Charlotte Farrell, "Entry on: The Silver Chair (The Chronicles of Narnia, 4) by Pauline Baynes, Clive Staples (C.S.) Lewis", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1426. Entry version as of November 07, 2026.

Pauline Baynes , Clive Staples (C.S.) Lewis

The Silver Chair (The Chronicles of Narnia, 4)

United Kingdom (1953)

TAGS: Afterlife Bible Centaur(s) Faun Immortality Underworld





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	The Silver Chair (The Chronicles of Narnia, 4)
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1953
First Edition Details	C. S. Lewis, *The Silver Chair*. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1953, 217 pp.
ISBN	Not applicable for editio princeps
Genre	Children's novel*, Fantasy fiction
Target Audience	Children
Author of the Entry	Charlotte Farrell, University of New England, charlottefarrell@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



Pauline Baynes , 1922 - 2008
(Illustrator)

Pauline Baynes, who illustrated many works (over 200, mostly for children), is best known for her illustration of C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings.* Born in Sussex, England, UK most of her first five years were spent in India due to her father's appointment to the Indian Civil Service. As a result of her mother's illness, Baynes and her sister returned to England and were placed in a convent and then sent to a boarding school in Camberley in Surrey. At the age of fifteen, she studied design at Farnham School of Art and later won a place at the Slade School of Art. When the second World War broke out both sisters joined the Women's Voluntary Service and were sent to the Camouflage Development Training Centre in Farnham Castle where they were put to work making demonstration models. Later, the sisters worked as mapmakers for the Admiralty's Hydrographic Department. Powell Perry, whose family owned a company that published picture books for children was one of their colleagues and gave Baynes her first professional commissions.

In 1948 Baynes began to develop her career by writing a book of her own, *Victoria and the Golden Bird* which was published. Her portfolio was given to J.R.R, Tolkien who was *s*eeking an illustrator for his book *Farmer Giles of Ham,* a comedy about dragons and knights. Tolkien was delighted with her work and although his *The Lord of the Rings* was too large a project for her she produced coloured maps of Tolkien's middle-earth. She also created a triptych of Tolkien's characters and locales, which became the iconic cover art for a one-volume paperback edition in 1968 and a three-volume version in 1981. In 1967 Baynes illustrated Tolkien's final piece of fiction *Smith of Wooton Major.*

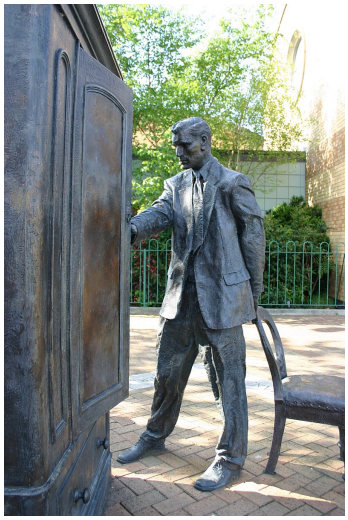
Tolkien introduced Baynes to C.S. Lewis. She signed a contract with Lewis's publisher and in 1949 sent drawings, and cover designs for *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe.*She went on to illustrate the six sequels, *Prince Caspian: The return to Narnia* (1951), *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952), *The Silver Chair* (1953), *The Horse and*

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His Boy (1954), *The Magician's Nephew* (1955) and *The Last Battle* (1956).

After many love affairs, Baynes met and married Fritz Gasch, a German ex-prisoner of war. They moved to Surrey where he worked as a gardener and she continued her drawing. They were a close couple and after Fritz's sudden death in 1988 Baynes poured her energies into her work producing her most accomplished pieces. Two years after Fritz's death Baynes had a call from his daughter from his first marriage in Germany who was delighted to find the woman who had loved her father. In old age, Baynes found she had a family. Baynes worked up to her death in 2008 illustrating both the Koran and Aesop's Fables. She remains one of the twentieth century's most influential illustrators.

Bio prepared by Beverley Beddoes-Mills, University of New England
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Belfast, statue of C. S. Lewis looking into a wardrobe. Entitled *The Searcher* by Ross Wilson. Retrieved from Wikipedia (accessed: May 4, 2022), CC BY 2.0.

Clive Staples (C.S.) Lewis , 1898 - 1963 (Author)

Clive Staples Lewis was born in 1898 in Belfast, Ireland, the younger son of Albert Lewis, a soliciter, and Florence Lewis, a graduate of the Royal University of Ireland. In the Lewis household reading and education were considered of great importance and Lewis and his older brother Warren 'Warnie' (later a historian) were avid readers. Lewis loved tales about animals and was influenced by Beatrix Potter's books which encouraged him to write and illustrate his own. After his mother's death in 1908 Lewis attended several different schools in England and Belfast. During this time, Lewis became an atheist, abandoning his Christian faith and pursuing an interest in Norse mythology. As a teenager, became fascinated by ancient Scandinavian songs and legends preserved in the Icelandic sagas. Lewis was also influenced by his father's old tutor and former headmaster of Lurgan College, William T. Kirkpatrick, who instilled in him a love of Greek literature and mythology.

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In 1917 Lewis entered Oxford and studied at University College. That year he joined the Officers' Training Corps, at the university, and was drafted into a Cadet Battalion for training. He was commissioned into the British Army as a Second Lieutenant and shipped to France where on his19th birthday he fought in the front line, in the trenches at the Somme Valley. Following an incident in April of 1918, which Lewis was wounded, and two of his colleagues were killed by a shell, he was demobilized (in December of that year). He wrote in a letter that the horror of his wartime experiences were the basis of his pessimism and continuing atheism.

In 1920, Lewis returned to his studies at Oxford University, where he studied Greek and Latin Literature, Philosophy and Ancient History, and English. He achieved Firsts in all these subjects, and went on to tutor in Philosophy at University College. In 1925 he was appointed as a Fellow and Tutor in English Literature at Magdalen College, where he worked until 1954.

At Oxford, Lewis and J.R.R Tolkien, the Anglo-Saxon scholar, and writer of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* were close friends. They were active in the informal Oxford literary group known as the Inklings, a group of scholars and storytellers interested in the writing of fantasy, and which included Roger Lancelyn-Green, the biographer and reteller of mythology for children.

Lewis eventually returned to Christianity due Tolkien's influence. He describes these changes in his autobiography *Surprised by Joy* which is an account of his spiritual and intellectual life through the 30s. He became known as one of the foremost British writers of Christian thought which he explored in his scholarship, and fiction. Lewis's first scholarly book was *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (1936), an exploration of the treatment of love in Medieval and Renaissance English. Later he wrote *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1942). Both are still cited today. He was commissioned to write *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century (Excluding Drama)*, for the Oxford History of English Literature (1954).

In 1956 he was appointed to the Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature, at Magdalene College, Cambridge University, where he worked until he died in 1963. In 1957, he married his friend Joy Davidson, an American divorcee, in a civil ceremony, in order to help her remain in the United Kingdom. Later, after she was diagnosed with bone cancer, their relationship developed and they had a

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Christian marriage. Davidson died in 1960 and Lewis wrote about this time of his life in *A Grief Observed* (1961) which was published under a pseudonym. His final book, *Letters to Malcolm*, was published in 1963, the same year in which he retired from his position at Cambridge. He died in November of 1963, following a period of ill health.

Lewis' writing covers many fields: he wrote important literary criticism such as *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (1964), and *The Allegory of Love* (1936). He wrote works of personal reflection and novels for adults and children. Among his novels for adults, *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (1956) recasts the story of Cupid and Psyche from the point of view of her older sister, Orual. In general terms, Lewis' best known works are the seven children's books about the fantasy world of Narnia: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), *Prince Caspian* (1951), *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952), *The Silver Chair* (1953), *The Horse and His Boy* (1954), *The Magician's Nephew* (1955), and *The Last Battle* (1956). These books reveal a fantasy world and include talking animals, mythical beasts, magic, and epic action as well as children from our (real) world, and cast the main drama of the series as a battle between good and evil in the context of the world of Narnia. Aslan, a noble lion, who can be identified as an allegory for the Son of God, brings unity to Narnia (the exception is *The Horse and His Boy*, which provides the prehistory of Narnia). The Narnia books have been translated into 47 languages and sold worldwide.

Sources:

Britannica (accessed: May 7, 2021),

Wikipedia (accessed: May 18, 2021).

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Additional information

Adaptations	*The Silver Chair* was adapted as a BBC television series of six episodes in 1990.
Translation	*The Narnia Chronicles* have been translated into 47 languages, see: here (accessed: March 31, 2022).
Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs	There are two different orders that the books can be read: order of publication and order of narrative chronology. Both orders are listed below, with an asterisk next to the present title. **Publication Order** 1. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*; 2. *Prince Caspian*; 3. *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader;* 4. *The Silver Chair* ;* 5. *The Horse and His Boy*; 6. *The Magician's Nephew*; 7. *The Last Battle*. **Chronological Order** 1. *The Magician's Nephew;* 2. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe;* 3. *The Horse and His Boy;* 4. *Prince Caspian;* 5. *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader;* 6. *The Silver Chair*;* 7. *The Last Battle.*
Summary	*The Silver Chair*, the fourth book published in the *Narnia Chronicles* by C. S. Lewis, introduces us to Jill Pole, a girl who attends Experiment House. She is cruelly bullied by some of the children there. At the beginning of the book she is found crying behind the gym by Eustace Scrubb. Eustace – who had appeared in the previous

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installment of the *Narnia Chronicles*, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* – comforts Jill and confides in her about his adventures in Narnia.

As they flee from the bullies' approach, they find that the door in the stone wall that opens onto the moor had been left unlocked. They enter through the door and experience a beautiful sky and sunshine, overwhelming birdsong, and a very steep cliff. Eustace falls of the cliff, and a gigantic lion appears and seems to blow him further away. The lion drinks some water nearby and invites Jill to drink, too. It is revealed that the lion is Aslan of Narnia. Aslan explains to Jill that he blew Eustace to Narnia. The King of Narnia is sad because his only son was taken away from him. Aslan knows that the prince is still alive and entreats Jill and Eustace with the task of finding him.

There are four signs that will guide Jill and Eustace on their quest. Aslan stresses that she must remember them. First, Eustace must speak to the first old friend he sees in Narnia. Second, they must journey north of Narnia to the ruined city of the ancient giants. Third, they will find writing on a stone in that city and must follow its orders. Fourth is that they will know when they have found the prince because he will ask them to do something in Aslan's name. Because of the detailed nature of these signs, Jill has trouble remembering them.

Jill is also sent by Aslan to Narnia where she finds Eustace. There is festive crowd of fauns, satyrs, centaurs, and giants surrounding a very old King aboard a ship from which he addresses the audience. Eustace emotionally realises that the King is Caspian, and cannot believe how old he has become, as Narnia time is different to human time. An owl, Glimfeather, who is assistant to the dwarf, Trumpkin (a key character from *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*) reveals to them that they are at Cair Paravel, the royal castle of Narnia. The children are invited to stay there.

In the middle of the night, Jill and Eustace travel to a ruined turret where a parliament of owls gather. The owls reveal that the King and Trumpkin have forbidden anyone to seek out the missing prince, as too many people have already gone missing in this dangerous quest. An old owl tells the story of Rilian, the missing Prince whose mother had been killed by a green serpent by a stream. Rilian sought vengeance on the beast, but eventually after visiting the stream where his mother was killed, seemed hypnotized after seeing a woman dressed in green one day. The next day he returned to the stream, never to be seen again. The owls explain that a type of creature called

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a Marsh-Wiggle can help the children on their quest. They find Puddleglum, a Marsh-Wiggle who accompanies them on their journey.

During a perilous journey over a rocky, cold landscape, they pass giants. They then encounter a woman on a white horse dressed in green accompanied by a knight who is concealed by armor. The woman says that the children and Puddleglum should go to Harfag, a land where they will receive a warm place to sleep and plenty of food and drink. This is very tempting for the children and becomes a distraction as they journey through a harsh snowstorm. Much to their relief, they eventually come to Harfag, where they are greeted and given lodging. They discover, however, that the giants intend to cook the children for the autumn feast, and they make their escape. The children and Puddleglum travel to the neighboring City Ruinous, pursued by the giant's hunting party. They make a narrow escape and emerge in a world deep in the earth called The Deep Realm where they encounter Earth People.

An army of Earth people take them to see their queen in her castle. When they are taken to the queen they meet a young man instead. The man reveals that once each day he has ravings that require him to be restrained, otherwise he'll become violent and transform into a serpent. The children and Puddlegum vow not to release him during his fit, but when he is under 'possession' he invokes the name of Aslan. The children release him. He is Rilian, the missing prince of Narnia. Enraged, the queen turns into a serpent and tries to kill them before Rilian, Puddlegum and Eustace behead her.

They then arrive at the Deep Land, before travelling through several caves and eventually emerging in Narnia. Everyone rejoices at seeing the prince. Aslan intercepted the King at sea and told him to return to Narnia. There is triumphant fanfare at the King's return to Narnia but he shortly dies after seeing Rilian. Aslan drives a thorn into his own paw and drips blood on Caspian who briefly returns to life. Eustace and Jill return to Experiment House, where things improve a lot for them after that.

Analysis

A key difference from the other books in the *Narnia Chronicles* and *The Silver Chair* is its reference to Experiment House, the co-educational school that both Jill and Eustace attend. At Experiment House, students are "allowed to do what they like" (9), where "bibles

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are not encouraged" (12), people "haven't heard of Adam and Eve" (37), and "girls are not taught to curtsey" (89). Experiment House operates in stark contrast to Narnia, underscored by Aslan's initial interaction with Jill.

Aslan reprimands Jill for going too close to the edge of the cliff; behaviour that ultimately led to Eustace falling off. Jill admits that she was "showing off", to which Aslan declares: "Do so no more." He explains that her "task will be the harder because of what you have done" (25). The theme of Christian repentance for sins committed is really driven home at the end of the book, where Aslan pierces his paw with a thorn and uses the blood to heal King Caspian. Through this, the Christian iconography of crucifixion, sacrifice and Aslan as a Jesus-like healer is made overt.

Further, the serpent – just like that which tempts Adam and Eve in the bible – is the villain in *The Silver Chair*. The green serpent is what sets the entire drama in motion: killing the Queen of Narnia (Rilian's mother); re-appearing in the form of a queen; and luring Rilian to her land and keeping him captive. Transmogrifying back into her serpent form before her ultimate destruction shows that once again, good defies evil in Narnia. The destruction of an evil serpent recurs in several mythological narratives including the Medusa myth from ancient Greek mythology, where the gorgon who had snakes for hair was decapitated by a heroic Perseus; and the Lernaean Hydra who according to Greek myth had nine heads and was defeated through Heracles' twelve labours. Lewis's allusion to these myths in *The Silver Chair* operate as tools for him to distinguish between good and evil forces in the Narnian universe.

In addition to the serpentine elements drawn from Christian narratives and Greek mythology in the book, *The Silver Chair* exhibits scenes of lively celebration that recalls the festivities of the Greek god of wine, Dionysus. At times the book teems with fauns, satyrs, and centaurs. When Jill emerges into Narnia at the end of the story, fauns are performing an elaborate and technical dance with "wild music playing, intensely sweet and yet just the least bit eerie too, and full of good magic" (172); a scene that is distinctly Dionysian. There are also tropes of the adventure or quest similar to *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, recalling Homer's *The Odyssey* such as when the children and Puddlegum face harsh terrain, weather, and fierce adversaries on their journey.

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The Silver Chair is the most subterranean of the books in the *Narnia Chronicles*, where the underworld and an even deeper underworld beneath it feature in the children and Puddleglum's adventures. As Charles A. Huttar notes (2014) the refrain throughout *The Silver Chair* of, "few return to sunlit lands" is uttered to those who find themselves in the underworld and is adapted from Virgil's *Aeneid*. Specifically, the refrain, writes Huttar "is Lewis's adaptation of the Cumean Sibyl's warning to Aeneas when he is about to descend to the realm of the dead" (150). Lewis's reference to Greek and Roman mythology in *The Silver Chair* is manifest through numerous elements including the characters' descent into the underworld; an underworld that starkly contrasts with the heavenly light of Narnia, again reinforcing the binary of good and evil that undergirds the text. Lewis harnesses mythological elements with a moral imperative to communicate to child readers lessons of right and wrong by utilising tropes of the adventure story.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Afterlife Bible Centaur(s) Faun Immortality Underworld
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Adversity Animals Appearances Authority Bullying* Child, children Christianity Conflict Death Desires Friendship Gender expectations/construction Good vs evil Heroism Intertextuality Journeys Judgement Justice Magic Memory Morality Other literary figures, texts and writers Peers Princes and princesses Revenge School Talking animals Transformation Travel Truth and lies Witch

Further Reading

Huttar, Charles A., "The Art of Detection in a World of Change: *The Silver Chair* and *Spenser Revisited*", *Mythlore* 32. 124 (2014):139–166.

Muth, Benita Huffman, "'Few Return to the Sunlit Lands': Lewis's Classical Underworld in *The Silver Chair*", *Inklings Forever* 8.17 (2012): 1–8.

Neidbala, Amanda M., "From Hades to Heaven: Greek Mythological

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Influence in C. S. Lewis' *The Silver Chair*", *Mythlore* 24.3/4 (2006): 71–93.

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