Inklings Bibliography

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Abstract
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Wayne G. Hammond


The proceedings of the Arda Symposium at the Second Northern Tolkien Festival, held in Oslo in August 1997. The general theme of the symposium was the “Ainur: Divine and Semi-Divine Powers in Tolkien’s World.” The papers are in English, with summaries in Swedish. The volume contains: “All in One, One in All” by Marjorie Burns, who is concerned with “Tolkien’s two-sidedness, his habit of granting equal standing to opposing ideals, his habit of creating mutually exclusive possibilities and developing them both to the full” (p. 2); “The Fall and Man’s Mortality: An Investigation of Some Theological Themes in J. R. R. Tolkien’s ‘Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth’” by Nils Ivar Agøy; “Whose Myth Is It?” by Verlyn Flieger, also concerned with the “Athrabeth”—whose myth is it (within the created world), why did Tolkien write it, and how did he write it; “On Entering the Same River Twice: Mythology and Theology in the Silmarillion Corpus” by Kaj Andre Apeland; “Sub-Creator and Creator: Tolkien and the Design of the One” by Daniel Timmons; and “Old Human’, or ‘The Voice in Our Hearts’: J. R. R. Tolkien on the Origin of Language” by Maria Kuteeva.


Five essays and a play, the majority given at the Cormarë Conference in September 1996. The essays are: “Tolkien Studies: News from the Shire and Beyond Indeed” by Peter Buchs and Thomas Honegger; “The Speech of the Individual and of the Community in *The Lord of the Rings*” by Nils-Lennart Johannesson; “From Bag End to Lórien: The Creation of a Literary World” by Thomas Honegger; “Middle Earth: The Collectible Card Game: Powerplay in the World of Tolkien” by Patrick Näf; and “Middle-earth: The Wizards: The
Representation of Tolkien's World in the Game" by Peter Buchs. The play is “The Meeting of the Istari” (“Das Treffen der Istari”) by Andreas Bigger. The essays are in English, the play in English and German.


Defending Middle-earth is in the first instance an answer to the question “how could such a remarkably unlikely book, written by someone so removed from (and indeed hostile to) mainstream cultural and intellectual life, achieve such a huge and lasting popular success?” (15). Curry explains the success of The Lord of the Rings and defends it from the “incomprehension” of critics by exploring the relation of Tolkien’s work to contemporary cultural, social, and political conditions. Some of these are obviously important personal concerns to the author, and are discussed vigorously, broadly, and with numerous, eclectic references. The subject matter encompasses class distinctions, postmodernism, Christianity and Paganism today, the significance of myth and fantasy, and (especially) concern for the environment, though Curry does not lose sight of Tolkien as his central focus.


An annual publication, this issue (published in Tolkien’s centenary year) contains a brief biography of him by Judith Priestman of the Bodleian Library (27-31), and a fact-filled article, “Tolkien as an Undergraduate, 1911-1915” by Lorise Topliffe, Archivist at Exeter College (32-8). The article includes two photographs of Tolkien, as a member of the College Rugby XV, and in a full College group in 1914. The 1992 Register also contains a reminiscence of another Inkling, Nevill Coghill, by Rowland Ryder (39-43).


For this book, published to commemorate the bicentenary of the stationer and bookseller W. H. Smith, forty writers were asked to discuss their early
reading, what did or did not influence them, and what they enjoy reading today. Tolkien is mentioned by John Mortimer ("Rumpole of the Bailey"), lexicographer Robert Burchfield, and mystery writer Ruth Rendell, as well as A. S. Byatt, Hermione Lee, and Alan Hollinghurst. Mortimer, Byatt, and Lee also include the Narnia books among their favorites, as does Carol Ann Duffy.


In his exclusion of female characters in The Hobbit, except by reference (notably to Belladonna Took), Tolkien creates "a Utopian construction, an Edenic world without sexual tension and guilt, a world consonant with pre-Freudian ideas of childhood innocence." In fact this is "a Quixotic effort to sweep back the sea of gender" (191). One cannot exclude the mother, who is present even in her absence. In The Hobbit she is present as Mother Earth, buried in figures such as Gandalf who are "feminine" in character, and "implicit in the glorification of 'feminine' versus 'masculine' values" (194).


Tolkien's Hobbit was read on the B.B.C. "Children's Hour" radio program in 1961. Grevatt quotes the reader/producer, David Davis, on his choice of part of the Gustav Holst ballet The Perfect Fool as theme music, and on his hesitation to read The Hobbit at all because "like all Tolkien, it is a dark and frightening story." He expected complaints from listeners, particularly parents, that "Children's Hour" should not present such terrifying material, but hardly any were received. "We can often under-rate a child's capacity for taking what we [as adults], with our greater knowledge of reality, would regard as matter for nightmare."


Pearce describes his book, written after the Waterstone’s poll proclaimed The Lord of the Rings the greatest book of the twentieth century, as “an effort to get to grips with [Tolkien] the man, the myth and the whole phenomenon that has delighted millions of readers and perplexed and apoplexed generations of critics. It is an attempt to unravel the mystery surrounding this most misunderstood of men” (xi). In other words, it is a defense of Tolkien against his critics, but written as biography, and in very large part a restatement of the authorized biography of Tolkien by Humphrey Carpenter. Pearce quotes heavily from other writers, and from Tolkien himself, in all perhaps a third of his book. His most valuable contributions are his view of Tolkien as a Christian and Roman Catholic, and his comparison of Tolkien with G. K. Chesterton.

A reprint of the paperback edition, with a new index (48 pp.) compiled by Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond. Readers of earlier printings of this work agreed that the original index was of limited usefulness, incomplete, inaccurate, and poorly arranged. The new index is in a single alphabetical sequence and much enlarged. N.B. A cross-reference, “Valar see Ainur,” was accidentally deleted when the compilers were revising for space.