Lewis's public life was an unusually full one. He was a popular lecturer and a sought-after but demanding tutor. Nor did he confine his lecturing to the lecture hall. During the Second World War he visited numerous Royal Air Force bases, lecturing on religion. He also gave a series of religious lectures on the BBC in the 1940s. And all this time he was writing assiduously on numerous subjects and in various literary genres. He wrote works of literary scholarship, works in defense of his Christian beliefs, and works of fiction. He made a considerable impact in all three areas, but he is, and rightfully so, best known for his literary fantasies, in particular for his Outer Space Trilogy and the seven Chronicles of Narnia. The trilogy consists of *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), *Perelandra* (1943), and *That Hideous Strength* (1945). The Chronicles appeared in rapid succession in the early and mid-fifties: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), *Prince Caspain* (1951), *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"* (1952), *The Silver Chair* (1953), *The Horse and His Boy* (1954), *The Magician's Nephew* (1955), and *The Last Battle* (1956). On the basis of these ten books, Lewis ranks with Tolkien as one of the most important fantasists of the twentieth century.

In the few pages of his essay "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to Be Said," Lewis reflects on his reasons for choosing the fairy tale as a "Form," or "the Fantastical or Mythical" as "a Mode" in his fiction. The essay relates particularly to his *Chronicles of Narnia*, which he considers fairy tales. To a lesser degree it also sheds light on his myth-based Outer Space novels (Lewis gave *That Hideous Strength* the subtitle, *A Modern Fairy-Tale for Grown-Ups*). In this sprightly, personal essay, the author discusses the relationship between fairy tales and children. More importantly, he differentiates between genuine children's literature, which can be enjoyed by everyone, and what most adults patronizingly refer to as children's literature, which is most often enjoyed by no one. "Sometimes," one of Lewis's shorter essays, is probably his most succinct state-

ment about a subject that preoccupied him especially in his later years: the fairy tale form of his fiction and the relationship of that form to his audience.

Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to Be Said

C. S. Lewis

In the sixteenth century when everyone was saying that poets (by which they meant all imaginative writers) ought 'to please and instruct', Tasso made a valuable distinction. He said that the poet, as poet, was concerned solely with pleasing. But then every poet was also a man and a citizen; in that capacity he ought to, and would wish to, make his work edifying as well as pleasing.

Now I do not want to stick very close to the renaissance ideas of 'pleasing' and 'instructing'. Before I could accept either term it might need so much redefining that what was left of it at the end would not be worth retaining. All I want to use is the distinction between the author as author and the author as man, citizen, or Christian. What this comes to for me is that there are usually two reasons for writing an imaginative work, which may be called Author's reason and the Man's. If only one of these is present, then, so far as I am concerned, the book will not be written. If the first is lacking, it can't; if the second is lacking, it shouldn't.

In the Author's mind there bubbles up every now and then the material for a story. For me it invariably begins with mental pictures. This ferment leads to nothing unless it is accompanied with the longing for

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bubbling

a Form: verse or prose, short story, novel, play or what not. When these two things click you have the Author's impulse complete. It is now a thing inside him pawing to get out. He longs to see that bubbling stuff pouring into that Form as the housewife longs to see the new jam pouring into the clean jam jar. This nags him all day long and gets in the way of his work and his sleep and his meals. It's like being in love.

While the Author is in this state, the Man will of course have to criticize the proposed book from quite a different point of view. He will ask how the gratification of this impulse will fit in with all the other things he wants, and ought to do or be. Perhaps the whole thing is too frivolous and trivial (from the Man's point of view, not the Author's) to justify the time and pains it would involve. Perhaps it would be unedifying when it was done. Or else perhaps (at this point the Author cheers up) it looks like being 'good', not in a merely literary sense, but 'good' all around.

This may sound rather complicated but it is really very like what happens about other things. You are attracted to a girl; but is she the sort of girl you'd be wise, or right, to marry? You would like to have lobster for lunch; but does it agree with you and is it wicked to spend that amount of money on a meal? The Author's impulse is a desire (it is very like an itch), and of course, like every other desire, needs to be criticized by the whole Man.

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Let me now apply this to my own fairy tales. Some people seem to think that I began by asking myself how I could say something about Christianity to children; then fixed on the fairy tale as an instrument; then collected information about child-psychology and decided what age group I'd write for; then drew up a list of basic Christian truths and hammered out 'allegories' to embody them. This is all pure moonshine. I couldn't write in that way at all. Everything began with images; a faun carrying an umbrella, a queen on a sledge, a magnificent lion. At first there wasn't even anything Christian about them; that element pushed itself in of its own accord. It was part of the bubbling.

Then came the Form. As these images sorted themselves into events (i.e., became a story) they seemed to demand no love interest and no close psychology. But the Form which excludes these things is the fairy tale. And the moment I thought of that I fell in love with the Form itself: its brevity, its severe restraints on description, its flexible traditionalism, its inflexible hostility to all analysis, digression, reflections and 'gas'. I was now enamoured of it. Its very limitations of vocabulary became an attraction; as the hardness of the stone pleases the sculptor or the difficulty of the sonnet delights the sonneteer.

On that side (as Author) I wrote fairy tales because the Fairy Tale seemed the ideal Form for the stuff I had to say.

Then of course the Man in me began to have his turn. I thought I saw how stories of this kind could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God or about the sufferings of Christ? I thought the chief reason was that one was told one ought to. An obligation to feel can freeze feelings. And reverence itself did harm. The whole subject was associated with lowered voices; almost as if it were something medical. But supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency? Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons? I thought one could.

That was the Man's motive. But of course he could have done nothing if the Author had not been on the boil first.

You will notice that I have throughout spoken of Fairy Tales, not 'children's stories'. Professor J. R. R. Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings*[1] has shown that the

[1]Lewis almost certainly meant to refer to Professor Tolkien's essay 'On Fairy-Stories,' to the section captioned 'Children' (pp. 33–40, but especially p. 42, in *The Tolkien Reader*, New York: Ballantine Books 1966).

connection between fairy tales and children is not nearly so close as publishers and educationalists think. Many children don't like them and many adults do. The truth is, as he says, that they are now associated with children because they are out of fashion with adults; have in fact retired to the nursery as old furniture used to retire there, not because the children had begun to like it but because their elders had ceased to like it.

I was therefore writing 'for children' only in the sense that I excluded what I thought they would not like or understand; not in the sense of writing what I intended to be below adult attention. I may of course have been deceived, but the principle at least saves one from being patronizing. I never wrote down to anyone; and whether the opinion condemns or acquits my own work, it certainly is my opinion that a book worth reading only in childhood is not worth reading even then. The inhibitions which I hoped my stories would overcome in a child's mind may exist in a grown-up's mind too, and may perhaps be overcome by the same means.

The Fantastic or Mythical is a Mode available at all ages for some readers; for others, at none. At all ages, if it is well used by the author and meets the right reader, it has the same power: to generalize while remaining concrete, to present in palpable form not concepts or even experiences but whole classes of experience, and to throw off irrelevancies. But at its best it can do more; it can give us experiences we have never had and thus, instead of 'commenting on life', can add to it. I am speaking, of course, about the thing itself, not my own attempts at it.

'Juvenilos', indeed! Am I to patronize sleep because children sleep sound? Or honey because children like it?

FÉLIX MARTÍ-IBÁÑEZ

(1912–1972)

In "The Ship in the Bottle," one of his many brilliant informal essays, Félix Martí-Ibáñez movingly describes the "most tragic day" of his life. That day was in January 1939, at the end of the Spanish Civil War, when he was forced to leave his beloved home in Barcelona, Spain. Martí-Ibáñez recalls walking into the magnificent, ten-thousand volume library he had shared with his father, wavering a long time, and finally choosing one book to take with him as a keepsake, and for inspiration. After tucking the book inside his belted jacket, he sadly walked out the door. "The book," continues Martí-Ibáñez, "was Romain Rolland's *The Universal Gospel*, and to this day it remains, now bound in fine red morocco, among my most precious possessions" (in *The Ship in the Bottle and Other Essays*, New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1967, pp. 6–7). The anecdote is both poignant and revealing. Félix Martí-Ibáñez had many loves, but none greater than that for the written word. Happily, this grand love affair has manifested itself in some of the finest essays, short stories, travel books, and novels of the century.

Félix Martí-Ibáñez—psychiatrist, author, editor, publisher, medical historian, and world traveler—was born in Cartagena, Spain, in 1912. His father, Professor