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Discussion Reports

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Additional Keywords

George Barr



DISCUSSION REPORTS



This issue we are presenting Discussion Reports for the readers' reactions. We would like to print more in the future, especially on topics from Tolkien, Lewis and Williams. Discussion Groups may follow guidelines on page 9 for reports.

Reported by Ruth Berman Rivendell
Minneapolis/St. Paul

August 20th, 1977--topic: Joy Chant's Red Moon & Black Mountain.

We began with some talk about the apostrophes in the Khendiol names. "In'serinna" might be Khendiol, as her real name was a secret.

The 3 Earth children are brought to this world because Thendarl could not be harmed by anyone of the Red Moon world. This is different from the situation of The Lion, The Witch & The Wardrobe, though, because there seems to have been no prior connection between the worlds in this case--while it was children from Earth who brought the White Witch to Narnia in the first place (as revealed in The Magician's Nephew). Of course, we might learn more about Thendarl in the future, and it doesn't seem too likely that CSL had thought much about the origins of the White Witch before he came to write Nephew. The real reason for the arbitrary kidnapping that begins this book is to provide an intermediary to introduce the Red Moon world to readers of this world. The frame may be an awkward device,



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that he is thinking of getting out of animation altogether and into live-action films. With Rankin and Bass's Return of the King, we have additional doubt if LotR 2 will ever be made. I had heard rumors before that United Artists was considering suit to prevent the R&B production. Perhaps some reader can explain in a letter how Rankin and Bass got the rights for Return; I would surmise through the unprotected Ace edition of LotR.

The production of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe has been the most satisfactory over-all. This is a shorter story and less had to be cut to fit into the two one-hour segments. The text was much more faithful to the book, in fact the dialog is taken line for line in many places. This was due in part to the on-going negotiations between the producers and the C.S.Lewis Literary Estate, especially Walter Hooper. Fr. Hooper had to stand firm several times, including when the producers wanted to have Susan kill the White Witch! Unfortunately the rights to Tolkien's works were more complete, and not open to such crucial negotiations. Who knows what would or could have resulted if members of the Tolkien family or their representatives could have had a say in the various productions. The chief fault of TLWW was its mediocre animation and its depiction of the Witch who was not as Lewis described her, as "beautiful...and cold and stern." All in all, the CTW did not do a bad job. Perhaps we may see the other six stories presented also, but then

and inartistic, but inasmuch as it must be incorporated into the story (that is, we cannot in a discussion ignore what the frame action does to the story by suggesting why Chant might have used this device for reasons unrelated to the coherence of the story), it provoked discussion of a problem arising from the way Chant has worked the children in--or the gods of Red Moon world have worked the children in. Supposedly, it is important that Oliver has free choice in his decision to make his sacrifice. Does he really? He was definitely kidnapped. Then he was so thoroughly indoctrinated-encultured with the plains folk's lifeways that he can no longer remember Earth--could he really have made any other choice? This is a problem beyond Patty Hearst's. Of course it also touches on the question of whether any of us has free will, or if all decisions are shaped entirely by upbringing--but at least in the imaginary world of RM&BM this is inappropriately problematical. D.B. commented that the Prydain books are a more effective treatment of the growth of a hero. Whether D.B. was Dainis Bisenieks, Don Braasted or Darla Baker, I don't know, though I think perhaps Don. Someone else rejoined that Chant has a lot less room to do it in, and that this was a pretty good first novel. (Generally assented to). There was talk about the believability and careful construction that had gone into this secondary world. The world of Eldor, by contrast, is not believable. (But, then, it is etched so shadowily that Garner apparently doesn't care about that, either.)

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the others are more complex and would need more time given to even hope to approach a good treatment.

Rankin and Bass's The Return of the King was not as good as their Hobbit. It suffered from the same exaggeration of the orcs. A five year old in delirium could probably do better. Liberties were taken with the time sequencing of the story, such as leaving Frodo wandering inside Mount Doom while Aragorn marches for several days to the Black Gate. Granted much had to be left out to present the core of the story within the time limitations, but so much was left out that the gaps were filled in with such non-textual inanities as the orcs' marching song "Where There's a Whip, There's a Way".

Some people are so excited about Tolkien that anything related to Middle-earth is welcome. I can view with detachment, damning and praising various aspects of someone else's commercialized interpretation without needing it to make Tolkien's sub-creation more real to me. Is there the danger that many need or prefer pre-digested adaptation for their esthetically malnourished imaginations? Or is it the threat of parasitic translators to the visual medium to attach themselves to great stories for expected profit? Give me the rich tapestry of the real book anyway over the selva, threads, and poorly executed postage stamp sized condensations. Let my own imagination work joyously along with the author's creation, filling in the fine details and making the experience personal. This is one of the best and most rewarding forms of work I know.