

Tolkien, Carroll, Peake: great British fantasists

Start date Friday 19 November 2021 **End date** Sunday 21 November 2021

Venue Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge
CB23 8AQ

Tutor Dr John Lennard **Course code** 2122NRX068

Director of ISP and LL Sarah Ormrod

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Tutor biography

Dr John Lennard was formerly both a Fellow of Trinity Hall and Professor of British and American Literature at the University of the West Indies in Mona, Jamaica, and is an Associate Member of and occasional Director of Studies in English at Hughes Hall. His published work includes two best-selling OUP textbooks, *The Poetry Handbook* and *The Drama Handbook*, and a study of *Mock-Death in Shakespeare's Plays* as well as two collections of essays on 'genre fiction', *Of Modern Dragons* and *Of Sex and Faerie*, as well as individual studies of Tolkien, Faulkner, and Paul Scott. He has taught for Cambridge ICE since 1991, including summer schools, virtual festivals, and day and weekend courses.

Course programme

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the Terrace Bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00 Dinner

20:30 – 22:00 The Uses of Fantasy

22:00 Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30 Breakfast

09:00 – 10:30 Charles Lutwidge Dodgson and Lewis Carroll

10:30 Coffee

11:00 – 12:30 The Lessons of Wonderland

13:00 Lunch

14:00 – 16:00 Free time

16:00 Tea

16:30 – 18:00 Mervyn Peake's Life and Art

18:00 – 18:30 Free time

18:30 Dinner

20:00 – 21:30 The Very Strange History of *The Lord of the Rings*

21:30 Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30 Breakfast

09:00 – 10:30 Tolkien's Wars and Faiths

10:30 Coffee

11:00 – 12:30 Pottermania and Beyond : The Popularity of Fantasy

12:45 Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

The course will introduce students to:

- 1) Issues and arguments about the value and uses of the fantastical in literature.
- 2) The expressions of personal concerns by Carroll, Peake, and Tolkien within their fantasy writing.
- 3) The historical development of Fantasy as a commercial genre.

Content:

NOTE: This course deals in detail with written fantasies that include violence and warfare, and will touch on other works that include death and sexual violence. Debates around Carroll's supposed paedophilia will also be discussed in one session.

Over the last two centuries fantasy writing has become a very successful commercial genre, and three creations in particular have gripped generations – Lewis Carroll's Wonderland, J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth, and Mervyn Peake's Gormenghast. But why write – or read – fantasy? And is it any more than the escapism of which it is often accused? This course begins with some sharp reconsiderations of what we mean by 'fantasy', and what it might actually be, before looking in turn at Carroll, Peake, and Tolkien, with their astonishing creations, and asking what purposes their fantasy has served, for themselves and for their readers. Why and how does it matter that all were notable polymaths, practicing more than one art? And why does fantasy writing grow ever stronger and more popular in a worrying world?

Presentation of the course:

The course will involve illustrated lectures, group discussion and the study of some fine and/or illustrated editions of the set texts.

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

- 1) Talk with confidence and knowledge about the confusions besetting the nature and study of fantastical texts.
- 2) Discuss with insight attitudes towards fantasy and the three set texts.
- 3) Relate current discussions surrounding popular fantasy to its historical and critical contexts.

Reading and resources list

Listed below are the set texts and texts of interest should you wish to supplement your learning on the course. Any essential reading is marked with an asterisk *

*Carroll, Lewis. *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), in *The Annotated Alice: The Definitive Edition* (edited Martin Gardner, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000) ISBN 978-0140289299
(A 'Deluxe 150th anniversary edition' with additions and revisions by Mark Burstein was published by Norton in 2015, but is as yet only available in hardback.)

*Peake, Mervyn. *Titus Groan* (1946) and *Gormenghast* (1950), in *The Gormenghast Trilogy* (London and New York: Vintage, 1999) ISBN 978-0099288893

*Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings* (in 3 volumes, 1954-5; in one vol., **with corrected text**, London: HarperCollins, 2007) ISBN 978-0261103253

Carpenter, Humphrey. *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977) ISBN 978-0007132840

Garth, John. *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-earth* (London: HarperCollins, 2003) ISBN 978-0007119530

Gilmore, Maeve and Sebastian Peake. *Mervyn Peake: Two Lives* (London and New York: Vintage, 1999) ISBN 978-0099282860

Hammond, Wayne G and Christina Scull. *The Lord of the Rings: A Reader's Companion* (London and New York: HarperCollins, 2005) ISBN 978-0007270606

Hume, Kathryn, *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature* (London & New York: Methuen, 1984) ISBN 978-0416380200 (Out of print, but readily available used.)

Leach, Karoline. *In the Shadow of the Dreamchild: The Myth and Reality of Lewis Carroll* (revised edition London: Peter Owen, 2009) ISBN 978-0720613186

Lennard, John. *Tolkien's Triumph: The Strange History of The Lord of the Rings* (Kindle Direct Publishing, 2013) ASIN BOOG3CBZSA

Phillips, Robert (editor) *Aspects of Alice: Lewis Carroll's Dreamchild as seen through the Critics' Looking-Glasses, 1865-1971* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974) ISBN 978-0140037951

Shippey, Tom. *The Road to Middle-earth* (3rd edition London and New York: HarperCollins, 2005) ISBN 978-0261102750

Sigler, Carolyn (editor). *Alternative Alices: Visions and Revisions of Lewis Carroll's Alice Books* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1997) ISBN 978-0813109329

Taylor, Alexander L. *The White Knight: A Study of C L Dodgson* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1952) No ISBN

Winnington, G Peter. *Mervyn Peake's Vast Alchemies*. (revised edition, London: Peter Owen, 2009) ISBN 978-0720613414

Website addresses:

<https://lewiscarrollssociety.org.uk/online-resources/>

<https://www.lewiscarroll.org/carroll/study/>

<https://artuk.org/discover/stories/the-life-and-unsung-art-of-mervyn-peake>

<https://www.tolkiensociety.org/links/>

<https://www.wheaton.edu/academics/academic-centers/wadecenter/authors/jrr-tolkien/tolkien-resources/>