CSL

The Bulletin of
The New York C.S. Lewis Society

May/June 2004 Vol. 35, No. 3 Whole No. 401

Harry Potter Is A Hobbit:

Rowling, Tolkien, and The Question of Readership

by Amy H. Sturgis

C.S. Lewis

Contents

Published bi-monthly for the subscribing members of the New York C.S. Lewis Society (Founded 1969)

Library of Congress ISSN 0883-9980

Subscription:
$10.00 for six consecutive issues;
$15.00 foreign

Editor: Robert Trexler,
366 S. Brooksvale Road, Cheshire CT 06410
e-mail: editor@nycslsociety.com
web-site www.nycslsociety.com

Correspondence/subscriptions/renewals:
Clara Sarrocco,
84-23 77th Avenue, Glendale NY 11385

J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels have redefined commercial literary success, and yet, oddly enough, no clear consensus exists about who is the proper audience for the books. Rowling has drawn surprise and even criticism for the dark gravity of her subjects and fierce action of her plots, leading some to suggest that the so-called children's series is unsuitable for the youngsters to whom it is marketed by publishers and booksellers. This conviction at times even translates into formal written complaints and legal actions lodged against elementary schools and libraries. In fact, the *Harry Potter* novels have continually topped the American Library Association's "Most Challenged Books List," and the series as a whole ranked as the seventh most challenged book of the decade 1990-2000, no small feat since the first volume, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, did not debut until 1998.[1]

Although religious convictions lead some individuals to denounce *Harry Potter* and the tradition of fantasy to which he belongs,[2] other adults who embrace such literature still worry about Rowling's work in particular, fearing its themes might prove too much for young readers. In their article "Controversial Content in Children's Literature: Is *Harry Potter* Harmful to Children?," Deborah J. Taub and Heather L. Servaty survey the complaints raised against the *Harry Potter* novels, finding that "Objections to the books stem from their controversial content—from the centrality of magic to the topic of death to scenes that some believe are too violent, intense, or scary for children."[3]

Not all concerns about the age-appropriateness of the novels come from unfriendly voices. In *The Washington Post* article "The Trouble With Harry," for example, Marguerite Kelly lauds the books for motivating youngsters to become enthusiastic readers, but also warns that the series "has scared some little children silly." Kelly does not let her own son's anxieties dampen her appreciation for *Harry Potter*, however; she simply advises fellow parents to set the books aside until they believe their children are mature enough to enjoy the tales "J.K Rowling writes so well and so clearly."[4]

Likewise, Deirdre Donohue in her *USA Today* article "Some Want Harry to Vanish Till Kids Are Older" notes how independent booksellers such as Diane Garrett simultaneously praise Rowling as a genius and warn parents the *Harry Potter* books are "completely inappropriate" for their small children. Garrett imagines her active discouragement of those who would buy the series for young readers as a kind of crusade.[5] One of her opponents, the article implies, is Scholastic, the U.S. publisher of the *Harry Potter* series, who advertises to elementary-aged students and claims the novels are suitable for those as young as seven years old.

To some it seems accepted wisdom now that the dark imagery and mature issues in the *Harry Potter* books make the series akin to forbidden fruit for children: frowned upon by parents and thus all the more attractive to youngsters. In her undeniably positive analysis of the novels, "Of Magicals and Muggles: Reversals and Revulsions at Hogwarts," Jann Lacoss describes the paradox of a supposed children's series dealing with subjects often closed, even prohibited, to youngsters: "The Harry Potter series incorporates several topics that are more or less taboo to children: violence, gross and disgusting items and topics, magic and witchcraft, and the concept of evil (as well as evil incarnate). Young readers find all of these rather enticing, as anything that adults consider off-limits must be worthwhile."[7] The reader is left to wonder, then, if the success of the *Harry Potter* franchise rests solely on a clever but risky strategy of reverse psychology, an initial gamble that children would learn that the novels are not really children's literature at all, and thus would want to read the series all the more. As explanations go, this hardly seems satisfying.

If the issues in *Harry Potter* such as death, and the means by which they are presented such as violence, are not appropriate for children, it appears likely to follow that adults, then, are the natural target for the series. Not so, some reviewers say. In the same way that critics of content object to the so-called adult subjects in *Harry Potter*, critics of genre object to the so-called childish wrappings of fantasy through which Rowling chooses to address them. William Safire, for example, asserts that "The trouble is that grown-ups are buying these books ostensibly to read to kids, but actually to read for themselves." He complains: "These are not, however, books for adults….this is not just dumbing down; it is growing down." Safire regrets that adults choose to follow the *Harry Potter* series rather than investing the same energy reading what he considers to be three-dimensional and challenging works of mature literature. His conclusion about J.K. Rowling's work is clear: "prizeworthy culture it ain't; more than a little is a waste of adult time."[8]

Yale professor Harold Bloom is equally dismissive of adult attention to *Harry Potter*. "Why read," he asks, "if what you read will not enrich your mind or spirit or personality?" Like Safire, Bloom revisits works he views as classic, canonical texts, and laments that the success of J.K. Rowling's series diverts attention from these "more difficult pleasures." Also like Safire, Bloom sees the *Harry Potter* phenomenon as a symptom of a larger malady of general intellectual inadequacy. He predicts "The cultural critics will, soon enough, introduce *Harry Potter* into their college curriculum, and *The New York Times* will go on celebrating another confirmation of the dumbing-down it leads and exemplifies."[9]

Authors such A.S. Byatt in "Harry Potter and the Childish Adult" also bemoan what they view as the devolution of culture brought about when adults – some not even parents – choose to read stories about Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.[10] Outspoken Rowling critic Philip Hensher, when reading *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* for review in his column, finds himself thinking "with shame and intensity, 'Jesus, I'm reading a book about sodding pixies.'" In fact, Pensher suffers from a sensation his own previous articles consciously fed, suggesting, or perhaps hoping, that in the case of *Harry Potter*, "the feeling of mild embarrassment is, for an adult reader, never far away."[11]

Hensher's view is not relegated to the elite circles of professional cultural criticism: undergraduate writer Craig Stern pokes fun at fellow University of Southern California students whose demand for *Harry Potter* novels strains the supply of the local retailers, campus bookstore,

and university library. "I'd like to take this opportunity to provide a little reality check for USC students who seem to be a little too enraptured with the series," Stern writes. "Harry Potter is for children. It is a series of children's books…." He warns that his classmates risk being "lame" when they do not realize "We are adults in a respectable institution of higher learning. It's time we stopped deluding ourselves."[12] Such opinions are so widespread that Bloomsbury Publishing even produces a separate set of *Harry Potter* novels exclusively for adults with subdued cover artwork intended not to draw attention – or ridicule – from others.[13]

Inextricable from these authors' judgments about the quality, complexity, and future longevity of J.K. Rowling's writing are suppositions about the nature and purpose of fantasy literature. Stern's parallel of "Maybe you are a grown man who likes 'The Velveteen Rabbit,'"[14] Hensher's reference to pixies, and even Bloom's and Safire's invocations of classic foils to compare with Rowling's series – none of which are of like genre with *Harry Potter*[15] — all betray a certain view of fantasy, in the same way that concerns about the age-appropriateness of the books reflect a particular perspective about young readers.

At day's end, a difficult question emerges from these disparate but repeated lines of fire: if children cannot handle dark and serious issues such as death, and adults should not enjoy such childish and light pleasures as fantasy stories, who if anyone is the proper audience for the *Harry Potter* series, and why? According to J.R.R. Tolkien, the solution to this dilemma lies not in discovering a new category of readers, but rather in dismissing the false assumptions about children, adults, and the nature of fantasy that undergird the question.

You Are Now Entering the Perilous Realm

In his 1908 piece "The Ethics of Elfland," G.K. Chesterton reflects, "My first and last philosophy, that which I believe in with unbroken certainty, I learnt in the nursery…. The things I believed most then, the things I believe most now, are the things called fairy tales. They seem to me to be the entirely rational things."[16] More than half a century later, J.R.R. Tolkien built on Chesterton's "rescue" of fairy tales with an in-depth definition of and justification for the genre in his 1947 essay "On Fairy-Stories."[17]

Dispensing with the amorphous and often misunderstood categories of fantasy and fairy tale, the exacting Tolkien concentrates on mining the genre's essential ingredients. In the process, he identifies and sets aside related but separate literature such as travelers' tales, dream-stories, and beast-fables. The works Tolkien ultimately classifies as fairy-stories meet several key criteria: 1. they touch on or use Faërie, the "Perilous Realm," a sober magic "of a particular mood and power"[18]; 2. they take the magic seriously, and do not satirize it even if the larger work is satirical in tone; 3. they involve human beings as characters and at some level speak to one or more of humanity's primal desires, such as the wish to communicate with other living things or to journey through space and time[19]; and 4. they offer to the reader four valuable gifts: Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, and Consolation.[20]

It is in his explanation of the four gifts of fairy-stories that Tolkien's most energetic defense of the genre lies. He chooses the term Fantasy to refer to "both the Sub-creative Art in itself and a quality of strangeness and wonder in the Expression, derived from Image"[21]: that is, the seductive creation of an internally consistent secondary universe that, while being arrestingly strange and different from the real world, nevertheless compels belief in the reader. Tolkien is well aware of the "depreciative tone" often applied to such works of make-believe.[22] Critics, he argues, assume that such fancy is irrational, when in fact only the reasonable creator can understand patterns and laws in the actual universe, construct a comparably constant framework for his own secondary world, and maintain a stark division between the two. In fact, the more carefully crafted and delicately designed the writer makes his setting, the better the Fantasy becomes. Not only does this offering delight the reader, Tolkien claims, but it reveals the author in her truest and most fundamental form, as a child of God, acting in God's image, driven to create just as she herself was created.[23] Quality

Fantasy in Tolkien's view is therefore a spiritual and intellectual achievement, and a difficult one at that. This leads him to admit that Fantasy "is, I think, not a lower but a higher form of Art, indeed the most nearly pure form, and so (when achieved) the most potent."[24]

The other three roles played by fairy-stories according to Tolkien's definition are no less complex or important. Recovery refers to the gift of childlike – though not childish, in the perjorative sense – perspective, the "regaining of a clear view."[25] By venturing into the unfamiliar, the reader can return to see the common, the trite, with fresh eyes and new attention. Such reenergized focus leads to renewed health, both in spirit and mind, according to Tolkien.

Escape, the third offering of fairy-stories, provides a temporary alternative and outlet for what Tolkien calls the "fugitive spirit."[26] That soul might be the archaic aesthete wishing to rise above or return to an era before the impersonal and automated industrialism of modernity, or the political dissident wishing to conjure an alternative regime (perhaps the first stage in what will become reaction), or merely the transcendent pilgrim wishing to meditate upon "simple and fundamental things" cut loose from the anchor of the "whims of evanescent fashion" of the time and place by which he finds himself held prisoner. Tolkien believes fairy-stories allow readers to separate themselves from the triviality of their circumstances in order to encounter, experience, and consider something otherwise lost, elusive, or as yet unborn.[27]

Tolkien's understanding of Consolation is twofold. In one sense, he argues, fairy-stories offer the Consolation of the fulfillment of ancient desires, whether those be communing with other creatures by speaking and understanding the languages of the animals, or defying death. But the Consolation even more essential to the essence of fairy-stories is the Happy Ending. The uplifting conclusion does not presuppose an absence of "sorrow or failure," however; in fact, Tolkien explains that "the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance."[28] Darkness might, perhaps even must, precede light, Tolkien says. Otherwise the reader would not value the "*Eucatastrophe*," the joyous turn that is the "highest function" of the genre.[29] The potential for grief and tragedy in effect makes the Happy Ending all the sweeter: "it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is *evangelium*, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief."[30]

Not only does this joy offer an immediate Consolation to the reader for the lack of happiness in her world, but it also provides the Consolation of an answer to the fundamental question asked of any story: "Is it true?" If the writer maintains the consistency of her secondary world throughout the tale, the story is true in a narrow sense, Tolkien argues; but if she offers her readers the glimpse of real joy, she is also providing "a far-off gleam or echo of *evangelium* in the real world," a moment of communion with the divine, a taste of what is really True.[31] In other words, Tolkien sees the best fairy-stories as echoes of the gospel story, evocative of the same kind of spiritual resonance and redemptive possibilities. Not only do the writers of fairy-stories recognize their humanity by mimicking their creator, Tolkien asserts, but they also recognize the divine by incorporating transcendent joy into the Happy Ending of their tales.

Tolkien's literary theory and his Roman Catholicism here cannot be divorced, but it does not require a theologian to recognize that Tolkien believes fairy-tales capable of offering sophisticated, serious, even life-changing benefits to the reader. These benefits should not be taken lightly, in Tolkien's estimation; moreover, they should not be relegated to one particular age group. In fact, Tolkien notes that Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, and Consolation are particularly suitable as gifts for adult readers, as they are "all things of which children have, as a rule, less need than older people."[32] He calls for adults so inclined to ignore the capricious fads of popular sentiment and "read fairy-stories as a natural branch of literature – neither playing at being children, nor pretending to be choosing for children, nor being boys who would not grow up…."[33]

If fairy-stories are not naturally or exclusively appropriate for children, then why has a consensus in popular culture assumed that they are? To illustrate, Tolkien draws a comparison between "latter-day Europe"[34] – though his metaphor applies with equal usefulness to the modern United States, as well – and the future painted by H.G. Wells in his classic 1895 novel *The Time Machine*. By constructing an artificial division between youngsters and grown-ups, Tolkien argues, contemporary society has created caricatures of the two groups, casting children as the ornamental, carefree, empty-minded Eloi forever stagnant, untroubled, and unchallenged, and casting adults as the slaves to the machines, the fierce and twisted Morlocks, driven from the lovely light to toil for survival in dankness and darkness. Both views are ridiculous for a variety of reasons, most especially because they deny that both beings are the same creature at different points along a spectrum: children are adults in training, and adults are older children.

These false assumptions, these visions of idealized childhood and demonized adulthood, lead to disservices on both sides, Tolkien asserts. On the one hand, literature written specifically for children becomes at its worst "often merely silly, Piggwiggenry without even the intrigue; or patronizing; or (deadliest of all) covertly sniggering, with an eye on the other grown-ups present."[35] On the other hand, adults lose the opportunity to experience Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, and Consolation because fairy-stories, confined to the nurseries, are then erroneously "stuffed away in attics" as outgrown and unnecessary playthings of a more innocent age.[36] To save fairy-stories, then, and readers as well, children must be challenged by thoughtful, quality material, and adults must be freed to read the genre without social stigma or guilt:

> If fairy-story as a kind is worth reading at all it is worthy to be written for and read by adults. They will, of course, put more in and get more out than children can. Then, as a branch of a genuine art, children may hope to get fairy-stories fit for them to read and yet within their measure; as they may hope to get suitable introductions to poetry, history, and the sciences. Though it may be better for them to read some things, especially fairy-stories, that are beyond their measure rather than short of it. Their books like their clothes should allow for growth, and their books at any rate should encourage it.[37]

When Harry Met Faërie

The question then arises, where in Tolkien's schema does *Harry Potter* fit?

First, J.K Rowling's series evokes the essence of Faërie. Though it is difficult to define, readers recognize when they encounter that "particular mood and power": at the moment Harry first sees his heart's dearest desire in the Mirror of Erised[38], for example, or first hears murmured whispers behind the black veil in the Department of Mysteries.[39] The backdrop for such pivotal scenes also showcases a cross-section of genre tradition. The domain of witches and wizards Harry initially encounters at the age of eleven includes such classic landscapes as an enchanted castle, forbidden forest, and magical village. Moreover, in this world the inhabitants remember the past atrocities of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, the Dark Lord Voldemort, and alternately fear, deny, enable, and/or resist his violent return: a "Perilous Realm," indeed.

Second, Rowling takes the magic of Hogwarts and its environment seriously. Although the Ton-Tongue Toffee or Skiving Snackboxes of troublemaking twins Fred and George Weasley may provide humor in the tales, for instance, the legitimacy of the magical charms they utilize so effectively is never questioned.[40] Magic at Hogwarts is a significant and permanent force capable of offense or defense, not a temporary device later explained away by dream sequences or similar sleight-of-hand.

Third, the series involves ordinary human beings as characters, whether they be magicless Muggles such as the Dursleys or Grangers, or magic-deprived Squibs such as Argus Filch or

Arabella Figg. Even the magical witches and wizards are recognizable as humans, and the reader's point of view is echoed in the perspective of students like Harry and Hermione who were raised without magic in the so-called real world. Furthermore, episodes in the series address what Tolkien identifies as humanity's primal desires. Harry communicates with magical creatures; he even builds friendships with a half-giant, werewolf, house-elf, ghost, and centaur, among others. Through devices such as the Time-Turner and the Pensieve, characters traverse time and space. Even death, for a period, is postponed via the Sorcerer's Stone.

Most significantly, J.K. Rowling's work offers Tolkien's quartet of valuable gifts: Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, and Consolation. The *Harry Potter* novels meet the criteria of Fantasy by illuminating an internally consistent, believable universe beyond and parallel to the Muggle world. The magical realm follows its own dependable logic. The reader immediately gains a sense of the patterns and practices of the magical community, from its need for educating the young in the tools of the craft such as charms, potions, and transfigurations, to its complex system of transportation including the use of enchanted trains, floo powder, and portkeys, to the existence of its own bureaucracy, the Ministry of Magic, predictably rife with incompetence, pettiness, hypocrisy, and ambition, not to mention the occasional flying Ford Anglia. As Hermione repeatedly reminds her classmates who have never read *Hogwarts: A History*, no one can Apparate or Disapparate on school grounds[41]: a rule is a rule, and within Rowling's series, the steady adherence to the laws of the magical universe seduces readers into belief.

Rowling provides Recovery for her audience, as well. Arthur Weasley's genuine delight with "eckeltricity"[42] and "the fellytone"[43] make the most ordinary trappings of everyday life appear new and remarkable. Photographs that capture still images, athletes who do not fly, and letters that do not howl aloud seem dear and precious after time spent at Hogwarts: so, too, does the closeness of parents living, or at the very least remembered. And although Harry's reality quite rightly can be called dark and dangerous, it nonetheless offers Escape. Voldemort, his Death Eaters, and Slytherin House are impressive foes to be sure, but exotic ones. Although the *Harry Potter* plots unfold in the present day, Hogwarts does not wrestle with the problems of teen pregnancy or school shootings, much less the post-9/11 threat of terrorism and war as felt in Harry's home nation, Great Britain.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, each *Harry Potter* volume includes the joyous turn that "denies…universal final defeat," savoring a victory made all the more potent by the suffering and danger that preceded it, even while contributing to the larger meta-narrative of the series as a whole. In fact, Rowling consistently delivers her Happy Ending in a literary one-two punch, with Harry's escape from peril and frustration of Voldemort's plan followed by a second revelation once he has returned from danger. For example, the first half of the joyous turn in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* comes through Harry's defeat of Professor Quirrell and Lord Voldemort, initially through the skill and resourcefulness of Harry, Hermione, and Ron, and eventually due to Lily Potter's unconditional and self-sacrificing love for her son, a power that protects Harry long after his mother's death. The Happy Ending is secured when Gryffindor later wrests the House Cup from Slytherin at the Hogwarts Parting Feast thanks to the often overlooked yet significant courage of underdog Neville Longbottom.

The same pattern recurs in subsequent books in the series. Even the bleakest volume to date, the wrenching *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, delivers this twofold Consolation, even while playing an important part in establishing the "sorrow or failure" that will contrast with the final *eucatastrophe* expected in the seventh and final book in the series. First, Harry endures the direst experience of his life, physical possession by Voldemort as the Dark Lord tempts Headmaster Albus Dumbledore to kill enemy and pupil both; yet Harry repels Voldemort through the strength of his love for his newly deceased godfather, Sirius Black. Second, the novel ends with Harry recognizing that, despite the fact he has lost – in some senses, at least, though the book suggests not in all – his godfather, he has gained a family,

as members of the Order of the Phoenix in effect announce their guardianship of him to his biological family in the Muggle world. Harry at the end of *Order of the Phoenix* is traumatized by new losses and revelations, it is true, but it is also certain that he has never been less alone. As Hermione, the Weasleys, Remus Lupin, Mad-Eye Moody, and Tonks close protective ranks around Harry, literally and figuratively, the reader appreciates the stark contrast between despair and hope, isolation and fellowship, and in the process glimpses that joy that is "poignant as grief."

In accomplishing these four tasks, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels meet Tolkien's criteria for fairy-stories. This places Rowling squarely in the tradition of many of Tolkien's chief literary influences – and, of course, Tolkien himself. In fact, many parallels exist between Rowling's primary themes and those expressed in Tolkien's fiction. In his analysis of the *Harry Potter* texts, related interviews, and guides, Rowling scholar John Granger identifies four central issues in the author's series: Prejudice, Change, Choice, and Death.[44] This same foursome of subjects runs throughout Tolkien's novels and short stories.

In a July 7, 2000 *Entertainment Weekly* interview, J.K. Rowling admits "bigotry is probably the thing I detest most. All forms of intolerance, the whole idea of 'that which is different from me is necessarily evil.'"[45] She explores Prejudice in her series through a variety of relationships and metaphors. Whether it is the elite Malfoys' distaste for the poor or non-pureblood magical folk, or the Dursleys' fear of anyone abnormal, or the wizarding community's prejudice toward giants and werewolves and Squibs, or the centaurs' disdain toward humans, or even the headless ghosts' dismissal of the nearly headless, Rowling provides a variety of examples of how bigotry hurts its victims and, in the end, the bigots themselves, as well.[46]

Rowling worries that "Oppressed groups are not, generally speaking, people who stand firmly together – no, sadly, they kind of subdivide among themselves and fight like hell."[47] Tolkien addresses this aspect of Prejudice repeatedly in his works, suggesting a hope not always untouched by skepticism. In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo Baggins watches uncomprehendingly as the Dwarves and Elves and Men only overcome their inexplicable and petty bigotry when forced to join ranks and face foes whose combined unreasoning hate is even stronger in what becomes the Battle of Five Armies.[48] *The Lord of the Rings* seems at times to be a protracted meditation on intolerance as Tolkien pairs characters from distrustful, suspicious backgrounds together and forces them into alliance: Elf and Dwarf, Man and Hobbit, Rohirrim and Wild Men, even Shieldmaiden and Philosopher-Statesman.[49]

In a telling twist, Tolkien launches his most poignant attack against those disdainful of Faërie itself, those prejudiced against the very essence of fairy-stories. In "Smith of Wootton Major," the narrow-minded Nokes the Cook is mocking and dismissive of his assistant Prentice, who unbeknownst to him is actually the King of Faery. When Prentice identifies a magical star, the Cook jeers at the apparent immaturity of his helper:

> 'What do you mean, young fellow?' he said, not much pleased. 'If it isn't funny, what is it?'
>
> 'It's *fay*', said Prentice. 'It comes from Fairy.'
>
> Then the Cook laughed. 'All right, all right', he said. 'It means the same; but call it that if you like. You'll grow up some day….'[50]

Yet Nokes is the one who suffers most from his prejudice. When he is confronted with the King of Faery in his splendor, his "'Take your Fairy and your nonsense somewhere else!'"[51] attitude does not allow him to see the magic right before his eyes. He is limited by his preconceptions of Faery – "'King o' Fairy! Why, he hadn't no wand.'"[52] – and thus is able to delude himself about the nature of his weight loss and, in fact, his entire world: "'There ain't no magic in it.'"[53] Nokes ends as a diminished, pitiable, empty character, untouched by the wonder of magic that

transforms and illuminates the humble protagonist Smith.

Change, too, plays its role in the works of Rowling and Tolkien. The imagery of alchemy – transfiguring, transforming, turning the crude into the golden – pervades the *Harry Potter* series.[54] This theme seems particularly fitting in books that follow the growth and maturation of an anti-heroic boy into a undeniably heroic man: even more so, perhaps, as the action takes place in the mercurial climate of Lord Voldemort's rebirth and renewed bid for domination. With every new revelation Harry and those around him find themselves at a point of no return, heavily laden with knowledge, responsibility, and reputation, compelled to act. Harry can no more deny his destiny and return to the simplicity of innocence and obscurity than Tolkien's Frodo can return to his beloved Shire and live in contented peace after parting with the Ring.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, change also appears in the ebbs and flows of the peoples of Middle-earth. The War of the Ring is the moment for the Halflings to take center stage, but it also marks the rise of the race of Men and the waning of the power of Elves. The protagonists of one Age must purchase the next with their blood and sacrifice, and then surrender to it. Leaders such as Elrond and Galadriel embrace the strategy of the Ring's destruction despite the fact they know it means irreparable change to their diminishing world, the unmaking of so much of its magic. So, too, in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, for example, does Dumbledore encourage Harry's and the Order's actions, though it costs him his Headmaster position at Hogwarts, his honors, and his reputation. Mad-Eye Moody's rumination on the photograph of the first Order of the Phoenix, his laundry list of courage and death and loss, further serves to underscore the fact that actions have consequences, that taking a stand changes the individual and his or her world forever.

Tolkien and Rowling dovetail the themes of Change and Choice. Both writers remain preoccupied with what Dumbledore calls "a choice between what is right and what is easy."[55] When Gandalf's complicated history of the One Ring and all that it means overwhelms Frodo, the wizard cuts to the heart of the crisis and the *The Lord of the Rings*: "All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."[56] Elrond notes that the journey to Mordor falls to Hobbits due to " neither strength nor wisdom,"[57] but because Frodo decides to accept the burden willingly: "But it is a heavy burden. So heavy that none could lay it on another. I do not lay it on you. But if you take it freely, I will say that your choice is right."[58] Similarly, Dumbledore considers Harry's decision to deny a possible future in Slytherin House in favor of a more difficult, even dangerous path as "a true Gryffindor"[59] more important than any specific talent or trait: "It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are far more than our abilities."[60] Therefore a small hobbit or a young boy can succeed where powerful wizards fail.

The two authors center their secondary worlds on the foundational issue of Death. The events in Tolkien's story "Leaf by Niggle" create an extended metaphor for Life, Death, Purgatory, and Heaven, literally walking the reader from one world into the next.[61] His Middle-earth books, *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Silmarillion*, juxtapose the melancholy of the deathless Elves and the vitality of the mortal Hobbits, Men, and Dwarves, defending the notion that Death is, in fact, a gift from the creator, and unceasing life is but a pale imitation of an immortal afterlife. In a letter to Milton Waldeman written perhaps in 1951, Tolkien says, "You asked for a brief sketch of my stuff that is connected with my imaginary world…. Anyway all this stuff is mainly concerned with Fall, Mortality, and the Machine."[62] He puts a finer point on his key theme in a 1957 letter to Christopher and Faith Tolkien: "But I should say, if asked, the tale [*Lord of the Rings*] is not really about Power and Dominion: that only sets the wheels going; it is about Death and the desire for deathlessness."[63]

J.K Rowling makes a similar statement in a July 2000 interview with *Newsweek*: "In fact, death and bereavement and what death means, I would say, is one of the central themes in all seven books."[64] The idea plays itself out particularly clearly in the clash between Albus Dumbledore and Lord Voldemort. Dumbledore does not fear death; in fact, he tells Harry, "to the well-

organized mind, death is but the next great adventure."[65] He implies that deathlessness ultimately is not a desirable fate when he notes that the Sorcerer's Stone provided "two things most human beings would choose above all" – unlimited wealth and life – "the trouble is, humans do have a knack of choosing precisely those things that are worst for them."[66] Lord Voldemort, it seems, is one such human. He boasts to his Death-Eaters that he has "gone further than anybody along the path that leads to immortality. You know my goal – to conquer death."[67] The two legendary wizards voice their opposing views during their battle in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*:

> "You do not seek to kill me, Dumbledore?" called Voldemort, his scarlet eyes narrowed over the top of the shield. "Above such brutality, are you?"
>
> "We both know there are other ways of destroying a man, Tom," Dumbledore said calmly, continuing to walk toward Voldemort as though he had not a fear in the world, as though nothing had happened to interrupt his stroll up the hall. "Merely taking your life would not satisfy me, I admit –"
>
> "There is nothing worse than death, Dumbledore!" snarled Voldemort.
>
> "You are quite wrong," said Dumbledore…. "Indeed, your failure to understand that there are things much worse than death has always been your greatest weakness –"[68]

Here Dumbledore's words clearly parallel Tolkien's own: "Death is not an Enemy! I said, or meant to say, that the 'message' was the hideous peril of confusing true 'immortality' with limitless serial longevity. Freedom from Time, and clinging to Time. The *confusion* is the work of the Enemy, and one of the chief causes of human disaster."[69] Rowling's Voldemort, like some of Tolkien's ancient Númenoreans, not only fails to understand and appreciate death, but also seeks to cheat it at substantial peril to himself and his realm.

Sophisticated, complex, even troubling themes such as Prejudice, Change, Choice, and especially Death, do not necessarily fit with popular understandings of light-hearted fantasy stories and the small children for whom they must be written. These themes do fit, however, with Tolkien's theory of the high art and serious purpose of fairy-stories. J.K. Rowling's approach to her writing also matches Tolkien's call for genre fiction able to satisfy other adults and challenge young readers to grow, rather than surrender to the "often merely silly" stereotypes of what nursery room tales should be.

Rowling alludes to this question by drawing a sharp contrast in her works. On the one hand is the wise and compassionate Dumbledore at the close of *Goblet of Fire*, who proves willing to share with students dark and disturbing truths that their parents and even government fear is too much for them in his "Remember Cedric Diggory" speech, a step he takes to prepare, challenge, and protect Hogwarts' young charges.[70] On the other hand is High Inquisitor Dolores Jane Umbridge, an authoritarian villain who tells condescending, soothing lies of safety to the students that, if believed, ultimately will endanger the children, leaving them unprepared and unwary even as her own self-righteous methods of control enable Voldemort's evil plans.[71]

In interviews, Rowling is forthright about her convictions. When asked if she ever thinks "Maybe I should just tone it down" with regard to the action and issues in her *Harry Potter* novels, Rowling responds: "No. I know that sounds kind of brutal but no, I haven't. The bottom line is, I have to write the story I want to write. I never write them with a focus group of 8-year-olds in mind. I have to continue telling the story the way I want to tell it."[72]

Putting the So-Called Adult in So-Called Children's Literature

Tolkien's friend, colleague, and fellow Inklings author C.S. Lewis wrote the 1966 essay "On Three Ways of Writing for Children" in part to praise and expand upon Tolkien's literary theory. In it Lewis says, "I hope everyone had read Tolkien's essay on Fairy Tales, which is perhaps the most important contribution to the subject that anyone has yet made."[73] He goes on to add his agreement to Tolkien's thesis that "The whole association of fairy tale and fantasy with childhood is local and accidental."[74] This conclusion has significant implications for both camps of critics taking aim at the *Harry Potter* series. According to Tolkien and Lewis, those who worry about the age-appropriateness of the novels and those who argue that adults should not read the works both are beginning from the wrong premise by assuming that, because the books rest on fantastic premises and include school-aged protagonists, they are intended only for youngsters.

And what of Rowling's dark, mature themes that might be too much for children? Tolkien responds by saying that it is healthy for children to read some works "beyond their measure," that fiction should promote development, offer challenge, and allow youngsters to grow into its style and message. How can there be Consolation, the solace and relief of the joyous turn, without fear and danger first? Rowling concurs that ideas such as Death have their proper place in the tales: "I don't at all relish the idea of children in tears, and I don't deny it's frightening. But it's supposed to be frightening! And if you don't show how scary that is, you cannot show how incredibly brave Harry is."[75] Without serious, believable peril, then, there is no serious, believable courage.

Lewis supports Tolkien and anticipates Rowling in his essay:

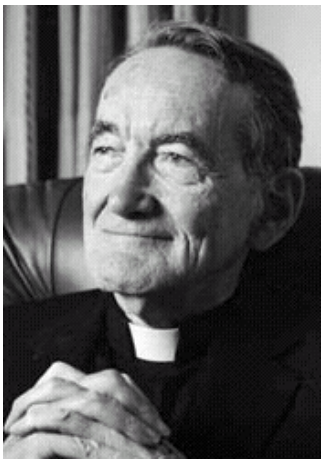
> A far more serious attack on the fairy tale as children's literature comes from those who do not wish children to be frightened…. that we must try to keep out of his mind the knowledge that he is born into a world of death, violence, wounds, adventure, heroism and cowardice, good and evil… [This] would indeed be to give children a false impression and feed them on escapism in the bad sense. There is something ludicrous in the idea of so educating a generation which is born to the Ogpu and the atomic bomb. Since it is so likely that they will meet cruel enemies, let them at least have heard of brave knights and heroic courage. Otherwise you are making their destiny not brighter but darker…. I think it possible that by confining your child to blameless stories of child life in which nothing at all alarming ever happens, you would fail to banish the terrors, and would succeed in banishing all that can ennoble them or make them endurable. For in the fairy tales, side by side with the terrible figures, we find the immemorial comforters and protectors, the radiant ones….[76]

In other words, losing the terrible Voldemort, losing the violent Death-Eaters, losing the tragic deaths of James and Lily Potter and Sirius Black, also means losing Mrs. Weasley's hand-knitted Christmas sweaters, losing the best seats by the fire in the Gryffindor common room, losing the healing tears and heartening song of Fawkes the Phoenix, and losing the devoted protection of Albus Dumbledore. Lewis, restating Tolkien's position, finds this price too great to pay.

And what of those critics who remind adults that *Harry Potter* should be a series for the delight of youngsters, not the "dumbing-down" of grown-ups? Tolkien does admit his enjoyment of fairy-stories began when he was young: "I desired dragons with a profound desire. Of course, I in my timid body did not wish to have them in the neighborhood, intruding into my relatively safe world…. But the world that

(Continued on Page 12)

Avery Cardinal Dulles
Speaker for NYCSL Society 35th Anniversay



An extraordinary Jesuit and theologian, Avery Cardinal Dulles, S. J., will lecture in commemoration of the 35th anniversary of the New York C.S. Lewis Society on Saturday, October 16, 2004 at 4 p.m., at Fordham University at Lincoln Center (12th floor lounge). Space is limited. Further information about making reservations will appear in the next issue of *CSL*.

The Cardinal has been called the preeminent Catholic theologian in this country for nearly four decades. He is the Laurence J. McGinley Professor of Religion and Society at Fordham University. He has received 21 honorary doctorates and is an internationally known author and lecturer, having written 21 books and more than 650 articles, essays, and reviews. He has the distinction of having been made a cardinal on account of his distinguished service to the church. A revised version of his book *A History of Apologetics* will be issued from Ignatius Press this summer. The current issue of *First Things* features his article "The Rebirth of Apologetics."

May 19th, 2004 - **Dr. Peter Kreeft**, Philosophy, Boston College. "Does God Exist & Can We Prove It?" Wine & Hors d'oeuvres at 6:15 pm (gentlemen must wear coats and ties) Speaker at 7:00 pm sharp Reception following the talk. The Union League Club, 38 E. 37th St. at Park Avenue, New York City Admission $20 w/ RSVP $30 at the door. RSVP to 973.695.0120 RSVP Online: www.socratesinthecity.com

FUTURE MEETINGS

May 14	"C.S. Lewis meets Soren Kierkegaard" Dr. Robert B. Scheidt
June 11	*Descent Into Hell* by Charles Williams Sue Wendling
July 9	Annual "From The Floor" moderated by James Como
Aug. 13	No meeting
Sept. 10	Discussion *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* moderated by Rev. Fred Herwaldt

We meet at 7:30 in the Parish House of The Church of the Ascension at 12 West 11th Street, Manhattan. Call 1 (212) 254-8620 after noon on the meeting day if there is a question of possible cancellation. On the block of the Parish House, on-street parking is legal all day (alternate side rules apply). On some nearby blocks, parking becomes legal at 6:00. Nearby subway stations are at 14th Street and 6th Avenue (F train) and 14th Street Union Square (many trains 4, 5, 6, N, R, L, Q). The Strand Bookstore, dealing in second hand books, is nearby. ALL ARE WELCOME.

(Continued from Page 10)

contained even the imagination of Fáfnir was richer and more beautiful, at whatever cost or peril."[77] Yet at the time Tolkien liked other literature as well or better. Only in his later years did Tolkien develop a true appreciation of the genre: "A real taste for fairy-stories was wakened by philology on the threshold of manhood, and quickened to full life by war."[78] Tolkien's own life experience with fairy-stories informs his argument that such fiction offers even more for the adult than the child. His entreaty to grown-up readers to brave the tide of public opinion and read fairy-stories for their own sake therefore is both an intellectual and a personal plea.

Rowling confesses to writing for herself, an adult, as her primary audience: "I cannot write to please other people. I can't. When I finish book 7, I want to be able to look in the mirror and think, I did it the way I meant to do it."[79] If Rowling's books satisfy her own literary appetite, it certainly seems possible that they might appeal to others over the age of fourteen, as well.

Once more, Lewis unites the perspectives of Tolkien and Rowling, framing an answer to meet the most vocal *Harry Potter* detractor:

> Critics who treat *adult* as a term of approval, instead of as a merely descriptive term, cannot be adult themselves. To be concerned about being grown up, to admire the grown up because it is grown up, to blush at the suspicion of being childish; these things are the marks of childhood and adolescence. And in childhood and adolescence they are, in moderation, healthy symptoms. Young things ought to want to grow. But to carry on into middle life or even into early manhood this concern about being adult is a mark of really arrested development. When I was ten, I read fairy tales in secret and would have been ashamed if I had been found doing so. Now that I am fifty I read them openly. When I became a man I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up.[80]

The primary obstacles to adult enjoyment of fairy-stories, Lewis finds, often are the so-called adults themselves. Lewis would say that critic Philip Hensher's humiliation at reading about pixies reveals much more about Hensher's unresolved psychological issues than any inherent problem with pixies as a topic. In essence, Lewis's prescription requires the reader, not the subject matter, to grow up.

And thus Lewis, writing from the common ground shared between Tolkien and Rowling, clearly sees Tolkien's solution to Rowling's dilemma of readership: bring the alleged adult subject matter to the child reader, and the adult reader to the alleged children's genre. Like Middle-earth, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, he suggests, has room enough for all within its landscape.

Amy H. Sturgis earned her Ph.D. in intellectual history from Vanderbilt University. She currently teaches courses such as "J.R.R. Tolkien in History, Political Thought, and Literature" and "Harry Potter and His Predecessors" at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee, and regularly teaches summer seminars at various colleges across the nation such as Princeton University and Bryn Mawr College for the Institute for Humane Studies. In the field of political history, she has written two books and co-authored a third. In the field of science fiction/fantasy studies, Sturgis has presented research with such organizations as the Media Studies Working Group, the International Conference on Medievalism, and the Mythopoeic Society. Her works have appeared in journals and magazines such as *Mythlore, Seventeenth Century, Reason, Parma Nólë, Winedark Sea,* and *The LockeSmith Review.* Sturgis also serves as the co-founder and coordinator of the Lómelindi Smial of the Tolkien Society based in Nashville. She was named a Scholarly Guest of Honor for the international J.R.R. Tolkien event The Gathering of the Fellowship in Toronto, Canada in December 2003.

Bibliography

Bloom, Harold. "Can 35 Million Book Buyers Be Wrong? Yes." *Wall Street Journal*. 11 July 2000. A26.

Byatt, A.S. "Harry Potter and the Childish Adult." *New York Times*. 7 July 2003. A13.

Chesterton, Gilbert K.. "The Ethics of Elfland," *IV The Ethics of Elfland – Orthodoxy*. 5 September 2003. http://www.literatureclassics.com/etexts/322/1956.

Donohue, Deirdre. "Some Want Harry To Vanish Till Kids Are Older." *USA Today*. Arlington, Virginia. 15 June 2000. D1.

Gish, Kimbra Wilder. "Hunting Down Harry Potter: An Exploration of Religious Concerns about Children's Literature." *Horn Book*. May/June 2000. 262-271.

Granger, John. *The Hidden Key to Harry Potter: Understanding the Meaning, Genius, and Popularity of Joanne Rowling's* Harry Potter *Novels*. Port Hadlock, WA: Zossima Press, 2002.

"Harry Potter Books From Bloomsbury." *Bloomsbury.com.* 30 September 2003. http://www.bloomsbury.com/harrypotter/.

"Harry Potter Tops Challenged Books." *Teacher Librarian*. 28:4. April 2001. 67.

Hensher, Philip. "A Crowd-Pleaser but No Classic." *The Spectator*. 113:9125. 28 June 28 2003. 30.

Kelly, Marguerite. "The Trouble with Harry." *Washington Post*. February 14, 2001. C4.

Lacoss, Jann. "Of Magicals and Muggles: Reversals and Revulsions at Hogwarts." 67-88. *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon*. Ed. Lana A. Whited. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002.

Lewis, C.S. "On Three Ways of Writing For Children." *On Stories and Other Essays on Literature*. New York: Harcourt, 1966. 31-44.

"The 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990-2000." 2003. *American Library Association*. 20 August 2003. http://www.ala.org/bbooks/top100bannedbooks.html.

Rowling, J.K. quoted in Malcolm Jones. "Harry's Hot." *Newsweek*. 17 July 2000. 56.

___. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. New York: Scholastic, 1998.

___. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. New York: Scholastic, 1999.

___. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. New York: Scholastic, 1999.

___. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. New York: Scholastic, 2000.

___. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. New York: Scholastic, 2003.

___. interviewed in *Entertainment Weekly*, September 7, 2000, as archived on *Mugglenet.com*. August 19, 2003. http://mugglenet.com/ewinterview1.shtml.

Safire, William. "Besotted With Potter." *New York Times*. 27 January 2000. A27.

The Scholastic Store Home Page. 1996-2003. 21 August 2003. http://www.scholastic.com/consumerstore.

Stern, Craig. "Public Reactions Overblown in Harry Potter Hysteria." *Daily Trojan Online: Student Newspaper of the University of Southern California*. 18 August 2003. 22 August 2003. http://www.dailytrojan.com/article.do?issue=/V150/N01&id=06-public.01v.html.

Taub, Deborah J. and Heather L. Servaty. "Controversial Content in Children's Literature: Is *Harry Potter* Harmful to Children?" *Harry Potter's World: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*. Ed. Elizabeth A. Heilman. New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2003. 53-72.

Tolkien, J.R.R. "From a Letter to Christopher and Faith Tolkien." 11 September 1957. Letter 202 of the *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Ed. Humphrey Carpenter. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000. 261-262.

___. "From a Letter to C. Ouboter, Voorhoeve en Dietrich, Rotterdam." 10 April 1958. Letter 208 of the *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Ed. Humphrey Carpenter. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000. 267.

___. *The Hobbit*. Reprint ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

___. "Leaf by Niggle." *A Tolkien Miscellany*. New York: Science Fiction Book Club, 2002. 147-162.

___. *The Lord of the Rings*. Complete ed. London: HarperCollins, 1994.

___. "On Fairy-Stories." *The Tolkien Reader: Stories, Poems, and Commentaries by the Author of* The Hobbit *and* The Lord of the Rings. New York: Del Rey, 1966. 33-99.

___. *The Silmarillion*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

___. "Smith of Wootton Major." *A Tolkien Miscellany*. New York: Science Fiction Book Club, 2002. 1-35.

___. "To Milton Waldeman." undated (1951?). Letter 131 of the *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Ed. Humphrey Carpenter. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000. 143-161.

Wells, H.G. *The Time Machine*. 2nd ed. New York: Bantam, 1982.

ENDNOTES

[1]See "Harry Potter Tops Challenged Books." *Teacher Librarian*. 28:4 (April 2001), 67 and "The 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990-2000." *American Library Association*. 2003. 20 August 2003. http://www.ala.org/bbooks/top100bannedbooks.html. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* is the U.S. version of the title for what in Great Britain is *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*.

[2]For a thoughtful overview of objections from a Christian perspective, see Kimbra Wilder Gish, "Hunting Down Harry Potter: An Exploration of Religious Concerns about Children's Literature." *Horn Book*. (May/June 2000), 262-271.

[3]Taub, Deborah J. and Heather L. Servaty. "Controversial Content in Children's Literature: Is *Harry Potter* Harmful to Children?" *Harry Potter's World: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*. Ed. Elizabeth A. Heilman. (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2003), 53-73: 53.

[4]Marguerite Kelly, "The Trouble with Harry." *Washington Post*. (February 14, 2001), C4.

[5]Deirdre Donohue. "Some Want Harry To Vanish Till Kids Are Older." *USA Today*. Arlington, Virginia. (June 15, 2000), D1.

[6]The first four books are listed on Scholastic's online store as appropriate for readers "Ages 7-13," although the fifth installment of the series, 2003's *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, is listed as suitable for "Ages 7-up." *The Scholastic Store Home Page*. 1996-2003. 21 August 2003. http://www.scholastic.com/consumerstore.

[7]Jann Lacoss. "Of Magicals and Muggles: Reversals and Revulsions at Hogwarts." 67-88. *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon*. Ed. Lana A. Whited. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 79-80.

[8]William Safire, "Besotted With Potter," *New York Times*. (27 January 2000). A27.

[9]Harold Bloom. "Can 35 Million Book Buyers Be Wrong? Yes." *Wall Street Journal*. (11 July 2000), A26.

[10]A.S. Byatt. "Harry Potter and the Childish Adult," *New York Times*. (7 July 2003). A13.

[11]Philip Hensher, "A Crowd-Pleaser but No Classic," *The Spectator*. 113:9125. (28 June 2003), 30.

[12]Craig Stern, "Public Reactions Overblown in Harry Potter Hysteria." *Daily Trojan Online: Student Newspaper of the University of Southern California*. 18 August 2003. 22 August 2003. http://www.dailytrojan.com/article.do?issue=/V150/N01&id=06-public.01v.html.

[13]"Harry Potter Books From Bloomsbury." *Bloomsbury.com*. 30 September 2003. http://www.bloomsbury.com/harrypotter/.

[14]*Ibid*.

[15]Bloom's examples of Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books and Kenneth Graham's *The Wind in the Willows* at first blush might seem to extol classic fantasy texts, J.R.R. Tolkien discusses each of these and explains how they fail to meet the necessary criteria for the genre: Carroll because his books are dream-stories that eventually deny the truth of their tales and frame them as illusions, and Graham because his work is a beast-fable "in which the animal form is only a mask upon a human face, a device of the satirist or the preacher." See the following section for more on Tolkien's understanding of fairy-stories. J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories." *The Tolkien Reader: Stories, Poems, and Commentaries by the Author of* The Hobbit *and* The Lord of the Rings. (New York: Del Rey, 1966), 33-99: 42.

[16]Gilbert K. Chesterton, "The Ethics of Elfland," *IV The Ethics of Elfland – Orthodoxy*. 5 September 2003. http://www.literatureclassics.com/etexts/322/1956.

[17]The essay first appeared in the 1947 volume *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* published by Oxford University Press. The 1966 version used here includes only a few small alterations to the 1947 text.

[18]"On Fairy-Stories," 39.

[19]*Ibid*., 43.

[20] *Ibid*., 67. The term fantasy for Tolkien, then, refers to one ingredient of a fairy-stories, one function performed by them, and does not apply to the genre as a whole.

[21]*Ibid*., 68.

[22]*Ibid*., 69.

[23]*Ibid*., 74-75.

[24]*Ibid*., 69.

[25]*Ibid*., 77.

[26]*Ibid*., 85.

[27]*Ibid*., 78, 80.

[28]*Ibid*., 86.

[29]*Ibid.,* 85.

[30]*Ibid.*, 86.

[31]*Ibid*., 88.

[32]*Ibid*., 67.

[33]*Ibid*.

[34]*Ibid*., 65.

[35]*Ibid*.

[36]*Ibid*.

[37]*Ibid*., 67.

[38]J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. (New York: Scholastic, 1998), 208.

[39]J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. (New York: Scholastic, 2003), 774.

[40]J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (New York: Scholastic, 2000) and *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, respectively.

[41]See J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. (New York, Scholastic, 1999), 164; *Goblet of Fire*, 564; and *Order of the Phoenix*, 500, for example.

[42] *Goblet of Fire*, 46.

[43] *Order of the Phoenix*, 869.
[44]John Granger, *The Hidden Key to Harry Potter: Understanding the Meaning, Genius, and Popularity of Joanne Rowling's* Harry Potter *Novels*. (Hadlock, Washington: Zossima Press, 2002), 33. See in particular 35-102.
[45]J.K. Rowling, Interview with *Entertainment Weekly*, September 7, 2000, as archived on *Mugglenet.com*. August 19, 2003. http://mugglenet.com/ewinterview1.shtml.
[46]See Granger's discussion of Rowling's Prejudice theme in *The Hidden Key to Harry Potter*, 35-44.
[47]*Ibid*.
[48]J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*. Reprint ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.
[49]J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*. Complete ed. (London: HarperCollins, 1994).
[50]J.R.R. Tolkien, "Smith of Wootton Major." *A Tolkien Miscellany*. (New York: Science Fiction Book Club, 2002): 1-35, 8.
[51]*Ibid*., 33.
[52]*Ibid*.
[53]*Ibid*.
[54]See Granger, 85-102.
[55]*Goblet of Fire*, 724. See also Granger, 73-84.
[56]*The Lord of the Rings*, 50.
[57]*Ibid*., 262.
[58]*Ibid*., 264.
[59]J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. (New York: Scholastic, 1999), 334.
[60]*Ibid*., 333.
[61]J.R.R. Tolkien, "Leaf by Niggle." *A Tolkien Miscellany*. (New York: Science Fiction Book Club, 2002): 147-162.
[62]J.R.R. Tolkien, "To Milton Waldeman." undated (1951?). Letter 131 of the *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Ed. Humphrey Carpenter. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000): 143-161, 143, 145.
[63]J.R.R. Tolkien, "From a Letter to Christopher and Faith Tolkien." 11 September 1957. Letter 202 of the *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Ed. Humphrey Carpenter. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000): 261-262.
[64]J.K. Rowling, quoted in Malcolm Jones. "Harry's Hot." *Newsweek*. (17 July 2000), 56.
[65]*Sorcerer's Stone*, 297.
[66]*Ibid*.
[67]*Goblet of Fire*, 653. See also Granger, 45-65.
[68]*Order of the Phoenix*, 814.
[69]J.R.R. Tolkien, "From a Letter to C. Ouboter, Voorhoeve en Dietrich, Rotterdam." 10 April 1958. Letter 208 of the *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Ed. Humphrey Carpenter. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000. 267.
[70]*Goblet of Fire*, 721-724.
[71]*Order of the Phoenix*, 241-246.

Byron Lambert (1923–2004)

In the beginning . . . were Byron and Phyllis Lambert, Society godparents if ever there were. The story of Phyllis' successful effort to save the Society in its infancy is known by few and will likely remain that way; but her and Byron's role as our hosts and guiding lights are the stuff of legend. On March 16 Byron died, and our prayers are directed Heavenward for him, and for Phyllis, and for their daughter Sharon. My own have a particular tone, for to a very young academic there was no more concrete and influential model of the Gentleman Christian Scholar than Dean Lambert. (Decades ago Byron compelled me to a first-name basis, but he was always, and remains, Dean Lambert to me, to the woeful disadvantage of every dean I have since known and have measured by his standard.) Byron's intellectual presence was formidable, but more commanding still were his equanimity and generosity of spirit. In 1998, he was presented with the James A. Garfield Award, the highest citation bestowed by the Emmanuel School of Religion. In presenting the award it was said, "In his capacities as scholar, teacher, lecturer, and zealot for Christian unity, Dr. Lambert is one of the most gifted theological thinkers of his generation." May he see the Glory he worshipped and so the peace he so dearly deserves. — James Como

[72]J.K. Rowling interviewed in *Entertainment Weekly*, September 7, 2000, as archived on *Mugglenet.com*. August 19, 2003. http://mugglenet.com/ewinterview1.shtml.
[73]C.S. Lewis, "On Three Ways of Writing For Children." *On Stories and Other Essays on Literature*. (New York: Harcourt, 1966): 31-44, 35.
[74]*Ibid*.
[75]*Entertainment Weekly*, September 7, 2000.
[76]"On Three Ways of Writing For Children," 39-40.
[77]"On Fairy-Stories," 64.
[78]*Ibid*., 64-65.
[79]*Entertainment Weekly*, September 7, 2000.
[80]"On Three Ways of Writing For Children," 34

Private Passions in the Public Square

Lewisian Reflections on Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*

by James Como

> He produced mainly three effects – Hatred – Terror – Adoration. There was no trace of people expressing mild approval. . . . A man who was merely a man and who said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with a man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. . . . Shut Him up for a fool . . . spit at Him and kill Him as a demon . . . fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.
>
> – C. S. Lewis

Given the vector and tenor of Mel Gibson's pre-emptive critics, I must ask: Might anyone go to a movie about an agonizing, self-doubting Caiphas (Samaritan perhaps? Or Greek?) who had no choice but very strongly to *rebuke* a cult-mongering, self-deluded, masochistic blaspheming Jesus? I would not, and surely Gibson's attackers didn't expect him (as opposed, say, to Oliver Stone) to make that film . . . did they? And for them the news is bad. Sorry, Rabbi Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League, there are no WMD's here either. And not-so-by-the-way: if you had said a few months ago what you said in the Diane Sawyer interview (that neither Gibson nor the film are anti-Semitic) we all would have forgone much *tsuris*.

Almost everything the attack crew has said about the film is false: it is not anti-Semitic, it does have some explicit Semitophilia, and the only people who could be motivated to anti-Semitism by the movie (the great prospective concern) are the same ones who put on capes and leap off tall buildings *before* seeing *Superman*.

On the other hand, the attackers – notice, please, how people who pick fights are often surprised when they get them – are invested in finding anti-Semitism and so they must, for the depth of their dismay would be unbearable were they to discover that this movie, like the Gospels, is not about Jews but rather about A Very Particular Jew. (No, not New York *Times*man Frank Rich, despite what he seems to think; or maybe he just knows a meal ticket when he sees one.) Is their quarrel with the Gospels? Are they the ones making unexamined assumptions ('prejudices') to the detriment of people whom they neither know nor understand to begin with ('bigotry')? Are their diatribes in fact the lenses through which, all along, they have wished to manipulate audiences into viewing both the film and the Gospels?

Without context there is no fixed or reliable meaning. These would-be Prior Restrainers – to borrow a term from First Amendment law: and how very odd that we have not heard the usual suspects shouting against censorship and its inevitable "chilling effect" – these attackers seem to have cared very little about the relevant context (and it's not Gibson's job to school them) but do care a good deal about a context that does not speak to the movie (e.g., Gibson's father's loony ideas, Traditional Catholicism so-called, Gibson's prior films – now being retro-reviewed as depictions of sado-masochistic martyrdom). Even Gibson's own declared intent (intent never equals impact) is irrelevant to any judgment of the movie *per se*. It must circle the earth on its own, in this case not as a documentary but as an artistic interpretation of pre-existing sources.

There is, though, the question of responsibility. Any communicator must be held to account for his message. If that message compels hysteria, the communicator is accountable; if it palpably invites hysteria, accountable. But what if it merely permits it, failing to deter any possible misinterpretation? Is the communicator accountable for each individual central nervous system and its response?

One producer has allowed that, although our multi-cultural society is sophisticated enough to bear the controversy, he worries over the "simpler" ones; a critic wonders at the impact to be had upon "the Magic Johnson theatre audiences"; a colleague (bright, sensible, invariably kind) tells me stories of personal victimization at the hands of hate-filled Catholics and asks if we should tolerate any film that runs any risk of either "offending or inciting": no longer able believably to claim that anti-Semitism is in the film, many attackers condescendingly worry that *others* might yet be infected.

I don't know what to say to these people except, No. The communicator is not accountable for every maladjusted, or traumatized, or politicized, or neurasthenic central nervous system and its response. Just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so very often with *-isms* of all sorts.

And this movie is proving to be more of a Rorschach test than most; how many movies a person sees, one's access to the story (especially to the Gospels *per se*), one's depth and understanding of his own belief, and one's stance towards Christ and Christianity make all the difference in what that person regards as excessive or offensive. More at the movies than almost anywhere else we will find what we look for, unless we are experienced, careful and, if not entirely agenda-free, at least mindful of an agenda and of its pull on our response.

Of a critic I would ask: What baseline of judgment do you bring to this film? That is, how have you assessed violence, religious iconography and conviction, historical fidelity, and edginess in the past? In particular, how many explicitly Christian films have you assessed and how? (For example, I should like to know your take on Anthony Quinn's *Barabbas*.) I don't at all mind the ground shaking; I do mind a critic shifting it from one film to another.

Disciplined and straightforward, this *Passion* is generally not simplistic. Judas, Herod, Caiphas, Pilate, the Court and the courtyard, the Apostles, Mary, and especially Simon the Cyrene (I wish I were he; would I have had the guts?) are all pulsating fibers in a script alive with subtlety and economy (that feature, perhaps, permitting much innocent misunderstanding). There are no stereotypes in the mob, the faces of which, in any event, can hardly be discerned without looking really *very* hard (and whose stereotypes would those be, by the way?); it is clear that the mob is in fact selected by Caiphas and his henchman (i.e., that mob is Caiphas's "crew"); it is clear that the preponderance of Jews who hailed Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem with palm five days earlier were not selected to be part of it (imagine old Mayor Daley rounding up a clubhouse crowd for a Dem rally: a whole bunch of pretty honest citizens would be left out); it is clear that due process of law for the weak who speak truth to power is a dicey affair in any event, and . . . and on and on.

In short, here we have The World: power-mongering; hangers-on; true believers; bureaucratic hand-wringing weaklings; rabble-rousers and mob-think; sadism, heroes, healing and the healed (not unlike academe, come to think of it).

As for this *Passion*'s art per se? Three stars (out of four): a flawed masterwork that breaks new ground. The use of ancient languages makes events immediate; it suggests colloquial authenticity and avoids the palpable falseness of cinema-biblical language. The *gothica* often heightens the supernatural realism that the Gospels, as do most holy writ, insist upon. The Satan figure, for example, does this concretely, as we see and feel in the haunting and portentous opening sequence. These and other genre- and mind-bending innovations (horror/grand guignol-cum-historical/devotional drama) are fresh and effective. But genre-bending always has a price tag. In this case the price tag reads "neo-Hollywood excess."

The flashing image-shifting, the near-parodic depiction of the Roman torturers and some heavy-handed, *Damien II* imagery (maggots, wasps) are intrusive, serving more as commentary than narrative. The actual brutalization of Jesus (as opposed to the *consequent images of suffering*, an important distinction largely ignored by all), along with Caviezel's sustained, expository groaning, compels the viewer (perhaps without realizing it) to go into Disengagement Mode, as an experienced moviegoer will with such sequences, finding Jesus' endurance and vestigial strength in carrying the Cross barely believable. Certainly the violence of the Passion is a prominent feature of Roman Catholic iconography, especially in its Latin cultures, and yet is not everybody's cup of tea – *to this extent of literalness and duration*. The price for understanding the *anatomy* of the Passion is a decline in credibility. In other words, even a *little* less would have gone a long way.

When Jesus is on the Cross, however, things change. The suffering-sans-brutality (just about), amidst penetrating spiritual intimacy, is both a narrative and an evangelical triumph: what every other version has sought to achieve but has failed at. The effect almost justifies the preceding excess: If *Jesus* can put that aside, then so can we. Here Caviezel excels (as he does in flashbacks, another brilliant idea, and another handled with restraint). Self-forgetful credulity rushes back, and we *get* it: *Forgiveness*, the toughest nut for a Christian to swallow and the real offense for anyone who will not try. I am reminded of a very different film, Abel Ferrara's uncompromisingly brutal and confrontational *The Bad Lieutenant*. This policeman (Roman soldier? Putative disciple? Establishment enforcer?) is so reprehensible that, until he literally beholds a tortured, bloody Christ standing before him – a Christ whom he *must* curse *before* accepting – he seems unredeemable. Forgive even *him*? Close business.

At the end of the day, it's not the brutality but what He does about it that startles, invites, frightens, or offends. This is why the last 90 seconds of Gibson's *Passion* – the most unadorned and straightforward of the movie, conventional almost to the degree of counterpoint – are magnificent.

To think we might have missed this. Kudos to a man who seems to have read his C. S. Lewis and would not be "chilled," either by Christophobia or anything else, *and* to those who turned the discussion civil, for example, Ebert and Roeper, Joel Siegel, Peter Bart (editor-in-chief of *Variety*), Michael Medved, Rabbi Daniel Lapin (*Toward Tradition*), William F. Buckley, Jr. (whose disaffection is even-toned and cogently proferred), and to thousands of others in local civic venues across the land.

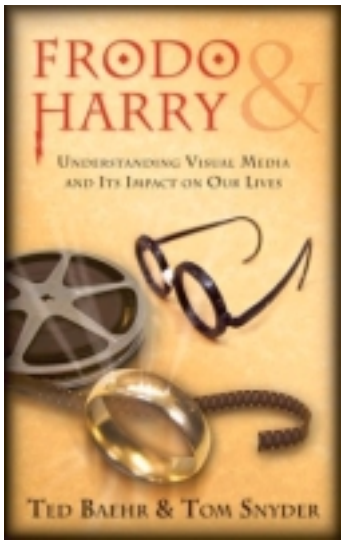
What about it, Mr. Rich? Three cheers for *rational* conversation in the public square?

James Como is Professor of Rhetoric and Public Communication and Chairman of the Department of Performing and Fine Arts at York College. His latest book is *Branches to Heaven: The Geniuses of C. S. Lewis.* He may be reached at como@york.cuny.edu

Tolkien, Lewis, Rowling & the Imagination

Three Book Reviews by Robert Trexler

The three books being reviewed have at least two things in common with each other and with Amy Sturgis's feature article in this issue of *CSL*. First, they each discuss the role of the Christian imagination in fiction (there is varied discussion of other mediums as well.) Second, they each apply their understanding of imagination and artistry, especially as it is informed by the works and methods of C.S. Lewis and/or Tolkien, to the Harry Potter novels by J.K. Rowling.



Frodo & Harry: Understanding Visual Media and It's Impact On Our Lives; Crossway Books; by Ted Baeher and Tom Snyder, (Nov. 2003) ISBN 1581345593, 207 pages, Paperback $12.99

In *Frodo and Harry*, the Harry Potter books are contrasted to Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and found to be incompatible with a Christian worldview. The authors possess impressive academic and professional credentials. Dr. Ted Baehr is the founder and publisher of Movieguide and the head of the Christian Film and Television Commission. He was also the president of the Episcopal Radio-Television Foundation in 1979 when the award winning animated version of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* was produced. He holds degrees in comparitive literature, law, and theology. Co-author Dr. Tom Snyder has a Ph.D in film studies and is currently vice-president of Good News Communications and an editor for Movieguide. Whatever else may be said about *Frodo and Harry*, these men are actively engaged in the culture and trying to change it for the better.

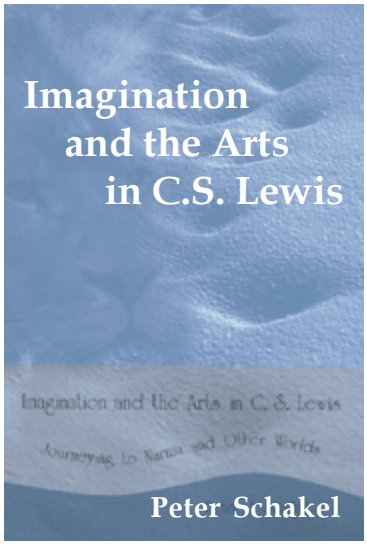
Frodo and Harry is different from the other books being reviewed in that the discusion begins in the realm of literature in part one, but in part two, the final two-thirds of the book is spent mainly discussing the negative effects of the media and suggesting ways to make discerning moral choices for oneself and one's family. The Harry Potter books are, in effect, the point of reference or object lesson of things the authors want to warn readers about. Following the example of other Harry Potter critics, their main accusations fall into three categories: dabbling in the occult, gnosticism, and moral-relativism or moral confusion.

The most prominant intellectual source for these accusations, whether in this book or earlier anti-Potter books by Richard Abanes, is the Catholic novelist and artist Michael O'Brien. The book's index shows six references to prior criticism by O'Brien. The only author with more references than O'Brien is J.R.R. Tolkien. Other indications of O'Brien's influence are two long quotes from the Catholic cultural historian Christopher Dawson. Dawson left this world long before Harry Potter appeared, but as interpreted by O'Brien or those who read and agree with O'Brien, the trends and Christian principles to be learned from cultural and intellectual history weigh against Harry in this contemporary debate.

I believe the authors are incorrect in their view of the overall negative impact of the Harry Potter books, unconvincing in their absolutist moral differentiation between the characters in Tolkien and Rowling, lacking evidence of moral corruption on those who read the Harry Potter books, and frequently contradictory in their argumentation. On one hand, the authors say "our position is neither black or white . . . our goal is to help people on both sides." (136) They also say "Christians should be willing to objectively point out the very real dangers of Harry Potter while at the same time avoiding hysteria and emotional arguments." (67) This sounds reasonable until you read a statement like this: "You must decide therefore, whether you want your culture and your family to be dominated by biblical Christianity, which gives people the freedom to worhip as they wish and yet allows the church to freely evangelize people in love and truth, or by something like Harry Potter and other contemporary books and movies, or worse, by a pagan theology and ideology like that of Nazi Germany where millions were slaughtered in the name of a mad, godless dictator." (34) It is through this Jekyll and Hyde presentation that the authors manage to say many good and reasonable things, while leaving no doubt through their own "hysteria and emotional arguments" that Harry Potter is somewhere on the slippery slope toward becoming (or leading your child to become) a godless power-monger.

This may sound harsh, but it pales in comparision to the book's criticism as exemplified in the appendix called "Thoughts on John Granger's *The Hidden Key to Harry Potter*." Here the double-talk continues when they write that Granger "may perform an apologetic service by pointing some non-Christians toward the Good News of Jesus Christ" and in the next sentence that he will confuse Christians "perhaps leading them into a Gnostic maze" (193). They smuggly write that Granger's arguments "tend toward the sophomoric, though some ascend to sophistry." Furthermore the authors consider Granger, an honors graduate in Classical Languages from the University of Chicago and a teacher of the Great Books, to "betray a lack of linguistic understanding." The authors say that his book "resembles the writings of Manley P. Hall, the father of modern occultism" and that the website designed to advertise his book is "pure gnosticism." (You may judge the merits of this claim by visiting www.zossima.com)

The authors end on a high-note of Christian charity with the wish that Mr. Granger will "discover the free gift available in Jesus Christ." (196) The editors at Tyndale, who are publishing Granger's book *Looking For God In Harry Potter*, and the various Christian scholars who have endorsed Granger's book, presumably need to read *Harry and Frodo* because, according to Dr. Baehr and Dr. Snyder, "the people who are enamoured of Mr. Granger's book do not have the tools to disern the truth." It is unfortunate that two highly educated men whose profession it is to discern truth, should stoop so low in their attempt to discredit ideas they disagree with.



Imagination and the Arts in C.S. Lewis; by Peter Schakel, Univ of Missouri Press; (July 2002) ISBN 082621407X, 214 pages. Hardcover $39.95

Peter Schakel's book may be compared to a good deli sandwich in that the beginning and ending chapters are the bread which hold the thing together and the middle chapters are the filling which may be enjoyed according to your tastes and interests. What, then, holds the book together? It is the framework and fiber of Lewis's understanding of the role of the imagination which Schakel reconstructs and interprets from four books: *Surprised By Joy*, *The Discarded Image*, *An Experiment in Criticism*, and *The Abolition of Man*. It is the beginning and end of the book which I found most important and interesting and which will occupy most of my comments.

Before doing that, I must at least acknowledge what, for other readers, may be their favorite part of the book. For every chapter contributes something to the overall picture of Lewis's view of the imagination and the arts.

Chapter two relates Lewis's viceral enjoyment of everything to do with books: their texture, smell, illustrations, arrangement on bookshelves, the act of purchasing books and indeed, "a wholistic approach to the reading experience." There are some important notes here regarding some textual improvements Lewis made while editing the American editions of Narnia which, Schakel regrets, were not carried over to the "uniform edition" of 1994.

Chapter three discusses the "correct" order of reading the *Chronicles of Narnia*. I suspect 99% of *CSL* readers will agree that *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* should be read first, but Schakel explains why. The imaginative process is better served by reading the original order instead of reading *The Magician's Nephew* first. Schakel presents the reasons clearly and persuasively.

Chapter four elucidates Lewis's essay "On Stories" which focuses on the sort of stories Lewis loved to read - romance, adventure stories, and fantasy. The title of this essay as it was presented in lecture form was "The Kappa Element in Fiction" where the Greek letter kappa stood for a word which translates: "hidden element." The hidden element that creates what Lewis called a "narrative net" to capture the reader, includes designing a distinctive atmosphere that places "familiar things in an unfamiliar context." According to Schakel, this helps readers "accept the world imaginatively and engage in its atmosphere." (59) The atmosphere of the unexpected is also produced by the "blending of childhood and adult experiences" and creating children and talking animals who are "independent and self-sufficient."

Chapter five explores the use of the "narrative voice" to encourage a trusting relationship between the storyteller and the reader. Schakel discusses the techniques of "active reader participation"and defends the Narnia stories against accusations of "alleged didacticism." (87) He concludes that "although the storyteller is never shown in Narnia or participates in any action, he – apart from Aslan – is the most important character in the *Chronicles*."

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 discuss Lewis's use of music, dance, art, architecture, and clothing. These topics are self-evident and I will leave the details concerning them for those who will read the book to discover.

Now, to the essence of the book: what Schakel describes in the subtitle to chapter one as "Lewis's Imaginative Theory and Practice." Here we learn (among many other things) Lewis's position on what the Romantics distinguished as imagination and fancy (invention). In brief, while Barfield believed that "imagination is a method of attaining knowledge of spiritual reality (truth)"(10) Lewis held that "imagination was not the source of truth, but the source of meaning." In a formulation which seems consistent with Thomistic epistimology (my comparision, not Schakel's) Lewis was to write in his essay "Bluspels and Flalansferes: A Semantic Nightmare": reason "is the natural organ of truth, but imagination is the organ of meaning." (quoted, Schakel 11)

In *Experiment in Criticism*, Lewis rejects the psychological approach to literature promulgated by I.A. Richards. In this book, Lewis distinguishes between two types of readers. Type one ***uses*** literature to "pick out from a work what it finds stimulating and neglects the rest of what is there: it does not see or hear what the work is in itself, but cares only for those parts which serve as effective starting points for an independant creative activity." (13) The other type of reader ***receives*** literature in order to "re-enact those connections and enter the meaningful relationships through which the work elicits profound and powerful feelings and impact." Schakel states that according to Lewis, "this requires disengagement before engagement. To experience a work of art fully, we must lay aside pre-conceptions, self-absorbed expectations, and personal needs or cravings." (14)

Schakel brings these lessons to bear on his final chapter "Let The Pictures Tell Their Own Moral: Lewis and the Moral Imagination." This chapter completes the analysis of chapter one because, as Schakel argues, Lewis believes that "the imagination is needed in the moral realm [...] to give meaning to morality, to connect its principles to life, to bridge the gap between theory and practice." (164)

Drawing from *That Hideous Strength* and *The Abolition of Man*, Schakel summarizes the task of the educator. Education which only develops the intellect produces (in Lewis's words) "Men without Chests." For emotionally and imaginatively impoverished children, Lewis prescribes a program of objective values through imaginative literature. Schakel quotes the famous lines: "for every child who needs to be guarded from a weak excess of sensibility, there are three who need to be awakened from the slumber of cold objectivity. The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles, but to irrigate deserts." (*Abolition of Man*, chapter 9)

The last fifteen pages of the book address the concerns by some parents and Christian leaders regarding the use of witches and magic. I will not detail his defense of their place in Narnia as the vast majority of Christians have come to accept these books as presenting clear objective values. But Schakel steps into troubled waters when he dares to ask the question: "What might Lewis think about the Harry Potter stories, if he were alive to read them?" (178)

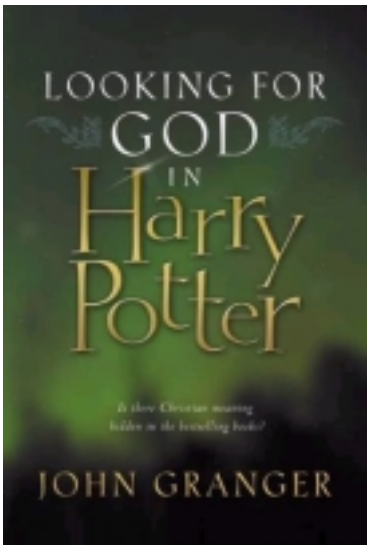
In *Surprised by Joy* Lewis criticises the traditional British school story "for indulging pychological fantasy – satisfying the desire for escapism – instead of the desire for the more positive imaginative experience literary fantasy provides." (181) Indeed, critics of the Harry Potter books make similar charges. But Schakel says Rowling avoids this by placing the school in a fantasy setting: "Thus, the Potter books satisfy not the longing for psychological escape, but the longing for fairy land, which is very different." (182)

To those who are concerned that the books will "desensitize children to the evils of magic" Schakel replies "I think the books could have the opposite effect: to undermine the basis for any belief in the efficacy of magic. There is a tongue-in-cheek quality in the handling of magic in the books: they come close to ridiculing magic, partly by treating it as a wholly mechanical process, partly by the examples of what such processes achieve." (183) To the charges of it tending toward the occult he writes: "the occult deals with hidden and supernatural powers. There is nothing 'hidden' about the magic in these stories: this is what Lewis called fairy-tale magic – objective efficacy that can not be further analyzed." (184)

What about the questions raised about moral relativism or ambiguity? He writes: "The Potter stories do not try to teach meticulous obedience to school rules and the rules of an ethical code, but they do provide models who affirm the desirablility of telling the truth and adhering to rules and codes of behavior." (186) This does not mean that the stories are morally ambiguous. He goes on to say "a person who wants to read Christianity into this will have no difficulty doing so, but it invites – as the Chronicles do also – a moral nonreligious reading first." (187)

The final conclusion to the question of what Lewis would think about Harry Potter is that "Lewis would have enjoyed and commended the Potter books, for their creativity in conceiving of a unique fantasy world, for her skill in adapting the traditional school story to a new and more positive use, and for the way in which they nurture the moral imagination by having characters and events affirm values that Lewis valued highly." (187)

Some may think it out of place for Schakel to finish his exploration of the moral imagination with a look at Harry Potter. It is, however, a useful application of the lessons outlined earlier in the book, and offers authoritative guidance from an author, editor, or co-editor of four previous volumes on the thought and writings of C.S. Lewis. *Imagination and the Arts in C.S. Lewis* is not a rehash of previous works, but a fresh presentation of Lewis's understanding and application of the artistic imagination. As such, it is a welcome addition to every Lewis lover's bookshelf and a necessity for college or university libraries.



Looking For God In Harry Potter; by John Granger, Tyndale Pub. (June 2004) ISBN 1414300913, 172 pages. Hardcover $16.99

(First, the disclosure. Since August 2002, when John Granger submitted his article "Harry Potter and the Inklings" for publication in *CSL*, we have become friends. I have done my best in this review to present an accurate and objective appraisal of the book based on an unpaginated proof-copy from the publisher.)

Granger's first book, *The Hidden Key To Harry Potter*, appeared in January 2003 with a private printing of 5,000 copies. Within a year the $18.95 paperback sold out (a remarkable acheivement for a first-time author with no advertising budget). In 2004 Tyndale decided that Granger could present a strong defense of the Potter stories in a religious publishing market with cross-over secular appeal. They fast-tracked publication of the book to coincide with the June 2004 release of the next Harry Potter movie.

If you already own the limited-edition, collectible Granger book you may want to know how it compares with his latest. The new book retains some of the content from the first, but adds a considerable amount of new material. Moreover, the new book is designed to appeal to a broader market. It is half the length, more sequential in logic, less redundant, and includes an evaluation of the fifth Harry Potter book (which was published in June 2003). *LFGIHP* is geared to a Christian readership, using more scriptural and theological comparisons. However, the spiritual is not a mere "tack-on" wherein the stories become detached Christian lessons. The spiritual is forged from the literary structures, themes and symbolism which Granger shows were developed within the traditions of centuries of artists writing within a Christian context.

Structure, themes and symbolism are discussed in chapters such as "The Alchemy of Spiritual Growth" (ch. 4) where he writes: "Alchemy, whatever it might have been, no longer exists except as a synonym for 'magical transformation' and as a resource for artists and authors writing about personal change. Alchemical symbols are a large part of classic English literature." In "One Person, Two Natures" (ch.5) he discusses Rowling's use of Doppelganger characters, the definition of Christ's nature, and our natures. Granger defines what makes a book "great" in "Christian answers to Big Questions" (ch. 6).

Each of the five Harry Potter books receives its own chapter with aptly descriptive headings. In order of Potter publication the corresponding chapters are: "The Purification of the Soul" (*Philosopher's Stone*), "Dangerous Books and Edifying Books" (*Chamber of Secrets*), "Despair and Delivery" (*Prisoner of Azkaban*), Girded with Virtue" (*Goblet of Fire*), and "Dark Night of the Soul" (*Order of the Phoenix*). By the time you reach these chapters, Granger has already clued the reader into the essential Christological and other symbols in "Evidence of Things Unseen" (ch. 9).

Here is one example of the insights you may expect from this book: Granger points out the significance of Rowling's writing from a "third person limited omniscient view" saying that because we experience the stories "from Harry's limited ability to understand what is happening [...] the books are getting larger and more detailed because Harry is able to experience more as his comprehension expands. These changes are due to the remarkable requirements Rowling has placed on herself in writing a coming-of-age story from this particular perspective. We experience the themes in each book not only in light of the particular plot, but also Harry's growing perspective and capacity - morally, intellectually, and spiritually." (ch. 16)

LFGIHP is easy to read, but too sophisticated for most younger teens, and although profitable for interested teenagers, it is geared toward literate adults. Parents will appreciate the final chapter on communicating biblical values and virtues to children through literature. C.S. Lewis enthusiasts will enjoy discovering how Rowling has managed to "steal past those watchful dragons."

Report of the February 2004 Meeting

The New York C.S. Lewis Society met on Friday, February 13, 2004 at Ascension Church Parish House, 12 West 11th Street in Manhattan. Eric Wurthmann opened the meeting at 7:40. Helene DeLorenzo selected and read from *De Futilitate*, an essay in which Lewis contrasts war and human misery against the background of popular evolutionism and improvement (printed in *Christian Reflections*, 1967). Marilyn Driscoll volunteered to select and read a Lewis excerpt at the March meeting. We welcomed several first-time attendees; a favorite Lewis book mentioned was *Reflections on the Psalms.*

Clara Sarrocco reminded the group to mark their calendars for the Society's Thirty-Fifth Anniversary celebration which is scheduled for Saturday afternoon, October 16, 2004 at Fordham University at Lincoln Center (12th floor lounge). Further details will follow. Bob Trexler reminded us about the June 4-6 George MacDonald Society conference in Litchfield, CT. A new member asked which biography of C.S. Lewis others would recommend for her to read; several members responded: *Jack: A Life of C.S. Lewis* by George Sayer.

Eric introduced our speaker on *The Personal Heresy*, Nyack College Professor Charles Beach, who has been a Lewis society member since 1993. Charles provided detailed handouts, which will likely result in publication in future issues of CSL, our Bulletin, hence not summarized in detail here. He introduced his remarks with the information that EMW Tillyard was an established Cambridge scholar and Lewis an unknown newcomer at Oxford when Lewis began his debate with Tillyard. (Later both Tillyard and Tolkien were on the Board that approved Lewis's move to his position at Cambridge.) The six essays dealing with "The Personal Heresy" were published in various volumes of the annual journal, *Essays and Studies,* beginning in 1934, with the six essays published in book form in 1939, now out of print since 1965. Only one of Tillyard's many books is still in print today (*The Elizabethan World Picture*). Charles provided a bibliography of Tillyard's books.

Charles Beach's 18-page thorough and fascinating summary of the issues in the various essay debates shows the debaters to be skilled and knowledgeable gentlemen-scholars who each adapted his opinions based on input from the other. While Lewis was occasionally sarcastic, each much respected the other and in fact were in agreement on many points. How should poetry be read? Does one read a poet or a poem? One Lewis quote: "A poet does what no one else can do: what, perhaps, no other poet can do; but he does not express his personality…" In evidence are the skills of debating, the use of precise definitions, inquiries about the meaning and purpose of poetry, and arguments about personality and communication.

The group applauded Charles's amazing grasp of the many issues mentioned in the essays and his skill in sharing these with us. A time of comments, questions and answers followed his talk. Do both Lewis and Tillyard both err, one to each extreme? Is this the nature of debate? An example of a debate where the extremes produced yet further out extremes: Luther and Erasmus on free will, where Calvin moved yet further than Luther and Calvin's successors further still. Is the nature of debate necessarily to polarize? Is debate more theoretical than real? Consider novels and memoir. A novel is not autobiography yet may reveal something about the author. Consider Tennyson and Browning as poets and their personalities. Was Lewis voicing something pertinent to the temper of his time? Dorothy Sayers had similar and firm views about the artist being separate from the artist's craft. Consider Lewis as a new Christian in 1934; was self denial an issue at all in his thinking here? Is the poet's role not to tell the reader what to feel but to cause the reader to feel what the poet feels?

Attending this meeting were: Eric Wurthmann, Charles Beach, Helene DeLorenzo, Gordon Weston, Maggie Goodman, Bill McClain, Joan Duncanson, Susan LaMagra, George Sanseverino, Marilyn Driscoll, Thomas Abraham, Fred Herwaldt, Edwin Woodruff Tait, Jennifer Woodruff Tait, Henri Bonte, Jeannette Ramsay, Mary Gehringer, Clara Sarrocco, Robert Trexler, Rose Marie Barba, Joe Barbiero, John Morrison, Lori Pieper, Jacqueline Gazella, John Martin, George McCrossin, Zina Michajliczenko, Claire Edwards.

Report by Marilyn Driscoll

Bits and Pieces

The Southern California C.S. Lewis Society is holding its 30th Anniversay Summer Workshop July 26-30 (Mon.-Fri.), entitled *Beauty and Truth: The Romanticism of C.S. Lewis*. The speakers will be James Prothero and Sara Park McLaughlin. Contact Edie Dougherty for more information at (310) 532-9973, or by email: lamppost@rcn.com

The 4th New England George MacDonald conference will be held in Litchfield, CT June 4-6, 2004. Speakers include: John Doherty, Nancy Mellon, and Robert Trexler. The focus is on MacDonald's story *The Golden Key*. More information at: www.george-macdonald.com or contact Robert Trexler at editor@nycslsociety.com

The C.S. Lewis Foundation is holding their summer conference June 24-27 in San Diego. *The Fantastic Worlds of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien* will feature lectures by renowned Lewis and Tolkien scholars, Peter Kreeft, Jerry Root, Joseph Pearce and Paul Ford. More information at: www.cslewis.org

A conference sponsored by the Chesterton Institute called *Landscapes with Angels*, subtitled "Fantasy, Children's Literature and the Spiritual Role of the Imagination," will be held in Oxford from August 12th to 15th. Information at: www.secondspring.co.uk

According to Amazon.co.uk, the second volume of the complete letters of C. S. Lewis was released on 29th March. Amazon.com states that the book will be issued on 1st July in America. *Collected Letters Volume Two by C. S. Lewis*, Edited by Walter Hooper.

Those interested in up-to-the-minute news and rumors on the 2005 Narnia movie should visit www.narnianews.com This site also provides links to the more "official" websites.

(continued from page 24)

Perhaps the ultimate example of roles and responsibilities and true equality can be observed in the Holy Trinity. God the Son wanted to do the will of God the Father. The Holy Spirit's role was to point to God the Son. The three are equal, but their roles are not confused. Their relationships are reflected in the creation.

A time of questions and answered began about 8:50. Did Lewis think his argument was strong or weak? Does the issue of dominance in a marriage vary when the woman has the more forceful personality? Male oversight is not male oppression. What about Joy Davidman, who was a strong woman. Lewis was single for years; how would his ideas relate to singleness? Did Lewis's theories work in real life? Did Lewis ever write about their marriage in this context? Are Lewis's fictional characters literal or symbolic? Are his ideas in this area metaphorical or based on actuality? Consider an Augustinian thought: for unity we need differences in degree or kind. Hierarchy should not make us think of abuses; we need to think of hierarchy as a good thing intended by God and reflecting the Trinity in His created world. For what we are considering, is "structure" a better word than "hierarchy"? Remember that Lewis appreciated women, admired Dorothy Sayers, corresponded with women.

At 9:15 we continued the discussion over cake & coffee.

Attending this meeting were: Eric Wurthmann, Bill McClain, Marilyn Driscoll, Maggie Goodman, Mary Pixley, George Sanseverino, Fred Herwaldt, Cheryl Kendrick, Patty Hisanasu, Barbara Zelenko, Juan Ryan, Henri Bonte, Kenneth E. Dupuy, Kateri T. Dupuy, Jim Tetreault, Charles Abraham, Jacqueline Gazella, Zina Michajliczenko, Claire Edwards, Lori Pieper, John Martin, Emily Arholekas, Ireene Arholekas, Mary Gehringer, Nicholas Santella, Joe Barbiero, Dorothy Fabian, Jim Como, Alexandra Como, Thomas Abraham, Clara Sarrocco, Samuel Lee, Helen Bachthaler, Jeanette Ramsay, J. Deiw, Jennifer Brennema, Karl Tiedemann.

Report by Marilyn Driscoll

Report of the March 2004 Meeting

The New York C.S. Lewis Society met on Friday, March 12, 2004 at Ascension Church Parish House, 12 West 11th Street in Manhattan. Eric Wurthmann opened the meeting at 7:45. As the selected Lewis quotation, Marilyn Driscoll read from the Affection chapter of *The Four Loves*, about how Mrs. Fidget had perverted "gift love" to her family. Juan Ryan volunteered to select the reading for the next meeting (May 14). We were reminded there is no meeting in April because of Good Friday. In May Robert Scheidt will speak on Lewis and Kierkegaard. In June Sue Wendling will speak on Charles Williams' *Descent Into Hell*. July is our annual "From the Floor" chaired by Jim Como.

We welcomed a number of first-time attendees. Lewis books mentioned as favorites included *The Four Loves, Screwtape Letters,* and *A Grief Observed.*

Announcements or questions: Which Joy Davidman books are recommended and available? Answer: *Smoke on the Mountain*, her book about the Ten Commandments. Bill McClain made available a tape of Armand Nicoli lectures and a photocopy of an article about the "anti-Lewis" writer, Philip Pullman. Clara Sarrocco reminded the group of the Society's Thirty-Fifth Anniversary celebration scheduled for Saturday afternoon, October 16, 2004 at Fordham University at Lincoln Center (12th floor lounge). Further details to come.

Eric introduced our speaker, Kevin Offner, arriving in the nick of time from Washington, DC. Kevin reviewed his history with the society, which goes back a dozen years. Kevin's announced topic was "Lewis and Women," relevant he suggested in connection with gender issues in the church today. Lewis's views, then and now, can be viewed as counter-cultural. Kevin cited two presuppositions of our culture. (1) Equality of worth means no preferencing of roles or responsibilities based on gender, an assumption which can lead in the direction of androgynous interchangeability. The second presupposition is (2) a particular person or individual and that person's gifts are more important than male or female genus. This assumption can lead, for example, to the ordination of women as priests.

Lewis disagreed with both presuppositions. He had a high view of the created order. God's good intention was to create inequalities everywhere in His universe, including an order or hierarchy of men and women. Rather than seeing equality as a value and hierarchy the result of the fall, before the fall there was an intended hierarchy. Beginning with the creation account in *The Magician's Nephew*, Kevin traced these thoughts through various of Lewis's books. Aslan created talking animals as higher than other nontalking animals. In Narnia, Peter as the firstborn had certain responsibilities and roles that the other children expected him to have. Peter was to be spokesman to Aslan, and challenger to King Miraz. Sex differences in Mars and Venus are built into the *Perelandra* story. Languages with masculine and feminine nouns recognize gender. Expectations from men (valor, strength, leadership) are different than expectations from women (warmth, compassionate mercy). Peter thinks, reasons, makes logical arguments. Lucy's emphasis is on relationality, mercy, sympathy. The masculine error is passivity. The female error is overactivity. Kevin read an example from *Letters to an American Lady*, and relevant statements from *Mere Christianity* and *God in the Dock*. The Lewis book that most develops the importance of male and female roles is *That Hideous Strength* where Mark and Jane Studdock learn that freedom comes in submission.

Kevin explained his Protestant background and then developed the ideas discussed in the Lewis essay, "Priestesses in the Church", which make sense if a priest is seen not as just an administrator or advisor but as a representative of us to God and God to us. Churches with less sacramental emphasis may see less clearly how the church plays a female role and priest a male role.

Throughout, Kevin emphasized that these teachings can be misunderstood, and should not result in bullying or misdirected authoritativeness. Good male leadership needs to be developed and taught in many churches.

(continued on page 23)