



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

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

---

Volume 18  
Number 4

Article 15

---

Fall 10-15-1992

## Reviews

Nancy-Lou Patterson

Glen GoodKnight

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore>



Part of the [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Patterson, Nancy-Lou and GoodKnight, Glen (1992) "Reviews," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 18: No. 4, Article 15.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol18/iss4/15>

This Book Reviews is brought to you for free and open access by the Mythopoeic Society at SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature by an authorized editor of SWOSU Digital Commons. An ADA compliant document is available upon request. For more information, please contact [phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu](mailto:phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu).

To join the Mythopoeic Society go to:  
<http://www.mythsoc.org/join.htm>

SWOSU<sup>TM</sup>

---

## Online Summer Seminar 2023

August 5-6, 2023: Fantasy Goes to Hell: Depictions of Hell in Modern Fantasy Texts

<https://mythsoc.org/oms/oms-2023.htm>



## Reviews

### Abstract

*Charles Williams*. David Llewellyn Dodds. Reviewed by Nancy-Lou Patterson.

*Fish Soup*. Ursula K. LeGuin, Illus. by Patrick Wynne. Reviewed by Glen GoodKnight.

*J.R.R. Tolkien: Life and Legend. An Exhibition to Commemorate the Centenary of the Birth of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Intro. Judith Priestman. Reviewed by Glen GoodKnight.

*The 1993 Tolkien Calendar*. Illust. by Alan Lee. Reviewed by Glen GoodKnight.

*The C.S. Lewis Handbook*. Colin Duriez. Reviewed by Nancy-Lou Patterson.

*All My Road Before Me: The Diary of C.S. Lewis*. C.S. Lewis. Reviewed by Nancy-Lou Patterson.



# REVIEWS



## Advent of Galahad

Charles Williams, edited and introduced by David Llewellyn Dodds (Arthurian Poets series), (Woodbridge, England: The Bagdell Press, 1991), 302 pp. ISBN 0-85115-291-0.

A bonanza for those who enjoy 1) the Arthurian in all its form, 2) Charles Williams, and 3) twentieth century poetry, this volume from the "Arthurian Poets" series (a part of the "Arthurian Studies" series of this publisher), presents not only fully reset texts of *Taliessin Through Logres* (1938) and *The Region of the Summer Stars* (1944), but 35 uncollected and/or previously unpublished poems. This is certainly a cause for rejoicing, and I speak as one who, charged with writing an essay on the poetry of Charles Williams, spent much of a recent long hot summer in various Ontario libraries trying to obtain and read all of the published poetry, including the very rare *Heroes and Kings* (1930/31) which included some of the poems included here.

In the elegant editing of David Llewellyn Dodds, the new materials become no mere addenda, but essentially a third volume, *The Advent of Galahad*, comprised of works composed circa 1929-1931, as well as a series of "Intermediate Poems," and of "Poems after *Taliessin Through Logres*." Dodds provides a superbly convincing and readable "General Introduction" setting all the Arthurian works of Williams into the context of his life and career as a poet, presenting him clearly and openly as the very complex and profoundly ambivalent man that he was. Dodds states frankly that "though Williams can describe himself as an 'orthodox Christian' and one who always keeps his 'doctrine homogeneous and consistent,' there is much in his works and life which does not appear homogeneous and consistent." (p. 13)

Those who are familiar with the characters appearing in *Logres* and *Stars* will be interested to learn that the earlier poems, including *Galahad*, contain a personage who did not make the transition from Williams' early and very conservative style to his late and emphatically Modern style: this is the Princess of Byzantion (or Byzantium). He writes of her in "Taliessin's song of Byzantion":

In the gate of Saint Sophia I saw a princess stand,  
call all in golden burnished robes, on the Emperor's right hand;  
with clasped and hieratic hands among the strings and swords  
a princess of Byzantion looked forth among the lords. (p. 171)

Another poem, "Taliessin's Letter to a Princess of Byzantion" names her: "Love-in-Coelia." (p. 227) This personage is evidently associated with Phyllis Jones, the young woman Williams loved unrequitedly during a cer-

tain period of his marriage to Michal Williams, his life-long wife. On the other hand we hear nothing of the several whipped or otherwise abused slave girls which form a significant motif in *Logres* and *Stars*.

As every reader of Williams' poetry knows, there was a great sea-change in his work between the five earlier books of poetry and his final magisterial pair of Arthurian volumes. A look at "Mordred's Song of the Kingdom" from *The Advent of Galahad* (circa 1931) and "The Meditation of Mordred" from *The Region of the Summer Stars* (1938) makes clear both the similarities (which largely concern matter) and the differences (which largely concern method). In the earlier poem, Mordred meditates upon his plans for life as a King. He will be, he muses,

... as that strange Emperor  
far beyond Christendom  
of whom the mad tales come  
who sits in a house of jade  
which slant-eyed goblins made  
among the poppy fields;  
whom a wall of wonder shields  
from the wandering wilderness;  
and he designs a rare caress  
to his tiny-footed wives. (p. 241)

while in the later poem, he thinks

... of another Empire, beyond the bamboos,  
where a small emperor sits, whom his woman fan  
in green palace among his yellow seas.  
He watches his tiny-footed, slant-eyed wives  
creep in and out; he designs  
a rare caress to any he cares to praise. (p. 135)

The end-rhymes of the first — *Christendom, tales come; jade, made; fields, shields; wilderness, rare caress* — along with the short lines and throbbing rhythms, give away to long lines, to subtle rhythms, to slant rhymes — *seas, praise* —; to an internal chiming of consonant and vowel — *green, creep; palace, praise*; and to reverberating sequences of sibilants: bamboos, small, his, suns, slant-eyed, designs, caress, cares, praise. Both poems emphasize, by unattractively racist means, very much in common with the popular culture of the period, the perversity of Mordred's plans.

All in all this complete collection of Williams' Arthurian poetry with its pungent and detailed editing, is a welcome event and should, as Dodds suggests, launch a new era of interpretation and analysis in the study of this extremely individual poet.

— Nancy-Lou Patterson



## Collateral Soup

Ursula K. LeGuin, *Fish Soup*, illustrated by Patrick Wynne. New York: Atheneum [part of the children's division of Macmillan], 48 pp. ISBN 0-689-31733-6.

It is a very great pleasure to see the appearance of this book, first because it carries the work of someone we feel towards like a member of the family, and secondly because it is a sweet delightful surprise in and of itself.

When J.R.R. Tolkien first saw the Pauline Baynes illustrations for his *Farmer Giles of Ham*, he wrote to Allen and Unwin, his publishers, saying:

They are more than illustrations, they are a collateral theme. I showed them to my friends whose polite comment was that they reduced my text to a commentary on the drawings. (*Letters*, no.120.)

Not since that collaboration could the same description be applied until the collaboration seen between Le Guin and Wynne.

Ursula K. Le Guin, one of the acknowledged top children's writers of this century, and Guest of Honor at the 1988 Mythopoeic Conference, has written a short story about the friendship of a man and woman who desire children to augment their friendship. In this dream-like world that could never be, what each one has in mind as the ideal child comes true with unforeseen results. In the end the problems are resolved in a manner satisfactory to all.

Patrick Wynne, whose work we have deeply enjoyed for years, has taken this short story, and with wit, cleverness and charm, has transmuted it through his drawings into a place exotic yet strangely familiar. There are bolts of creativity on nearly every page. Counting the dustjacket, there are nineteen illustrations in all. If one looks carefully one can see resemblances in the two adult protagonists to two of Pat's real-life friends. This is a triumph which will delight readers of all ages for many years to come. You must read it.

— Glen GoodKnight

## Tolkien Treasure Old and New

J.R.R. Tolkien: *Life and Legend*. An Exhibition to Commemorate the Centenary of the Birth of J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973). Introduction by Judith Priestman. Oxford: Bodleian Library. ISBN 1-85124-027-6. 96 pages.

Monday, August 17, 1992 saw two receptions to inaugurate the Tolkien Centenary Conference: one actually began the Conference and was held at the legendary Blackwell's bookstore on Broad Street. Less than a block away, a private reception was held one hour earlier at the Exhibition Room of the Bodleian Library. Christopher Tolkien spoke there to express his appreciation to the Bodleian and Judith Priestman. She was the prime mover in organizing probably the most extensive and impressive exhibition of Tolkien material the world has had the opportunity to see. I wanted to see each item in the exhibit with complete attention, but I had to hurry off to the Blackwell's reception. As a result I stayed an extra day in Oxford to return to more carefully peruse this magnificent exhibition.

The exhibition was composed of 250 separate items and divided into nine part: 1. Family and Early Life, 2. School-days and Oxford, 3. War, 4. Lexicography and Leeds, 5. 'Mr. Baggins', 6. *The Lord of the Rings*, 7. *The Silmarillion*, 8. Academic Life, 9. Last Years. One of the delights of this exhibit is that its organizers have produced a printed catalogue of the exhibit. This contains one hundred thirty-five drawings and photographs, twenty-nine of which are reproduced in color. Some of these items we are all familiar with: the color and pen and ink illustrations for *The Hobbit*, the illustrations found in *The Father Christmas Letters*, and illustrations that have been printed in Tolkien Calendars. Then there are previously seen, although less well known items, such as the original designs for *The Fellowship of The Ring* and *The Return of the King*, various letters and photographs. There are also items that to my knowledge have never been seen publicly before, such as the original design for the dustjacket of *The Two Towers*, two watercolors for the story 'Roverandom' (not yet published) en-

titled "The Gardens of Merking's Palace" and the "House where 'Rover' began his adventures as a Toy." The first of these is stunning and very unlike anything else that Tolkien has drawn, depicting a lush underwater scene.

I am grateful that this catalogue exists to bring back the pleasant memories of the actual exhibit, which will continue at the Bodleian until December 23, 1992. See it if you can.

— Glen GoodKnight

## Best of the Fair

The 1993 Tolkien Calendar, featuring all original art by Alan Lee. New York: Ballantine Books, 1992. ISBN: 0-345-37850-4. London: Grafton Books (a Division of HarperCollins Publishers) ISBN 0-261-10247-8.

These American and British versions of the Calendar feature artwork from *The Lord of the Rings*, illustrated with fifty original paintings by Alan Lee, printed in 1991. Since these illustrations have already been reviewed and cataloged extensively in the last two issues of *Mythlore*, this will only be to comment on which of the fifty illustrations were selected, and how they are presented in these two new Calendars for 1993.

Lee's illustrations in the book were 4 7/8 by 7 7/8 inches. In the Ballantine version they are 6 3/8 by 10 3/8 inches, with the borders, whether plain or decorated, left intact. The British version presented the illustrations 8 by 13 1/2 inches without the border, and with two insets. The top inset gives the month, half of which covers about 3/8" of the art work at the top. The second inset features the familiar initials of J.R.R.T. superimposed within an oval in the lower left corner. These insets are a minor intrusion on the artwork, and in the second may give some uninformed viewer the impression that the art is by Tolkien himself.

At these larger sizes the artwork tends to look better than in the book, and the producers of the Calendars have chosen some of the better illustrations. Overall the Calendars do not compare with the artwork of Tolkien himself, or say, Ted Nasmith, but they do appear better than most of the Tolkien Calendars that have been produced since 1973.

The order of the Ballantine Calendar is: 1. "Entrance to Moria," 2. "Tol Brandir," 3. "The Battle of the Hornburg," 4. "Frodo and Gandalf," 5. "The Golden Hall," 6. "Galadriel's Mirror," 7. "Rivendell," 8. "The Oliphaunt," 9. "The Siege of Gondor," 10. "Shelob," 11. "The Orcs," and 12. "The Dark Riders."

The British Calendar omits "Entrance to Moria" and includes "Treebeard" instead, putting the art in this order: 1. "Frodo and Gandalf," 2. "The Dark Riders," 3. "Rivendell," 4. "Galadriel's Mirror," 5. "Tol Brandir," 6. "Treebeard," 7. "The Golden Hall," 8. "The Battle of the Hornburg," 9. "The Oliphaunt," 10. "Shelob," 11. "The Siege of Gondor," and 12. "Orcs on the Road."

The British Calendars come with a different format: either with a spiral binding, printed on one side the sheet only, and are larger in size. This year's Calendar is 13 1/2 by 14 7/8 inches, and contains a final page of (unspecified) passages from *The Lord of the Rings* for each of the pictures.

— Glen GoodKnight

## Very Small Pots

Colin Duriez, *The C.S. Lewis Handbook* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1990. 255 pp. ISBN 0-8010-3001-3.

While this is not by any means what its subtitle calls it — "A Comprehensive Guide to His Life, Thought, and Writings," — it is a useful introduction to the works of Lewis for a reader just coming to him in the last decade of the 20th century. All his books are discussed briefly, many of the characters in the works of fiction (with the odd omission of those in *The Great Divorce*) are listed, along with a selection of geographical places, potted (in very small pots) biographies of people he knew well or vice versa, and short but well-focussed essays on some of his major concepts. Perhaps the most useful contribution is the entry, "Literary Critic, C.S. Lewis as a," which sets his critical career in the context of the major movements and schools of critical thought not only in his lifetime but to the present: no small feat. Duriez's remarks, though compressed, are telling.

There are infelicities — he mistakenly says that "Edmund Pevensie" found a dragon dying in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, when one would assume he meant Eustace Scrubb. He also says that Ransom was "renamed the Fisher King" in *That Hideous Strength*, when Ransom was actually renamed "Mr. Fisher King"; and he tells us that G.K. Chesterton was a "convert to Christianity" when his actual conversion was to Roman Catholicism after a substantial part of his life (since his baptism as an infant) had been spent as an Anglican.

On the bright side, he does provide some useful derivations from George MacDonald, comparing the downfall of Edgestow in *That Hideous Strength* to that of Gwintystorm in *The Princess and Curdie*, and Frank the Cabby in *The Magician's Nephew* with Diamond's father in *At the Back of North Wind*. His point of view is consistent with his role as "general books editor for Inter-Varsity Press," an evangelical publisher, and his interpretations and emphases accord with that posture, as is to be expected. Every book of this type brings us closer to the annotated and complete C.S. Lewis, an idea I contemplate with equanimity and anticipation.

— Nancy-Lou Patterson

## Boiled Eggs and Plums

C.S. Lewis, *All My Road Before Me: The Diary of C.S. Lewis* (1922-27). Edited by Walter Hooper. London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991. 438 pp. ISBN 0-00-215406-4.

C.S. Lewis once said that for a study of sin, he had only to

look within himself. This long book, by turns wearying and riveting, documents the small smugnesses, the tiny tolerances, the monotonous miseries, and the minor miracles of daily life over a six year period, as Lewis, his middle-aged companion Janie Moore, and her daughter Maureen, shared a series of uncomfortable dwellings while he moved from being a 23-year-old student to a 29-year-old teacher at Oxford.

The diaries, kept by fits and starts (and truncated still more by the editor's editing), are primarily though not exclusively about what he called "the home life" (p. 273). For him, "the difference between coming back to my real home of an evening" (p. 169) was a major contrast. Clearly, his life with Mrs. Moore had become the life he wanted to live. For him, "the cream of the day" was "to sit by our own fire, to chat and read, to have our own easily prepared and quickly dispatched supper — all peaceful and delightful" (p. 290). Those who have read his biography, and know of his mother's early death, the unspeakable schools he attended, his brief pleasure as an Oxford student interrupted by a sojourn in the trenches of France, including wounds which he still remembered vividly, will understand his bliss. But such bliss was mixed: he spent hours engaged in housework, painting, wallpapering. Mrs. Moore endlessly invited others to join them, always had a toothache or a headache or a backache, and required "jars" — earthenware hot water bottles — at all hours of the night; Maureen and her girlfriends interrupted his studies; but such is home life. He was content. His chief anxieties were associated with his efforts to find work as a scholar and teacher in order to support this household; and in the meantime, his father paid for most of it, all unaware of the complexity of his son's domestic arrangements. It is no wonder that visits to his father's house in Belfast were an agony for the young Jack Lewis; he was in terror of his second family being discovered. The diaries show clearly his development from an opinionated youth to a man on the doorstep of maturity; as they conclude he is still what his fellow Oxonians had nicknamed "Heavy Lewis," but his voice is assuming its full power.

One of the delights of this book is meeting Aunt Lily, his mother's sister, a wonderful, brilliant, eccentric, and exasperating lady who lives alone with her cats, a sort of fairy godmother to Lewis, who was a little in awe of her intense but entirely ungoverned intellect. In her we can catch a glimpse of his mother and of — at long last — his wife; vivid, autonomous, and ruthless; something in these women called out to him. He sums up Aunt Lily like this: "the Holy Ghost discusses all his plans with her and she was on the committee that arranged creation." (p. 154) Delicious!

His brother Warren is a major player too; the two of them entertain themselves royally by visiting near Wynyard, their terrible school, rejoicing to recall that they are alive and well while their monstrous headmaster is already in hell. And the entire hair-raising encounter with his wife's kinsman who goes mad, to which Lewis later

refers glancingly in several places (the sufferer thought, probably rightly, that his youthful syphilis was responsible, while Lewis thought it was his dabbling in the occult), is given in full detail, for those who, reading it elsewhere, have wondered what it was that gave Lewis such a scare.

Again, although we have been told that in later years Lewis entirely avoided political and current affairs, quite a vivid view of the General Strike is given, with Lewis as an interested and remarkably impartial observer. Perhaps the scenes of violence and rioting lie behind his portrayal of the riots in Edgestow in *That Hideous Strength*.

All the while, he reads prodigiously, he studies, he prepares and marks exams, and he writes poetry. We hear of the development of *Dymor* almost line by line, and read of its publication and of the reviews it received. We hear also, comic, cruel, and occasionally racist observations about everybody he knows and meets, male and female alike. He has the tongue of an eighteenth century caricaturist, and his gleefully venomous pen, perhaps sharpened by the knowledge that he will read aloud what he has written to "D" (Mrs. Moore), is seldom anointed with charity.

As for Christianity — he refers to "the uncomfortable sacrament" as an in-joke paraphrase of the Book of Common Prayer when writing ruefully of Maureen's Confirmation, recalling, of course, his ashes-in-the-mouth of a forced Confirmation in his own boyhood. On the other hand he writes pages of beautifully honed and heartfelt description of scenery and weather enjoyed on his many walks, expressing the profound nature mysticism which was his first contact with the God who would one day overtake and embrace him.

"Supper of boiled eggs, plums and cream in the garden," he writes on 29 May 1922 (p. 42), and this is a good simile for the contents of this book, by turns commonplace, even base, amusing, horrifying, touching, comic, and sublime. Oddly, this work was published under the rubric of HarperCollins Religions. Readers should be warned that this is not a work of apology, or theology, and not a fantasy, and not a study of literature, though all these elements occur in germ, curled within the glazed case of an unfolding human personality — still a kernel, a green bud, only in potential the intellectual tree of life that was to come. Walter Hooper's editorial mechanisms and interpolations are useful and tactful. The introduction by Owen Barfield serves as an Imprimatur and has, of course, its own distinctive interest. Nevertheless this would not be the first book by Lewis to put into a neophyte's hands. Its late appearance in the canon is, in many ways, justified. It would be best to read *Surprised by Joy* first, because the more the reader knows about Lewis, the more the reader will see in *All My Road Before Me*; not only of the man, but of the action, silent and relentless and all unrecognized, of his God within him. He was, after all, to have a home that would last forever.

— Nancy-Lou Patterson