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The Transcendent Vision of Mythopoeic Fantasy by David S. Hogsette

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(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,

covering one author's book in comparison with a second work by an author covered in a previous chapter.

Hogsette's introduction gives some idea of what he sees as his remit: "mythopoeic fantasy literature transcends culture and history by shifting the reader's attention from the mortal to the divine" (7), and later notes that "[m]ythopoeic fantasy literature is, above all, a literature of redemptive joy, what Tolkien called *eucatastrophe* [...]. True fantasy is never tragic [...]. Rather, fantasy is comedy, in the sense that right relationship is ultimately restored" (9-10). These points are arguable, but help a reader shape their expectations for the rest of the book.

The authors and books covered are, in order (which is not entirely chronological), chapter 1, George MacDonald's *Phantastes*; chapter 2, Lord Dunsany's *The King of Elfland's Daughter*; chapter 3, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring*; chapter 4, C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*; chapter 5, Michael Ende's *The Neverending Story*; chapter 6, Ursula K. Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*; and chapter 7, Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* and C.S. Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet*. The principal coverage being allotted to only one work in an author's oeuvre is unfortunate, especially when an author (e.g., Le Guin) revisits and rethinks in the later books the issues of the earlier ones.

Tolkien and Lewis get the most coverage of all the authors, though Lewis has both a chapter of his own and a chapter shared with Madeleine L'Engle. Le Guin and Dunsany get the least amount of space. Some aspects of the potted biographies are too selective, and too reductive. The context for the author's life and their one book just doesn't come through, or it is sort of glibly dismissed, as when Hogsette describes Dunsany's characters as representing "a caricature of traditional Christianity derived from Dunsany's disdain for the Church" (52). Is this correct? Not in my experience in reading the bulk of Dunsany's writings. And some of the analysis is also eccentric. Hogsette teases an interpretation of Tom Bombadil as a Christ figure (74-75), and falls in the trap of interpreting Tolkien's thought through the writings of C.S. Lewis. In considering homosocial subtext between Frodo and Sam, Hogsette writes: "[A] plain reading of the text from an understanding of Tolkien's view of friendship as outlined by Lewis in *The Four Loves* suggests that Tolkien depicts [...]" (70). On any subject, Tolkien often had different views from Lewis, and it is improper to assume that because either Tolkien or Lewis thought such a way that the other did too. The point about what Tolkien's views on were on male friendship can be made without any reference to Lewis. For Michael Ende, Hogsette notes that "[f]antasy for Ende is a type of imaginative baptism in which the reader dies to his old self and emerges refreshed and renewed in the new self" (127). This may be true of Ende's works, but it seems something quite different from Hogsette's

subsequently expressed view that “Ende has given us what Tolkien has said is gained by all readers fairy stories—Escape, Recovery, and Consolation” (129).

The lens through which these books are studied is predominantly Christian (the exception being Le Guin’s *Taosim*, which Hogsette focuses on in terms of balance and moral instruction), but when one considers the promise of “transcendent vision” in the book’s title, one hopes for coverage of David Lindsay’s *A Voyage to Arcturus*—certainly one of the most transcendental fantasies—it is not only an important source for *Out of the Silent Planet* but also for other works by Lewis. Or one might hope to see consideration of the Buddhist inspired *Flower Phantoms* by Ronald Fraser. Much of Algernon Blackwood’s mystical nature stories could fit here, as well as the theosophical fantasies of Kenneth Morris—though these two authors were at their best in the story form, rather than novel-length, so are thus outside the scope of this study. Still, one yearns for a book with the same title as this one that is not a course text, but a true monograph covering the entire fantasy field.

Throughout the volume there are some incorrect or inconsistent assertions that should have been caught by the publisher in fact-checking (if there was any) or copyediting. To give only a few examples, Lord Dunsany’s first book *The Gods of Pegana*, misspelled “Pagana,” is dated to 1904 (41), when it should be 1905; the correct spelling *Pegana* appears several pages later (59), but the index reverts to *Pagana*. Tolkien is said to have been born in South Africa (60), a country which did not exist at the time of his birth: he was born in the Orange Free State in southern Africa. And it seems odd that nowhere in the book does it tell the reader when *Phantastes* was published; that it was MacDonald’s first novel, from 1858, or that it was bookended in MacDonald’s career by his second fantasy novel *Lilith* in 1895.

Reaching the end of the book, I confess I still don’t know the audience for whom this book is intended. It seems primarily aimed at a Christian reader interested in exploring for the first time some basic fantasy authors, but the price of \$55 for a trade paperback will rule out casual purchases. The publisher doubtless hopes the book will find a market in university libraries, but that is also problematic because of the price as well as the narrow content. It is also available as a Kindle ebook.

—Douglas A. Anderson

