

Moonwalk

The Urth list — 3 messages, 2 voices, 12 May 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3256>

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Alice K. Turner — 12 May 2002, 17:45

This is completely off-subject; skip if you will.

When I was about 11, I read a Victorian children's novel in which a young boy looking out at the sea under a full moon, was able to jump from bar to bar on the light reflected on the swell of the waves to reach another land (Heaven, I would presume, though I don't recall). Part of that passel of Kingsley/MacDonald sentimental type of Christian fantasy. For many years, decades, I misremembered this book as -At the Back of the North Wind- by MacDonald. But it isn't; I reread that recently and it's entirely different. But the image is very potent to me--the path laid down by the moon. Does this ring a bell with any of you? Please e-mail if so. I would like to get a copy of that book to read again.

-alga

Adam Stephanides — 21 May 2002, 01:58 · follows Alice K. Turner

on 5/12/02 5:45 PM, Alice K. Turner at aturner6 at nyc.rr.com wrote:
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THE GARDEN BEHIND THE MOON, by Howard Pyle. A peculiar book: the titular garden behind the moon is not heaven, but a place where the souls of "simple" children play temporarily. Its subtitle is "A Real Story of the Moon Angel," who is a sympathetic Death figure (nearly a century before either Gaiman or Pratchett). It is sentimental, and not well written, but not specifically Christian that I could tell; in fact, it contains a version of the story of the Fall in which, as with Pullman, the Fall is presented as a good thing (though without the specifically anti-Christian coloration that Pullman gives it).

(I've both emailed this to Alice and posted it to the list, since others may have found her description interesting.)

--Adam

Alice K. Turner — 21 May 2002, 12:58 · follows Adam Stephanides

Adam replied:

THE GARDEN BEHIND THE MOON, by Howard Pyle. A peculiar book: the titular garden behind the moon is not heaven, but a place where the souls of "simple" children play temporarily. Its subtitle is "A Real Story of the Moon Angel," who is a sympathetic Death figure (nearly a century before either Gaiman or Pratchett). It is sentimental, and not well written, but not specifically Christian that I could tell; in fact, it contains a version of the story of the Fall in which, as with Pullman, the Fall is presented as a good thing (though without the specifically anti-Christian coloration that Pullman gives it).

Many, many thanks. But without having read it yet, I should like to correct, gently, one thing. Sympathetic Death figures were very much a part of Victorian sentimentality; Victorians were virtually gung ho for death, with its attendant guardian angels etc. Tom is effectively dead for most of -The Water Babies- and is taught by two huge female figures. The North Wind (also female) is Diamond's psychopomp in -At the Back of the North Wind-. And popular art (very kitschy, we would say now) reflects this heavily. It was filtered off into fantasy, and this is something that John Crowley captured triumphantly in -Little, Big-, in some aspects a Victorian pastiche, with the transformation of Daily Alice.

Some years ago, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC, which has a costume division, put on a Victorian exhibit. To my absolute delight, there was a wedding panorama in which the bride's family was in mourning. The bride wore black, as did the attendants. The groom was in the usual penguin suit. But my absolute favorite was the little ringbearer, a boy of about six, who wore a black kilt and tam-o-shanter.

-alga