

Do we live in a disenchanted world?

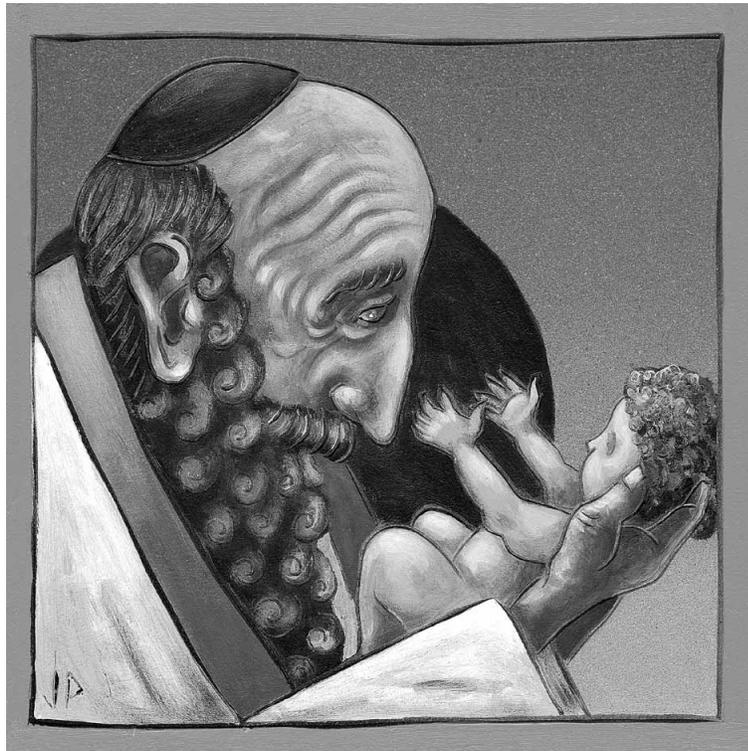
Disenchantment refers to the loss of a spiritual quality that was long believed to be part of the very fabric of the real world. One expression of this loss is the split that has been made between reason and imagination, where reason grasps what is true while imagination merely dabbles in its self-created falsehoods. On other occasions I have sought to affirm a contrary view suggesting that imagination is indispensable for faith and that metaphor and symbol are a means to understand important truths about the world.

Though I cannot claim to be an avid reader of fiction, fantasy or fairy tale I am very interested in how these forms of story captivate us. In his insightful and influential lecture titled, *On Fairy-Stories* (1938), J.R.R. Tolkien makes clear the importance of this genre of story-telling, perhaps more important than ever in a disenchanted world. Faerie as he prefers to spell it, speaks of a “perilous realm enchanted by a kind of magic”. Tolkien prefers the word “enchantment” to describe the elvish craft. Magic seeks to alter the primary world while enchantment produces a Secondary World “into which both designer and spectator can enter”. Magic is more about control and manipulation of the world,

while fantasy seeks “shared enrichment... not slaves.”

C.S. Lewis and Tolkien were good friends. I recently discovered more about that friendship through reading an article by Canadian scholar

Kristin Johnson. (“Tolkien’s Mythopoesis”, in Trevor Hart, & Ivan Khovacs eds., *Tree of Tales: Tolkien, Literature and Theology*). She tells of how early in their relationship Tolkien



...now let your servant depart in peace.

*For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all people,
a light to lighten the Gentiles,
and the glory of thy people Israel.*

and Lewis disagreed about myth and fairy-story. For Tolkien they had the power to carry truth and open up fresh understanding of our world, while for a young Lewis they could not be anything more than “beautiful lies.” Lewis understood well the value and role of myth in a culture but was not very sympathetic to Christianity at the time. A long late-night conversation between Lewis, Tolkien and fellow Inkling – Hugh Dyson resulted in a significant discovery for Lewis. Soon after Lewis said to a friend; “Now they have convinced me that the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference that *it really happened*.”

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For My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation, from a larger series by James Paterson illustrating the gospel readings for each Sunday of the Revised Common Lectionary cycle B.

James lives and works in Oakville, Ontario, where he and his family have recently returned after three years of dorm parenting at the Black Forest Academy in Germany. His current work is building three dimensional sculptures called Prayer Machines, where one was recently a hit at the Strutt Wearable Art Show. His work can be seen at the Abbozzo Gallery (www.abbozzogallery.com) and Art Etc., (www.thebac.ca/ArtEtc/)

www.jdpaterson.com

Siméon

Seven Cities

With the support of Stronger Together 2010 Imago in collaboration with Image Journal hosted arts events in seven cities. Image and Imago joined together for the Vancouver event in June. Image coordinated events in Calgary, Winnipeg and Toronto, while Imago coordinated events in Hamilton, Kitchener and Montreal. All were held by the end of June except for Montreal. At the end of November an evening of music, poetry and visual art was held at the Lighthouse on Rue Ste. Catherine in downtown Montreal. It was an opportunity for francophone artists to participate. Bernard Racicot and Jacynthe Vaillancourt of Christian Direction and Psegga Jones of Evangel Pentecostal Church were wonderful partners in the planning of this event. For Imago the value of these events has been to broaden the network, profile Christian artists to new audiences and create momentum for future collaborations. With these goals in mind the events have been a great success.

A Designer's Garden

By *Kevin Fleetwood*

Delight, wonder, rest – great reactions to hear from visitors to my garden! Sometimes the ‘wow’ factor of colour, form and line does it and sometimes the evening light; hardly anything to do with me! But is there something more foundational, something about the ‘bones’ or frame of the garden that’s more central to their reaction? And, more central to the designer’s work in developing a garden that helps visitors discover the beauty I hope they find there?

My understanding of the answer owes a lot to Gordon Hayward’s book *Garden Paths – Inspiring Designs and Practical Projects*. I’ve modified his terms but his guidance that a garden is built on three key factors that speak to the depths of the human experience has been powerful in guiding my design skills. The three factors, as I’ve understood them: Path, Shelter, Surprise.

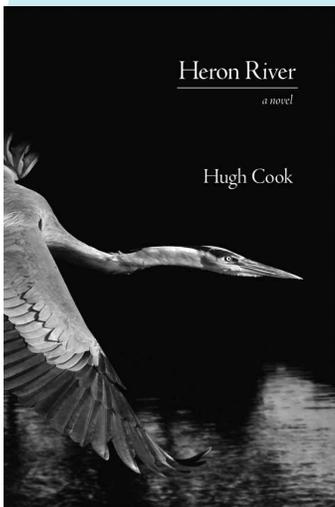
How do they work? Path, the way in, is the first concern. The designer uses it to invite, draw, and promise more. The path asks you to come further and to explore. It hints, charms and welcomes. A designer starts

here and the garden falls into step. Shelter – safety, rest, a place to pause and settle is found as the path is followed. It could be felt in an arching branch or built arbour or in a small garden’s simple screening. But, one treading the well-designed path finds cover, a place that allows them to let go, to relax. And, as they rest and look they find Surprise, delight. They discover a view revealed; something they didn’t know or see before they travelled. The surprise only comes as they take the path’s invitation, as they rest in a place of welcome, as they look and receive what is waiting for them.

Can you see the gospel in that design order? Is the well-designed garden speaking to the depth of human experience because it reflects God’s own hand with us? We live in God’s garden and He sets out a path that He gently invites us to travel on. With steps of faith we enter and find rest and the surprise of life and the delight of glimpses of heaven as C.S. Lewis suggests. Path, Shelter, Surprise – a design order built on God’s loving pattern for His whole creation. As garden designer I follow!

Kevin Fleetwood, currently a pastor in Ontario, also designs and cares for show-quality gardens including his own in Claremont, Ontario. He’s begun developing that garden as a setting for arts-based retreats.

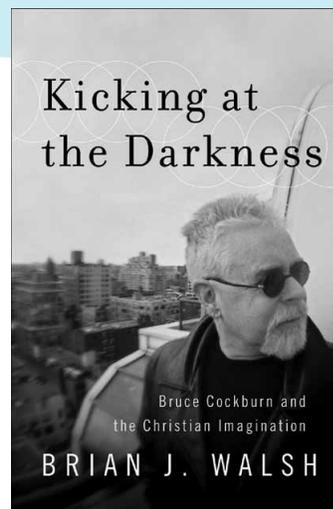
Books



Heron River,
Hugh Cook Mosaic Books,
November 2011

Heron River probes the fierce bonds of family, the tragic consequences of human failure, and the persistent reverberations of history and memory. The story is set in a small Ontario town. Madeline Harbottle, a woman with a debilitating illness, seeks solace from the pain of the past and the challenges of the present. Her son Aaron, damaged from a tragic childhood accident, finds security in his

routine existence, until he falls prey to a cunning deception. Jacob Cunningham, a gifted thirteen-year-old boy, harbours a dark secret that he must confront in order to be whole. A young female police officer named Tara Burnaby tries to solve a string of break-ins following the murder of an elderly woman, and the previously staid small town reacts anxiously to the fact of a killer in their midst. Heron River explores human error and redemption, tragedy and triumph, and confronts the possibilities for human forgiveness and love amidst adversity.



Kicking at the Darkness:
Bruce Cockburn and the
Christian Imagination, Brian J.
Walsh, Brazos Press, 2011

Canadian icon Bruce Cockburn has been making music and shaping poetic lyrics for over forty years. Few if any have engaged his work more carefully than Brian Walsh. In Cockburn’s music Walsh discerns a prophetic voice, a psalmist for the contemporary world. The book provides moral and theological insight as it explores the lyrics of Cockburn’s music. Walsh is skilled in discerning the connections to biblical themes.

He notes that “Cockburn is indeed on a journey, but that journey has an unmistakable Christian shape and direction.” The song index at the back of the book runs a little over two pages and the text is liberally sprinkled with the strong lyrics of Cockburn’s music. Whether you are well acquainted with Cockburn or can’t name song he wrote— this book is worth reading as it addresses ideas important for faithful living in a broken world. It is a rich conversation between biblical themes and the realities of contemporary culture and may leave you wanting to hear some of that music again or perhaps for the first time.

Glass is a wonder

By Craig Handy,
Toronto-based architect

In the light of early morning downtown Toronto emerges as a shifting spectrum of colours making the first commute of the day. First violets, then warmer hues, move westward across a glade of glass towers. Historic brick buildings huddle in the shadows, eclipsed now by high-rise buildings clad in glass. Glass is so widely used in contemporary architecture it is a

defining characteristic of modern architecture. For architects and engineers, these great expanses of glass are exultant expressions of new technical possibilities, but the popularity of glass is because it allows for light and openness. Expansive views, lots of daylight. So is this passion for glass a triumph of modern construction? A return through technique to connection with the natural environment after so many movements that seemed to lead away from realm of nature?

The architect Chad Oppenheim spoke enthusiastically at a recent Construct Canada Architectural Roundtable of designing with the elements themselves. Rather than bricks and mortar he works with the sun, clouds, stars, and the shimmer of the ocean on the horizon. I enjoyed Oppenheim's poetic description of design – carefully situating a building in the landscape and crafting it to optimize views and day-lighting are central to architecture. Yet Oppenheim's glamorous modernist buildings are from Miami, a city often out of place, dominated by the automobile, and they are designed to "enhance the possibilities of a hedonistic lifestyle." Here in Toronto the condos are also marketed as light-filled luxury-living, hopefully with a view of the lake. Is the beauty of glass employed as mere marketing ploy I wonder? It is the low cost of window wall, the poetry of the balance sheet rather than earth and sky, that usually inspires its use.

Nonetheless, glass is a wonder, material poetry. Glass offers views to elsewhere, reflections, multiplying images, the play of light, sparkle, at day and all the more at night, the inversion of the view as light levels change. It has that cool sheen, smooth

texture, and fluid form. Glass is beautiful and beguiling. So glass buildings are often statements of glamour or prestige. I was curious where this Roundtable discussion would lead. Another architect, condemned glass buildings as mute. Mario Botta prefers to work in stone and brick, finding facades of glass opaque and ultimately inert. The commercial towers of Bay Street bear this analysis out, as do too many insipid condominium towers.

I think Botta goes too far, however, when he attributes a paucity of substance to glass itself. Yes, glass can be a superficial surface. (Sometimes the elegance of a seductive artifact is a fine end.) Glass is also a beautiful and necessary building material when handled well, especially in our northern climate. The challenge is, as always in art, to be alert to and eschew banal expressions. Find the possibilities proffered by material at hand and respond with a craftsmanship that brings these out.



9th Hour Theatre, Ottawa; Jonathan Harris, Artistic Director

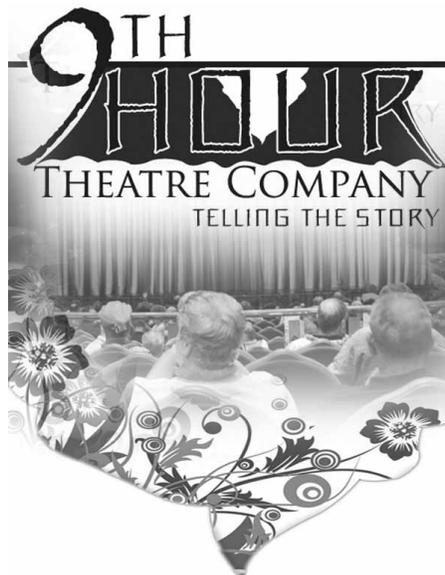
This Canadian not-for-profit theatre company was launched in 2009 with a vision to creatively engage the art of story-telling to explore, examine, and express themes of faith and spirituality.

Story telling is central to 9th Hour's mandate. The vision is to tell stories that will evoke consideration of faith; stories that are fictional, historical, biographical, classical, or contemporary in nature, whether through children's theatre, one act or full length plays, dance theatre, musicals,

oratorios, operas, operettas, collectives, or a combination. 9th Hour is keenly interested in collaborating and partnering with other artists and companies in producing original creative works, seeking to provide opportunities for both veteran professionals and emerging artists alike, regardless of faith interest or background.

9th Hour seeks to be sensitive and relevant in sharing the light and love that is at the heart of the Gospel. This needs to happen not by means of didacticism or a coercive style, but, as Thornton Wilder once said, "letting beauty be the persuasion".

9th Hour has staged its third full scale production after the contemporary *Eyes Upon the Cross* at the Shenkman Arts Centre in Ottawa, Easter 2011 and the inaugural musical collective *Telling the Story* in June of 2010. In September 2011, 9th Hour presented *Children's Letters to God*, a new musical based on the international best-selling book. The show featured a cast of young performers and is inspired by actual letters from kids writing to God. Performances were held at Centrepointe Theatre in Ottawa. For more on 9th Hour Theatre visit www.9th-hour.ca.





In My own Backyard

Visual artist, Mary Abma, of Bright's Grove, Ontario, has expanded the boundaries of artistic practice to encompass the disciplines of science and history. The incorporation of scientific practice and historical research into a multi-layered project centering on one small lot in suburbia opened up a window to the abundant and diverse botanical world that is usually trodden, unnoticed, beneath our feet. "In My Own Back Yard" will be exhibited at Calvin College's Center Art Gallery from January 6 to February 18, 2012. The opening reception and artist's talk will be held on Friday, January 27, at 6 p.m.

Radio Program on the arts

"Arts Connection" explores the intersection of faith, the arts and Canadian culture. The program is hosted by Robert White, an award-winning veteran journalist with a love and appreciation for the arts and artists.

"Arts Connection" is broadcast every Thursday from 10 to 10:30 p.m. on Faith FM 94.3 – Waterloo Region's inspiration station and webcast simultaneously at www.faithfm.org. Archived programs can also be found at www.selawministries.ca

To pass on information about the arts e-mail robert@selawministries.ca.

Crabgrass

is one of the details from my central work, *Herbarium of Lot 161 Plan 150*, which is comprised of mixed media panels with pressed plant, acrylic, text and beeswax on hardboard. The work contains 82 such plant species on 122 panels and covers a significant amount of gallery space. All of these plants grew in my lawn over the course of one growing season! ~ Mary Abma



Ali Matthews

Stratford Ontario artist Ali Matthews received four GMA Covenant Awards for 2011 for her new CD *Carry Me Home: CD/DVD* Artwork Design of the Year, Folk/Roots Song of the Year for "God Only Knows", Album of the Year, Female Vocalist of the Year. You can find out more at alimatthews.com

"I desire to write songs that connect us with each other; songs that tap into our hopes and heartaches, our fears and passions, the things that make us vulnerable, the things that tell us we are alive." ~ Ali Matthews

A disenchanting world

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Toward the end of his essay *On Fairy-Stories* Tolkien writes of the Consolation of the Happy Ending as a key component of the fairy-story. He observes that "Tragedy is the true form of Drama" while the opposite is true of Fairy-story. He calls this opposite "Eucatastrophe" which bring "joy". He sees this "good catastrophe" not as 'escapist' or 'fugitive', but rather as a sudden and miraculous grace, never to be counted on to recur". In this there is no denial of failure, sorrow and suffering – only the denial of a final defeat.

The Gospels embrace all the essence of fairy-stories but the story they tell "really happened". In the Epilogue Tolkien writes "The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. The story begins and ends in joy."

Daily news keeps us mindful of the weight of sorrow, pain and suffering which so many must bear. None of us can escape the sombre realities of life. The story of advent invites us to a posture of waiting attended by a confident hope that soon we will experience a "sudden and miraculous grace".

At this year-end I want to thank all who have in one way or another supported Imago in 2011. We are grateful for your interest and support. It has been a good year with lots of events, new projects and connections with new artists. In November Imago entered its 40th year and we look to celebrating this milestone anniversary in 2012.

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