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Briefly Noted: *Thanks for Typing*, edited by Jukliana Dresvina, and *In and Out of Bloomsbury* by Martin Ferguson Smith

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

Abstract

Review of chapters in two recent books on Dorothy L. Sayers and persons with connections to JRR Tolkien.

Additional Keywords

Mythlore; Briefly noted; Thanks for Typing, edited by Jukliana Dresvina, and In and Out of Bloomsbury by Martin Ferguson Smith; Janet Brennan Croft; Tolkien, Edith; Reynolds, Richard "Dickie" Williams

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

Dome Karukoski's film *Tolkien* (2019). Artamonova relies heavily on Nicole duPlessis's "On The Shoulders of Humphrey Carpenter" (*Mythlore* vol. 37, no. 2, #134, 2019), but also references a *Journal of Tolkien Research* article by Nancy Bunting and Seamus Hamill-Keays titled "The 'Gallant' Edith Bratt," which was withdrawn from that journal shortly after publication but just recently released as a monograph from Walking Tree Publishers.

In *In and Out of Bloomsbury*, classicist Martin Ferguson Smith collects mostly previously-published pieces on his more modern interests, more or less loosely connected to the Bloomsbury Group of writers. Dorothy L. Sayers, who draws a tenuous connecting line between Bloomsbury and the Inklings, is the subject of two chapters. Chapter 8, "A teenage star" (200-218), reprises Smith's essay in *Seven 28* (2011) on Sayers's previously unknown involvement, at the age of fifteen, with the Somersham Pageant of 1908, shortly before her departure for boarding school. Sayers wrote several historical poems and performed on the violin, and the article identifies two pictures of Sayers wearing an Ionic chiton, previously thought to have been from a school performance of *Coriolanus*, as actually dating from this pageant. The following chapter, "'She had quite unusual gifts'" (220-237), is original to this volume and details Sayers's time at the Godolphin School in Salisbury, 1909-1911, making good use of original sources among school records and taking the unfinished autobiographical novel *Cat O'Mary* with the grain of salt it deserves.

The other chapter of interest in Smith's volume concerns "The secret love-child of an American Civil War commander" (238-271) and how he wound up as a master at King Edward's College. R.W. Reynolds was the son of a former Confederate officer and the widow of a British merchant who had settled with her in Arkansas. The senior Reynolds had an affair with her some years after her husband's death and before his own marriage, and she returned to her family in England to have the child. She settled with "Dickie" in Birmingham, where he began his long association with King Edward's School, first as a student, then later returning as a master after education at Oxford and a career as a barrister. Reynolds taught Classics, History, and English Literature, led the Literary and Debating Societies, and famously drove Tolkien to Oxford in 1911 in his own motor-car. This chapter goes well beyond the information found in the entries in Scull and Hammond's *J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide* and by Doug Anderson in Michael D.C. Drout's *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia*.

—Janet Brennan Croft