

All literature -- and particularly fantasy -- has to do with desire. Lev Grossman is a contemporary fantasy writer and author of *The Magicians* (2009), a bestselling postmodern fantasy novel, and the first in a trilogy of books which is also being adapted for television. While *The Magicians* is clearly written as a response to several popular fantasy authors, including Rowling and Tolkien, Grossman's main target is C. S. Lewis and his Narnia series, which Grossman grew up loving from childhood. In *The Magicians*, everything from characters to the most specific phrasing mirrors and subtly deconstructs Narnia. Grossman writes that his primary goal is to rewrite Narnia, as described in Harold Bloom's book *The Anxiety of Influence*. For Lewis, his fantasy is a means of telling the medieval and ancient worldview as a story; for Grossman, even if his book has the same genre conventions, his literary roots are far closer to the Realistic Novel. By deconstructing several key elements of Narnia, Grossman challenges Lewis's view of a world where an everyday person can live heroically and experience a divinely-guided happy ending. Grossman rejects Lewis's medieval picture of the world as a place with transcendent meaning. Beyond that, he takes Lewis' picture of the centrality of desire and transposes it, perfectly, for a generation like Quentin, who might be far away from Lewis philosophically, but is still strangely moved by his works. Quentin's view of the world really speaks to this generation's experience: "He'd spent too long being disappointed by the world – he'd spent so many years pining for something like this [magic being real], some proof that the real world wasn't the only world" (Grossman 37). The novel captures this generation's adoration of fantasy, and its related ideas of beauty and significance. *The Magicians* also captures the difficulty, and often the disillusionment, that comes from trying to reconcile joy and desire with our everyday lives. Surprisingly, though, Grossman and Lewis have more in common than one would expect: Grossman's novel reveals some of the major shifts that have occurred in the genre

of fantasy as it departs further from its religious and mythic roots, but asks the same questions about desire that motivated C. S. Lewis as well.