



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

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

Volume 2
Number 2

Article 14

Fall 10-15-1970

Lines on the Reverend's Black Beard / To Michal Williams

Anonymous

Simone Wilson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore>



Part of the [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Anonymous and Wilson, Simone (1970) "*Lines on the Reverend's Black Beard / To Michal Williams*," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 2: No. 2, Article 14.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol2/iss2/14>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by the Mythopoeic Society at SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature by an authorized editor of SWOSU Digital Commons. An ADA compliant document is available upon request. For more information, please contact phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu.

To join the Mythopoeic Society go to:
<http://www.mythsoc.org/join.htm>

SWOSUTM

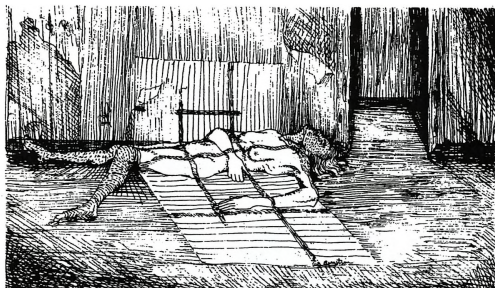
Online Summer Seminar 2023

August 5-6, 2023: Fantasy Goes to Hell: Depictions of Hell in Modern Fantasy Texts

<https://mythsoc.org/oms/oms-2023.htm>



Lines on the Reverend's Black Beard / To Michal Williams



ter that, I realized I was being silly and everything else was routine."
They were both silent for some time. Then Clarissa said: "And what do you think about it now?"

He turned to her, and shrugged. "What am I to think?" he said. "There it is; that was what happened. I suppose I could persuade myself easily enough that it didn't, for I'd almost forgotten that it had till you dragged it up. But I don't want to."

"Why not, Mr. Challis?" Clarissa asked.
"Because it would be persuading myself," he answered. "I would do it willingly enough if I thought it was right, if I was being morbid or... or delicious or anything. But this now seems all so plain and certain. You don't think I'm being morbid, do you?"

She said: "Now, I don't. But will you let me, before we go on, put you through a medical examination? I'm a doctor, you know, and I promise I'll tell you exactly what I think afterwards. It would be a check for both of us. If there's anything physically wrong, we shall know; if not, I may ask you to do something for me."

"There's my lung, you know," he said. "But just as you like. Now?"

"Why not?" she said. "Come into the other room, will you?"

Three-quarters of an hour afterwards, Challis was settling his tie, and Clarissa was standing by the table glancing over her notes. When he turned to her, she took up a box of cigarettes, offered them to him, took one, and as he threw away the match said: "Let's sit down. Now, Mr. Challis. First of all, you're entirely sound, so far as I can find. The lung is nothing. You're as near normal, physically, as any ordinary man can hope to be. Does that satisfy you?... Very well. Second, I've listened to everything you could say, and I believe implicitly everything you say. I believe that something happened, and you knew of it; that there was a shock which, as near as you could hear it, sounded like a bomb, and that what you saw in that room was much like sand as a body, though at present it keeps the shape of a body. I believe you saw it move, and I quite certainly believe that it was something no child had better come near — nor anyone else if it can be helped. Does that satisfy you?... Very well. And thirdly I want to know if you will come again to that house to-night with me. I don't know what we may hear or see — nothing, very likely; and if we do, we shan't be sure what it is. But I mean to go myself, and I'd be very glad if you would come too."

"Of course I will," Challis answered. "Why not? I don't quite see why you want to go; our people ransacked it pretty completely. But if you'd like to look over it again, I'll certainly come."

Clarissa looked at him thoughtfully. "Yes," she said. "Thank you."

Only — don't forget the sand, will you? I mean, if we're to take it that you saw what you described, then for the present we must take it so altogether, mustn't we? I do. But I'd like to be sure that you do."

Challis sat back, thinking. She saw his face harden again as he said: "You really mean it was as loathsome as that?"

"I mean we must take it so," she answered, and added abruptly: "Personally, I think it was."

"But sand—" he objected, "after all, even I — now — can see that they've got the body. I've seen it long enough myself. I told you what I thought I saw then, but... Why, the doctor'll be doing the P.M. — now, perhaps; soon anyhow."

"Yes," Clarissa said, "yes. When you say the P.M. — Oh well, never mind that yet. But I've cancelled an appointment with a hair-dresser this afternoon, because I've told the Colonel that I shall ring him up presently to hear about the result of that P.M. If it's what I think it may be —. You must understand, Mr. Challis, that if you come to-night, you come to look for clues to the bomb that wasn't there and to the sand that became a body. And to the mice."

"Mice?" he asked.

She told him, briefly, of her own experience, of hearing the mice that were also not there. Ending, and pressing out her cigarette, "You see," she said, "it's all a very odd business. And in a way none of mine. You have every right to do as you choose. But I can't reconcile myself to leaving it as it is without any kind of further effort."

Challis suddenly grinned at her. "I doubt if you've tried very hard," he said.

Clarissa stared at him for a moment, almost as if taken aback by his words, and all but inclined to be offended. Then she relaxed and herself broke into a quick answering smile. He was astonished at its rich delight; her eyes danced, her mouth quivered, and in that release of joy she stood up and stretched her arms as if in relief after the heaviness of their long talk. "Well, no," she said, "perhaps I haven't. You're very good for me, Mr. Challis. There's a risk, of course, but really very little. What I do so hate is the filth. But a bath" — her voice changed to a serenely joy — "and the Eucharist, and it's gone."

"The—" said Challis, startled. "Oh yes, of course, the—" He stumbled so obviously over the word that her smile came back and then she laughed outright.

"Oh I do beg your pardon," she said and stretched out her hand to him. As he took it, she went on: "You looked so surprised that I couldn't help it. Never mind that now. Where shall I find you to-night? Say, at half-past ten?"

"Half-past ten!" he exclaimed.

"You think that's rather late?" she said. "In my experience, it's not usually much good being earlier."

"I was thinking of the evening," he said. "If you want to look over the house, it'll be dark by then."

"We'd better perhaps be there before dark," she said; "after all, I don't know the house. But it's generally from twelve to two that one ought to be about. Only it makes it a long time and too long a time makes one stale."

"Couldn't we go and look at it about seven," Challis suggested, "and then if you'd dine with me? We could go back afterwards. Let me call for you here about half-past six; I'll get a Yard car and save trouble."

"That's very kind of you," Clarissa said. "Yes; I should like that. And now go and get some sleep if you can, for you must have been up all night. Till half-past six then, Mr. Challis" — she smiled at him again as she opened the door — "and God defend the right."

NEXT: Chapter II — THE VOICE OF THE RAT

TO MICHAL WILLIAMS

(on the news of her passing)

The old substantial glory fades;
Gone is the blank between
The imagic stuff of which we're made
And the long-suspected dream
From which, in likeness there portrayed,
The Empire took its theme.

Done is the vigil of memory
For years by death enforced.
The Love exchanged through each to each
Reflected a larger course
As in the Emperor's House of Unity
She joins him at Its source.

—Simone Wilson
February 19, 1970

LINES ON THE REVEREND'S BLACK BEARD, BEGUN 20 JUNE
ANNO DOMINI 1965 AT THE REQUEST OF HIS LADY-LOVE

The aesthete in her wanted it
For symmetry it gave;
Farbeit from her to admit
Nostalgia for the cave.

And though in church it may distract
Her from a prayer or two,
How strangely things opaque can act
To slant the Glory through!

—A Charles Williams Character