



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

Volume 18
Number 4

Article 14

Fall 10-15-1992

The Baby and The Bird

Diana L. Paxson

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Recommended Citation

Paxson, Diana L. (1992) "The Baby and The Bird," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 18 : No. 4 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol18/iss4/14>

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Online Winter Seminar

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The Baby and The Bird

Diana L. Paxson

Old Rome had many taverns
Devoted to the vine
Where Ovid pledged each new love
In red Falernian wine;
Catullus, shamed by Lesbia,
Poured out his grief in verse,
Apuleius counted follies,
And pondered which was worse.
(Chorus)

The Company was merry,
In Cheapside's Tabard Inn,
When Chaucer and the Pilgrims
Were telling tales within,
And on the Canterbury road
They took that April day,
And at the other hostels where
They stayed upon their way.
(Chorus)

When Villon, gutter-poet,
Reeled through the Paris night,
Drunk on verse and hypocras,
And looking for a fight,
The Pomme de Pin, the Cheval Blanc
All welcomed him, and more,
With wine at every table,
And doxies at each door.
(Chorus)

(Chorus)

**But the place that draws me ever
When my fancy's running wild,
Is a little pub in Oxford
Called "The Eagle and the Child" —
The Eagle and the Child — oh,
Or else as I have heard,
Its regulars all called it
"The Baby and the Bird!"**

Of all the city's taverns
When Bess was England's Queen,
The Mermaid, undisputed ruled
The literary scene.
Each Global play was played again,
And christened in brown ale,
While Shakespeare, or Ben Johnson,
Stood up to tell the tale.
(Chorus)

Augustan wits made merry,
At London's Cheshire Cheese,
The topic was no matter
So that the manner please —
Be it love or politics,
'Twas scandalous I've heard
But Johnson had his Boswell
To write down every word.
(Chorus)

They sing of famous taverns;
Considering them all,
The one where I had rather
Been a fly upon the wall
Would be the inn where Tolkien,
Lewis, Williams too
Met with the Inklings
Asking "Who has something new?"
(Chorus)