Conclusion

In this dissertation I have tried to define fantasy in popular children’s literature in the writings of C.S. Lewis, 1898-1963 (Narnia), J.R.R. Tolkien, 1892-1973 (Hobbit), and J.K. Rowling, 1965 (Harry Potter).

If we once more go back to some loose definitions provided by the likes of Jung who talks of fantasy as a “self justifying biological function”,\(^1\) which is the “natural life of the psyche” or Northrop Frye’s definition of fantasy that it, “transcends the limits both of the naturally possible and morally acceptable,”\(^2\) we can understand that such sweeping generalisation is not adequate. I have demonstrated that such definitions are too sketchy and fail to formulate fantasy. Transcendence is a vague and loose term. Transcendence truly is an essential aspect of fantasy but transcendence occurs not by segregating reality but by distorting the normative sense of the real. Even Tolkien and Lewis failed to shape a proper theory to formulate fantasy. I have demonstrated that fantasy is not an out of the world transcendent something but a very distinctive kind of narrative or language game. It is important to rectify the erroneous perceptions about the major fantasy writers of the last century. Secondly, the narrative technique also confronts the cognitive problem of the child mind—one which does not conceive or learn from extraordinary perceptions but very real and plausible perceptions which typifies and helps in celebrating their take on the world.

---

In the thesis I have developed a definition on the magical world of popular children’s literature. It was demonstrated that fantasy is not a narrative far removed from reality but but it replaces the real world by a parallel ‘para-real’ world with its own distinct paradigms, ideologies, ground rules and its own cognitive thought process. I tried to identify a few features as under:

- The narrator acts as an *accomplice narrator*.
- The author *manipulates* the child’s imagination and the notion of the real by (a) either induction of tropes / imagery of the “non-real”, & therefore one of shock, horror, suddenness, mystery and the wonder. The narrator evokes the world of fantasy by manipulating the sense of reality with calculated strategies, which are peculiar to such texts; the normal world becomes alien and foreign; magic is the chief criterion.
- I demonstrated that the deviation from normality occurs with the help of manipulation or distortion of associations / referents.
- induction of tropes / imagery of the non-real, & therefore one of shock, horror, suddenness, mystery and the wonder
- Magic reigns supreme and it becomes the chief narrative device as it carries the narrative forward by means of substitution of the real for a distorted version of the real. The world is the “other” world, one which we can call the ‘para-real’. The entire narrative is carried forward through the rules of the other world, with typical (even typological) substitution with which the characters look at the normal world,
- transference of epithets
- tropes.
The fantasy world thus becomes the “other” world, one which we can call the ‘para-real’. I tried to derive my conclusions based on a few postulates which I will sum up very briefly.

- Fantasy transcends in the sense that it deviates from the normal. How does deviation work? It works by means of language. The linguistic deviation can be understood by taking into account a series of examples from the texts of a wide cross-section of fantasy tales. Strangely enough fantasy can be evoked with real life tropes.
- I derived similar conclusions from the Bakhtinian concept of the carnivalesque which is very relevant.
- Another significant premise which helped us to understand how children develop the idea of fantasy is provided by Jean Piaget. So when a child reads the stories, the child reader can relate to their own real time experiences.
- I also used the theory of aggrandizement and miniaturization which Tirtha Prasad Mukppadhyay in his thesis relating to icons. In children’s fantasy, we find the author the ‘accomplice narrator’ consciously tweaking our imagination by distorting the traditional norms of reality and standard size.

I had taken up 3 authors and 6 texts for my purpose. There is a sort of a progression in these works. If humans play an important role in Lewis, there absolutely is no place for them in either Tolkien or Rowling. I will come to these aspects in more details a little later. There are other texts which were written in the last century which fit the bill of such ‘para-real’ worlds in ways partially or completely.

I will now list a few more authors who are close to our scheme of thing and hence need mention. These authors are:
1. Lloyd Alexander
2. Alan Garner
3. Susan Cooper
4. Roger Zelagny
5. Patricia Wrightson
6. Peter Beagle
7. Ursula Le Guin

I will briefly discuss the case of Ursula Le Guin and show how she distorts our normative sense of the real to create fantasy. Ursula Le Guin takes up these issues. Her *Earthsea* explores the pre Gandalf stage as it were. She discusses in detail how the young kids learn to master their erudite and dangerous art of wizardry. She put in a lot of effort while framing the structures of this land as she puts bits and pieces together. Of the steps that made *Earthsea* she writes:

> In 1964 I wrote story called *The Word of Unbinding* about a wizard…. and developed the only such rules of magic as were germane to the very small point” and then on the first book she writes, story of the book is essentially a voyage, a pattern in the form of a long spiral. I began to see places where the young wizard would go eventually I draw map – now then is the time for cartography”

So Ursula Le Guin painstakingly creates this world which is different yet a real world. To make it resemble the real requires narrative genius and Le Guin has it. She does not need portals through which she would make her characters enter the secondary lands; the worlds are there to

____________________________


11 Ibid.
be seen, just as we have our own world. There are distinctive features. “Earthsea is an imagined Archipelago, comprising series of lands, no machines, magic everywhere”, suggest John Townsend. The narrative device as we see is a manipulation or substitution of the real with magical incident which takes the narrative forward. Subtle rules are taught in the school to which Ged Graduates. Ged emerges as a right wizard in this Earthsea world, which Tolkien termed as the ‘secondary universe’. “To create what Tolkien calls a ‘secondary universe’ make a new world – a world where no voice has ever been spoken before, where the act of speech in creation. The only voice that speaks is the author’s voice. And every voice that speaks is the author’s voice. And every voice counts”  


6 Ibid. 191.

Le Guin has it clear when she talking of the ‘voice’ of the author has the sole ‘voice’ that counts. There is of course an archetypal mythical foundation to Guin’s works but that does not mar the narrative under any circumstances. Now we can throw some light on each text individually. First in the series is the Guin fantasy, ‘A Wizard of Earth sea’ Ged is the wizard not very keen upon taking up challenges but nevertheless not shying away from it other. He is unwise, immature, but aspiring. The novel is taken forward by his magical exploits. His lessons prove magic is an art. He tries to find out the meaning of what light is. He has the power to work wonders, but lacks in knowledge to prove himself. Ged has to chase his own shadow, his own capacity for evil and subdue it. The narrative gift Le Guin has is profound and she intelligently weaves the magical patterns in the text and one goes on with the moral and ethical fights of Ged.


6 Ibid. 191.
She can win sympathy for all her characters even her villains. She is in her narrative much condensed whereas Tolkien is far more expansive. Her condensed patterns and trite narrative do not emerge as demerits but as positive facets. Magic is serious and wizardry is here a product of wisdom, the patterns of evil and sinister shadows have to be encountered with magic. Light and darkness meet and join together in a Jung like pattern and inculcate virtues and ultimately the pattern of light must win powerful nevertheless, but, for all his nonchalance to work does not accept Yevaud’s offer of letting him know the name of the shadow in exchange of the dragon raids or when he is lured by another dragon to betray his duty so that he can be saved. Ged is more than a good wizard, a little lackadaisical and nonchalant about things lacking the killer edge to prove himself. He is to fight a psychological battle against himself. As Manlove suggests “the desire to self aggrandise itself at the expense of others that causes evil”\(^7\), whether in the form of the evil shadow of himself a powerful magician in *A Wizard of Earthsea* or in the subjugation of Arha to service in the old to old ones in the dark and eventually destroyed labyrinth in the Tombs of Atuan, or in the desire of the magician to live for ever, even by destroying all other beings, in *The Farthest Shore*. The matter of light and dark conjures other propositions in *The Tombs of Atuan* (1971) The fable like structure of Book 1 is continued in this book also. The narrative once more is instrumental in creating a world of the para-real. There is a lot to happen of course in this book and also in the next book *The Farthest Shore* (1972),

In the last book of Earthsea, *Tehanu* (1990) we have a young child who is the chosen one is to take up the mantle form Ged. She is going to be trained and made to realize her responsibilities. There is that utopia like ambience in this place and a realm where the fantastic

reigns and all is set right at the end. Tolkien suggests in *On Fairy Stories* “In that realm a man may, perhaps, count himself fortunate to have wondered, but its way richness and strangeness tie the tongue of the traveler who would report them. And while he is there it is dangerous for him to ask too many questions, lest the gates should be shut and the keys be lost”\(^9\). This is the realm which Guin paints so very deftly. It is a mind boggling world, one in which magic and fantasy dominate and the charm never ceases to act. A small clipping from Guin essay “*Dreams must explain themselves*” can aid us in endeavoung to unravel…. more narrative strategies and what exactly Le Guin was trying to achieve in tales:

I said that to know the true name is know the thing for me and for the wizards. The implies a good deal about the ‘meaning’ of the trilogy and about me. The trilogy is, in one aspect, about the artist. The artist as magician. The Trickster, Prospero. That is the only allegorical aspect it has of which I am conscious …wizardry is artistry. The trilogy is then, in this sense, about art, the creative experience, the creative process, there is always this circularity in fantasy. The snake devours its tail. Dreams must explain themselves\(^8\)

The dream factors are really fascinating and each tale is a metaphor of sorts. The magic seems to be just endless. I am tempted to quote these lines from Rabkin’s *The Fantastic in Literature*:

> While fairy tales use the world of enchanter as their location, and are therefore highly fantastic, a true fantasy such as Alice continues to reverse its ground rules time and time again. Fantasies may be generally distinguished from other narratives by this. The very nature of ground rules, of how we know things, on what basis we make assumptions, in short the problem of knowing infects Fantasies at all levels, in their settings in their methods, in their characters, in their plots” \(^9\)


As we can see there are remarkable similarities between The Le Guin texts and the other three authors I have discussed in my dissertation. There is a sort of progression as we go ahead with these authors. In the Narnia Series we have a portal through which the protagonists enter the other world and humans play a very important role so much so that they become kings and queens in these lands. Tolkien’s world of hobbits is a more complete para real world as it were; there are no portals; no human interference but the existence of a completely different world substituting the real world. With Rowling, there is indeed a portal but only legitimate entrants to this world can enter. There is no human interference, or more so no interference of non magical humans. Another very fascinating attribute of her narrative exists in the fact she invests pages together for the depiction of the school life of her protagonists situated in the substituted magical world which substitutes real schools of the real world; without initiating the plot.

After the phenomenon called Harry Potter there have been authors who have tried their hands in creating such ‘para-real’ worlds. I will briefly discuss a few of these. Michelle Paver’s Chronicles of Ancient Darkness, Eoin Colfer’s Artemis’ Fowl books, and the Lemony Snicket Tales are series which carry forward the mantle of Lewis, Tolkien and Rowling. Even later, Barry Cunningham composed the popular Cornelia Finke books. Barry Cunningham conjures a fantasy tale about a boy archaeologist, who discovers a world of thrilling adventure after digging a hole. *Books of Beginning* by John Stephens are books which distort reality and create similar ‘para-real’ world. The first book, *The Emerald Atlas*, came out to high acclaim in 2011, and the sequel, *The Fire Chronicle*, followed it up. *The Emerald Atlas* is a book with fully-formed setting while *The Fire Chronicle* is the long-overdue sequel. It takes place a little while after *Atlas*, but ultimately wastes no time.
Artemis Fowl is a series of eight science fiction fantasy novels written by Irish author Eoin Colfer, featuring the titular character, Artemis Fowl II. A teenage criminal mastermind, whose Father was missing and his mother in a nervous breakdown, Artemis sets himself in the task to preserve the family fortune and finding his father, to that, he uses his genius mind to plot the kidnapping of a fairy with the aid of his manservant, Butler. As a result of his encounter with the fairy world, at the beginning he became public enemy number one of the people when he succeeds in capturing a Leprocon fairy, Holly Short, and keeping the ransom gold. In successive encounters with the people, Artemis and Holly Short, the People's genius, the centaur Foaly, and the thief Mulch, began a collaborative work where they face a megalomaniac pixie, an astute tech businessman, the Russian Mafia (who held his father captive), and even the demon race from the past, but as the series progresses, he assists the Fairies in resolving conflicts with worldwide ramifications; Artemis develops a strong sense of morals, and by the final book, he is willing to sacrifice his life for his friends. The series concluded with Artemis Fowl: The Last Guardian, released in July 2012. In this series we find the author manipulate the normative sense of the real quite like Tolkien, Lewis or Rowling.

To conclude I would like to assert that the aspect of reality in fantasy is of primary significance and at the same time it is an instrument of the improbable. We must understand that fantasy operates through paradoxes that these other worlds operate, crafted by conscious designs by these authors. Real is not obliterated but aggrandized. The real evokes the unreal as games continually emerge; both language games and others. The authors hint at disproportionate realistic themes and perceptions. We do not divorce reality but distort normal perceptive standards. There is continuous mystery and suddenness which shapes the fantasy. The magical and the improbable operate together as the authors employ reality but then withhold or distort it.
with some totalizing related but erratic effects that shape the fantasy. Fantasy is not a remote thing but an application of that of reality in unexpected phases of reading and interpretation.

We are perfect outsiders in such worlds, as the wizards and the hobbits dominate and we can only sit back and watch in awe and wonder. Fantasy is created by the author’s design to replace the real life by calculated strategies to create another world by strategies I have theorized. The narrator artfully creates such worlds with specific details in such a manner that the real world at times gets obliterated by some calculated strategies. The other world is a critically structured one. It is an extension of the real by aggrandizing and minimizing sizes, by creating ground rules in the non-rational, non-cognitive sense which the child can relate to. It is always an extension of the real.i have tried to formulate a theory for children’s fantasy in this dissertation. There are a lot issues to ponder on. For example why it is so that all these tales are confined within the purview of a series comprising a few texts where as a cartoon sires goes on and on? The study needs to be extended to other forms of children’s fantasy, (even fantasy for grown ups) children’s fairy tales and also folk tales which, I am sure will provide us with a few more interesting introspections and insights.