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***Nancy-Lou Patterson Reviews Books by and About Dorothy L. Sayers, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and Others* by Nancy-Lou Patterson, edited by Emily E. Auger and Janet Brennan Croft**

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NANCY-LOU PATTERSON REVIEWS BOOKS BY AND ABOUT DOROTHY L. SAYERS, C.S. LEWIS, J.R.R. TOLKIEN, CHARLES WILLIAMS, AND OTHERS. Nancy-Lou Patterson, edited by Emily E. Auger and Janet Brennan Croft. [Clifford, Ontario]: Valleyhome Books, 2018. xv, 461 p. 9781987919202. Hardback \$43.57, e-book \$9.99.

LET US NOW PRAISE FAMED REVIEWERS. Nancy-Lou Patterson was reviews editor for this journal between 1981 and 1998, and was a frequent reviewer for several years outside that span in both directions. Like many review editors, she wrote a good deal of the contributions herself. Her work as a reviewer was not flashy or eccentric, but solid and workmanlike. This book collects all known reviews by her of books by or about the four named authors, plus a good deal more of mythpoeic scholarship and a bit of its literature.

Almost all of these reviews were published in *Mythlore*, so the purpose of collecting them in hardcover form is for the sake of convenient access to the reviews. This is worthwhile because of the remarkable coverage of the volume, whose contents are arranged in sections, one for each of the four authors, and within each section chronologically. During her active reviewing career of approximately a quarter century, 1975–2001, Patterson reviewed almost every separately-published study about Dorothy L. Sayers or Charles Williams that appeared during that period. Coverage of C.S. Lewis is less comprehensive but more extensive, due to the large number of books about Lewis published during the period. One bibliography of recommended books on Lewis (Glyer and Bratman) gives notice to 63 books published during those years, of which Patterson reviews 46, not counting another 26 books she covers that are not in the recommended book list.

For Tolkien, Patterson's review coverage is mixed. During her early years, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, her coverage of the Tolkien secondary literature was quite thorough, including even some fugitive items, pamphlets

from the small press publisher T-K Graphics. But in later years, especially after Tolkien's centenary in 1992 brought a new surge of interest in his work, she cut back considerably on her Tolkien reviewing. In addition to secondary studies, she did review a number of the posthumous volumes of primary material released during this period, including *The Silmarillion*, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, and *Roverandom*, plus new editions of previously published Tolkien volumes in which she concentrates on the illustrations. Patterson was herself an artist with a distinctive style, and a couple of her illustrations are reproduced in this book. But of the numerous volumes of assorted Tolkien manuscripts with commentary by Christopher Tolkien that appeared during this time period, the only one she reviewed was *The Shaping of Middle-earth*, volume 4 of *The History of Middle-earth*.

Patterson's reviews are much briefer and less comprehensive than the typical *Mythlore* reviews of today. Sometimes they are distinctly perfunctory, as with the review of *The Shaping of Middle-earth* (329–30), which describes the prose imagery in the text and stops to marvel at the art of the cosmological drawings in the "Ambarkanta," but otherwise summarizes the content very briefly. What Patterson shines at are the corresponding virtues of brevity: succinct penetrating views of the purpose or nature of the book, sometimes recognizing the lessons of the work beyond what it explicitly says. Thus, she observes of Clyde S. Kilby's "exquisite" *Tolkien and the Silmarillion* that it "tells considerably more about Tolkien than it tells about that particular part of his writing" (276). Of Humphrey Carpenter's group biography *The Inklings*, she cites "Carpenter's canniest insight" as "that the Inklings were for Lewis that 'inner ring' which he envied, feared, and sought all his life" (295). This is canny indeed, but it's not really explicit in Carpenter's book. Patterson has brought out an implied theme.

The studies reviewed in this book run from standard texts in the field to a number of (often unjustly) half-forgotten or obsolete books which still may have valuable insights. Looking first at the Tolkien section, as that is my own area of expertise, it becomes clear that Patterson's reputation as a specialist in Sayers and Lewis should not be allowed to obscure her abilities as also a sensitive and educated Tolkienist. Most of her evaluations have stood the test of time. She does not refrain from being harshly critical when necessary ("execrable," 264; "ill-tempered," 312) and frequently uses her penetration to point out where authors have failed to be equally perceptive ("It is not at all clear that Stephen Miller has recognized this element," the Christian eschatology in Tolkien, 272). On the other hand, her praise, when fairly won, is equally intense: a description of the original edition of Verlyn Flieger's *Splintered Light* as an "elegant little barque" of a book is a charming metaphor, even though she has difficulty accepting some of Flieger's argument (327).

Buried in the reviews are some astute observations on Tolkien's work, some of Patterson's own, some as summations of the arguments of the authors being reviewed. See her defense of the value of Tolkien's idea of secondary creation as a reflection, not a replacement, of the primary creation (309), or this comment: "It was Tolkien's genius to take the words of an invented language and weave from them a seamless robe of myth" (283). Of Tolkien's artwork, she is critical of his figure drawing (as was Tolkien himself), but notes that "[H]is true forte was line," especially in calligraphy: "The word, in the end, was the image for Tolkien" (302). Behind much of Patterson's analysis is a principle she credits to Richard L. Purtill, "that Tolkien writes as a Christian, to a Christian end" (327), but that is not the totality of her analysis. Her review of *The Silmarillion* finds a common theme lying behind all Tolkien's works, "an elegiac note of sadness, too profound for mere nostalgia" (285). But, like many other critics, she regrets the "distant and cool" tone of the book, referring to what's absent as the "living element" (287).

Patterson is aware of the spread of scholarship and will sometimes use one reviewed work to comment on another. Regarding Tolkien, she brings up in her late 1970s reviews something I also noticed at the time, that little of value was written on *The Silmarillion* in the immediate wake of its 1977 publication ("nothing truly illuminating has yet been said by anybody since its publication," 297; "more smoke than light has been generated on the subject up to now," 310). Patterson suggests that it was the publication of Tolkien's *Letters* in 1981, with its "truly indispensable commentary on his most private, most primary, most difficult, and perhaps most essential" writing (314), that offered the breakthrough for *Silmarillion* scholarship.

As a mythopoetic scholar equally interested in the other authors named in the title of this book, Patterson frequently brings them up for comparison in her Tolkien reviews, a practice rare among more closely-focused Tolkienists. Comparisons (333) and contrasts (290) with Lewis's creative work are particularly insightful; she even makes a comparison between Tolkien as a scholar with a character in Sayers's *Gaudy Night* (277). As a practicing artist and art scholar, Patterson ranges even more widely. It's characteristic of her thought to describe Tolkien as a "naïve artist" ("one who, without formal training, creates works of power") and then to compare him with Simon Rodia of Watts Towers fame (301).

The Lewis section is by far the largest in this volume, covering over a hundred books, including collections and reprints of Lewis's own writings as well as scholarship about him. The reader will thrill as Patterson reviews treatise after treatise, scholarly collection after collection, finding almost every one of some value, even when flawed. Still, it's possible to pick out the highlights. Thomas Howard's *The Achievement of C.S. Lewis* gets the strongest encomium:

reading it, Patterson says, is “like having the company of an angel, throwing light continually over my shoulder” (103). Paul F. Ford’s *Companion to Narnia* is dubbed the essential book on the Chronicles, and moves Patterson to compile a set of comparative retrospective reviews of other books on Narnia in its wake (108–11). George Sayer’s biography *Jack* and Doris T. Myers’s *C.S. Lewis in Context* also earn particular praise and attention. Patterson’s praise is generous and witty. She concludes a review of one thoughtful and balanced theological survey (*C.S. Lewis’s Case for the Christian Faith* by Richard L. Purtill) with “Screwtape will hate it” (137).

Even more interesting is how Patterson handles more problematic books. She finds A.N. Wilson’s controversial biography a fascinating read, and she recommends it despite flaws which she goes into (186–88). *C.S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion* by John Beversluis is slammed for poor argumentation (147–48), a treatment which contrasts with a more sober analysis of what Patterson considers a more effective critique of Lewis, *C.S. Lewis: The Man and His God* by Richard Harries (170–72). On *The C.S. Lewis Hoax* by Kathryn Lindskoog, Patterson is non-committal. She is undecided on Lindskoog’s charges and wants to know the truth (162–64). But she does support other writers “stating [Lindskoog’s] arguments accurately and respectfully,” instead of “the vituperations so regrettably present in certain other sources” (241). She has an aversion to scholars who use Lewis and Tolkien, or Lewis and Williams, as sticks to beat each other with (68, 87). Of Walter Hooper’s work, she praises his “ceaseless industry” (211), but gets a little snippy at Hooper’s attempts to attach himself personally to Lewis (189), and finds much imperfect in the presentation of ideas in Hooper’s *C.S. Lewis: Companion and Guide*, in exactly the manner for which she has particular praise for Paul F. Ford (compare 238 with 106–7).

In reviewing Hooper’s *Past Watchful Dragons*, Patterson devotes great care to a detailed comparison of the book with the earlier essays it is based on (89–92), and she devotes similar care to comparing successive editions of Lindskoog’s *C.S. Lewis: Mere Christian*.

Books by Lewis include illustrated editions by Michael Hague and Pauline Baynes for which Patterson concentrates on the illustrations. The reviews also cover a fair amount of new material. The perception in her review of *The Dark Tower and Other Stories* makes the reader wish Patterson had covered more fiction (70–72). One glimpse of that comes in the context of reviewing a scholarly study, where she mounts a defense of Lewis’s depiction of Jane Studdock in *That Hideous Strength* (123). Of *They Stand Together*, Lewis’s collected letters to Arthur Greeves, Patterson observes that, for all the material on the young Lewis’s sexual interests, the letters show that his real passion was for books. She also advances a theory that, from the beginning, Lewis considered

Mrs. Moore a replacement for his lost mother (92–95). She does argue with Lewis in one place, on pacifism (169–70). But the final word on the topic of Patterson on Lewis should go to her proposal for assigning one fiction book by Lewis for reading in each month of the year — with the Narnian books in publication order, of course (125–26).

Of the 18 reviews of books about Sayers in this collection (there are also nine reviews of compilations of her work), half are of biographies, and two of the other reviewed books have biographical sections. That's a remarkable concentration on biography in the study of an author. One could wish that Patterson had kept up through the end her conscientious habit in the earlier reviews of comparing each successive biography to its predecessors, or that she might have written a comprehensive survey of the entire field of Sayers biography. Each of these books presents new material or new ways of looking at Sayers, so each has value, at least from the perspective of it as a newly-published addition to the literature. Looking over the entirety of the biographies as a group, I think Patterson would give the highest rankings to those by James Brabazon (which she covers a second time on its republication, in the longest review in the book) and Barbara Reynolds.

Sayers was not a mythopoeic fantasist, so such concentration on her in the reviews of a journal of Tolkien, Lewis, Williams, and mythopoeic literature studies needs some justification. Fundamentally, the explanation is Patterson's own personal enthusiasm for Sayers's work, but that enthusiasm itself arises from Sayers's commonality of mind with the Inklings, as demonstrated in Patterson's review of a collection of Sayers's *Spiritual Writings* (47–49). Readers are reminded of Sayers's voluminous correspondence with both Williams and Lewis by a review of the appropriate volume of her *Letters* (55). Patterson goes far enough to suggest that the British traditions of the fantastic and of detective and thriller fiction "grew out of the same garden" and are best studied together; indeed "Charles Williams's works can scarcely be understood without" that connection, and the connection is why "discussion of Sayers's works belongs in *Mythlore*" (22).

In the fairly brief (13 reviews) section on Charles Williams, Patterson takes several opportunities to recall her own early encounters with Williams's work, readings which fascinated her and left her part of his "dedicated audience" (361), even a devotee (364). (She includes a few similar notes in the Lewis section.) She insists that Williams is a compelling and readable author even if a difficult one. Yet she is harshly critical of his "inaccurate" (370), "repellant" (362), "repulsive and annoying" (358) views on women.

After a separate section with reviews of nine early issues of *Seven*, the annual journal of the Marion E. Wade Center, the book concludes with a section titled "Other Mythopoeia and Fantasy." Several of the reviews here are of fiction

(including a reissue of Owen Barfield's *The Silver Trumpet*) or medieval material, but most are of scholarly studies. About half of these are of general or multi-author import, including a witty attempt to review a Colin Manlove study in the style of Colin Manlove (416-18). A few are on authors such as Malory, MacDonald, Chesterton, and William Morris: more than a review of the brief study it covers, this last piece is itself a useful introduction to Morris's medievalist invented-world fantasies (421-26).

The editors have provided brief editorial notes on coverage and separate indexes to each section (by author of book covered and, less usefully, by the slug title given each review on original publication). Some errors and omissions have been corrected, but there are a number of misspelled words.

—David Bratman

Glyer, Diana Pavlac, and David Bratman. "C.S. Lewis Scholarship: A Bibliographical Overview." *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy*, edited by Bruce L. Edwards, vol. 4, Praeger, 2007, pp. 283-302.



THE TRANSCENDENT VISION OF MYTHOPOEIC FANTASY. David S. Hogsette. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2022. viii, 224 p. ISBN 9781476682921. \$55.00.

THE TRANSCENDENT VISION OF MYTHOPOEIC FANTASY is David S. Hogsette's fourth book. His other three show a diversity of interests: *Writing That Makes Sense: Critical Thinking in College Composition* (2009; second edition 2019); *E-mails to a Young Seeker: Exchanges in Mere Christianity* (2011); and *Training Ronin Style: Principles, Tips, and Strategies for Practical Martial Arts Solo Practice* (2020). Hogsette is currently Executive Director of the School of English Studies at Wenzhou-Kean University, Wenzhou, China. He was educated at Ohio State University in Columbus (B.A., 1990; M.A. 1992; and Ph.D., 1996), and thereafter taught at the New York Institute of Technology and Grove City College (Grove City, Pennsylvania).

The Transcendent Vision of Mythopoeic Fantasy is the end-result of Hogsette's teaching a course in mythopoeic fantasy literature over about two decades. He began this course in 2002, and finished at his current position in China. The fact that the book is based upon a course brings in a number of limitations. Structurally, it is comprised of an introduction and seven chapters. The first six chapters each introduces an author and then analyses one single representative work. The seventh chapter takes a slightly different approach,