The Controversy of "The Golden Compass"

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In Oxford, England during the1990s eleven-year-old Lyra Belanqua, a rebellious and curious girl, lives among scholars at Jordan College, who have become her guardians. She inhabits a world which is governed by the parochial ideologies of the church, known as the Magisterium. Lyra the protagonist/heroine exists in a realm that lies parallel to earth separated by the aurora boreal (Northern Lights) on which the other side exists numerous other worlds.

This is the first book/movie of the fantasy trilogy known as "His Dark Materials" by English author Philip Pullman. His story seamlessly combines reality, fantasy, history and he shares his perspective of the church. Pullman creates a compelling story of a world like ours and the adventure of Lyra on her journey to find out the truth of her world and her role in its survival.

LN junior Morgan Butts speaks about what she believes to be the wonderful content and beauty of the book.

" My Father gave me the series when I was eight years old, but I didn't actually read them until I was ten. It was so wonderful, the surface line story was so intriguing and the fact that there was a girl, around my age, as the heroine was really exciting," said Butts with a smile.

The Magisterium in the book actually represents a real part of the Roman Catholic Church but is called the Magisterial which has the authority and power of the church to teach religious truth.

Pullman takes reality and puts a spin on it and paints the church as a sinister place. A section of the church known as the General Oblation Board kidnaps children and steals their souls. In this book and movie the central idea revolves around Dust. Dust (truth) is something humans are not born with. When humans are young adults their mind is growing, so Dust [knowledge, free thinking] is attracted to you as you are to it.

Butts breathed in, a small burst of laughter trailed behind her exhale and exhibited a frustration for the big fuss made about the book/movie from those who have a different view.

"The Golden Compass" is one of New Line Cinema's biggest box office hits. The film grossed over 325 million dollars worldwide. "The Golden Compass" also released a video game the same week as the movie.

"It's [the movie] not trying to force a satanic point of view down the throats of children, it is just the perception of one man. Anyway a lot of the people judging haven't even read it [the book], and if they have, it didn't change their views on religion so they just proved themselves wrong," stressed Butts.

In Genesis the bible talks about the first sin: Eve eating an apple from the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden. It was then that humans were found to be imperfect and choice was introduced to their lives. The rise of the individual.

In the book Pullman takes awareness of the pleasures of body and mind or the knowledge and the capability of free-thinking/Dust, and turns that into the original sin. The Magisterium wants to breed a new generation of children, one without original sin. In order to have original sin you must be free-thinking and separate from the church. In order to do that you must have Dust flow through you, which means you must be past puberty.

In order for the church to catch a child before they separate from the church and enter adulthood, they must make an incision. The incision was done in a room much like an operation room where a patient could receive surgery. The human and their daemon would be placed in a large cage of pale silver mesh, above which a great pale silver blade poised to separate them forever and ever (The Golden Compass, Chapter Sixteen: The Silver Guillotine).

The cage was separated by an impenetrable see-through screen, where on one side was placed the human and on the other its daemon. The blade would come down and literally cut the emotional and physiological bonds which connect humans and daemons and are so strongly shared between the two.

Butts understands where people are coming from that don't like the message the book is sending but feels a strong current of hypercriticism in their argument.

"The church is doing exactly what the book says is bad about them: trying to take away people's ability to think what they want to and individual rights to feel and do what they want, which is exactly what the church in the book does. Their stand takes what makes the church so corrupt in the book and makes it a reality," said Butts.

Every human-being in Lyra's world has an animal daemon. Everyone talks to themselves whether it is out loud or just inside; it is a way that all humans process information and deal with the aspects of life. Imagine, instead of talking to yourself, there is actually someone there, a life long companion.

A daemon also represents its human's character and attitude. It is the opposite sex and you can talk to it and it will talk back. It is separate from you and has its own mind and emotions, yet it is the biggest part of you; it is your soul. The daemon does not take an ultimate shape until you have reached puberty.

In the book the church cuts you away from your daemon (steals your soul) so you will be under the churches power/doctrine forever.

Butts thinks that it is important that people always remember this book is fiction/fantasy and is not compulsory for everyone to read, she feels that if you don't like it, don't read it.

" There is no way these books can possibly destroy the foundation of Christianity because it is over one thousand years old and it has been the staple for cultures in countries all around the world," said Butts now overwhelmed with irritation for the constant bashing of the books that lie so dear to her heart.

Pullman is insinuating that the church thinks for you and that we are "slaves" to it, and therefore taking away knowledge, curiosity, freethinking and the human asset of individuality.

Many churches worldwide tried to ban people from reading the books and public theaters showing the film.

One of the biggest problems that has surfaced in debates about the religious and ethical correctness of the movie is the fact that the book was being made into a movie targeted at children. The book was originally written for young adults. Although the movie hid the anti-religious sentiment fairly well and left out many parts that strongly suggested comparison to the bible/Christianity with plausible arguments against the church, it was what the movie actually represented that caused an up-roar. The movie in some respects symbolizes a deliberate blow to Christianity.

Butts recalls with a smile a childhood memory that is still crisp in her mind. At age thirteen Butts was at a friend's house discussing books and "The Golden compass" came up.

"I was just sitting on his porch with him during a party, and his mom came up behind me and said that she had heard about the book. She said that she never read them but told me that I should stop because it will corrupt me and she would really wish that I never read another page. She never looked at me the same," said Butts with a sigh.

Butts father is a librarian and is a friend of Pullman and his publisher who he has personally met.

"My father loves books and has always encouraged me to read as many as I can and of different types, but always keep an open mind. 'The Golden Compass' is one of my father's favorites as well, not because of its anti-religious views, but because of the solid story line and beautiful craftsmanship shown by this gifted author. There is nothing better than reading a wonderfully written book no matter the content," said Butts.

Cultural Food

Jana Graudins
Copy Editor

Loy Norrix is known for its cutural diversity, with students from many backgrounds attending one school. This means that students celebrate different holidays with different cultural or ethnic foods. Here is a chance to get introduced to some of the traditional foods of Mexico, Latvia, and Israel.

TRES LECHES

Mexican Tres Leches Milk Cake Tres Leches (trays-LEY-chez) is a cake that is often made in Central and South America, most commonly in Nicaragua, Mexico, Costa Rica, Cuba and Guatemala.

It is a dense, moist cake topped with whipped cream. As the name suggests, it uses three different milks: evaporated, sweetened condensed, and whole milk; hence the name Tres Leches.

When combined, the milks are poured over the cake and soaked into it to create a rich cake with a milk syrup.

LN senior Vasti Castro says it is often eaten at many Mexican celebrations. "They have them a lot at celebrations...the Quinceanera, weddings and other things," said Castro. "They usually have it with coffee."

To make the Tres Leches cake, you bake a cake the way you normally would. Then it is cooled in its pan and pierced several times with a fork.

The three milks are combined in a bowl and poured over the top of the cooled cake.

Next the whipping cream is whipped until thick. Once the milk has soaked into the cake the cream is spread on top of the cake and garnished with fresh fruit or cinnamon.

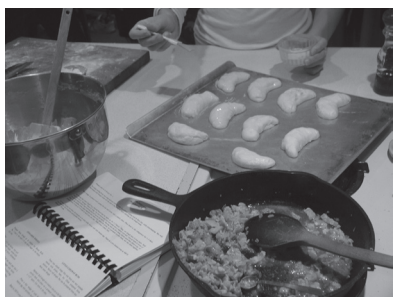
Recipe

-5 eggs
-1 tsp. baking powder
-2 C white sugar
-1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
-1 1/2 C flour
-1/2 C unsalted butter
-2 C milk
-14 ounce can of sweetened condensed milk
-12 fluid ounce can evaporated milk
-1 1/2 C heavy whipping cream
-1 tsp. vanilla extract

LATVIAN PIRAGI

Piragi (pronounced pee-rah-gee) are a common Latvian appetizer that were traditionally made by farming families in Latvia's countryside. They are glazed buns usually filled with miced onion and bacon. The recipe, over a thousand years old, is still a staple food for many celebrations today. It is also an important part of the festival of Jani, a celebration of the Summer Solstice. The recipe also varies in different families, with an ongoing joke among Latvians that their grandfather's is the the best.

The first step in making Piragi is to mix the dough ingredients together with risen yeast. Milk and flour are added last.



The Piragi are then placed on a cooking sheet and brushed over with a mixture of egg yolk and milk. This makes them shiny once they are taken out of the oven.

After mincing and chopping the onions and bacon, they are combined in a pan and sprinkled with salt and pepper. The mixture is then wrapped in small balls of dough and shaped into a half-circle.

Allow the finished Piragi to cool before enjoying. They should appear shiny and slightly browned.

ALL PHOTOS BY JANA GRAUDINS

Recipe

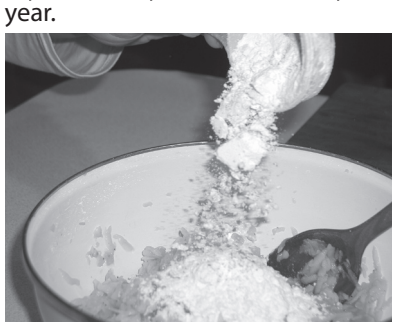
-bacon
-3 medium onions
-flour
-butter
-baking powder
-pepper and salt to taste

HANNUKAH LATKES

Latkes are fried potato pancakes that those in the Jewish religion have traditionally made on Hannukah. They are made of potatoes and onions and usually served as an appetizer with applesauce or sour cream.

Fried food is traditionally made on Hannukah in commemoration of the oil that burned for eight days when the Maccabees purified and rededicated the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

LN junior Howard Tobochnik says his family has Latkes every year.



To make Latkes, the potaotes are peeled, then grated to a hash-brown consistency. The onion is chopped and also mixed with the potatoes.

Lastly, a quarter cup of the potato mixture is dropped onto an oiled pan over medium-high heat and flattened slightly. Once it is golden brown on both sides, remove from pan and serve with sour cream or applesauce.

Recipe

-5 potatoes
-2 onions
-3 eggs
-1 1/2 tsp. salt
-1/4 tsp. pepper
-1/4 to 3/4 cup flour
-oil for frying