

FAIRY-LAND IS HELL
and
MAGIC IS DEMON-POWER

by
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“Hell is empty, and all the devils are here!”

Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

*Gaude, Maria Virgo, cunctas haereses
sola intereremisti in universo mundo.*

**“Rejoice, O Virgin Mary!
Alone Thou hast destroyed all heresies
throughout the world!”**

The Little Office of the BVM
Based on *Genesis 3:15*

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	v
Some Remarks on Fantasy as a Literary Genre	vii
Preface.....	xiii
Doctrinal Foundations	1
Fairies and the Four Elements.....	5
An Infinite Universe and a Plurality of Worlds: Doctrinal Considerations	7
Magic Is Demon-Power: Doctrinal Considerations	13
Demonic Transport	25
Gnosticism: Ancient and Modern	29
Summary	39
C. S. Lewis	43
Familiar Spirits	45
Dr Elwin Ransom	49
Evolution and C. S. Lewis	57
Lewis and Mythology: A Closer Look	63
Narnia: A Closer Look	73
J. R. R. Tolkien	81
Tolkien's Alternative Creation	83
Some other works	95
About the author	97

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Some Remarks on Fantasy as a Literary Genre

Any speech construct (novel, poem, essay, treatise, etc.) is, in itself, and by definition, a structure of sound and meaning, i.e., speech sounds and their meanings. As such, it presents to the reader or listener a great variety of meanings calling forth a corresponding variety of responses. Because of this complex variety of meanings, it is possible for the reader or listener to pick and choose, as it were, those meanings he likes best and even, as in the case of many, to “read into” a literary construct meanings that are not really there. This happens, for example, in those readers who see “Christian” or “Catholic” meanings in Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*. They take the meanings that are exaltations and very realistic and charming presentations of merely natural virtues and transform them into something else which necessitates the implicit introduction of the supernatural life of Divine Grace – something totally lacking in the speech itself. (Obviously, the motion picture greatly reduces and even vulgarizes the richness of literary meaning and value.)

It is an axiom of valid literary theory that “It is the structure that means” – it is not the structure that has meaning, and can thus be detached or moved about, but it is the structure itself that means. This is proven by linguistic studies of the phoneme, etc. But it is easily seen also in the total structure say, of a poem or a novel, in short, in any speech. (I went into this very important point in some detail in my analysis of Cardinal Ratzinger’s book, *In the Beginning*, which deals with the text of *Genesis*.)

In other words, the reader must strive to keep his own ideas and prejudices out of his reading of any literary work. Only when he has **first** grasped the structure of the work and its real meaning, specific and peculiar to itself, can he then go on to assess what I call **the world-view** of the work. And for the Catholic, especially today, this task is indispensable.

Structural meaning is seen very clearly in the Harry Potter books, and it is this structure that the author has used as the main vehicle for the great appeal, even fascination of these books for children, and even adults. There is the **basic juxtaposition** throughout of two families and two worlds, The Dursleys and the Weasleys, the world of the Muggles and the world of Wizardry. Add to this all the techniques of the classical mystery story, and we have structures that are fascinating in their presentation of multiple meanings all intrinsically related.

But the world view presented is one totally devoid of the most basic and indispensable realities for salvation. The same must be said of the works of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien. It is the life of Divine Grace that is missing. These books are Pelagian at best and Gnostic at worst (Magic introduces the element of Gnosticism). It was not for nothing that our Lord told us that “Without Me you can do nothing.” The books of Lewis and Tolkien then present us with values, yes, but they are merely natural virtues and values. This is no small omission or deficiency, especially these days. Parents must ask themselves if they really want their children to be immersed in a world **without** Christ, without His Mother, without the Church and Her Sacraments, for this is the world of Lewis, of Tolkien, and of many others writing in the fantasy genre. Even, yes, Winnie the Pooh!

I was fortunate enough to have been brought up when a truly Catholic fiction was being produced in the works of Caryl Houselander, Robert Hugh Benson, Enid Dinnis, Fr. Owen Francis Dudley, Fr. Francis Finn, Michael Kent, S.M.C. and many others. Dudley, especially,

presented the world of the 20th century as the milieu of his characters and one could not wish for a better example of truly Catholic fiction representing all of Reality. Outstanding examples are *Shadow on the Earth* and *Pageant of Life*. My favorite novel of all time is Enid Dinnis' *The Anchorhold* – universal values of the religious vocation and supernatural charity.

But in Lewis and Tolkien we have something **entirely different**. Tolkien has constructed a new mythology for his Creation story. It has much more to do with Gnosticism, Modernism and 19th century theories of geological catastrophism and evolutionism than with any similarity to or analogy with the divinely revealed creation story in *Genesis*. Both Lewis and Tolkien follow the majority secular view (as did Christopher Dawson) that mythology represents some kind of progressive approach upwards towards the full revelation of God in Christianity. They see myth as a kind of preparation for Revelation and for the Incarnation. But the Truth is just the opposite – if you follow Catholic sources. God gave divine Revelation and the Prophecies to Adam and to Moses. From this Primordial Revelation and Tradition (see Jaques Vaquie) men, aided and inspired by Lucifer, degraded and corrupted the Original Revelation. The mythologies are the result. (See Volume II of *From the Beginning*.)

Lewis is more fanciful than mythological. He contents himself with reviving literally the ancient Greek and Roman myths and incorporating them into the Creation of Narnia.

As I will point out in this book, Tolkien and Lewis both extol the natural virtues and in this they are totally pagan, for what is paganism but Naturalism. However, the ancient pagans had no access to Divine Revelation or the supernatural Life of Grace in our Lord and His Church. This places them in a radically different situation from today's pagans like Lewis and Tolkien and all the rest. For these latter-day-pagans base their paganism on **a deliberate rejection** of the Divine Revelation of Scripture and the Supernatural Life of Grace. They construct new worlds that do not need the God of the Gospels. They get along famously without Him. That, I contend, is apostasy, something the ancient pagans were incapable of.

Wasn't it Pope Leo XIII who said that it is much worse to have received the Faith and then to reject it than never to have had it at all? This is precisely our situation today, a situation much different from that which faced Saint Basil and the other early Fathers as they tried to deal with the pagan literature of Greeks and Romans. Today we are dealing with so-called Catholics who have received Christ and His Church but now turn to paganism for their inspiration! They **willingly** fall back into paganism and glory in it! How can this be good for our children and contribute to their eternal salvation? Will it not be, rather, a serious obstacle?

Defenders of fantasy literature appear comfortable with a separation of the physical from the moral. I find this strange and unacceptable for Catholics. God created a world, the real physical world and with it, man and his moral values. In my opinion, it is disastrous to separate these two orders of reality – just as it has been disastrous for Galileo and his followers to separate Faith from Science, Revelation from the natural sciences.

Distinctions between Fantasy and Fiction in Literature

These two are not the same in the current milieu of literary discourse. There may, however, be **realistic** fiction versus **fantasy** fiction.

Fantasy, by its very definition as violating all the canons of *verisimilitude*, would be bad. **Good fiction** respects the canons of *verisimilitude*.

A definition of *verisimilitude* from *Dictionary of World Literature*. Edited by Joseph Shipley. New revised edition. Littlefield, Adams & Co., (1953) 1968. Paperback: –

A degree of likeness to truth that induces belief that the action and characters in an imaginative work as probable or possible.

The Dictionary goes on to say:

In both ancient and modern criticism it is generally agreed that some element of actual or idealized reality contributes toward making an imitation verisimilar and credible. In discussing narrative, Cicero (*De inventione...*) defines verisimilitude as likeness to a truth that may be verified by experience, history, or common opinion. According to Plutarch (*Moralia...*) an imitation is pleasing when it is likely. Closeness to nature, comments Horace (*Ars poetica...*) is necessary in a fiction intended to please. ... etc.

There is more, but this gives an idea of *verisimilitude*, a key term. So it becomes obvious that parallel universes, other worlds, animals that talk, travel through space & time, and other such fantasies clearly overstep the boundaries of what we would normally think of as verisimilitude in literature. Thus, the name *fantasy*.

Fantasy, by its very definition as violating all the canons of verisimilitude, would be bad. **Fiction**, if it is good, respects the canons of verisimilitude.

I contend that verisimilitude – a literary canon of primary importance -- requires that the reader judge the world-view of the literary work against Reality as such, i.e., the real world that exists and whose origins are divinely revealed in the *Book of Genesis*. As believers we know that Reality includes the Truths of Faith based on Divine Revelation and the teachings of the Church of Tradition. And so, when a literary work, however pleasing otherwise, leaves out such all-important, really absolutely necessary parts of Reality, we are bound to find it woefully lacking also as a work of fiction or non-fiction that claims to represent reality in one way or another. How can we expect children to relish and enjoy a world-view without the Blessed Trinity, without Christ and His Mother, without the Church and Her Sacraments and at the same time to accept totally and with appropriate seriousness, the Total Reality that includes these Truths of Faith. I maintain that the child will prefer the fantasy to the Reality, to the great endangerment of his eternal salvation.

Fantasy, as such, is devoted to constructing an **un-real** world. Lewis and Tolkien both do this, as their works are based on an un-real world – in opposition to the real world of God's creation, the world in which we must live and struggle to save our souls.

On the other hand, **realistic fiction**, such as good Catholic novels, deals with the real world in this sense. Such novels extol the Truths of Faith to which we must conform if we are to be saved.

All **fantasy**, by its very definition as un-real, is a danger to this crucial task of saving our real souls in the real world for a real eternity after a real death of a real body with its real separation of the real soul, which is then subjected to a real personal judgment in which is affixed a real disposition of that soul for a real eternity in a real Heaven or a real Hell.

While fantasy literature constructs un-real worlds, the source of the lies that abound is very real – Lucifer and his agents. This inter-penetration of the real and the un-real is rarely, if ever, taken into account by devotees of this genre..

According to the latest edition (6th, 2000) of the *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, there are “elements of the fantastic” in the oldest examples of English literature. For example, the great epics contain elements of “fantastic” heroism – Beowulf’s feats of swimming, of overcoming Grendel beneath the sea; in the Greek epics, the interventions of the gods are “fantastic” in this sense; Pegasus is a “fantastic” horse, etc. The *Oxford Companion* says, however,

Literature of the fantastic should ... be distinguished from fantasy fiction, a genre in some respect decisively modern. ...

The editor singles out the modern genre as beginning, essentially, with books written for children – *Wizard of Oz* and *Alice in Wonderland* being the two most popular examples.

Then writers like Madelein L’Engle, Ursula LeGuin, and C. S. Lewis introduced scientific concepts like time-travel and life on other planets, etc. Some authors, also (especially Lewis) bring in the magical elements and characters from medieval romance, as with the ancestral model, *Merlin*.

The same article distinguishes **realistic fiction** from **fantasy fiction**. This is a good and necessary and very obvious distinction. **Realistic fiction** today, as in the works of the mystery story writers and people like Robin Cook and Clive Cussler (medical novel and adventure novel, respectively) is almost entirely Gnostic (an exclusion or distortion of the truths of Faith as held by the Church from the beginning) in that its heroes save the world without any help from Heaven or, for that matter, apparently, from Hell! They are all, much like the Super-Heroes of the comics, though on a more realistic level, “avatars”(incarnation of deities in human form) of Jesus Christ – Gnostic through and through.

The **fantasy fiction** writer (like the “science” fiction writer who constructs other worlds with other and alien beings) must make use of space travel or the magic “door” (in *Narnia*) and the Portkey and Platform 9¾ in Harry Potter – doors to the other world, etc. Tolkien is much more in the tradition of the ancient epic but he constructs another world – the world of the *Hobbits* – even though Middle-Earth is a concept familiar in Anglo-Saxon literature, referring simply to Earth. The term *Middle-Earth* situates our Earth, as it is, mid-way between Heaven and Hell, a very Catholic (Christian) concept. But Tolkien paganizes it by putting it into the context of his totally imaginary world. (See this writer’s “The Real Middle-Earth: Truth in Poetry and Fiction” now in preparation.)

By all these definitions and clarifications, you can see that epic and mythic literature contain elements of fantasy while maintaining a realistic context. Thus *Beowulf* was a real Danish hero but over time, due to the poetic elaborations of the Bards, his deeds became exaggerated and thereby entered those elements of the fantastic.

But fantasy literature as such, or fantasy fiction, completely abandons all “realistic” place and time, while maintaining the barest necessity for understanding in the characters and their actions. We could say, then, that it retains just enough verisimilitude to hold the reader’s interest, all other things considered.

The concept of verisimilitude has thus been extended here by the present writer to refer to and thus include all of the really Real – reality, as such, which of necessity begins and ends with God and Truths of Faith revealed by Him “Who canst neither deceive nor be deceived.” As Catholics we must make this extension. Otherwise, we are accepting as real what is a false view of the world and of reality – a view most pleasing to Satan, who hates the reality of God’s creation.

Any world view or presentation of the real, purporting to be real, that at the same time is atheistic, agnostic or gnostic, either implicitly or explicitly, must be rejected as bad by the Catholic. The reasons are obvious. We reject error and heresy.

Why, then, would we accept it in fiction – realistic fiction or fantasy fiction? Especially should the mind of the child be protected from this influence. Let them be steeped in the lives of the Saints – as children were in medieval times – and in the scenes from the Life of Christ and His Mother, as in the Rosary and the Gospels.

Historical fiction is also good. This was the specialty of Enid Dinnis in *The Anchorhold* and *Bess of Cobb’s Hall*. Another positive example can be found in the novels of Canon Sheehan, an Irish priest who wrote long novels about Catholic life in Ireland.

Recently discovered by this writer, are two essays entitled “Bad Books”. One is by Redemptorist Fr. Michael Mueller in his book entitled *The Sinner’s Return to God: The Prodigal Son* (1897, reprinted by TAN). The other is an essay by Canon Sheehan, the Irish priest-novelist, that appears in *From the Housetops* (1994, Vol. 24, No. 3, Serial No. 53). Both of these essays are very forceful in their warnings of the effect that literature has on the mind, especially of the young. Here’s an excerpt from Canon Sheehan:

It will always remain an open question whether the invention of printing was a boon or a curse to mankind. Up to the present moment, however, it may be safely averred that its evil effects have more than neutralized its good effects.

The France of today is infidel. What has made it so? Bad literature. You may pass from end to end of France, and you will not find a single book in a single bookstore that you can touch without fear of committing mortal sin.

And he was writing in the late 1800s or early 1900s! What would he say now – of the movies, of television and of the Internet?

Both of these essays are by authorities in support of the view that the fantasy literature of Tolkien and Lewis should be avoided. A point worth noticing, however, is that Lewis and Tolkien are careful not to offend in the areas of sexual morality. Their influence is in the area of doctrinal heresy. This could be one reason why they have become so popular with Catholics today – for Catholics today are notoriously and scandalously ignorant of the truths of their Faith. They will quickly condemn adultery and fornication and abortion but embrace, wholeheartedly, a Gnostic and/or heretical world-view!

Authors today, like Rowlings & others writing in this genre of magical-fantasy, really do not

believe in Lucifer-Satan-Devil but rather, attribute all such magical powers that come from Satan as really coming from some source described in the sciences (cf. Madeleine L'Engle's books) or in nature itself, as in Lewis. In this way, Lucifer disguises himself under forms of good, as the created nature, etc.

Then there is much animism, which is much the same thing – that these occult powers attributed to “magic” are inherent in the natural world and in man himself.

Because of this kind of mixing of truth and fantasy – Satan's real powers and the fantasies of science (time travel, other worlds, etc) – the entire genre of fantasy is extremely dangerous to Faith, and even to sanity.

The works of Tolkien, Lewis & Rowling are mild by comparison with those of Philip Pullman's trilogy, *His Dark Materials*, in which he directly attacks the Church and Her entire system of dogma.

In defense of good Catholic literature as written in the past and as possible today and in the future, it should be insisted that our Lord's parables give us the model to be followed. Good Catholic fiction does this.

Two good examples of truly Catholic fiction being written today are *The Glory of the Olive* and *Burning Faith*, both by Susan Claire Potts (obtainable from Avila Books, 1575 W Big Beaver Rd, Troy MI 48084). Also worth mentioning is *A Danger to the State* by Philip Trower (1998, Ignatius Press), an historical novel about the suppression of the Jesuits in the 18th century.

Paula Haigh

Preface

“... I know of no other modern fantasy that contains so much of a complete demonology as the Harry Potter books...” [by Paula Haigh in this book, p. 38]

For a number of years now we have been witnessing an increase in fantasy literature, concomitant with a rise in public interest. With the release of the Harry Potter books and movie portrayals of such as the works of Tolkien [*Lord of the Rings*], 2001 could be a record-breaking year for public financial support of this insidious and ever so subtle mockery of God's Creation, Original Sin, the Fall, the Son of God made Man, the Redemption, the Saints and miracles.

Since the Potter books are currently the most popular works in this fantasy literature category, and since Miss Haigh's attention is mostly given over to a theological analysis of this overall literature category – with little that is specifically directed at the Potter books – I will attempt to single them out in these brief remarks.

Author of *Harry Potter*, J. K. Rowling, has publicly stated she intended for her books to be read by children approximately 10 years of age and up. There can be no question, however, that they are wildly popular among children under 10. I urge the reader to persevere in reading Haigh's analysis which clearly demonstrates that the entire category of fantasy literature is not only dangerous to the spiritual welfare of children, but also to people of all ages.

Imagination is good in such as a mechanical engineer, as an aid to design. But the rest of us generally abuse it around the clock. It would be fine to use it if you were reading the life of a saint or about some episode of Church history, but it's not for enhancing a profane story – certainly not for embellishing falsities about God Almighty & His Creation of all things. We know that those untruths emanate from Satan whose hatred of God is unimaginable to the human intellect.

Miss Haigh emphasizes Catholic doctrine *vis a vis* the general pattern in the literature and singles out the two most popular writers of fantasy among Catholics – Lewis and Tolkien. Though the Protestant author of the Potter books is not given that same attention, Rowling's work is most certainly taken to task in this extraordinary book. In light of global society's current inundation with so powerfully attractive an evil, we desperately need to know how the Potter fantasies are a mockery of inerrant and Sacred Scripture.

Throughout the Potter books there is parallel after parallel of Satanism. Examples: the Unicorn [symbol of Anti-Christ]; blood drinking

[prohibited by Scripture]; occult beliefs about death and reincarnation; beliefs that there is no absolute right or wrong and that the end justifies the means; belief that there are “good” witches; enticement to achieve eternal life through the occult power of alchemy; and, the stages one must complete to become proficient in exercising unnatural power.

Unnatural power can be only of God or of Satan. I wonder how many of the Potter readers who purport to be Christian are even aware of these parallels which constitute an open invitation to Hell. OK for adults?

Indeed, “stages” to which I’ve just referred constitute a process called “the five stages in the transmutation of the soul.” Child or adult, beware, if you are concerned about your eternal salvation. Toying with Satan is deadly business. His high angelic intellect, retained even after his fall from Heaven, is far superior to any human intellect. OK for adults?

I write with those readers in mind who are not familiar with the various fantasy characters and terms used by Rowling. However, I will make reference here to her having made the creator of the “Sorcerer’s Stone” 666 years old. Please refer to *Apoc. 13:18* in which St. John tells us, as part of the inerrant Word of God, that 666 is the numerical “mark of the beast” [of Anti-Christ]. OK for adults?

I pray that the reader has not indulged in reading such material. Those who haven’t may count that as a special blessing. Americans are currently going wild over Harry, mostly children who don’t know any better, but also adults [and even clergy] who should know better. Until now, this kind of “entertainment” would never have been condoned by practicing Catholics, let alone offered to children.

Please, dear reader, avoid like the plague all fantasy literature, including [and especially] the Harry Potter books. The soul you save may be your own and-or that of your children and grandchildren. Don’t patronize Satan’s commerce.

May God bless, guide and protect you from the snares of the Devil, as he continues to seek the ruin of souls.

Jerome Sladeki
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