ForeWord Reviews

HISTORY

The Celtic Quest in Art and Literature: An Anthology from Merlin to Van Morrison
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The spread of Christianity into Britain separated the Celtic people from much of their Celtic traditions. The Celtic Quest is a testament to the potency of those traditions and proof that they still live on. It is a lavish book and a true treat for anyone with a love of anything Celtic. It presents a mix of poetry, ballads and stories illustrated with artwork from Ireland, Scotland, Wales and more. The artwork, which is stunning, ranges from photographs of natural scenes, sacred sites and Celtic relics to drawings and colorful paintings that are as rich and full of stories as the text. The breadth of the writing, encompassing twelve centuries, is extensive. It includes writers such as W.B. Yeats, Dylan Thomas, William Blake, Kathleen Raine, Robert Graves and Sting, as well as translations by Joseph Campbell.

The Celtic Quest is divided into three sections: Song, Sword and Star. “Song” sings about the land, about the powers of the natural world to both move and heal us, and about the ever-present possibilities of love. “Sword” is devoted to the legends of the Celtic heroes. The stories and ballads in this section are full of courageous deeds and magical occurrences. Like Fionn who falls in love with a woman he first encounters in the shape of a deer, or Cuchulainn who at age six defeats a massive and awesome hound, and Arthur who obtains a beautiful sword from the enchanted Lady of the Lake. “Star” explores Celtic wisdom as it was embodied in the philosophies and teachings of the Druids. This section is full of mysteries, wisdom and tidings from the spirit world.

The Celtic Quest is a large book-it takes over the lap. Beautifully designed, it is a wonderful place to spend a few hours and leave, in the words of Mary Ann Larkin, “Stamped by this land of murmurs and half-heard chants / a dreaminess in our gaze.”

Nava Hall