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Re-Envisioning Mythopoeia by Nancy-Lou Patterson, edited by Emily E. Auger and Janet Brennan Croft

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RE-ENVISIONING MYTHOPOEIA: PAPERS ON THE WORKS OF LLOYD ALEXANDER, PAULINE BAYNES, MADELEINE L'ENGLE, C.S. LEWIS, GEORGE MACDONALD, J.R.R. TOLKIEN, CHARLES WILLIAMS, AND OTHERS, AND NANCY-LOU PATTERSON'S MYTHOPOEIC DRAWINGS. Nancy-Lou Patterson. Edited by Emily E. Auger and Janet Brennan Croft. Valleyhome Books, 2020. xvi + 386p. 978-1987919-24-0. hardcover.

THE PATTERSON PAPERS IS A MULTI-VOLUME SERIES collecting the mythopoeic scholarship and art work of the late Nancy-Lou Patterson (1929-2018), a scholar, artist, poet, educator, and frequent contributor to *Mythlore*. The previous volumes in the series gathered Patterson's papers on a single author (*Ransoming the Waste Land: Papers on C.S. Lewis's Space Trilogy, Chronicles of Narnia, and Other Works, Volumes I and II*, 2016; *Detecting Wimsey: Papers on Dorothy L. Sayers's Detective Fiction*, 2017; and *Divining Tarot: Papers on Charles Williams's The Greater Trumps and Other Works*, 2019) or her numerous book reviews (*Nancy-Lou Patterson Reviews Books by Dorothy L. Sayers, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and Others*, 2018).

As the sixth and final volume in the series, *Re-Envisioning Mythopoeia* is an *omnium gatherum* rounding up the remainder of Patterson's major presentations and published scholarship on mythopoeic literature and art, and presenting her mythopoeic artwork, including her numerous illustrations for *Mythlore*. While the unwieldy subtitle is explicitly descriptive, the volume might just as accurately be subtitled "*Archetype & Art*," for the contents easily divide into those two broad categories.

First, however, are the introductory matters, including a brief preface by co-editor Emily E. Auger, a memorial by co-editor Janet Brennan Croft, and editorial notes, all of which contextualize Patterson's life, career, and works. By all accounts, she was a remarkable individual who, Croft writes, "was an exemplar of the life well-lived and fully engaged" (xii). This volume reflects just some of her diverse interests and accomplishments, for in addition to mythopoeia, she also taught and wrote about non-Western art, Canadian Native art, magic realism, religion, and spirituality. She also created quilts, organized art exhibitions, and wrote poetry and fiction. Patterson's relationship with *Mythlore* extended from 1969-2001, where she was one of its most prolific contributors. In addition to her essays, she reviewed over 200 book titles for *Mythlore* (as well as a number for *Mythprint*) and served as the journal's book review editor from 1981-1998. She also contributed dozens of drawings to *Mythlore*, often illustrating her own essays. The volume concludes with a healthy bibliography and index.

The first eight essays of *Re-Envisioning Mythopoeia* generally concern the topic of “**Archetypes**” in mythopoeic literature. They derive from Patterson’s presentations at Mythcon and other events, articles published in the journals *Mythlore*, *The Lamp-Post of the Southern California C.S. Lewis Society*, *Children’s Literature in Education*, and *English Quarterly*, and pamphlets created to accompany various art exhibitions at the University of Waterloo where she helped to found the Department of Fine Arts and served as Director of Art and Curator.

The first trio of essays concern the woman’s archetypal journey into the underworld. The nadir of the hero’s journey is an actual or metaphorical descent into the abyss, but Joseph Campbell reportedly stated “[W]omen don’t need to make the journey. [...] [S]he’s the place that people are trying to get to” (qtd. in Murdock 2). Campbell responded to a question about the heroine’s journey that Penelope’s was a journey through time rather than space, of “endurance [...] until my husband comes back from the sea” (Campbell 267). Patterson resists this notion, arguing that the woman’s descent into the underworld is as ubiquitous in world mythology as the man’s. In “The Chthonic in Women’s Spirituality” (1986), Patterson considers the various mythological descent narratives of Inanna (Sumerian), Persephone (Greek), Psyche (Roman), and the Virgin Mary (Christian). In “Kore Motifs in *The Princess and the Goblin*” (1992) and “Archetypes of the Mother in the Fantasies of George MacDonald” (1970), she illustrates MacDonald’s use of maiden, mother, and wise woman archetypes. For example, the maiden who descends into the abyss becomes a mediatrix between the upper and lower worlds. As Ariadne’s clue guided Theseus out of the labyrinth in Greek mythology, so Princess Irene’s magic thread guides Curdie out of the goblin caves in *The Princess and the Goblin*: out of darkness into light, out of death into a real or spiritual rebirth. The ascending figure is no longer a maiden but a woman, for, as Patterson writes, “the tomb [...] is also a womb [...] by a return to the earth, a new birth will take place into a new, eternal life” (51-52). Thus, Irene’s subterranean sojourn prepares her to take her place in the court of her father, the king. The role of the mother and wise woman is to guide others on their journeys, as do Irene’s fairy-grandmother and the North Wind in MacDonald’s *Princess* novels and *At the Back of the North Wind*, respectively. This trio of essays nicely compliments another trio on feminine roles and archetypes in the works of C.S. Lewis reprinted in *Ransoming the Wasteland, Volume I*.⁴

⁴ The essays in *Ransoming the Wasteland, Volume I* include the following: Chapter 9, “‘Guardaci Ben’: The Visionary Woman in *That Hideous Strength* and the Chronicles of Narnia”; Chapter 10, “‘Some Women’ in *That Hideous Strength*”; and, Chapter 11, “Archetypes of the Feminine in *That Hideous Strength*.”

The fourth essay, "Death by Landscape" (1998), a title borrowed from a Margaret Atwood story, is *sui generis* here: a study of landscapes in English and Canadian ghost stories. Patterson contends that landscape and weather contribute to the ghost story's "[r]omantic creation of mood through detail" (77). Without identifying the Gothic, she describes an essentially Gothic aesthetic of old ruins, windswept moors, isolated places and gloomy weather conditions which can help to trigger the spine-tingling thrill of the ghost story. It is a well-researched essay, if somewhat incongruent with the rest of the collection.

The next four essays return to the study of archetypes in mythopoeic literature. "'Bright-Eyed Beauty': Celtic Elements in Charles Williams, J.R.R. Tolkien, and C.S. Lewis" (1983) and "The Dragons of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis" (2003) are cursory (even, as in the case of the second title, when augmented with material from co-editor Auger) and, unfortunately, do not significantly add to their respective conversations in fantasy literature scholarship. On the other hand, "'Homo Monstrosus': Lloyd Alexander's Gurgi and the Shadow Figures of Fantastic Literature" (1976) and "Angel and Psychopomp in Madeleine L'Engle's 'Wind' Trilogy" (1983) are both insightful and significant. For my money, there simply is not enough scholarship on Alexander's *Chronicles of Prydain* or L'Engle's *Time Quintet*. Consequently, both of these essays help to fill that perceived void. "'Homo Monstrosus'" examines the figure of Gurgi, Alexander's hairy man-dog, as a "shadow" figure like Gollum, Grendel, and Caliban. Despite some outdated terminology (particularly regarding race and ethnicity), the essay holds up as a cogent discussion of archetypal, psychological, and racial aspects of the ambiguous monster figure, particularly as a Jungian projection of rejected aspects of the Self. "Angel and Psychopomp" is a satisfying examination of the several supernatural guides in the first three novels of L'Engle's *Time Quintet* (*Many Waters*, 1986, and *An Acceptable Time*, 1989, not having been published at the time of Patterson's writing). Each guide irrupts into the ordinary world to "escort the [protagonist] children into an otherworld of conflict, where they achieve victory over evil" (128). Patterson describes each escort as an emissary from heaven. Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which in *A Wrinkle in Time* are guardian angels. Proginoskes in *A Wind at the Door* is a cherubim. Gaudior the unicorn in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* is an image of the Christ (134). Thus, Patterson argues, L'Engle's psychopomps do not merely guide the child protagonists through the physical plane, but also the spiritual one so the children can learn how to "win their wars within" (136).

The remaining six essays generally concern the topic of "Art," with a final section featuring Patterson's own mythopoeic illustrations originally published in *Mythlore*, *Mythprint*, and other publications. Each of the six short essays concerns some aspect of mythopoeic art, whether by Canadian modernist

Emily Carr, or J.R.R. Tolkien and his illustrators, or the Canadian magic realist painters. “Emily Carr’s Forest” was prepared as a pamphlet to accompany a 1967 exhibition of Carr’s artwork. Others have compared her mysticism to the Carmelite contemplative St. Thérèse of Lisieux or the Jesuit poet-scientist Father Teilhard de Chardin (147). But in the way she approached her paintings of Pacific Northwest forests, she is a looking-glass image of Tolkien’s Niggle. Niggle “used to spend a long time on a single leaf, trying to catch its shape, and its sheen, and the glistening of dewdrops on its edges” (“Leaf by Niggle” 94). Carr, conversely, exhorted herself, “In the forest think of the forest, not of this tree and that but the singing movement of the whole” (qtd. in Patterson 144). Images of Carr’s forests are readily available online, and one will appreciate Patterson’s essay all the more for taking the time to examine their organic energy, their impression of motion. Carr wrote of the woods, “For all that you stand so firmly rooted, so still, you quiver, there is movement in every leaf” (qtd. in Patterson 146).

Thus, evoking Tolkien with Patterson’s essay on Emily Carr, the editors wisely follow it up with three essays on Tolkien’s art. “J.R.R. Tolkien: Art and Literature from Middle-earth” (1968, co-authored with A.M. Mac Quarrie) is from a brochure for an art exhibition held at the University of Waterloo. For all its brevity, it’s fascinating to read Patterson’s description of the state of Tolkien fandom at the time. How could she know how improbable it would sound in the Year 2020 (in the wake of the extremely successful “Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth” exhibitions), for her to write, “Perhaps this intense interest will fade” (160)? The included list of items in the exhibition will make this essay popular among Tolkien historians and archivists: manuscripts, maps, and other Tolkien holographs from Marquette University, fanzines from the Tolkien Society of America and, from Allen and Unwin, three (162) or four (191) original Pauline Baynes illustrations for *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*, only six years in print at the time. “Art in the English Classroom: An Interdisciplinary Approach” (1973), and “Tree and Leaf: J.R.R. Tolkien and the Visual Image” (1974) discuss the interaction of word and image to conjure the fantastic. The first essay deals with the topic in a more general sense; the second deals particularly with the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, considering his own illustrations and those of other artists, including Pauline Baynes. This is followed by the delightful “An Appreciation of Pauline Baynes” (1980), whose artistic visions of Narnia, the Little Kingdom, Wootton Major, and the Old Forest shaped those fantastic landscapes in the minds of myriad readers of Lewis and Tolkien. The essay also reproduces Baynes’s Autumn 1980 illustration from *Mythlore* of *The Forgotten Kingdom* (aka *The Firland Saga*), a little-known children’s book by

Norman S. Power.⁵ The essay also discusses Baynes' background and some of her non-Inklings-related work.

The final essay, "Magic Realism in Canada" (1969), is, like the earlier "Death by Landscape," an outlier and seemingly strikes a discordant tone as the final full-length paper of the volume. As an essay from an art exhibition catalogue, it could make a set with "Emily Carr's Forest" and "J.R.R. Tolkien: Art and Literature from Middle-earth," though it is unlike them. Here, Patterson defines and describes Magic Realism, a school of painting exemplified by the work of Alex Colville and Andrew Wyeth, and characterized by a "quality of frozen time, of a strange otherworldliness that is at the same time very realistic" (qtd. 207). Patterson uses as her example Colville's "Woman at the Clothesline" (1957) which was included in the exhibition. However, most readers will be more familiar with Wyeth's famous painting, *Christina's World* (1948). The Museum of Modern Art, which owns the painting, describes it as "a young woman seen from behind, wearing a pink dress and lying in a grassy field. Although she appears to be in a position of repose, her torso, propped on her arms, is strangely alert; her silhouette is tense, almost frozen, giving the impression that she is fixed to the ground" ("Andrew Wyeth, *Christina's World*, 1948.") *Christina's World* evokes similar emotions of longing and nostalgia—what the German Romantics called "*Sehnsucht*"—as Tolkien's poem, "The Last Ship." Elves, leaving Middle-earth for the West, invite a girl on the river-bank to join them, "Fíriel! Fíriel! [...] Come!" But Fíriel's feet sink into the clay. "I cannot come! they heard her cry. / 'I was born Earth's daughter!'" (*Adventures of Tom Bombadil* 112-113). Like Wyeth's *Christina*, Fíriel is fixed to the ground. The transcendent quality of these "frozen moments" is surely why Patterson took an interest in the Magic Realism school of art, and why this essay, on second thought, does fit into a volume on re-envisioning mythopoeia.

The final section, comprising fully one-third of this volume's page count, reproduces Nancy-Lou Patterson's own mythopoeic drawings, with some brief explanatory texts by Patterson (e.g. excerpts from exhibition pamphlets, the transcript of a talk, letters, poetry, and an artist statement), with additional commentary and annotations by co-editor Auger. As Auger notes in the volume's Preface, due to the difficulty of locating many of Patterson's originals, some of the pictures in the book are reproductions of reproductions, and thus do not appear as crisp and clear as one would like. Yet the section marks a singular achievement in collecting as much of Patterson's mythopoeic art as possible. It includes some of her works from private and public collections, a selection of illustrations from published works, including her own poetry and

⁵ "This picture by Baynes is not an illustration from the published books, as they were illustrated by a Michael Jackson" (193).

fiction, and (the highlight for the audience of this review), all of Patterson's Inklings-related and Inklings-adjacent drawings that the editors were able to find in such publications as *Mythlore*, *Mythprint*, *The Lamp-Post of the Southern California C.S. Lewis Society*, and programs from Mythopoeic Society events. Auger writes that the section represents "as close to a catalogue raisonnée as is possible at present with available resources" (ix).

Some of Patterson's illustrations are reminiscent of Pauline Baynes's whimsical medievalist illustrations for Tolkien's *Farmer Giles of Ham* and Lewis's Narnia books (e.g. First page banner, p. 219; "Wedding Island," p. 236; and "St. Anne's," p. 276). Much of it feels verdant and organic (e.g. her illustrations for her poetry collections, *All Green Creation*, 1969, and *Four Square Garden*, 1981, pp. 228-230; her various World Trees and "The Maypole," pp. 231-233; and her series of Ladies for a book of poetry titled *Lady of Grace*, 1983, pp. 240-241). But long-time readers of *Mythlore*, or those who have had occasion to browse through its back issues, will realize how much Patterson's illustrations shaped the journal's signature style, particularly in the 1980s (see pp. 260-312). Everyone will have their favorites. For me, her illustration of Diamond riding with the North Wind for George MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind* (300) is sublime. Her illustrations of gods and goddesses for Douglas A. Rossman's *Norse Mythology* and *Cherokee Mythology* are both powerful and enchanting (315-323). And, her illustrations for her own children's book, *Apple Staff & Silver Crown* (324-333) make me want to go find a copy and read it.

At the end of the day, *Re-Envisioning Mythopoeia* does lack the tight focus of the earlier volumes in the series, but it may be considered a two-part volume of Patterson's works on archetype and art. In an earlier review of the first two volumes of the Patterson Papers, *Ransoming the Waste-land, Volumes I & II*, I said it could be hard, outside of such an anthology, to find Patterson's older articles from *Mythlore* and other journals. Since the writing of that review, however, the entire *Mythlore* archive has come online. As such, Patterson's *Mythlore* essays and art are now readily available to anyone with a computer. However, her non-*Mythlore* writings and artwork will still be difficult to find outside of this book. Additionally, with papers on Lewis, Tolkien, Williams, MacDonald, Alexander, L'Engle, Baynes, and Carr, the volume is something of a mythopoeic omnivore's buffet, much like an issue of *Mythlore* itself. As such, it may be an interesting volume for many of the journal's readers. It will not appeal to all—the scope is too broad, the length and quality of the essays too varied—but it is a fine round-up of Patterson's remaining papers and artwork on mythopoeia, and a solid final volume to conclude the series. *Re-Envisioning Mythopoeia* is recommended for academic libraries and relevant archives, and for individuals interested in the development of fantasy literature scholarship,

the role of archetype in fantasy literature, or the evocation of the fantastic through image and word.

Nancy-Lou Patterson, herself, is someone of interest to all readers of *Mythlore*. Her impact, not only on the history and appearance of this journal, but on mythopoeic scholarship in general, is significant and should not be forgotten. Auger and Croft have given us six volumes in which to remember or acquaint ourselves with the work of this remarkable woman. The Patterson Papers series is available from Emily E. Auger's website (<https://emilyeauger.weebly.com/mdashpatterson-papers.html>).

— Kris Swank

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FURTHER UP & FURTHER IN: UNDERSTANDING NARNIA. Joseph Pearce. Charlotte, North Carolina: Tan Books, 2018. 202 pp. ISBN 978-1-5051-0866-8. \$24.95 (hardcover).

CAN AN ENCHANTED WARDROBE ALSO BE FOR GROWNUPS? After all, C.S. Lewis did intentionally write the Narnia stories for children. *Further Up & Further In: Understanding Narnia* is a new book about the imaginative world of Lewis, and it begins with this sometimes-overlooked question.

The issue of how we as adult readers should approach the layers of meaning within *The Chronicles of Narnia* is the latest topic taken up by Joseph Pearce, who has authored several books about C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, G.K. Chesterton, and countless authors who either influenced this triumvirate or were influenced by them. Pearce is also the editor of the journals *Saint Austin Review* and *Faith & Culture*, and he works as Director of Book Publishing for the Augustine Institute. All of this shows that whenever Pearce is not writing