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Review of Charles Williams and C. S. Lewis: Friends in Co-inherence

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Como's approach and exploration are a surprising twist in Lewis scholarship but a valuable addition to texts surrounding the impact of the science fiction trilogy. *Mystical Perelandra* is a testament to the transformative power of the written word.

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Paul Fiddes, *Charles Williams and C. S. Lewis: Friends in Co-inherence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021). 432 pages. \$115.00. ISBN 9780192845467.

If shared merriment, as C. S. Lewis claims in “The Weight of Glory,” “must be of that kind . . . which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously—no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption,” surely shared theology should follow suit. In his book *Charles Williams and C. S. Lewis: Friends in Co-Inherence*, University of Oxford Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology (and contributor of a number of insightful essays on the Inklings), Paul S. Fiddes does exactly that. In this study, which Rowan Williams has rightly called “a brilliant work,” Fiddes pays Lewis and Williams the important, often-neglected compliment of taking these authors and their theologies seriously. By doing so, Fiddes's magisterial study accomplishes at least two critical tasks: it deepens and widens our knowledge about one of the most crucial friendships in the Inklings, and it explores key literary and theological concepts vital to that friendship.

Fiddes divides his book into five parts, the first three of which deal the most explicitly with Lewis and Williams's friendship and its intellectual implications; the final two sections explore the wider implications of the concept of co-inherence, considered in a specifically theological context. For most scholars of C. S. Lewis and admirers of the Inklings, these first three parts, “The ‘Secret Road’ of Friendship,” “Ways of Exchange,” and “A Collaboration in Co-Inherence,” offer a treasure trove of helpful observations and analysis of the inception, growth, and implications of their friendship. The final two sections, “Further Studies in Co-Inherence” and “The Theology of Co-Inherence,” go a long way to furthering Williams studies, and build on important work by Sørina Higgins and Grevel Lindop, among others.

The first three parts should prove most accessible to readers more familiar with Lewis in particular and the Inklings in general. Fiddes's painstaking and careful scholarship delves deeply into the origins and immediate impact of the friendship that quickly blossomed between Lewis and Williams in the late 1930s. Many biographers and scholars have cited the epistolary spark between the two authors, when Lewis wrote admiringly to Williams about his *The Place of the Lion* almost at the same time that Williams wrote to Lewis about *The Allegory of Love*, which Williams shepherded through Oxford University Press. Fiddes systematically explores the specific impact of that happy meeting, looking at the way Williams and Lewis in some ways shared and in others diverged sharply about the concept of romantic theology, a topic rightly attracting much study and attention of late. Fiddes traces their shared development regarding ideas about "the weight of glory," Williams's influence on *The Problem of Pain*, and the pair's key collaboration on Williams's Arthuraian poems. Fiddes accesses much unpublished material, including the work of Raymond Hunt, whose notebooks and other observations about Williams remain largely overlooked in the archives of the Marion E. Wade Center and the Bodleian Library. Fiddes's fine scholarship sets a bar for all other writers about the Inklings.

His sections concerning co-inherence (which many will recognize as the idea of "substitution" or "exchange" in the work and lives of both men) help readers to grasp the concept itself while tracing its evolution. Fiddes defines co-inherence as "the conviction that human persons inhere or dwell in each other so that they exist in a mutual interdependence, and that at the foundation of this relational reality the 'Persons' of a triune God permeate one another in love." This concept, which has perhaps not been explored deeply enough, offers a way of looking at these mythopoeic modernists within a deeply theological and theoretical context, and celebrates them in the seriousness and insightfulness of thoughtful analysis. Fiddes also traces the development of the romantic theology of both writers, noting how in both Lewis's Great Dance in *Perelandra* and *The Four Loves*, Lewis goes far to resolving his initial differences with Williams's ideas.

As with all excellent scholarship, even as this study poses important new queries, answers neglected questions, and provides new insight and new ways of thinking about the Inklings, some questions still linger. Notably, maybe even lamentably, one wonders why Fiddes's careful synthesis of

a wide range of studies curiously omits the definitive, groundbreaking and essential work of Diana Pavlac Glyer; her books *The Company They Keep* and *Bandersnatch* offer genre-defining categories of collaboration that would have vastly helped the development of analysis in this already impressive work. While he rightly analyzes the importance of *The Four Loves* and provides a brief but helpful discussion of *Till We Have Faces*, a longer consideration of that last novel (which Lewis rightly called “far and away my best book”) would add even more depth to the study. Nevertheless, *Charles Williams and C. S. Lewis: Friends in Co-Inherence* profoundly moves the landmarks of Inklings studies and offers an indispensable lens to anyone interested in a careful look at these and related writers. As a significant theologian and scholar, Fiddes pays these authors and their readers alike the grand compliment of taking them seriously, and by doing so, this book will surely widen many worlds.

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Peter Grybauskas, *A Sense of Tales Untold: Exploring the Edges of Tolkien's Literary Canvas* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2021). \$55.00. 176 pages. ISBN 978606354308.

With the September 2022 release of Amazon Prime's *Rings of Power*, Peter Grybauskas has selected an opportune time to explore the margins of Tolkien's legendarium. Perhaps, unlike the creators of the Amazon series, Grybauskas ventures to the edges of Middle-Earth with both scholarly rigor and faithfulness to the spirit of Tolkien's mythmaking project. With this powerful combination, Grybauskas makes a persuasive case for why we should consider the legendarium's “untold tales”—the “gaps, enigmas, allusions, digressions, omissions, ellipses, and loose ends that pepper [Tolkien's] narratives” (1)—as “a defining feature of his subcreation” (xx). While not necessarily groundbreaking in taking up this theme, the study illuminates how careful attention to the periphery of Tolkien's work sheds new light on both his literary techniques and broader cultural legacy.