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Reviews

Nancy-Lou Patterson

David Llewellyn Dobbs

Glen GoodKnight

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Reviews

Abstract

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. C.S. Lewis, Illus. by Pauline Baynes. Reviewed by Nancy-Lou Patterson.

The Magical World of the Inklings: J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield. "Gareth Knight". Reviewed by David Llewellyn Dobbs.

Celtic Calendar 1992: an historical and mythological calendar representing the Celtic Year: November 1, 1991 to October 31, 1992. Patrick Wynne and Alexei Kondratiev. Reviewed by Glen GoodKnight.



REVIEWS



Aslan's Country

C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, color illustrations by Pauline Baynes (London: Harper Collins, 1991). ISBN 0-00-183152-6

Certainly the most beautiful edition ever published of Lewis' superb fantasy, this book rejoices in 18 wonderful color illustrations by the first and still best Narnian illustrator, Pauline Baynes, along with a reprint of her already well known fine color map of Narnia. Enclosing there are the endpapers, offering an aerial view of the moment when, with Aslan's arrival, Narnia begins to emerge from the fixed imprisonment of a winter without Christmas to the freedom of a glorious spring where birds and animals play about the stone table where Aslan is to offer his life: this prefiguration of the Narnian Resurrection perfectly embodies the central metaphor of the book.

The color illustrations within are exquisitely refined and jewel-like. They not only repeat themes treated by the artist's incomparable penwork from the original editions (here sadly marred by repeated copying, obviously not from the original drawings), but enlarge upon her vision, and consequently upon ours. The fundamental structure of the drawings also contains a powerful metaphor. Each is — partially — contained in a framing border, increasingly and variously breached as the events of the world within the wardrobe encroach upon the mundane world of the reader. Narnia is a world within, a place for the enactment of a psychodrama experienced by the various child visitors and vicariously, through our identification with them, by ourselves. That world spills into ours because, as we are told in *The Last Battle*, every place is a foothill of Aslan's country.

It would be difficult to choose the most perfect of these wonderful paintings. I know from personal experience with others of her original works that Pauline Baynes miraculously paints these works at the same size as that at which they are reproduced, a remarkable achievement. But to fit our narrow format, I will mention some which significantly increase our visual knowledge of Lewis' story. The illustrations entitled "She immediately stepped into the wardrobe," which is based in part upon the very wardrobe so lovingly preserved at the Wade Center in Wheaton, reveals between the fur coats within, a glimpse of a winter forest with the light of a distant lamp gleaming minutely, like a star.

In "A few mornings later Peter and Edmund were looking at a suit of armour," we are given a far more elaborate view than ever before of the interior of Professor Kirke's house, which, Lewis tells us, "was so old and

famous that people from all over England used to come as ask permission to see over it." (p. 50) What we see is a view of "the Green Room," evidently so called for its rich green draperies and a portrait of a lady in green, with "beyond it, ... the Library" (p. 53), filled with books and curious furnishings, at that moment before Mrs. Macready and "her party of sightseers" cause the children to take flight to the Wardrobe Room.

Although this volume contains a very bad reprint of the extremely delicate sketch of the Beavers' "funny little house" on the dam, a larger version, rather taller, appears in the colored view of an elegant winter landscape, showing in detail the "glittering wall of icicles, as if the side of the dam had been covered all over with flowers and wreaths and festoons of the purest sugar." (p. 68) The stone figures encountered by Edmund in the courtyard of the Witch's castle also appear in ink but are rendered in color as noble beings locked in their cold enchantment, matching Lewis' description of the "lovely stone shaped that looked like women" and "the great shape of a centaur and a winged horse and ... a dragon." (p. 90)

My personal favorite in the series depicts Father Christmas giving his solemn gifts, perfectly embodied in his hooded robe, "bright as hollyberries." (p. 100) offering Peter a sword and a shield with "a red lion, as bright as a ripe strawberry." (p. 101) In a delicate touch, the wooden sleigh is carved with design reminiscent of those on the wardrobe, as befits the remark of Lewis about Father Christmas that "though you see people of his sort only in Narnia, you see pictures of them ... even in our world — the world on this side of the wardrobe door." (p. 100) This image, so important for the symbolism of Narnia, and absent from the original illustrations, here appears as the numinous icon Lewis intended in the text.

Many of the illustrations repeat, in color, scenes already strongly evoked in penwork, but a moment which — of course — surpasses that of the advent of Father Christmas, is the romp of the resurrected Aslan, here gloriously shown just as the magnificent Lion leaps beyond the frame of the picture into pure air, overarching a Narnia lovely in the garments of spring, past "wild orchards of snow-white cherry trees; past roaring waterfalls ... up windy slopes ... and across the shoulders of heathery mountains." (p. 152-53)

The series concludes with an enchanting medieval vision of the four children seated in equal majesty upon thrones amongst their loving subjects, while in the foreground we see "the mermen and the mermaids swimming close to the shore and singing in honour of their new Kings and Queens," (p. 168) and in the background "the

wonderful hall with the ivory roof and the west wall hung with peacock's feathers" (p. 168) which prefigures eternal life. One only hopes that every one of the remain six volumes of the Narnian Chronicles will appear in due time with color illustrations by Pauline Baynes, adorning them too with refined evocations of Lewis' enchanting prose, making visible in a world jaded and engorged by the randic images of our excessive era, her ever refreshing vision of the things that cannot be tarnished and will never fade.

— Nancy-Lou Patterson

Stretching the Magic

"Gareth Knight." *The Magical World of the Inklings: J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield. Foreword by Owen Barfield.* Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element Books, 1990. xiv + 258pp. Paperback. ISBN 1-85230-169-4.

Owen Barfield's high praise for this book in the blurb and Foreword, claims more for it that the author does himself, and promises more than it delivers. The book is an introductory work, dealing primarily with the imaginative writings of the four, rather than their "non-fiction" work (except for Barfield). Mr. "Knight's" reading in their works has clearly been wide and thoughtful. He generally gives a good synopsis and discussion, sometimes very good — as that of *Shadows of Ecstasy*. And his comments — or the way he chooses to outline a work — are often illuminating for the reader who knows it already. Thus is not only an introductory work.

He also makes a great number of careless errors, which could easily have been avoided. His brief discussion of Williams' poetry, for example, is full of mistakes of detail. But the fault runs through the book, and the cumulative effect is disquieting: how many more such errors are there, where I am less familiar with the facts?

Mr. "Knight" says he has "no specialist axe to grind." But he has a subject to pursue — these four Inklings and magic — which also makes it more than simply an introductory work. He makes some astonishing claims in the process. For example, "magic is the application of the imaginative powers" and "anything that works through and upon the imagination to evoke a wider consciousness ... is a form of magic" (207). Given such sweeping claims, it is perhaps not so surprising to find all that is "mythopoetic" appropriated as "magical." Or to find Lewis' ways of "starting with a picture" described as "exactly the technique used in magical dynamics" (47). We are told "Magic is essentially a holy business" and given "a definition of magic as acts of the spiritual will and imagination induced by the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit" (67-68). Mr. "Knight" challenges us anew to serious thought about the use of magic in the imaginative works of Tolkien, Williams, and Lewis, and indeed about what "magic" does or can or should refer to or describe. But he does not offer much positive help in the way of

argument or explanation — e.g., as to why all that he appropriates to the term should be so called.

His specific suggestions are often unimpressive — why, for example, should we think that Tolkien got his subject matter by "reading the akashic records" (130)? He disappointingly fails to shed light on such things as Williams' use of Kabbalistic imagery, or his magical practices. Indeed, he repeats old errors about Williams and the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross in the very paragraph in which he cites a book that avoids them. (154).

Mr. "Knight" concurs with Lewis and Tolkien in linking the drives for technological and magical power, and in criticizing power-seeking in both forms. He acknowledges and discusses a number of Lewis' other criticisms of magic in some detail. Mr. "Knight" affirms what he calls "the neo-Platonic traditions" which include such figures as Ficino and Dee. Yet he does not address Lewis' most detailed and radical critique of this tradition, and of magic, in the Introduction to *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*. Indeed, *OHEL* is nowhere mentioned. Thus, Lewis' position is denied its full clarity and "bite," and Mr. "Knight" does not undertake the sort of detailed and explicit defense of magic that answering Lewis might have required. Furthermore, the opportunity for criticizing Williams' practices is passed over in silence (154), though he elsewhere suggests, referring to *Pilgrim's Regress*, that Williams may come "periously close to the two of Magopolis, the centre of cult leaders and power-hungry magicians" (18). Instead, he ends by asserting that in the works of these Inklings we have "the vision and power of ancient wisdom, the secret doctrine," "the age-old perennial philosophy" (245).

These catchphrases, together with, for example, the tendency to explain things by reference to Qabalistic terms (e.g., 63, 107), show that the book is to a certain extent addressed to an "occult" readership. Mr. "Knight" is critical of those with a "profound ignorance of what the magical philosophy is all about" (8), but makes no attempt to dispel clearly what Mr. "Knight" takes the content of teaching of "the ancient wisdom," "secret doctrine," "perennial philosophy," or "the original traditions" of the Kabbalah (129), to be. There are only hints — such as, that "the Vision of God 'face to face'" is only "preliminary to the Divine Union" (107) — which suggest that it is something Gnostic or monistic or somehow pantheist, wherein you are to attain the realization that you are God. It is interesting, in this context, that while Lewis' letters to Greaves are included in the "Selected Guide to Further Reading," *Spirits in Bondage* is nowhere mentioned. And the references to Lewis' "Great War" with Barfield (6, 210) are misleading, and certainly contain no hint that Lewis was then (c. 1925-30) arguing from a kind of pantheist or Gnostic position himself.

Mr. "Knight" speaks critically of the naïveté of "neopagan romanticism" (104) and "withdrawn cultishness," and calls for "the abandonment of enclosed fraternities, secret rites, and the camp-following psychic fringe" (245).

Opposing materialist reductionism, he affirms that "we are all part of a divinely ordered process" (245), ordered by "the True and the Good" (69). Referring to *Prince Caspian* (ch. 11), he claims what he sees in Lewis as "no irreconcilable difference between Christian and pagan, for the pagan finds its ultimate fulfillment and justification in the coming of the Creator," as "a comprehensive vision that seems beyond the minds of many modern-day Christians and neo-pagans alike" (79). This might be set beside what Lewis says more than once, "that I sometimes wonder whether we shall not have to convert men to real Paganism as a Preliminary to converting them to Christianity", which is why he did "not regard contemporary Paganisms (Theosophy, Anthroposophy, etc.) as a wholly bad symptom" (*Present Concerns* 66).

It will be no bad thing if Mr. "Knight's" book introduces an "occult" readership to these Inklings — and particularly to Lewis — and encourages it to take them seriously, and read them. It will of course guarantee nothing, for, as Lewis says of "semi-Christianity," "the road into the city and the road out of it are usually the same road: it depends on which direction one travels in" (*Letters* Feb. '61).

Unfortunately, as we have seen, Mr. "Knight" partly demonstrates this himself. A final example deserves note. What seems in many ways a very admirable summary of Tolkien's mythology (112-36) includes no specific details about the corruption and destruction of Númenor, and no references to the "mortality" theme and the fact that the Elves are imagined as enduring "with and within the created world, while its story lasts" (e.g., Tolkien, *Letters* nos. 131, 181). Accidental or not, these omissions are in keeping with Miss Vivienne Jones' magic ritual, "A Voyage West," which Mr. "Knight" includes as example of "Extending the Myth" (137-48). This ritual is an attempt to take practical features of the Golden Dawn tradition and mix or clothe them with Tolkienian references — and its substance is to imagine you are sailing to visit Eressëa — the very thing forbidden by the "Ban of the Valar," for violation of which Númenor was destroyed! [Folly and dreadful philistinism] are apparently not limited to the media (151).] How could anyone do this to Tolkien?

— David Llewellyn Dobbs

Around the Celtic Year

Celtic Calendar 1992: an historical and mythological calendar representing the Celtic Year: November 1, 1991 to October 31, 1992. Artist: Patrick Wynne. Mythological captions: Alexei Kondratiev. New York: Celtic League American Branch.

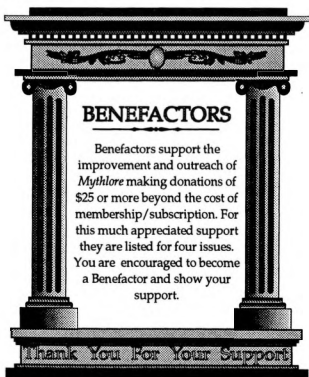
For those who love Celtic mythology *and* the artwork of Patrick Wynne, this calendar has much to recommend it, offering some of the very best of both.

The Calendar contains thirteen pen and ink drawings by Patrick Wynne: Aengus the Young (cover), The Dagda's Porridge Feast (Nov.), The Enlightenment of Fionn (Dec.), The Death of Fraech Mac Iadaid (Jan.), Brigid and Conlaeth (Feb.), The Serpent - Hearts of Meiche (Mar.), Cynon and the Black Man (Apr.), Olwen, the Summer Maiden (May), The Brown Bull and the White Bull (June), The Rescue of Cíabhán (Jul.), The Begetting of Lúgh (Aug.), The Druid Harpers of Caíníle (Sept.), and The Triple Goddess of Battle (Oct.).

The back of the calendar has a map of the Celtic Nations: Alba (Scotland), Éire (Ireland), Mannin (the Isle of Man), Cymru (Wales), Kernow (Cornwall), and Breizh (Britanny) and inside the back cover we are given the names of the months and the days of the week in Irish, Scottish, Manx, Welsh, Cornish, and Breton. There is also an order form for membership and back issues of previous calendars.

Wynne's style changes from drawing to drawing, offering the out-right humorous, the bemused, and the serious, depending on the subject matter. This is, as a whole, a serious undertaking, and it makes you want to read or reread and brush up on your knowledge of Celtic mythology.

— Glen GoodKnight



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