

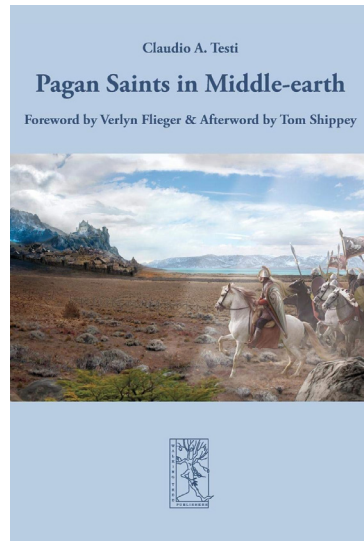
Claudio A. Testi. *Pagan Saints in Middle-earth*, Walking Tree Publishers, 2018, \$24.30 (paperback).

I first encountered Claudio Testi's work in his article from the 2012 Tolkien Society Conference proceedings.¹ I was struck immediately by the piece, which was both intelligently written and added good insight into the ongoing, not always cordial, conversation about reading Tolkien's works from faith-based or non-faith-based perspectives. Testi re-states and expands his argument from that article in the book *Pagan Saints in Middle-earth*.

The book outlines the Christian and pagan perspectives of reading Tolkien's works, and their respective advocates, and then suggests a synthesis of both views. This approach, and consideration of faith from *inside* the sub-created world of Middle-earth rather than imposing outside-world assumptions, presents a unique premise hitherto unexplored in other scholarship. With a background in philosophy, Testi's arguments read like philosophical treatises with numbered points guiding the reader's logic. This writing technique allows him to avoid some of the "heat" from previous impassioned arguments on both sides of the topic, resulting in a work that reads in a (generally) impartial narrative voice. Testi's work has received endorsements from leading Tolkien scholars Verlyn Flieger and Tom Shippey, who provide a foreword and afterword to the book, and Testi has utilized and cited extensive and key sources from previous Tolkien scholarship across the field on this topic.

Upon reading the book, my feeling was that the article provided a stronger overall argument with its compact prose. Some sections of the book, notably the first part of chapter 5, seemed to get away from the central argument, and there were a few times where Testi's logic did not connect for me. Granted, the trouble in some of these sections simply may have been caused by the translation of the book from Italian to English.

Overall, I would first recommend Testi's article, and then the book, to anyone interested in the ongoing debate surrounding the religious influ-



¹ Testi, Claudio A. "Tolkien—Pagan or Christian? A proposal for a 'new' synthetic approach." *The Return of the Ring: Proceedings of the Tolkien Society Conference 2012*. vol. 1, edited by Lynn Forest-Hill, Luna Press, 2016, pp. 155–164.

ences and readings of Tolkien's works. I think Testi's work is easily the most authoritative and intelligent approach on this topic to date, and I hope it produces more work using his suggested "synthetic" approach.

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Book Notes

Ruth Pitter. *Sudden Heaven: The Collected Poems of Ruth Pitter, A Critical Edition*, ed. Don W. King, Kent State UP, 2018, \$70.00 (hardcover), 464 pp.

Poetry helps us to see the world with new eyes; to imagine nature, life, and things as they ought to be or as we secretly wish them to be. Ruth Pitter, while not well-known today, was much-loved and admired by her peers such as C.S. Lewis, Owen Barfield, Hilaire Belloc, and Lord David Cecil. Her poetry has been compiled and arranged by Don W. King in *Sudden Heaven: The Collected Poems of Ruth Pitter, A Critical Edition* (2018). King supplies an Introduction and Chronology of Ruth Pitter's Life as well as several appendixes based on his previous scholarly work on Pitter and her poetry. Students and fans of Pitter will appreciate this collection. The uninitiated will no doubt benefit from Pitter's insightful, inspiring, and revealing poems.

Janice Brown. *The Lion in the Waste Land: Fearsome Redemption in the Work of C.S. Lewis, Dorothy L. Sayers, and T.S. Eliot*, Kent State UP, 2018, \$45.00 (hardback).

Janice Brown considers the works and legacies of three modern writers, C.S. Lewis, Dorothy L. Sayers, and T.S. Eliot, as a single spiritual unit in *The Lion in the Waste Land*. This trio, it could be said in Brown's imagining, comprise a miniature set of Inklings with its own dynamic creative life. Brown alternates between historical and literary analysis to argue that these three spoke together a common message against the encroaching modernist spiritual landscape (i.e., the "Waste Land" from Eliot's memorable poem): a message of deliverance through suffering, rather than from suffering; of a God who is not safe and a hope that is also terrible. In summary, a fearsome redemption.

Brown devotes herself to overcoming what might seem the initial difficulty of discerning the continuity between these three contemporaries. Though modern readers associate them freely, in context they had little in common. All three were laypeople, none of whom worked in the same field