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Middle Earth, Narnia, Hogwarts, and Animals: A Review of the Treatment of Nonhuman Animals and Other Sentient Beings in Christian-Based Fantasy Fiction

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Abstract
The way that nonhuman animals and other nonhuman sentient beings are portrayed in the Christian-based *Harry Potter* series, C. S. Lewis's Narnia series, and Tolkien's Middle Earth stories is discussed from a Christian animal liberationist perspective.
Middle Earth comes closest to a liberationist ideal, in that vegetarianism is connected with themes of power, healing, and spirituality. Narnia could be described as a more enlightened welfarist society where extremes of animal cruelty are frowned upon, but use of animals for food is acceptable. In contrast, the more recent *Harry Potter* series portrays a less enlightened attitude toward human and nonhuman animals. Animals are treated merely as ends, vegetarianism is unheard of, and the view that even iconic species have intrinsic worth is ridiculed.

Keywords
C. S. Lewis, fantasy, Harry Potter, Hogwarts, Middle Earth, Narnia, Tolkien, vegetarianism

Introduction

As the influence of the *Harry Potter* novels on popular culture spreads, the series has drawn no shortage of condemnation from scholars and educators, critical of the way the books portray societal norms and Christian values, their sexual stereotyping, and their conservative and derivative descriptions of boarding school life (Dickerson & O'Hara, 2006; Griesinger, 2002; Holden, 2000). Notably lacking has been any critique of the way nonhuman animals and other nonhuman sentient beings are portrayed in the worlds of *Harry Potter*, Narnia, and Middle Earth.[1] Since nonhuman beings make up a substantial part of the fantasy genre in general and these three series in particular, the aim of this essay is to explore and compare attitudes toward animals in these three popular fantasy series.

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Tolkien and Lewis were both practicing Christians, and a Christian worldview pervades their works. According to a recent interview, Rowling is also a Christian, and, while Christian imagery is not obvious in the earlier *Harry Potter* books, it is more evident in *Deathly Hallows*, published in 2007.[2] For this reason, and because of the importance of the church in shaping social values (Scully, 2002), I will be drawing on a Christian view of animal liberation and discussing ways in which the three fantasy series attain or fall short of the Christian liberationist ideal.

Christian and Secular Animal Liberationism

For the purpose of this critique, I have defined animal liberationism as the view that the lives of animals require serious moral consideration and have intrinsic value, independent of their use by humans. From this viewpoint, animals have an interest not only in being free from pain and distress but in being allowed to live out their natural lives to the fullest.

Secular animal liberationists tend toward the view that differences between humans and animals in terms of cognitive ability are of degree rather than kind and that for this reason we should not make moral distinctions between the needs of human and nonhuman animals (e.g., Singer, 1990; Wise, 2000). These advocates tend to have egalitarian—even anarchist—tendencies and to distrust hierarchy (Taylor, 2005; Potts & White, 2007). Christian or more conservative animal liberationists, however, consider that humans are a morally or spiritually superior species, but that with that superiority goes responsibility, stewardship, *noblesse oblige*, and an obligation to care for those weaker than ourselves (e.g., Linzey, 1990, Webb, 1998; Scully, 2002; Morris, 2007). Such liberationists are more likely to be politically conservative and accept a hierarchical political structure (e.g., Scully, 2002).

Christian liberationists differ in their views on animal "rights." Linzey (1990) insists that animals have rights, though in contrast to many secular liberationists (e.g., Regan, 1983, Wright, 1993), he considers that such rights cannot be claimed by the animals themselves but are given to them by God. Scully (2002) is demonstrably uncomfortable with—even at times hostile to—the idea of "rights," seeing the issue as one of the human obligation to show mercy. His view, however, is similar to Linzey's in that he believes the powerful should not forget that the source of their authority is God. Both authors consider God the origin of all ethical obligations not to treat animals as commodities.

While Christian and secular animal liberationists may hold different metaphysical beliefs, at a practical level, there is little difference in the way they

believe animals should be treated. Christian liberationists such as Scully (2002) and Linzey (1994, 1998) are as strongly critical of practices such as vivisection, hunting, and flesh-eating as their secular counterparts. Christian and secular liberationists consider that animals should be regarded as beings in their own right and not simply instruments for human use.

Attitudes and Practices Toward Animals in the Modern Western World

Animal liberationism can be contrasted with welfarism. Welfarists often work with the agricultural or pharmaceutical industries. They have no ethical objections to using animals for food, experiments, or other nonvital purposes, and their moral concern is generally restricted to ensuring that animals do not suffer physically or psychologically. Typically, welfarists consider that the painless death of nonhuman animals is not something with which humans need to concern themselves (e.g., Webster, 1994), whereas death and other nonpainful deprivation is a real moral concern to liberationists (Regan, 1983).

While prevailing attitudes in the West are still strongly welfarist, there are signs that, at least for some animals, the public is starting to appreciate that their lives have some intrinsic value and is therefore moving toward a liberationist position. Frank (2007) describes how fewer companion animals are being euthanized, showing that an appreciation of the intrinsic value of companion animals is growing.

Iconic or endangered species generally enjoy special status in the modern world. Linzey (1994) documents examples of cases in which individual wild animals have been given protection in the United Kingdom. The rights of bats to a suitable living habitat even override human inconvenience under British law. The Japanese whaling debate has also highlighted public concern for one group of sentient animals. The restriction of concern to endangered or iconic species is a double standard, however, with little sympathy being offered for the suffering of farmed and laboratory animals. It is also debatable whether changing attitudes have led to any real, concrete improvements for animals, given the continuing increase in factory farming (Frank, 2007). Nonetheless, a double standard is better than no standard at all and represents some progress in a societal shift toward an animal liberationist position.

This shift may be impeded or encouraged by popular literature, such as the *Harry Potter* series and other fantasy stories popular with children. This is not to say that works of literature should simply be regarded as a form of advocacy, or that the opinions of characters in books necessarily reflect either the opinion of the author or the view the author wants to espouse. In the case of fantasy literature, however, the theme is very much that of good versus evil, so

the characters set up as heroes act as role models more than characters in other genres, and the authors have more responsibility to ensure that these role models are positive.

Animal use in the World of *Harry Potter*

The world of *Harry Potter* is full of sentient creatures, both magical and mundane. For an animal liberationist, it is sentience that gives creatures moral status, regardless of whether they are "animals" in the zoological sense. Dragons, gnomes, doxies, mandrake plants, and the reptilian blast-ended screwts have a rudimentary intelligence and culture, and in that way are no different from the mundane rats, cats, and fur animals that are featured in the novels. The presence or absence of magical ability has no relevance to the moral worth of such creatures.[3]

Sentient creatures are routinely used for sport and entertainment in the magical world of *Harry Potter*, in contrast to the practices among the non-magical Muggles. The credits to the Warner Brothers film *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* state that no animals were harmed in the film's making, reflecting modern audiences' concerns about animals in films. Though the credits then proclaim that no dragons were harmed in the making of the film, the dragons in the story are not so lucky. Three dragons are used in the famous tri-Wizard tournament at Hogwarts, where the aspiring champion is set the task of robbing a golden egg from a dragon. In order to do this, one of the contestants hits the dragon with a conjunctivitis curse that causes her to "trample round in agony" and destroy her own eggs (*Goblet of Fire*, ch. 20). This is a clear use of magic to inflict cruelty on another life form for personal pleasure.

Another "sport" in which Harry's friend Ron likes to engage is swinging gnomes around his head and letting them go, as a means of evicting them from their homes (*Chamber of Secrets*, ch. 3). Harry's reluctance to participate in this dubious activity is overcome by Ron's assurances that it "doesn't hurt them," echoing the standard excuse for animal cruelty in the "Muggle" (non-magical) world. Gnomes biting humans, for example, are fair game for being hit with paralysis spells, humiliated, and put on top of the Christmas tree: "Stupefied, painted gold, stuffed into a miniature tutu and with small wings glued to its back, it glowered down at them all" (*Half-Blood Prince*, ch. 16). This reflects the attitude that other sentient beings exist merely for their entertainment value. Gnomes are also kicked for no other reason than to relieve feelings (*Deathly Hallows*, ch. 6).

Rowling impresses upon readers the serious nature of using what she describes as the "unforgivable" curses on a human being, but her characters have no scruples about performing them on animals to make an educational point. The entire class watches one teacher demonstrate the *Cruciatus* (torture) curse on an enlarged spider. Harry's friend Hermione only stops the experiment because of her concern for a boy in the class, not because of the pain being caused to the spider (*Goblet of Fire*, ch. 14).

Arguments about whether spiders really are sentient are irrelevant, since the very purpose of a *Cruciatus* curse is to cause pain, and it was evident, from the point of view of the author, that the spider could feel pain.

In Hogwarts, there is no mention of any ethical oversight on the uses of animals in education. Nor is there any mention of ways by which the numbers of animals or the severity of their suffering can be reduced. The "Three Rs" of Reduce, Refine, and Replace (Russell & Burch, 1959), to which educational institutions in modern Britain are encouraged at least to pay lip service, do not seem to have reached Hogwarts. Similarly, there is little or no limitation on the use of animals in magical research and testing. A list of typical potion ingredients includes products such as dragon's blood (*Goblet of Fire*, ch. 13; *Half-Blood Prince*, ch. 4), rat spleens (*Prisoner of Azkeban*, ch. 7) and rat brains (*Goblet of Fire*, ch. 19). Dumbledore is a wise father figure that readers are persuaded to look up to, and one indication of his brilliance is his discovery of the 12 uses of dragon blood (*Deathly Hallows*, ch. 2).

Dickerson and O'Hara (2006) describe as "occult" practices the enslavement of house elves and humans by Voldemort and his followers, and the use of enslaved *dementors* by the frightened and misguided Minister for Magic. The authors then contrast this occult magic with the more positive way magic is used by Dumbledore, Harry, and his friends. It should be apparent, however, that dominating or enslaving animals to use their parts for ingredients could equally be described as an "occult" form of magic using the Dickerson and O'Hara (2006) definition above.

The use of animal parts to produce magical effects can be compared with vivisection in our own world. Christian author Andrew Linzey (1994) strongly denounces vivisection, describing it as an "un-Godly sacrifice" and as "idolatry." Unlike many antivivisectionists, he believes that humans can make advances in knowledge through vivisection. He is quick to point out, however, that the issue is not whether humans can gain from certain forms of animal exploitation, but whether they are "ill-gotten" gains. Such a concept, with the vivisector as someone coaxing information through ethically questionable practices, comes close to the literal meaning of the occult as "hidden knowledge."

While endangered or iconic animals often have special status in modern society, there is little evidence for this in Hogwarts. In this regard, dragons in the world of *Harry Potter* would closely correspond to whales, pandas, or endangered bats in ours. Hagrid is the only character, however, with a more liberationist view toward dragons and other more unusual or interesting animals. His concern over the welfare of Norbert, the baby dragon (*Philosopher's Stone*, ch. 14), is quite touching. Nevertheless, this appreciation of creatures for their own sake is ridiculed by the three main characters—Harry, Ron, and Hermione—who are unable to see beyond a strictly anthropocentric view of these creatures. Hermione even goes so far as to suggest that Hagrid's blast-ended screwts should be "stamped on" because they are of no use to humans (*Goblet of Fire*, ch. 13). A few remarks about conservation are made in the introduction to *Fantastic Beasts*, a humorous book J. K. Rowling wrote for charity. The same book, however, also states that the primary purpose of magical beasts is to "ensure that future generations of witches and wizards enjoy their strange beauty and powers."

Fur and skins from magical and mundane animals are a common sight among wizards. Even dragon-loving Hagrid has no scruples about using dragon-hide skins (*Goblet of Fire*, ch. 18), and he appears one winter in a moleskin coat, rabbit fur gloves, and beaverskin boots (*Philosopher's Stone*, ch. 13). The materialistic Weasley twins also show off their "finest dragon skin" jackets as a status symbol (*Order of the Phoenix*, ch. 23). The role of conservation is limited in the world of J. K. Rowling and reflects the attitude that other life forms do not have any intrinsic value to the society portrayed in the novels.

Vegetarianism and semi-vegetarianism have grown in Britain in recent years, particularly among the young. This has been prompted by both health and animal welfare concerns (Gregory, 1997). One would therefore expect that a significant number of the approximately 300 teen and preteen students at Hogwarts would request greater freedom to choose what they eat rather than having it served up to them. But the dietary changes in the Muggle world seem to have passed Hogwarts by. The Hogwarts feasts are described in great detail, and all the food is heavy in saturated fats, sugar, and animal products. The visiting French student Fleur Delacour is the only character to protest at the "'eavy" Hogwarts food, and she is made a figure of fun for doing so (*Goblet of Fire*, ch. 23). J. K. Rowling has created an overly simplistic world, morally and ethically, in which beasts both magical and mundane have very limited intrinsic value and are enslaved and reduced to sources of food, entertainment, and exploitation for potion ingredients.

Animal Use in Narnia

C. S. Lewis's world is certainly not a vegetarian Mecca; in fact, vegetarianism as a movement is put down the only time it is mentioned (*Dawn Treader*, ch. 1). The descriptions of the feasts at the Narnian court of Cair Paravel (*Silver Chair*, ch. 3) and that provided by Aslan (*Prince Caspian*, ch. 15) also rival those of Hogwarts for artery-hardening potential. In other ways, however, Lewis shows a more enlightened view toward animal use than Rowling in both his children's books and his adult fiction. Lewis has long been known for his dislike of vivisection (1947). This is shown in the way his child hero, Diggory, is revolted by the experiments his uncle Andrew performs on guinea pigs to understand more about his magic rings (*Magician's Nephew*, ch. 2).

A respectful attitude to animals is also demonstrated in other ways in the Narnia series. For example, Lewis expertly characterizes the cruel nature of Calormene royalty when they discuss hanging idle slaves and sending worn-out horses to the knackers in the same casual manner (*Horse and His Boy*, ch. 8). The Christ-like Aslan, appearing in cat form, scratches a boy for throwing stones at a stray cat (*Horse and His Boy*, ch. 6). When Narnia is created, Aslan makes talking and non-talking animals, and the non-talking animals are no different from those in our world. Aslan tells the talking beasts that the animals are theirs to use, but they must be treated "kindly and fairly" (*Magician's Nephew*, ch. 11).

Lewis's adult fiction makes it clear that cruelty to animals is not a mere peccadillo but is literally Satanic. The subject of Lewis's adult novel *Perelandra* is a new Eden on the planet Venus, together with a new incarnation of Satan. Lewis's Satan delights in gratuitous mutilation of animals, and this is the chief indication of his evil. Similarly, Lewis characterizes vivisection as one of the more undesirable activities of the demonically controlled and despotic National Institute for Coordinated Experiments, with the ironic acronym NICE (*Hideous Strength*). Vivisection is again seen as a kind of forbidden "occult" knowledge.

When one contrasts the world of Narnia and Lewis in general with that of *Harry Potter*, one finds an obvious difference in the portrayal of the inherent value of animals (other than for food).

Animal use in Middle Earth

In Middle Earth, kindness to animals is also seen as a virtue and cruelty to animals is a defect of character. Sam's affection for his pony Bill can be contrasted with the neglect of the same beast by his previous owner, a half-Orc spy of the Enemy (*Fellowship of the Ring*, ch. 11). Like Narnia, Middle Earth is not

a vegetarian realm. Hobbits eat pork and chicken (*Hobbit*, ch. 1 ; *Fellowship of the Ring*, ch. 4; *Two Towers*, ch. 9), Faramir's men provide rations to Frodo and Sam that include dried flesh (*Two Towers*, ch. 16), and the worldly wood elves hold feasts in Mirkwood that include roasted flesh (*Hobbit*, ch. 8). Flesh is consumed by mortals and worldly wood elves in Middle Earth, but the portrayal of ethical issues around the treatment and use of sentient beings is significantly different from that in the worlds created by Rowling and Lewis.

The more mystical and immortal holy Noldor elves appear to be vegetarian, as there is no mention of flesh in any of the descriptions of the feasts provided by the Rivendell or Lothlorian elves (*Fellowship of the Ring*, ch. 3, pp. 18-20*).* In Tolkien's mythology, it was the Noldor who heeded the call of the gods to leave Middle Earth, whereas the flesh-eating wood elves are also known as the "unwilling" (*Children of Hurin*). The Noldor of Rivendell and Lothlorian therefore represent a higher spiritual calling. The elven iron rations provided to members of the "Fellowship" by the Lady Galadriel of Lothlorian are totally vegan, and Tolkien's narrator explains how they are at their most potent when they are not combined with any other food (*Return of the King*, ch. 13).

Further, the immortal Tom Bombadil was conceived by Tolkien as a "spirit of the place," a powerful Nature spirit over whom even the Ring has no control (Shippey, 2000). Bombadil can be compared to Beorn, another powerful, gruff, yet essentially benevolent being in Middle Earth. The immortal and environmentalist Ents of Fangorn forest provided vegetarian "Ent drafts" to the hobbits, which certainly had strengthening properties (*Return of the King*, ch. 4). All these immortal or powerful beings provided only vegetarian fare to travelers in need (*Hobbit*, ch. 7; *Fellowship of the Ring*, ch. 7). The association of vegetarianism with immortality, closeness to Nature, and strength and spirituality appears to be a strong theme in the world of Middle Earth.

The healing infusions of the elves, as well as their food, are totally plant based. This is in contrast to the potions in the *Harry Potter* series. Characters wounded by the Ring wraiths are cured with herbs, and these need to contain particularly powerful magic to counter the evil of the wraiths (*Fellowship of the Ring*, ch. 12; *Return of the King*, ch. 8). Vegetarianism and plant-based products seem to be portrayed as empowering for mortals. This can be compared with the way poisons are neutralized at Hogwarts by using a product that required the death of an animal (*Half-Blood Prince*, ch. 18).

Talking Beasts, Ents, and *Hnau*

Like most fantasy fiction, Narnia, Middle Earth, and Harry Potter's world all contain nonhuman creatures with humanlike abilities in rational thinking,

cultural complexity, and emotional range. The major premise of both Christian and secular animal liberationist philosophy is that it is advanced cognitive abilities that qualify animals as subjects of moral concern (e.g., Regan, 1983; Linzey, 1994; Scully, 2002).

Consequently, the way that these more complex creatures are treated provides some insight into how other nonhuman creatures are viewed by the three authors. For Aslan, and for his subjects in Narnia, the talking beasts have the same rights for moral consideration as humans, as do fauns, dryads, and other nonhuman but humanlike magical beings. Lewis carries this theme into his adult fiction, and his *Out of the Silent Planet* has three humanlike species (called *hnau* in the local language) on the planet Mars, to show that they are objects of moral concern.

Non-talking animals in Narnia are not *hnau*, but this is likely because Lewis underestimates their cognitive ability, describing them in one case as "bundles of impulses" (1960, ch. 3) and calling their consciousness "rudimentary" (1940, ch. 9). He does nevertheless remain open to the idea that at least some nonhuman animals can go to heaven (1940, ch. 9), so in some ways it is surprising that the non-talking animals do not share in the afterlife with Aslan's talking beasts when Narnia is destroyed (*Last Battle*, ch.14). Bassham (2005) considers that doing so would have raised too many "issues" for readers at the time the books were written.

Although non-talking animals are not *hnau*, they can be promoted to *hnau* status for showing the humanlike capability for love. It is non-talking mice who gnaw away Aslan's bonds, and they are rewarded by becoming talking beasts (*Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, ch. 15; *Prince Caspian*, ch. 15). Chained and oppressed farm animals are freed by Aslan and join his joyful romp together with downtrodden humans (*Prince Caspian*, ch. 14). The gulf between mundane and talking beast in Narnia is therefore not as great as first impressions would suggest.

Lewis explores the same theme in his more serious philosophical work *The Problem of Pain* (1940), where immortality is granted to domesticated (and therefore somewhat humanized) animals, but not to wild ones. In Lewis's adult fiction, animals partake in romantic joyful interludes when the evil NICE has been defeated (*Hideous Strength*). The liberation of animals, together with humans, after evil is defeated finds an echo in the animal liberation theology of Linzey (1994), who argues that Christ's defeat of the Enemy liberates human and nonhuman alike.

Like Hogwarts and Narnia, Middle Earth is inhabited by talking beasts, as well as long-lived humanlike races such as dwarves and hobbits, immortal high elves, and intelligent immortal trees (ents). Like humans, these all have good and evil aspects, and they are shown respect as members of the moral

community. They can be compared with the "beings" in Harry Potter's world (as classified by Rowling in *Fantastic Beasts*), which include centaurs, merpeople, goblins, mandrakes, giants, and house-elves. Here the nonhuman rational creatures are treated in a more shabby fashion than they are in Narnia and Middle Earth, even by the characters Rowling has set up as the heroes.

Not only are house elves slaves, but the nature of their slavery is such that they are totally incapable of rebellion, even in thought. This transformation of a sentient being into a machine for human use has parallels in the way animals are not only enslaved but totally manipulated and commodified through genetic modification and patenting. Linzey (1996) sees this as a particularly insidious evil.

Although Hermione campaigns to give house elves the same rights as wizards, she is met with indifference or even ridicule from her friends Ron and Harry (*Goblet of Fire*, ch. 12, p. 21). By sarcastically referring to Hermione's attempts to provide decent working conditions for elves as the "House-elf Liberation Front," Ron is denigrating not only Hermione's crusade, but the Animal Liberation Front, to which he compares it.

The main characters are disgusted at the way the evil Voldemort tests a poison on an elf (*Deathly Hallows*, ch. 10). Harry's only reaction when one of his teachers uses the same trick to test his drinks, however, is relief that Hermione does not know (*Half-Blood Prince*, ch. 22). Ron and Harry have a change of heart toward house elves in the final book, finally realizing that the way even their mentors have treated elves has been unacceptable (*Deathly Hallows*, ch. 10, p. 31).

The mandrakes described in the *Chamber of Secrets* (ch. 13), although classified as plants, have sufficient cognitive complexity to enjoy such pastimes as having "raucous parties" and "getting into each other's pots" in a parody of stereotypical teenage behavior. The mandrakes are treated even worse than house elves, however, and there is not a murmur of protest at their plight. Their advanced consciousness and their only—too-human sexual foibles cannot save them from being chopped up, stewed, and made into a restorative potion.

Christian Themes and Political Structures in Fantasy Worlds

Middle Earth and Narnia are organized into hierarchical political structures, which is in keeping with the Christian theme of the sovereignty of God, divinely appointed authority, and humans as stewards. It is also clear, however, that the authority of the king is balanced by his duties of care and *noblesse oblige* with regard to those less fortunate. In both realms, the deity steps in to

overthrow tyrants or keep the good kings in line, when it looks as if evil is about to win the battle. King Caspian's weakness and fit of pique is corrected sternly by Aslan and by his own subjects (*Dawn Treader*, ch. 16). Aslan intervenes in overthrowing the White Witch (*Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, ch. 11), saving king Rilian from his own madness (*Silver Chair*, ch. 2) and dethroning the tyrant Miraz (*Prince Caspian*, ch. 10).

Similarly, in Middle Earth the wizard Gandalf is given extra powers by the forces of good to overthrow the usurper Saruman (*Two Towers*, ch. 5) and the godlike Valor finally intervenes to curb Morgoth's reign of destruction (*Children of Hurin*). Much later, the descendants of this era shape Middle Earth (*The Silmarillion*). Although deities at times interfere in the affairs of sentient beings, they do not override free will; the heroes always have the option to reject divine counsel.

The political systems of Middle Earth and Narnia could offend the sensibilities of many modern animal rights activists who tend toward the belief that animals are no different in kind from humans, and who vigorously reject the Great Chain of Being (Taylor, 2005; Potts & White, 2007). They are in keeping, however, with the ethic of *noblesse oblige* and mercy as advocated by Christian liberationists such as Linzey (1994) or Scully (2002). The worlds of Middle Earth and Narnia present a positive worldview for Christians or conservatives who have not yet come to any firm conclusions on animal liberation issues.

In contrast, the political system of the *Harry Potter* series is one of naked power. The despotic Minister for Magic is neither elected nor divinely appointed, and he presides over a corrections system that is medieval in its brutality. The Minister has the power to imprison without trial (*Chamber of Secrets*, ch. 14; *Half-Blood Prince*), and the Azkeban prison keeps inmates in line through a hideous system of psychological torture that "sucks the happiness" out of them (*Prisoner of Azkeban*, ch. 6 and ch. 11). To make it worse, such torture is exacted through the total domination of other beings, through practices described as "occult" by Dickerson and O'Hara (2006) and condemned as particularly malevolent by Linzey (1996).

The forces of law and order in the magical world are represented by the Aurors, the government-appointed enforcement agency that fights the Dark Arts. Rowling's hero has a high regard for the Aurors and an ambition to become one (*Order of the Phoenix*, ch. 29).[4] But none of the Aurors make the slightest protest over the government corrections department. One of the Aurors who is most prominent in the fight against evil in fact declares that Voldemort's Death Eaters are all "filth" who deserve everything they get in prison (*Goblet of Fire*, ch. 30). Dumbledore has sufficient insight into his own character to know that he could not be trusted with power (*Deathly Hallows*).

It is a pity that his insight did not extend to a realization that, without checks and balances, nobody else could be trusted with it, either.

Conclusion

Rowling, Lewis, and Tolkien have all produced fantasy writing that deals with themes of courage, sacrifice, redemption, and the battle between good and evil. Lewis's work is steeped in Christianity, and the world of Middle Earth contains a great deal of Christian material. Rowling's work is less overtly Christian and therefore possibly reflects a more secular modern age. All three series, however, contain Christian overtones and have been praised by Christians as suitable reading material (e.g., Greisinger, 2002; Dickerson & O'Hara, 2006). In Narnia and Middle Earth, the Christian themes and the struggle between good and evil can clearly be seen as part of the world the authors created. The heroes of Middle Earth and Narnia are by no means perfect, but they live out their ethics in showing respect to all sentient beings. This is especially evident in Middle Earth, where Tolkien has created a whole world and a history of languages, cultures, races, and traditions descended from the gods. Narnia lacks cultural origins when compared to Middle Earth, but it did come from the mind of a trained medievalist steeped in knowledge of the best and worst of Christian and pagan mythology and culture. Tolkien's world, in particular, is ahead of its time—and even the present time—as far as respectful treatment of animals is concerned. It is not a thoroughgoing liberationist world, but in portraying vegetarianism as the highest ideal of the Noldor, it goes further in its liberationism than the current Western worldview. The author of the Narnia series advocates an enlightened welfarist position, an opposition to vivisection, and a violent rejection of gratuitous cruelty, even if some aspects of Narnian society (such as the acceptance of flesh-eating) fall short of the liberationist ideal.

In contrast, the overly simplistic themes in *Harry Potter* appear to be tacked on to a group of characters who are not merely unable to shake off the prejudices of their age; they appear to belong to an earlier era when animals and some human members of society were not so well respected. The world of the *Harry Potter* series does not even attain the inconsistent position that Western society holds toward iconic or endangered species, or the Western tendency toward eating less flesh. Other critics have pointed out the traditional conservative nature of Hogwarts in the portrayal of other aspects of society (Holden, 2000; Griesinger, 2002). This conservatism extends to its treatment of nonhuman sentient beings, so its value as a standard for Christian values as described by some Christian critics (Greisinger, 2003; Dickerson & O'Hara, 2006) is questionable.

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Notes

1. Fans and critics of Lewis (1939, 1950-56), Tolkien (1937 et seq.) and Rowling (1997 et seq.) will be more familiar with the titles of their works than the year of publication. For this reason, references to works of fiction by these authors will be given by title. The first published version of each work is cited in the references section. Because these fiction works exist in so many different versions and translations, reference will be made to chapter rather than page number.

2. See 2007 *Time* magazine interview with J. K. Rowling, accessed May, 2009, from http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/personoftheyear/article/0,28804,1690753_1695388_1695436,00.html.

3. The classification of magical sentient creatures into "beasts" and "beings" is actually discussed at great length in Rowling's *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them.*

4. In a live Web chat, author J. K. Rowling tells fans that Harry succeeded in his ambition, ending up as head of the Auror department. Hundreds of references to Harry's adult career can be found by typing "Rowling Answers Fans' Final Questions" into Google.

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