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An Appreciation of Pauline Baynes

Abstract

Appreciation and description of the illustrations of Pauline Baynes. Includes bibliography of her illustrations.

Additional Keywords

Baynes, Pauline

AN APPRECIATION OF PAULINE BAYNES

NANCY-LOU PATTERSON

Like a character in a Victorian or Edwardian children's story, Pauline Baynes spent the first five years of her life in India, though she was born in Brighton. Her talent emerged in her childhood, for by the age of ten she was already writing illustrated fan letters which aroused the interest and approval of authors to whom she wrote. Her art training--a single year at art school--was cut short by World War II, but her war service included a stint of drawing charts at the Admiralty Hydrographic department at Bath. The effects of the highly disciplined arts of draughting, charting, and mapping, may be seen in all her subsequent work. Her early career as an illustrator included the "hours of trudging round different publisher's offices," as Dorothy Woods puts it, which mark the illustrator's profession, as well as the extremely long hours of meticulous work at her drawing board.

Unlike Dorothy Woods, Kay Linskoog, and Walter Hooper, all of whom have described for us their experiences in meeting Pauline Baynes, I only know her through her art. I did, however, have the pleasure of meeting that first-hand, for in 1968, George Allen and Unwin did me the great courtesy of sending four original paintings from The Adventures of Tom Bombadil, which I included in an exhibition at the University of Waterloo. Pauline Baynes's art has three special qualities--exquisite detail, historical accuracy, and animated life-likeness--and two polarities. These poles range from the extremely elegant, stylized "medieval" mode to a lively, decorative naturalism. Either of these is appealing, though the first sometimes leads her toward conventionalization and empty decoration, while the second sometimes leads her toward slightness and mere whimsey. I say "towards," for those nadirs are never reached. And when she combines the two tendencies in one, Baynes's art is superb. The four paintings which were lent to my exhibition made these qualities clear.

The works were a revelation to me: I have compared them in an essay to Islamic illumination, because of their extremely minute detail and perfection of finish. The originals were exactly the same size as the published illustrations, so the exquisitely refined articulation came directly from the hand of the artist and not from the re-producer's camera. C.S. Lewis himself commented upon this trait: Walter Hooper quotes a letter of 21 January, 1954, written by Lewis to Baynes: "How did you do Tashbaan? We only got its full wealth by using a magnifying glass." The illustration about which he wrote must be the view of Tashbaan in the chapter, "Shasta Falls in with the Narnians," in The Horse and His Boy. Several hundreds of tiny buildings are depicted, with their minute cupolas and miniscule windows indicated by tiny strokes of the pen. Works of this kind indeed invite comparison with the various illustrations of the Shah-Namah and other secular books of the great days of Iranian illustration.

This effect is even more striking when a work is created by the brush, as were the four from The Adventures of Tom Bombadil which I was able to examine myself. An unfortunate by-product of this remarkable technical facility is that if it is not matched by the printer of subsequent editions, there may be loss of clarity and quality. This

has certainly been the case with some of the later editions of the Narnian Chronicles, as Kay Linskoog has pointed out. Both the paperback versions and some of the recent hardback versions of the Chronicles present Baynes's illustrations in a deteriorated form. This cannot so easily occur with the artist's more recent works, which are drawn in a larger, freer, and slightly more abstracted form, perhaps because the sharp eye of a young woman is not longer available to her. An example of her more recent style may be seen in the cover drawing which she prepared for Mythlore.

In The Adventures of Tom Bombadil, the polarities I mentioned above are demonstrated especially well in one painting: on page 51 a magnificent tabby cat painted in full naturalism with every multi-coloured hair in place, stands poised against an elaborate background of highly stylized heraldic lions. It is meant to illustrate the poem "Cat," printed on page 48:

The fat cat on the mat
may seem to dream
of nice mice that suffice
for him, or cream;
but he free, maybe,
walks in thought
unbowed, proud, where loud
roared and fought
his kin, lean and slim
or deep in den
in the East feasted on beasts
and tender men.

Here Baynes's brush presents in visual terms the contrast Tolkien describes in words. She chooses naturalism to suggest domestication, and conventionalization to suggest wildness. The painting can equally well stand as a metaphor for Baynes's technique, in which she invests archetypes with immediacy and life.

The story of Pauline Baynes's finding as an illustrator of Tolkien and Lewis has a cinderella quality. She was invited by George Allen and Unwin to submit drawings in the medieval manner. These won her the task in 1949 of illustrating Farmer Giles of Ham. Her understanding of heraldic form is used there to excellent effect, with the inclusion of blue and gold colour as well as fine ink line in a few of the drawings, and a charming evocation of medieval style in the drawings of the figures. Her dragons in this work are superb. C.S. Lewis and his publisher, Geoffrey Bles, selected Baynes as illustrator for the Narnian Chronicles, which began in 1950 with The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, reportedly on the suggestion of a bookstore salesgirl, and presumably on the basis of her illustrations of Tolkien's Farmer Giles of Ham. Pauline Baynes writes, in a recent letter to Gracia Fay Ellwood:

About the illustrating--or non-illustrating of "The Lord of the Rings"--Tolkien did mention that he was working on this book, and would I be interested in illustrating it. (At that time he visualized something of the nature of marginal illustrations--or the tops of pages embellished)--But when it finally came to printing--and the book had grown somewhat!--the publishers realized--

quite rightly--that illustrations would not be feasible, and the whole idea was dropped.

Baynes illustrated several of Tolkien's post-Rings publications, including The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Smith of Wootton Major. Again, she did not illustrate The Silmarillion, which in line with The Lord of the Rings has no illustrations, excepting one or two charts or maps. Tolkien told Raynor Unwin that he considered that he (Tolkien) and Baynes were "the only people who could illustrate his work." The artist has recently illustrated a large boxed deluxe edition of the "Poems and Stories" of Tolkien for Allen and Unwin, which includes old drawings, old drawings redrawn to a new size, and some entirely new drawings prepared especially for this edition. After the paperback Ballantine version of The Lord of the Rings was published with Barbara Remington's paintings, some British and Canadian publishers turned to Baynes for paperback cover paintings, while Ballantine used Tolkien's own works for their later editions. In addition to all this, Baynes's maps of Middle-Earth and Narnia are triumphs of the map-maker's art, showing her application of knowledge from her early career. Perhaps Christopher Tolkien should be added to the list of illustrators approved by Tolkien, for his excellent maps made a major contribution to Baynes's achievements here.

Pauline Baynes's illustration of the two great Inklings are the basis for discussing her in Mythlore, but she has illustrated a number of other books, some of considerable note. Her illustrations for A Dictionary of Chivalry by Grant Uden (1968) won the Kate Greenaway Medal, and her illustrations to Richard Barber's A Companion to World Mythology (Penguin's Kestrel Books, 1979) have been praised by Kay Linskoog. I find the latter well within Baynes's usual high standards, historically accurate and happily in full colour. In 1958 the Christmas Issue of The London Illustrated News contained four large, exquisite paintings in colour by Baynes, with elaborate borders surrounding depictions of the history of the Christmas tree. These include "Martin Luther's Tree, about 1533," "Strasbourg, The Earliest Authentic Record (1605)," "The Lady of Wittenburg and her Children (1737)," and "In Queen Caroline's Household in the 1820's." These delightful paintings have been remarkably influential in the United States, where they have been reprinted in several places, and where one can find photographed versions of Christmas trees obviously owing something to Baynes's carefully-researched originals. The paintings show extremely meticulous care for historical detail in re-creating, with charm and animation, each of four periods and styles. I said above that Baynes's illustrations have three main characteristics, and I have spoken already of her capacity for detail. Here one sees her ability to make historical accuracy live.

I note that the Kerlan Collection at the University of Minnesota contains holdings of some twenty different works (presumably beyond Tolkien and Lewis) illustrated by Pauline Baynes. One of my own prized possessions is the book she illustrated for Loretta Burrough, Sister Clare (1960). This charming novel tells about the life of a Discalced Carmelite nun. As it happens, the only English-speaking monastery of Carmelite nuns in Canada (Carmelite nuns call their houses monasteries) is located a few miles from my home. I lent them the novel, and while they found one or two inaccuracies in the story, they were delighted with the illustrations (a high compliment! the book went into the enclosure through the "turn," and Carmelites don't read anything without permission). Carmelites are cloistered contemplatives. Until recently nobody but another Carmelite (or a reigning sovereign) could see one. What is so remarkable about Pauline Baynes's achievement is that she has created, with enchanting accuracy, pictures of Carmelites exactly as they are--with their combination of reverence and humour, simplicity and poise, naturalness and self-control. Maybe she got it from reading Burrough's book, or maybe from reading St. Teresa of Avila. Maybe it is a result of extraordinary empathy and intuition.

All three of Baynes's traits as an illustrator receive their fullest and perhaps finest expression in the Narnian Chronicles of C.S. Lewis. He thought highly of her work himself--Walter Hooper says Lewis expressed to him his "endless admiration" for her work. She must have been in her early twenties when she created these masterpieces of children's (or anybody's) illustration, and Lewis gave her

a free hand with the work. All her Virgoan instincts (her birthday is September 9) must have gone into them: refinement of detail, attention to accuracy, and an earthy liveliness. The fauns and unicorns and dryads and centaurs and dwarfs and giants and every other member of the longaevi are shown with an affectionate respect for traditional depictions and a sense of their immediacy and truth. Aslan is magnificent, never for a moment a tame lion. The frontispiece of his dionysian romp in Prince Caspian is glorious. Nobody can fault Baynes's Calormenes (who are not "dark" in her pen-work) or her Uncle Andrew. As Lewis wrote, "The pictures of Rabadash . . . just turning into an ass were the best comedy you've done yet." Anyone can see that he is unharmed, that being turned into an ass is not really a humiliation, only an experience of humility. For a person whose childhood favourites included Struwwelpeter (according to Wood: it is the most terrifying book in the world, I thought as a child, and certainly one of the most Germanic) Baynes's work is remarkably free of obsession with shadow imagery. Her drawings are not, and are not intended to be, frightening in a way which will create an attraction for the very elements they purport to condemn. The works quite lack the erotic in any dark sense: they are, one might say, not at all Expressionist or northern in that way. Baynes's work does not show the influence of Arthur Rackham, for instance--no baleful forests or brooding mountain vistas (mountain vistas there are in plenty, of course). The world she shows is entirely consonant with the world of the Narnian Chronicles, where even the Witch at her most evil is beautiful, only as white as the paper beneath the artist's pen. Lewis was capable of evoking evil, especially the bloodstained laboratory floors and police cell walls of our own twentieth century world--but his works on this theme are not illustrated, and Pauline Baynes would not have been invited to illustrate them.

What she has, in common with Lewis and Tolkien, is the capacity to make goodness--which includes both the physical and the psychic world of the imagination--beautiful, attractive, and alive. During the preparation of this essay I began to read for the first time that lovely seventeenth-century Anglican mystic, Thomas Traherne. In his Centuries, which has served as a mine of wonder for Aldous Huxley as for Dorothy L. Sayers, I found a passage which describes the qualities--and indeed the very subjects--which Lewis and Tolkien described and which Baynes superbly expressed in visual terms:

God being, as we generally believe, infinite in goodness, it is most consonant and agreeable with His nature, that the best things should be most common . . . Then I began to enquire what things were most common: Air, Light, Heaven and Earth, Water, the Sun, Trees, Men and Women, Cities, Temples, &c.

From the Carmel of St. Joseph to the Christmas parlours of Strassburg and Wittenburg, from Ham in the Little Kingdom to Wootton Major, from Beaversdam to Tashbaan, from Cair Paravel to the Lone Islands, Pauline Baynes shows us a world of wonders through the magnifying glass of her elegant, superbly disciplined, intuitive, and unflinchingly enchanting talent.

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Chronology of Works Discussed

<u>Farmer Giles of Ham</u>	1949 (England) 1950 (U.S.A.)
The Narnian Chronicles	1950 1951 1952 1953 1954 1955 1956
<u>The Illustrated London News</u>	1958
<u>Sister Clare</u>	1960
<u>Smith of Wootton Major</u>	1967
<u>A Dictionary of Chivalry</u>	1968
<u>A Map of Middle-Earth</u>	1969/1971
<u>A Map of Narnia</u>	1972
<u>A Companion to World Mythology</u>	1979

Books by C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien Illustrated by Pauline Baynes*

J.R.R. Tolkien, Farmer Giles of Ham (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950). "embellished by Pauline Diana Baynes."

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Adventures of Tom Bombadil (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1962). Illustrated by Pauline Baynes.

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C.S. Lewis, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader (New York: Macmillan, 1952). Illustrated by Pauline Baynes.

C.S. Lewis, The Silver Chair (New York: Macmillan, 1953). Illustrated by Pauline Baynes.

C.S. Lewis, The Horse and His Boy (New York: Macmillan, 1954). Illustrated by Pauline Baynes.

C.S. Lewis, The Magician's Nephew (New York: Macmillan, 1955). Illustrated by Pauline Baynes.

C.S. Lewis, The Last Battle (New York: Macmillan, 1956). Illustrated by Pauline Baynes.

*I don't pretend that this is an exhaustive bibliography: I leave that to the arts of Joe R. Christopher. These are the editions of the books which are in my personal possession and which I examined in the preparation of this little paper.

EDITORIAL

FAIL & FAREWELL

A few months ago, I announced that I was taking leave for one issue, and expected to return with Number 25. I did intend to resume work, but now I am in fact returning to say farewell.

My involvement in *Mythlore* began innocently enough with my agreeing to serve as papers coordinator for Mythcon years ago; the job crept up on me until finally the whole thing was in my hands. It is certainly a worthwhile project, but I have never felt it was my thing. I want to study and write; but with the needs of my two children for parental attention taking first place now while they are small, and waiting correspondents and deadlines insuring that *Mythlore* takes second, the thing I feel primarily called to do has been pushed into the background. I am resigning as of this issue (I may contribute an occasional column hereafter), and Glen has agreed to resume editorship.

Mythlore was his creation; he carried it forward for a long time and has a devotion to it that I never claimed. I would like to share some of my reasons for expecting that things will go well, that good things of past years will continue, and that problems of the past will not reappear. A new dating and filing system for MSS accepted should insure that material will remain accessible and appear more or less in the order received. Some of the Stewards have agreed to help with correspondence until ongoing help can be found. (Anyone interested in typing or writing up some letters in exchange for an indefinite subscription?) Glen has plans for continuing education which should be of value to *Mythlore*. Overall, I have seen signs of grace and growth in his life in the last few years, for which I rejoice.

Members of the Society have been very supportive of me during my editorship, for which I am grateful, as well as for competent material submitted. I ask that this support be extended to Glen, and that submissions continue.

* * *

Two other new members of the staff must be introduced. Christine Smith is retiring as art editor, pleading the press of many other activities. We are grateful that Edith Crowe (cover illustrator for *Mythlore* 23) has agreed to take the job. Art submissions should now be sent to her at 2674 Briarfield Avenue, Redwood City, Ca. 94061. We thank Christine for her years of work, and welcome Edith.

Some months ago, as a response to our financial crisis, Eric Frame volunteered to take charge of promotions for *Mythlore*. Advertisements and any ideas for promoting our circulation should be sent to Eric at 4832 N. Shoreland Avenue, Whitefish Bay, Wisc. 53217. A belated welcome, Eric, and thank you.

Mythlore salutes Pauline Baynes, well-known illustrator for both Lewis and Tolkien. We are glad to offer our readers the illustration which she graciously did for the cover of this issue, as well as an article by Nancy-Lou Patterson highlighting her work over the last three decades. The cover scene is from *The Forgotten Kingdom*, a children's story by English writer Norman S. Power. When the book first appeared under the title *The Finland Saga* in 1970, Mistress Baynes wrote to Mr. Power with enthusiastic praise. While the book is unfortunately out of print at this time, an American edition is expected before long.