

Book Notes

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James Como, *Mystical Perelandra: My Lifelong Reading of C.S. Lewis and His Favorite Book*. (Hamden: Winged Lion, 2022).

Mystical Perelandra is an invitation to the newest, the most skeptical, or even the experienced reader of C.S. Lewis. It is an encouragement to come to *Perelandra* and see that what Lewis said in *The Allegory of Love* about Edmund Spenser is true of himself: “to read him is to grow in mental health” (448).

Perelandra is, according to James Como, “nothing less than a mini-*summa*: of cosmology and mythology of Western Christendom” (1). He sees *Perelandra* as a story that has guided his own spiritual journey and shaped his own belief. That is, it has helped him in the practice of his spiritual life. He calls this effect *spiritual formation*. His purpose in writing this book is to do for the reader what *Perelandra* has done for him.

Como spends the first two chapters describing how the whole breadth of Lewis’s work has formational intent. The third and fourth chapters tell Lewis’s spiritual theological story and that of *Perelandra*’s hero Ransom. In the final two chapters, Como expresses the full measure of *Perelandra*’s influence on his own spiritual life. Likewise, the reader is invited to reflect on how *Perelandra* might affect their own experience.

Como believes *Perelandra* to be an expression of the belief system that guided Lewis’s spiritual formation. And he interweaves his own faith story to illustrate that in *Perelandra*, Lewis shows truths about reality and the Christian’s walk through this world that Como has experienced in his own life. Much of the book’s influence is a mystery to Como, but he believes that God has used *Perelandra* to wondrously shape, direct, and lead him. That mysterious and wonderous work is the reason for the title, *Mystical Perelandra*. Being taken into the story of another, and the resulting recognition of truth in one’s own story, is what Como means by *mystical*. To bolster his exploration of that term, Como brings in relevant historical Christian mystics, from John of the Cross to Evelyn Underhill. He also cites modern scholars who speak of the ability of story to take us in, such as Diogenes Allen, Austin Farrer, and David Downing.

Readers of *Mystical Perelandra* will be absorbed by Como’s compelling and winsome telling of his and C.S. Lewis’s spiritual journeys. Along the way, they will learn to see how the gospel according to *Perelandra* can be transformative over a lifetime.

Work Cited

Lewis, C.S. *The Allegory of Love*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Crystal Hurd, *The Leadership of C.S. Lewis: Ten Traits to Encourage Change and Growth*. (Hamden: Winged Lion Press, 2022).

In *The Leadership of C.S. Lewis*, Dr. Crystal Hurd attempts to show what few have paid attention to and Lewis did not see in himself: that Lewis, through writing, speaking, teaching, letter writing, broadcasting on the radio, and befriending and shepherding many people in his personal life, displayed the qualities of a Christian leader.

Hurd is a poet, scholar, visiting professor of Inklings studies and Romantic theology at Northwinds Seminary, and a reviews editor for *Sehnsucht: The C.S. Lewis Journal*. Her doctoral work in educational leadership and policy analysis focused on Lewis's transformational leadership. She reveals her premise this way: "We, working through Christ, have the power to impact our culture in extraordinary ways" (21). To prove that Lewis did just this, she draws from a wide range of his writings and life events. The book is a hybrid of biographical exploration and leadership study (21).

In Lewis's younger life, leadership studies were in their infancy (12). Thus, to prepare her approach and the book's framework, Hurd begins by referencing a wide range of leadership literature over the last fifty years, ranging from Robert Greenleaf (1970) to John Maxwell (2014). These references are also scattered throughout the chapters, but to begin she outlines the book with ten traits of leadership that inspire change and growth: humility, morals/ethics, vision, courage, intellect, compassion, duty, resilience, inspiration, and creativity. These are also her chapter themes as she traces each trait in Lewis's life and writings.

The structure of the book will be helpful for groups or students. Each chapter concludes with a summary and a list of discussion questions. The book would also be valuable for CEOs, teachers, or business professionals. Pastors will especially find *The Leadership of C.S. Lewis* helpful as they seek to shepherd their church. This is, after all, what Lewis's sense of duty and appreciation to God caused him to do.

As Hurd says, in the end we are all leaders. "Influence," she writes, "does not require a title, a different pay grade, a corner office, or a newsletter. Leadership is simply the art of influencing others" (213). C.S. Lewis certainly did that for good. May we all.

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Cristina Casagrande, *Friendship in The Lord of the Rings*. (Edinburgh: Luna Press Publishing, 2022).

This title seeks to explore the topic of friendship in *The Lord of the Rings*, including both the books by J.R.R. Tolkien and the three film adaptations by director Peter Jackson (New Line Cinema, 2001-2003). Casagrande utilizes Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* as a rough framing device for the study of ethics and friendship. Classic understandings of friendship as useful, pleasurable, and with mutual interest/shared virtues are outlined and discussed in relation to Tolkien's characters and their motivations.

The book provides story overviews and backgrounds of characters from *The Lord of the Rings* and some content from *The Silmarillion*, including a study of Gollum's dual personalities in chapter 3. Some space is also given to outlining Tolkien's background and ethics, particularly in chapter 2, and film theory. An introductory note is provided by Cesar Machado, and the Foreword is written by Ronald Kyrmse. The book is translated from Portuguese by Eduardo Boheme and was originally published in Brazil in 2019. Some typographical errors present in the book may be the result of the translation process.

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Peter Grybauskas, *A Sense of Tales Untold: Exploring the Edges of Tolkien's Literary Canvas*. (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2021).

In this volume, Peter Grybauskas examines how Tolkien uses references to stories and legends, nowhere fully articulated, to add levels of depth and veracity to his sub-creation. Grybauskas begins his work with a discussion of the three main ways that Tolkien incorporates his untold tales into his narratives and provides an in-depth case study of an example of each type of untold tale tradition. In particular, the book examines the scattered references to the Last Alliance battle found throughout the *Lord of the Rings*, the different recountings across Tolkien's corpus of the tale of Turin Turambar, and the puzzling omission of information in *The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth*. Citing Tolkien's own experiences studying early English texts such as *Beowulf* and the *Maldon Fragment*, Grybauskas demonstrates how, in each case, Tolkien's choice to deny his readers a complete narrative adds to the depth of his created worlds and to the veracity of the settings he creates. The final chapters of the book deal with how other creators have handled or continued Tolkien's tradition of untold tales. Grybauskas examines films, TV series, and even video games on a case-by-case basis to show how each project has

either continued Tolkien's legacy of depth or, on the other hand, failed to understand the importance of an untold narrative to the appeal of Tolkien's legendarium. Although somewhat technical in nature, this work is written to be accessible to the scholar and non-scholar alike. However, at least a passing knowledge of Tolkien's works, especially beyond *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, will aid the interested reader in following the author's arguments.

***Loremasters and Libraries in Fantasy and Science Fiction: A Gedenkschrift for David D. Oberhelman.* Edited by Jason Fisher and Janet Brennan Croft. (Altadena: Mythopoeic Press, 2022).**

This collection of essays, gathered in honor of the life and work of the late librarian and scholar David D. Oberhelman, examines the intersection of fantasy, science fiction, and the library, where the library is loosely defined as a place where one goes to seek information. Oberhelman had wide-ranging scholarly interests that often coalesced around the intersection of literature and myth, a focus that found expression in Oberhelman's active participation in the Mythopoeic Society. Assembled by fellow Society members Jason Fisher and Janet Brennan Croft, this volume serves as an homage to Oberhelman's interests, a recognition of his influence on scholars and students alike, and a demonstration of his impact on the scholarly conversation around myth, fantasy, and science fiction.

The fifteen essays that comprise this anthology explore the areas where library and fantastic fiction meet, whether in the setting, as an important plot element, or as a key provider of information for the characters despite the library's tangential narrative role. The essays include case studies of how libraries appear and are used in fantasy and science fiction popular culture, from the works of H.P. Lovecraft to *Game of Thrones* ("Surveys and Multiple Sources"). A section is devoted to the critical examination of libraries, archives, memory, and information in Tolkien's legendarium ("Topics in Tolkien Studies"), but this collection also addresses wider lessons that libraries of fictional works can bring to actual librarians and patrons ("Individual Authors and Sources"). This collection, while at times lacking critical analysis, is nonetheless an interesting read for anyone who enjoys libraries, fantasy, and science fiction. Here a reader can look at old favorite characters, books, or even TV series in a new light as they are encouraged to think more critically about the role of the library in their favorite fandoms, and perhaps find some new works of fantasy and science fiction to explore—so long as there is a library present.

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