—but Lewis’s purpose (this reviewer suggests) was simply variety. Anyone can think of series of children’s books that basically repeat the same pattern time after time.

This reviewer has had a number of quibbles with Ward’s theses—but not with his basic one. He has made an excellent—and convincing—case for the astrological planets influencing Lewis’s presentations of Narnia. Although given to erudite locutions and a necessary (if sometimes tiring) thoroughness of argument, Ward has written one of the basic books on the Chronicles of Narnia.

—Joe R. Christopher

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OWEN BARFIELD: ROMANTICISM COMES OF AGE: A BIOGRAPHY. Simon Blaxland-de Lange. Forest Row, Sussex: Temple Lodge, 2006. 352 pp. \$45.00. ISBN-10: 1 902636 77 5; ISBN-13: 978 1902636 77 1.

THIS, THE FIRST FULL-LENGTH BIOGRAPHY of the most neglected of the four major Inklings, is both welcome and a milestone long overdue. It’s been more than thirty years since the first major Lewis biography, by Green & Hooper, appeared [1974], since followed by Wilson [1990] and Sayer [1988], and almost as long since Carpenter’s authorized biography of Tolkien [1977]. A full-length biography of Charles Williams appeared almost a half-century ago [1959], although since superseded by Hadfield’s later book [1983], to which Lang-Sims’s memoir [1989] should be added to fill out the picture. Yet through all this we’ve been limited when it comes to Barfield—probably the most brilliant of all the Inklings and certainly the deepest thinker among them—either to passing references in works devoted to other topics, like Carpenter’s *The Inklings* [1979],

or to brief autobiographical accounts by Barfield himself. Fortunately, with the publication of Simon Blaxland-de Lange's *Owen Barfield: Romanticism Comes of Age*,¹ this is no longer the case.

Blaxland-de Lange's qualifications for undertaking the task are twofold. First, he was Barfield's own choice as the person to write his biography, entrusted by Barfield with a mass of correspondence and other papers to which no previous writer has had access. Second, he is a fellow Anthroposophist, who can thus shine light on the dominant influence on Barfield's life and thought, the massive impact of Rudolf Steiner, in ways impossible for any biographer who approached Barfield from an outsider's perspective—it is as if Lewis for the first time were to be written about by someone who took his Christianity seriously. Furthermore, all previous books on Barfield have been from an Inklings-centric point of view. This has produced some excellent books, such as Leon Adey's *C.S. Lewis's 'Great War' with Owen Barfield* [1979] (on Barfield's influence on Lewis) and Verlyn Flieger's *Splintered Light* [1983] (on Barfield's possible influence on Tolkien), but at the cost of looking at him as an 'influence' rather than in his own right—which is rather like writing about Coleridge only as a friend of Wordsworth, ignoring his own poetry and thought.

By contrast with such previous treatments, Blaxland-de Lange's account emphasizes just how different Barfield was from his fellow Inklings, thus serving as a good reminder of the great diversity within that group that all too often gets glossed over in accounts that naturally focus on their commonalities. In fact, there comes a point mid-way through the book (at the end of Chapter 9; cf. pages 183–184) where Blaxland-de Lange explicitly advises those reading only because of an interest in Lewis *et al.* to stop, while beckoning those interested in Barfield himself to continue on. Although it's good to have fair warning, readers who ignore this advice and read the whole of the book will be rewarded, since those chapters which follow contain much on Barfield worth knowing, including a detailed (forty-page) synopsis of his major work of fiction, the still-unpublished novel *English People* [circa 1930].

The book's most surprising revelations, perhaps, are threefold. The first is the centrality of Anthroposophism (an early twentieth-century offshoot of Madame Blavatsky's Theosophism) in Barfield's life. Barfield himself kept insisting on this, of course, but it has been so under-emphasized by previous writers that the degree to which it dominated his work and thought has been obscured.² It would be fair to say that Anthroposophism and its teachings on the

¹ Not to be confused with Barfield's own book *Romanticism Comes of Age*, a collection of anthroposophical essays first published in 1944, with a new expanded edition in 1966.

² Blaxland de-Lange's unquestioning acceptance of Steiner's tenets does cause some surprises for the uninitiated, who will include most readers of this book—for example, his linkage of Noah to the destruction of Atlantis in 8000 BC (page 195), or the calm assertion

evolution of consciousness were just as important to Barfield's life as his legendarium and invented languages were to Tolkien's. The second is Blaxland-de Lange's drawing attention to the sudden abrupt shifts in focus that marked Barfield's career—from his early emphasis on poetry and literature, to his embracing of (and advocacy for) Anthroposophy, to a study of the law as he decided to make a career as a solicitor, to a mid-career immersion in economics, to his return to academia in retirement and second career in his later years as a visiting professor at American universities. Previous studies of Barfield have always stressed the continuity of his career; in contrast, Blaxland-de Lange points out the sudden breaks and shifts of focus where Barfield spent considerable time mastering a field only to more or less abandon it when his interests shifted. Third and most startling is Blaxland-de Lange's account of the early breakdown of Barfield's marriage, and the degree to which his conversion to Anthroposophy shortly after his marriage to Maud Douie permanently blighted their relationship. As Blaxland-de Lange tells the story, Maud seems to have considered that the brilliant poet and scholar she had just married was throwing his talent away and ruining his career in order to devote himself full-time to propagating the weird cult he had just joined, for which she had no sympathy whatsoever. If this is true, then it explains and gives poignancy to the loving yet bitterly estranged couples that appear again and again in Barfield's work (e.g. *The Mother of Pegasus*, *English People*, *Eager Spring*). And just as surprising are the biographer's revelation of two serious affairs, with Josephine Spence and Marguerite Lundgren (later Mrs. Cecil Harwood), which nearly led to second (or even third) marriages midway through Barfield's long life.

Although it does provide a great deal of information never before available, and is worth reading for that reason alone, Blaxland-de Lange's book does have its shortcomings. First and foremost, the book includes no Timeline, so the reader is often left in doubt about the exact date when events took place and their relation to other things going on in Barfield's life at the time. Also, there is its eccentric organization. Rather than tell the story chronologically, Blaxland-de Lange begins with a long transcript from autobiographical interviews he conducted with Barfield in the latter's extreme old age (he was ninety-seven at the time). The rest of the book is made up of a series of thematic chapters, each

that Barfield's spirit has not yet been reincarnated but is now reliving his life backwards from the point of his death at three times the original speed (that is, in the eleven years since his death he has re-experienced the last thirty-three years of his life and is now roughly at the point of his retirement [page 6]). It is remarkable that Lewis, who hated and feared occultism, surrounded himself with friends who were deeply involved in what he would have called the occult, whether Charles Williams (whose *Companions of the Co-Inherence* was his own private spin-off from the *Golden Dawn*) or the Anthroposophy of Barfield and Harwood, the two men he chose to be his legal and literary executors.

devoted to different topic—for example, one on Barfield’s friendship with Saul Bellows and another on that with C.S. Lewis; a third on his interest in Coleridge and another on Steiner’s teachings. The self-contained nature of each chapter allows the biographer to focus in on specific subjects, but also means that no unified picture of Barfield’s life is given by the biographer; the reader must construct one for himself or herself out of the materials provided. This being the case, readers should feel free to embrace this participatory concept and ignore Blaxland-de Lange’s sequence, reading the chapters in any order they please.

I must also say that Blaxland-de Lange’s portrayal of Barfield’s personality as stern, doctrinaire, and uncompromising (e.g. page 65) does not accord well with my personal memories of the man, either from our correspondence or our four meetings spread over a little more than a decade, nor with Barfield’s self-portrait and self-evaluation in the final chapter of *This Ever-Diverse Pair*, nor with Barfield as he appears in the various letters Blaxland-de Lange quotes in the course of his book. I should have said instead that he was courteous, indeed almost diffident in his eagerness to avoid confrontation or giving offense (cf. for example the letter to Saul Bellows on page 60). Finally, Blaxland-de Lange is no Tolkien or Inklings expert; his book twice refers to JRRT as “J.J.R. Tolkien” (pages 323 & 327) and once as “Tolkein” (page 352), and leaves the impression that the Inklings were co-founded by Barfield and Lewis in 1922, with Laurence Harwood as a member, and met until 1945 (pages x & 34)—dates that do not agree with the preponderance of evidence from other sources.

In conclusion, this is not the definitive authoritative authorized biography we have been waiting for, and it seems unlikely to add appreciably to the number of Barfield’s admirers. But all future work on Barfield will have to take Blaxland-de Lange’s book into account, not least because of the never-before-published material he draws upon. The “fit audience, though few” who already admire Barfield will find much of interest here, making this a welcome addition to the relatively small number of books about Barfield, worthy to stand on same shelf with Adey and Flieger.

—John D. Rateliff



ARTHURIAN WRITERS: A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA. Ed. Laura Cooner Lambdin and Robert Thomas Lambdin. Westport, Connecticut and London: The Greenwood Press, 2008. xxiii + 402 pp. \$95.00. ISBN 978-0-313-34682-8.

GIVEN HOW UBIQUITOUS AND FAMILIAR the themes of the Arthurian mythos—the Sword in the Stone, the Round Table, the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere, the magic of Merlin, the treachery of Mordred—have become in both our literary and our popular culture, it comes as a bit of a shock to realize that this familiarity only goes back to about a century and a half ago, when Tennyson caught the attention of the reading public with *The Idylls of the King*, his poetic reworking of material he had found in Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Malory's great masterpiece of synthesis of mediaeval Arthurian tradition, however, had been followed by several centuries of neglect of Arthurian themes (at least in English-language literature), when an interest in such things was seen as marginal and antiquarian. The re-articulation of these stories in the Victorian period endowed them with a new vitality and power which have not abated since, as writers today continue to find inspiration in various aspects of the mythos.

The present collection offers detailed introductions to the lives and works of individual writers who have made important contributions to the tradition through the centuries (though over half of those dealt with here were born after 1800). After an opening chapter (by the editors) giving a very concise overview of the origins and development of Arthurian literature, twenty-five contributors (including the Lambdins) have provided articles on thirty-four writers, each entry averaging ten pages in length. Arranged chronologically, they begin with Gildas, the sixth-century British monk who may or may not have known the historical Arthur; and end with Margaret Atwood, included here because of her early poem cycle "Avalon Revisited" (there is also a concluding chapter—by the Lambdins—on "Arthurian Art," a bit of a misnomer since it only deals with post-Victorian developments and ignores the rich heritage of Arthurian art from the illustrated manuscripts of the Middle Ages). Each entry begins with an account of the writer's life (or what little is known of it, in the case of some of the earlier writers), then gives a chronological presentation of the writer's works, a closer focus on those works that have Arthurian themes, and finally a survey of the critical response to the works up to the present day. Each entry is followed by a comprehensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources. The unvarying format gives a welcome feeling of consistency to the entire collection, smoothing over the differences between the individual contributors' styles and concerns. Even so, there is still some variation as to whether the emphasis is put on the "writer" or the "Arthurian" aspect of the subject. For example, Jena Trammell's entry on John Dryden (whose credentials

as an “Arthurian writer” are rather skimpy, being based entirely on his libretto for Purcell's opera *King Arthur* goes into more detail about his general work than seems relevant to a study of Arthuriana. By contrast, Edward Donald Kennedy's entry on Mark Twain, while it gives an excellent summary of Twain's career, limits its discussion to *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Most interesting is Thomas Winn Dabbs's treatment of Walker Percy, which brings out the influence of Arthurian themes on all of Percy's work and shows them to be an integral part of his imaginative and moral world, even though they are alluded to explicitly only in *Lancelot*.

In general, the selection of the writers to be discussed has been comprehensive and judicious. The earlier (pre-Malory) writers are drawn from many linguistic traditions: Latin (Gildas, Nennius, Geoffrey of Monmouth), French (Wace, Chretien de Troyes, Jehan Froissart), English (Layamon, the *Gawain*-poet, Geoffrey Chaucer), German (Hartmann von Aue, Wolfram von Eschenbach), and Italian (Giovanni Boccaccio). However, the choice to focus on individual writers means that many of the seminal texts in the tradition (in particular those of the French “Vulgate” cycle of the thirteenth century)—which are the source of some of its most important themes—are alluded to only in passing, since they are anonymous. Also, for the entire period after Malory only English-language writers are discussed. One could indeed argue that the richest body of modern writing on Arthurian themes has been in English, but even so one should not completely ignore the continuing influence such themes (especially that of the Grail) have had on the literatures of France, Germany, and Spain. (In addition to those already mentioned, the post-Malory authors included here are: Edmund Spenser; Thomas Heywood; Matthew Arnold; William Morris; Algernon Charles Swinburne; Alfred, Lord Tennyson; Edwin Arlington Robinson; T.S. Eliot; C.S. Lewis; John Steinbeck; T.H. White; Mary Stewart; Rosemary Sutcliff; Thomas Berger; Marion Zimmer Bradley; and Persia Woolley.)

The most notable absence is that of Charles Williams. Not only is there no entry devoted to him, but his name does not even appear in the index. Actually, he is not left completely unmentioned, as Fiona Tolhurst's entry on C.S. Lewis (which gives a decent introduction to Lewis's life and work, and discusses not only the Arthurian elements in *That Hideous Strength* but the early poem “Launcelot” and the facetious legal correspondence “Mark vs. Tristram” that Lewis wrote in collaboration with Owen Barfield) mentions his friendship with Williams and indicates that his essay in *Arthurian Torso* is a commentary on Williams's cycle of Arthurian poems. Raymond M. Vince's entry on William Morris also mentions that Morris's *The Well at the World's End* is a “forerunner of the stories of Charles Williams, Tolkien, and C.S. Lewis,” indicating that some of the contributors at least have an understanding of the importance of Williams in

the development of modern fantasy (Arthurian or otherwise). The editors may well have decided that Williams has become too obscure and marginal a figure for twenty-first century readers, and therefore chose to leave him out. Nevertheless, the wide scope, imaginative power and innovative character of Williams's Arthurian work—as well as its continuing influence on writers and scholars, however limited—should have led them to revise that decision, if only to draw attention to the originality of Williams's contribution to the tradition. One hopes that, if the volume ever goes through a second edition, Williams's importance will be recognized by giving him a full entry of his own.

The book would also have benefited from better proofreading. In nearly every entry, misspelled or omitted words and garbled sentences abound—e.g. (from the introduction alone), "Briton" for "Britain" (several times), "Arimethea" for "Arimathea," "Porcell" for "Purcell," and so on. When we are told that William Morris used "tempura" for his murals, we are surely not to assume that he threw Japanese food at the walls! This is unfortunate, as it gives a slapdash air to what is in fact a remarkable collaborative achievement of research and interpretation. All in all, in spite of the deficiencies noted above, the Lambdin's collection brings together a great deal of solid information. It will be especially useful as a source of basic orientation for beginning students of Arthuriana, who will then be guided to deeper levels of study by the book's excellent bibliographies.

— Alexei Kondratiev



HUNTING THE UNICORN: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY OF RUTH PITTER.

Don W. King. Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2008. Hardcover. xviii + 342 pp. \$55.00. ISBN 978-0-87338-947-1.

Ruth Pitter, besides being an excellent poet, was a friend of C.S. Lewis, Owen Barfield, and Lord David Cecil. She was at least acquainted with W.H. Lewis. She met Joy Davidman one time, but they did not become friends—or even friendly. Don W. King's book covers these matters, tied to interests of the Mythopoeic Society, but they are just part of the biography. Since King's book is the first full treatment of Pitter's life and works, it becomes automatically the basic authority on Pitter—and, indeed, the book is substantially done, as one might expect from the author of *C.S. Lewis, Poet*.

What King has done is go through Pitter's life, narrating it, with pauses to summarize and evaluate a substantial number of her poems from each of her books as they appear. He also surveys the reaction to the volumes in reviews and in letters to Pitter from readers (for one book entering objections to the reviews [137-38]). Although he quotes appropriate passages of the poems, these pauses may tire some readers if they do not know or care for the poetry. This reviewer has the second edition of Pitter's *Collected Poems*, and it does not have Pitter's first three books in it since Pitter considered them her juvenilia. Lewis, in a letter to Pitter, praises *Persephone in Hades* (1931), a narrative poem, her third book—all King quotes is that Lewis says it is a "remarkable work" (147); but that poem was printed in a limited edition originally and certainly is difficult to find. So on the early works most readers will be dependent on Pitter's judgment, King's agreement, and his excerpts. No doubt Pitter was right.

The basic biography: Pitter was the oldest of three children of two schoolteachers in London. The great influence on her young life was the family's long-time rental of a cabin in a forest near London, where they spent vacations and often weekends. She did not receive a college education, due in part of finances during World War I, and in 1928 she and a woman friend set up a business painting designs on furniture, trays, and other materials—more specifically, they put their money together, with some help, and purchased a business whose owner was retiring. They were successful in the 1930s, with a number of people working for them, but their business closed down during the restrictions of World War II. Pitter worked the rest of the war in a munitions factory, mainly doing paper work. After the war, they started up their business again, but in 1953 they bought a retirement home not too far from Oxford. Pitter's friend had retired from the business, but Pitter kept up her work with its long hours after their move. She also gained some BBC work in the later years. Pitter and her friend basically were women whose possibilities for husbands were killed in World War I; Pitter seems to have had some love affairs while living in London, but no marriage resulted. She has a number of poems on romantic love in her books, continuing into the early volumes of her mature work.

What kinds of poetry does she write? Some of it is descriptions of nature—often of birds. Related to that is a type of nature mysticism, a finding of a spirit in and through nature. Some of the poems are autobiographical, but phrased not as confessions so much as studies of human nature—e.g., "The Bridge." Pitter's religious poems become more straightforward as she approaches becoming and becomes a Christian. A number of the poems are reflections on things seen—e.g., "The Military Harpist." The weakest of her poems seem to be merely versified anecdotes—e.g., "Potting Shed Tutti-Frutti." This is probably not a complete list of types, but it suggests something of the

serious poems. In addition, she has three books of mainly light verse—the satiric *A Mad Lady's Garland*, the bawdy *The Rude Potato*, and the lightly humorous *Pitter on Cats*. This reviewer does not know how many poems were dropped from the *Collected Poems*, but the one he has seen—"A Happy Christmas! Love to All! (With Footnotes)," originally in *End of Drought*—shows that Pitter was an uneven poet even in her mature period, for it deserved dropping. (Some that got into *Collected Poems* also deserved dropping, unfortunately.) King does not attempt to describe all of her poems in his book, picking generally the better poems. And he does not just summarize the poems: he offers comments about their meaning—for example, three levels of "The Bridge" (121). In making his case for Pitter, he tends to ignore the weak poems of her maturity. But she has many good poems.

The other thing to say about Pitter's poems is that they are written in traditional verse forms and traditional meters. King sometimes comments about these aspects, sometimes just generalizes about the types she is using in a book. More could be made of her ear for rhythm, for she does not keep to a very regular meter (more or less like Ben Jonson), but is freer in her substitutions.

Before turning to the Inklings, perhaps some general conclusions about King's book are worth making. In general, it is very good. Sometimes he simply ignores something that one would like to read more about—perhaps because the information is simply lacking. For example, in a letter of Richard Church of 27 May 1934 (52), Pitter says that the "pseudo-modern verses I have written lately are a deliberate joke"—but nothing more is said about these. (They seem to have been published.) More details about the art of her business partner-friend would be appreciated. Other times—such as concerning A.R. Orage, who published many of Pitter's early poems in *New Age*—one finds valuable additional information in the notes in the back of the book. Occasionally, King seems to miss a point. For example, Pitter publishes a poem titled "Urania" in 1934 (not discussed by King), titles her 1950 selected poems *Urania*, and occasionally refers to Urania elsewhere (see 97, 126). King refers to these as being references to the Muse of Astronomy, which is classically correct; but he does not note that Milton, in *Paradise Lost* (VII.1), invokes Urania as a Christian muse. Pitter could only be using it as a starry *spiritual* guide in the poem, but the reference is probably Christian on the collection. Nevertheless, King does very well what he sets out to do: provide a biography of Pitter and a basic guide to her poetry.

Now then, about Pitter and the Inklings. It began with Lord David Cecil writing her a fan letter in September 1936, praising her book *A Trophy of Arms*. "I read [its poems] last week in a fit of drab depression brought on by the condition of the world: and I cannot tell you what a ray of light spread out on my horizon" (82). Cecil recommended the book to the committee for the Hawthorden Prize, and Pitter won it in 1937. Pitter later wrote to Rachel Cecil on the birth of her first son, and the friendship between the Cecils and Pitter lasted until their deaths

(86). She spent a number of weekends at their house; she invited them to meals at her home.

Lewis's broadcast talks during World War II led Pitter toward Christian belief. But the first connection between them, through Cecil, seems to have come to nothing. Cecil writes in a letter of 1 February 1941 that he had shared her poems with Lewis and that Lewis went off to buy her book. Cecil recommends Lewis's *The Allegory of Love*, and Pitter replies as if he had offered to send a copy of the book to her (103). Then, in August 1942, she says she has been reading *The Screwtape Letters* and asks if Cecil knows Lewis (112). Perhaps by that point she has been listening to some of his *Mere Christianity* radio talks (or perhaps *The Screwtape Letters* caused her thereafter to listen to Lewis on the radio). Pitter made contact with Lewis through another friend, not Cecil, and Lewis writes about her, "The little I have seen of her work I admired very greatly" (*Collected Letters* v.2, 15 Dec. 1945)—which sounds as if he never did buy the book that Cecil thought he would (*Hunting the Unicorn* 142). Certainly after Lewis and Pitter meet, and Pitter then sends some copies of her books to him, he writes as if he had not known *Trophy of Arms* through Cecil: "Why wasn't I told you were as good as this?" (*Collected Letters* v.2, 19 July 1946)—but he is referring specifically to "A Solemn Meditation," so perhaps Cecil had not shown him that one (144). Lewis invites her to luncheon in his rooms at Oxford with Hugo Dyson and the Cecils on 9 October 1946 (146). (According to W.H. Lewis's diary, they dined in "the New Room"; W. H. Lewis is cited by King for some details in the endnotes.) C.S. Lewis and Pitter continue to correspond about poetry—mainly his poetry.

On 16 July 1949 Pitter received a letter from Owen Barfield, which seems unrelated to Lewis: "By showing me your very kind appreciation of my poem *The Unicorn* Marjorie Milne has emboldened me to imagine that, if I asked you to lunch with me, you might consent" (150). Of course, Milne is the person to whom the second edition of *Dymer* was dedicated by Lewis, so it is a connected group. When Lewis learns that Pitter has met Barfield, he arranges a luncheon for the three of them in Pitter's flat in Chelsea (151). Pitter gives each of them a painted tray. She is also to Oxford that December for a debate in Lewis's rooms about women becoming priests (Thursday afternoon and Friday morning) with lunch for Pitter, Lewis, Barfield, and Milne afterwards (153).

Later, when Pitter and her friend moved to Long Crendon, a village not far from Oxford, Lewis wrote, "Welcome to what Tolkien calls the Little Kingdom, at least to the marches of it" (21 December 1953). But when he writes, he has Joy Davidman and her sons visiting him. Pitter and Davidman met one time, at a lunch with Lewis in Oxford, which evidently did not go well (196-97). King has a good discussion of why Lewis married Davidman instead of Pitter (196-207, 240). Lewis and Pitter meet twice after Davidman's death, but those are the same type of meetings they had before—for friendship—with others present.

The first time, Barfield drives Lewis over to Long Crendon; the second time Lewis invites Pitter and her friend over to Oxford for a brief visit.

This matter of the Inklings is important to the Mythopoeic Society, but they are only part of Pitter's life. She wrote an epigram on Lewis's professional move to Cambridge (a poor work, with two forced rhymes), and she refers to *Perelandra* in her poem "Angels" (collected in *Still by Choice*, three years after Lewis's death). "What angel haunts your mind[?]" she asks, and gives as one answer:

Or, likelier, now we dream of space,
Lewis's dread sublime
Pillars of light, no limbs, no face,
Sickening our space and time?

(That last line is supposed to have only three beats, so she is writing a dactyl followed by two iambs.) She also did a version of *The Great Dance*, at the end of *Perelandra*, in Spenserian stanzas (never collected in her poems but appearing in Appendix 1 of King's *C.S. Lewis, Poet: "A Passage from Perelandra by C.S. Lewis done into irregular Spenserian stanzas by Ruth Pitter"*). In *The Ermine*, thirteen years earlier than *Still by Choice*, appears "Hill and Valley," dedicated to D.C. King says that it is "almost certainly set in the countryside near Oxford" (177). It is a descriptive poem, written when she lived in London ("by a great river"), probably reflecting experiences while visiting the Cecils. The poem is irregular in some ways (e.g., an extra half line appears in the third stanza), but rhetorically it reads well:

I watch in silence, while the lark is shrill,
Drifting grape-coloured shadows on the hill,
Drifting stone-coloured sheep cropping and roving,
The long-abiding and the ever-moving.

Of course, Lewis was one of the earthly influences that led Pitter to the Christian faith, and so may be considered to have a secondary influence on a number of her later religious poems. However, if one considers just the less theological influences, the matters of friendship, in the long run these two poems—"Angels" and "Hill and Valley"—and perhaps including the *Great Dance* poem, are what matters out of Pitter's friendship with the Inklings.

—Joe R. Christopher



INSIDE LANGUAGE: LINGUISTIC AND AESTHETIC THEORY IN TOLKIEN. Ross Smith. Berne and Zurich: Walking Tree Publishers, 2007. ISBN 978-3905703061. Softcover. 154pp. \$16.20.

IN THIS SLIM VOLUME, ROSS SMITH intends to provide “the general reader [...] an informed introduction to Tolkien’s views on language and their historical relevance” (i). Such an introduction must necessarily be slim, considering that Tolkien never produced any single cohesive account of those views—though he touched on them, often indirectly, at many points in his writings. Nevertheless, and in spite of the relatively meager vein he has to mine, Smith aims to “examine these relatively neglected areas of study and attempt to provide an all-encompassing account [...] of Tolkien’s ideas and theories in relation to language, linguistics and aesthetics” (iv).

This is a bold (perhaps even a rash) promise, on which Smith cannot quite deliver. Let me begin, however, by pointing out some of the better qualities of his monograph. Simply opening a dialogue about Tolkien’s linguistic aesthetics is long overdue, as remarkably little of any substantial length has been written about it before. Far more often, scholars either take these views for granted, citing Tolkien’s own statements on the subject without elaboration, or else ignore them altogether. The Tolkien scholarly community seems to have largely bifurcated into two distinct groups, one focused on the literary qualities of his work, the other on his invented languages—much like the artificial, and indeed detrimental, “bogeys *Lang* and *Lit*” (Tolkien, “Valedictory” 230) that Tolkien discerned in British education. Occasionally, and in the best studies, these two commingle; however, this is the exception, not the rule. Smith’s book is another laudable attempt at reconciling them.

Smith’s writing is generally enjoyable and quite readable, and he is occasionally insightful, as when he writes that Tolkien “was profoundly aware of the shades of meaning that words take on and also shed as they develop through the centuries” (29). Likewise, he hits paydirt with the observation that “[i]n practical terms, there were two main results of this fascination with individual phrases and lexemes, and his endless patience: Tolkien’s reinterpretation of certain old texts, which helped enhance his scholarly reputation, and the obtainment of an enormous lexicon for his private languages and fiction” (82).

Also to his credit, Smith makes lively and sometimes novel comparisons between Tolkien and other authors and linguists—including Jorge Luis Borges, Umberto Eco, Roman Jakobson, Otto Jespersen, Owen Barfield, and David Abram, to name a few. Against the more establishmentarian linguists of the day, most notably Saussure and Chomsky, Smith *contrasts* Tolkien’s thinking. There is one unfortunate oversight I must point out. Smith casually remarks that “[w]e do not know the extent to which Tolkien was familiar with the work of Jespersen”

(56); but we do, in fact, have a pretty good sense of this. Tolkien refers explicitly to Jespersen's work three times in his essays for *The Year's Work in English Studies*. In two instances, he refers briefly, but favorably, to books by Jespersen (Tolkien "Philology (1924)" 52, "Philology (1925)" 56)—in the latter case, Tolkien apparently read Jespersen's book in the original Danish! In the third instance, Tolkien greets the arrival of Jespersen's *Philosophy of Grammar* with a lengthy and glowing review (Tolkien "Philology (1924)" 28–32). Taken together, these lesser-known writings demonstrate much more than a passing acquaintance, and indeed considerable engagement, with Jespersen's theories. It is quite a shame Smith failed to take advantage of this material.

Smith is on firmest footing in his discussion of Barfield—after all, Barfield and Tolkien both denounced Max Müller's infamous characterization of mythology as a "disease of language" (Tolkien "Fairy-Stories" 121, Barfield 89)—however, that ore has been well-mined already (see Flieger 67–72). The discussion of Borges is some of the most fascinating in the book, but after a little while, one begins to feel that Borges is everywhere, mentioned almost as often as Tolkien himself, and being forced to fit even in the absence of any evidence to connect Tolkien to him (or vice versa). One gets the feeling that Smith has made a special study of Borges (independent of his study of Tolkien) and seems determined to make as much use of it here as possible. Indeed, it is too often the case with Smith's comparative portraits that the mere highlighting of similarities or differences serves as a proxy for a direct relationship which has not been (and usually cannot be) established.

However suggestive they might be, such cases are therefore of limited illustrative value. By contrast, I wonder whether Smith might have made fuller and better use of Ernst Cassirer's *Language and Myth*. Smith stresses the views Cassirer, Barfield, and Tolkien held in common—though Smith fails to observe that Cassirer was also dismissive of Müller (Cassirer 6, 80, *passim*). They evidently differed on some points as well, as where Cassirer believes that "[m]yth never breaks out of the magic circle of its figurative ideas. [...] But language, born of that same magic circle, has the power to break its bounds; language takes us from the mythmaking phase of human mentality to the phase of logical thought and the conception of facts" (Cassirer ix–x). I am not sure Tolkien would agree with the spirit of this viewpoint. Would Tolkien have known Cassirer? He very well might have (though I cannot point to an explicit reference). *Language and Myth* was first published in English in 1946, but originally in German (as *Sprache und Mythos*) in 1925. Tolkien could have known the translation or known or read reviews of the original in any number of journals, *Wochenschriften*, or *Jahrbuchen*. There seems to be some genuine potential for mining this vein further, yet Smith's use of Cassirer is almost throwaway.

Smith's discussion of Eco yields somewhat more, yet it, too, is not taken far enough. Smith points out that Eco is the only major philologist/writer since the time of Tolkien and Borges. Of Eco, moreover, Smith writes: "His knowledge of the major European languages ranges from excellent to absolute, and he puts this to good effect by collaborating closely with the translators of his novels and bombarding them with recommendations about the best way to render his work in their respective tongues" (5–6). This certainly reminds one of the *Nomenclature* Tolkien prepared for prospective translators of *The Lord of the Rings*. Unfortunately, Smith fails to capitalize on that additional resemblance between the two authors.

There is much material in Smith's already slim volume which feels like nothing more than window dressing. Were it excised, however, the remainder might be so small as to collapse for lack of support. The second chapter, for example, has almost nothing whatsoever to do with Smith's stated purpose of illuminating Tolkien's linguistic aesthetics. Its twenty-six pages, rehashing arguments and issues well known to the point of banality in Tolkien studies, are better suited to its original audience at *English Today* than even to "the general reader" of critical works on Tolkien.

Much the same may be said of the fifth chapter, which rehearses the history of invented and artificial languages before and after Tolkien's own. While some of that discussion is pretty interesting, the languages under discussion meet Tolkien's own work only at a tangent, with coincidental rather than causal relationships. And even where Tolkien has offered comment, Smith typically overlooks such concrete material for more tenuous assertions of his own. Such is this case with a 1932 letter published in *The British Esperantist*, where Tolkien writes tellingly: "it seems to me, too, that technical improvement of the machinery [...] tends [...] to destroy the 'humane' or aesthetic aspect of the invented idiom" (Tolkien, "Philologist" 182). This goes completely unmentioned by Smith, who neither makes full use of Tolkien's various statements on Esperanto nor of the scholarly work that has been previously published on that subject (e.g., Smith and Wynne). The other artificial languages discussed in the chapter, though they hold much interest in their own right, have even less appreciable value for understanding Tolkien's views. Still less with Smith's few examples of *literary* glossopoeia. These consist of Orwell's Newspeak and Burgess's Nadsat (neither of which is a genuine invented language), with a lengthy and largely irrelevant digression into Russian Futurism thrown in. But Smith misses more than he includes—as but one example, the fragmentary language Edgar Rice Burroughs invented for *Tarzan of the Apes* and the books of that series.

I also must find fault with many smaller statements throughout the book. Lest this review devolve into a laundry list of complaints, I will give only a

few select examples. Smith refers to “the chimerical relationship between sound and emotion” (20), but can *chimerical* (“imaginary, prone to fantasizing”) really be what Smith means? And if it is, can he possibly be correct? “[*The Lord of the Rings*] has been translated into every major language and a number of less widely-spoken ones as well” (25). Well, no, that’s simply not true. Major languages into which a translation has not been undertaken include Hindi/Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi, Javanese, Telugu, Vietnamese, and Tamil—together representing nearly one billion combined speakers. Among lesser-spoken languages, there is no Welsh translation, all the more conspicuous given Tolkien’s special fondness for that language. Footnote 24 (34) repeats the contents of footnote 11 (17) verbatim, clearly an artifact of the previous life of these two chapters, and the web link is no longer valid in any case. Also, one gets a little weary of the promise to explain something “further on”; the exact phrase “further/farther on” occurs at least six times in the early part of the book (12, 19, 29, 33, 37, 53), and there are also variations such as “discussed in a later chapter” (11, *et seq.*). Eventually, I stopped keeping track. Smith tells us that Tolkien “had little choice but to recur to the modes of classic chivalric literature, which he could feel sure would be recognised by his readers” (42); however, what about Smith’s earlier point that Tolkien seems almost not to have cared about his readers at all (11)? He is probably exaggerating one or the other; or at least, he ought to explain how both might be true. In comparing Tolkien to Wilkins (85–6), Smith avers that “Tolkien’s Elvish languages are essentially *a posteriori* creations, derived from Finnish, Welsh, Greek, Latin, and, to a lesser extent, Germanic sources”; however, I think this may be overstating the matter. One can easily argue the presence of a considerable number of arbitrary (that is, *a priori*) elements as well. Smith goes on to say that the “one point in common” between Tolkien and Wilkins is grammatical agglutination, yet the majority of languages, real and invented alike, operate in that way. If this is indeed all they have in common, then they have essentially nothing in common after all. “Quenya verbs inflect for case,” Smith says (90). Surely he meant to say that its *nouns* so inflect. “Tolkien’s invented languages are as complete as any” (92). If restricted to *fictive* languages, then, in the main, yes; but this is hardly true of invented languages in general. The lexis of Esperanto is many times the size of that of Tolkien’s most developed languages—and Tolkien’s least developed are barely skeletal. And let me stop there and sum up.

One is left, finally, with the impression of an unfinished, superficial, and largely inconclusive work (though I admit I may be more difficult to satisfy than most on this topic). This is not surprising, really, as the book’s thesis rests on profoundly subjective and personal subject matter, on which Tolkien left few definitive statements behind. To his credit, Smith opens the door to further study; however, his own monograph uncovers little that is new, and ignores

much than has come before. Tom Shippey, for example, foresaw some of Smith's central conclusions *thirty years ago* in his essay, "Creation from Philology in *The Lord of the Rings*," yet of that Smith makes no mention at all. Shippey has continued the work, though Tolkien's phonosemantic preferences have never been his primary bailiwick. Smith cites a little of Shippey's subsequent work, if not much by others, but who will cite Smith? We can only hope that while *Inside Language* has done relatively little to advance our understanding of Tolkien's linguistic aesthetics, the book may prompt others to move the subject forward.

—Jason Fisher

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THE VOICE OF THE HEART: THE WORKING OF MERVYN PEAKE'S IMAGINATION. G. Peter Winnington. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006. Hardcover: xiii + 290 pp. £55.00. ISBN 13-978-1-84631-022-5.

G. PETER WINNINGTON'S *The Voice of the Heart* is the first critical text to consider all genres of Peake's art, including his short stories, novels, novella, poems, plays and graphic art. Winnington has long been the main scholarly authority on the facts of Peake's career, in particular the bibliographical details of his books, and this text is a treasure-trove of finely reproduced illustrations, many not readily accessible elsewhere. Winnington also gives a salutary reminder of the extent of Peake's achievements beyond his best-known works of fiction, and provides occasional well-argued commentary on their source material, which this reader wished to be far more extensive.

Winnington claims that his book presents for the first time the most significant themes and motifs in Peake's oeuvre, and it also discusses Peake's (and some of his fictional characters') typical strategy of moving between sensory modalities in a particular pattern during the creative process, from its origin in inspiration to its outcome as a realized work. While Winnington's claims to have included the main structural patterns, motifs and themes in Peake's work can be challenged, he provides copious, often compelling evidence for each of his cases. There are chapters on Peake's animals, birds and islands; on perspective, voice and theatre; on love, evil, solitude and identity. Winnington comments that reading Peake from these perspectives has transformed his understanding of the works, and for this reader also, these minutely observed patterns of imagery and technique enrich by bringing to awareness some hitherto unnoticed connections within Peake's oeuvre, as well as stylistic elements such as his over-fondness for the pluperfect tense. The most persuasively critical section of *The Voice of the Heart* is its chapter on perspective, with its analysis of the generally adverse effect of the pluperfect on narrative flow.

Serious weaknesses can, however, be found in this book. Although, as editor of the journal *Peake Studies*, Winnington has published many analytical essays by other scholars, his own motif and theme discussion takes place almost in a scholarly vacuum. His first chapter on Peake's creative process appears to draw, without acknowledgement, on Robert Dilts's NLP analysis of the creative process in his three-volume *Strategies of Genius*. Given Winnington's final claim that Peake is a genius of the order of Blake and Milton, it would have been appropriate to use Dilts's work in this chapter to argue for Peake's genius. As it stands, this claim of genius is not specifically supported within any of the chapters.

Nor does Winnington engage in debate with the various literary critics who have proposed alternative significant patterns, themes and motifs in Peake's

work. This becomes more regrettable as the book moves progressively towards interpretation and judgment, as in the chapter offering a reading of Peake's novel, *Mr Pye*, where Winnington does not enter into dialogue with the detailed readings put forward by either this reader or Pierre François. A related lack of critical engagement occurs within specific readings of the textual evidence. An early example occurs in the chapter on the creative process. Here, having established a particular strategy of creativity starting with the cosmic spaces of the heart, Winnington acknowledges Peake's motif of smashing a glass container which has contained the artist. This is noted without discussing the seeming incompatibility of spatial imagery. Does this element of creative strategy, for instance, lead to artworks with different main themes such as freedom and imprisonment, or might it in some way point to a stifling of creative power? Elsewhere, regrettably, Winnington sometimes ignores evidence to the contrary or alternative interpretations of his material. In the chapter on solitude, for instance, he notes in passing the fact that the Lost Uncle abandons his wife; but surely, what needs to be accounted for in a chapter on solitude is the fact that he enters into this grotesque marriage. Discussing the motif of tree-roots, within his discussion of the bird motif, he concludes that the root polished and preserved by Fuchsia in her sanctuary "is her virgin sexuality" (142). What, though, of the British slang meaning of root as penis, well established since the middle of the nineteenth century? Most damaging to the overall argument of the book is Winnington's reading of a quotation from *Drawings*, first propounded at the start of the "Solitude" chapter. Here he argues from this quotation that Peake "saw his activity as analogous to God's"; however, the most obvious reading of Peake's simile, where the artist flings out his work "as the earth was thrown from the sun," aligns it with scientific hypotheses about the formation of the planets. There is no need to bring God into the picture. Winnington's argument moves from the assertion of a living God here to claims that in Peake's fictions, God is dead, without considering the contradiction between these two understandings of the world. Nor does he consider an alternative overall reading of the works in which the question of God's existence simply does not matter, where mentions of hell and Satan are no more than outworn Gothic paraphernalia.

Another serious difficulty within the book is its all too frequent confusion of categories. Winnington's argument moves between four main categories: what Peake says about himself as artist; what Peake says about his fictional worlds; what Winnington says about Peake's mental processes; what Winnington says about Peake's oeuvre. Problems arise when these categories are blurred, as when at the end of the chapter on islands, in which Winnington argues that this motif represents the difficulties of human (particularly sexual) relationship, he says: "To have realized his dream in this world would have been to deny the metaphor he lived by" (78). What can "in this world" and "lived by"

mean other than a judgment on Peake's love-life, brought in without any supporting evidence?

The Voice of the Heart is of value in setting out a series of motifs, themes and other patterns in Peake's work and in drawing its examples very widely, encouraging readers to explore the lesser known poems and plays; but it could have gone so very much further, and placed itself on much stronger ground, by entering into dialogue with other critics and debating alternative readings.

—Alice Mills

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TOLKIEN ON FAIRY-STORIES. J.R.R. Tolkien. Expanded edition, with Commentary and Notes by Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson. London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008. ISBN 978-0007244669. Hardcover. 320pp. £16.99.

WITHIN THE PAGES OF ANY JOURNAL CONCERNED WITH J.R.R. TOLKIEN, it should go without saying that "On Fairy-Stories" is one of his most important works, yet one of the least read outside of scholarly circles. We might therefore expect a variorum edition, with detailed discussion of the textual history of the essay, copious notes and commentary, contemporary reports, and two bibliographies to be read even *more* closely by scholars and serious students, but even *less* so by everybody else. That being said, I must direct the remainder of my evaluation toward that small minority, or else abandon my task. I do this with high hopes that Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson's *Tolkien On Fairy-Stories* will find a larger audience than I have reason to expect, because the book is a treasure trove, and one not to be hoarded, but shared.

The editors' introduction, a considerable essay in itself, offers valuable summary and context for "Tolkien's defining study of and the centre-point in his thinking about the genre" (9). As those who have read it before will know, its central thread is a long and circuitous one, making the editors' roadmap all the

more indispensable. Moreover, the editors show how the lecture was a critical bridge between *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, the latter being “the practical application and demonstration of the principles set forth” (15) in it. Further, they point out that Tolkien “established positive criteria by which fairy-stories [...] could be evaluated. He built up a working vocabulary for the craft of fantasy that could be used in its criticism” (19). Many of the terms we take for granted in Tolkien studies today, of which *sub-creation* is surely (and justly) the most well known, first took shape in “On Fairy-Stories.” The editors also give vital background material on the debates of Tolkien’s day, represented in the essay by “the major opponents in the mythology wars” (21), Andrew Lang and Max Müller.

For the essay proper, the editors have opted for the text as published in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, which in turn was slightly edited from the version printed in the second edition of *Tree and Leaf* (Hammond 243–4). The only change Flieger and Anderson have made to the present text is the addition of paragraph numbers for ease of reference in the subsequent commentary. This is an enormously helpful feature I wish more editors would espouse. I feel I need hardly comment in this review on the essay itself—many others have done so before me, and the issue at hand is the trappings of this expanded edition—and so, in Tolkien’s words, “I shall therefore pass lightly over [it]” (40) and move on.

In discussing the history of “On Fairy-Stories” (123–5), Flieger and Anderson present some excellent background on how Tolkien came to be selected for the Andrew Lang Lectureship of 1938–39, including previously unpublished correspondence to Tolkien from the University of St. Andrews. Dates and details provided here fill in a few small gaps in Scull and Hammond’s otherwise authoritative *Chronology* (Scull and Hammond 222–3, *et seq.*). (I should note that in their online addenda and corrigenda, Scull and Hammond have now written a new entry for 8 October 1938.) Equally interesting are unpublished letters from Charles Williams’s “friend and occasional typist,” Margaret Douglas (134, 135–6). Thus, a more complete picture of the evolution of the essay begins to emerge. I should clarify that the Douglas letters are referred to in the *Chronology*, but very succinctly, and scholars will welcome the opportunity to examine her own words directly. By referring back to the *Chronology*, one may also get a clearer sense of what else was occupying Tolkien’s time during this time—primarily, *The Lord of the Rings*.

Following this history, we have two of the three newspaper reports that appeared in the days after Tolkien delivered his lecture at St. Andrews. The longest was published in *The St. Andrews Citizen*, with two others clearly abridged from it appearing in *The Scotsman* and *The St. Andrews Times*. These two are practically the same; therefore, the editors reprint only the former. No better,

indeed no other, record of the original lecture *as delivered* survives (references to the essay in Tolkien's published letters are scant, and they mostly cluster around times he was known to be revising it for print); therefore, it is only these contemporary accounts which make possible some reconstruction of the contents of (and omissions from) the original *lecture*.

In their commentary, the editors do much to contextualize Tolkien's essay, from identifying and explaining arcane references such as "the Devil's tithes" (87) to giving readers extended passages from which Tolkien quoted only piecemeal. These include excerpts from Fridtjof Nansen (88), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (107), G.K. Chesterton (109–10, 114–5), Andrew Lang (90, 109, *et passim*), and Max Müller (102), *inter alia*. Such passages constitute one of this edition's most useful features. In some cases, Tolkien has *misquoted* a source (90, 91, 121, 297), and Flieger and Anderson have thoughtfully pointed out his mistakes. The editors throw their own voices in on a few other occasions as well: they say of Drayton's Pigwiggen: "His name tells you all you need to know about him" (91); or of Thackeray's *The Rose and the Spring*: "[m]uch of its content and approach can be deduced from the names of its principal characters [e.g., the Countess Gruffanuff]" (120). These editorial comments, with their deadpan delivery (intended or not), are most welcome.

Now we have reached the halfway point in the book. The remainder consists of two complete (or nearly complete) manuscripts, each with commentary. MS. A, the editors believe, represents the original draft for the lecture. MS. B, on the other hand, is the considerably expanded revision made for the essay's first publication in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*. Much may be gleaned from careful comparison of these two drafts, together with the various published versions (further to this, see Hammond 184–190). It is almost possible to peer over Tolkien's shoulder as he works through the presentation of complex ideas and metaphors, as well as reintegrates much of the careful research he had been forced to cut from the lecture at St. Andrews. Readers will observe that most of the key elements (including sub-creation, the failings of the OED, the indictment of Max Müller, the excerpt from Tolkien's poem, "Mythopoeia", and so on) were there from the beginning, but ever more refined through the mortar and pestle of revision. Other elements (e.g., the Tree of Tales, the Cauldron of Story) emerged later. Though usually the opposite, Tolkien's wording sometimes went from clearer and more emphatic to subtler and more complex. As one example, we find in MS. A the powerful declaration that "[m]ythology is language and language is mythology" (181). Most often, however, we see Tolkien's ideas become clearer and more focused over the course of the essay's evolution. For instance, in MS. A, we find Tolkien much more wishy-washy about his reasons for excluding beast fables, travel tales, and so forth, from the genre of true 'fairy story'; he seems more interested in simply keeping the

number and kinds of tales to a manageable number, no doubt in the interests of a shorter lecture time, and dismissing the others with the cavalier remark, “[a]t least they do not come in my department” (178).

Next, we come to the much longer MS. B. By this point in the book, it requires considerable fortitude to face yet another version of the essay. But a dedicated reviewer must not quail (even if many readers will), but press on with each and every word. There are rewards for those who *do* press on, as MS. B is actually longer than the published essay, with many associated “miscellaneous pages,” as well as extended passages struck out by Tolkien but available for study here. Perhaps the most profitable way to explore this long portion of the book is to jump from one canceled passage to another—rather like Gollum, Frodo, and Sam traversing the Dead Marshes from one patch of dry land to another (if the editors will excuse the comparison). One has the feeling that the various recensions will be quarried by scholars, but not often read straight through one after the other—at least, not more than once. And that seems to me a perfectly reasonable use of the raw material Flieger and Anderson have painstakingly provided.

For a book of its length and a topic of its complexity, the defects of *Tolkien On Fairy-Stories* are few and small, but it does have some. Before I discuss more subjective quibbles, there are one or two objective ones to dispense with. The commentaries to the A and B manuscripts, unlike the commentary to the published essay, identify their referents by page number; however, these page numbers are all wrong, every last one of them. For MS. A, I should advise readers to subtract *two* from each page reference in the commentary; for MS. B, subtract *three*. The problem likely arose during typesetting; perhaps the two-page introduction to the manuscripts was inadvertently excluded from the count.

Second, I find the two bibliographies and the index to be a bit idiosyncratic. The editors quote from Tolkien’s translations of *Sir Orfeo* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (86); however, the source publication is absent from their bibliography. So too, Francis James Child’s *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, though they clearly consulted that work (87). And there are several others. Likewise, the bibliography of works cited or consulted by Tolkien has notable slips. Tolkien quotes from *The Tempest* (297), but it is not in his bibliography with other works by Shakespeare. (The editors refer to *Romeo and Juliet*, but that is not in their bibliography either.) He also mentions Charles Kingsley, but the editors have not placed him in Tolkien’s bibliography. And so on. The index, while it may have license for more selectivity, is also missing some entries. Knatchbull-Huggesen, for instance, is in Tolkien’s bibliography but not in the index (for the record, see 170, 249). Tolkien’s “Lay of Aotrou and Itroun” is not to be found in the index, though the editors discuss it (118). And so on again. But lest we become bogged down in minutiae, let me move on.

To consider more subjective matters, my own opinion is that while the editors do a great deal to intercontextualize "On Fairy-Stories" with other works in the critical and literary milieu to which it belongs, they do less than they might have to *intracontextualize* it with the larger body of Tolkien's own work, especially (but not exclusively) his fiction. I would like to give a few examples before I close this review. And let me be clear: I did not expect a lengthy disquisition in any of these cases; however, with a work as central to Tolkien's theories of story-making as "On Fairy-Stories" certainly is, many readers would have appreciated additional crib notes to more of the those occasions where Tolkien demonstrates these theories in his other work.

While the Postscript to the editors' history of the essay (157–8) makes an excellent point of comparison between "On Fairy-Stories" and *Smith of Wootton Major* and its accompanying essay (unpublished until 2005), several opportunities to highlight this interrelationship in the earlier commentary are ignored. For instance, at the first mention of George MacDonald, some mention of *Smith of Wootton Major* would have been most welcome (98). Shortly following, where the editors comment on MacDonald's story, *The Golden Key*, they do not mention Tolkien's draft preface to a new edition of it, which work actually precipitated *Smith* (104). In the note on "the magic land of Hy Breasail" (88), readers could benefit from reference to the legend of St. Brendan and Tolkien's published poem "Imram," taken up again in *The Notion Club Papers* (Tolkien *Sauron Defeated* 261–4, 295–9). On "enchantment" (112), the editors choose not to refer to *The Silmarillion* with its "songs of power" (Tolkien *Silmarillion* 171, *et seq.*). Neither do the editors allude to the analogous song contests in *The Kalevala*, from which Tolkien took inspiration. In the note on Gram (115), why not mention Narsil, a strong analogue in *The Lord of the Rings*? The editors do allude to specific elements from the novel (e.g., just a few pages later, 118), so why not here?

Speaking of *The Lord of the Rings*, and recalling that the editors have called it "the practical application" of Tolkien's theories on fairy-stories, there is a passage from the A manuscript of "On Fairy-Stories," unpublished before now, which I found strongly redolent of Tolkien's masterpiece: "Joy can tell us much about sorrow, and light about dark but not the other way about. A little joy can often tell more about grief and tragedy than a whole book of unrelieved gloom" (245). It is telling, I think, that C.S. Lewis, upon his first full reading of *The Lord of the Rings* in 1949, said something very similar: "the steady upward slope of grandeur and terror (not unrelieved by green dells, without which it [would] indeed be intolerable) is almost unequalled in the whole range of narrative art known to me" (C.S. Lewis 990). Likewise, Tolkien's admonition that the fabulist should "look at green again, and be startled anew (but not blinded) by blue and yellow and red" (67) is a central motif with threads extending all directions.

There are Tolkien's references to *The Coloured Lands* of Chesterton and to Lang's collection of fairy books, each with its proper color. And as it should happen, Tolkien was successful in reinvigorating the world of color, at least for one reader, where *The Lord of the Rings* offered "new colours available in profusion, whether the journey be beautiful or terrible" (W.H. Lewis 231).

In closing, this new edition, despite a few small problems, can rightly be called the definitive reference work on Tolkien's watershed essay. It contains much supplementary material helpful in understanding and contextualizing the essay, as well as valuable and often revelatory insights into Tolkien's thought processes as he developed the essay over a period of years. In some cases, the editors might have gone further with their contextual notes, but taken as a whole, their work is absolutely first rate and will surely be an essential resource for further work on—and with—"On Fairy-Stories."

—Jason Fisher

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