

MYTHPRINT

The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

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March 2006

Whole No. 288



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Illustrations

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Strider's Screening logo by Patrick Wynne © 1997 (p. 5)

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See inside back cover

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DEADLINES for receiving material for each issue of *Mythprint* are the 1st of the preceding month (eg, April 1st for the May issue).

Mythcon 37 Announcement

August 4–7, 2006

University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK

Theme: The Map and the Territory: Maps and Landscapes in Fantasy
(with a track on Native American Fantasy/Native Americans in Fantasy)

Author Guest of Honor: Lois McMaster Bujold

Scholar Guest of Honor: Amy H. Sturgis

The Site

The Thurman J. White Forum Building on the OU campus.

Housing

The Sooner Hotel & Suites (standard hotel rooms and two-bedroom cottage suites). Breakfast, lunch, and dinner in the Commons Restaurant on-site.

Events

- Book signing and reception at the University of Oklahoma main campus bookstore.
- Annual Banquet in the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History.

Campus Amenities

- Special exhibit on Native American authors at the Western History Collections
- Special exhibit on maps in the History of Science Collection in Bizzell Library

Maps and brochures are available for self-guiding walking tours of the campus, with a focus on our wonderful sculptures, architecture, and gardens.

Transportation

Fly into Will Rogers International Airport in Oklahoma City (about 45 minutes) or the nearby hub airports at Dallas/Fort Worth (a three-hour drive by rental car).

Registration

\$150 Mythopoeic Society members
 \$175 non-Society members
 \$110 students
 Single day rate: \$45 per day
 (Children under 12 are free)

Meals and Accommodations

\$53 full meal package (not including banquet)
 \$50 Sunday banquet

Accommodation reservations will be made directly with the hotel. Standard room rate is \$53/night (up to 4 persons); suite is \$88/night (up to 6 persons).

Checks or money orders for registration and meals should be made payable to "Burning Hill Farm." You may register through the Society's web site, using our Paypal shopping cart feature. Check the Mythopoeic Society web site for details, updates, and links.



To receive a flyer and registration form, ask questions, or obtain more information about the conference, contact:

Burning Hill Farm, Inc.
 c/o Janet Brennan Croft



e-mail

Mythopoeic Society Conference XXXVII (Mythcon 37)

August 4–7, 2006

University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK

Theme: The Map and the Territory: Maps and Landscapes in Fantasy

Call for Papers

What role do maps and landscapes play in fantasy? Is drawing the map necessarily an early part of the subcreative process? How do fantasists go about creating the worlds in which their stories take place? Sometimes it's said that the landscape is a character in the story—what does this mean? Sometimes maps play an important role in the story itself. Maps also provide an opportunity for “other minds and hands” to fill in the blanks left in an author's subcreated world. Native American characters frequently appear in fantastic fiction—how are they portrayed, and what role(s) do they play? Consider fantasies based on native myths and legends and/or fantasy written by Native American authors ... what sources and philosophies do they bring to the field of fantasy?


Papers dealing with these conference themes are especially encouraged. We also welcome papers focusing on the work and interests of the Inklings (especially J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Charles Williams), of our Guests of Honor, and other fantasy authors and themes. Papers from a variety of critical perspectives and disciplines are welcome.

Each paper will be given a one-hour slot to allow time for questions, but individual papers should be timed for oral presentation in 40 minutes maximum. Two presenters who wish to present short, related papers may also share a one-hour slot. Participants are encouraged to submit papers chosen for presentation at the conference to *Mythlore*, the refereed journal of the Mythopoeic Society. All papers should conform to the *MLA Style Manual* (2nd ed). **Paper abstracts (250 word maximum), along with contact information, should be sent to the Papers Coordinator at the following address (e-mail is preferable) by 15 April, 2006.** Please include your AV requests and the projected time needed for your presentation.

Edith L. Crowe

Reference & Academic Services



The Mythopoeic Society is an international literary and educational organization devoted to the study, discussion, and enjoyment of the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and mythopoeic literature. We believe the study of these writers can lead to greater understanding and appreciation of the literary, philosophical, and spiritual traditions which underlie their works, and can engender an interest in the study of myth, legend, and the genre of fantasy. Find out about past conferences at: 

Film: Strider's Screening Room

Ringers: Lord of the Fans

Ringers: Lord of the Fans. Directed by Carlene Cordova. Written by Cliff Broadway and Carlene Cordova. Narrated by Dominic Monaghan. Culver City: Sony Pictures, 2005. DVD, 98 min., \$24.94.

Obscurer than the *Trekkies* documentaries, *Ringers* was advertised mostly in the pages of comic books in the immediate advance of its late November DVD release. It's been shown at a few film festivals and conventions but not, so far as I know, in theatres. But it's a delightful, intelligent film worth seeing even for those who are, like myself, not fans of the Peter Jackson *Lord of the Rings* films and who would rather convert to the worship of Edmund Wilson than call ourselves "Ringers."

Oh, it's got its Jackson-worship all right. The last third or so of the story is a giddy paean to the popularity of the films, and you may find yourself as nauseated as I was by some of the fan interviews that appear throughout: the woman whose goal in life is to pose her action figures on Tolkien's grave, and the guy who compared waiting in the movie line to sitting on the toilet, a connection I didn't quite follow. But the interviews are well cut (as demonstrated by the uncut ones on the DVD extras) and most are passingly amusing. Jackson's actors, asked to comment on Tolkien, acquit themselves quite well. Noted authorities and familiar faces like Brian Sibley and Peter Beagle make appearances, the (British) Tolkien Society and the old Tolkien Society of America get brief look-ins, and while the Mythopoeic Society goes unmentioned, a couple of our members make uncredited cameos; see if you can find them!

The better part of the film is not about Jackson at all but is a history of Tolkien's popularity, starting with a brief account of how *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* came to be

published, passing on through the paperbacks and 1960s fan boom, giving an abbreviated account of Tolkien-inspired rock music from "The Ballad of Bilbo Baggins" to Led Zeppelin, and wagging at the awful animated films of the 1970s before oddly claiming that Tolkien fandom fell into abeyance in the following decades.

Despite its intense condensation, the narrative—written by staffers of *TheOneRing.net* and delivered energetically by Jackson's Merry Brandybuck—is superbly researched (the mocking comments by snob critics of Tolkien are drawn from their actual writings) and admirably accurate. Better still, it's all delivered with tremendous wit and imagination. The early backstory is presented in the form of silly cut-out animation *a la* Terry Gilliam, with C.S. Lewis and W.H. Auden floating in as angels to defend the books from the snobs. The decades of Tolkien fandom are shown by period-style film of students in accurate clothes of their time reading the appropriate editions of the books.

Weird but well-chosen spots abound. I was pleased to see a segment visiting the diorama tourist attraction Hobbiton U.S.A. I've been there, but when I try to describe it nobody believes me. Now I have videographic evidence that it exists. And I was floored by a description of spin-off merchandising delivered in the non-sequitur form of a mariachi song: "Think of the money you could save / Tolkien's rolling in his grave."

Tolkien would roll in his grave at all of this, but apart from the Jackson-worship which isn't too glutinous, and the embarrassment factor some of the fans provide, *Ringers* takes a clever and justifiably wry look at the whole phenomenon of the fandom of *The Lord of the Rings* and its often questionable media adaptations.

Reviewed by David Bratman

'Caught by a Rumour':

News and Notes

Conferences

The downtown district of Vacaville, CA, is hosting the second annual **Middle Earth Festival** on **April 21–23, 2006**. This festival will have all of the usual festival activities—vendors, food, music, games, contests, and so on—as well as offering some thought-provoking forums about Tolkien and the themes in his writing.

The hosting group, the Downtown Vacaville Business Improvement District, a non-profit group, charges no admission for the festival. It is family oriented and most activities are free of charge. You may learn more about the festival by going to [REDACTED]. Contact: Betty L. Lucke, Chairperson, Middle Earth Festival Committee, [REDACTED]

C.S. Lewis & Friends: The Fifth Frances White Ewbank Colloquium, Taylor University, **June 1–4, 2006**. Speakers include: Thomas Howard, Colin Manlove and Louis Markos. Activities include a dramatic portrayal of George MacDonald by Daniel Koehn, academic paper sessions, music, discussion sessions, and more. For more information about the 2006 Colloquium, please see our web site: www.taylor.edu/cslewis

Gouden Woorden, Zilveren Genootschap Lustrum. **June 9–11, 2006**, The Netherlands. The Dutch Tolkien Society Unquendor celebrates the organization's 25th birthday, as well as the 50th anniversary of the very first translation of *The Lord of the Rings*. And if that's not enough, the Flemish Tolkien Society Elanor will celebrate their first Lustrum at the same time. Information: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Hypericon 2, Stadium Days Inn, Nashville, TN, **June 23–25, 2006**. Literary Guest of Honor: Tim Powers. Artist Guest of Honor: TBD. Special Guests: Sherrilyn Kenyon, Brian Keene, & Glen Cook. Guests: Mary M. Buckner, J. Ardian Lee, Deborah LeBlanc, Bryan Smith, James Newman, Elizabeth Donald, Dr. Amy Sturgis, Alethea Kontis, Hunter Cressall, Stephan and Suzie Lackey, & Jason Sizemore. Planned Events: Tabletop Gaming, Live Action Gaming, Filmmaking Panels, Room Party Competition, Late Night Dances, Art Show and Dealers' Room, Masquerade, Hospitality Suite. Room rates for Hypericon are \$70.95 a night for king or doubles (reserve under the room code CG1002). Pre-registration Memberships: Adults \$25, Children \$10. At the Door: \$35. Info: [REDACTED]

Oxford Tolkien Conference: *The Lord of the Rings: Sources of Inspiration*, Exeter College, Oxford, **August 21–25, 2006**. This international conference with speakers from Poland, France, Italy, Germany, Romania, and the USA will examine Tolkien's extraordinary achievement from a variety of angles, asking some of the leading specialists in the growing field of Tolkien Studies to discover the main sources of his inspiration and influences upon the work. Invited speakers include John Garth, Wayne G. Hammond, Verlyn Flieger, Marcel Bülles, Patrick Curry, Robert Lazu, Christina Scull, Alison Milban, Michaël Devaux, Marek Ożiewicz, Stratford Caldecott and others. Special guests: Priscilla Tolkien and Walter Hooper. Web: [REDACTED]

Cost: £695 full board; £100 non-resident per day. Information: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] email
[REDACTED]

Paper Calls

Storytelling: A Critical Journal of Popular Narrative (no deadline): The peer-reviewed, quarterly journal *Storytelling* is dedicated to analyses of popular narratives in the widest sense of the phrase and as evidenced in the media and all aspects of culture. Although past essays have focused on children's literature, comics, detective/crime fiction, fantasy, film, horror/gothic, popular music, romance, science fiction, and television, submissions are by no means confined to these areas.

Executive Editors: Bonnie C. Plummer and Sharon Bailey, Eastern Kentucky University. Submission Details. Manuscripts should see the narrative as a reflection of culture; use theory to analyze the work, not work to illustrate theory; employ scholarship; and be written for the general audience. The editors are especially interested in visual accomplishments, bibliographies, and interviews with creators of popular narratives. Submissions should include a short (50-word) abstract, be between 10 to 15 double-spaced, typed pages (approximately 3,300 to 6,000 words), and follow the *MLA Style Manual* (2nd ed., 1998), including parenthetical citations in text and an alphabetized list of Works Cited. Authors are encouraged to submit manuscripts on disk or CD with hard copy as backup, or via email. More info:

Address submissions to: Elizabeth Foxwell, Managing Editor, *Storytelling: A Critical Journal of Popular Narrative*, Heldref Publications,

Email:

The Clarion West Writers Workshop is now accepting student applications for the 2006 session. The Clarion West Writers Workshop is an intensive six-week summer program for writers interested in pursuing professional careers. It

focuses primarily on the genres of science fiction, fantasy, and magic realism. The upcoming session runs **June 18 through July 28, 2006**. Instructors will be Paul Park, Maureen McHugh, Ian R. MacLeod, Nalo Hopkinson, Ellen Datlow, and Vernor Vinge; the 2006 Susan C. Petrey Fellow. Since 1984, Clarion West has provided training and inspiration for some of the field's most respected authors and editors. For the next session, only 18 students will be selected. Application information is available on the Clarion West Web site at www.clarionwest.org, or by writing to Clarion West at [REDACTED]. Minority and special-needs students are strongly encouraged to apply.

New Publications

Apocryphile Press announces newly available editions of four books by Charles Williams: *The Figure of Beatrice*, *He Came Down From Heaven* & *The Forgiveness of Sins*, *Outlines of Romantic Theology*, and *Witchcraft*. These are part of the Inklings Heritage Series, which will offer more out-of-print writings from Williams and the other Inklings, and also reprint books on Inklings-related subjects. Catalog available at:

Naive critics are accustomed to saying that life is random, things do not turn out, or present themselves, in life with the glittering appositeness and fated inevitability that they do in literature. Everyday experience contradicts this silly wisdom every day.

A.S. Byatt
The Biographer's Tale

Activity Calendar

Marion VanLoo
Membership & Discussion Group Secretary

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Prospective Groups

CALIFORNIA

[REDACTED] *LOTHLORIEN*
Linda Sundstrom, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

CONNECTICUT

[REDACTED]: *FANTASTIC WORLDS*
Bill Pierce, E-mail: [REDACTED]
Web: [REDACTED]

FLORIDA

[REDACTED] *HOBBITON*
Paul S. Ritz, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] *ERYN GALEN*
B.L. McCauley, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]

INDIANA

[REDACTED] *CERIN AMROTH*
Ellen Denham, E-mail: [REDACTED]
Web: [REDACTED]

MICHIGAN

Julie Bailey, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] E-mail [REDACTED]

Chartered Groups

CALIFORNIA

[REDACTED] *MYDGARD*
Lee Speth, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] *KHAZAD-DUM*
Amy Wisniewski & Edith Crowe, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
E-mail: [REDACTED]
Web: [REDACTED]

March: *Od Magic* by Patricia A. McKillip
April: *Son of a Witch* by Gregory Maguire
May: *Hallowed Hunt* by Lois McMaster Bujold
June: *Many Dimensions* by Charles Williams

COLORADO

[REDACTED] *FANUIDHOL ("CLOUDY HEAD")*
Patricia Yarrow, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]
Web: [REDACTED]

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

[REDACTED] *KNOSSOS*
Mimi Stevens, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]

HAWAII

[REDACTED] *SAMMATH NAUR*
Steve Brown, [REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]
Web: [REDACTED]

March: *The Burning Stone* by Kate Elliott
April: *Blind Lake* by Robert Wilson
May: *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel
June: *The Planets* by Dava Sobel (with Planetarium show following)

ILLINOIS

[REDACTED] *THE FAR WESTFARTHING SMIAL*
Mike Foster, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]
March: *The Silmarillion* by J.R.R. Tolkien, Ch. 5 & 6

IOWA

[REDACTED]: *ALFHEIM*
Doug Rossman, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]

LOUISIANA

[REDACTED] *ROKE*
Sally Budd, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

MICHIGAN

[REDACTED] *GALADHREMMIN-ENNORATH*
Dave & Grace Lovelace, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

MINNESOTA

[REDACTED] *RIVENDELL*
David Lenander, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Web: [REDACTED]

NEVADA

[REDACTED] *CRICKHOLLOW*
Joanne Burnett, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]
Web: [REDACTED]
March: *Mortal Love* by Elizabeth Hand

NEW YORK

[REDACTED] *HEREN ISTARION*
(*THE NEW YORK TOLKIEN SOCIETY*)
Anthony Burdge & Jessica Burke, The New York
Tolkien Society, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]
Web: [REDACTED]

OREGON

[REDACTED]
Donovan Mattole, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Web: [REDACTED]
March: *Taliesen* by Stephen Lawhead
April: *Merlin* by Stephen Lawhead
May: *Arthur* by Stephen Lawhead
June: *The Four Loves* by C.S. Lewis

PENNSYLVANIA

[REDACTED]: *C.S. LEWIS AND FRIENDS*
Neil Gussman, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]

SOUTH CAROLINA

[REDACTED] *THE COLUMBIA C.S. LEWIS SOCIETY*
Nina Fowler, [REDACTED]
E-mail: [REDACTED]

WASHINGTON

[REDACTED] *MITHLOND*
Matthew Winslow, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Web: [REDACTED]

WISCONSIN

[REDACTED] *THE BURRAHOBBITS*
Jeffrey & Jan Long, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Special Interest Group

THE ELVISH LINGUISTIC FELLOWSHIP
Carl Hostetter, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Newsletter, *Vinyar Tengwar*. Journal, *Parma Eldalamberon*. Christopher Gilson, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Correspondence Groups

BUTTERBUR'S WOODSHED (general fantasy)
Diane Joy Baker, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Correspondence circular with set topic. Web:
[REDACTED]
March: *Sea of Trolls* by Nancy Farmer
May: 2006 MFA Adult nominees
July: Mazes and Gardens of Fantasy
ONCE UPON A TIME (children's fantasy)
Laura Krentz, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Correspondence circular. Web: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Online Discussion Groups

MYTHSOC E-LIST
Society activities and general book-related discussion.
Sign up: [REDACTED] or contact
Joan Marie Verba: [REDACTED].
COINHERENCE
Online discussion of Charles Williams
David Davis: E-mail: [REDACTED]



Book Reviews

LOIS MCMASTER BUJOLD, *The Hallowed Hunt*. New York: Eos, 2005. ISBN 0060574623, hc, 480 pp., \$24.95.

One of the many things I admire about Lois McMaster Bujold is the way she writes about animals. From the placid horse that Cordelia Vorkosigan falls off in *Barrayar*, to the indignant kitten whose frustration captures the hero's mood in *The Spirit Ring*, to the menagerie of sacred animals in *The Curse of Chalion*, Bujold's perceptive portraits of beasts large and small suggest that she has spent considerable time with animals, observing their habits with fond attention. Where many authors' animals are props, Bujold's are characters in a drama.

I also admire the religion Bujold has created for the world of *The Curse of Chalion*, with its complex interweaving of divine intervention and human free will. The Holy Family (Mother, Father, Daughter, Son, and Bastard) are loving but limited gods, desiring the salvation of all, but powerless to intervene in the material world without human cooperation. They can be extravagantly merciful to wrongdoers, but ruthless in the demands they make on their saints, the men and women whose willing submission gives them a path into the human world.

Playing to the author's strengths, Bujold's latest adventure in the Chalion universe deals with both animals and theology, exploring a heretical sect of shamans who perform illicit sacrifices to induce possession by animal spirits.

Lord Ingrey, one of Bujold's typical battle-scarred heroes, is sent to investigate a death associated with a botched animal sacrifice, and finds himself hip-deep in complications he never wanted to face. He meets a proud and beautiful lady possessed against her will by a leopard spirit, who inspires in him contradictory emotions: an instant attraction that quickly warms into love, a mysterious compulsion to try to kill the beloved

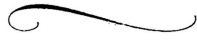
lady, and the fear that contact with her is reawakening his own long-suppressed wolf spirit. Like the lady, he was possessed against his will, and his life has been marred by the disgrace of that illicit rite.

If that sounds complicated, just wait. Ingrey's troubles haven't half begun. He's been recruited by the Son, god of animals and hunters, to fight a desperate battle for the soul of his kingdom and the eternal peace of an army slaughtered generations ago. The struggle may cost his own soul and that of the woman he loves. Bujold's oft-noted talent for putting her protagonists through hell has not diminished.

The Hallowed Hunt fulfilled many of my fondest hopes. A polar bear that terrorizes a temple—as it turns out, with just and even holy cause—is a fine addition to Bujold's bestiary. The Son, least developed of all the gods in Bujold's previous novels, at last appears in glory. The plot is a roller coaster of twists and turns, and the mythology and suspense intertwine smoothly with a thoughtful portrait of the politics of the fictional kingdom, a long-conquered nation building a new identity on the ashes of its old national myths. All these qualities make *The Hallowed Hunt* a fitting sequel to *The Curse of Chalion* and *Paladin of Souls*.

Yet this latest Bujold novel is grimmer and less hopeful than its predecessors. *The Hallowed Hunt* uncovers the limitations of the gods' power to bring justice and mercy to humankind. In this volume, we discover that the gods sometimes lose even the souls of their beloved saints. The theological problems of the novel are not as happily resolved as in *Chalion* and *Paladin*. But all in all, this bittersweet book is well worth exploring, offering a new twist on Bujold's addictive mix of suspense, romance, heroism, politics, and unconventional religion.

Reviewed by Lois V. Hinckley



ALAN JACOBS, *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C.S. Lewis*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005. ISBN 0-06-076690-5, hc, xxvi + 342 pp., \$25.95.

Jacobs has written a truly excellent interpretative biography of C.S. Lewis; the way he phrases his purpose is to say he is writing “the life of a mind, the story of an imagination.” Later, he sums up his understanding of Lewis’s personality: “the keynote of this book [is] my belief that Lewis’s mind was above all characterized by a willingness to be enchanted” (p. xxi, Jacobs’s italics).

Given this approach, Jacobs then writes a largely chronological biography, omitting facts if they seem minor and pointing to the significance of the rest. He mentions disagreements with earlier biographies at points: specifically, with Green and Hooper, Michael White, and A.N. Wilson. For example, about Wilson’s biography he says it “is highly readable and thoughtful book, and about some aspects of Lewis’s life and work he is more acute than any other biographer. But he also has some very odd ideas” (p. 231). Jacobs then lists four of the odd ideas, three from the same chapter. More interesting is a discussion of Green and Hooper’s treatment of the romance with Joy Davidman. “Lewis denied at this point [after the civil marriage] he had any erotic or romantic feelings for Joy, and Green and Hooper, dutiful biographers that they are, take his word for it” (p. 278). But Jacobs reports that both W.H. Lewis, in his diary, and Douglas Gresham, from his memories, record that Lewis was already making plans to move Davidman and her sons into the Kilns. Jacobs suggests, on the basis of an odd passage in *The Four Loves*, that Lewis did not understand his own motives very clearly.

The popular reviews I have seen of Jacobs’s book emphasized Lewis’s love affair with Janey Moore as a sensational new detail about the Christian evangelist’s life. (It’s hardly new, since Lindskoog first suggested the affair in her *C.S. Lewis Hoax* in 1988.) Jacobs cites two letters between Lewis’s father and his brother—they are his evidence for the affair—and discusses what little is known at some length.

What the popular reviews have not stressed is the less sensational material. For example, the seventh chapter begins with quotations from MacDonald’s *The Princess and the Goblins*: Irene’s grandmother on Curdie’s lack of belief in a magical thread, and Curdie’s mother’s on Irene’s belief in the thread—which, Jacobs says, are foreshadowings of Professor Kirke’s comments to Peter and Susan about believing Lucy’s account of her visit to Narnia (pp. 156-57). One valuable aspect of Jacobs’s approach is that he takes seriously the intellectual comments by Lewis: he spends some space on Kirkpatrick’s atheism being based on Schopenhauer and Frazer (pp. 47-48)—and shows that Lewis read Schopenhauer and demonstrates his knowledge of Frazer. He reads Professor Kirke as being a redeemed version of Kirkpatrick: a Schopenhauerian pessimist turned into a Platonic idealist (p. 51).

Much more could be said in praise of the book (such as the biographical emphasis on Tolkien’s “Mythopoeia” [pp. 143-47, 149]), but perhaps one should note a small number of errors. For example, Jacobs speaks of Walter Hooper “agree[ing] that in January 1964 he would return to serve as Lewis’s secretary” (298). Whatever misled Jacobs—perhaps Sayer’s biography, which still, in its third edition, says that—Lindskoog has summarized two letters from Lewis to Hooper, asking him not to return for a visit until June, or April at the earliest (*Sleuthing C.S. Lewis*). Between those, in a letter written by

Molly Miller (the Kilns housekeeper) on behalf of Lewis, of 24 September, Hooper was urged not to visit until winter was over. This reviewer caught three other such slips, which suggests how few there are. It should also be indicated that Jacobs's notes in the back give sources of quotations or paraphrases; sources of more general ideas, if not given in the text, do not appear.

But the errors are minor, the virtues many. Except for occasional citation of unpublished letters from the Wade or from the Lewis Family papers, Jacobs is not doing biographical research: instead, he is—as he indicates—interpreting Lewis's life; he does it very well.

Reviewed by Joe R. Christopher



ELIZABETH KOSTOVA, *The Historian*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005. ISBN 0-316-01177-0, hc, 642 pp., \$25.95.

I confess that I resisted reading this book when it first came out, mainly because of the hype surrounding it—the \$2 million advance, the movie deal, the top spot on the *New York Times* best-seller list, and so on. Now that the dust has settled and cooler heads are assessing its merits, I decided to take on its 600-plus pages, and here is what I found. The news is both good and bad. Let's take the bad first.

For a first novel, the structure Kostova has chosen is extremely ambitious: triple-nested memoir frameworks, requiring three separate timelines. Gary Younge, who interviewed Kostova for *The Guardian*, reported that she “stuck a wall chart up in her study to keep track of the plot.” The reader could use one, too. I found that from chapter to chapter, I was continually trying to remember in which decade the described action was taking place and whose narrative head we were in.

The endless parade of documents, tomes, letters, missives, collections of tales, folk songs, chronicles, and menacing images in print and paint tend to wear away at your patience, even if you are a reader who enjoys this kind of historical treasure hunt through ancient documents and lost artifacts. Most unforgivable of all is the fact that the meat of the story, Professor Rossi's lost letters, consists of twenty-five pages of smaller-than-usual italic font.

This use of nested frameworks has another inherent problem: telling the three storylines completely through letters, journal entries, memoirs, and postcards creates an emotional distance that prevents the reader from becoming engaged with the characters. Additionally, the main character, the Oxford academician writing about her daring adventure at age sixteen, remains nameless. I found it difficult to care about any of these main characters, who were mostly two-dimensional mouthpieces for the beauties of the places in which they traveled. Oddly, the most memorable characters are those who briefly add local color but add little to the plot itself. For example, Massimo, an Italian friend of Paul, the narrator's father, completely dominates two brief pages with his exuberant dialogue and overbearing personality. I found him, and the French restaurant manager that the narrator and her father encounter in Les Bains, far more interesting and memorable than either of the two main characters.

Most disappointing is the problematic ending of the book. For my taste, it ends not with a bang, but with an unsatisfying whimper, due to the badly conceived final chapter and a completely unnecessary epilogue. The wrap-up of the plot (the narrator's reunion with her mother Helen, and Helen's explanation of her disappearance of nearly sixteen years) is perfunctorily summarized by Helen as she sits in her cozy hotel room surrounded by her husband, her

daughter (the primary narrator), and her daughter's boyfriend. This chapter has an unpleasant *deus-ex-machina* flavor to it in that Helen's excuses for why she leaves her husband and nine-month-old baby and why, over a decade later, she decides to follow them at a distance but never reveal herself are simply not believable. Sadly, Dracula himself, potentially the most riveting presence in the book, is dispatched quickly with a bullet in the back and reduced to a pile of dust in a scant page and a half of the next to last chapter.

Kostova's writing style, which has received high praise from some reviewers, struck me as uneven at first, then gaining some confidence as the book proceeds, but losing its momentum at the end. The analogy that comes to mind is that of someone learning to ride a bicycle: wobbly at first, then finding equilibrium for a good part of the way, and ending in a rough dismount. Too many times we stumble over gems such as "It was a hollow echo, even if it came through the swish of fresh coffee," or "...twisted single columns of red marble so fragile in appearance that they could have been corkscrewed into shape by an artistic Samson." Help from a judicious editor would have been welcome here.

In spite of its problems, however, there are things to admire in *The Historian*. The depth and breadth of Kostova's research is impressive, providing a fascinating travelogue that is political as well as geographical. The search for the historical Dracula rests on a rich cultural foundation laid down by the early Turks and Christians of the region, which makes the actual character of Count Drakulya immensely intriguing when we finally meet him in the undead flesh on page 569.

No black cape here; our historical Dracula wears "a peaked cap of gold and green with a heavy jeweled brooch pinned above his brow," a tunic of gold velvet, and a white fur cape that

falls "down around him like a swirl of snow." With his scarred hand resting on a dagger's hilt, Kostova presents Dracula as a seasoned warrior of the Ottoman wars rather than a dandy who puts Victorian ladies in a swoon by moonlight, a welcome departure from the norm. Dracula himself is easily the most arresting and interesting character in the novel, so it is a shame that he receives so little actual screen time, so to speak.

Kostova's other strong suit is her ability to set atmosphere. Indeed, I believe this is the greatest appeal of *The Historian*. For every lapse of language and logic, there are lyrical, evocative passages such as this one where the sense of the scene seeps into your bones: "Night had come down hard—a cold, foggy, wet, East European night, and the street was almost deserted." For every "evil librarian," "eerie study," and scrambled simile such as "The blunt question went into me like a blade," it's possible to find marvelous passages such as this one: "...understanding that travels from word to brain to heart, the way a new language can move, coil, swim into life under the eyes, the almost savage leap of comprehension, the instantaneous, joyful release of meaning, the way the words shed their printed bodies in a flash of heat and light."

So, does *The Historian* deserve its hype? Not really. As a first novel, it is by turns ambitious, confused, lyrical, laughable, occasionally riveting, and mostly tedious. As Kostova said in her *Guardian* interview, "It's a very long book. It's a very detailed book. It's in an epic Victorian tradition. It's slow. I like to think that it's readable, but it's not an hour's read." Not by a long shot.

Reviewed by Anne Petty



J.R.R. TOLKIEN, EDITED BY VERLYN FLIEGER. *Smith of Wootton Major: Extended Edition*. London: HarperCollins, 2005. ISBN 0-00-720247-4, hc, 149 pp., \$26.54.

There's as much depth behind Tolkien's short masterworks as behind his epics. Six years ago, Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond presented an edition of *Farmer Giles of Ham* with notes, drafts, and associated material. Now it's the turn of *Smith of Wootton Major*, and this time the presenter is Verlyn Flieger, a scholar whose specialty is the ethereally uncatchable in Tolkien's writing. Since this story is the perfect embodiment of that spirit, editor and subject are well-matched.

First we have, of course, a photographic reproduction of the original published text with all the original Pauline Baynes interior illustrations, and her original U.K. cover illustration on the dust-jacket. And the text is perhaps Tolkien's most moving and endlessly re-readable story. But that is less than half the book. We also have the text of the original abandoned essay (an introduction to MacDonald's "Golden Key") which inspired the story; Tolkien's account of how he came to write the story; facsimile and transcription of what is probably the first complete draft of the story (with a few interesting differences from the final version); some story notes; and some most remarkable supplementary material. Tolkien prepared the equivalent of *The Lord of the Rings*'s Appendices A, B, and C for this tiny story, and here are timelines and genealogical material for the story and its characters, along with a long essay on the background of the village and the fairies, the relationship of the story's Faery to the primary world, the meaning and reasoning of giving the Star to Smith and bringing it to Wootton at all. What's interesting about the essay is that everything in it is implied in the story itself, though none of it is stated there.

Most authors today would frontload their stories with all this stuff, but Tolkien wrote it only for his own notes. That Tolkien doesn't say this openly, but makes sure it comes across, is the secret of the story's magic quality if anything is. Tolkien had a rare gift, but authors who read him wisely could try to emulate it.

Flieger's introduction to the after-material discusses the story's relationship to Tolkien's life-long concern with Faery, the history and organization of the manuscripts, and a little about the book's post-publication history. She doesn't mention the reason for delay in original publication, the publisher's hope that other short material by Tolkien could be gathered to make a larger volume.

The facsimiles show many cross-outs, but only in one small section are the crossed-out texts reproduced in the transcriptions. That is a little frustrating. I could also wish for a little more on what about "The Golden Key" could have inspired Tolkien to write this story, and perhaps the unpublished text of the introduction Tolkien wrote for his reading of the story at Blackfriars in 1966.

For the essay and timeline alone, this is a tremendously valuable volume with important new insights into Tolkien's way of working. It's also a beautiful fine hardcover edition of the story. Houghton Mifflin has failed to publish this volume in the U.S., and therefore the U.K. edition is in print here and may be ordered through U.S. sources, though it might take longer to arrive than ordering it directly from the United Kingdom.

Reviewed by David Bratman



Mythprint is the monthly bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society, a nonprofit educational organization devoted to the study, discussion and enjoyment of myth and fantasy literature, especially the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Charles Williams. To promote these interests, the Society publishes three magazines, maintains a World Wide Web site, and sponsors the annual Mythopoeic Conference and awards for fiction and scholarship, as well as local and written discussion groups.

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