



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

Volume 37
Number 1

Article 26

10-15-2018

***Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth* Ed. Catherine McIlwaine**

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Recommended Citation

Croft, Janet Brennan (2018) "*Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth* Ed. Catherine McIlwaine," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 37: No. 1, Article 26.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol37/iss1/26>

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Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth Ed. Catherine McIlwaine

Abstract

Review of the catalog for the Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth exhibition.

Additional Keywords

Bodleian Library; Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth

BRIEFLY NOTED

TOLKIEN: MAKER OF MIDDLE-EARTH. Edited by Catherine McIlwaine. Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, 2018. Distributed in the United States by University of Chicago Press. 416 pp., 300 color plates, cloth bound. 978-1-85124-485-0. £40.00, \$65.00.

NOT BEING AMONG THE LUCKY FEW WHO TRAVELLED TO OXFORD earlier this summer to see the *Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth* exhibit (I plan to make my pilgrimage when it visits the Morgan in New York City early in 2019), I was delighted to obtain a copy of the massive exhibition catalog. It includes a concise biographical essay by Catherine McIlwaine, of the Bodleian's Department of Special Collections, and a small selection of scholarly review essays by major scholars: on the Inklings by John Garth; on the concept of Faërie by Verlyn Flieger; on Tolkien's languages by Carl Hostetter; on his Northern European influences by Tom Shippey; and on his visual art by Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull. It is my understanding that the exhibition and its accompanying materials cannot mention the Peter Jackson films, so I was a bit surprised to see the tag line "the biggest event for Tolkien fans since the movies" on the accompanying publicity release. But it was good to encounter no dilution of the focus of the volume by any discussion of adaptations; its attention, as it should be, remains solely on Tolkien, his works, art, and biography.

The bulk of the volume, of course, consists of glorious high-resolution photographs of items in the Bodleian collections, with detailed descriptions, usually on the facing pages. Here is where we find the "seventy-five never-before-seen images" touted in the publicity materials, and that alone makes it worthwhile to acquire this volume. (Even things we have seen before are often reproduced in clearer detail than in previous publications.)

For example, pp. 152-153 reproduce a letter from Tolkien to Edith from 3 November 1913—fortunately transcribed for us from his hasty and idiosyncratic handwriting—in which he describes that quintessential Oxonian rite of passage, going to take the oath at the Bodleian Library and registering as a member. Turning back to pp. 116-117, we see a generous sample of his mother Mabel's even more idiosyncratic handwriting, in a March 1893 letter to her in-laws. For lovers of Tolkien's artwork, there are also treasures: for one, a sketch of "Bilbo comes to the Huts of the Raft-elves" on p. 310, which correctly has him arriving at night (a case where the reproduction is *slightly* better than the one in Hammond and Scull's *J.R.R. Tolkien: Artist and Illustrator*). On pp. 284-285 are reproductions of watercolors by William Russell Flint that hung in Tolkien's study; one might trace inspirations for some of Tolkien's own paint and prose landscapes here. There are also many stages of many maps scattered throughout

the various sections of the catalog. And for those interested in biography, in addition to many new pictures of family life, a charming account book in which the newly-engaged Tolkien kept track of the kisses Edith owed him (148-149).

All in all, a treasure-house of images, a perfect gift for yourself or a Tolkien-lover on your list.

—Janet Brennan Croft



THE COMPLETE FAIRY TALES. Charles Perrault; edited by Christopher Betts; illustrations by Gustave Doré. Oxford World's Classics Hardback Collection. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. 264 pp. ISBN 9780198817970. \$22.95.

THE MABINOGION. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Sioned Davies. Oxford World's Classics Hardback Collection. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. 294 pp. ISBN 9780198815242. \$24.95.

THE OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS IS A VENERABLE SERIES that has been around for over 100 years, according to the press's website, and has printed more than 750 titles representing the most enduring books from around the world. The current hardback series, relaunched in 2017, features handsome single-color cloth bindings stamped in one color. While individual titles are frequently updated, this *Mabinogion* (in a scarlet binding stamped in gold) is a reprint of a 2007 edition. Sioned Davies's Introduction places the collection of tales in context and provides a brief textual history, in addition to a note on the translation, a pronunciation guide, a bibliography, and a map; the end matter includes notes and indexes of personal and place names. The Perrault *Fairy Tales* (in turquoise cloth stamped in navy), similarly, is a reprint of a 2009 edition, and includes a comparable set of helpful introductory and ending material. The Doré illustrations are printed with no margin, aside from the frontispiece, which somehow renders the more grotesque ones all the more disturbing. Other titles of potential mythopoeic interest in the current series include *Frankenstein*, *A Christmas Carol*, M.R. James's *Collected Ghost Stories*, Arthur Conan Doyle's *Gothic Tales*, Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan and Other Horror Stories*, *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, and *Victorian Fairy Tales*. The press's website, however, is unfortunately coy about which titles are reissues and which include new critical material.

—Janet Brennan Croft