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## Reviews

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### Abstract

*The Hobbit, or There and Back Again*. J.R.R. Tolkien, Illustrated by the author, Foreword by Christopher Tolkien. Reviewed by Nancy-Lou Patterson.

*C.S. Lewis*. Joe R. Christopher. Reviewed by Nancy-Lou Patterson.

*Daughter of Regals & Other Tales*. Stephen R. Donaldson. Reviewed by Thomas M. Egan.

*Elfquest – The Blood of Ten Chiefs, Volume One*. Edited by Richard Pini, Robert Asprin, and Lynn Abby. Reviewed by David Bratman.

*Shadowlands*. Film produced by the BBC and the Episcopal Radio-TV Foundation. Directed by Norman Stone; written by William Nicholson. Reviewed by David Bratman.

*Charles Williams*. Kathleen Spencer. Reviewed by Nancy-Lou Patterson.

*Around the Year with C.S. Lewis and His Friends*. Kathryn Lindskoog, compiler. Reviewed by Nancy-Lou Patterson.

### Additional Keywords

Sarah Beach



## *The Half Century Hobbit*

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit, or There and Back Again, illustrated by the author, Foreword by Christopher Tolkien (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987), 256 pp. ISBN 0-04-823386-2.

This splendid volume marks the 50th anniversary of the publication of The Hobbit, and contains the text of the Fourth Edition (1978) with a delightful and thoroughly useful Foreword by Christopher Tolkien. Since my readers have all read The Hobbit, I will concentrate upon the Foreword in order to be able to say something new, but I assure you that this version of Tolkien's masterpiece is a volume of major significance, containing the most recent edition in print together with the two endpaper maps, five colored plates, and eight black and white illustrations, plus an excellent dragon on the first (unnumbered) page, and the jacket now printed in full four-color splendor (green, blue, black, and red) as its author originally conceived it (or almost, since Christopher Tolkien says that his father wanted the title to be in red too, and here we see only the red eye of the Sun on the front and the red form of Smaug beside the Moon on the back).

If all this had been the full contents of this volume, it should have been enough for us, as the Haggadah puts it, but there is more. Christopher Tolkien's Foreword contains a reproduction of what, when he wrote his text, he thought was the only surviving page of the original draft of the first chapter of The Hobbit (two more pages are in fact in the collection of Marquette University, according to the note on p. xvi). This page contains the first sketch of Thrór's Map. Its text, transcribed from its spidery scrawl by Christopher Tolkien, gives "Gandalf" as the name of the chief Dwarf (Thorin) and "Bladorthin" as the name of the wizard Gandalf. Also included are six previously unpublished drawings, all of them interesting and one of them -- No. 3, "The Lonely Mountain" -- remarkably beautiful. Christopher Tolkien has added his own and his siblings' memories of the origins, both written and oral, of The Hobbit, which began, I am happy to report, in 1929, the year I was born.

I wish I could say I had read The Hobbit when it was published fifty years ago in 1937, but in fact, I did not read it until, having purchased the Narnian Chronicles a month at a time, from October 1956 to April 1957, on the meager salary of a graduate student's wife, I was lent (if you can believe it) a copy of The Hobbit by the manager of the University of Washington's Trade Books Department, because he thought, rightly, as it turned out, that I would like it. In June 1958, I bought a copy of the Second Edition, which is in my possession still, somewhat the worse

for wear from having been read aloud to my nine children.

I am telling you this because I know that if you were sitting beside me as I write, you would be telling me when you first read The Hobbit. It is that sort of a book.

Nancy-Lou Patterson

## *Clive by Christopher*

Joe R. Christopher, C.S. Lewis (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 150 pp. ISBN 0-8057-6944-7.

The best birthday present I ever got was a copy of Chad Walsh's C.S. Lewis: Apostle to the Skeptics, which started me on what is by now more than half a lifetime's reading not only of Lewis but of his many friends, precursors, commentators, and peers. It is a very great pleasure to add Dr. Christopher's C.S. Lewis to the spot I reserve for the very best of these. He brings to his task a well-honed talent for the biographer's balanced, succinct and precisely worded characterization of content and style, and a gift for discernment which ought to be added to those lists of God-given capacities adumbrated by St. Paul.

In ten neat chapters, from the mandatory biography, aptly titled "A Romantic and Argumentative Life", to the mandatory summary, wittily titled "A Romantic and Argumentative Oeuvre", he treats the seven varieties of Lewisian writing: autobiography, literary and lexical history, generic criticism and literary theory, moral philosophy, apology, Christian essays, and romances (yes, I can count: two chapters go to "The Romancer"), while mentions of the poetry occur throughout. The method is admirable; each is given the most abbreviated and winsome of summaries, subjected to precise and illuminating analysis, and then probed for cross-references, both biographical and literary. This latter practice, which should pique the curiosity of new readers, will give the profoundest pleasure to the aficionado, the long-time Lewis reader, who will learn some new thing on nearly every page.

In fact, every page reveals a deep understanding of the works of Lewis and a thorough mastery of the works of his critics both pro and con, and every chapter contains not only an accurate report upon those matters but new and original refinements of interpretation. An interesting example is Dr. Christopher's list of the influences of Tolkien upon the Narnian Chronicles. I can imagine rivers of ink being spilled upon this subject, now that it has been broached, since unlike the bandersnatchian (that is, uninfluencable) Tolkien, Lewis drew deeply and widely from many sources of his prodigious reading and delighted to include allusions to the writings, ideas, and conversations of his friends (he was, perhaps,



something of a bandersnatch himself in his total lack of sensitivity to their possible, and in Tolkien's case rather bitter, response to this cheerful plucking of his neighbor's apples).

I have been waiting for quite a while to see this book (long rumored), and I am delighted to report that if any of you know a young or new reader of Lewis, Joe R. Christopher's *C.S. Lewis* would make the finest of birthday presents and could well trigger for them a lifetime of the world's best reading. You will want to read it for yourself first, of course; it has been well worth waiting for.

Nancy-Lou Patterson

## Regal Collection

Stephen R. Donaldson. *Daughter of Regals & Other Tales*. New York: Del Rey/Ballantine Books, 1985. 366 pages. \$3.95 paperback. Fantasy.

Stephen Donaldson made his debut into public attention with his best-selling trilogy of a Tolkien-type fantasy, *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant, The Unbeliever*. (1977) He was a young man of thirty at the time, and this was his first published effort as a graduate English major (later teacher) at a Western university. His strengths and weaknesses in this creation were great -- and both show in this first collection of his short stories, six culled from magazines and anthologies and two written especially for this. Michael Whelan's cover for the hardcover version put out by Ballantine is wonderfully reproduced here; its rich contrasting colors and figure of frightened maiden and stained dragon-glass capture the power of the title story.

"Daughter of Regals" is the most successful and most complex of the tales. It posits a world where reality is based on Magic, not the natural order of physics as in ours. Like most of these stories it is told in the first person by the protagonist. (It gives greater immediacy and sympathy for the moral drama involved.) Power politics for the peace and unity of this alien globe intertwine with the author's love for the variety of forms that life appears in. The narrator is Chrysalis, a young girl soon to be Queen, facing rival monarchs, the treachery of human love, and the perils of "ultimate reality". The Dragon, the Basilisk, the Phoenix and many others are mythic life forms, like Plato's primordial Ideas. They can be used for chaos or for justice -- the power is the same, only one's free-choice determines the outcome.

The author uses the other seven tales as instruments to search for the meaning of reality, including the need to understand our own conscious choices, our "free-will". The scenarios he invokes range from medieval lifestyles and culture to the coming Technocratic State, from heartland America to other dimensions beyond our world.

"Gilden-Fire" is a large excerpt originally designed for *The Ill-earth War*, the second volume of the first trilogy about Thomas Covenant. The quality of *The Land* continues, although here this piece makes no sense for the ordinary reader -- unless he is an avid reader/enthusiast for the first two trilogies. The hero is the stubborn Korik of the Bloodguard and his quest (if it is real) is to get to Seareach and the race of Giants. Demons and strange folk abound; the influence of Christian medieval and Hindu traditions for the makeup of this world is obvious. Dialogue is harder to accept but the imagery makes for great "browsing" power.

Donaldson's disgust with the modern computer society comes to the fore with his finely honed image of the Unicorn, the "Mythological Beast". The future is seen as an all-encompassing Welfare State with doctors acting like a benign secret-police ready to eradicate freaks like our hero who grows a strange horn in his forehead, and then...? Medieval symbolism links to modern with good effects for storytelling. But there are a few loose strands here like the wife abandoned, the beautiful female unicorn who suddenly appears just as our hero needs her, etc. Compare this with the cyborg hero who fights the Frankenstein-like "Animal Lover" of the 21st century America. Decently done in plot and character. "The Conqueror Worm" is plain awful despite its artsy appeal to Edgar Allan Poe's psychology of terror. A murder tale, it murders its own plot and character, too.

Religion shows two faces in the tales. "Unworthy of the Angel" brings us into the present for a theological duel between the diabolic and a heavenly guardian for one very uncertain artist's soul. Logic and character are excellent here as well as background. Sentimentality threatens but is overcome by the search for the Transcendent. The opposite effect shows forth in the more crudely constructed "Ser Visal's Tale" when a corrupt theocracy of the far future uses witchcraft and slavery to enforce its views. But can turnabout be fair-play? Donaldson's neo-medievalism is evident here and even more so in the very beautiful, if tragic, "Lady in White".

Donaldson has some serious faults in all of these stories. He is entranced too often by archaic word forms, overuses capitalization, and too often can't

control his passion for allegory and symbol in his use of characters and situations. But all his work respects the complexity of human choice and the need for a moral code to define human life. The imagery and power of ideas he explores make Daughter of Regals worth while for any reader's attention.

Thomas M. Egan

## Our Bodies Our Elves

Elfquest -- The Blood of Ten Chiefs, Volume One, edited by Richard Pini, Robert Asprin, and Lynn Abby. Tom Doherty Associates, New York, 1986. 314 pages. U.S.A. \$6.95; Canada \$8.95.

Richard Pini jests that the Elves subcreated by his wife Wendy (with some help from him) have only two things in common with most other Elves: "their ears, which are pointed." That is something they may not have in common with Tolkien Elves, unless J.R.R.T.'s description of Hobbit ears as "only slightly pointed or 'elvish'" was not merely the use of a popular idea to help create a mental image. Of the Elves themselves, Tolkien mentions only two obvious nonhuman external characteristics: their very pleasant body odor (The Hobbit) and the brightness of their eyes (Unfinished Tales). At any rate, Pini Elves do have several important traits in common with Tolkien Elves. Both groups are Exiles, far away from their own true home, in a hostile world where they are subject to fierce hatred and persecution. Through the years they have dwindled in their powers, and even in their physical size (though the latter is something Tolkien emphasized only originally, and later dropped). The "magic" of both groups of Elves is something far more natural than what is usually meant by the term. It is not the use of spells, formulae and enchanted objects, but of the Elves' own innate powers, in harmony with the forces of the universe. In both conceptions, some Humans are the bitter enemies of the Elves, others are their allies and even their servants. There are other intelligent beings in ambiguous relationships with the Elves. The Pini Trolls are very much like a combination of the Tolkien Orcs and Dwarves. The worst of them are cruel and cannibalistic like the Orcs, but even the best of them are as greedy as the Dwarves. The matter is worth discussing at length, but not here, since Trolls do not appear in Blood of Ten Chiefs.

Other enemies do appear, and they are treated with varying degrees of success. Thus the wild pigs in Allen Wold's "The Deer Hunters" (probably the best-written story in the book) are far more frightening than the dinosaurs in Piers Anthony's "Plague of Allos" (definitely the weakest writing in this collection), which handles external life-and-death conflicts and inner turmoil of love and grief with equally unconvincing blandness.

Miscegenation is a very important theme of both the Tolkienian and Pinian universes. Tolkien's saga is in great part the story of the triumphs and tragedies that resulted from the interracial marriages of a few important Elves and Humans. Saruman built up his armies by cross-breeding Orcs and Humans. The Orcs may have originated as a cross-breeding of fugitive Elves and primitive Humans. In the Pini chronicle, two key characters both receive the title of "Half Elf": Two-Edge and Timmorn. Both their mothers are High Elves. Two-Edge's father is a Troll, Timmorn's father is a Wolf.

Timmorn appears twice in Blood of Ten Chiefs,

both times in a story written by one of the anthology's editors: "Pendulum" by Richard Pini himself and "Coming of Age" by Lynn Abbey. Both stories are excellent, convincingly conveying the fears and self-doubts that were initially felt by Timmorn and later by his daughter Rahnee the She-Wolf, the first two chiefs of the Wolfriders.

Wolfriders? Yes, here is where the Pinis most radically differ from Tolkien. In Middle-earth, Wolfriders were evil Orcs. In the World of the Two Moons, they are good Elves. This latter concept is closer to the realities of our own world. On Earth, Wolves are good creatures, and not at all dangerous to Humans.

Humans are presented very sympathetically in Robert Lynn Asprin's "Lessons in Passing," a story about my least favorite Elf, the truculent Mantricker. "Night Hunt," by Diane Carey (about Mantricker's son Bearclaw), also has a positive portrayal of the Human race.

Humans are humorous figures of fun in stories featuring my two favorites among the Ten Chiefs. "Taanner's Dream" by Nancy Springer tells how the gentlest chief of the Wolfriders was accidentally helped by a Human in a major breakthrough. Hanny Wurts' "Tale of the Snowbeast" shows that Huntress Skyfire would have been far more deserving of the name "Mantricker" than her descendant who bore it.

An ambiguous character is "Swift-Spear," in the story by that title written by Mark C. Perry and C.J. Cherryh (which tells how his name was changed to Two-Spear, by which he is better known) and the Humans similarly receive an ambiguous treatment. Neither they nor the Elves are wholly blameless or







wholly guilty. The conflict is so well described, as are the strong emotions of the participants, that this story is perhaps my favorite of the ten in this volume.

An unusual story is Diana Paxon's "The Spirit Quest," about Goodtree, Tanner's daughter and Mantricker's mother. This tale contains no external conflict -- no human, dinosaurs or pigs. The conflict is all inside Goodtree's soul, and it is described beautifully.

To sum up: Nine of the ten stories are very good, even excellent. The story collection as a whole is a fine introduction to the Elfquest universe, which is well worth visiting.

Lest I forget: These Elves are very physical and sensual, which is my excuse for the title of this review.

## *Light in the Shadows*

Shadowlands, a film produced by the BBC and the Episcopal Radio-TV Foundation. Directed by Norman Stone; written by William Nicholson.

This film is a dramatization of the story of the marriage of C.S. Lewis and Joy Davidman. It's a difficult tale to tell in fictionalized form, involving as it does highly personal matters of emotion and religion, but the filmmakers have achieved their task with warmth, care, and assurance. Often enough I have winced with embarrassment at the touchy moments in dramatized history, but I never had to wince at Shadowlands.

The version I saw was televised and had been edited down to 90 minutes; I don't know how much was left out. Certainly, unless the original is very much longer, the plot has been seriously but skillfully condensed. The casual viewer would not know that the

events take place over a period of nine years. It begins with Joy Davidman's first letters to Jack Lewis, continuing through their meeting, developing friendship, Joy's illness, the unusual circumstances of their civil and religious weddings, and her death and funeral.

Lewis is played by Joss Ackland, a British actor not previously known to me. He doesn't look much like Lewis, except in a very general way, but he understands the part and plays him very well indeed. The role of Lewis fits Ackland like the old suit he wears. Joy is played by Claire Bloom, a distinguished American actress, who bears a striking resemblance to the original and also does a fine job. Lewis' brother Warnie is done fine service by David Waller. There is a fairly large cast, if you include all the walkon parts, but the only other major characters are a fictionalized amalgam of Lewis' skeptical faculty colleagues (played by Alan MacNaughton) and Joy's two small sons.

On its own terms, Shadowlands is a fine drama. Both the writer and director have done their jobs well, holding the story together in a way which is clear even for viewers with little previous knowledge of the people and events. There are some fine opening scenes establishing Lewis as a teacher and public personality. The cool banter between Jack and Warnie is delightful, and Joy comes across courageously in her humor and self-possession after her illness begins. The dialog is for the most part fine and natural. It's largely extracted from Lewis' books and various people's surviving papers, and only in a few places do speeches taken from Lewis' writings sound faintly overliterary for their conversational setting.

It seems inevitable that any dramatic condensation should distort reality in a few ways. Most seriously, the screen-writer has falsified the circumstances of the religious wedding. The film makes it seem as if the marriage was Lewis' unilateral and spontaneous decision of love, taken without thought to the consequences, while according to the biographies it was planned, in part, specifically so that Joy could be taken to the Kilns (Lewis' home) to die there. She was definitely in imminent danger of death at the time, but while in reality Joy was taken to the Kilns immediately after the wedding, in the film she is not released from hospital until she is markedly recovering. Joy's period of remission from cancer is glossed over in only a couple of scenes, but which in reality was a happy and important time lasting over two years. (This could be a result of the tv edit, though.)

More sensibly removed is any reference to Lewis' changing of university from Oxford to Cambridge, which occurred while he was getting to know Joy. The college scenes, which are mostly near the beginning of the film, were shot at Magdalen, Lewis' Oxford college. I am not sure if the home scenes were shot at the Kilns, but from the look they may well have been. The credits do acknowledge assistance from Douglas Gresham, Joy's younger son.

The handling of the religious and emotional issues is much trickier. Both Jack and Joy were practising Christians, but it would be wrong to portray them as completely consumed by their religion, and Nicholson wisely refrains. Yet it might be possible to lose sight of this most important thread in their lives. One might forget that the title Shadowlands refers to the shadow existence of mortal life in contrast to life eternal. During their early meetings in the film, Jack and Joy talk more of what they believed before they

became Christians than of what they've come to believe. Much of the complexity of Lewis' personal emotion is conveyed by the film -- his intellectual compatibility with Joy, his questioning of God after her death -- but some of it comes a bit flat as a description of the actual events without impairing the film's strength as a drama in any way.

In sum and balance, then, this first film dramatization of an Inkling's life is something to be watched with pleasure and appreciation, and I hope you get the chance to see it. It was shown on one of the local PBS stations here, and is also available (details not given in the press release) from Gateway Films, Worcester PA 19490. A book based on the film, also titled Shadowlands and written by Brian Sibley, has been published in England by Hodder and Stoughton (and reviewed in Mythlore 47).

--David Bratman

## Responding to His Vision

Kathleen Spencer, Charles Williams (Mercer Island, WA: Starmont House, 1986). 104 pp. ISSN: 0272-7730.

This 25th volume in the Starmont Reader's Guide's to Contemporary Science Fiction and Fantasy Authors, very carefully proofread and in a neat and useful format, is an excellent introduction to Charles Williams for several surprising reasons, considering that this is a literary series. First, the author devotes a third of her pages to a clear, accurate, and powerful expression of Williams' theology. Readers with these distinctive doctrines -- the Way of Affirmation, the "quality of disbelief," the Theology of Romantic Love, Nature and Supernature, and the City with its three modes: Co-inherence, Substitution, and Exchange -- clearly in mind, can then read her chapters on Williams' seven novels and two volumes of Arthurian poetry in their intense and revelatory light. She also reminds us that the novels "are not, technically speaking, novels at all, ... but romances," (p. 31) and that while the two volumes of poetry "are generally referred to collectively as... Arthurian poetry, ... in some senses the label is misleading." (p. 79)

Second, her discussions of these works, which are sharply focussed and full of insights, are neither defensive nor carping. A reader who approaches Williams' distinctive and difficult works after reading these essays will do so armed with genuine understanding. In one of her most telling paragraphs, she says "mere intellect is not sufficient to deal with the intrusion of the supernatural into the natural; what is required is... the feeling intellect, combined with a festive courage and a natural, if diffident, impulse toward reverence." (p. 36) These words, written of Williams' heroes, "would serve as a description of Williams himself, from all accounts. Certainly, Kathleen Spencer shows us that she is in possession of a "feeling intellect."

Third, her final judgement will, I think, stand: "Though [Williams]... is without doubt only a minor figure in twentieth-century British literature, to the small but dedicated audience who find themselves responding to his vision, his is a unique and wondrous voice." (p. 88) During the summer of my 19th year I visited Orcas Island, which is about 100 miles north of the place where this volume was published. Along with exploring the amorous possibilities of row-boating, and the flavor of raw oysters, I leafed all unexpecting through the last few pages of Charles Williams' Descent into Hell, which somebody had left on

a table. There I encountered for the first time the terrible vision of Wentworth endlessly descending his rope of bone. From that hour, though real knowledge of the Inklings lay still in the future, I joined the dedicated audience of which Kathleen Spencer speaks.

--Nancy-Lou Patterson

## Communion of Saints

Kathryn Lindskoog, compiler, Around the Year with C.S. Lewis and His Friends (Norwalk, Connecticut: C.R. Gibson Company, 1986), unpaginated (but with a page for every day of the year). ISBN 0-8378-5126-2.

In The Great Divorce, C.S. Lewis imagined a Bishop who attended discussion meetings in Hell, where like-minded souls could meet to share opinions, and infernal version, one assumes, of an Inklings meeting. Those of us who hope never to attend the one, and cannot now hope to attend the other, may turn to this enchanting book compiled by the awesomely industrious Kay Lindskoog (upon whom be a thousand blessings) for a sample of the conversation in heaven. And if this is saying too much, still I know of no other work which so perfectly recreates the pleasure of the Lewis aficionado, who once upon a time began with the same book or other of the Master Clive and has found that one thing has led to another until a whole library stands erected upon that random volume, so vast that one can never hope (unless one is the reader Lewis was) to encompass it within one's lifetime.

The conversation echoes across the years as I like to imagine one's prayers darting across the Communion of Saints, from one sweet voice to another: J.R.R. Tolkien, Warren and Jack Lewis, Joy Davidman Lewis, William Wordsworth, G.K. Chesterton, George MacDonald, Dorothy L. Sayers, Charles Williams, W.H. Auden, Leo Tolstoy, Beatrix Potter, and a great many more. Each day is provided with an event (or events) which took place on that date, and with an apt quotation which expands upon or relates to that event. These juxtapositions are as exquisite, as revelatory, as those of a Zen koan; nut-sized fragments in which, like Julian of Norwich, we can extend our thoughts to a cosmos; worlds, as William Blake has told us, seen in a grain of sand.

I am at a loss to choose the finest of these. At their best, read day by day, they reverbrate both with meditative meaning and with that sense of the compression of all times and all places which Charles Williams sought to express in his novels. I would like to let you discover the finest of these choice morsels for yourself, so I have selected a tiny compilation of one to offer, in order to prove that they are not all too serious for words. It gives you not only the voice of Lewis at his most personal but also of Kay Lindskoog at her most wry: when I first read it, it made me laugh out loud.

The entry for January 24 states that "C.S. Lewis lunched with Joy Davidman Gresham (his future wife) and Ruth Pitter (winner of the Queen's Medal for Poetry) on this day in 1954." Underneath, the "Words for this day" are as follows: "'I'm not a man for marriage; but if I were, I would ask Ruth Pitter.' Famous last words about marriage said by C.S. Lewis to Hugo Dyson." In between these deliciously juxtaposed tibits are nine empty lines upon which we are invited to inscribe any jottings we should care to add. I am not sure I would dare.

Nancy-Lou Patterson