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Owen Barfield: Philosophy, Poetry, and Theology. Michael Vincent Di Fuccia

Additional Keywords

Heidegger; Kant; Coleridge; Levy-Bruhl; romanticism; poetry; philosophy; theology; creativity; language; evolution of consciousness

If St. Paul's rhetoric is postmodern, we may well ask, what is not? The rest is silence.

Throughout this book, Yuasa demonstrates that she is a careful and deeply sympathetic reader of Lewis, and insightful when she is reading closely. Her care for the much-loved novelist, apologist, and Oxford don is worthy of praise, and her skill in the service of those works and their characters is exemplary. I would dearly love to read the book she writes about Joy Davidman's presence in the text of *Till We Have Faces*, or more straightforward comparative work. As for *C.S. Lewis and Christian Postmodernism*, any Lewis scholar who is interested in the author's ongoing popular and critical reception should add it to the shelf, especially those who identify as evangelicals and make room for their faith in their scholarship. I would not assign it to a class, as its conceptual world is confused and the very poor editing makes the book much easier to nit-pick than I have here represented. It is of no use in serious discussions of "postmodernism," except as an example of an idiosyncratic usage of the term derived from weak philosophical sources; readers not warned about this are likely to give up on the book before the end of the Introduction. Those who persist, perhaps encouraged by the very tactfully worded blurbs on the back, will likely be rewarded with several insights into Lewis's novels that are worth the price of admission.

—Peter G. Epps



OWEN BARFIELD: PHILOSOPHY, POETRY, AND THEOLOGY. Michael Vincent Di Fuccia. Eugene OR: Cascade Books, Wipf and Stock 2016. 250 p. 9781498238724. Hbk. \$55.00, pbk. \$35.00, Kindle \$9.99. Series Veritas 20.

READERS FAMILIAR WITH THE INKLINGS GENERALLY have some knowledge about Owen Barfield and his works, which might prompt interest in Michael Vincent Di Fuccia's *Owen Barfield: Philosophy, Poetry, and Theology*. Although it is not essential for a reader to have prior knowledge about Barfield, it could be helpful since Di Fuccia's book is not as much an introduction to Barfield as it is scholarly insight on Barfield's theories about philosophy, poetry, and theology. These subjects can be deep and sometimes difficult to understand, but Di Fuccia does an admirable job of providing background in each chapter before delving into weightier analysis. His introduction includes a brief literature review and outlines the plan of the book with some defined terminology.

With any study of Barfield, it is a given that Rudolf Steiner, anthropology, and the "evolution of consciousness" must be discussed as key

to Barfield's work. Di Fuccia presents these influences at the beginning as foundational to Barfield's study of language and his poetic philosophy: "his attempt to bring language and being together" (36). Barfield's theory is similar to Martin Heidegger's work on language and being, and their theories include theology as a central theme that is key to the book's argument. Di Fuccia then explores the influences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and romanticism before moving into Part II to describe Barfield's theory of sociological participation. Here, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's work on language and primitive cultures is connected with Barfield's view that language has changed over time and that humanity has increasingly separated from participating with the natural world. These issues correspond with modern science's influence, and Di Fuccia outlines this along with the Aristotelian concepts of art as *technê* and nature as *phýsis* (134) and how Barfield confronts materialism without completely disavowing positive elements of science. Instead of there being a divide between art and nature, there needs to be unity. Of importance in the book is Barfield's use of the word *rediscover*—that one would "use the imagination [...] to see that which at present simply eludes one's consciousness" (16). Di Fuccia concludes considering the relationship of theology and poetic metaphysics with the concept of a "middle voice" (detailed in chapter 5) that brings together the finite and infinite.

While it is impressive as a scholarly work, there are several factors that could make the book daunting for the average reader, besides the often dense subject matter. Sometimes the presentation is not reader-friendly; for instance, one paragraph takes almost two full pages to read through, starting at the end of page 186, filling page 187, and ending on page 188. Such length can make it more challenging to follow the ideas being presented or evaluated. There are almost as many footnotes as text (possibly more), which can be visually distracting when trying to focus on the main material. Occasionally the footnotes on a page are even longer than the text and seemingly overpower the content. One footnote fills an entire page and parts of two other pages (222-224), and since footnotes are in smaller font than the main text to begin with, it can be harder to read or may tempt the reader to skip the content. Di Fuccia's word choice can also be complicated and confusing for one with little background in the field or may prompt the use of a dictionary periodically, such as the phrase "Proleptically avoiding onto-theological speculation [...]" (222). All of these comments are not meant as negatives against the work but rather notes about its accessibility. As a positive for the book's presentation, the headings and subheadings throughout help provide organization and pauses for the reader. However, the subject matter and presentation will likely only appeal to a narrow audience, though the work is valuable as contributing to the information on

Barfield, a point underscored in the book's foreword by Barfield's grandson and trustee Owen A. Barfield.

—Tiffany Brooke Martin



SCOTLAND'S FORGOTTEN TREASURE: THE VISIONARY ROMANCES OF GEORGE MACDONALD. Colin Manlove. Aberdeen U.P., 2016, ISBN 978-1857520569. \$77.77.

COLIN MANLOVE BRINGS TO THIS WORK A LONG HISTORY of scholarship on fantasy literature in general and MacDonald in particular. One valuable contribution of this book is to put MacDonald's fantasy in the context of various fantasy traditions and to observe connections between the texts treated here and the tales of other fantasy writers.

Scotland's Forgotten Treasure examines MacDonald's "pilgrimage" narratives: *Phantastes*, *Lilith*, and "The Golden Key." Manlove sees these works as a sequence, in that *Phantastes*, written at the beginning of MacDonald's career as an author, deals with the beginnings of life, "The Golden Key," written mid-career, deals with life's journey, and *Lilith*, MacDonald's last fantasy story, presents MacDonald's view of the afterlife. The book does not offer definitive, detailed "readings" of these texts so much as observe motifs, structures, and the way the texts present ideas important to MacDonald.

The Preface puts these three works in the context of Scottish fantasy and the German Romantic fairy-tale tradition. The preliminary chapters present the main outlines of MacDonald's biography and sketch his character, summarize MacDonald's theological and literary views (emphasizing MacDonald's notion that the imagination is the faculty through which people have the most direct contact with God) and vet some candidates for the position of MacDonald's literary predecessors (with the caveat that MacDonald alters so completely what he borrows that determining any literary debt is difficult).

The chapter on *Phantastes* presents Fairy Land as Anodos' own mental landscape. Anodos' wanderings, Manlove says, are "a journey into the human imagination" (42), which MacDonald believed had God as its root. Even the evil things Anodos encounters there further his spiritual growth. Over the course of the story, Anodos moves from "dependent child" (in the forest), to "questioning youth" (in the marble palace) to "choosing adult" (in open country) (57). Recurrent motifs Manlove identifies are: improvements in seeing (a metaphor for better moral understanding); mirrors, reflections and doubles (everything in Fairy Land "reflects" Anodos to himself); doors or ways in and out (learning to