

## Bibliography

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### DEEP ROOTS IN A TIME OF FROST

Review by Ryder W Miller

Deep Roots in a Time of Frost: Essays on Tolkien by Patrick Curry. Cormarë Series No. 33. Zurich and Jena, Switzerland: Walking Tree Publishers, 2014. Paper, \$24.30. [*Previously reviewed "Beyond Bree" Aug'15. Ed.*]

From Deep Roots in a Time of Frost, a collection of essays and reviews, by Patrick Curry, one will find a secure grounding in Tolkien scholarship, studies, and fandom. One assumes, that is, if one here has also read The Tolkien Canon (The Hobbit, The Lord of the Rings, The Silmarillion). Deep Roots contains a large amount of information about Tolkien's relationship to modernism, the reaction of his critics, and his popular reception. Curry is a great defender of Tolkien and refutes many of the criticisms of his Middle-earth. One will find many of the famous quotes about Tolkien, and some from Tolkien and Lewis defending their endeavors in fantasy.

As such, the book is collegial and there are important lessons to be learned here. Some though will have read some of these points already, but others are likely to find here that they might have missed or forgotten something even if they have also read biography, criticism and scholarship. Some might not agree with all the arguments presented. Curry is also of a mind frame which appreciates theology, mythology, and enchantment, with Tolkien reminding that the world was once magical and may still be for some.

Curry uses academic language and one will find that one needs to look up some of the words he uses. He also requires a close reading, but for some there are important things to be gained. Curry is an interesting stylist and seems to have used some stylistics that are not widely used in the United States. This is a great read with sophistication, sometimes pique, fervor, and a deep understanding and appreciation of Tolkien's accomplishment and context. Tolkien, though, can sometimes take work also, but most have found him rewarding, including Curry.

Much of the book is about Enchantment and Modernism. Curry writes that our Nature experiences are about Enchantment. So that is responsible for the special feeling we have when we walk in the outdoors he seems to be saying, though not directly. Modernism seems to be challenging this with Curry arguing that some of the ideals of progress "Knowledge, Rule, Order" have put our lives in danger. These are the ideas of Saruman and Mordor, he writes. To our loss is the enchanted world which has needed to defend itself from those who would use dark magic in the form of technology to bear.

In one of his definitions of modernism Curry writes: "Modernism in this sense can be seen to comprise three interlocking empires: international financial capital, state-power, and modern science and technology." (238-239)

Tolkien is charged here, not by Curry but shown by him and others, to have reminded us that there is also a natural world which is enchanting. Though he agreed with the modernists about some of the dangers of technology and industrialism, he helped others flee from it and them. He also challenged the literati with doing something different. Curry goes to great lengths to describe modernism which Tolkien seems to have refuted on some points, reminding that there once was a mythical and enchanted land that we came from. The current Tolkien renaissance with all the English writing he tried to make current and available again reminds that there was an old time mythology for English speaking peoples also.

Curry does not address the dichotomy in Tolkien's wild places with there being beings that we do not like, ie. some that could be considered evil. This will offend Evolutionists and defenders of endangered species. Some of these creatures we now need to and are required to defend. They are part of ecological systems and have requirements, but for some there is not an understandable explanation for them.

Many have sought to disenchant this land or this experience, but for Tolkien readers it is still there in Middle-earth. Tolkien also did not let us forget, giving us back a mythology:

Tolkien's other route to universality, probably equally unintentionally, is through the fact that there is nowhere in the world without some indigenous tradition of a mythical way of relating to the world in which it is alive and saturated with spiritual meaning "enchanted", in a word. Those traditions may be deeply buried; they may only exist in most readers' minds now as a dim ancestral memory of a "small" and ostensibly primitive rural or wild folk who knew how to live on nature's terms. (242)

For some, Middle-earth changed this, as well as some other things.

In one essay he writes that there are three roads we can go down, either that of Heaven, Hell or the Faërie. The last may not exist for many others with The Faërie being not in their tradition. The first two might not exist for the non-religious either. There are though those magical experiences one experiences in the outdoors? Maybe it is not just beauty, solitude, and the chemicals in the air? Maybe in some sense we still can join Tolkien, The Elves, and the Fellowship there in a "wild of sorts" that reminds us of Middle-earth. These wild places and their creatures still need defenders. There is a less direct connection with this with folks who are from other places, but Tolkien, as told by Curry, shows that it has not necessarily or completely disappeared for English speaking peoples.