Chapter VI

Re-enchanting Reality: Fantasy as Renewal

The most competent fantasist to pronounce the function of fantasy might be C.S Lewis, having used the genre so in his works. “Fantasy just doesn’t relax alone, it fortifies us” (“The Gods Return” 1083). Tolkien’s LotR and its worthy successor HP establish this strength of fantasy over other fictional genres in dealing with the reality of the primary world, as substantiated in the previous chapters. LotR offered an image of the kind of rural conservational ideal and escape for which a generation disillusioned by wars were looking for, and also fulfilled their perennial longing for roots, a tradition and a mythology. Yet the story of Middle-earth was for them the story of their own immediate lives. While the readers of Tolkien’s time were captivated by the appeal, the escape and the contemporarity it offered, the readers of our own times find the books exotic (being twice removed in time) and extant (for its ever relevant themes) at the same time. The immediacy of the stories to the present-day readers is what makes HP familiar and therefore, family-property to them. In a society where the cultural value of a book is very low, HP has become a trans-cultural phenomenon linking society and literature, taking over the consciousness of a generation of children and the confidence of a multitude of adults with a misconception about fantasy. In a post-modern disenchanted world devoid of mystery, romance and the unexpected, the quiet weaving together of the extraordinary with the everyday-ordinary in HP has created a bridge to cross from the magical over to our own mundane ‘real’.
LotR is a prototype of high fantasy which became the framework for all its successors. Though HP is a generic fusion, thus exploding the fantasy genre, it has derived much of the fantasy elements of its exemplary predecessor, consciously or through assimilation. LotR and HP series have more in common than their film adaptations or their popularity which has raised them to literary, social and cultural phenomena, in turn also raising suspicions among the ‘intelligentsia’ about their literary value. But beyond these obvious similarities lie their uniqueness which has rendered them an undisputed place at the top of the canon.

The present chapter consolidates the aspects of fantasy and violence in LotR and HP outlined in the previous chapters of the dissertation in the light of Tolkien’s and Timmerman’s views on fantasy, signifying to the commonality of fantasy novels in general, while also showing forth their uniqueness. The general fantasy structures of the narratives have achieved many positive merits from their similar yet singular efforts. The unequalled status of Tolkien and Rowling lie in their genius as sub-creators to provide patterns of ‘escape’, ‘recovery’ and ‘consolation’ in maintaining the balance between fantasy and reality which leads to the regaining of the underlying truth and the child-like sense of wonder, by removing the veil of familiarity. Since LotR and HP are representative texts of the fantasy genre, this observation leads to the general conclusion that fantasy allows recovery and re-enchantment to the reader.

Neither Tolkien nor Rowling was writing on a blank page when they planned their secondary worlds of Middle-earth and Hogwarts. Tolkien was deeply inspired by the Northern mythology and languages he so much loved, while Rowling’s post-modern fairy tale assimilated influences from several sources, LotR being one of the greatest among them. Tolkien created his own mythology of Middle-earth and drew upon that ‘feigned history’ to sub-create the story of LotR. Rowling draws extensively
upon history, legend and myth, in both prosaic and preposterous ways and rewrites the past by making its potential felt in the present, whereby, like the Pensieve, memory becomes history. Though Rowling has acknowledged Lewis’s influence on the *HP* novels, she has assimilated from Tolkien too pretty well. The intertextuality of *HP* with *LotR* which is minor and imperceptible in the beginning becomes more evident as the series grows denser, and is most pronounced in the *Deathly Hallows*.

The similarities as well as the differences lie scattered all over the secondary worlds of the two fantasies, starting from the heroes. Both *LotR* and *HP* are bildungsroman, delineating the process of initiation of a boy into manhood and his progress as a hero, even though Rowling inverts the traditional initiation paradigm at several points. As Frodo’s story becomes linked with the fate of Middle-earth, Harry’s personal family story becomes central to the fate of the wizard world. The stories are in the pattern of quest romances but Tolkien has inverted the quest theme in *LotR*, making it an anti-quest. On the other hand, Harry’s journey towards his quest is more an internal struggle than an external one, and therefore equally perilous. *HP* incorporates a multi-genre approach into a traditional fantasy quest, inviting the reader to an exciting interplay of tags or signs of the different individual genres and the multiple meanings of the whole that they generate. However, the initiation of the two heroes comes to a close when the initiates realize a higher truth that transcends self, and they “*re-emerge [ ] from the kingdom (return, resurrection). The boon that [t]he [y] bring [ ] restore the world*” (Campbell 246).

The “endless repeatability” of age-old “recurring themes and patterns” that Byatt found so appealing in old tales (5-11) is what carries the central stories of *LotR* and *HP* not only forward but backward as well. The more the readers learn about the future, the more they learn about the past. The various stories are interconnected: in
*LotR* the Ring’s story of the Third Age emerges out of earlier stories of the history of Middle-earth in the First Age and the Second Age, and Sauron’s fall is a continuation of the story of his master Melkor. In *HP* Harry Potter’s struggle with Voldemort is only the most recent manifestation of similar animosities between Salazar Slytherin and the other founders of Hogwarts.

Tolkien and Rowling put the metaphoric power of the past to work in a fantasy story of traditional heroes in order to convey important moral lessons. Treebeard, who embodies the principle of tradition is Tolkien’s personification of Chesterton’s philosophy of the Tree, which goes on growing and therefore changing, yet remaining unchanged at the centre, holding more strongly by its roots, the higher it rises. (qtd.in Pearce, “Tolkien and the Catholic Literary Revival”119). This idea resonates throughout the entire canvas of *LotR*. ‘Criticized’ as a “throwback to some other culturally stable time” (Westman 327), *HP* too upholds age-old values. Both Tolkien and Rowling are concerned principally with “the eternal verities of human nature” (used in terms of *LotR* by Carter 93-4) and the perennial nature of everlasting life. Typical of fantasy, they present the reader with a vision of the world revitalized by a transcendent power, “restoring our receptivity to an underlying order and value to be discovered in experience” (Rabkin 213). They are part of a revival for the highest function of art, which is the expression of the highest common factors of human life.

In this sense, both *LotR* and *HP* can be considered as literary myths, Tolkien being its chief exemplar. They represent heroism in very traditional ways and through age-old virtues and often employ historically and mythically significant symbolism, which are the chief features of a literary myth. The heroes of *LotR* and *HP* are products of the past who recognize its shaping influence upon the future. While the grandiosity of Tolkien’s universe and its inventiveness render *LotR* the status of a literary myth, it
is the “literary alchemy” (Kern 227) of Rowling which combines the familiar and the fantastic through the inventive use of history, legend and myth to portray the moral journey of an archetypal hero, that provides appeal to the literary myth of HP. While Frodo is a mythical hero, Harry is a fairy-tale hero. The mythical hero experiences a transfiguration into eternal life in heaven as when Frodo goes to the Grey Havens; the fairy tale hero lives happily ever after right amongst the rest of us (Bettelheim 39), as Harry does.

Fantasy, a metaphorical mode, implies that there are many alternate realities and many ways of perceiving the same reality. Magic in fantasy becomes a metaphor for personal development and maturation in LotR and HP; which offers a model for the reader’s own growth. Distinctions between ‘true’ and ‘false’ magic can cause the reader as thinker “to hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events described”; for Todorov, such hesitation is what defines fantasy as a genre (33). Magic also serves as a metaphor for the child’s imagination and capacity to tell stories. It serves as a plot device and as a vehicle for an outlook on the world, including spirituality. Above all, magic in fantasy expresses a sense of wonder in nature. The wondrous is a part of, not apart from, the world; Tolkien believed this; and the secondary worlds of Middle earth and Hogwarts manifest it.

Like magic, the spirituality of the secondary world of Tolkien has also deeply influenced Rowling. Tolkien never mentions God at all in LotR, yet the Christianity could not be more explicit. The Christianity in HP is subterranean though the Christian symbols that Rowling uses are quite conspicuous, especially towards the end of the series. Both authors are said to uphold traditional Judeo-Christian values; but these are also universal human values common to all religions and cultures, hence their universal appeal. Though life is chaotic for them and often beyond their control, the characters of
these fantasies never abandon their power to choose to respond and are always guided by both chance and courage, by fate and free will and above all, by faith— in oneself and others, and in the power of love rather than faith in a supreme being who guarantees victory over evil. The implicit theology and metaphysics of this secondary world is worthy of what Tolkien calls ‘Secondary Belief’. The message of friendship, goodness and love in the stories do not call to a spiritual transcendence through faith, but they portray a secular moral philosophy of personal development consistent with the traditional patterns of heroism found in universal culture.

The nature of evil running ambivalent throughout in _LotR_ and _HP_ are in two ways: intrinsic evil or things evil by nature and instrumental evil or things evil by choice. As literary myths, the stories suggest that evil is part of the human condition existing intrinsically in things that cannot be controlled and instrumentally in actions and decisions that can be controlled. Evil is presented as the absence of good (Boethian concept) as well as a force in its own right (Manichean concept), conveying a strong sense of the way things feel in the real world. Good and evil in _LotR_ and _HP_ are not black and white, but shades of grey. For Tolkien, the shadows were always there. The moral choices of Frodo are thoughtful and complex, with a richness that Harry only achieves towards the end of his final struggle against Voldemort. But in _HP_ sometimes the characters would surprise us with the shades becoming predominant in either way; thus a so-far evil person might turn out to be good and vice versa. Good and evil are not abstractions in either Tolkien or Rowling, but they are a confrontation with great psychological dimensions.

Readers of fantasy vicariously experience dilemmas that allow them to make judgments, tests the results of decisions and imagine alternatives; and in doing so they prepare themselves to respond to moral issues. The conflict between Good and Evil in
LotR and HP enable the readers to make wise choices, to do the right things and to overcome evil with good. Young readers who see the fictional magic as a metaphor for power are more prompted in fantasy than elsewhere to an ethical and cultural reflection on its infinite power of use and misuse, which bears down to the reality that power is never morally neutral. LotR and HP are fantasy’s answer to the threat of power ideologies, of uncontrollable growth in the name of technology and the unquenchable thirst for control and dominance, which are often attributes held by the unimaginative. So, Gollum, the Orcs or Sauron in LotR and Voldemort, the Death Eaters or the Muggles in HP who share a world vision without imagination, cannot achieve Recovery nor regain a clear view of reality from their unfantastic, unimaginative aesthetic positions.

It is our ability to read metaphorically that has made the fantasy genre directly relevant to our own times. We may not meet Ring-wraiths or dementors or dragons: but ‘wraithing’ is a genuine danger; demented minds are wide spreading into a calamity; and men are evolving into machine-minded orcs, Sarumans and greedy Death-Eaters. By holding onto traditional values in a moral universe of fantasy, Tolkien and Rowling have re–introduced those values into the literary world which make them ever so relevant. The fantasy of Tolkien and Rowling provide antidotes to present despair by taking us back to traditional themes and literary conventions not for an escape into a fictional past, but for a return to moral, emotional and imaginative values. Such values are not beyond the reach of contemporary man, if only he has the imaginative power to realize them. The traditional elements and archetypal motifs of fantasy such as the mythic journey and the triumph of the hero over evil still have emotional meaning for the modern reader who finds in the secondary world a universe analogous to our own, in which we may see ourselves.
Fantasy narratives are woven from the strands of such multiple realities relating the texts to their authors, their times and ultimately to their readers and revealing the underlying psychological dimensions of reality. In Jungian terms, the archetypal images which arise in the universal unconscious are mediated by the personal as well as socio-cultural and historical contexts in which they are created. So fantasy writers are inescapably bound to their own lived experiences, ideas and concepts, using them as prime resources for defamiliarization and reflecting them with the metaphorical spectrum as a mode of writing. *LotR* and *HP* span the most cataclysmic periods of the modern world; therefore the traumatic and fearful experiences of the age find form and expression through these fantasies in true psychoanalytic terms. Tolkien survived the horrific trench warfare of World War I and lived through another world war. Rowling is living in a post 9/11 world of constant threats and distrust. The archetypal images they both use in their fantastic narratives do not just make us aware of trauma and potential trauma; simultaneously they help us to comprehend our own perceptions and motives and a sense of the underlying personal and collective angst of life during the period. Both writers hand on underlying archetypal material for contemporary and future creations of fantasy to re-image in their own contexts, since “active fantasy is the chief mark of the artistic mentality, the artist is not just a reproducer of appearances but a creator and educator, for his [sic] works have the value of symbols that adumbrate lines of future development” (Jung 255).

Fantasy stories can be appropriated as a psychological strategy creating meaning in the midst of violent conflict such as the world is faced with today and serving as protective powers against chaos, which become ironic sites of growth. They “help young people face reality, however distasteful that reality may be” (Whitehead 5). The violence in *LotR* and *HP*, which is actually the weapon of the unimaginative,
serves to show how creating fear in the reader is simultaneously appealing and repulsive as well as therapeutic. They ease the way to adulthood for readers as well as characters since they catalyze possibilities for resistance, resilience and resolve. The challenge faced by children in learning such constructive responses to aggression will determine their achievement of maturity. The violence of Sauron and Saruman in *LotR* affecting the entire community and also its nature, become part of the total cultural experience of a young reader, urging him to make connections and to respond positively to the modern disease of degeneration and separatism. Through modelling, mirroring and trusting (Jones, *Killing Monsters*) *HP* can help children to use violent entertainment as an invaluable part of their emotional well-being. Rowling presents Harry to the ‘GenNext’ readers as a model hero, a mimetic prototype. He is a mirror up to a young adult’s nature and actions. While adults usually sugar-coat the deeper feelings of children thinking that in children’s minds the world is rosy, “Rowling taps into that in so many levels” (“The Real Magic of Harry Potter” 64).

Literature encodes a society’s history and belief systems, and so is significant in developing values and in providing hope and comfort. Hope that gleams even in the gloom of Mordor and optimism in the despair under Sauron’s Eye is the underlying message of *LotR*. Arda (the Earth) is unmarred and even healed; the same could be with us also. Similarly, *HP* enables children as well as adults to hope in their own lives, however dull and wretched. The theory of courage re-introduced by Tolkien from the old literature of the North which offers neither reward nor heaven or salvation, but only the sombre satisfaction of having done the right, demands more of young adults urging for challenges to empower themselves in a world where everything is taken for granted. Its currency of our own dark times lies in the hope that it holds out when there seems no hope, as Sam who finds the insight of faith at the slopes of Mt. Doom in a single star
glimmering in the gloom. What readers find in the pages of Tolkien or Rowling is not faith, but precisely and above all, hope or an echo of *evangelium* in the real world.

Over and above these fantastic and popular elements that are assimilated into *LotR* and *HP*, there are several other aspects that connect them to a common aesthetic plane while maintaining their unique individual identity. It is their ‘Englishness’ that primarily link these authors who are read by audiences that literally span four generations. Both Tolkien and Rowling are experts in their love for the language games. As W.H. Auden opines,

[i]n the nominative gift, Tolkien surpasses any writer living or dead, whom I have ever read. To find the right names is hard enough in a comic world; in a serious one success seems almost magical (qtd.in Barbieri 99).

Rowling has been acknowledged in her mastery in the art of comic naming, from ‘Gringotts’ and ‘Hogwarts’ to ‘Bertie Bott’s Every Flavour Beans’ and ‘Quidditch’. In the verbal world she invents, she reins an unquestioned queen owing nothing either to Tolkien or to the pseudo world of medievalism of others. Beyond the verbal links lie the realms of narrative, themes, character and philosophy.

The names of people and things and the topography of Middle-earth give *LotR* the appearance of real history, just as Tolkien had intended. Few other writers would feel the need to invent languages for their characters, but for Tolkien it was an essential part of his story telling. It is this retelling of our most deeply believed myths about ourselves that makes *LotR* so moving. For the same reason, Tolkien’s writing style is always subordinate to the story, never meaning to surprise or shock us, in a language which is sometimes lengthy and descriptive and at times poetic. He can evoke hideousness, terror, horror and dreadful suspense, as well as beauty, laughter, mobility
and joy. The style is always graceful, often highly eloquent, and occasionally lyrical with descriptive passages of much loveliness and colour. Edmund Fuller summarises on the impeccable prose of the great philologist:

[He is] an adept painter of scenes and evoker of images, [who] can orchestrate his narrative and descriptive effects with flexibility and variety, from pianissimo to forte, while keeping his themes or motifs tightly interwoven and steadily developing (174-5).

Joseph Pearce acclaims this “breathtaking clarity” of Tolkien’s language combined with profundity as “unusual” (*Tolkien: A Celebration* 194).

Rowling lacks the solemnity and the sheer elegance of Tolkien, yet her language feels intricately woven and delicate. It is alluringly transparent in its simplicity and spontaneity and is pleasingly natural. The language is true to life and unadorned, almost work-man-like prose, with no showy artificial elaborations or complications. The careful pacing of action, the ingenious false leads and reversals of expectations, the suspense ending of chapters and the several climaxes leave the readers spellbound and hanging on, which is the secret of her page-turning readability. The sharp-edged satire of Rowling has more of Mark Twain in it. The sunshine of humour and cheerfulness breaks in among the shadows of evil and its resultant despair. Humour plays a key role in lightening the threat of evil and in balancing the horror of violence, steering Rowling from the absurd to the monstrous with remarkable ease, which is a unique feat in fantasy. But as the series progress, and as her characters grow older along with her readers, the shadows eclipse the humour, typical of Young Adult novels. Along with the fun stuff, the earthy salty realness and the refusal to fall into the basic clichés of fantasy makes Rowling a fine stylist, a clever fantasist and a great storyteller. Her most innovative literary gift is her ability to turn the fizz and excitement of
the video games on to the prose page while adding in a consistently brilliant line of jockey inventiveness. In essence, “Rowling’s genius is not just her total realization of a fantasy world, but the quieter skill of creating characters that bounce off the page, real and flawed and brave and loveable” (Fordham The Times).

The extraordinary powers of invention, fertile imagination and specialized vocabulary of HP and LotR make them acceptable both to critics and to a vast international child and adult readership. They are the rare occurrence of a product of popular culture finding their way in the thoughtful and serious studies of popular culture. They have confounded the established division between high and low art and have bend genres in the world of fiction as well as movies. The literary delight and the literary weight of these fantasies demand themselves to be discovered and re-discovered. The novels will not let us escape to an enchanted past of powerful magical influences and supernatural presence which seem real. Instead these humanistic meta-narratives remind us that such times and places if they ever existed, are right within ourselves and with us, thus regaining for us a clearer and profounder vision of our own reality and also re-enchanting us so that all who would share such delight may recapture, the taste for marvels and adventures and high fantasy.

Fantasy is timeless and placeless which makes it always relevant. LotR and HP present an ethos which is as significant for the contemporary world as it would be for the Middle-earth or the wizard world of Hogwarts. Tolkien’s sub-created world is timeless, enabling him to ignore the peripheral in favour of the perennial problems of existence. The universality of HP which grows beyond temporal, spatial and cultural constraints makes it a fantasy of ‘here and now’. Rowling does a balancing act of presenting two worlds which are actually one; so Harry Potter’s magical world brings the reader back to his own world. Harry is the reader, transformed by narrative. Both
authors unite sound contemporariness with universality, addressing children in a voice to which they would want to listen. The misconception held against fantasy that it is an escapist genre is discharged by the highly contemporary nature of *LotR* and *HP*. As fantasy-realism hybrids, *LotR* and *HP* are not any flight from reality; instead they are a flight into a heightened reality. The very real issues that they vividly portray, by re-seeing them in the magic mirror of fantasy, provide catalysts for addressing such issues the young confront in their own lives, but with the safe and possible tool of fantasy. Therefore *LotR* and *HP* can be termed as ‘realistic fantasies’.

*LotR* is a multicultural and multiracial text where the stories are profoundly pluralist; *HP* is both a multicultural and a trans-cultural text celebrating cultural relativity. Patrick Curry considers Tolkien ahead of his times in understanding and portraying cultural relativity for the reason that Tolkien’s work “joins up with a growing contemporary sense, represented in postmodernism, of history’s sheer contingency (*Defending* 25). Post Modernism question’s the legitimacy and desirability of modernity by undoing its war against mystery and magic and by aiming at re-enchantment, which is what Tolkien and Rowling as fantasists do. The contemporary appeal of *LotR* and *HP* is the return and the celebration of enchantment.

The two crucial questions about a work of literature are whether the work is interesting and enjoyable and whether the enjoyment helps or hinders other things that we would enjoy. That *LotR* and *HP* are enjoyable is fore-grounded by their exceptional popularity and success. Being among the most representative texts of the fantasy genre, they serve to consolidate the positive merits of the genre in general and its relevance in the present times than ever before in literary or social history. The moral, ethical, psychological, cultural and at times philosophical questions and issues that the works address help children, young adults and even adults to embrace the magic of life in a
better and more balanced way. They understand and cater to a child’s state of imaginative immaturity and possessiveness of the self most successfully, since fantasy alone broadens the scope of vision and imagination of a reader. The poetic sense of life that fantasy instills help children and young adults to look into themselves and out of themselves through the characters they identify with, be it Frodo, Sam, Harry, Ron or Hermione. By helping to alleviate selfishness and insecurity, these fantasies act as a cushion to fall on, to return refreshed to cope with the challenges of the material world and be strengthened therein. The epiphany in them provides a catharsis for the young adults because adolescents need the emotional outlet that books provide. Tucker observes that individual psychological portraits have always been best created by novelists (“Good Friends” 173) which holds true of LotR and HP.

An essential value of fantasy in a technological society is the opportunity it provides for children to recognize the connection between individuals and society. In an era of virtual friends, television talk-shows and video games that seem more real than their own relatives or living rooms, stories of heroes like Frodo and Harry, who are so closely bound with their respective societies, provide for an increasing need for children to find such personal connections. Therefore, reading children are better balanced and more in control of themselves and their emotions and surroundings, than those who clamour for the newest videogames. This power of fantasy to engage its readers accounts for the wide popularity of LotR and HP.

Like all other cultural elements, children’s literature too has been subjected to “adultification” in the changing perspectives of the various social institutions and the merging of the tastes and styles of children and adults. As the concept of childhood diminishes and the symbolic markers of childhood too diminish with it, the values, styles, tastes and language of children and adults merge into a homogeneity.
Consequently, there arises an “adultified” child and a “childified adult”, resulting in an erosion of a traditional distinction between children and adults (Postman, *Disappearance of Childhood*). Ultimately, the individual alone is powerful enough to resist the prevailing cultural trend where continuity, self-discipline, self-restraint, hard work, family relationships and moral standards are of little worth. Stories that inculcate these values, are in effect defying the directives of the prevailing culture. They are not only creating intellectual elite of successful adults and civilized human beings, but also helping those child readers who imbibe the values that these stories present them, to have their childhood. Fantasies like *LotR* and *HP* reveal truths about mankind and oneself to the child and to the adult, who like Socrates, knows that there is still a child in the wisest of us.

In a world where childhood erodes at a pace fast enough to meet an adulthood which is already retarded into an extended childhood, fantasy provide coping skills. It gives a new perspective, an altered mirror that reveals our world of reality and its experiences in a metaphorical way and also addresses the psychological needs of readers. As a result, a reader can identify with the problems of growing up of Harry or the moral decisions of Frodo in a deeper, symbolic level. In the act of experiencing something clearly and completely different from oneself, the reader becomes actually aware of who and what he or she is. The coming-of-age story of the hero helps the young adult who leaves home to find home, to find his/her place in the world and the truth about oneself and one’s world. “The journey in fantasy is a circular one, taking us “There and Back Again”; we lose our way in the wilderness of fantasy so that we may find our way back home” (Rabkin 70). Only by going out into the world and, relinquishing one’s infantile dependency wishes on the way to achieve a more
satisfying independent existence, can the fantasy hero (and the reader too) find himself/herself there.

Childhood and children’s literature are defined by the culture’s need and desires for the next generation. So the changing literature for the young including dark matters such as violence and injustice is a healthy response to a different world. Stories of fantasy, abundant in the basic virtues of resilience, empathy, self-control and a respect for others help children to combat increased aggression, fear, desensitization and an appetite for violence which are the four main effects of viewing violence. Frodo and Harry Potter, through their resistance in the face of aggression and violence, their self-control, respect for themselves and for others when faced with absolute and remorseless evil and their empathy not only for the victims of suffering but also for the victims of evil like Gollum or Pettigrew, provide children with life-lessons indispensable for human thriving. Their stories reaffirm the faith that despite its darkness the world is good and people can find joy, making fantasy the most viable means for children to cope with social evils like violence, terrorism and war, and also inspiring young adults to attempt to change the world one individual at a time, through the wisdom that they find in fantasy.

Fantasy and violence are antithetically related. Fantasy takes a reader to a secondary world of enchantment, while the violence depicted in it makes him aware of the stark reality of a disenchanted primary world. Violence in the fantastic, by contrast, helps the reader to achieve Recovery, by helping to regain a clearer view of reality through enchantment. Fantasy stories like LotR and HP, which are the results of the “desire of man to impose a pattern on what mystifies and frightens him” (Storr 72) re-enchant, by removing us from everyday world and prompting to look at the ordinary in fresh ways. They teach, in their own ways, that the world is a wild and startling place,
which might have been quite different, but which is quite delightful. In the present world, where a child faces insecurity in the family, and violence and disintegration in the community, it is important to provide him with images of heroes who have to go out into the wild world all by themselves and who find secure places by following the right way with great moral strengths - like Frodo and like Harry.

Fantasy stories, when dealing with fictional violence makes for the young people similar connections. It offers a wider framework for understanding, thus becoming an important part of the total cultural experience of a young reader, prompting him to opt for positive causes. A young adult fed on the cultural experience offered by thoughtful books would be the one to bridge human gaps his parents and elders may have failed to achieve, the one to expand his consciousness without drugs or other stimulants and the one to fight injustice out of strong compassion rather than strong passion without reason.

Children need the experience of fantasy as an essential part of growing up. The strong emotions and the moments of triumph or despair that they identify with and respond to are a part of their inner lives, lives which are richer and more complex than we might have imagined, on both an unconscious and conscious level. This exploration of the realm of fantasy is a child’s best way to enlarge from within, putting as flexible a frame as possible around his adult world; in such a world a person will be never bored or cornered. If the unchartered provinces beyond reality are a playground of healthy childhood and a coaching centre for creative adult life, should we not be concerned about the child who avoids fantasy and prefers to stay in a narrow world devoid of the extraordinary, where he may grow up unable either to identify or enjoy the dragons and the sleeping princesses of the real world? These are some of the lessons that adults
learn from fantasy and so they too turn to authors like Tolkien, Lewis and Rowling in an effort to ‘sort things out’.

The children’s story of a shifting world is also the naked subterranean story of our adult days. A good children’s story is not one written for adults, rather a good children’s story is the story of the making of adulthood. Cross-over writing is something to do with sympathy with the young mind, with a concern for the ‘grace’ of being young. Children’s literature needs to express and exemplify that concern, while maintaining an adult integrity within a children’s book and making the adult voice audible to young readers. “If a children’s book is any good, it is already a cross over book – by virtue of its quality, its honesty, its integrity. It is the readers who must grow up, not the literature” (Watson 128). *LotR* is Tolkien’s answer to his own insistence that fantasy is for the adults; the cross – over appeal of *HP* has made it a house-hold favourite for all ages.

Fantasy is regarded as mere escapism. Healthy escape does not confuse fiction and reality; it is not denial of reality or an inability to cope with the real world. The spirit needs to refresh itself; the mind needs to play; the imagination needs to stretch. Fantasy supplies this recreation, restoration and renewal. Fantasy allows escape and produces hope simultaneously. It is important for young people as well as adults to experience the hope and feel the joy which fantasy provides, helping them to return to this world refreshed, able to take up their particular loads again. Author Tamora Pierce writes, “I visited Tolkien’s Mordor often for years, not because I liked what went on there, but because on that dead horizon and then throughout the sky overhead, I could see the interplay and the lasting power of light and hope. It got me through” (50-1).

Fantasy, being open to its many interpretations can be contradictory. It can represent post-modern instability as well as pre-modern concepts of continuity, because
it is stylistically conservative. Post modernism does not offer any solution to this problem and rather reflect the impossibility of attaining stability. The scouring of the Shire and the dwindling of the Elves and Men at the end of the Third Age in *LotR* show that stability and consistency are unattainable, and therefore unimportant. In *HP* good finally wins, but only with much loss and irreparable damage. What matters is the ability to adapt to new circumstances and refresh the self in the world that is being refashioned, as Sam does in a renewed Shire or Harry does in his wizard world.

Fantasy, thus is appropriate for a post-modern text, being open to a multiplicity of interpretations, as it is based on an imaginary experience. This shift from a focus on stability to a focus on growth reflects a cultural shift away from protecting children towards exposing them to life’s problems, so that they are better prepared for the instability that they will inevitably face. Middle-earth and Hogwarts are set in a peaceful and stable world which is self-healing through renewal and re-enchantment by maintaining links with the past and by rebuilding after trauma.

Modernity had left the world disenchanted, de-spiritualized, de-animated and denied the capacity of subject, in its war of liberation against mystery and magic. What modernity had presumptuously taken away, post-modernism tries hard to restore through re-enchantment, but often through a pseudo-enchantment of addiction to entertainment, sex and possessions. The hallmark of re-enchantment is non-utilitarian and open-ended response called wonder achieved through the imagined wonder of fantasy. Fantasy is the answer to the modern world’s disenchantment from the inner world of fantasy, mystery and spirit - through re-enchantment and by a re-sacralization of living nature and living in nature.

The literary mythologies of Tolkien and Rowling can be seen as remedies for ‘pathological modernity’, as they speak of a pre-modern world of values and the hope
for its recovery. Their liberation from the chains of circumstances makes these stories especially vital in an age of disenchantment. They not only help to imagine wonder but also realize it by returning to our world and seeing it afresh, offering re-enchantment and renewal; not through escapism, but through reconnection and recovery. As fantasies, they recover for us the innate and deep hunger for mystery, for spirit and for glory. In the sense that post-modernism is a return to and a celebration of enchantment, *LotR* and *HP* can be said to be post-modern, and fantasy genre which they represent can be termed post-modern, and not outdated or mediocre. However, alongside with the renewal, it is also the passing away of many fair things; so even recovery from evil only opens on to the existential reality of life and death. “This maturity is the final glory of a legacy all too rare in contemporary literature and one indeed to celebrate” (Curry, “Modernity”39).

The path to re-enchantment lies in recovering the collected wisdom of the human race, made accessible through stories in the form of folktales, myths and legends which develop (or repair) our capacity for wonder, our ability to make believe and make belief. The literature of fantasy appeal to us so deeply “because it echoes within us lessons that we lose at peril of losing essential qualities of our humanity–amazement, wonder and mystery” (Raboteau 396-97). Escapism results from losing sight of the interconnectedness of both the worlds- the ordinary and the wondrous, and yielding to the power of one world. Tolkien and Rowling achieve their success because they strictly separate the secondary world from the primary, having a clear view of reality, sacrificing neither for the other. Re-enchantment is a mature consciousness and return of a previously disenchanted mind to true wisdom, through transformation of the mind into the heart, of the whole person, which brings back the sense of wonder that leads to fantasies. The wisdom of humanity resides and is perpetuated in fantasy; ignore
them, or not bother to recover our desire for them, and humanity will lose the collective wisdom passed down to it through these stories.

Good and evil, death and suffering, defeat and victory, love of family and friends, moral effort and temptation, joy and rebirth all continue throughout our lives; yet they occur in their greatest intensity in the confrontations and discoveries of adolescence. Hence we need literatures of repeated rituals and renewals to fight our battles, to win our loves and to face our deaths over and over again and above all, to re-enchant us. Fantasies like *LotR* and *HP* provide such renewals and rebirths, where innocence is tested and virtue is successful, not fugitive or cloistered but having borne the heat and burden of the day. Children’s books can be said to be at the forefront of this process of possible renewal currently affecting the whole of literature. The development of cross-over fiction might be a hint at this renewal which allows adventurous authors to explore more widely and challenge more sharply in children’s literature than in adult literature. Philip Pullman echoes this clearly: “Children’s books, for various reasons, at this time in our literary history, open out on a wideness and amplitude – a moral and mental spaciousness that adult literary fiction seems to have turned its back on” (qtd. Lenz 38).

It is on the part of critics to examine whether this is true, whether it is to the advantage of young readers and also whether this has helped children’s literature to come of age. Modern novelists have turned to fantasy as an appropriate idiom for contemporary fiction, which points to an important function of children’s literature in culture. In times of anxiety, transition and change, fantasy becomes a medium for writers to explore their own restlessness and that of the historical moment they live in. When genres fall out of favour in mainstream fiction, in the realm of children’s literature, they subtly metamorphose into modes suitable for the new readers. In
fantasy this is closely related to what Jung calls the collective unconscious, resulting in forms that are rich in archetypes and resonances.

As the electronic media becomes important in narrative transmission, fantasy is becoming increasingly complex in form, adapting to the media. Text is no longer ‘just’ the book; the back stories, the prequels, the games, the products and the parallel stories produced on websites by other authors and imaginative spaces shared by bloggers are also important. The multiple texts of HP have revolutionized the concept of narration. Imaginations all over the media across the world combine to form fluid corporate fantasies. Thus fantasy is becoming interactive, unpredictable and transitory. In short, there is a change in the way we understand stories, and fantasy is leading the way. New critical modes and research are required to appreciate and understand the multi-verse of fantasy. A statement of faith in fantasy that reflects the complexities and paradoxes that we are dealing with is what is needed in this age, for, as Chesterton affirms, “[f]antasy [reminds us that the soul is sane] but the universe is wild and full of marvels “(Gardner155).
End Notes

1. bildungsroman - novels of transition and coming-of-age of an adolescent; labelled so by critics such as Susanne Howe, G.B.Tennyson and Jerome Buckley.

2. hornbook - a printed sheet tacked onto a paddle of wood and covered with a transparent film of horn to protect it.

3. battledores - cardboard folds where lessons are written on one side of Dutch paper decorated with gilt and sometimes illustrated with woodcuts.

4. chapbook - books of 16, 32 or 64 pages

5. penny dreadfuls - nineteenth century lurid serial storie published in Britain featuring cheap sensational fiction, appearing in parts over a number of weeks, each part costing a penny.

6. learned helplessness - feeling of powerlessness to protect oneself and one’s family which makes one feel useless.


8. squib - a person of the wizarding family with no magical talents.