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Reviews

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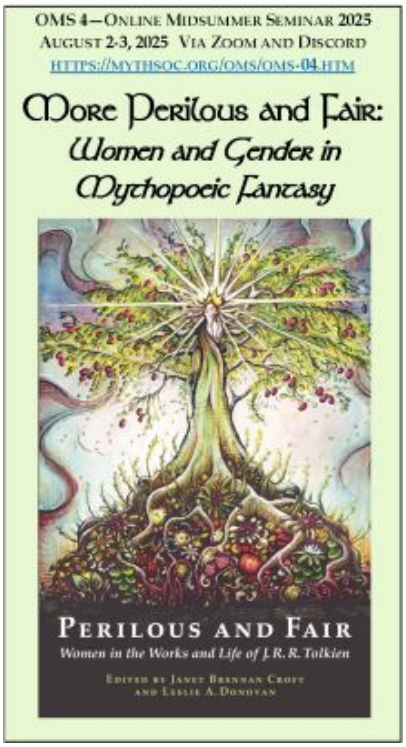

Reviews

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Additional Keywords

Patrick Wynne

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REVIEWS

Reviews are by the Reviews Editor, Nancy-Lou Patterson, unless otherwise indicated.

A Blissful Supplement

REVIEW EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Bliss was published in 1982 for the first time and contains a complete facsimile of Tolkien's original manuscript including his own illustrations, from the collection of Marquette University. Jessica Yates began her review, "As a full review of Mr. Bliss will probably already have appeared in Mythlore, I will restrict myself to some supplementary observations which may extend our appreciation of this work." In fact, hers is the first review to appear in Mythlore, and I am delighted to give her pride of place.

A letter in the Sunday Times, 10 October 1982, referring back to a colour magazine feature on the book [Mr. Bliss], on 19 September, gives a more reliable date for its composition of 1928. The letter is written by Tolkien's daughter-in-law Joan, wife of his son Michael, and she says that the three bears were based on the teddy-bears actually owned by Tolkien's three sons. The car driven by Mr. Bliss was inspired by a toy car with driver owned by Christopher Tolkien.

Mr. Bliss now takes its place before The Hobbit as Tolkien's first children's story. (The Father Christmas Letters is not a continuous story, and was not assembled by Tolkien as a complete volume.) Unlike The Hobbit and the short novels, Mr. Bliss is very much a children's picture-book where the text and illustrations are integrated, in the tradition, I feel, of Beatrix Potter. Tolkien's wry comments on his illustrations throughout the book, e.g. "The car is just here (and the ponies and donkey) but I am tired of drawing it," are also reminiscent of Kipling's Just So Stories. It's written in the kind of dramatic, open-mouthed style which is just right for parents reading to their under-five children, but can seem a bit twee to sober adults reading silently!

Foretastes of Tolkien's mythical obsessions may be detected in the couple Mr. Day and Mrs. Knight (the reverse gender from Sun and Moon in Middle-earth!), and the Tolkienesque trees in several drawings, for example the Dorkinses' kitchen-garden, and the maypole scene. The three bears are drawn as teddy-bears, but their home in the wood features a Beorn-style Great Hall. Mr. Bliss, like Bilbo Baggins, is a solitary, well-off bachelor living at the top of a hill, apart from the rest of the villagers.

The setting would seem to be a Cotswold village around the turn of the century where cars were a recent invention. Interesting hobbitish names appear: Sergeant Boffin, and Gaffer Gamgee! We may remember that Tolkien eventually cut out the reference to tomatoes in The Hobbit. Here tomatoes appear on the menu at the Bears' Banquet, and not only that, but Mrs. Knight's speciality is selling bananas, which aren't even grown in our country [Jessica Yates is speaking on behalf of the British Tolkien Society] now!

Tolkien was not as accurate about maps and distances then as he was later. The journey to the Dorkinses goes through Three Bears' Wood, straight out of the Wood to the top of the Hill, as shown in the picture, and straight down the Hill into the Dorkinses' garden. But the journey back is like this: up the hill, down the other side to the inn at Cross Roads for tea, and then a further journey from Cross Roads to Three Bears' Wood. Perhaps they went back over a different hill. The signpost outside the inn shows DORKINS/WOOD at right angles. But why make a detour when the car was so loaded down?

In the language used in dialogue we see Tolkien the linguist playing games. Mrs. Knight is a country-woman who says "ain't" and "Not if I knows him", while Mr. Binks is a cockney whose missing "h's" are carefully punctuated:

> "I seen him sneaking 'ome, early this morning, as I was a-telling the sergeant 'ere."

Mr. Binks, car-dealer, could well be an immigrant to the country from the city. There is at least one pun. Fattie can't sleep in one of the bears' beds because "None of the beds would bear him." Then there is the Girabbit, half giraffe, half rabbit. Unexpected slang for a Professor of English in 1928 appears: "kids" for children; "brunch" for a late breakfast.

Yes, Mr. Bliss is quite a treasure, and not at all damaging to Tolkien's reputation--well worth publishing.

Jessica Yates

The Road Goes Ever On

T.A. Shippey, The Road to Middle-Earth (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), 252 pp.

Professor Shippey holds the Chair of English Language and Mediaeval Literature at Leeds University of which Tolkien was the first holder. As well as being an authority on Early English literature, he is very knowledgeable about science fiction and fantasy--and he is a Tolkien fan. In this book he has two goals: to explain to those who love The Lord of the Rings instinctively, some reasons why this is so; and to refute

many adverse criticisms of Tolkien by such as Edmund Wilson. All this is written in an easy-going, witty prose style, not unlike Tolkien's, full of allusions, scholarly references and displaying a wide range of reading in several languages by a scholar who, although he knows much more than his average reader, does not patronise us.

We have probably read Tom Shippey's essay, "Creation from Philology," in J.R.R. Tolkien, Scholar and Storyteller (ed. Salu, Cornell U.P., 1979), so we should be familiar with his method. The road to Middle-earth, it appears, lies through the Oxford English Dictionary, on which Tolkien worked. Vestiges of old beliefs, in ents, elves, and dwarves, lingered on into modern English, and these words inspired Tolkien to create a world in which these species existed. The book is an expansion of the essay, with many new insights into Tolkien's genius.

My review will be mainly descriptive, as I have no major criticism of Shippey's approach, and only a few points to take up with him. For Mythlore now, I hope to convey my enjoyment of this book, and to persuade you that it is essential reading.

The first two chapters, "'Lit. and Lang.'" and "Philological Inquiries," set the scene. Tolkien believes that only through studying the hard discipline of philology could one discover the true romance of the early English, Norse and High German poetry: "maybe something peculiar and tragic did take place during the collapse of the Gothic Empire in the fourth century." History confirmed the existence of characters in early literature, proving that even through oral tradition facts could be handed down. And poetry was the key to a nation's character, the roots of Englishness. We see that everything Tolkien wrote, not just his Middle-earth corpus but his scholarly works and earliest poems, had a bearing on his Secondary World. His discovery of AB dialect, for instance, a descendant of Old English relatively uncontaminated by Norman French, and located in the West Midlands, was to develop into the concept of the Shire.

Chapter 3, "The Bourgeois Burglar," is an analysis of The Hobbit, showing how Tolkien went back to the early texts to try to reconstruct the original elves and dwarves. He then contrasted the world of the sagas, in the persons of Thorin, Beorn and the Elf-king, with a contemporary anti-hero, Bilbo, to demonstrate the good and bad features of the saga heroes. Tolkien displays this contrast in dialogue, for example Bilbo's use of modern financial terms like profit, deduct, and claim, as opposed to the archaic terms used in the debate between Thorin and Bard. Shippey points out that Smaug is slain, not in the traditional way when a hero kills his dragon alone, but by an anachronistic attention to discipline, a characteristic of 19th and 20th century armies, which keeps the archers shooting under Bard's direction until the right moment arrives. And although Tolkien does not actually use the word "bourgeois" in the text, it's a perfect description of Bilbo, and since "burglar" derives from the same root, Shippey assumes that the concept was consciously in Tolkien's mind.

Chapter 4 to 6 deal the The Lord of the Rings, and are the heart of the book. Chapter 4, "A Cartographic Plot," follows clues in maps, place-names and proper names to Tolkien's intentions, beginning with a discussion of Tom Bombadil, who he suggests is to Oxfordshire as the Green Knight is to the Pennine country--its genius loci, a Green Man. Then there is a long look at Rohan. Many have noted the Riders' similarity to the Anglo-Saxons, but few have noted the difference, which is that the Old English were not a horse-riding culture. However, their Gothic ancestors were, on the East European plains, and so Tolkien's obsessions with Gothic language and culture found expression. Shippey discusses the meaning of "enmet", which turns up in modern Britain as a place-name in the notoriously flat country of Norfolk. Perhaps its Gothic antecedent meant "steppe" or "prairie". But Britain doesn't have prairies, so "enmet" did not survive into regular usage. Until Tolkien revived it, to indicate the grasslands of Rohan!

Chapter 5, "Interlacements and the Ring," analyses the structure of The Lord of the Rings (already discovered by Richard C. West in A Tolkien Compass to be that of entrelacement). This device, by showing parallel and "leapfrogging" journeys of several groups of questers, illustrates the role of coincidence, chance, luck and fate, and shows how, even when the characters despair of making the right choice, an overriding power for Good supports them. This is illustrated most powerfully, of course, when Gollum takes the Ring and fulfills the quest, his life having been spared along the way, not only by Bilbo and Frodo, but also Aragorn, Sam, Faramir, even Sauron . . .

In this chapter Shippey confronts the critics who have accused The Lord of the Rings of escapism and irrelevance to the real world. He shows the Good characters are not incorruptible but prone to temptations, as their reactions to the Ring demonstrate. The Ring's power over individuals is seen to resemble drug addiction--a modern concept! Saruman's hypocritical brand of evil has a particular contemporary relevance, and so does Denethor's desire, if he cannot defeat Sauron, for "naught".

> "The West has failed. It shall all go up in a great fire, and all shall be ended. Ash! Ash and smoke blown away on the wind!"

Shippey comments: "He does not say 'nuclear fire', but the thought fits . . . He mingles an excess of heroic temper . . . with a mean concern for his own sovereignty and his own boundaries: a combination that unusually and in this one particular case makes no sense at all before 1945 and the invention of the 'great deterrent'." (p. 130)

The theme of Chapter 6 is elusive. It covers the style of LOTR from prose narrative and poetic diction, including parallels with Shakespeare's Macbeth, to the book's metaphysical and religious themes, and the origin of the character Frodo in the ancient Teutonic king Forda/Forthi. This indicates that in LOTR Tolkien wanted to show that pagans could behave in a Christian way, and provide a model for ordinary secular man today. Shippey claims literary status for LOTR as a romance, according to Northrop Frye's definition in the Anatomy of Criticism.

Chapter 7, "Visions and Revisions," deals with the sources of The Silmarillion and analyzes its structure. This chapter is much more straightforward, and will contain familiar material to those who have read Randel Helms's Tolkien and the Silmarils, a book composed at about the same time and covering similar ground. A useful study, which this review will not provide, would be to take both books and see how many insights were common to both, and where Shippey's analysis is superior. Both, for instance, give space to discussing creativity as the besetting sin of the Elves and some Valar; Shippey relates this to Tolkien's own preoccupation with his writings. Both say that the source of the Silmarils lies in the "sampo" of the Kalevala.

In Chapter 8 Shippey ties up loose ends with reference to the minor works Smith of Wootton Major, Imram, The Sea-Bell, and even Songs for the Philologists. The Chapter is titled "On the Cold Hill's Side," a line from Keats' poem La Belle Dame Sans Merci, which describes a mortal's unlikely love for an elf-woman, a theme running through Tolkien's works. In his case, as well as symbolizing his love for his wife, it meant his love for Faerie and Middle-earth, and the time he spent creating his Secondary World to the detriment of his philological career.

The rigorous tone of much of this book is due to the fact that Shippey is not just writing for the lay reader and Tolkien fan, but for the British academic and journalist who detests Tolkien, either because he's read The Lord of the Rings and didn't like it, or because he doesn't want to try. He compares such critics to Gollum, who refused lembas! Mythlore readers may need reminding that Tolkien's works are barely studied in British universities, and where they are, the lecturers prefer to concentrate on Tolkien's apparent faults, and to complain because he didn't write a novel. The fact that hardly any reviews of The Road to Middle-earth have appeared in the three months since the book's August [1982] publication, indicates the determination of the literary establishment to ignore it. (Reviews of the Biography, The Silmarillion, and Letters were widely circulated.) Of the two reviews which have appeared, George Watson in the TLS (8 October 1982) is favourable, although he says "Of course the issue of quality remains to be debated [re LOTR]". Derek Pearsall in the THES (15 October 1982) praises Shippey's book, but says he still can't read LOTR: "I have never managed more than a few chapters without a feeling of creeping sickness." (!)

I trust, however, that Mythlore readers will respond in other ways, will enjoy The Road to Middle-earth, re-read The Lord of the Rings and The Silmarillion with fresh enjoyment, and then go on to tackle the extensive reading list of Tolkien's sources which the Professor has thoughtfully provided for the insatiable fan.

Jessica Yates

Whimsy and Tragedy

Unicorns!, edited by Jack Dann and Gardner Dozois, (New York: Ace Books, 1982), 310 pp.

The unicorn treads down the tangled paths of ancient folklore and medieval myth--and lives for us in the modern classics of C.S. Lewis's Narnia and the Arthurian epic interpretation of T.H. White. The editors here (both Science-fiction veteran writers) supply us with some sixteen tales and one essay on the unicorn's "use" in modern fiction. The quality is high with a rich variety of styles and interpretations to cull the interest of the average reader. The sources used are the traditional pulps, with the exception of the last tale, the famous chapter of the hunting and killing of the beast of innocence in White's Once and Future King.

Avram Davidson's historical essay is very informal, full of wit and sarcasm at our modern world while it conveys the basic information on how the unicorn came to be. Davidson surprisingly gives little attention to the myth-making potential of the Renaissance artists and manuscript illustrators. Yet his work covers the main points and reads well.

For those who like light whimsey there is the nasty monster of L. Sprague de Camp's "Eudoric's Unicorn." Roger Zelazny's delight in unicorns mixes with his pride in how a clever human can outwit a unicorn in a game of Chess. Larry Niven jumps into Time-travel in "The Flight of the Horse" with low-key hunour. The stress is on clever surprise in Dozois' tale of "The Sacrifice," set in a prehistoric Golden Afe.

But it's the tragic element and the use of the innocence of the unicorn that is stressed in most tales. Theodore Sturgeon's old 1953 story of "The Silken Swift" is magnificent in its classic beauty. Quite the opposite in style but with a somewhat similar moral is "On the Downhill Side"by Harlan Ellison. There's a feel of anarchy here as two very different ghosts meet the innocent unicorn.

Stephen R. Donaldson's "Mythological Beast" delves into the ugliness of the modern State as it attempts to crush the appearance of a new Unicorn. Modern society invokes genetic experiments and gets Vonda McIntyre's tragic "Elfleda" and Gene Wolfe's "The Woman the Unicorn Loved." Compare these with the fatalism and cruelty of the dying Celtic

paganism of Bev Evans' "The Forsaken." Good locales include India (Ursula K. Le Guin's "The White Donkey"), China (Frank Owen's "The Unicorn"), and the Greece of 1914 (Eric Norden's "The Final Quarry"), and even a Mayan village (though Thomas Burnett Swann's tale is a bit too preachy).

All in all, the tales give a unique enjoyment as they present the varied ways the unicorn can tread his way into our hearts and minds.

Thomas M. Egan

Gilding the Cat's Wiskers

C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, An Anniversary Edition of the three books, The Case for Christianity, Christian Behaviour, and Beyond Personality, edited and with an Introduction by Walter Hooper (New York: Macmillan, 1981), 211 pp.

C.S. Lewis, The Pilgrim's Regress, An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason, and Romanticism, illustrated by Michael Hague (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), 211 pp.

Special editions of classical works can be redundant or even exploitative, mere gilt rather than gold: the two reviewed here are fully justified as truly enhanced editions to be desired beyond the ubiquitous paperback versions of their subjects. In each case, books as objects of profound significance, which are treasures in themselves, have been enriched by the labours of ancillary craftsmen, like the relics of medieval saints in their splendid reliquaries. Not that these works are medieval, of course: Pilgrim's Regress is significant as C.S. Lewis's first attempt to explain, to himself as much as anybody, the journey which led him to seek the vision of his childhood and find it fulfilled beyond hope. One reads it like Thomas Merton's Seven-Storey Mountain as a gallant hymn to the new-found embrace of Holy Wisdom. And Mere Christianity, which one reads again and again, presents Lewis in his maturity, setting forth with all simplicity, the solid faith, bread and wine for a world hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

In each case, the talents of those whose enhancements grace these special editions are perfectly applied. Walter Hooper's best contributions to his long task as Lewis's literary executor are two-fold. First, he has ransacked the record for every word from the pen of his subject, burrowing through libraries and collections with awesome persistence. These efforts have resulted not only in extensive bibliographies but in the numerous collections of Lewis's works which put everybody in his editor's debt. Father Hooper's second talent, not nearly so frequently acknowledged, derives from the same gifts of industry and consistency. He is the author of a number of detailed studies of aspects of Lewis's career which, while humble in intention and almost demure in their interpretation, throw strong and important light on their subject. I think of his studies of the Martlets, of the Socratic Society, and of the genesis of the Narnian Chronicles. Beside these can be placed the fine essay which introduces the anniversary edition of Mere Christianity. Here Hooper has drawn from the archives of the British Broadcasting Corporation a wealth of materials which expand our understanding of Lewis's intentions and of the milieu from which this greatest of his apologetic works emerged. Letters by Lewis, and by those who engaged him to broadcast for the BBC, are reproduced, along with photographs of the hand-written version by Lewis of one of his most famous talks, "Sexual Morality," and a transcript of a br oadcast conversation between Lewis and the host of a religious programme, "The Anvil," in which a number of questions are touched upon, not least, "Why does God allow suffering?" (p. 210)

Hooper has woven from his researches a delightful and revealing narrative: Lewis struggling with the problems of broadcast timing, of expression in the vernacular, with his own intentions and the intransigency of his medium. The essay concludes with a note on the response of listeners: in 1944 Eric Fenn of the BBC wrote, "The single most important fact is the sharp division you produced in your audience. They obviously either regard you as 'the cat's whiskers' or as beneath contempt . . . " (p. xxxv). Lewis thanked Fenn for this "suitable Lenten reading" and added, "The two views you report . . . aren't very illuminating about me perhaps: about my subject matter, it is an old story, isn't it?" Father Hooper's careful work and delicate touch in this essay makes the anniversary edition of Mere Christianity worthy of careful attention by all of Lewis's readers.

An equally happy event is the splendid hardback edition from Eerdmans of The Pilgrim's Regress, which is delightfully accompanied by Michael Hague's illustrations. Exactly the right period note is struck, that of the Edwardian era, the time of Lewis's youth. Hague's illustrations for books, which include those of East of the Sun, West of the Moon, Beauty and the Beast, The Wind in the Willows, and The Wizard of Oz, are making him a new master in the fantasy field. His two Narnian calendars, for The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe (1982) and Prince Caspian (1983) set one hungering for a new Hague-illustrated edition of the Narnian Chronicles despite one's loyalty to the magisterial drawings and paintings of Pauline Baynes (to whom all illustrators of Narnia turn as the primary source, after the manner of illustrators of Alice turning to Tenniel: Baynes's Aslan is Aslan; her White Witch is the White Witch; ad infinitum). In the meantime, here is an edition of The Pilgrim's Regress, never previously illustrated, let alone enhanced, by anybody, which is truly enriched by its new setting.

The designer, Charlotte Ellison, and the illustrator, Michael Hague, each have contrib-

uted to the handsome effect of this extremely attractive and beautifully crafted volume. When Lewis was a boy he made much of the joys of owning fine books. Later, we learn that he rather outgrew this passion. Not all of us have been able to achieve this level of self-abandonment, and those who still delight in a great book greatly presented, will find this lovely edition of The Pilgrim's Regress irresistable.

Now, a dream: someday, let there be a complete and uniform edition of Lewis's works, letters, juvenalia, and whatever else exists, presented in a fine format, well designed, well annotated, accompanied by new and enhancing essays and magnificent illustrations. Let Lewis's many editors and commentators collaborate, to make this dream edition of the complete Lewis come true. If not in this world, then in the next, where the chorus of their voices will be joined by a booming base from a red-faced gentleman somewhere in the front row, and where the artists will find their pen- and brush-work visions made harder and brighter than diamond, as gems in a supernal crown for the One who invented images. Lewis might add a touch or two of his own to that grand design also, for he was, as his letters show us, an artist manqué, and in Heaven, all that we wish to be we shall be, and more besides. It's all in Lewis, all in Lewis!

From Dogmatism to Gentleness

Margaret Patterson Hannay, C.S. Lewis (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1981), 299 pp.

A miracle of concision, this fine work includes two brief notes which account for (without quite explaining) its contents: "In keeping with the aims of the Modern Literature Series, I have included a chronology, a biographical sketch, detailed summaries of each of the major works, and a survey of the themes that bind them together." (p. xiv.) If this were all, C.S. Lewis would be an elegant little pony, capable of substituting for the real thing in the hands of an unscrupulous examinee. But, "C.S. Lewis wrote children's fairy tales, adult fantasy, literary criticism, Christian apologetics, and poetry, making him fit . . . rather 'oddly into our accustomed literary categories.'" (p. 1.) Add to that list "stories" and "letters", and you have a summary of the contents. We are not told why this particular order (which is not at all in accord with their chronology) was adopted; perhaps it was to express the author's choice of which works would be most lasting: most likely to survive--the Narnian Chronicles; least likely--the poems. At any rate, the range of Lewis's works makes great demands on his commentator, and Hannay rises strongly to the challenge.

Each chapter contains first, felicitous summaries of the works in each category; and second, brief but pungent and well-argued analyses and commentaries on them. Hannay has woven together her own very interesting opinions with a good selection of others' comments, to provide the reader with introductions to each of the polymathic Lewis's areas and modes of expression. This is a remarkable feat, especially in so restrictive a format. People with a profound familiarity with Lewis may prefer to read the second half of each chapter, at least of the fiction, though Hannay's summaries are, as Joe R. Christopher has pointed out, very well written. The "summaries" of the non-fiction are actually selections rather than summaries, and thus in a sense a part of the commentary. Hannay moves with equal poise through each, from fiction to literary scholarship to apology.

She has made some significant contributions to the new somewhat crowded and cacophonous conversation between scholars and commentators on Lewis. One draws a breath of relief at her charitable treatment of other commentators. Not a word about "allegory" mars her text, except where it properly belongs, in discussing Lewis's actual scholarship on, or use of allegory (both in his early work). An equally interesting idea is her summary of Lewis's oeuvre in terms of his gradually changing interests and experiences (pp. 260-265). It is her thesis that he shows "a correspondence among his literary scholarship, his fiction, and his apologetics; and a progression from dogmatism to gentleness in all his works." (p. 260.)

These five pages would be worth the rather considerable price of this volume in themselves, though one could wish for a book dedicated to this theme.

A splendid contribution is Hannay's recognition that Lewis's war experiences found their expression in certain terrifying passages in Dymer. In reading these in the light of this insight (and the revelation that Lewis suffered from nightmares for years after the war) one sees at once the terrible and obvious reason for Lewis's estrangement from a father who would not visit him in hospital--though I think his father's obtuseness probably arose from an inability to face, in his son, anything which would remind him of the mental agony he had been forced to undergo in the death by cancer of his wife (Lewis's mother).

Hannay is wonderfully sound on Lewis's relationship with his wife Joy, and on the effect this had upon his last and greatest works. I also understand intellectually, but cannot feel, Hannay's fervent objections to the story of Jane and Mark in That Hideous Strength. I suppose I disqualify myself (as Lewis is thought by some to have done in declaring himself a Christian in writing on Milton) by saying that Strength remains my favourite single book by Lewis. So far from "lack[ing] this evocation of longing," I still find the passages describing the approach to Bracton Wood, and Jane's first passage through the garden at St. Anne's Manor, as among the most evocative in fiction. And over the many times I have read this book I have never felt that it depicted a wronged wife forced to submit to a degraded

husband by a charismatic leader who feels free to "dispose" of her as he chooses. The character of Jane seemed to me remarkably realistic. How many young women have I known who meant to continue with the professions for which they were trained but somehow never did so? I can name numerous classmates of my girlhood! And poor Mark (who has, I think, as unpleasant a time as his wife, tricked and buffeted as he is by his continually frustrated desire to get in to a society which in fact has no centre)--his wife has never really accepted him, never really opened herself (soul and body), never become his haven and garden of delight. They have both been selfish and unfeeling, both need to learn humility. Mark's behaviour is, as Hannay says, far more evil than Jane's --but his offence has not really been toward her (except in a kind of boyish boorishness, a desire to keep her for himself as his "secret hostess"). And his cure has been drastic: in a sense his desires have been granted and he has been admitted to the very maw of the N.I.C.E.--an absolute confrontation which awakes, almost at the last moment, the decency which has been so long latent in him, and which must have attracted Jane to him in the first place. Jane's cure is so much more benign. The experience of a true self-opening, of being brought out of herself by exposure to Ransom's hard-bought charism, has prepared her for a far lesser charity, merely to descend a ladder of humility down the length of a farmhouse garden to bed with her repentant and humbled husband: he is, after all, only an ill-educated young modern, quite out of his league in his attempts to play hardball with the N.I.C.E. I've always suspected that she managed to make him (and herself) happy, raise the family Ransom predicts, and return to her books as well!

Sayer's Best Pieces of Theology

Dawson Gaillard, Dorothy L. Sayers (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1981), 123 pp.

Leroy Lad Panek, Watteau's Shepherds: The Detective Novel in Britain 1914-1940 (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1979), 232 pp. [pp 72-110 on "Dorothy Sayers"]

Dawson Gaillard's fine study, Dorothy L. Sayers, published in the."Recognitions" Series on detective fiction by Ungar, treats the complete oeuvre of detective fiction by Sayers, including the short stories. Gaillard begins with an essay entitled "The Essential Mysteriousness," which sketches Sayers's biography with an emphasis on her ideas and attitudes toward detective fiction. Sayers's own essays and comments on her field are referred to throughout Gaillard's study, to excellent effect: she is made to comment on her own work as if she stood at Gaillard's elbow. The short stories are given a chapter to themselves, and are considered first. Gaillard contrasts the brevity and moral simplicity of the Montague Egg stories with the complexity and "mysteriousness" (p. 18) of the stories about Lord Peter. These "gave [Sayers] a chance to experiment with Lord Peter's nature," (p. 18) which includes a hint of the supernatural.

The novels are dealt with in four chapters, in which those included are compared and considered as examples of Sayers's development. "The Design of the Glittering Mechanism" treats Whose Body?, Clouds of Witness, Unnatural Death, and The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club. During this period (the 1920s), Sayers was "exploring the limits of the genre." (p. 42) In "Toward a Detective Novel of Manners," The Documents in the Case and Strong Poison are discussed. These introduce two pictures of woman-man relationships: that of John Munting and Elizabeth Drake, and of Lord Peter and Harriet Vane. Gaillard points out that the former relationship, with its "honesty, friendship, respect, and affection" (p. 51) anticipates the latter. In "From Puzzle and Manners to Mystery," Gaillard suggests a trend of spiritual and emotional development through the sequence of Five Red Herrings, Have His Carcase, Murder Must Advertise, and The Nine Tailors. The supernatural elements in the last of these--"God's presence . . . hovers over the actions of the men in this novel" (p. 66)--"evokes from the reader a sense of God's mystery." (p. 69) In "Precarious Balance," Gaudy Night and Busman's Honeymoon are analyzed in terms of the ideal relationship between men and women. Gaillard's remarks on this theme are penetrating and sensitive. The concluding chapter discusses the "touch of the eternal" in Sayers's detective fiction. This remarkable essay sets forth Sayers's right to be considered a maker of "Fresh worlds," (p. 103) a creative artist whose work "once again releases the powers of old truths and of imagination." (p. 103)

Gaillard's achievement is a tribute to Sayers's achievement: as she proves in writing of Sayers's "Rejoicing Universe" (p. 101) the Great Dance is celebrated anew in Sayers's fiction.

Leroy Panek's Watteau's Shepherds gives an excellent background to Sayers's world by describing her own and seven other detective novelists' works in their historical, literary, and cultural context. Sayers wrote between the two world wars and contra the detective fiction of her girlhood. Panek's analyses of Sayers's twelve novels are presented in a series of excellent and well-argued short esssays. He begins with Whose Body?, of course, but also with a discussion of "the key to Wimsey's character," which "lies in his conscience. From first to last, writing about crime presented for Sayers certain moral considerations . . . " (p. 75). Sayers's early fiction is "a morality play of good and evil." (p. 77) She develops her vision from 1923 through the entire sequence, until in 1936 "her overriding concerns were turning away from the burlesque of the traditional detective story toward active work for the spiritual revivification of modern life." (p. 109) Panek suggests that in Busman's Honeymoon, the last novel, Wimsey confronts "the insoluble, protean, and transcendental problems of the world, the

flesh, and the devil." (p. 110)

Concluding, Panek writes:

> Sayers felt that she had to move to more practical and honest ways of coping with the world than the detective story offered, so she directed herself exclusively to theological writing and mainstream literary scholarship. She was, however, I think, wrong about herself and her detective books: The Wimsey stories have more to do with life than any other writer's detective books. They confront problems and do not give easy answers. They may be, in fact, Sayers' best pieces of theology. (p. 110)

Although Dorothy L. Sayers is not mentioned in Eric S. Rabkind's study of The Fantastic in Literature (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), detective fiction is. And it is dicussed in the context, and as a part of, fantasy; so eminent a writer as W.H. Auden is quoted to point out that the underlying myth of detective fiction is the Garden of Eden. Detective fiction in fact grew out of the same garden as other nineteenth century fantasy: that plantation of post-romantic forms which includes the gothic novel, the thriller, and the tale of horror, as well as the mythopoeic fantasies of George MacDonald and the medievalizing tales of William Morris, both of which directly influenced Lewis and Tolkien. Charles Williams's works can scarcely be understood without reference to the former tradition: they are detective/thriller/mythopoeia all at the same time, beginning with the corpse in War in Heaven. His arch conversations, heightened style, and "clotted" plots owe their tone to detective thrillers, and are not only alien but incomprehensible without an understanding of the other genre.

On such a basis, discussion of Sayers's works belongs in Mythlore, and indeed, four essays and a poem have been printed here (see below) along with book reviews of studies of her biography and works. But Sayers is qualified for inclusion in another way: not that she was an Inkling, as some writers have naively and erroneously supposed. She was associated with Lewis in the more formal Oxford Society, the Socratic Club, and Joe R. Christopher has shown that her friendships included Lewis and Williams, though Tolkien disliked both Peter and Harriet. Her qualifications, however, surpass her association with the Mythopoeic Triumvirate. She is the other British writer whose works range from popular fiction to scholarly discussion to Christian apologetics, and whose work is, throughout, a seamless whole of orthodox Christian doctrine (with an Anglican colouration, pace Tolkien).

If I may skirt blasphemy, I am reminded of Jung's joy when he perceived that the Dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary raised the Feminine Principle to convert the Trinity into a quadripartite whole. What reads as richly masculine in Tolkien, Lewis, and Williams, reads as richly feminine in Sayers, without the slightest waver of orthodoxy or power.

Nancu-Lou Patterson

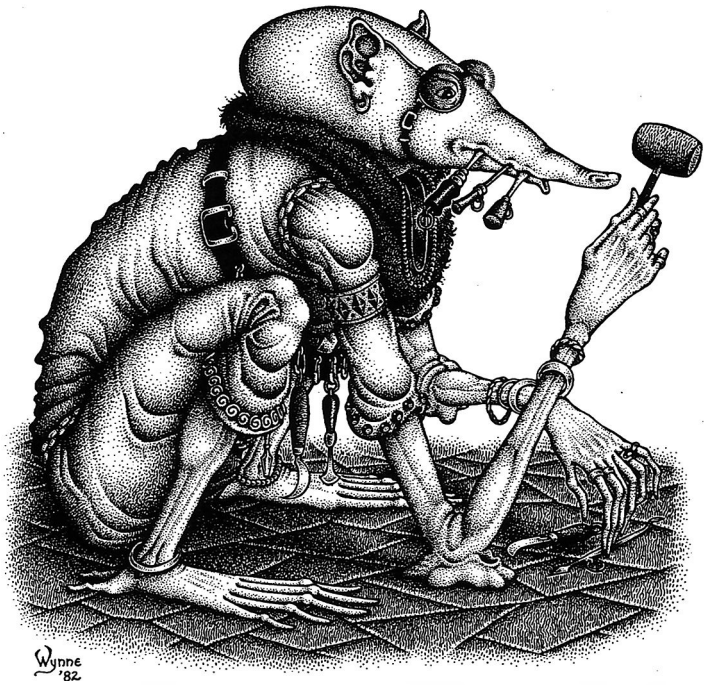
Christe Ann Whittaker, "An Introductory Paper on Dorothy Sayers," Mythcon III Proceedings (Whittier, California: They Mythopoeic Society, 1974).

Joe R. Christopher, "Dorothy L. Sayers and the Inklings," Mythlore #13, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Fall, 1976).

Margaret P. Hannay, "Head vs Heart in Dorothy L. Sayers' Gaudy Night," Mythlore #21, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Summer, 1979).

William R. Epperson, "The Repose of a Very Delicate Balance: Postulants and Celebrants of the Sacrament of Marriage in the Detective Fiction of Dorothy L. Sayers," Mythlore #22, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Fall, 1979).

Joe R. Christopher, "Dorothy L. Sayers at Fifty," (poem) Mythlore # 23, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring, 1980).



A pfifltriggi from Lewis' Out of the Silent Planet

Cavalier Treatment, continued from page 26

tive for being hidden - might by now have permeated the whole of Europe and the Americas to the benefit of this tattered, battered and deeply scarred planet." This is touching, if a little grandiose, but it overlooks the obvious. In a comparison of her "Legitimate" and "Bend Sinister" lists, the latter is the more impressive. It was when Williams went among the Inklings that he located a group that has overtly, without guarded secrets, touched western culture significantly, not transforming it indeed but leaving the world somewhat cleaner, wiser and more hopeful for its passing. It is hard for most of us to lament Williams's choice.