



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

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

Volume 40
Number 1

Article 25

10-18-2021

***Terry Pratchett's Ethical Worlds*, edited by Kristin Noone and Emily Lavin Leverett**

Felicity Gilbert

Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick

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

Recommended Citation

Gilbert, Felicity (2021) "*Terry Pratchett's Ethical Worlds*, edited by Kristin Noone and Emily Lavin Leverett," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 40 : No. 1 , Article 25.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol40/iss1/25>

This Book Reviews 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>

Online Winter Seminar

February 4-5, 2022 (Friday evening, Saturday all day)

<https://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/ows-2022.htm>

Online Winter Seminar



Online Winter Seminar

The Inklings and Horror: Fantasy's Dark Corners

February 4-5, 2022 (Friday evening, Saturday all day)

Via Zoom and Discord

Mythcon 52: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico; July 29 - August 1, 2022

<http://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/mythcon-52.htm>

Additional Keywords

Mythlore; Terry Pratchett's Ethical Worlds, edited by Kristin Noone and Emily Lavin Leverett; Felicity Gilbert

TERRY PRATCHETT'S ETHICAL WORLDS: ESSAYS ON IDENTITY AND NARRATIVE IN DISCWORLD AND BEYOND. Kristin Noone & Emily Lavin Leverett, eds. Jefferson: McFarland & Co Inc. ISBN 9781476638034.

IN NOONE AND LEVERETT'S EDITED COLLECTION OF ESSAYS on Terry Pratchett, a range of arguments from varying authors solidifies the main theme of the collection: that Pratchett's works have been deliberately constructed as a vehicle for the expression of moral beliefs and the questioning of socially influenced ideologies. Many different questions about ethics are asked throughout and observed via character creation, beliefs, and behaviors. This collection not only highlights, but examines the inner workings of Pratchett's creations, adding to an already growing body of work that maintains Pratchett's creative genius as being of high academic merit. In this sense, the collection is certainly a welcomed addition to the study of fantasy and science fiction literature, and specifically, to studies of Pratchett.

The editors refer to Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James's *A Short History of Fantasy* when addressing Pratchett's use of genres. As Noone and Leverett note in their introduction, his incorporation of comedy is vital as a means exploring larger social and moral questions. They sum up their aim eloquently by addressing Pratchett's ethical stance which "values and valorizes informed self-aware choice, knowledge of the world in which one makes those choices, the value of play and humor in crafting a compassionate worldview, and acts of continuous self-examination and creation" (2). However, a firmer grasp on Pratchett's use of comedy could have been established and developed.

Noone takes the lead with her chapter entitled "Some Gods that Are: Acts of Creation in Terry Pratchett's Early Science Fiction." She uses two of Pratchett's lesser-known texts, the novel *Strata* and the short story "DEBUG + 'world/enough' + 'time,'" to examine his active creative choices in expressing issues regarding moral choices in acts of creation and social progress. She uses a rigidly structured essay format that feels somewhat choppy and disjointed in regard to theory and text sources. However, her point is clearly expressed and in keeping with the collection theme. She uses an excellent contrast of the two stories and refers back to her former points aptly to explore how the genre of science fiction lends itself to the questions of morality and ethical choice; as she quotes from Istvan Cicsery-Ronay, science fiction "is ingrained within the quotidian consciousness of people living in the postindustrial world; each day they witness the transformations of their values and material conditions in the wake of technical acceleration beyond their conceptual threshold" (qtd. 5).

Similarly, individual chapters by Leverett, Kathleen Burt, and Elise A. Bell propound the thematic exploration of ethics in Pratchett's work. Leverett's

chapter is by far the most compelling; my only criticism would be that needless long quotations might better be paraphrased to avoid disjointing her argument. Similarly, Burt explores ethics in Pratchett's work aptly: "Pratchett explores themes of realizing ethical practice and use of self-identity by adding a social component in which many of his characters must determine how to fit in with or break with social expectations" (46).

The only chapter to potentially break the thematic flow of the collection is "Conan the Nonagenarian: Beyond Hyborian Hypermasculinity with Terry Pratchett's Cohen the Barbarian" by Mike Perschon. While Perschon's argument is interesting, it is difficult to determine how this chapter fits into the collection; it does not appear to be in keeping with the general examination of ethics. The language is also somewhat informal compared to the other chapters. However, the argument is interesting none the less.

In conclusion, this collection is a compelling read and a wonderful tribute to the venerated Terry Pratchett. With the exception of a few minor flaws, the collection is well sourced and exceptionally interesting.

—Felicity Gilbert



BRIEFLY NOTED

THANKS FOR TYPING: REMEMBERING FORGOTTEN WOMEN IN HISTORY. Edited by Juliana Dresvina. Bloomsbury Publishing Co., 2021. 328 pp. 978-1350150058. \$74.72 hbk, \$26.95 pbk.

IN AND OUT OF BLOOMSBURY: BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAYS ON TWENTIETH-CENTURY WRITERS AND ARTISTS. Martin Ferguson Smith. Manchester University Press, 2021. 352 pp., ill. 978-1-5261-5744-7. \$120.00 hbk.

THESE TWO BOOKS INCLUDE CHAPTERS OF INTEREST on people more or less closely connected with J.R.R. Tolkien: in *Thanks for Typing*, Edith Tolkien, and in *In and Out of Bloomsbury*, Dorothy L. Sayers and Richard "Dickie" Williams Reynolds, one of Tolkien's teachers at King Edward's School.

Maria Artamonova's "Edith Tolkien in the Eye of the Beholder" (pp.199-210) is at its core concerned with the "Edith mythology" (204), the "Procrustean" (208) set of stereotypes that attempt to force Edith into the convenient pigeonholes (202) of romantic maiden, unhappy wife, or spirited and defiant young woman. I question whether "most Tolkien aficionados" first encounter Edith as a name on a tombstone (199), but in other respects this is a sound essay on the public image of Edith, and includes an intriguing analysis of