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## *Forgotten Leaves: Essays from a Smial.* Eds. Jessica Burke and Anthony Burdge

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## Mythcon 50

Looking Back, Moving Forward

San Diego, California

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All told, though, Gordon creates a compelling and fascinating account of an important figure of 20<sup>th</sup>-century British literature. *The Invention of Angela Carter* provides many important correctives on Carter—her life and personality, for example, but also her feminism. Gordon amply demonstrates that, although Carter “described herself for a while as a ‘radical feminist,’ her politics always had as much in common with the libertarian and socialist tendencies” (215), a judgement that will significantly help hone future feminist appraisals of her work. Indeed, it seems safe to say that all future work on Carter, in one way or another, will have to consult this valuable (and highly readable) new resource.

—Dennis Wilson Wise



**FORGOTTEN LEAVES: ESSAYS FROM A SMIAL.** Edited by Jessica Burke and Anthony Burdge. Staten Island, NY: Myth Ink Books, 2015. 285 p. 9781534923461. \$20.00.

*F*ORGOTTEN LEAVES: ESSAYS FROM A SMIAL (a smial being a recognized offshoot of the Tolkien Society in the UK, and the first official Tolkien group) is meant to “showcase fans as the first scholars. We wanted to present a scholarly discussion that was open to scholars and non-scholars alike. [...] Here we have discussions that are academic, fannish, and pleasant blends of the two” (5). This volume succeeds in its goals, though the connections to fan scholarship are not as explicated or as forthright as they could have been, especially given certain contributors’ bona fides. Indeed, co-editor Jessica Burke’s forward lingers over the disconnect between book and film fandoms that has turned toxic for some; she assigns the popularity of the films as the source of the greed of the Tolkien estate, which demands a great deal of pricey permissions for the use of the name alone, which subsequently bankrupted the smial whose members created the volume and led to an end of their activities and a hiatus for the organization. This bitterness casts a pall on the collection, which is otherwise an interesting and pleasurable read. *Forgotten Leaves* is more of a collection for fans than academics, despite some academic-esque entries. Most of the essays are lightly written, focusing on the core texts of Tolkien’s work and its offshoots, though sporadically contributors do make use of some of Tolkien’s other work or his letters, or of some of the scholarship that has been written for a popular audience.

Topics vary widely, recalling the wide-ranging discussions many Tolkien enthusiasts will cheerfully indulge in repeatedly. The book begins with a series of more conventionally literary readings: Melissa Snyder discusses

Tolkien's view of the hero, with Boromir representing a traditional archetype that Tolkien rejects and Frodo as a self-sacrificing and merciful hero. Elizabeth Johnson ably discusses Tolkien's "unintentional" use of Romanticism in his portrayal of idyllic nature and the innocence of the Hobbits. Andrea Mathwich argues that Goldberry is a reincarnated Yavanna—an intriguing interpretation, but one that is under-examined; this essay shows the best and worst of purely fannish writing, with just enough detail to make an interesting case but not enough to close the argument successfully, nor drawing on any sources beyond the source texts of *The Lord of the Rings* or the *Silmarillion*. Clare McBride discusses the adaptation of Éowyn and Faramir's story in the Jackson films, referencing comments on fan message boards ca. 2002 that christened Faramir as "Filmamir" and "Farfromthebookamir." Laurel Michalek rereads interpretations of the Old Forest and Old Man Willow, arguing that they are not inherently evil but merely responding to harm in an understandable way.

After these pieces, the book shifts gears, starting with a particularly odd entry: Maria Alberto's book review of *Tolkien and the Modernists*. This is no slight on the author or her work, but it is the only such review in the middle of what is otherwise an essay collection, and so it stands out accordingly as a bit of a puzzle, and if the editors had only included other book reviews, this would have been mediated. Chris Tuthill provides a discussion of Tolkien-inspired games across multiple media, including board games, role-playing games, and video games. Laura Kemmerer contributes a personal essay on *The Lord of the Rings*, storytelling, and making one's way in the world, followed by Jessica Burke's longer meditation on myth and Tolkien's writing. After this we return once again to more conventionally literary analysis: Richard Rohlin discusses the heroism of the men in the *Silmarillion*, Anthony S. Burdge considers Tolkien as a Catholic mystic, and Nicholas Birns contributes an extensive analysis of Tolkien's representation of his own authorial voice in *The Lord of the Rings*. This piece is by far the most traditionally academic in the collection, as Birns substantially draws on the extant scholarship to inform his arguments. It's a truly winning essay and one that is not, I hope, lost in the shuffle of contemporary scholarship.

The final pieces largely tread more familiar territory: Elizabeth Reinhardt considers Tolkien's translation of *Beowulf*, recently released, to that of Seamus Heaney, while Jared Lobdell looks at C.S. Lewis and Nevill Coghill as an "Irish friendship in English literature" in what is another substantially academic piece. Tatiana Denisova provides an interesting analogue between the Noldorin Revolution and the French Revolution, discussing Locke, Hobbes, and the Enlightenment by way of a close reading of "Exile of the Noldor." Denisova's essay is particularly interesting and a blend of fannish and academic writing as she largely relies on popular and online sources yet creates a

fascinating and original argument; like the Birns piece, I hope it's a piece of scholarship that doesn't get lost.

Because of the uneven quality of the contributions, this isn't necessarily a collection for scholars, but it is definitely of interest to Tolkien fans. I wish that Burke and Burdge's editorial apparatus had been a bit clearer about how these pieces came to be: in the foreword, it seems to represent a specific fan group from a specific location (NYC) and yet the contributors are from across the US; there is the claim that fans were the first Tolkien scholars (which is true), but these are all contemporary pieces. An afterword of any kind could have cleared this up, but there isn't one; the last essay is followed directly by the index. Despite these puzzles, all of the contributions are engagingly written, and there are some real gems here for fans and scholars alike.

—Cait Coker



**TOLKIEN STUDIES: AN ANNUAL SCHOLARLY REVIEW.** Edited by Michael D.C. Drout, Verlyn Flieger, and David Bratman. Volume XIII (2016). ISSN 1547-3155. 321 pp. \$60.00 annually.

**NORTH WIND: A JOURNAL OF GEORGE MACDONALD STUDIES.** Edited by John Pennington. No. 35 (2016). ISSN 0265-7295. 143 pp. Print with \$26.00 annual membership. Online [digitalcommons.snc.edu/northwind/](http://digitalcommons.snc.edu/northwind/)

**VII: JOURNAL OF THE MARION E. WADE CENTER.** Edited by Marjorie Lamp Mead. Volume 33 (2016). ISSN 0271-3012. 122 pp. \$18.00 US annually, other prices on website.

MANY OF THE ARTICLES IN THE 2016 ISSUE OF *TOLKIEN STUDIES* deal with Tolkien's recently published *Beowulf* and Arthurian materials. Simon J. Cook's essay "The Cauldron at the Outer Edge: Tolkien on the Oldest English Fairy Tales" is a complement—not a continuation, since it has a different focus—to his essay on "The Peace of Frodo" in *Tolkien Studies* 12 (reviewed by me in *Mythlore* #128). Here he delves into Tolkien's understanding of some of the very oldest stories in English mythology, and how he used elements from these tales to construct *The Lord of the Rings* as an asterisk-origin for them: the "scholarly-literary nexus" of Tolkien's work as a whole provided him with a way to "[connect] his philological inquiries with his emerging story of the Third Age of Middle-earth" (10). Cook looks particularly at two legends referenced in *Beowulf*—the Scyld Scefing story, with its culture hero who arrives and departs