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Abstract

An examination of the pagan belief structure in *The Serpent's Tooth*, Diana Paxson's retelling of *King Lear*. Discusses her use of source material in Shakespeare, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and early pagan religious beliefs.

Additional Keywords

Monmouth, Geoffer Mythlore y. *Historia Regum Britanniae*; Paganism in fantasy; Paxson, Diana. *The Serpent's Tooth*; Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*

PAGAN BELIEFS IN *THE SERPENT'S TOOTH*

JOE R. CHRISTOPHER

THE YEAR 1991 WAS A GOOD TIME for works inspired by Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Most readers have heard of, or read, or seen the movie of, Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*—after all, her novel won the 1992 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. But another version of the legend also appeared in 1991: Diana L. Paxson's *The Serpent's Tooth*, which was not a modern adaptation, like Smiley's, but an attempt to recreate the original *King Lear* story. Paxson sets her novel in the fifth century B.C., in a Britain conquered by the Celtic Leir (Paxson follows Geoffrey of Monmouth's spelling) but with a population made up mainly of a matrilineal people predating the Celts. The immediately preceding people, whom Leir has conquered, are in Paxson's treatment the Hamitic group who moved up from North Africa through Spain. Further back, remaining only in the moors, are a stone-age people. Of course, these terms are not used in the novel itself—for example, the Hamitic group is referred to as the Painted People (22)—but Paxson in her "Afterword" indicates that this intellectual framework underlies the novel (395-97). (The Hamitic tribes seem to have been a bronze-age culture before they were conquered, since Leir has to use a bronze knife to sacrifice a bull in their rites [26].)

I have said that Paxson's novel is inspired by Shakespeare's *King Lear*, but that is oversimplifying what she is doing. Her book could be considered as much a retelling of Geoffrey of Monmouth's account in his *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Shakespeare's source, as of Shakespeare's play itself. Therefore, in this essay, I want to consider two topics. First, the essay will discuss Paxson's adaptation of Shakespeare's work. Second, growing out of that, the essay will discuss Paxson's development of the pagan aspect of the setting. Students of Shakespeare will remember that he depicted the pre-Christian setting by the use of the names of the Roman gods. The names of the Celtic gods, even if they had been available to him, would not have been familiar to his audience. One modern production of *King Lear*, starring Laurence Olivier as Lear and Diana Rigg as Regan, emphasized its temporal setting with an opening in a small-scale Stonehenge, holding Lear's court, with the actors dressed mostly in furs (Elliott). Paxson uses a few Celtic names of deities—e.g., Lugus (34), Dana (124), Briga (134)—but most of her references are more general—"The blessing of earthmother is thine" (45) and, at a spring, "Lady of life, from the depths of earth upwelling, [...] [h]elp me, my Mother!" (275). Presumably these goddesses are

different aspects of a Mother Goddess, but if they were named, they would be as different as Gaia and Arethusa, to use Greek examples.

But, before more is said about this, the first topic is how Paxson has handled her Shakespearean inheritance. Obviously, the technique is different: fiction *vs.* drama. But Paxson has also not followed Geoffrey of Monmouth's third-person history, since she has Cridilla (her version of Cordelia) tell her own story.¹ The novel begins:

The Midwinter sky was brightening slowly through the river mist that shadowed the land. The day seemed as reluctant to awaken as I had been to leave the close warmth of my sleeping furs, but at seven, I was already old enough to know that no one in my father's household slept when the high king of the Island of the Mighty was astir. I clung to Leir's shoulders, swaying to his long stride as we plunged down the hill from his feasting hall at Udrolissa toward the sacred stones. (Ch. 1, after the Prologue, 21)

Although Paxson is primarily giving exposition here, the passage also reveals that the novel, unlike the drama, will be Cridilla's history, from seven years old to, as it turns out, twenty-one (19, 139, 261, 360).² One easy example of the difference between Shakespeare and Paxson comes when, in Shakespeare, Cordelia leaves with the French king and, in Paxson, Cridilla leaves with Agantequos, a king of a Celtic tribe in what later would be France—more specifically, on the border of the later Normandy and Brittany (16). In the play Cordelia vanishes for two acts and only reappears when she returns to England. In the novel, the narrative obviously follows the narrator, and the reader only learns what is happening in the proto-England as messages come to Cridilla.

Let me digress for a paragraph: I am not saying one of these treatments of Cordelia/Cridilla is better than the other. I will say something about the Cridilla sequence in the discussion of the supernatural events later, but I should note that I read Shakespeare's play as symbolic here. I believe he took Cordelia's name as deriving from the Latin *cor, cordis*, "heart," and read her as symbolic of love. As a concordance of the combined texts will indicate, in the play *King Lear*, Shakespeare uses the word *heart* forty-eight times and the word *love* fifty times (Bartlett). What Shakespeare depicts is a world stripped of love. The little

¹ One bothersome inconsistency (or perhaps interesting complexity) in Cridilla's character is her narration of the entire book while she mentions a few times that she is not fluent in words: "I had never found words easy" (221; cf. also 82, 207).

² The easiest way of identifying Cridilla's age at the end of the novel is to combine two passages. At the first of the book, as the quotation in the text indicates, she is seven (21). Near the end of the novel, Crow (to be discussed in the essay later) says it has been fourteen years since he was rescued by Cridilla from some villagers (360; cf. the rescue on 31-35). Seven plus fourteen equals twenty-one.

affection that remains is driven into disguised forms and/or is used cruelly. This is the animalistic world controlled by Edmund, Goneril, and Regan. Thus, for Shakespeare's purpose, the disappearance of Cordelia is necessary, since she symbolizes love. I do not see Paxson as having such a thematic core to her book: she is writing partly a historical novel, partly a psychological novel, and partly a pagan religious novel, but these do not entail an extended symbolic structure. (Alexei Kondratiev, who worked with Paxson on the proto-Celtic and other languages in the novel [cf. the acknowledgement, 9], wrote me that *Cridilla* is a hypothetical early Celtic form meaning "little heart"—but I still do not see *Cridilla* as symbolic of love in the structural way that I believe Cordelia is.)

The other differences between Paxson and Shakespeare can be indicated by a brief discussion of three topics, out of a far larger number of possible ones. First, Leir's three daughters. Rigana is Shakespeare's Regan, and Gunarduilla is his Goneril (23, 28). The background is that Leir and his warriors conquered three Hamitic tribes living in what is now England and Scotland, and Leir, after killing the kings of each, took each queen as wife (67-69). Thus, his three daughters are his children by three different wives (11). *Cridilla's* mother died at her birth (26), so she has been raised by him and is the closest to him of the three (36-37). The Hamitic people are depicted as matrilinear goddess-worshippers (81); therefore, the other two daughters think of themselves as the rightful rulers of their tribes, not Leir (40-42, 44, 67). Nevertheless, Leir arranges their marriages for his own patriarchal reasons (40-41, 87). This background explains the sisters' treatment of Leir later. Paxson, within the context of her novel, presents a psychological rationalization of the sisters' actions that Shakespeare presents more as a given of their personalities.

The second of these brief sketches of aspects of the book is about a character named Crow. He is the equivalent of Shakespeare's Fool. He is one of the oldest group of inhabitants of Britain—what I called the Stone Age people (24). At the beginning of the novel, he has been captured by one of the Hamitic tribes (24); *Cridilla* as a seven-year-old claims him before he is sacrificed, cutting him down from a bag hung on a tree (21, 32-33). Crow is a failed shaman of his people (13, 360) and therefore an outcast when he was captured. His first speech in the novel, while still a captive, is a *dróttkvaett* or something like one:

When flies grey skies the wren[,] [...] [
Glower storm clouds—gather hither
holders, the fire hailing, blazes the flame
to brighten the days,
and strengthen sun—
Come everyone! (24)

Many of Crow's exclamations are as obscurely phrased as this, and many are also in verse. But, while he often deliberately plays the fool and the entertainer, juggling apples, for example (49), and turning cartwheels and somersaults (113, 161), he nonetheless has some type of second sight, being able to see the ghosts that come on Samonios (117-18) and being able to predict the future at times, such as who will get killed in battle (63, 199; cf. 200). He also is often unable to keep from speaking (63, 51, 199). Unlike Shakespeare's Fool, he does not simply vanish from the action after Leir is left homeless by his two older daughters (267, 281): near the end of the novel, after Leir and Cridilla have been captured, Crow, who was captured with them, is tortured and killed by Maglaros, husband of Gunarduilla (346, 358-364). The book suggests, or at least Cridilla who is narrating it indicates, that his spirit takes the form of a bright bird as he dies (364-65), perhaps "a crow whose feathers glistened blindingly" (376), perhaps a white crow (382).

The third aspect to be briefly sketched has to do with Cridilla's husband. In Shakespeare, the King of France is simply one of the suitors in the first act; for some reason—some problem in his kingdom—in Act 4 he must return to France when Cordelia invades England to rescue her father (4.3.1-7). Perhaps Shakespeare's audience could not have accepted a depiction of a French king invading England. In Paxson's book, as has been said, this man—Agantequos—is the king of a Celtic tribe in an area now in France. Cridilla knew him before his courtship, having met him at a training as warriors on the Isle of Skye (74)—although the island does not have that name in the book (cf. the map on p. 14 and the identification on 15; 75 *et seq.*). While that makes a large non-Shakespearean episode, the actual *contrasts* to what Shakespeare presents come later. When Agantequos and two other suitors ask for Cridilla in marriage, Cridilla has a promise from her father than he will not give her in marriage without her consent (e.g., 147, 160, 172). At this point, some of Paxson's depiction of the matrilineal Hamitic culture becomes important. Because of Cridilla's early friendship with Agantequos, he is the only one she would consider as a husband. But, rather than marrying him, she takes him as a lover and becomes pregnant by him (190-91, 194, 203). When challenged about the matter, she says she is a free woman and free to love any free man whom she chooses (212). After her banishment by her father, she goes into exile with Agantequos—or, more specifically, she goes to join her husband's kingdom (214-15, 223). In his area of proto-France, she undergoes a ritual marriage to the land (237-241)—and she has a son (254-57).

The final point to be made about Agantequos ties to Paxson's decision to lay this novel in the 400s B.C. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's account, King Leir lived about 800 B.C.—perhaps dying as late as 758 B.C. (This figure has to be arrived at by figuring backwards from the five-or-so year rule of Cordelia after

Leir's death and the rule of Leir's grandson, Cunedagius, after that; Geoffrey dates the grandson's rule as beginning at the time of the founding of Rome [2.15]; according to Roman belief, Rome was founded 753 B.C.) Paxson mentions that, dated to the fifth century, Celtic artifacts first begin turning up in British archeological digs (394)—thus her placement of Leir and his Celtic peoples at that time. But the arrival of one Celtic group implies population pressures on the continent (cf. 230-31), and in Paxson's novel Agantequos and his tribe have conquered their area in proto-France (cf. 229). When the chief priest in Leir's society arrives at Agantequos' home, asking for aid for Leir, Agantequos turns him down, direly needing his soldiers to protect his own borders, although offering to take Leir in if he could be convinced to come to France (272-73). When Cridilla leaves secretly with the priest to return to England, abandoning her husband and son (she hopes, only for a short while), she goes without an army, unlike Shakespeare's account (275-76)—although one gathers around her (285). Later, near the end of the novel, her husband and son, and some of her husband's tribe, arrive, having been defeated in their defense of their French home (375-78). Thus, in addition to development of the psychology of the characters, both in terms of the reasons for their actions and in terms of their culture, Paxson also develops the historical side of her novel, depicting an archeologically and comparatively possible society, inspired by early Celtic culture, by Geoffrey of Monmouth, and by Shakespeare—sometimes, one feels, inspired by a need to *explain* Shakespeare.³

Much more could be said about the psychological development in Paxson's novel, such as the reason Leir becomes furious and banishes Cridilla (cf. 211-14, 217). But the topic of the supernatural in the novel has been promised. Let me begin with an early episode, coming in the second chapter. At Rigana's wedding festivities, the bride-to-be takes a bowl of milk to the entrance into a barrow; she kneels, touches the earth with her brow, and holds out the milk to the barrow's dark entrance (41). On the second offering of the milk, Cridilla nearly falls; she says, "What is it? [...] What is inside?" And then she says, "It is cool inside . . . and peaceful. They are saying to wait . . . be patient . . . to each cycle its season . . . they abide" (42). *They* is never explicitly identified, but a barrow indicates the inhabitants are the dead. A priestess overhears Cridilla's words and says, "The power is in this one. She must be trained" (42). Perhaps Paxson used this episode early because it could be read as simply a child

³ Paxson has written me: "I would agree that I felt a need to explain Shakespeare—the play begins, like all good tragedies, *in medias res*—the moment when it all starts to come apart. But the only reason we are ever given for Lear's stupid decision is, 'He hath ever but slenderly known himself.' So I spent the entire first half of the book trying to explain what might have led up to such choices" (e-mail of 21 February 2003).

projecting her imagination onto the darkness of the barrow; thus it is a mild introduction to the supernatural episodes that are to follow.

Almost every chapter of the novel provides examples of such happenings. I will limit myself to two more of these. One fairly elaborate supernatural episode happens when Cridilla is in France. This occurs at a fair and harvest-time festival—the Feast of Lugh (230). Agantequos, dressed as the Young God, kills the Black Horned God—actually, in a last-minute substitution, a bull, slain with an axe with a bronze blade (235); as the Young God is celebrated, the people call for the Goddess—that is, Cridilla, his bride. This passage occurs, after she has joined him before them:

I faced the folk to whom my marriage had bound me, and began to lift my arms in the ancient blessing. One of the priests pressed the ram-headed serpents that had twined around the staff of the Black God into my hands. Vision wavered, so that at one moment I saw serpents of plaited straw and in the next real snakes writhing in my fists.

But I was not afraid. [...] I held the snakes higher, smiling. Surely I had done this before. [...] In some other time and place I had blessed a rejoicing crowd. But my breasts should have been bare. Power surged through the great pile of stone behind me, and in that moment I understood what I must do.

Slowly I brought the serpents forward, opening myself to the energy. [...] It rushed through me and out through the spirals woven into the straw, over the waiting people, over the land. For an eternal moment I stood, arms extended in an ecstasy of blessing. [...]

[...]

“Thou art Goddess!” came the cry, and in that moment it was true. (236-37)

The hint of a Cretan priestess—of the Boston Snake Goddess, as a famed statue is called⁴—is here in the references to the bare breasts. In what follows in the novel, Cridilla and Agantequos swear their marriage, but Cridilla as narrator says that it is the Earth Goddess who speaks, and acts, through her (239-41). In the allusion to the Cretan priestess, there may be a suggestion of reincarnation; either that, or a type of psychological unity across time, rather as Charles Williams suggests in his novel *Descent into Hell*, when one character in the twentieth century bears the fear of her ancestor, who is being burnt at the stake in the sixteenth century (149-

⁴ Kenneth Lapatin has summed up the reasons for believing this statue is a forgery (see the Works Cited). But, if this particular example is invalid as evidence, still there are enough early carvings of bare-breasted goddesses from the Middle East and enough emphasis on snakes in early religions (and enough snake pits) to support Cridilla’s cross-temporal memories.

151, 156-58, 167-173). The power that flows from Cridilla in her blessing of the people is, of course, a pagan parallel to the Pope, or a bishop, or a priest, making the sign of the cross over a congregation: it too transfers, or is meant to transfer, a type of power, a blessing, to the people facing the priest. And the Earth Goddess acting through Cridilla in her marriage, in the oath and the sexual union, is like Christ, in Williams' *Descent into Hell*, acting through the woman who bears her ancestor's fear (170-71). I make these Christian comparisons not because I think Paxson's book is Christian in any sense; it is not. But I want to indicate the type of supernaturalism she is suggesting. Paxson, in the preface to one of her novels—*The Paradise Tree*—said that Williams was one of the authors she was following in her urban fantasy; here, in a far different type of novel, she may not be following him at all, but she is presenting a type of religious paganism which is like his Christian presentation.

The third example occurs after Cridilla has returned to England. She needs to find her father and Crow, and she deliberately enters the spiritual realm to locate them. A priestess helps her, saying,

[T]he Otherworld [...] lies upon the world we know like the folds of a cloak, some parts touching closely, some far indeed from the knowledge of men. For some folk, the doors open easily and unawares, while others can find them only with senses heightened by time or place or ritual. (288)

In the book, they use all three of these heightening agents: the time is the feast of Samonia (287), later called Samhain or, in Christian terminology, All Saints' Day (399); the place is the Arrows (288), today known in England as the Devil's Arrows, at Boroughbridge (15); and the ritual involves the priestess circling the formation seven times and chanting as she circles (289). The priestess sends Cridilla's spirit forth; Cridilla at first hears a resonance; then she sees the land below her "veined with light," as the dead move on the spirit paths (289). She sees the spirits of several dead persons she knows (290), and then summons one, a priestess, to help her locate her father (290-91); they take the forms of birds as they go to where the trail of Lear and Crow was lost (291). Cridilla's meeting with Leir is not emotionally successful, for, while he does ultimately see her spirit, he believes her to be dead and that he has slain her (293). Paxson is using the madness first described by Shakespeare, but for her own purposes (cf. 217). One passage by Leir when Cridilla first arrives as a spirit, before Leir sees her (292), is parallel in content to Lear's speech in the drama beginning, "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!" (3.2.1). But the passage I find most interesting in Cridilla's visit to the spirit realm is when she first flies up as a swan:

The night was wild with energies for which I had no names. I willed them to take familiar forms, winds that my spirit-shape could ride, shaped by recognizable contours in the land below. (291)

The repetition of *shape* is awkward, but the idea is what I find interesting: the ghost must shape that mysterious world into what he or she can comprehend in order to deal with it (cf. also 333). Paxson is not concerned with mysticism as I understand the term, but the mystics also, in their vision of the One, of God, find somewhat different things, depending on their traditions and thus what they expect: Sankara finds a static joy, Plotinus finds an aesthetic *eros*, and Eckhart finds a moral *agape*, in the Ultimate Being of the spiritual realm (Otto 210-11).

But what Cridilla wants and finds is simply a method of locating her father and Crow. Hers is a pagan spiritual realm, with lines of light between points of power—that is, the sacred places in the landscape—with spirits of the dead and with spiritual journeys imaged, even by the participant, as bird flight. In the first passage considered, milk was offered as food to the dead; in the third, although it was not noted above, a ghost wants blood and mead, although it is satisfied with bones (291). One remembers that Odysseus offered ghosts blood to drink at the entrance to Hades, although in Paxson the offering is not necessary to allow the ghosts to communicate. Also, it has been indicated that Paxson's depiction has a religious flavor, not just being a fantasy in which magic works. This is not surprising since Paxson is a leader of a neo-pagan coven in California. I can be more specific than that. She was at one time an Episcopalian (she mentioned in a personal conversation many years ago), and I have heard her say that reading C.S. Lewis was what converted her to paganism—although I have never asked her for the details. She comments:

C.S. Lewis tried to refresh people's vision of Christian truths by presenting them through the mythology of Narnia. I am less ambitious, and in this materialistic age, would be happy to see readers['] awareness of spiritual reality stimulated by my work, whether they go on to interpret and apply it in Christian or pagan terms. (e-mail of 21 February 2003)

Among other pagan activities, she was involved in the founding of Hrafnar, a group which practices Germanic paganism, in 1988. I have heard her say that she is depicting a truth, not fantasy, in her novels.⁵

⁵ Actually, I believe I heard her say she depicted "the truth" in her novels, but that was in a moment of oral emphasis—and she may have been speaking about some limited aspect of her content; at any rate, she, upon reflection, when looking at a draft of this paper, suggested the text should read "a truth" (e-mail of 21 February 2003).

However, I am bemused by Cridilla *willing* the spiritual forces to take a form she could manage. If Paxson is describing what she believes (and I have no reason to doubt it), I am not at all certain she is describing accurately what is there, rather than what she *wills* to find. Analogously, can both Charles Williams and Paxson be right about their similar depictions but opposed sympathies? I do not attempt on my own authority to answer that question or settle the previous uncertainty, for, if I may reverse the statement by the priestess when Cridilla saw the ghosts in the barrow, I do not have the power: that is, I do not have second sight. As a character in one of Williams' other novels commented, "No-one can possibly do more than decide what to believe" (*War in Heaven* 113)—which may be another statement about *willing* what one will see.

Paxson, however, does not consider the willing to indicate uncertainty of the kind I raise about what is seen; instead, the willing is necessary because the spiritual is not actually perceivable by the senses—thus each person has to shape what is there in his or her own terms, and what similarities there are in various persons' experiences imply the general truth of what is perceived. "The human brain seems to be wired in such a way that we use the symbol systems with which we are most familiar to express transcendent experience" (e-mail of 21 February 2003).⁶ If Paxson is correct in her understanding of the individual responses to the supernatural realm—as the accounts of the mystics suggest—then both Paxson and Williams can be describing the same realm from their different perspectives.⁷ Karen Armstrong, in her *A History of God*, comments that the

Jewish mystics did not imagine that they were "really" flying through the sky or entering God's palace but were marshaling the religious images that filled their minds in a controlled and ordered way. (213)

⁶ "As for the shaping of reality—the writings of the mystics make abundantly clear how difficult it is to put spiritual experiences into words—to express something which transcends the worlds of the senses in sensory language. So when Cridilla 'wills' what she is perceiving to take a shape she can recognize, she is using a symbolic language, which is the way the conscious and unconscious (or trans-conscious) minds communicate—as in dreams. I therefore make a distinction between the *content* of the experience and the way in which it is processed. The human brain seems to be wired in such away that we use the symbol systems with which we are most familiar to express transcendent experience. Symbol systems can be known and analyzed, the true nature of that which they express is more problematic" (e-mail of 21 February 2003).

⁷ I realize that Paxson's similarity to Williams' material is explainable as a fictional tradition, not involving any spiritual truth; hence my use of the tentative "if [. . .] can be" in the text above. Different readers will make different assumptions about the relationship.

Cridilla, in Paxson's fiction, certainly assumes she is flying in the spiritual realm and, by that means, travels to her father in the real world of the novel. But the similarity of shaping mental images in an understandable way is in both accounts. Again, Armstrong says, "Unlike dogmatic religion, which lends itself to sectarian disputes, mysticism often claims that there are as many roads to God as people" (230; cf. 218-19). Paxson and Williams are not going so far in their cited fictions as to depict God (and neo-pagans would not depict a single, masculine god anyway), but they are describing spiritual practices and spiritual realms that are similar, despite major dogmatic differences between Trinitarian Christianity and polytheistic paganism.⁸

Truth or illusion? A perception of spiritual reality? I do not really have to choose or decide in this essay. C.S. Lewis has written about a good reader (which I at least try to be):

[The best type of reader] never mistakes art either for life or for philosophy. He can enter, while he reads, into each author's point of view without either accepting or rejecting it, suspending when necessary his disbelief and (what is harder) his belief. (68)

And again Lewis writes,

A true lover of literature should be in one way like an honest examiner, who is prepared to give the highest marks to the telling, felicitous and well-documented exposition of views he dissents from or even abominates. (86)

I certainly do not abominate Paxson's book (the "exposition" in question) and give it good marks as fiction. After all, it is not a treatise on metaphysics, which still would be a Lewisian "exposition"; and it is not (at least for a good reader, and not for the average reader of fantasy) a piece of propaganda. Instead, it is a novel, which certainly raises questions about its world-view after it is read, but which (as it is read) is simply enjoyable fiction. I have, indeed, enjoyed the reading. For me, Paxson is writing a powerful pagan fantasy, depicting not the historic truth (if that could ever be certainly recaptured) but imaginatively what pagans might have believed and done, back in the time of a possible King Lear. Her depiction of religious practices and beliefs are appropriate for her fantasy and are therefore part of the aesthetic, for me.

⁸ Paxson has written that she agrees with Armstrong's "there are as many roads to God as people" (e-mail of 5 March 2003). Neo-paganism, since it is not dogmatic, has a variety of beliefs about any archetypal or ultimate divinity.

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*Edited by Amy H. Sturgis
Preface by Darrell Gwaltney*

This volume provides a broad sample of the research presented at the “Past Watchful Dragons: Fantasy and Faith in the World of C.S. Lewis” international conference held at Belmont University on November 3-5, 2005. The contributing scholars reflect a truly interdisciplinary discussion representing the fields of literature, theology, history, and popular culture. The assembled essays offer insights on the messages of C.S. Lewis’s fiction and nonfiction, the dramatic adaptations of his work, the influence of his faith, and his relevance to related fantasy literature and authors from J.R.R. Tolkien to J.K. Rowling. These diverse contributions combine to offer a better understanding and appreciation of the life and legacy of C.S. Lewis.

Praise for *Past Watchful Dragons*

It is no small achievement to gather twelve essays with authority and grace (ten on Lewis and one each on Tolkien and J.K. Rowling). Lewis enthusiasts with Puddleglum personalities, who expect at least one bad egg in a dozen, will be pleasantly surprised.

—Robert Trexler, Editor of *The Bulletin of the New York C.S. Lewis Society*

This is no dry collection, but a continuation in kind of the vibrant conversations that went on between C.S. Lewis and his like-minded friends in smoky Oxford pubs and book-lined college rooms.

—Colin Duriez, Author of *Tolkien and C.S. Lewis: The Gift of Friendship*

A welcome collection of reflections on C.S. Lewis by both seasoned and fresh voices on a wide range of topics topped off with two provocative explorations into Tolkien and Rowling.

—Christopher Mitchell, Director, Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton College

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