

2017

## Review of Beren and Luthien

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### Recommended Citation

Himes, Jonthan B. (2017) "Review of Beren and Luthien," *Sehnsucht: The C. S. Lewis Journal*: Vol. 11 : Iss. 1 , Article 22.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55221/1940-5537.1398>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cslewisjournal/vol11/iss1/22>

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influence is filled with several excellent testimonies to the power of the man's writing, nor should Chapter Six on Lewis's letters to Americans be passed over. Here Snyder is smart to track down not only new and surprising stories about Lewis's correspondents, but also the best tidbits from Lewis's letters. The three-volume set of Lewis's letters is a daunting read. Snyder kindly offers some fine moments from an epistolary Lewis in a few pages.

In his final chapter, Snyder appropriately turns from sharing histories to analyzing them. His own conclusions on why Lewis has had a powerful impact on Americans are spot on: "substance," "style" ("he is just so quotable"), and fiction works which have stood the test of time (186). His first point, one readers might initially dismiss, is one of great observation: Lewis's "Britishness has an inherent appeal to a large number of Americans" (185).

There are times when Lewis scholars and fans should ask, "Is this new book about Lewis really needed?" It would be very easy to ask whether or not we need a book about Lewis and America, especially one that moves beyond Lewis and his generation to the generations after. However, K. Alan Snyder's *America Discovers C. S. Lewis* illustrates the first foray into something very much worthwhile. Snyder's book predicts about Lewis what usually takes centuries to recognize in philosophers, theologians, or poets: the need to look back, acknowledge, and analyze the profound influence of a great writer/thinker on our culture. Had Lewis faded in the sixties as he himself predicted, there would be no need for such a study. Yet, despite Lewis's speculation, Snyder firmly demonstrates a powerful trend: C. S. Lewis has and still *is* influencing Christianity in America. He did so in his lifetime, and, as Snyder proves, he continues to do so today.

CHARLIE W. STARR  
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J. R. R. Tolkien, *Beren and Luthien*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien (New York: HarperCollins, 2017). 288 pages. \$30.00. ISBN 9781328791825.

**T**he value of this latest release by Christopher Tolkien (hereafter, CT) is that it draws together the evolving narrative threads of J. R. R. Tolkien's

“Beren and Luthien” legend into a single volume with greater clarity than is found in *The History of Middle-earth* volumes. In Christopher’s words, he resisted the urge to explain (or analyze) and thus let the tale unfold in his father’s own words.

That said, it still contains quite a bit of Christopher’s notes and commentary. There is the explanatory Preface, then “Notes on the Elder Days” (abbreviated from the 2004 book *The Children of Hurin*), then, even after the title page announcing “Beren and Luthien,” which launches the main text of the book, the reader encounters more of the authorial background that led to the formation of this core legend. Only then do the “original” texts proceed, beginning with the stand-alone tale *Tinúviel*. The longest version, *The Tale of Beren and Luthien* from *The Silmarillion*, is not included.

The sweep of these notes provides a helpful tutorial on Middle-earth lore that the reader will need to know. The way CT explains the Lost Tales and his father’s mysterious composition process may well entice readers to one day turn to *The Silmarillion* itself or even certain volumes of *The History of Middle-Earth* who would be otherwise put off by its mystery. For now, these books released by CT in the last decade seem an appealing way to get essential Tales into the hands of a wider public. This one is especially attractive and well designed. The illustrations by Alan Lee—both the in-text greyscale drawings and the full color inserts—are stunning.

Unfortunately, this book does not synchronize the disparate versions of the “Beren and Luthien” legend. It does not present one continuous, harmonized narrative to the reader in either condensed or extended form. Neither is it a variorum edition. Instead, CT has brought together strands of poetry and prose to make this legend more convenient for study. I say *study*, because one must still rely on CT’s running commentary to make sense of each extract. CT tracks the major changes, at times painstakingly showing his father’s back-and-forth decisions over the years to make “Beren and Luthien” conform to the greater pattern of his mythos. For instance, Tevildo, the Prince of Cats in charge of Melko’s kitchen with a realm of his own, was dropped; Thu the Necromancer was at one stage a hunter to whom Beren was given as a slave; Beren’s father was originally not Barahir, but Egnor, a hunter and of the Noldoli, thus making Beren in the earliest Tale a Gnome and not a Man.

For ease of reference, it would have been extremely helpful for the various prose sketches and alternate passages to be listed in the Table of Contents; these must be found again by simply thumbing through the book to find the opening sections since no running heads are provided at the top of the book's pages. The list of names in the back, however, is brief and unobtrusive, and helpful for reference. This book as a whole is definitely one of the best of the more recent releases and a welcome trove of Tolkien treasures.

JONATHAN B. HIMES  
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Donald T. Williams, *Deeper Magic: The Theology Behind the Writings of C. S. Lewis* (Baltimore, Maryland: Square Halo Books, 2016). 287 pages. \$16.99. ISBN 9781941106051.

According to Donald Williams, a deficiency in *Mere Theology*<sup>1</sup> by Will Vaus is its lack of sustained critique of Lewis's theology. Williams intends to fill this void with *Deeper Magic*. His design is to look "at Lewis's presentation of Christian doctrine as a unified whole and critically asks what are its strengths and weaknesses as a guide to biblical faith from a conservative Evangelical perspective" (13-4).

To accomplish this goal, Williams must first spend time summarizing what Lewis has written in order to elucidate and illuminate his theological underpinnings. It is a daunting task not only because of the breath of genres in which Lewis wrote, but also because of the persistent public commitment by Lewis to promote "mere Christianity" rather than lifting up any sectarian Christian doctrine. Thankfully, Lewis could be more forthcoming in his private correspondence and Williams acknowledges here his indebtedness to Walter Hooper's pioneering work, *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis*.

Structurally, Williams's book is well organized according to various formal categories of systematic theology: Anthropology, Christology,

<sup>1</sup> Will Vaus, *Mere Theology: A Guide to the Thought of C. S. Lewis* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2004).