

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe at 50
A Celebration (and a Worry)

by
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. . . It is the author who *intends*; the book *means*. The author's intention is that which, if it is realized, will in his eyes constitute success. . . . the meaning of a book is the series or systems of emotions, reflections, and attitudes produced by reading it. . . . this product differs with different readers. . . . The ideally true or right meaning would be that shared . . . by the largest number of the best readers after repeated and careful readings over several generations, different periods, nationalities, moods, degrees of alertness, private pre-occupations, states of health, spirits, and the like cancelling one another out when . . . they cannot be fused so as to enrich one another.¹

That the readers of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* now number in the millions and that their ranks will grow in the new millennium are incontestable. I suspect that one of the joys of heaven will be able to sit in the company of C. S. Lewis and all the readers (and re-readers!) of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* to share the meaning of this marvelous book and how it enriched each of us. The very sharing would be a mystagogy, a farther-up-and-farther-in increase of grace, grace given by the not-safe-but-good One by his death, resurrection, rescue of those turned to stone, killing of His Killer, crowning of regents, and quiet slipping away to return again.

¹ C. S. Lewis, "On Criticism," *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, Walter Hooper, ed., (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966) 57 (Lewis's emphasis).

What a grace! Such a sharing! This essay, far from being the appreciation² *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* deserves, is better read as an invitation to this celestial celebration.

Before I began this essay, it had been at least three years since I re-read *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* for my contributions to *The C. S. Lewis Reader's Encyclopedia*.³ I first read *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* thirty-three years ago when I was recovering from the 'flu as a junior (third-year student) in a seminary (boarding) college. For the five years previous I had been reading all of Lewis I could get my hands on. I never knew he had written children's books until I discovered them in a book shop. Buying them rather shamefacedly (like Susan Pevensie, I wanted to appear "beyond" such childish things), I did not display them on my seminary bookshelves. However, there came the time when, sick of and in my new school, I took them out one by one and read them furtively, quickly hiding each under my bed covers when a fellow seminarian visited me.

I will never forget my joy when—in Chapter Fifteen, “Deeper Magic from Before the Dawn of Time”—Aslan invites Susan and Lucy to romp with him. For the first time I felt the elation of Christ's rising to new life.

Of course there were other delights: the home-iness of Mr. Tumnus's cave and the Beavers' Lodge, the thrill of the first pronunciation of Aslan's name (the pivotal thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth full paragraphs of Chapter Seven, “A Day with the Beavers”—more about this shortly), the end of winter and the return of spring—and terrors, and revulsion (at Edmund's betrayal of Lucy). But Lewis succeeded in his goal of helping me get passed the watchful dragons at the Sunday school door⁴ so that I could, almost for the first time, have my own feelings about Christian realities.

I have since re-read *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* at least twenty times. I *analyzed* the book and its sisters almost a dozen times for *Companion to Narnia* (I hope its readers don't think I *dissected* the books) but my best re-readings have happened when my spirits were low. Then the books served as a seven-volume magician's book which disenchanting all that should be disenchanting and re-enchanting all that should be enchanted. Here I am deliberately evoking Lucy's use of Coriakin's Book in *The Voyage of the DAWN TREADER* and Lewis's magnificent

² The dictionaries tell us that to appreciate is to make or form an estimate of worth, quality, or amount, to perceive the full force of, or to esteem adequately or highly, to recognize as valuable or excellent, or to find worth in.

³ Jeffrey D. Schultz and John G. West, eds. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998): Balfour, Arthur James; Books of Influence; Chronicles of Narnia; The Horse and His Boy; The Last Battle; The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe; MacDonald, George; The Magician's Nephew; Prince Caspian; The Silver Chair; The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, q.v.

⁴ C. S. Lewis, “Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to Be Said,” *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, 37.

sermon, “The Weight of Glory”: “. . . remember your fairy tales. Spells are used for breaking enchantments as well as for inducing them. And you and I have need of the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness which has been laid upon us for nearly a hundred years.”⁵

As I have said, I hadn’t read *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* for at least three years. I had tried twice and failed to read *The Magician’s Nephew* as the first of the Chronicles, as the marketers of the “new” editions⁶ would wish (the “worry” of the title of this essay, and I’ll come to it soon). Asked to write for *The Canadian C. S. Lewis Journal* (may God reward Stephen Schofield and his wife, and the editors who keep Stephen’s dream alive!), I took up the “new” hardcover edition of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and tried to imagine what a reader might have experienced when s/he read the first edition that autumn of 1950 (sometime after October 16th in the British Commonwealth and after November 7th in the United States of America⁷). The key to reading the Chronicles is, I reminded myself, “reading with the heart,” in the apt phrase of Peter Schakel.⁸

The most important fact I had to *forget* in this re-reading is that *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is the first of what later grew to be seven Chronicles of Narnia, a name they receive from Roger Lancelyn Green only in 1952.⁹ In fact, when Lewis finished the book, in the spring of 1949, there were no others planned. (He soon began to write what later became *The Magician’s Nephew*, which ended up being the last Chronicle he completed.¹⁰) I also had to forget that it had taken Lewis nearly ten years to return to and finish *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, a book he began at the outset of World War II when girls from London were evacuated to his home outside of Oxford. (I am happy to reproduce in the appendix to this essay the text of a letter I received from one of these girls.)

What came across strongly to me on this re-reading was how the narrative tastes of the children’s books of Edith Nesbit.¹¹ We know that Lewis loved her Bastable books (and even

⁵ There are so many editions that I refer you to the fifth full paragraph.

⁶ The 1994 HarperCollins world trade hard- and soft-cover editions and the mass-market paperback edition.

⁷ Walter Hooper, *C. S. Lewis: A Companion and Guide* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996) 452 and 454. Hooper makes available a few of the first British reviews on 449–450.

⁸ *Reading with the Heart: The Way into Narnia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979).

⁹ Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper, *C. S. Lewis: A Biography* (London: Collins, 1974) 245.

¹⁰ See my entry, “Chronicles of Narnia,” in *The C. S. Lewis Reader’s Encyclopedia*, Schultz and West, eds. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).

¹¹ (1858–1924). In the *Oxford Companion to English Literature* (1985) Margaret Drabble tells us that “She is remembered . . . for her children’s books, tales of everyday family life sometimes mingled with magic. In 1898 her first stories about the young Bastables appeared with such success that she published three ‘Bastable’ novels in quick succession: *The Story of the Treasure-Seekers* (1899), *The Wouldbegoods* (1901), and *The New Treasure-Seekers*

refers to the Bastable family in the second paragraph of Chapter One of *The Magician's Nephew*) and how some motifs from her stories *The Magic City* (1911) and "The Aunt and Amabel" (in *The Magic World*, 1912) went down very deep in Lewis's imagination, only to come up in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.¹² The omniscient author's perspective, with a touch of the avuncular (all the talk about not shutting the wardrobe door) is alive in Nesbit and in Lewis. Lewis was saying a great deal when he told Chad Walsh in the summer of 1948 that he was " 'completing a children's book he has begun "in the tradition of E. Nesbit", ' when he had finished *Surprised by Joy*. (C. S. Lewis: *Apostle to the Skeptics* (1949), p. 10.)"¹³

It is very significant that Lewis was writing his autobiography—about the paralysis of his spiritual life caused by the death of his mother and the Great Magician's [God's] failure to answer prayer—at the same time he was writing *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*—whose central motif is the rescue of a country and a boy from the paralysis of winter and betrayal, respectively. It appears that one of the reasons that Lewis delayed finishing his autobiography is that he was swept up in the creation of the Narnian stories. These stories allow him to deal at the feeling level with the death of his mother (in *The Magician's Nephew*) and the estrangement from his father (glimpsed in Tirian's meeting with his father Erlan in Chapter Sixteen of *The Last Battle*¹⁴) and, most importantly, with the ever good but never tame Lion of Narnia. The at-least-fictional resolution of Lewis's central spiritual crisis is framed by two scenes in *The Magician's Nephew*—the scene at the beginning of Chapter Twelve, "Strawberry's Adventure" and the scene at the end of Chapter Fourteen, "The Planting of the Tree":

(from Chapter Twelve)

(1904). Other well known titles with a lasting appeal include *Five Children and It* (1902), *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904), *The Railway Children* (1906), and *The Enchanted Castle* (1907)."

¹² It is significant that the child heroes of *The Magic City* and "The Aunt and Amabel," have their respective experiences in imaginary worlds in order to help them repair relationships they have damaged, Philip Haldane with his stepsister Lucy and Amabel (no last name given) with her great aunt.

¹³ Green and Hooper, 238.

¹⁴ Who can miss seeing the long evenings of a Northern Ireland summer in the following (p. 204 in the 1994 hardcover and trade paperback editions)?

"But before [Tirian] had had much time to think of this he felt two strong arms thrown about him and felt a bearded kiss on his cheeks and heard a well remembered voice saying:

" 'What, lad? Art thicker and taller since I last touched thee!'

It was his own father, the good King Erlan: but not as Tirian had seen him last when they brought him home pale and wounded from his fight with the giant, nor even as Tirian remembered him in his later years when he was a grayheaded warrior. This was his father, young and merry, as he could just remember him from very early days when he himself had been a little boy playing games with his father in the castle garden at Cair Paravel, just before bedtime on summer evenings. The very smell of the bread-and-milk he used to have for supper came back to him."

“Yes,” said Digory. He had had for a second some wild idea of saying “I’ll try to help you if you’ll promise to help my Mother,” but he realized in time that the Lion was not at all the sort of person one could try to make bargains with. But when he had said “Yes,” he thought of his Mother, and he thought of the great hopes he had had, and how they were all dying away, and a lump came in his throat and tears in his eyes, and he blurted out: “But please, please—won’t you—can’t you give me something that will cure Mother?” Up till then he had been looking at the Lion’s great feet and the huge claws on them; now, in his despair, he looked up at its face. What he saw surprised him as much as anything in his whole life. For the tawny face was bent down near his own and (wonder of wonders) great shining tears stood in the Lion’s eyes. They were such big, bright tears compared with Digory’s own that for a moment he felt as if the Lion must really be sorrier about his Mother than he was himself

“My son, my son,” said Aslan. “I know. Grief is great. Only you and I in this land know that yet. Let us be good to one another. . . .”

(from Chapter Fourteen)

“ . . . And the Witch tempted you to do another thing, my son, did she not?”

“Yes, Aslan. She wanted me to take an apple home to Mother.”

“Understand, then, that it would have healed her; but not to your joy or hers. The day would have come when both you and she would have looked back and said it would have been better to die in that illness.”

And Digory could say nothing, for tears choked him and he gave up all hopes of saving his Mother’s life; but at the same time he knew that the Lion knew what would have happened, and that there might be things more terrible even than losing someone you love by death. But now Aslan was speaking again, almost in a whisper:

“That is what would have happened, child, with a stolen apple. It is not what will happen now. What I give you now will bring joy. It will not, in your world, give endless life, but it will heal. Go. Pluck her an apple from the Tree.”

Such enormous, indeed tragic, feelings were only hinted at in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. But all four children, especially Edmund, are quite disoriented by being evacuated from wartime London and separated from their parents. In addition Edmund has been influenced for the

worst by a “horrid school which was where he had begun to go wrong.”¹⁵ (Alas, the strong, negative hint given by the kind of animal Edmund hopes to see while at the Professor’s estate, “snakes”—introduced into all U.S. editions by Lewis himself—has been suppressed in favor of “foxes” in all British editions.¹⁶) However, far from hints, what are clear and unmistakable on every page, beginning with the advent of Father Christmas¹⁷ in Chapter Ten, “The Spell Begins to Break,” are the effects of Aslan’s return, in first the sounds, then the sights, and finally the smells of spring come to Narnia. This cavalcade ends in the beholding of Aslan for the very first time—one of the most significant passage in the book.

But as for Aslan himself, the Beavers and the children didn’t know what to do or say when they saw him. People who have not been in Narnia sometimes think that a thing cannot be good and terrible at the same time. If the children had ever thought so, they were cured of it now. For when they tried to look at Aslan’s face they just caught a glimpse of the golden mane and the great, royal, solemn, overwhelming eyes; and then they found they couldn’t look at him and went all trembly.¹⁸

This experience of the simultaneous terror and delight, the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, of Rudolf Otto’s *The Idea of the Holy*, one of Lewis’s ten favorite books,¹⁹ has been anticipated in the thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth full paragraphs of Chapter Seven, “A Day with the Beavers”:

[Mr. Beaver says, after much caution at being overheard,]“They say Aslan is on the move—perhaps has already landed.”

And now a very curious thing happened. None of the children knew who Aslan was any more than you do; but the moment the Beaver had spoken these words everyone felt quite different. Perhaps it has sometimes happened to you in a dream that someone says something which you don’t understand but in the dream it feels as if it had some enormous

¹⁵ Chapter Sixteen, “The Hunting of the White Stag,” ninth full paragraph. For a more extensive discussion of Edmund’s character and development, please see “Edmund Pevensie” in *Companion to Narnia*.

¹⁶ Edmund’s excitement over “snakes” and Susan’s excitement over “rabbits” in the British version for “foxes” in the American foreshadow Edmund’s fall into evil and Susan’s fall into vanity. Due to trade and union regulations at the time, all the Chronicles of Narnia were typeset first in England and then all over again in the U.S.; Lewis had to correct two different sets of galleys and made changes at that time. See “Variants” in “Using the Companion” in all but the first edition of *Companion to Narnia*.

¹⁷ A typographical error persists from the very first editions to the latest. When Mr. Beaver calls his wife and the children from the hiding place to see Father Christmas, he says, “Come out, Sons and Daughters of Adam,” when there is only one Son of Adam, Peter, there.

¹⁸ Chapter Twelve, “Peter’s First Battle,” eighth full paragraph.

¹⁹ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, John W. Harvey, tr. (Oxford: Oxford, 1923). Lewis identified it as one of his ‘top ten’ in *The Christian Century* 79:23 (June 6, 1962), p. 719.

meaning—either a terrifying one which turns the whole dream into a nightmare or else a lovely meaning too lovely to put into words, which makes the dream so beautiful that you remember it all your life and are always wishing you could get into that dream again. It was like that now.²⁰ At the name of Aslan each one of the children felt something jump in its inside. Edmund felt a sensation of mysterious horror. Peter felt suddenly brave and adventurous. Susan felt as if some delicious smell or some delightful strain of music had just floated by her. And Lucy got the feeling you have when you wake up in the morning and realize that it is the beginning of the holidays or the beginning of summer.

What is also obvious and splendid but so much more solemn is Edmund's reconciliation with the good and terrible Aslan and with his brother and sisters—no wonder that such an experience should have made him a grave and quiet man, great in council, King Edmund the Just.²¹

After this re-reading I also felt how complete in itself the story was and how satisfying, if read with the heart. The book seems to come to an end in the twenty-second full paragraph of Chapter Sixteen, "The Hunting of the White Stag": "So they lived in great joy and if ever they remembered their life in this world it was only as one remembers a dream." I grew convinced that C. S. Lewis added the last two sentences in the book only when he decided to write more books in the year after he finished *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*: "And that is the very end of the adventure of the wardrobe. But if the Professor was right it was only the beginning of the adventures of Narnia."

Here is where I must express my worry. Beginning with the worldwide editions published in 1994 the decision was made to market the Chronicles in the order of their internal chronology rather than in the order in which they were published from 1950–1994 (what Doris Myers call the chronological order as opposed to the canonical order). The HarperCollins website now announces:

The seven books of *The Chronicles of Narnia* were published between 1950 and 1956. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* came first—it was because of the popularity of this

²⁰ How much this simile is like the one in the all U. S. editions of what used to be in the eleventh full paragraph from Chapter Twelve, "The Dark Island," of *The Voyage of the DAWN TREADER*, now disappeared from all further editions:

And just as there are moments when simply to lie in bed and see the daylight pouring through your window and to hear the cheerful voice of an early postman or milkman down below and to realise that *it was only a dream: it wasn't real*, is so heavenly that it was very nearly worth having the nightmare in order to have the joy of waking; so they all felt when they came out of the dark.

²¹ The summary statement found in Chapter Sixteen, "The Hunting of the White Stag," twenty-first full paragraph.

book that the other books were written. But the author later expressed a wish that the books be sequenced by Narnian chronology, rather than the order in which they were first published. Thus the series now begins with *The Magician's Nephew*, in which the world of Narnia is created, and ends with *The Last Battle*, in which it is destroyed— so that a new world can begin.²²

My worry is that this decision will diminish their impact on future readers, indeed will impede readers from moving from *The Magician's Nephew* to *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and thus to the end. Consider how *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* introduces the mystery of a world within a wardrobe and builds to the revelation of Aslan. Contrariwise, *The Magician's Nephew* plops the reader unmysteriously into the plot of the whole series, using “Narnia” as the fortieth word a reader will now encounter.

But the pivotal insight which clinches the argument is found in the scene cited above: “None of the children knew who Aslan was *any more than you do*; but the moment the Beaver had spoken these words everyone felt quite different.” The five words I have emphasized show that we must read the books in the order in which they first came to the attention of the world of readers and re-readers, in the order in which the *meaning* of these glorious books grew beyond Lewis’s late-formed *intention* to revise them.²³ Here I am referring to a sentence in epigraph of this essay: “It is the author who *intends*; the book *means*.” C. S. Lewis’s intention to emend the books—agreed to just two days before he died—is inferior to his attention to their meaning and their success at that level (his deeper intention). This deeper intention (I am tempted to all it the ‘Deeper Magic’) was never better expressed than in Lewis’s letter to Anne of 5 March 1961 (referring, it would seem, to her question about the twelfth-from-the-last paragraph of Chapter Sixteen of *The Silver Chair*):

What Aslan meant when he said he had died is, in one sense plain enough. Read the earlier book in this series called *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and you will find the full story of how he was killed by the White Witch and came to life again. When you have read that, I think you will probably see that there is a deeper meaning behind it. The whole Narnian story is about Christ. That is to say, I asked myself ‘Supposing that there really was a world like Narnia and supposing it had (like our world) gone wrong and supposing Christ wanted to go into that world and save it (as He did ours) what might have happened?’ The stories are my

²² The HarperCollins Classroom Activity Guide to the Chronicles of Narnia, page three of the PDF file at www.narnia.com.

²³ “His last visitor was Kaye Webb, editor of Puffin Books in which *The Chronicles of Narnia* were appearing. ‘We had a nice talk on Wednesday,’ she wrote to Green, who had arranged the meeting. ‘What a very great and dear man. How I wish I’d had a chance to know him well, but how grateful I am that you “introduced” us to each other. He promised to re-edit the books (connect the things that didn’t tie up) and he asked me to come again . . .’ Green and Hooper, 307.

answers. Since Narnia is a world of Talking Beasts, I thought He would become a Talking Beast there, as He became a man here. I pictured Him becoming a lion there because (a) the lion is supposed to be the king of beasts; (b) Christ is called ‘The Lion of Judah’ in the Bible; (c) I’d been having strange dreams about lions when I began writing the work. The whole series works out like this.

The Magician's Nephew tells the Creation and how evil entered Narnia.

The Lion etc the Crucifixion and Resurrection.

Prince Caspian restoration of the true religion after corruption.

The Horse and His Boy the calling and conversion of a heathen.

The Voyage of the “Dawn Treader” the spiritual life (especially in Reepicheep).

The Silver Chair the continuing war with the powers of darkness.

The Last Battle the coming of the Antichrist (the Ape). the end of the world and the Last Judgement.²⁴

Here Lewis indicates that the redemption story is foundational to the meaning of the series. Even though the inconsistencies between the stories, I shudder to think what might have happened if Lewis had applied his waning energies to making the Narnian Chronicles more successful at such a superficial level.

Most Lewis scholars I have read express the same worry. Doris Myers (in her essential essay, “Growing in Grace: The Anglican Spiritual Style in the Narnia Chronicles”²⁵), Colin N. Manlove,²⁶ Peter Schakel,²⁷ and now Emma Dunbar²⁸ all argue to retain the original order of publication. Schakel says it most succinctly:

The only reason to read *The Magician’s Nephew* first . . . is for the chronological order of events, and that, as every storyteller knows, is quite unimportant as a reason. Often the early events in a sequence have a greater impact or effect as a flashback, told after later events which provide background and establish perspective. So it is . . . with the Chronicles. The artistry,

²⁴ in Hooper, *C. S. Lewis: A Companion and Guide*, 426.

²⁵ The last edition is in David Mills, *C. S. Lewis and the Art of Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 185–202.

²⁶ *C. S. Lewis: His Literary Achievement* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 124–125 and *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Patterning of a Fantastic World* (New York: Twayne Publishers [Twayne Masterwork Studies No. 127], 1993), 111–115.

²⁷ *Reading with the Heart: The Way into Narnia* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979) and “Elusive Birds and Narrative Nets: The Appeal of Story in C. S. Lewis’s Chronicles of Narnia” in Andrew Walker and James Patrick, eds., *A Christian for All Christians: Essays in Honor of C. S. Lewis* (New York: Regnery Gateway, 1992), 116–131.

²⁸ Dunbar is the granddaughter of Maureen Moore, Lady Dunbar of Hempsbriggs. She wrote her 1998 senior dissertation at Scotland’s St. Andrew’s University on the subject; its title is “The Wardrobe or the Rings? What is the best way to read C. S. Lewis’s The Chronicles of Narnia: canonical or chronological.

the archetypes, and the pattern of Christian thought all make it preferable to read the books in the order of their publication.²⁹

We will have to see how the new marketing strategy will work out. We can pray that if sales of the Chronicles diminish, a return to the canonical order will be ordered.

And, after all, the strategy is not consistent. Isn't it amazing that, whenever anything Narnian is marketed, it is *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* that is featured! Witness the Michael Hague wall calendars,³⁰ the seven special editions Hooper mentions in his *C. S. Lewis: A Companion and Guide*,³¹ a list which include the glorious fully-illustrated Robin Laurie abridgement (how I wish he would finish the other six Chronicles!), and the nine of the eleven projects since Hooper's book was published in 1996: (1) *Lucy Steps through the Wardrobe*, (2) *Edmund and the White Witch*, (3) *Aslan*, (4) *Aslan's Triumph*, (5) *The 1999 World of Narnia Calendar*, (6) *The Narnia Paper Dolls: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe Collection* [these six books are illustrated by Deborah Maze], (7) *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe: A 2001 Calendar*, (8) *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (with illustrations by Christian Birmingham), (9) *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (pictures in black & white and full color by Pauline Baynes). Only in 1999 do we see (10) *A Book of Narnians: The Lion, the Witch and the Others* (as well as a second edition of *The Land of Narnia: Brian Sibley Explores the World of C. S. Lewis*, originally published in 1989). And only in the year 2000 do we see an adapted and illustrated edition of a section of (11) *The Magician's Nephew: The Wood Between the Worlds*. But even the HarperCollins Classroom Activity Guide to the Chronicles of Narnia shows *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* as first on page two of the PDF file at their website.

So, Happy Birthday to *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. May it find new readers for centuries to come so that readers will thrill at and know the name and the deeds of the Son of the Emperor-over-Seas.

²⁹ *Reading with the Heart*, 143.

³⁰ for 1982; this calendar and the one for 1983 on Prince Caspian was intended to be a seven year project of the Lewis estate and the Episcopal Radio-TV Foundation.

³¹ 454.

APPENDIX

[When I was a monk named Bro. Peter Ford, I was able to get in touch with one of the children billeted at the Kilns, Mrs. Margaret Leyland, and she supplied the other names, Mary Derrington and Katherine Fee (later killed in the Blitz with her parents). This letter was first published in *The Lamp-post of the Southern California C. S. Lewis Society* in July 1977]

London, England
11 February 1977

Dear Brother Peter,

I was evacuated with my fellow students of the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Hammersmith, and was fortunate to be billeted (with two other girls) with Mrs. Moore at The Kilns, Headington, Oxford, from January–July 1940.

You may like to know something of the house; it was fairly large, stood in its own grounds which incorporated large lawns, flower beds, a tennis court, natural lake, copse and woodland leading up to Shotover, a large kitchen garden, a bungalow which we girls were allowed to use for our studies, and a summer house.

Mrs. Moore, a widow, lost her only son in the 1914–1918 war. C. S. Lewis and his brother, Major Lewis, were great friends of her son, and as their parents were dead Mrs. Moore adopted them—whether legally or not I do not know.

I saw little of Major Lewis as he was in the army, so the household consisted of Mrs. Moore, her daughter Kitty, C. S. Lewis, a cook, a parlour maid, and a gardener.

It was obvious that Mrs. Moore was devoted to Lewis; she was over-protective and I felt at the time she still thought of him as a small boy; she called him ‘Boyboys’ and he called her ‘Mintons.’

I shall always remember one warm, sunny spring day; we were all at lunch in the summer house—a distance of 20–30 yds. from the house—when it grew overcast and before the meal was finished it started to rain quite heavily. Lunch over, Mrs. Moore rang for the parlour maid to ask her to fetch an umbrella and galoshes for Mr. Lewis so he could return to the house and not get wet.

Lewis, I am certain, was liked and respected by his students. Often at weekends 3 or 4 came to the house (always male students—Mrs. Moore would I am sure not have taken kindly to females) and he played tennis with them and went swimming or boating on the lake. We girls joined in these activities—being school girls Mrs. Moore considered it safe for us to be with ‘Boyboys.’

I was taking my School Certificate in that June and Lewis was a great help to me, always interested and willing to give advice.

Mrs. Moore was very Victorian in her outlook and in her dress, and although I was 17 years old (the other 2 girls were younger) I was never allowed to have dinner with the family. We had supper which consisted every night of Marie biscuits, an apple and a glass of milk. Without the help of Lewis and the cook we would have spent many a hungry night.

The bedroom which we girls shared was above Lewis’s study, which had a bay window with a flat roof. He used to pass food up to us and often helped us down so we could visit the kitchen where cook gave us food. Sometimes we climbed through the window of his study and listened to his records with him. On occasion he took us to the local fish and chip shop and we’d eat our secretive meal out of boxes on the way home.

One May morning he invited us to the top of Magdalen Tower to hear the singing. We often had tea with him after school in his rooms at college.

Once he took me to meet Masfield, and on another occasion I met Tolkien. It was then I heard Tolkien and Lewis discussing the ‘Lord of the Rings’ and I feel looking back that the embryo of the Narnia series began to take shape.

Lewis was a keen astronomer and had a telescope on the balcony of his bedroom. I was privileged to be shown many of the wonders of the universe.

He was a wonderful story teller and would tell us tales as we sat in the garden or walked through the woods and over Shotover.

He was unpretentious, a casual dresser preferring tweeds or grey flannels and sports jacket, usually carried a stout walking stick and always wore a deer-stalker hat.

He seemed unconcerned with the war, his mind being filled with space, the heavens, literature and his church.

I think he was disappointed we girls were Catholics; he asked us once or twice to go and hear him preach (he was a lay preacher) and in return he came with us to Mass once or twice.

At that time I am certain he had no thought of becoming a Catholic and was not in favour of High Church Protestantism.

He was a kind, sympathetic and very human man, never talking down to us school girls. I shall always consider it a great privilege to have known him.

I hope these few details will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret M. Leyland (Mrs.)

(4769 words in main body, 5915 in total, including notes; 411 words quoted from *The Magician's Nephew*, 314 words from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, 282 words quoted from *C. S. Lewis: A Companion and Guide*, and 77 words from *The Voyage of the DAWN TREADER*)