Trevor Hart and Ivan Khovacs (editors), *The Tree of Tales*, Review by B.N. Wolfe The C.S. Lewis Chronicle Vol. 7, No. 2, Trinity 2010

Tree of Tales: Tolkien, Literature, and Theology. Edited by Trevor Hart and Ivan Khovacs. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007. xii + 132 pp. ISBN 978-1932792645.

The sixty-fifth anniversary of Tolkien's Andrew Lang Lecture at the University of St Andrews, published as 'On Fairy-Stories', was the occasion for a symposium on 8 March 2004, treating Tolkien's ideas and work, especially as represented in the Lang Lecture. The book under review contains a selection of these papers with some supplementary material. The essays are all interesting and well-presented, but many contain little material likely to be new to the specialist reader.

In what is perhaps the most original research in the collection, the story of how Tolkien came to be invited to give the Andrew Lang lecture in 1939 is told in the first chapter, 'Tolkien, St Andrews, and Dragons' by Rachel Hart, the muniments archivist of the university. References to the lecture in Tolkien's letters are catalogued, and the publication of the lecture elsewhere than by St Andrews is explained. Hart also highlights some of the potential influence of Lang's books (words and illustrations) upon Tolkien, particularly in the matter of dragons.

Colin Duriez investigates the status of Tolkien and Lewis' friendship in 1939, and uses Lewis' *Rehabilitations* as a springboard to discuss their joint aims and emphases. Meanwhile, Kirstin Johnson goes over Tolkien's debt to Owen Barfield in developing the concept of mythopoeia, and asserts the importance of story both within and without Tolkien's own tales.

Trevor Hart posits that Tolkien's concept of sub-creation is best expressed in his legendarium's Creation story, the Ainulindalë. This cosmogony, with its theologically monarchic Creator, aided in the fulfillment of His plan by created sub-creators (will they or nill they), could be said to illustrate aspects of Tolkien's Lang Lecture, and indeed to take the argument further, so that it is not merely literary but also theological.

In the Andrew Lang lecture for 2004, David Lyle Jeffrey discusses drama, more specifically tragedy (most specifically Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*, used a frame for the whole article), as a source for the rewards Tolkien claims are offered by Fairy-Stories. Classical and Renaissance tragedy, the class of drama most inclined to treat the otherworldly or supernatural and therefore the most likely to impart some of the

same gifts as Fairy-Stories, is little read or studied nowadays. This is primarily due, according to Jeffrey, to audience's unfamiliarity with the Classical religious and Scriptural sources on which they draw and depend. Jeffery contends that this is true for literature in a wider sense as well, and that partial blame can be attached to those such as Matthew Arnold who sought to replace literature with religion: Doing so leads to the survival of neither.

Loren Wilkinson deplores the absence in the films of *The Lord of the Rings* of the theme of the renunciation of power. She makes use of critical categories created by Ursula LeGuin to discuss the 'gardener' aspect of LOTR, which did not and perhaps could not translate onto the silver screen. In the final essay of the collection, Ralph Wood challenges Tom Shippey's influential identification of both Boethian (or as Wood has it, Augustinian) and Manichean evil in Tolkien. Wood is certain that only Augustinian views of evil (that is, evil as a privation of the good) are present. In this he is right, but throws the baby out with the bathwater, since he ignores Shippey's insights about the way evil can overwhelm the wills and intentions of good characters in the book. A far better formulation would be that Tolkien's universe (like ours) is Augustinian as a whole, but in local, specific interactions, evil may have a reality attenuatedly 'Manichean'.

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