The Wit and Wisdom in the Novels of Diana Wynne Jones

Elizabeth A. Crowe, Brigham Young University - Provo

Abstract

British speculative fiction writer, Diana Wynne Jones, has published over forty books for middle school to adult readers, and her work continues to receive many awards for its creativity and high quality. Jones is a prolific and talented writer who has contributed to and influenced speculative fiction. She uses magical contexts to comment on social situations in what she sees as an essentially non-magical world. Whether she is being humorous, drawing upon myths and legends, or using fantasy or science fiction, Jones reflects the contemporary unpredictable adolescent mind. Jones's unusual childhood has influenced her writing, and a brief biography of Jones's life provides insight into her work—why certain themes have greater interest to her over others. Recurring themes in her books include alienation, empowerment, and identification. Through often convoluted plots, she encourages her readers to think for themselves. From her stories, readers learn to appreciate and accept the complexity and inexplicability of life. While her themes are consistent, her work varies. Some of her work is humorous, some is based on myths, some leans more towards science fiction than fantasy, and some seems more like fantasy than science fiction. Despite this diversity, Jones consistently seeks to learn from her own work by questioning basic assumptions and endeavors to contribute wisdom to her readers through her fiction. Jones uses myth and the heroic ideal to encourage readers to question their motives and recognize the empowerment that comes from self-sacrifice.

Degree
MA

College and Department
Humanities; English

Rights
http://lib.byu.edu/about/copyright/

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation
https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/539

Date Submitted
2005-06-10

Document Type
Thesis

Handle
http://hdl.lib.byu.edu/1877/etd846

Keywords
Diana Wynne Jones, British literature, fantasy, children's literature, young adult literature, speculative fiction

Language
English

Diana Wynne Jones was born in London on August 16, 1934. She is a British writer whose better-known works include the Chrestomanci series and the novels Howl's Moving Castle and Dark Lord of Derkholm. Jones' books range from a broad, almost slapstick delight in the construction of absurd-yet-logical situations, to sharp social observation, to witty parody of literary forms. Foremost amongst the latter are her Tough Guide to Fantasyland, and its fictional companion-pieces Dark Lord of Derkholm (1998) and Year of the Griffin (2000), which provide a merciless critique of formulaic swor
before studying English Literature at Oxford, where she married a don and largely spent the following twenty years. What possible significance does this have for her readers? Much speculative fiction is set in other worlds, either on other planets or perhaps in other universes altogether. This is true of many of Jones’s books, but in others the setting appears to be the world as we know it.

Even where that is not the case the mundane and fantasy worlds may still bleed into each other, opening up the possibility of pilgrimage.