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Reviews

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Reviews

Abstract

The Lost Road and Other Writings. J.R.R. Tolkien. Reviewed by Taum Santoski.

Seven: An Anglo-American Literary Review, Vol. 8. Beatrice Batson, David S. Robb, John Coates, Diane Edwards, Gwentyth E. Hood, George Musacchio, Brian G. Marsden, Stephen Medcalf. Reviewed by Nancy-Lou Patterson.

Gesellschaft für Literatur und Aesthetic. Gisbert Kranz. Reviewed by Christine Lowentroun.

C.S. Lewis and His World. David Barratt. Reviewed by Nancy-Lou Patterson.



Language to Mythology to World

A Subjective Review of *The Lost Road and Other Writings*, Volume V in *The History of Middle-earth*. (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987), 455 pp.

About 1931 J.R.R. Tolkien delivered a remarkable short address to an unknown philological group in Oxford. Entitled "A Hobby for the Home" (a.k.a. "A Secret Vice") this paper, prepared about the time he was writing the *Quenta Noldorinwa* and the first annals of *Beleriand* and *Valinor*, presents a remarkable by Tolkien of the *raison d'être* for his mythology: language. He says so quite directly (pp. 210-11, *Monsters and the Critics*):

I might fling out the view that for perfect construction of an art language it is found necessary to construct in outline a mythology concomitant.... because the making of language and mythology are related functions; to give your language an individual flavor, it must have woven into it the threads of an individual mythology.... your language construction will breed a mythology.

Out of the enormous selections of texts of Tolkien's mythology against the samples of language found in Vols. I-IV of *The History of Middle-earth*, Christopher Tolkien has amply defended his father's statement that an art language will breed a mythology. But what of this making of languages? In Vol. I we are given the earliest lexicons of Tolkien's language, which are supplemented in Vol. II. In Vol. III, the most literary volume in the History, except for name-changes we are left without much idea of how the languages are behaving at this point; Vol. IV shows how the actual physical dimensions of the world evolve, but again, little language.

Volume V rectifies this imbalance of language versus mythology marvelously, but here there is a great proviso by Christopher Tolkien. He offers an explanation: "(M)y father was perhaps more interested in the processes of change than he was in displaying the structure and use of the languages at any given time" (V: 342). What we have is more complicated than the literary texts, and as the *Lhammas* and *Etymologies* demonstrate, a problem whose resolution, if a suitable one can ever be established, will be an understanding of the constant reflowing and reworking of the languages.

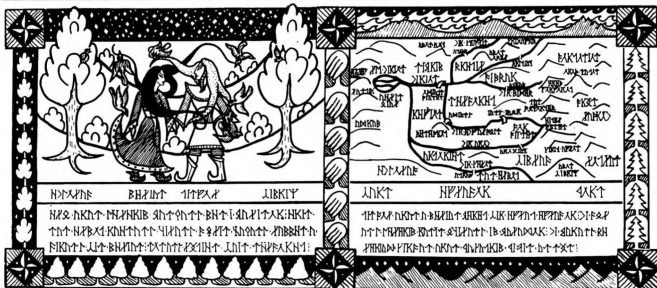
This deep interest by Tolkien in revising his art-languages is demonstrable by a brief glance at the *Etymologies* and comparison with the lexicon in Vol. I. Under the entry *Nume* (I: 263) 'West'; the *Qenya* word

is said to derive from the root *NUHU* 'bow, bend down, stoop, sink'; in the *Etymologies* we find (V: 376) the word *numen* 'west' under the root *NDU-* go down, sink, set (of Sun, etc.) with reference to another root *NU-* without definition, but associated with *Q. nun* adv. 'down below, underneath'. Within the proper context of the appropriate stages of development, *nume* and *numen* are both "real" words. But are they both valid? Taking advice from Christopher Tolkien, it cannot be truly decided which words are rejected and which are in abeyance. Those who are hoping for a "authoritative" form of *Qenya* or *Sindarin* I think will be disappointed. Those whom are concerned more with the complexities which still await, are more intrigued than dissuaded by Christopher Tolkien's statement (V: 342): "the only way to determine sequence is in the internal evidence of the changing philology itself."

Although Vol. V is entitled "The Lost Road" from the publication of an unfinished novel of that name, in this largest of the five volumes, we are now brought down to the time of the writing of *The Lord of the Rings*. Many of the stories which are referred to in *LR* are now in the form Tolkien will use in his "new *Hobbit*". From all this mass of material, which is presented with precision and clarity, the vision that emerges is one of surprise. It has become readily apparent that Tolkien's great accomplishment is not that he began *The Lord of the Rings* at all, but that he finished it. As Jared Lobdell has stated, it is to the linkings that the greatest debt should be shown, especially to Jack Lewis, who mid-wifed the birth.

The *History of Middle-earth*, *Unfinished Tales*, *The Silmarillion*, all illustrate Tolkien's great creative and subtle imagination. The prose of the *Lost Tales* may sometimes stumble, the lines of the *Lay of Lethian* (and its reworking) show great control of word and structure but lays incomplete, the story of "The Lost Road" contains marvellous passages, and even if it could have been sustained it was the fatal attraction of language and myth that seems to have stalled it continuance. All of this points to the poignancy of the words of the late Christopher Wiseman: "Why these creatures live to you is because you are still creating them. When you have finished creating them they will now be as dead to you as the atoms that make our living food" (Tolkien, p. 120).

I think it is this incompleteness that makes all of the work of Tolkien so attractive to many of us. Should I have said "fatally attractive"? The *History of Middle-earth*, in no matter how many volumes, will have a hard center when it comes to the story of the destruction of the Ring. We will miss the invention of the *Hobbits*: they at first lay outside of the high world of *Elves* and heroic *Men*. Even with the reference to Gondolin and the knowledge (thanks to Vol. V) that *cram* is an elvish word (V: 365, entry *KRAB*



--with the meaning of 'cake of compressed flour or meal (often containing honey and milk) used on long journeys' *The Hobbit* was still outside of the language-mythology in 1937.

The "new Hobbit" drew upon and was caught up in the maelstrom of the *Quenta Silmarillion*. Volume V makes quite clear, though it is never actually stated, that in 1937 the currents of Tolkien's imagination gathering for a fusion: the *Quenta* was nearly complete, the story of Men after the Great Battle had arisen, the languages were in a more advanced style, and, the public was clamouring to hear more about Hobbits. Fortunately Mr. Baggins, who "had more sense, and properly went into retirement!" (*Catalogue of Hobbit Exhibit*, p. 6) had a nephew.

Taum Santoski

Literary work for everyman

Seven: An Anglo-American Literary Review, Volume 8 (Longmont, Colorado, and Wheaton Illinois: Bookmaker's Guilt, Inc., and the Marion E. Wade Center, 1987), 116 pp. ISSN 0271-3012.

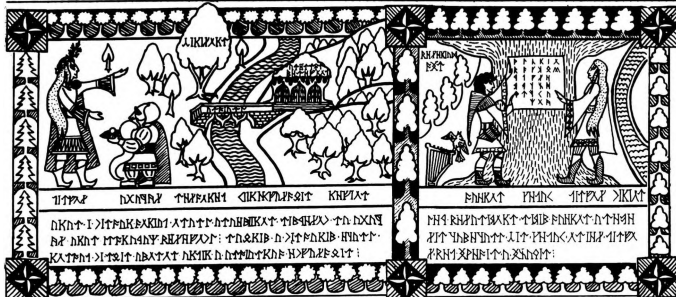
An annual volume is like an orchestra performing a symphony; the individuals who participate contribute to what, in the end, is a significant whole. I take the license to compare writing with music from Charles Williams, who made that comparison only half in jest, in his essay "The History of Critical Music" (1928). The Editors of *Seven* understand this concept very well, and Volume 8 is a splendid example of their skills. All of its essays are significant and instructive, and one of them is even delightful. The Editors carefully call attention to the inclusion of "scientific subjects" in this volume, and state, "We welcome this extension beyond literary themes, both as characteristics of the authors and as likely to appeal to a diversity of readers." (p. 1)

The Volume begins with "A Tribute to Clyde S. Kilby" by one of the Editors, Beatrice Batson, and concludes with the usual book reviews", but as I wrote the last of them, modesty forbids). In between are seven articles, devoted to six of the seven authors from whom *Seven* takes its name: missing this time is Owen Barfield. The first essay is David S. Robb's "George MacDonald and Animal Magnetism," an

interesting study of MacDonald's use of "somnambulism," "mesmerism," and "seance phenomena." Needless to say, these three categories are not understood in the present as they were when MacDonald drew upon them from the popular preoccupations of his own period; mesmerism was an early understanding of what is now called hypnotism, and the phrase "animal magnetism" was another nineteenth century term for the same thing. Dr. Robb suggests that MacDonald may have been familiar with the writings of a distinguished chemist, William Gregory, who was Professor of Medicine at King's College, Aberdeen, when the young MacDonald was a student there. Dr. Robb's analysis of Gregory's works' and in particular of Gregory's insistence that these apparent powers were entirely natural, leads him to suggest that "it is perhaps possible to catch echoes of things in MacDonald," (p. 15) very usefully placing the author in the context of his own period, and offering surprisingly mundane origins for some of his most numinous motifs, including the crystal globe in the little girl's hand in *Phantastes*, the "miraculous thread which guides Irene in *The Princess and the Goblin*," p. 20 and the "rigidly clenched hand" (p. 21) of the eponymous heroine (if she is a heroine) of *Lilith*.

What might be called deep background, a larger, historical contextualization, of these preoccupations, is provided by the fourth essay of this volume, Gwyneth E. Hood's "Sauron as Gorgon and Basilisk." She carefully distinguishes between the capacities of Sauron's lidless eye to strike dead (at least spiritually) all who see it, like the Gorgon, Medusa, and to kill (again in spirit) all upon whom it looks, like the Basilisk, and she too touches upon hypnotism and upon earlier conceptualizations which contributed to popular ideas of what the hypnotist's powers can be (one not shared, I hasten to emphasize, by any scientists of our own time), most notably the Medieval notion that vision somehow extended outward from the eye like a ray. This essay is derived from Dr. Hood's 1984 Ph.D. dissertation from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, "The Lidless Eye and the Long Burden the struggle between Good and Evil in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*."

The second essay in the volume is John Coates' "Malaise at the Heart of *The Flying Inn*," which is, like that of Dr. Robb discussed above, an extremely



revealing exercise in contextualization. It considers G.K. Chesterton's *The Flying Inn* as a work "written very much out of its author's awareness of a political and social crisis... made even more threatening by its spiritual and religious dimensions," (p. 26) in a word, the Marconi Case, in which highly placed officials of the British government used "their official positions and knowledge of the government's intentions... in order to enrich themselves," (p. 27) The government was Liberal, Chesterton's own party, and the coverup which followed included the trial for libel of his own brother Cecil. Not surprisingly this crisis was accompanied for Chesterton by severe illness, accidental injury, and unusual irritability. It is Dr. Coates' entirely convincing thesis that all of this was also reflected in *The Flying Inn*.

Continuing this gloomy theme is Diane T. Edwards' very perceptive essay, "Christian Existentialism in the Early Poetry of Charles Williams." Although "it was chiefly because of Williams' energies that Kierkegaard [the quintessential Christian Existentialist] was translated into English and published," (p. 43) Professor Edwards points out that Williams' emphasis is "not the individuals, and laws of exchange," in concurrence with Buber and Marcel. She pursues these themes through *The Silver Stair* (1912), *Poems of Conformity* (1917), *Divorce* (1920), and *Windows of Night* (1924); Williams' early poetry exhibited in grains of sand the full-blown universes of his later novels and theological treatises. Professor Edwards' comments upon the poem "Richmond Park" summarizes what she calls "the existential shock" -- that one "is solitary, isolated, unique and... capable of plunging into the depths of the abyss" -- and his Christian resolution -- "the very activity of God as He Who protects us from the void of despair." (p. 49)

A second essay on Charles Williams is Stephen Medcalf's meditation, in a review article of Alice Mary Hadfield's *Charles Williams: An Exploration of His Life and Work* (1983), "Charles Williams as Natural and Præternatural." Mr. Medcalf confronts directly the many witnesses, including T.S. Eliot, C.S. Lewis, W.H. Auden, and Mrs. Hadfield, who have "felt that there was something præternatural about Charles Williams," (p. 97) and the contrast of these apprehensions with the impression some have derived from his writings that he must have been "a detestable type of charla-

tan." He has not exhausted either the subject or Mrs. Hadfield's absolutely essential book, but his essay is very important in dealing openly and specifically with the relationship between Williams' spiritual life and his theology.

On the same theme of a writer's spiritual life and its role in his Christian teachings is George Musacchio's study, "Fiction in *A Grief Observed*," which reiterates in an expanded form the essay previously published in *Mythlore* (Spring 1986). It is Dr. Musacchio's thesis that *A Grief Observed*, while founded upon C.S. Lewis' experiences after the death of his beloved wife, Helen Joy Davidman Gresham Lewis, is in general a fictionalized version of the grieving process, tailored to include a broader range of experiences than those Lewis actually endured, and should be classed with its successor volume, *Letters to Malcolm*, in which the "letters" are fully as fictional as those in *The Screwtape Letters*. It is, Dr. Musacchio argues, "a literary work for Everyman," indeed, an expansion upon the "grief motifs in *In Memoriam*," (p. 78) This thesis has the virtue of refuting the unpleasant and inaccurate notion of John Beversluis that C.S. Lewis lost his faith when he was bereaved of his wife, but I would like to add that *A Grief Observed* does not in fact depict a man who has lost his faith, but rather a man wrestling with the demons of grief and, in God's good time, winning over them.

I now turn to the essay which I deemed "delightful": Brian G. Marsden's "Dorothy L. Sayers and the Truth about Lucan." Dr. Marsden is Director of the International Union's Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams and "Minor Planet Center (which deals, I guess, with real unidentified flying objects). As an undergraduate at Oxford, he was engaged in correspondence with Miss Sayers, who "made an attempt to rehabilitate the minor Roman poet Lucan" (p. 85) who had been not only mis-translated but "roundly condemned as inaccurate by A.E. Houseman and by Robert Graves." This may sound like a dry topic if you have never read any of Miss Sayers' letters before, but I assure you that it is witty, learned, and delicious romp, combining her ascerbic and searching intellect with her passion for justice. The central matter concerns "the hellical rising of Sirius, the Dog Star, and the relation of this event to the date of the summer solstice and the 'dog days'." It is delightful to con-



template Miss Sayers' preoccupation with these arcana "during the last eight months of her life," (p. 85) and for people who enjoyed her notes to *The Divine Comedy* almost as much as her translation of that sublime work, it is a privilege to share, thirty years latter, her correspondence with Dr. Marsland, a man who even as a student quite evidently held his own in the exchange. Lucky him; luck us!

Nancy-Lou Patterson

Inklings in Germany

Two new publications have appeared from the Inklings Gesellschaft für Literatur und Aesthetik. The group has produced a catalogue of their special collection of primary works of, and secondary works focusing on, the writers: G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, George MacDonald, Dorothy L. Sayers, J.R.R. Tolkien and Charles Williams. The collection was established because of the increasing difficulty Inklings scholars were having in locating and being permitted to study primary and secondary works relating to the Inklings and their "spiritual ancestors" G.K. Chesterton and George MacDonald. The collection is open, free, to members of the Inklings Gesellschaft.

The growing collection features seven hundred books, and also clippings from newspapers, related articles from literary journals (including *Mythlore*), plus there are pictures and holographs of handwritten manuscripts. The catalogue is divided into six headings, one for each author. Under each heading there are further divisions for poetry, plays, novels, essays, autobiographies, anthologies, and then the secondary works that focus on these aspects. Further divisions (such as certain themes) are made for some authors. It is a very complete catalogue, highly useful for anyone studying the Inklings.

The second publication is the fifth *Inklings Annual*. This volume, nearly four hundred pages long, focuses primarily on Charles Williams as most of the articles in it were presented at the Charles Williams Symposium of November 1986. The articles from the Symposium are followed by summaries in German, if the original article was presented in English, or in English if the article was in the German language. Following that is a brief synopsis of the discussion inspired by each paper. These discussions are succinct, but each is highly interesting. For instance, following Judith Kollmann's paper on "The Question of

Influence in Charles Williams' Arthurian Cycles," the discussion ranges from how Williams used symbolism, to other writers who employed literary allusions in order to build an overall effect, like T.S. Eliot and David Jones. Even more interesting was a fine look at Williams' use of language in "The Star of Percivale" by Angelika Schneider. In the discussion that followed, one gets the impression that Williams' highly individualistic language sometime fails to cross the German/English language barrier. The phrase meant nothing to the one auditor, though it evoked clear images for others. Finally someone expressed the desire to hear the poetry spoken out loud!

Other highlights of the volume include a translation into German of a segment of "Talesin Through Logres" (with notes), by Gisbert Krantz; considering the language barrier problem as stated above, this poet has done a remarkable job in conveying the tone and flavor of Williams' English in this German translation. The are papers on Williams' occult interests, and his verse drama, and an exceptionally good paper by Charles Hutter on "Williams' Changing Views of Milton and the Problems of *Shadows of Ecstasy*." Anyone interested in Charles Williams should make an effort to read this volume.

Not that the focus is all on Williams. There are two articles on Tolkien, both very good. Also there are the usual extensive reviews, always fascinating: one likes to see how English-language secondary works are perceived in other countries, and one likes to see what is being written about the Inklings in other languages. These volumes from the Inklings Gesellschaft, all five of them consistently excellent, should be obtained by any library that seeks to build quality reference material on the subject of the Inklings.

Christine Lowentrout

World within Worlds

David Barratt, *C.S. Lewis and His World* (London: Marshall Pickering/William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 46 pp. ISBN 0-8028-3639-9.

This very slim, presumably (but not, I think, successfully) popular, and prettily illustrated work may be of interest to those who have come very late to an acquaintance with the writings of C.S. Lewis. It offers a brief summary of his life, accompanied by some pho-



tographs which are very revealing and others (among them some without clear or specific labels) which could be found in any British picture-book. As a Canadian I can point to a vast genre in the same format which concerns itself with members of the Royal Family.

Happily, the text is not mere hagiography but a generally interesting account of Lewis' life (with which no specialists will agree in every particular, but such is the nature of specialists), into which is successfully woven a commentary upon his books (with which ditto). A very peculiar emphasis is Barratt's notion that "in these days of what might be termed the 'occult explosion', Lewis' reference to magic and even astrology become problematic -- even though harmless when first written." (p. 44) This somehow suggests 1) a naive credulity on the part of Barratt as regards the "occult" activities of the present period, and 2) an equally naive lack of awareness on the part of Lewis as regards the "occult" activities of his own period.

I regard contemporary anxieties about the "occult" as far more dangerous and un-Christian than anything that may (or more likely, may not) be happening in "occult" circles, but as I cannot discern precisely the theological/denominational stance from which Barratt speaks, I cannot say whether he is really as naive as he sounds. But I know from Lewis' own letters, autobiography, and other writings that he was very well aware indeed of the occultist preoccupations of his own day. I think, in fact, that his appeal to Renaissance concepts of high magic was a deliberate attempt to steer his child readers away from any squalid dabblings toward the "deep magic," the true wonder, of the religion he espoused and defended. His references are to Edmund Spenser, not to Charles Manson. The characterization of Uncle Andrew in *The Magician's Nephew* should dispel all fears of Lewisian weakness for the goetic arts, surely!

Nancy-Lou Patterson

Tolkien Journal

Complete sets of *Tolkien Journal*, numbers 1-15 (excluding #12, which is the same as *Mythlore* #5) are available for \$23 (plus shipping). See the Order Form.

THE THINGOL SCROLL by Tom Loback

This print is a reconstruction of, perhaps, the earliest artifact of Middle-earth. The subject matter, style of illustration, and the use of the Cirth, all indicate a likely First Age origin for this piece. Written in a Sindarin dialect, the scroll depicts and describes the formation and major events of the realm of King Thingol of Doriath, prior to the Years of the Sun. Both the map of Eglador, with its westward orientation, and a lack of the later Certhas runes make possible a late First Age-early Second Age dating for this piece.

Panel 1 illustrates and describes the meeting of Thingol and Melian under the trees of the woods at the western end of the Valley of Nan Almoth.

Panel 2 is a map of Eglador, later called Doriath. The map shows the great river network around which Thingol established his realm. The four borders of this panel show stylized features of the surrounding geography of Beleriand. Left, the willows of Nan Tathrin. Right, the pines of the highlands of Dorthonion. Bottom, the mountains of Ered Luin, with Mt. Dolmed and the pass into Beleriand from the east. Top, the west of Beleriand and the Great Sea, with the highlands of the Faroth to the left and Mt. Taras to the right.

Panel 3 shows Thingol rewarding the Dwarf-lord of Belegost for the building of Menegroth and its great bridge.

Panel 4 depicts Daeron demonstrating the Certhas to Thingol in Nivrim.

Panel 5 is concerned with the arming of Thingol's folk by the Dwarves of Nogrod.

Panel 6 shows the First Battle of the War of the Jewels, fought on the Estolad, and Amon Ereb, during which Denethor of the Nandor was slain.

Panel 7 depicts the exchange of the magic, black sword of Eol for the fief of Nan Elmoth.

Panel 8 concerns the first rising of the Moon, with Tilion's silver bow pointing its star arrow at the peaks of Thangorodrim.