Charlotte Farrell, "Entry on: The Magician's Nephew (The Chronicles of Narnia, 6) by Pauline Baynes, Clive Staples (C.S.) Lewis", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1428. Entry version as of November 07, 2026.

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

The Magician's Nephew (The Chronicles of Narnia, 6)

United Kingdom (1955)

TAGS: Bible Creation Myths Olympus Pegasus





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

General information	
Title of the work	The Magician's Nephew (The Chronicles of Narnia, 6)
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1955
First Edition Details	C. S Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*. London: The Bodley Head, 1955, 183 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 Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

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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.*

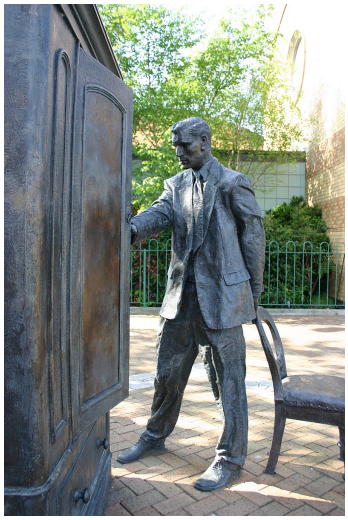
Tolkien introduced Baynes to C.S. Lewis. She signed a contract with Lewis's publisher and in 1949 sent drawings, and cover designs for *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe.*She went on to illustrate the six sequels, *Prince Caspian: The return to Narnia* (1951), *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952),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

Bio prepared by Beverley Beddoes-Mills, University of New England, bbeddoes@myune.edu.au

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Additional information

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	Polly and Diggory are neighbours in row houses in London. Diggory lives with his aunt and uncle. His father is away in India and, sadly, his mother is dying. While playing together one day, Polly and Diggory discover a long tunnel running through the roofs of the adjoining houses on their street. They open a door with a latch and enter an attic room, discovering the room that Diggory's Uncle Andrew has forbidden anyone from entering. Uncle Andrew is in the room, snarling, and is immediately dislikable. He offers Polly a yellow ring and upon touching it she promptly vanishes. Dabbling in magic, Uncle Andrew has been conducting experiments on how to access the 'Other

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Place'. Diggory learns that Polly can be saved if he, too, enters the 'Other Place' by means of a yellow ring and takes with him green rings to enable them to return.

Diggory goes to the 'Other Place' emerging from a pool in a wood. He comes across Polly there, and they debate whether they should stay and explore or return to where they came from. To decide, the children test whether they can return home using the green rings. It works, so they feel confident to stay and explore for a time, by stepping into other pools in the world. The first world they enter from the 'Wood Between Worlds' is one full of red light. There, they discover elaborately dressed people frozen in place. In the room, there is a riddle written on a plaque with a bell next to it. The children disagree about whether they should ring it. Diggory rings the bell against Polly's will, and a strong and intimidating Queen/Witch comes to life.

The witch, Jadis, reveals that the city they are in is called Charn. At a previous time, she had uttered a "Deplorable Word" that ended everyone's existence. The Queen, Jadis, threatens to rule the world they came from and insists that they take her to it. The Queen grabs the children but accidently lets go of them for a moment. They take the opportunity to touch their rings and return to the wood, only to discover that they had accidentally brought the Jadis with them. They accidentally take her back to Uncle Andrew's attic, too. She orders Uncle Andrew around and wreaks havoc in London.

After a violent scene on the street where Diggory is kicked while trying to take hold of the Queen in a craze as she pulled a lamp post from the ground and threw it, the children, Uncle Andrew, the Queen, a cabdriver, his horse, Strawberry and the lamp post are catapulted into the wood. They put on the green rings and enter the 'world of nothing', where slowly stars emerge in the black sky above them and there is the reverberating sound of beautiful singing. While the other characters are entranced by the music, Jadis and Uncle Andrew don't like it.

Eventually, the sun rises and it is revealed that it was a lion – Aslan – who was the main voice singing in the sky. Trees grow from the ground and a whole manner of animals, creatures, and mythic beasts emerge from the hills. Andrew tries to steal the rings to get home.

Aslan declares that the cabdriver and his wife are to be the first King

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and Queen of this beautiful world, Narnia. Diggory wants to speak to Aslan to help cure his mother. Aslan guides Diggory to find a seed to plant a tree that will protect Narnia from Jadis. Aslan gives Strawberry, the horse, wings, and renames him Fledge. The children fly on Fledge's back to 'The Place'. They come across golden gates and Diggory enters alone. He discovers a tree with silver apples. Jadis appears, having eaten an apple and explains that they are the apples of youth and life. Aslan has entreated Diggory to bring the apple to him so that a tree can be planted from its seed to protect Narnia, but the witch tempts him to steal it and take it to his mother. Diggory resists and takes the apple to Aslan instead, who gives it back to him to give to his mother.

Upon their return home, Diggory presents the apple to his mother and she is healed. Great Uncle Kirke dies making Diggory's father very rich so he can return from India and they move to the family's country estate. Uncle Andrew stays with them and becomes nicer. The lamp post which Jadis had brought back with her becomes the lamp post that Lucy discovers in Narnia in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. The tree that sprouts from the apple core that Diggory planted becomes the wood from which the magical wardrobe is made.

Analysis

In terms of narrative time, not publication chronology, *The Magician's Nephew* is the first book in the *Chronicles of Narnia*. It provides the backstory for the other books in the series. *The Magician's Nephew* explores how all the comings and goings between Narnia and 'this' world began. It is in large part a creation myth, revealing how Narnia first came into existence, summoned through the song of Aslan, who is a regal lion and God-like figure of Narnia. Out of the trees sprouted gods, goddesses, fauns, satyrs, Dwarfs, and the river god and his Naiad daughters, all of whom worship Aslan (109). These figures contribute to the otherworldly quality that defines the *Chronicles of Narnia* and distinctly connects *The Magician's Nephew* to aspects of classical mythology.

One notable aspect of the book that connects in this regard is the transformation of Strawberry into a flying, winged horse. Like Pegasus in the Medusa myth who emerged from the blood of Medusa when she was beheaded by Perseus, Strawberry experiences a magical transformation in *The Magician's Nephew*. In this case, Aslan transforms Strawberry and renames him, Fledge. This transformation

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evokes the pleasant fantasy of flying on a winged horse and is a clear use of a classical mythological reference by Lewis.

The creation of Narnia is an allegory for the seven days that God made the earth in the Bible before Adam ate the apple and introduced evil to earth. Aslan says, “before the new, clean world I gave you is seven hours old, a force of evil has already entered it; waked and brought hither by this son of Adam” (126). Here he is referring to Diggory having rung the bell that brought Jadis, the Witch, back to life. The metaphor of the garden of Eden carries across in Diggory’s encounter with Jadis in the garden where she tries to convince him to eat from the silver apple tree. Diggory resists, in some ways redeeming himself through the lens of Christian morality that the book upholds. In other words, the book’s use of Creationism operates as the framework through which the moral messages of the book are primarily conveyed.

The legend of Atlantis is also a powerful aspect of the book. The rings that Uncle Andrew inherits from Mrs Lefay came in a box that was apparently Atlantean. The connection between Atlantis and Narnia in *The Magicians Nephew* positions Narnia as a mythological world within a broader trajectory of ancient imaginaries. Polly and Diggory experience a rupture in their grasp of reality as they enter the magical realm of the Wood Between Worlds. The magical realms accessed by the children positions *The Magicians Nephew* as a continuation of a broader history of mythological world-building narratives including that of Atlantis. Lewis engaged these alternative, magical realities primarily to convey a moralistic message for his school-aged readership while appealing to their creative imagination through fantastical imagery and non-human characters. .

Before being crowned King of Narnia, the cabdriver from London exclaims, “Glory be!”, a well-known phrase from Catholic prayer upon seeing the stars and hearing the music. Aslan operates as a God-like figure that presides over the emergence of all the natural elements and inhabitants of Narnia. Replete with Christian allegory as well as figures plucked from classical mythology, *The Magician’s Nephew* reveals that Diggory grows up to be Professor Kirke, who is the kind but mysterious owner of the house that the children visit in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

Bible Creation Myths Olympus Pegasus

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Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Animals Child, children Family Friendship Gender expectations/construction Good vs evil Journeys Magic Morality Nature Parents (and children) Relationships Talking animals Transformation Travel Truth and lies Witch
Further Reading	Schakel, Peter J., "The 'Correct' Order for Reading the Chronicles of Narnia", in Shanna Caughey, ed., *Revisiting Narnia: Fantasy, Myth and Religion in C. S. Lewis' Chronicles*, Dallas: BenBella Books, 2005, 91–102.

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