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## Reviews

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## Reviews

### Abstract

*The Chronicles of Narnia*. C.S. Lewis. Reviewed by Glen GoodKnight.

*The 1995 J.R.R. Tolkien Calendar*. Art by John Howe. Reviewed by Paula DiSante.

*Essential Writings in Spirituality and Theology*. Charles Williams. Reviewed by Nancy-Lou Patterson.

*The Collected Poems of C.S. Lewis*. C.S. Lewis. Reviewed by Nancy-Lou Patterson.

# REVIEWS

## A PLEASANT SURPRISE!

**The Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis.** Three editions appearing simultaneously: I. The large hardbound editions, with dust jacket artwork by Chris Van Allsburg. II. The "trade" paperback editions with covers by Allsburg. III. The "mass market" paperback editions with covers by Leo and Diane Dillon. Each of the titles can be purchased separately, but are most commonly found as boxed sets. New York: Harper Collins, 1994.

Until 1994 the history of various published editions of the Narnia books has been one of disappointment or outright disgust. I am not referring here to changes made to the text, but to its illustrations. We need to accept the original British editions of the seven books as the standard for comparison. Geoffrey Bles was the publisher of the first five; *The Magician's Nephew* and *The Last Battle* were published by The Bodley Head. *Prince Caspian*, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, and *The Horse and His Boy*. Each had a different map of the Narnia universe printed on the front endpapers, as well as color frontispieces for *The Lion*, *The Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian*, and a screened pencil drawing in *The Horse and His Boy*, in the chapter "Shasta among the Narnians." To my knowledge, these last three drawings have not appeared in any subsequent editions.

The real problem was what was done with the line drawing by Pauline Baynes in later editions. The first American editions were published by Macmillan, who left out a number of illustrations, most of a smaller size and omitted the two page maps. The only way American could see all of Miss Baynes' art were to obtain either the British hardbound or Puffin paperback editions, which were only marketed in the Commonwealth, and which contained the explicit statement on the back "For Copyright Reasons This Edition Is Not For Sale In The U.S.A."

Then in 1970 the worst event in Narnian publishing history happened. Collier, the paperback division of Macmillan, published the books in paperback in the United States. Worst because only one illustration headed each chapter, but this one looked, as I said at the time, like someone had run the illustrations through a bad photocopy machine, so that the details would drop out, and then trimmed the illustrations down and cut out all but the central focus. Why was this atrocity, this mutilation done to the few illustrations we were given? My surmise is that Macmillan was making a good profit on their hardbound editions, as the Narnia books continued, as ever, to grow in popularity, and wanted to make yet more profit by producing a paperback set. The trick was to offer mutilated art so that the informed reader (in an

American context) would continue to want to obtain the hardbound books in order to enjoy what was believed to be a full set of illustrations..

Those in America had to suffer with these minimalist editions until 1994, when Harper Collins obtained the rights to publish the Narnia books. How they did this is a story I would like to know. Regardless, they are to be highly commended for producing three Narnia sets with nearly all the illustrations, and producing handsome editions at that. I think the advent of these new editions was not coincidentally timed after the appearance of the film *Shadowlands*, the fictionalized story of C.S. Lewis and Joy Davidman, and a new wave of interest in Lewis.

The artist for the covers of the hardbound and trade paperback editions, Chris Van Allsburg, has a realistic yet dreamy style. All seven covers looks as if they are slightly out of focus, which creates the dreamy effect. The Dillon illustrations are crisp, colorful, and ornate. While I like these illustrations, they are different from the sublime mistress of Narnian art, Pauline Baynes. For nearly all of us, no one can ever even think of supplanting her as the interpreter of Narnia *par excellence*. It is a pity that the vibrant covers she did for the earlier Puffin editions were not used. They would have been the best choice. Perhaps in future editions her superb covers can be used. However there is a minor bonus in the "trade" edition: inside the back cover there is a color reproduction of Miss Baynes superb poster Map of Narnia. The original was produced at 50 x 71 cm. Here the same is 11.4 x 16 cm, far too small to see any detail or read more than the very largest words. The "mass-market" editions contain a rudimentary line drawing based on the Baynes map, but without any artwork insets or the majestic face of Aslan in the upper left. These two maps appear in every volume of their respective editions.

I cannot recall actually praising a publisher before, but all in all, HarperCollins deserves many dozens of roses for what they have done. If a new generation of adults and children encounter Aslan, Narnia, and the joy they bring through their new editions, the more to be praised.

—Glen GoodKnight

## Wrap-Around Tolkien

**The 1995 J. R. R. Tolkien Calendar**, HarperPaperbacks, a division of HarperCollins, New York, NY, ISBN: 0-06-105014-8

Breaking from Ballantine's previous American edition traditions, this year's calendar is offered by HarperCollins in the much larger British format. It is packaged in a large cardboard sleeve, which makes it convenient for mailing.

The Calendar is spiral-bound at the top, with a convenient indentation in the wire by which to hang the it. The designers have jettisoned both relevant real-world and Middle-earth dates, merely offering for each day of the month a blank line (rather than the usual square) upon which to write important notes and information. The last page provides the textual quotes from which the artist took his inspiration for the paintings.

Artist John Howe, who has been previously tapped for the Tolkien Calendar (most recently in 1991) provides all of this year's paintings. Howe's style continues to impress and improve. But certain built-in limitations make this entire calendar problematic. The fault, however, does not lie in the skill of the artist, but in the origins of the paintings.

Most, if not all, of the paintings were not initially earmarked for calendar presentation. A few were used as posters to promote and commemorate important recent anniversaries related to Tolkien. Others were commissioned as book cover art. It is the cover art pieces which are the most perplexing, and ultimately the most dissatisfying.

In wrap-around book art, the preponderance of the action, as well as the most important characters, must be concentrated in the lower right-hand corner of the piece. Above this action is usually a relatively empty space over which the title of the book and the author's name may be printed. The portion which wraps around to the back cover is also mostly empty, so that blurbs and recommendations may likewise be printed over it.

When viewed as individual pieces of flat artwork, the compositions are lopsided and awkward. No matter how fancily HarperCollins tries to package this calendar, it cannot hide the fact that these designs are failures when not wrapped around a book. In an attempt to make this less obvious, some of the artwork has been flipped, so that the "heavy" part of the composition is on the lower left-hand side, rather than the right. This may be an attempt to balance the calendar, but it fools no one. Compare the compositions in Howe's 1991 calendar with this year's, and the book cover origins become glaringly obvious.

But since this is what we have been given for fifty-two weeks, there's nothing left to do but look at what we have. January's "Smaug" served as cover art for a 1991 British edition of *The Hobbit*. The vertical format works well here (this piece did not wrap around the book), despite the fact that it did undergo minor cropping from its original form. Howe crams the dragon into the frame, and this provides a feeling of attractive menace, with the power to draw in a curious — and perhaps dangerously fascinated — hobbit (and viewer). Smaug dominates this space, hardly seeming to fit. The vault of the ceiling above is echoed in the dragon's arcing wings, which are folded about him. Smoldering wisps of dragon's breath rise languidly from his nostrils. Smaug's legendary baleful eye can here be interpreted in two ways — first, it may appear closed while the dragon slumbers. But the placement of a slashing

highlight of gold can also lead the viewer to believe that the eye is open. It is an effective deception, and causes one to take a second, wary look at the creature.

Smaug certainly is not a new subject — we've seen him many times — probably too many times in previous calendars. But this fact doesn't diminish the work. Since this was cover art, it was a good idea to use a subject with which many of the readers would be familiar. But because it is a cover, it retains a "promotional" feel to it. This is true of virtually every painting in the calendar. The works possess a particular kind of veneer — one that is a little glitzy, a trifle too emotionless, a bit too much like show-pieces. These aren't bad paintings by any stretch of the imagination. Yet they often fail to engage on a deeper level.

February's "The Battle for Gondolin" was originally published as a cover for the paperback *The Book of Lost Tales, Part One*. While this is a competent painting, as a calendar piece it is muddled in its ultimate focus. The sharp lighting contrasts are eye-catching, to be sure — too much so. The eye is drawn not to the dragons and orcs in the foreground, but to the brilliant mountainsides, where, frankly, nothing is happening. The city itself, shadowed in blue in the middle ground, suffers an oddly two-dimensional effect, whereas the foreground and the background elements have plenty of light and deep shadow to define them.

Howe's architectural preference is to make Middle-earth cities and towers have a distinctly European flavor. They are pretty — but they are not much like what Tolkien described in his writings. This probably will not bother most people, but for those who closely study Tolkien's texts, it proves an annoyance. It must be added, however, that Howe resides in Switzerland, and the castles there (and probably those in Austria, too) could account for this influence.

In March's "Gandalf Comes to the Guarded City" we again have a scene often repeated in the history of the calendar. The appeal to an artist is obvious — the great City of Kings revealed to Pippin and the reader for the first time. Textually, Howe is very accurate here — except for his tendency to have driving raindrops in many paintings that contain Gandalf. Howe takes the name "Gandalf Stormcrow" a little too seriously. While this weather element worked beautifully and appropriately in Howe's portrait of Gandalf (May, 1991 Tolkien Calendar), the rain does not belong in this painting.

Composing this scene is a challenge, one that Howe does not meet quite as satisfyingly as Ted Nasmith did in his version of the painting (December, 1990 Tolkien Calendar). Although any attempt at this scene pretty much takes as a given the viewing of Shadowfax, Gandalf and Pippin from the back, Nasmith's panorama allows for more of the grandeur and sheer scale of the City to impact upon the observer. The idea that the viewer is getting the first peek at Minas Tirith in Howe's painting is a good one. But again, Nasmith's mastery of architecture has Howe's beaten hands down.

April — “Gandalf Comes to Hobbiton.” There’s that rain again! Gandalf as drought relief. Send him to Southern California. All kidding aside, this is a skillfully painted picture. Howe gives us a fertile Shire with greens, golds and browns rich enough to allure any true hobbit. A nicely drawn Gandalf, undoubtedly bringing news of great portent, sneaks unnoticed through the gate of Bag End. Howe’s details of nature, which get better and better the more he paints, are observed beautifully in this work. In May’s “The White Tower of Elwing,” Howe redeems his European architectural tendencies with a shapely and lovely white tower that is truly other-worldly. It rises before a misty purple headland, awaiting the arrival of a winged creature which may or may not be Elwing herself. Howe uses the cool aqua of the sea to offset the slightly warmer browns, greys and purples of this painting. He achieves a certain timelessness by severely limiting his palette, and accenting it with just a dash of orange in the setting sun—and also in the almost unnoticeable sailing ship located on the far right and middle of the painting.

The one flaw is the presence of those awful orcs in the foreground. The orcs aren’t textual, and they don’t belong. The only reason to include them might once again point back to the picture’s original purpose — that of a book cover. The editors may have wanted a sense of menace to entice readers into buying the book. This is purely speculation, but there has to be some reason to include those orcs, and that one is as good as any.

June’s “The Door of Night” is a lovely rendition of the quoted passage from *The Book of Lost Tales, Part One*. Howe gives us the carved dragons with the smoke pouring from their mouths, and the immense posts and lintel of the gate. The galleon of the Sun sails majestically through the door, ushering in a pure and glowing light. Howe carefully picks out highlights upon the backs and heads of the dragons. This captures the eye, allows it to explore the bulk of this dim composition, and still relate it in strong visual contrast to the clear light that tears a gaping hole into the Night. A sprinkling of stars in the upper right-hand corner completes this excellent painting.

July’s “Minas Tirith” returns us to the vertical composition of a poster. Despite everything that’s been said about Howe’s architectural influences, this is technically a well-painted piece. Anonymous soldiers of Gondor stand guard on the battlements of the City at sunrise. Mountains loom in the near distance. Rock faces glow with the incandescence of morning as the sun first touches the mountain tops and the Tower of Ecthelion. Unfortunately, in the end, the rocks fare best of all, because despite his skill, Howe doesn’t really manage to emotionally engage us in this piece. There’s a remoteness to it that, if not quite as cold as the stone walls of the City, still bears an unmistakable chilliness.

In August’s “The Fall of Gondolin,” mighty creatures assail the walls of the hidden realm. Howe provides diagonal slashes of light and dark as the forces of Morgoth are unleashed on Turgon’s jewel. Brilliant flame also rakes across

the composition. The lowest slash — a relentless stream of fire — reads also like a river of blood, prefiguring the enormous death and destruction that has just begun to fall upon the city. Howe has taken poetic license, it seems, by including a mounted figure that, if compared with October’s painting, seems to be Morgoth himself. Of course, Morgoth was not there at the battle. But it is a small quibble, and “The Fall of Gondolin” remains a powerful piece.

September’s “Ulmo, The Lord of Waters,” suffers a great deal from the wrap-around syndrome. It is an essentially empty painting, with the main figures occupying a relatively small space on the right of the picture. Ulmo, for the most part, comes off pretty well, except that he seems to be rummaging around in the surf for an errant boogie board, or perhaps his snorkel. He holds a huge six-pointed trident (does that make it a hexadent?) in the other hand. The surf and its spray are handled expertly. Howe sandwiches the coolest and brightest light of the middle of the painting between a dark cloud deck above, and the deep grey of the rolling waves below in the foreground.

Ulmo’s massive size in contrast to the brave but tiny Tuor, is fully appropriate. But if we’re talking scale, let’s talk about that sword. Tuor’s sword is laughably out of proportion. It is huge — taller than he is himself. The scabbard he wears on his belt must be for some other weapon, because it couldn’t possibly fit the one in his hand. Howe has done this before in “Glorfindel and the Bladrog” (November, 1991 Calendar). It didn’t work there, and it doesn’t work here. Conserve steel — forge smaller blades!

October — “Melkor and Ungoliantë before The Two Trees.” Although the figure of Melkor looks too much like the Black Knight with a spiky helmet, the rest of the painting is powerful and frightening. This painting contains some of Howe’s best use of light in the Two Trees. Laurelin vibrates with an unearthly golden glow. Telperion, pierced by Morgoth’s spear and poisoned by Ungoliantë’s terrible venom, is on the wane. Its silvery light, already failing, bleeds from a wound soon to prove fatal. The monster drinks it dry as Morgoth stands watching.

Howe covers the belly of the beast with death’s head horrors. These skulls, while not textual, are eerily effective. The dreadful nature of these two beings contrasts excellently with the beauty of the glowing trees. This painting is a keeper.

November — “Fingolfin’s Challenge to Morgoth.” Because of its origins (*The Lays of Beleriand* paperback), this painting struggles against a pronounced lopsidedness. The action is tucked into the lower right hand corner of the picture, leaving far too much empty space in the rest of the frame. Howe does manage to capture a certain intensity, with Morgoth’s mace a whirling blur amidst the action. A valiant Fingolfin tries to hold his ground, but it’s only a matter of time before he is thrown down. Howe provides a

hotfoot setting for his combatants by showing the glowing fires below the surface where Morgoth's mace has smashed the ground. The light in the sky, however, is too clean and pure. The sky would have benefited from more roiling smoke, which would have lent an air of impending doom.

December's "The Siege of Angband" suffers much from a combination of odd architecture and skewed composition. The elves in the right foreground seem to be casually hanging out, rather than diligently enforcing a siege in Middle-earth's worst locale. The elves are more or less right up against the grim walls of Angband, and yet are unopposed by any of Morgoth's army. On the left-hand side of the picture is a strange tandem of white towers, one of which is in flames. An elven army crosses the bridge spanning the two white towers. But it is hard to determine where they are going. This painting, although competent in the technique, is confusing and disappointing. It is the weakest one in the calendar. Not exactly a high note on which to go out.

It is to be hoped that in the future HarperCollins will not attempt to package any more book cover art as calendar art. Still, despite all the problems this time around, there is enough here to delight the eye, making the calendar worth your attention.

—Paula DiSante

## SEED AND VESSEL

Charles Williams, *Essential Writings in Spirituality and Theology*, Charles Helfling, Editor (Boston: Cowley Publications, 1993), 230 pp. ISBN: 1-56101-073-1.

Blessed with a superb introduction, "The Pattern of the Glory," by its Editor, Charles Helfling, this excellent selection of writings — essays, reviews, and superbly chosen excerpts from books — precisely fulfills its sub-title. One might regret that none of Charles Williams' poems were included (There are some that would have enhanced not only the pleasure but the comprehension of the reader), but one can be content with what is here, and happy that Helfling has elected to write, in detail, upon Williams' teachings. Williams is an acquired taste, with his own self-chosen, not to say self-invented vocabulary, and his own, ditto, ideas. But, armed with Helfling's clearly expressed Introduction, new readers of Williams are advised to do what Dorothy L. Sayers did with Dante's original Italian when she first picked up *The Divine Comedy*: read on; eventually you'll get the hang of it. By the time you reach the end, you'll be reading it as if it were written in plain English! And once acquired, the taste is likely to stay with you for the rest of your life.

The volume contains selections from *The Image of the City and Other Essays* (Anne Ridler's superb compendium), *He Came Down from Heaven*, and *The Forgiveness of Sins*, along with several reviews of books, which are delicious in themselves, telling much about Williams; if little about

the reviewed books. The most important essay (and I've read *all* of Williams' essays, for my sins) is entitled here, "The Cross." It is the toughest thing you are ever going to read on the subject, a down-and-dirty, in-your-face confrontation with the Incarnation and the Atonement, taken head on: "If, obscurely, he would not cease to preserve us in the full horror of existence," says Williams of Jesus, "at least he shared it;" and adds, "alone among the gods, he desired to endure the justice he decreed." (p. 193)

Readers new to Williams will hear from him that "Poetry is sensual and intellectual, like sex." (p. 119) To learn what he thought about sex, consult the book! The body, he informs us, is always less sinful than the soul. His favorite dicta are all here — my favorite concerns God's way with Christendom: "Everything must be made ready and then he does what he likes." And, while I will always maintain that C.S. Lewis was *not* significantly influenced by Williams in writing *That Hideous Strength* (that is, no more influenced in it than in the previous volumes of the Space Trilogy), here is a phrase, from "The Index of the Body" (1942) that may lie behind certain phrasings in that Trilogy, and certainly explains (as Lewis himself did, in a later interview) the symbolism of interplanetary fantasy: the phrase is "the deep heaven of our inner being." (p. 131) Psyche, you see, is coterminous with Cosmos.

The heaviest emphasis in the selections are upon the doctrine of Romantic Religion (that the version of the beloved is, at least for the moment it occurs, a vision of God) and upon the doctrine of Exchange (that one can, literally, bear another's burdens: can, in reality, take another's fear and pain and carry it on behalf of that other). In discussing the latter, in at least three places in the present volume, Williams uses as an example of Exchange from the natural world, the situation of procreation and childbirth. Unfortunately, Williams, who was born in 1886, had a very imperfect understanding of genetics, and in his most potent (and hence most inaccurate, not to say offensive) expression of his idea, he uses the following archaic language, "the masculine seed has to be received by the feminine vessel." (p. 208) He evidently knows nothing of the intermixing (in equal quantities) of genetic material from the single sperm and the single egg; of the full participation of both genders in the formation of the human person (or in like manner, in any other living form produced by sexual generation). And the phrase as he has inherited it — he didn't invent the notion — reduces the female to a mere receptacle and keep all the potency for the male. That seems to me to be a most unsatisfactory figure for the idea of Exchange, but it may make clear why it is sometimes so infuriating to have someone else presume to bear one's burdens!

There is a passage in Shaw — I think it is in the Introduction to his charming play about Christianity, *Androcles and the Lion*, where he tells us that *he* didn't ask Jesus to die for him: Williams knows all this in all its irony in "The Cross." The tough-hearted truth-telling of that essay al-

most makes most of the other essays on burden-sharing seem trivial and presumptuous. Almost, but not quite. We have all, in some way, had our burdens borne, or have borne those of others, have we not? Williams, for all his mannerisms and all his autodidactic theologizing, has a way of getting, almost despite himself, frightening close to the burning heart of the real. Most highly recommended.

— Nancy-Lou Patterson

## ATHENS, TROY, JERUSALEM

C.S. Lewis, *The Collected Poems of C.S. Lewis*, edited by Walter Hooper (London: Fount Publications [HarperCollins Publishers], 1994, 263 pp. ISBN 0-00-627833-7).

The latest product of the Editor's ceaseless industry, this volume includes the entire contents of Lewis' *Poems* (1964), *Spirits in Bondage* (1919), and *A Miscellany* of additional poems (copyrighted 1986 and 1994) of which (as was the case with the first edition of the works in the 1964 volume), many have been published before but not collected, and some appear in print for the first time. And will, of course, be welcome to readers of Lewis, whether they have already managed to acquire *Poems* or *Spirits in Bondage* or not. In addition to the poems, there are not only Hooper's original introduction to *Poems* (1964) but a new Introduction by him, discussing the contents of all three sections including the Miscellany, and — deliciously sharpened-tongued — an "Introductory Letter" (1963) by Lewis himself, which was, Hooper says, to have accompanied "a volume to be called *Young King Cole, and Other Pieces*." (p. xvi)

Readers may recall that Lewis also wrote four long poems, of which only the first was published in his lifetime: *Dymor* (1926 *Launcelot, the Nameless Isle, and The Queen of Drum*, the four were published with a Preface by the Editor Walter Hooper, as *Narrative Poems* (1969), and this has been published again as a companion volume without apparent revisions under the same title, in the same format and date as *The Collected Poems of C.S. Lewis*, that is, in 1994. Whether we will eventually see more poems by Lewis (previously published but not yet collected, or not yet published, only Walter Hooper knows, but I suspect that if there are any out there we will!

Now, to the *Poems* (1994). Lewis scholars, including Joe R. Christopher, have discussed Lewis' poetry to very useful effect, and I won't presume to improve upon their efforts. He was a good poet, if not a great one, and he knew it. In his witty (if fundamentally defensive)

Introductory Letter," Lewis writes, "It is of course just possible that some one critic who reads this... may be concerned not at all with me as a person or a type and degree of my failure or success." (p. xxi)

A daunting challenge, and one I haven't the hubris to undertake, except to say that all the poems, including those in the Miscellany, are competent. Many are memorable (ditto). And some are wonderful. But few, at least for me, reach the level of Lewis' greatest prose, where in line

after line, wonder flashes through mind and body, coursing along the veins like lightning.

I will quote, in spite of this, some lines that have afforded this stab of wonder to me. From the *Poems*, I would select (among other, of course), "A Confession," which concludes:

...peacocks, honey, the Great Wall, Aldebaran,  
Silver weirs, new-cut grass, wave on the beach, hard gem,  
The shape of horse and woman; Athens, Troy Jerusalem.  
(p.15)

From *Spirits in Bondage*, I would chose these lines from "Death in Battle":

O Country of Dreams!  
Beyond the tide of the ocean, hidden and sunk away,  
Out of the sound of battles, near to the end of day,  
Full of dim woods and streams, (p. 223)

And from the Miscellany, the astonishing "Findlay Avenue," (circa 1950), which expresses, more personally than in anything Lewis ever wrote elsewhere, that odd combination of sensitivity toward, and separation from, women, despite his close, almost life-long contact with them, that Lewis only finally overcame in his late marriage which was, though he did not know it when he wrote this poem, soon to befall him:

What do they do? Their families have all gone hence,  
Grow up. The whole long avenue exhales the sense  
Of absent husbands, housework done, uncounted hours.  
...it seems to me  
Almost an eerie rashness to possess a wife  
And house that go with living with their different life  
For ever inaccessible to us, all day; (P 251-252)

Hooper sensitively closes this volume with the next and last poem, the Epitaph Lewis composed for, and caused to be carved upon, the tombstone of Helen Joy Davidman Lewis. This edition, despite its rash of typos, serves a very useful function, in making Lewis' poetry available to readers in the 1990s, and it certainly recommended.

— Nancy-Lou Patterson

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** A revised edition of Kathryn Lindskoogs' *The C.S. Lewis Hoax* has been printed in 1994 under the title *Light in the Shadow Lands: Protecting the Real C.S. Lewis*. It is somewhat revised, but also contains new chapters at the end. Due to the extensive controversy the original book provoked in this journal several years ago, this editor does not wish to see that controversy revived again on an interminable basis. Therefore *Mythlore* invites two reviews of this book, one pro and one con. It you are interested in writing one of these reviews, let me know, so *Mythlore* can cover this book, and then go on with the innumerable facets of C.S. Lewis not touched by either book, as well as the many other areas of *Mythlore's* interest.

—Glen GoodKnight