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Game of Thrones Versus History: Written in Blood. Brian Pavlac

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C.S. Lewis and the Arts: Creativity in the Shadowlands is a brief and nuanced articulation and application of Lewis's views on the Arts. Unfortunately, the more one reads, the more redundant the essays become, with a particular reliance on and quotation from Lewis's discussion of art and literature in *The Abolition of Man* and *An Experiment in Criticism*. However, as each essay aims at different nuances and applications from these and other essays, this redundancy is a unifying thread of diverse exposition throughout the volume. Additionally, one minor criticism of this book concerns the final format. One labors to discover anything more about each contributing writer beyond his name *(his*, as all of the contributors are male). Unless directly aware of the identity and vocation of each essayist, the only recourse one has is to look externally to discover that the writers are artists and educators. The inclusion of a brief biography for each writer at the end of each essay would have added value for the reader who wishes to know the credibility of each writer.

As with most edited books, some of the essays shine brighter than others. However, the contributions of each essay add nuance and depth that make this a varied and compelling read. In the words of the editor Rod Miller, this book was written for "those who want to be faithful and discerning when encountering art and/or using their creative gifts to make art" (xiii). Miller and the other essayists have successfully created an accessible and readable book for artists, practitioners, pastors, and educators who desire to learn from Lewis' vision for the arts in culture and the church and apply it well in their production and evaluation of art.

—Michael David Prevett

Game of Thrones Versus History: Written in Blood. Brian Pavlac. Wiley-Blackwell, 2017. ISBN 978-1119249422. $18.95. Kindle $7.99.

In 2016 an exercise in career development placed me on the review panel for a graduate conference run by a small, young university in a small, young country. One of the papers passed to me was by a student who had graduated the previous year, recording a breakthrough he had achieved by reading the only entry in his bibliography, Humphrey Carpenter's *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*. After four readings of what was breathlessly presented as the fruits of a counterintuitively innovative research technique, I was forced to conclude that the student's core argument was that *The Lord of the Rings* had been written by a university professor.

Against my recommendations, the paper was accepted. The author failed to attend his session.

I relate this anecdote because my reading of Brian Pavlac's *Game of Thrones Versus History: Written in Blood* stirred up similar intellectual sensations in me. I do not wish to suggest for a moment that editor Pavlac and his numerous collaborators are remotely as ill-read as the student who naïvely presented a widely-known biographical fact about Tolkien as a penetrating breakthrough in the analysis of his work. I am sure this is not the case. But I learned very little from reading this volume, which seems dedicated more to a straightforward itemization of Martin's historical inspirations than any analysis thereof.

At the risk of singling anyone out, Shiloh Carroll's chapter "Barbarian Colonizers and Postcolonialism in Westeros and Britain" illustrates the problem. I was keen for a postcolonial reading of Martin, who could certainly benefit from such attention. Carroll instead devotes her chapter to a series of parallels between the emblematic history of Martin's Westeros and that of the British Isles. Martin's Children of the Forest resemble the semi-prehistoric Celts; the First Men who pushed these beings north and built the Wall are analogous to Romans; the Andals to the Anglo-Saxons; the Targaryens the Normans. I take no issue with these comparisons. Nor do I feel that Carroll has characterized the relevant historical trends and events at all incorrectly. My willingness to abide with her observations, however, stems from the fact that they occurred to me at my first reading of Martin's work, as they surely must have to most readers with even a rough understanding of British history. I am no medievalist—my training in history ended at undergraduate level—but I do not believe that any of this is obscure or specialist knowledge. Despite Carroll's title, which seems to promise a postcolonialist analysis of these waves of fictional colonialism and their parallels with history, no such reading is actually attempted. The thesis of Carroll's chapter, therefore, is that Martin's invented history draws extensive inspiration from the earthly past. Again, I know this, and I suspect most readers of *Mythlore* do as well. Indeed one of my few systemic difficulties with Martin's work is that his borrowings from history are often a little too blatant. Taking the comparisons to a slightly deeper level than might be apparent at first glance—"Aegon's special forces were his dragons. He and his sisters had three, while no one else had any. William's special forces were his well-trained armored cavalry" (80)—does little to take the matter further. Carroll's points are almost inarguably valid, but their strength stems not from her robust scholarship, but from the fact that they are so obvious.

Other contributors take similar approaches to their subject matter. Kris Swank notes "the High Septon of the Faith of the Seven is comparable to the pope" (214), offers some quick examples of some scandalous historical popes,

then moves on to similar analysis of the Warrior's Sons. Pavlac's contribution provides a potted introduction to the evolution of medieval kingship, pausing occasionally to note a parallel to the game of thrones, but offers no thoughts on the literary effects Martin pursues or achieves by portraying the institution. At times the contributors seem to almost be going out of their way to avoid academic investigation of their subject matter. Robert J. Haug observes that the Unsullied, Martin's brutalized slave-soldiers, bear some similarities to the mamluks and janissaries maintained by the Ottoman Empire, but does not pursue the point. Huag is a professor of Islamic world history and doubtless could have offered some thoughts on how Martin's janissary stand-ins characterize the medievalist Westerosi, both to the reader and to each other, but he does not. In the closing piece, "Setting up Westeros; The Medievalesque World of *Game of Thrones*," Gillian Polack does in fact make some effort to demonstrate how Martin's medievalism aestheticizes his characters: "The actual use of plate is not relevant, however, to Martin's narrative; what *is* relevant is the sense of dressing like a medieval knight" (254) A valid and perceptive point, but one not particularly developed, or supported by the preceding essays. This book should not, in short, be taken as the equivalent for Martin of a book like Jane Chance's *Tolkien the Medievalist*. On the whole this is not an exploration of how Martin uses or portrays history; merely an observation that he does so.

Who is this book for, then? Not literary critics, surely. It may be helpful to have a secondary source substantiating historical parallels at hand when studying Martin. Noting in passing in my own work that the War of Five Kings closely recalls the Wars of the Roses, I welcomed the ability to make a quick reference to another scholar to demonstrate that the comparison was not solely my opinion. But I was able to do so because such scholarship already existed in books such as Carolyne Larrigton's *Winter is Coming: The Medieval World of Game of Thrones*. That being the case, the question frankly arises of how many such books are necessary. Historians are not a likely target audience either. They are unlikely to need the occurrence of the Battle of Hastings, for example, explained to them as carefully as it is here. Ultimately the target audience for this book, I conclude, are members of the general public and viewers of *Game of Thrones* (some contributors confine themselves to the television series alone, ignoring Martin's novels entirely). Such people may indeed have their appreciation of Martin's song deepened by explanations of Hadrian's Wall, the massacre at Glencoe, and the career of Eleanor of Aquitaine. Such matters are not necessarily general knowledge—or as Terry Pratchett once said, it is always worth remembering how few people actually know what everybody knows. With that thought in mind I will unhesitatingly allow that there are many *Game of Thrones* fans who will find *Written in Blood* an informative and thought-provoking discussion of the inspirations for their favorite TV show.

So this book has its place. This is not a negative review. A review should not be a description of the book the reviewer wanted to see, but an explanation of whether the book as actually written achieves what its maker set out to achieve. Pavlac's book manages this admirably. With a few small quibbles (Pavlac's statement that Tolkien and C.S. Lewis "[led] the way to modern fantasy" [2] would come as a surprise to readers of George MacDonald, William Morris, Robert E. Howard, James Branch Cabell, and Hope Mirrlees, not to say to the authors themselves), I have no issues with the assertions provided here. I also feel that fan enthusiasm is to be treasured, and that books answering and perhaps adding to that enthusiasm are nothing to be ashamed of. But a review should also leave the reader in little doubt as to what the subject actually is, and the readership of a peer-reviewed literary journal should be clear that this book is more of a popular reader's or viewer's guide than a piece of academic criticism. The core business of literary criticism is to provide explanations for the impact that given narratives have on their readers and their culture. By stating historical parallels without putting them into any particular analytical context, this book gestures towards those explanations, but it does not actually offer them. Its chief value to academic critics is not in its contents but in its existence. In itself, the fact that a publishing house has decided there is a market for such a volume shows how "big" A Song of Ice and Fire has become over the last decade.

That George R.R. Martin's emblematic history derives much of its impact from his habit of aping actual history is a matter of public record. Martin himself has repeatedly confessed this in interviews and non-fiction. A compendium of specific examples of the sorts of events and processes he is referring to in such statements has its place. Literature gains critical and academic followings because informed individuals begin noticing, systematizing, and analyzing the reasons for the fact that an author has fans. *Mythlore* has its origins in Inkling fan culture; even Shakespeare began his ascent to the apex of critical respectability as people began trying to responsibly account for the appeal of his plays. *A Game of Thrones Versus History* is a record of a group of scholars *noticing* the historical basis for Martin's work, but they offer little in the way of systematization or analysis. For that scholars remain, for the moment, dependent on a small corpus of journal articles and Battis and Johnston's academically robust *Mastering the Game of Thrones*. In the critical wars to come, I believe, Pavlac's book will come to be shelved alongside paratexts like *A World of Ice and Fire* and *The Wit and Wisdom of Tyrion Lannister*—not so much an explanation for the contemporary fan engagement with Martin's work, but an attempt, largely successful, to cater to it.

—Joseph Young

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Detecting Wimsey: Papers on Dorothy L. Sayers's Detective Fiction. Nancy-Lou Patterson. Ed. Emily E. Auger and Janet Brennan Croft. Valleyhome Books, 2017. xiv + 279 pp. 978-1-987919-11-0 (hardcover; paperback and e-pub also available). Amazon.com has the paperback at $28.67.

Nancy-Lou Patterson was a multi-talented person, both an artist and a teacher of art, a creative writer, and an appreciative essayist on writings by (especially) C.S. Lewis and Dorothy L. Sayers. In this book, in addition to the essays to be discussed below, several line drawings are reproduced: three for Sayers's centenary, pp. i, 183, and 279 (and the first and the third also appear, in part, on the front and the back covers respectively); two accompanying Patterson's essay "'All Nerves and Nose': Lord Peter Wimsey as Wounded Healer in the Novels of Dorothy L. Sayers," p. 1 (the two drawings titled "Shamamic Descents of Lord Peter Wimsey" and "Shamanic Ascents of Lord Peter Wimsey"); another two accompanying "'A Comedy of Masks': Lord Peter as Harlequin in Dorothy L. Sayers's *Murder Must Advertise*," p. 70 (the two drawings titled "Harlequin's Dive" and "Harlequin in the Tree"); and five accompanying "'Beneath That Ancient Roof': The House as Symbol in Dorothy L. Sayers's *Busman's Honeymoon*," p. 98 (the five drawings titled "Talboys," "Bedroom Casement," "Chimney," "Kitchen," and "Door and Drain"). Although it would have taken an editorial paragraph for explanation, it seems a pity that Patterson's one illustration for a fictional radio address written by Sayers, as if spoken by Lord Peter Wimsey, was not included; it shows Peter Wimsey, as a boy, in 221b Baker Street, talking to Holmes and Watson. (This appears on the cover of *Sayers on Holmes: Essays and Fiction on Sherlock Holmes*, a 2001 publication of the Mythopoeic Press, now alas out of print. —Ed.)

But the essays are the main appeal of this book. The editors have arranged them into two large sections, of eight and five essays respectively, in