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Review of The Letters of Ruth Pitter: Silent Music

Tiffany Brooke Martin

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straightforward to reproduce such a listing here. Of course, guidebooks always leave readers hungry for a bit more. Marsden has done an excellent job in that respect, urging his audience to delve more deeply into the original source material. After all, that is why readers would want to go through his volume in the first place—to reread *Mere Christianity* with greater understanding.

BRUCE R. JOHNSON
Scottsdale, Arizona

Ruth Pitter, *The Letters of Ruth Pitter: Silent Music*, ed. by Don W. King (Newark, 2014). ix + 584 pages. \$126.00. ISBN: 9781611494518.

Following his *Hunting the Unicorn: A Critical Biography of Ruth Pitter* in 2008, Don W. King's edited collection *The Letters of Ruth Pitter: Silent Music* is another high quality publication to add to the available material on Ruth Pitter, who was known for her poetry and public commentary (radio and TV) during her long lifetime (1897-1992). King's substantial book is over five hundred pages; however, the letters themselves comprise approximately half of the book, the rest being introductory material, extensive footnotes, Pitter's bibliography, and indices. After the explanation of his "Editorial Principles," King indicates in his introduction that he published many but not all of Pitter's letters that totaled over 1,000 written in over an 80-year period. What letters King chose to print "go a long way toward illustrating Pitter's desire to reach a public interested in her as both a poet and a personal commentator" (xxiii). Since Pitter is not as well known now, readers tend to discover her work through her friendship with some of the Inklings who admired her writings.

The letters are presented chronologically and grouped into chapters, each with an overarching theme. Many of the letters are written to fellow writers and poets with the obvious topics of writing, publication attempts and successes, and discussion about other writers' work. Correspondence detailing her relationships with famous individuals such as C. S. Lewis and A. E. Russell are of interest and can provide some insight for scholars who study their work. Pitter writes late in life that, "I do not think C. S. Lewis

influenced my work to any great extent. I was through most of my career before meeting his works or himself, but I have the highest admiration and affection for both” (499). Regarding her spiritual beliefs, Pitter acknowledges Lewis’ strong influence through his broadcasts and books, and she writes, “I owe it [my faith] to C. S. Lewis” (503).

In addition to the topics of poetry and writing, domestic topics related to gardening and painting are recurrent themes. Pitter’s letters with certain friends spanned several decades, offering insight into her daily life. For example, she wrote numerous notes of appreciation to her American friend Mary Cooley for the food Cooley sent her during years of rationing in England. Pitter often listed the items and how she used them, one product being “a far-flung cake” that “would represent most of the habitable globe in one way & another” due to the ingredients received from around the world (216). Chocolate was another gift Pitter often appreciated. While many of her letters are on commonplace subjects and likely of little interest to most, Pitter’s diligence in maintaining friendships through correspondence is refreshing. The material can also offer amusing turns of phrase and arouse curiosity by discovering what Pitter thought meaningful to her, such as her favorite flowers or her changed opinion on “Wash ’n-Dri” (356).

Overall, *The Letters of Ruth Pitter* is a delight for the scholar while being accessible for the general reader and those interested in reading biographical, historical, and personal insights found in private correspondence of the time. King’s work as an editor is exemplary. Impressive detail and documentation with footnotes provide ample material for the reader interested in going deeper. A minor quibble is that King claims the biographical index is about “the most important of Pitter’s correspondents” (xiii), which insinuates that King felt some acquaintances were more important than others; the people listed appear to qualify as either more well-known or more frequent correspondents with Pitter. Despite the somewhat prohibitive price and limited availability, this collection of letters is valuable since it makes many primary sources accessible as a useful resource for scholars and writers.

TIFFANY BROOKE MARTIN
Keokuk, Iowa