

Foreword

Born in 1898 in Belfast, Northern Ireland, C.S. Lewis, was educated in Oxford, England, served in the British army during World War I, and completed a long and fruitful teaching career in Oxford and Cambridge that lasted from the mid-1920s until his death in 1963. Lewis thought much of his published work would be forgotten, but has long been an influential figure in the English-speaking world and continues to have a sustained impact on three continents, particularly in the British Isles, in Australia and New Zealand, and in North America. He is regarded with high esteem well into the twenty-first century in his multiple vocations as a literary historian, cultural critic, fantasist, Christian apologist, poet, and memoirist, and, one can say usefully, as an astute eulogist of the presumed values inherent in Western civilization. What has gone relatively unremarked is the rise of Lewis's popularity and reputation in world letters—seen in the growing scholarly attention and translation he has received in the last two decades in Germany, the Netherlands, France, Spain, Russia, China, South Korea, Brazil, and, now, as evident in Dr. Kyoko Yuasa's innovative new publication, in Japan.

It is important as Lewis's readership continues to expand that there arise gifted, informed, and diverse critics who come along to meet the challenge of translating and interpreting—as well as extending—the impact of Lewis's oeuvre in languages and traditions different from his own. It is thus a truly happy occasion to welcome Dr. Yuasa's adventurous new voice to Lewis Studies. I was first privileged to meet Professor Yuasa in a seminar I was teaching on Lewis in the Kilns, his Oxford home, under the auspices of the C.S. Lewis Foundation in the Summer of 2004. It was here shared with me as well as seminar participants insights from her growing inquiry into the efficacy of Lewis's fantasy as well as the effectiveness of his rhetorical

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criticism. Her scholarship has since flourished to include many insightful articles published in both Japanese and English, translations of previous English monographs into Japanese (including a work of my own, *A Rhetoric of Reading: C.S. Lewis's Defense of Western Literacy*), and, presently, this unique volume that reintroduces and reimagines C.S. Lewis for a worldwide audience under the rubric of “Christian postmodernism.”

Dr. Yuasa offers a unique take on the meaning of the pregnant but problematic term, “postmodernism,” and the reader of this volume would do well to follow her development and deployment of this term. *Christian* postmodernism, in particular, is the platform she endeavors to establish and recalibrate—to “baptize,” if you will, the term, “postmodernism,” in the manner Lewis asserts Scottish author, George Macdonald, “baptized his imagination”—all in the service of explaining Lewis to an emerging world audience. She undertakes this challenging task because she wishes to equip Lewis to speak eloquently out of his own time and cultural context. To do so, Dr. Yuasa, argues, Lewis must be artfully migrated from his original milieu and inserted into the critical consciousness of a post-Western, post-Enlightenment era. Through an elucidation of Lewis’s Christian postmodernism, she hopes to enable a truly world audience to bypass the inhibitions of an errant modernist typology, who can then directly encounter Lewis’s ideas and his fiction through the lens of his mythopoetic imagination.

Since we live in an era of instant punditry, of conclusion-drawing from the thinnest of reconnaissance, out of a reductionist default mode based upon the whimsy of an idea, Dr. Yuasa’s work is particularly valorous. She helps to address this malady with a carefully argued exposition that provides welcome new insight into Lewis’s achievements and ongoing relevance for readers everywhere, of all times. Put simply, it is C.S. Lewis’s uncanny “anachronicity,” recognizing his pivot that situates between time and eternity, that Dr. Yuasa uncovers: his audacious ability to be “neither/and” within fiction and nonfiction texts that serves us as a tool for recovery of perspective and true insight. For this accomplishment alone, we must be thankful—and thereby properly chastened.

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Willow, Alaska, March, 2015