Interpreting Children’s Fantasy as Distortion of Reality: A Study of the Para Real in the Novels of C.S. Lewis (1898-1963), J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973) and J.K. Rowling (1965)

Abstract

In this dissertation I have tried to define fantasy in popular children’s literature in the writings of C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien and J.K. Rowling. I have demonstrated that existing definitions are too sketchy and fail 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.

We must understand that fantasy operates through paradoxes 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. 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.
Fantasy is created by the author’s design to replace the real life by calculated strategies to create another world as 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. 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. 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.