CHAPTER - I

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Until recently it has been generally assumed that fantasy is for children. Only children, so adults condescendingly reasoned, were uncritical and gullible enough to enjoy literature about magic or fairies. But since the paperback edition of the works of Tolkien was published in 1965, adults have begun to learn what children instinctively knew that fantasy, when written well, is both entertaining and serious literature. It can be read with equal (though different) appreciation by the child, the adolescent and the adult. With this renewal of interest in fantasy literature, a number of neglected talents in this field have been rediscovered. Works of popular writers have been reprinted a number of times. In the past 35 years, more critical works on the genre of 'fantasy' have appeared than in any other decade of the period.

Another intriguing development in fantasy is the current popularity of cinema and television adaptations of fantasy works. Television producers have undertaken full-scale productions of fantasy classics. Appearing with even more regularity are cinema adaptations of fantasy works. Fantasy enthusiasts desiring visual presentations of their
favourite fantasy settings and characters do not rely solely upon television and the cinema. At no other time in history have the works of fantasy artists, both old and new, been so readily available and accessible. This unprecedented accessibility constitutes a major healthy development in this field.

'Fantasy' in fact is both a literary and a psychological term. As a psychological term 'fantasy' has three meanings. It may refer to an imaginative construction which in some way or the other pleases a person and is mistaken by him for reality. A woman in this condition imagines that some famous person is in love with her. A man believes that he is the long-lost son of noble and wealthy parents and that he will soon be discovered, acknowledged and overwhelmed with luxuries and honours. The commonest events are twisted, often not without ingenuity, into evidence for the treasured belief. This connotation does not concern me in the present study.

Secondly it may mean a pleasing imaginative construction entertained incessantly, and to his injury, by a person, but without the delusion that it is a reality. A waking dream - known to be such by the dreamer - of military or erotic triumphs, of power or grandeur, even of mere popularity, is either monotonously reiterated or elaborated year after year. It becomes the chief source of consolation
and almost the only pleasure of the dreamer's life. Into "this invisible riot of the mind, this secret prodigality of being" he retires whenever the necessities of life set him free. Realities, even such realities as delight other men, appear insipid to him. He becomes incapable of all the efforts needed to achieve happiness. The imaginary Don Juan will take no pains to make himself agreeable to any woman he comes across. We can call this activity Morbid Castle-Building.

Thirdly, it may connote the activity indulged in moderately and briefly as a temporary relief or recreation, duly subordinated to more effective and outgoing activities. Whether a man is wiser to live with none of this at all in his life, we need not perhaps discuss, for no one does. Nor does such reverie always end in itself. What one actually does is often one dreamed of doing. The books one writes were the books which, in a day dream, one pictured oneself writing—though, of course, never quite so perfect. This may be called Normal Castle-Building.

In the present chapter, however, we are concerned not with the psychological but with the literary implications of the word "fantasy". As a literary term, "Fantasy means any narrative that deals with impossibles and preternaturals" [C.S. Lewis]. For Lloyd Alexander, "fantasies are works in which the major action takes place
According to Marshal B. Tymn, in a secondary world, fantasy, as a literary genre, is composed of works in which non-rational phenomena play a significant part. That is, they are works in which events occur or places or creatures exist, that could not occur or exist according to rational standards or scientific explanations. The non-rational phenomena of fantasy simply do not fall within human experience or accord with natural laws as we know them. Thus history as we know it does not record that someone pulled a sword from a stone or that someone forged a ring of power to control nine other rings of lesser power in Middle Earth. If such events or places are recorded, we regard the source not as history or as realistic fiction, but as fantasy. The presence of non-rational phenomena, then, is the principal criterion for distinguishing fantasy from history or from other types of literature. Mainstream literature, of course, deals with life in this (our) world, and in fact puts a premium on verisimilitude - on the appearance of reality and the laws that govern it - as it is perceived by the majority of people. Fantasy, on the other hand, has its own natural laws, which differ from the generally accepted ones.

"The Ancient Mariner", Gulliver's Travels, The Witch of Atlas, Alice in Wonderland and Apuleius's Metamorphoses are some of the famous fantasies. They are, of course, very heterogeneous in spirit and purpose. The only common factor
in them in the fantastic element. Eric S. Rabkin observes, "The fantastic is a special quality that we have seen as the defining quality in the genre of Fantasy". He adds, "A real Fantasy uses the fantastic so essentially and so constantly that one never escapes its grip into the security of a fully-tamed world for more than a moment."

What is the fantastic effect and how is it created? What are various types of themes which the writer chooses to create this effect? What types of structures does the writer of fantasies generally prefer? What type of language is more suitable for the writing of fantasies? What are the other genres which use "the fantastic" in some degree and of some kind, yet fail to be included in the list of pure fantasies? Why do readers of all ages enjoy fantasies? What functions does fantasy literature perform? All these questions are related to the literary meaning of Fantasy.

Explaining the fantastic effect in his book The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre, Todorov writes that in a world which is our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of the two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination - and laws of the world then remain what they
are; or else the event has indeed taken place and it is an integral part of reality but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us. The devil may be an illusion, an imaginary being or may really exist, like other living beings, with the reservation that we may encounter him infrequently. The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we have chosen the either possibility, we leave the fantastic for a neighbouring genre, the uncanny or the marvellous. The fantastic is the hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event.

Todorov avers that the fantastic lasts only as a certain hesitation, common to the reader and character (of the story), who must decide whether or not what they perceive derives from "reality" as it exists. At the end of the story, the reader makes a decision even if the character does not; he opts for one solution or the other, and thereby emerges from the fantastic. If he decides that the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomena described, we say that the work belongs to another genre: The Uncanny. On the contrary if he decides that new laws of nature must be postulated to account for the phenomena, we enter the genre of the Marvellous.

The fantastic, therefore, leads a life full of dangers, and may evaporate at a moment. It seems to be
located on the frontier of two genres, the marvellous and the uncanny, rather than being an autonomous genre. One of the greatest periods of supernatural literature, that of the Gothic novel, seems to confirm this observation. Indeed, we generally distinguish within the literary gothic, two tendencies: that of the Supernatural explained (the Uncanny), as it appears in the novels of Clara Reeve and Ann Radcliffe, and that of the Supernatural accepted (the marvellous) which is characteristic of the works of Horace Walpole and M.G. Lewis. Here we do not find the fantastic in the strict sense, but only genres adjacent to it. More precisely, the effect of the fantastic is certainly produced, but during only a portion of our reading: in Ann Radcliffe, up to the moment when we are sure that everything which has happened is susceptible of a rational explanation; in M.G. Lewis, up to the moment when we are sure that the supernatural events will receive no explanation. Once we have finished reading, we understand—in both cases—that what we call the fantastic has not existed. To quote Todorov again, "The reader's hesitation is, therefore, the first condition of the fantastic".8

Whereas for Todorov, the fantastic effect of a work lies in the "hesitation" it creates in the reader (also in the main character) who finds himself in the dilemma "to believe or not to believe", for Eric S. Rabkin, the same lies in the "astonishment" which the reader (along with the
leading character) experiences when he encounters something unexpected. Rabkin says that we enter a narrative world with the preconceptions of our arm-chair world intact, which undergo change just as the narrative reconfigures them. In our world, the animals, birds and plants do not speak. Their speaking is unexpected in the sense of anti-expected. When the anti-expected happens, we are in the presence of the fantastic. Rabkin remarks, "The fantastic is a quality of astonishment that we feel when the ground rules of a narrative world are suddenly, made to turn about 180°. We recognise this reversal in the reactions of characters, the statements of narrators, and implications of structure, all playing on and against our whole experience as people and readers."9

II

After having described the fantastic effect, we may examine various types of themes which help the writer in creating this effect. Since the fantastic is only a special perception of the uncanny events, we must examine in detail the "uncanny events" themselves. The fantastic text may or may not be characterized by a certain "style". But without "uncanny events" the fantastic cannot even appear. The fantastic, however, does not consist of only these events, but they constitute its necessary elements.
Some critics have tried to classify themes. Dorothy Scarborough, in one of the first books concerned with this question, *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction*, proposes the following classification: modern ghosts; the devil and his allies; supernatural life. Penzoldt affords a more detailed division (in his chapter entitled "The Detailed Motif"): ghosts, phantoms, werewolves, witches, and witchcraft; invisible beings, the animal spectres. Vax proposes a very similar list: werewolves; vampires; parts of the human body; the pathology of personality; the interplay of invisible and visible; the alternations of causality, space and time; regression. Cailloux in *Images, Images* offers an even more detailed classification. He mentions the following thematic classes: the pact with the devil (e.g. *Faust*), the anguished soul that requires, in order to achieve rest, that a certain action be performed (e.g. 'The Token'); the spectre doomed to an incoherent and endless journey (e.g. *Melmoth*), death personified appearing among the living (e.g. "The Masque of Red Death"); the undefinable, invisible 'thing' that haunts ("The House Surgeon"); Vampires, e.g. the dead who obtain perpetual youth by sucking the blood of the living; the statue, figure, suit of armor, or automaton that suddenly comes to life and acquires a deadly independence; the magician's curse involving a dreadful and supernatural disease (e.g. 'The Mark of the Beast'), the phantom woman, appearing from
the beyond, the inversion of the realms of dream and reality, the room, apartment, house or street erased from space, the cessation or repetition of time (e.g. The Saragossa Manuscript).

Todorov adds a few things to the lists of themes mentioned above. According to him, 'metamorphoses' is the first important theme of the fantasies. In fantasies, we have generally men changing themselves into animals and birds. Secondly we have many fantasies based on the very existence of supernatural beings, such as the genie and the princess - sorceress, and on their power over human destiny. "This is one of the constants of the literature of the fantastic: the existence of beings more powerful than men."¹⁰

These supernatural beings compensate for a deficient causality. The fairy who assures a character's fortunate destiny is merely the incarnation of an imaginary causality for what might just as well be called chance, fortune, accident. The wicked genie who interrupts the amorous frolic in the Calendar's Tale is none other than the hero's bad luck. But the words luck or chance are excluded from this part of the fantastic world. Fairies and genie represent the work of Good Luck and Bad Luck. In the fantastic world, we touch a ring and candles flare up; we throw something and the flood recedes. In other words, the
line of demarcation between the physical and the mental, between the matter and spirit, between word and thing, ceases to be impervious. Thus we may make a hypothesis as to a generating principle of all the themes collected in this paragraph: "the transition from mind to matter has become possible".11

**Multiplication of personality** is a recurrent theme of fantasies. We all experience ourselves as if we were several persons; here the impression will be incarnated on the level of physical reality. The *Effacement of the limit* between subject and object is another theme. The rational schema represents the human being as a subject entering into relations with other persons or with things that remain external to him, and which have the status of objects. The literature of the fantastic disturbs this abrupt separation.

**Transformation of Time and Space** is another theme. The time and space of the supernatural world, as they are described in the fantastic texts, are not the time and space of everyday life. Here time seems suspended; it extends beyond what one imagines to be possible. Space is transformed in a similar way.

The other common trait that characterizes a work that has passed through the world of fantasy is the *vision of escape*. Boredom is one of the shackles of the human mind.
The fantastic offers escape from this prison. In some works of the fantastic, escape is the means of exploration of an unknown land, a land which is the underside of the mind of man. Many fantasies offer an escape from the harsh realities of the present. Rabkin remarks, "Most Fantasies are atavistic; they hearken to an earlier historical era or an earlier personal era, both times are distinguished from the adult present in that they are not progressive times laden with responsibilities and future death." 

III

After having explained the thematic aspects of a fantasy, we shall now discuss its stylistic aspects. In pure fantasies, the narrator generally (not always) uses the first person singular "I". What is given in the author's name in the text escapes the test of truth; the speech of the characters can be true or false, as in everyday life. The detective story, for example, plays constantly on the false testimony of the characters. The problem becomes more complex in the case of a narrator-character i.e. a narrator who says "I". As narrator, his discourse is not subject to the test of truth; but as a character, he can lie.

The represented ('dramatised') narrator is, therefore, quite suitable to the fantastic. He is preferable to the simple character who can easily lie. But he is also preferable to the non-represented narrator, and this for two
reasons. First if a supernatural event were reported to us by such a narrator, we should immediately be in the marvellous; there would be no occasion, in fact, to doubt his words. But the fantastic, as we know, requires doubt. It is no accident that the tales of the marvellous rarely employ the first person. [It is not found in Arabian Nights]. They have no need of it; their supernatural universe is not intended to awaken doubts. The fantastic confronts us with a dilemma, to believe or not to believe? The marvellous achieves this impossible union without really believing. Secondly, and this is related to the very definition of the fantastic, the first person narrator most readily permits the reader to identify with the character, since as we know the pronoun 'I' belongs to everyone. Thus we enter as directly as possible into the universe of the fantastic.

In many tales with the element of the fantastic, the inexplicable events are narrated by someone who is not only one of the heroes of the story but also its narrator; he is a man like anyone else and his language is doubly worthy of confidence. In other words, while the events are supernatural, the narrator is natural. These are excellent conditions for the appearance of the fantastic. [In most of Kipling's ghost-tales, the supernatural events are narrated by a person who is one of the heroes as well as its
narrator]. To sum up we might say that the represented (or dramatized) narrator is suitable for the fantastic, for he facilitates the necessary identification of the reader with the characters. This narrator's discourse has an ambiguous status, and authors have variously exploited it, exphasizing one or another of its aspects: as the narrator's the discourse lies outside the test of truth; as the character's it must pass this test.

IV

Todorov and his contemporaries use the word 'fantasy' only for those works which contain some incident which can be interpreted in psychological as well as supernatural way. The narrator as well as the reader hesitates between the two explanations. Todorov and his followers refuse to use the world 'fantasy' for fairy-tales, myths, murder-mysteries, horror fiction, science fiction and utopian fiction. But critics like Neil Cornwell find this definition to be "too narrow."

Kath Filmer, Marshall B. Tymn, Kenneth J. Zahorski, Robert H. Boyer and others have used the phrase "pure fantastic" for the stories which satisfy all the conditions laid by Todorov for a story to belong to the genre of fantastic. They have mentioned a number of subgenres of the genre of fantasy. According to them, there are nine subgenres of the genre of fantasy, which are — (i) animal fantasy (ii) myth fantasy (iii) fairy
According to Todorov, fairy tales are sometimes more fantastic than even certain fantasies. But the fairytales have a whole set of perspectives that exist in another world altogether. Tolkien names this land Faerie, and defines fairy-tales this way, "...fairy-story is one which touches on or uses Faerie, whatever its main purpose may be: satire, adventure, morality, fantasy." By this phrasing, Tolkien first makes a point he will make over and over: fairy tales are not true fantasies, though they may contain what he calls 'fantasy', an aspect of imaginative subcreation present in all art. He continues: "Faerie itself may perhaps most nearly be translated by Magic—but it is magic of a peculiar mood and power, at the further pole from the vulgar devices of the laborious, scientific, magician." Later in the essay, Tolkien renames this magic and calls it Enchantment. Faerie then becomes the world of Enchantment. The characters, unlike Alice in the garden of talking flowers, show no astonishment at the talking frog. In this world, fairies are invited to christening; there are foreknown rules of how much one fairy's spell can offset another's, and the prophecy of the pricked finger is as believed, and as confirmed, as the frog's prophecy of Briar Rose's birth. Within this world of enchantment, everything happens according to rule.
Luthi, too, remarks that fairy-tale heroes live in a world of foreknown and stable rules: "... miracles, astonishing and central to legends are a matter of course in the fairy tale."17 The fairy-tale hero does not ponder over the mysterious forces or where his helpers come from; everything he experiences seems natural to him and he is carried along by this help, which he has earned often without his knowledge. Supernatural events in fairy-tales provoke no surprise; neither a hundred years sleep, nor a talking wolf, nor the magical gifts of the fairies. Although the world of enchantment is more fantastic than the world of some fantasies even, yet it is still a stable world which does not produce continuing astonishment, nor does it reverse its own ground rules. Alice in Wonderland, on the other hand, does.

**Detective story** or Murder Mystery approaches the fantastic but it is also the opposite of the fantastic. In fantastic texts we tend to prefer the supernatural explanation; the detective story, once it is over, leaves no doubt as to the absence of supernatural events. Further, the emphasis differs in the two genres: in the detective story, the emphasis is placed on the solution to the mystery; in the texts linked to the uncanny (as in the fantastic narrative), the emphasis is on the reactions which this mystery produces.
Pornography feeds the fantasy that sexual fulfilment comes easily and without the onus of emotional involvement. Although in normal life an easy liaison is unusual, and series of a dozen a week is stretching probability considerably, no fictional series of sexual encounters of itself contradicts possibility. Horror fiction, on the other hand, in its creation of supernatural or other worldly terrors, contradicts possibility quite often. In this sense, horror fiction is more radically fantastic than pornography, though neither of them belongs to the genre of pure fantasy. Science fiction and utopian fiction also make use of the fantastic, though they also cannot be termed as pure fantasies.

Marshall B. Tymn, Kenneth J. Zahorski and Robert H. Boyer have given an all embracing definition of fantasy in their book *Fantasy Literature*. According to these authors and Kath Filmer, the writer of *The Victorian Fantasists* and *Twentieth - Century Fantasists*, there are nine types of fantasies - (i) animal fantasy (ii) myth fantasy (iii) fairy fantasy (iv) gothic fantasy (v) sword and sorcery fantasy (vi) heroic fantasy (vii) science fantasy (viii) utopian fantasy (ix) feminist fantasy.

*Animal fantasy* is the oldest form of fantasy. Earlier it was known as beast fable. These animal fantasies, such as Aesop wrote or as George Orwell has more recently
written in *Animal Farm*, draw our attention to their lessons, not because the lessons are themselves so different from what we are used to hearing, but because we are surprised and charmed by animals that can talk in our world.

Myth fantasy consists of those stories which posit supernatural causality. There are three types of myth fantasies: retellings, modern adaptations, and new inventions. Kenneth Morris's *Fates of the Princes of Dyfed* and *Book of the Three Dragons* are the retellings of the celtic myths, as contained in *Mabinogion*. C.S. Lewis has written an adaptation of Cupid and Psyche myth in *Till We Have Faces*, an adaptation of the Adam and Eve Myth in *Perelandra* and an adaptation of the redemption myth in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, to name only a few of his myth adaptations. The third category, new invention, consists of tales that might be analogous to traditional myths, but tell of completely different gods and events. Lord Dunsany's *Gods of Pegana* is an early example whereas Tolkien's *Silmarillion* is the supreme achievement in this category.

Fairy-fantasies are closely related to myth fantasies. Tolkien uses the terms "high myth" for myth proper and "low myth" for fairy fantasies. The latter have in fact descended directly from the former. The difference is that in the fairy-fantasies the gods have faded as
supernatural forces, but their powers remain in the form of magic. The supernatural powers of the deities of myth become, in fairy fantasies, the unstable forces of magic. Thus magic is a derivative of supernatural power and the fairy fantasy is the offspring of myth-fantasy.

Gothic fantasy is the fourth type of fantasy. Weird tales which offer rational explanation are not fantasy; but if they eschew such rationalisations, they are fantasy. Todorov calls these fantasies "pure fantasies" whereas gothic fantasy is the more acceptable term for these kinds of fantasy. When we use the term 'gothic' we are not concerned so much with the particular literary characteristics of a formal genre, such as the gothic novel, as with what we consider to be the very essence of gothicism - that is, human kind's archetypal fascination with, and fear of, the unknown and the unnatural. It is this profound sense of dread that is at the very heart of the genuine gothic fantasy, and only if the author can imbue the reader with the same feelings of dread and apprehension that are felt by the characters themselves has he passed the test. There are many ways in which an author can convey this sense of dread, but the key to success lies in the creation of an effective ambience. Thus it is this unique ambience with its resultant suspense and emotional impact that characterizes the true gothic tale; and it is this fundamental element that must be present in a work of literature to be
categorised as gothic fantasy. This form of fantasy has fascinated more authors than any other form of fantasy. Arthur Conan Doyle, Algernon Blackwood, H. Rider Haggard, William Hope Hodgson, H.P. Lovecraft, M.R. James, T.H. White and Ursula K. Le Guin are some of the famous writers who wrote gothic fantasies.

"Sword and Sorcery" fantasy, as Lin Carter puts it, is that kind of fantastic fiction where heroes are pretty much heroic, the villains thoroughly villainous, and action of the derring-do variety takes the place of sober social commentary or serious psychological introspection.\(^{18}\) In a word, the sword and sorcery fantasy is written primarily to entertain. According to Marshall B. Tymn, sword and sorcery fantasy must have these four characteristics.\(^{19}\) First, it must have a barbarian superhero as its central figure. He is fierce, sometimes foolhardy, warrior who hacks his way through battle after battle, leaving piles of mangled bodies in his bloody wake. The second identifying trait of the sword and sorcery fantasy is its emphasis upon action. The reader is irresistibly catapulted along by the swift progression of action packed episodes. The third distinguishing feature is the lack of thematic substance. Here the reader finds action for action's sake, and is rarely intellectually challenged. Finally, the fantasies of this kind are characterized by an extreme emphasis upon
gratuitous and sensational violence. Robert E. Howard, Lin Carter, L. Sprague de Camp and John Jakes - the creators of barbarian superheroes like Conan the Cimmerian, Thongor of Lemuria and Brak the Barbarian - have created fantasies of this kind.

The sixth type of fantasy is known as "Heroic fantasy." Those writers who truly attempt to recreate the medieval epic and romance forms, and who feature in their works heroic actions motivated by serious purpose, are bonafide members of the school of heroic fantasy (as distinct from sword and sorcery fantasy which has "serious thought" left out). Diana Waggoner defines Heroic fantasy in these words: "As a recreation of the medieval epic and romance forms, heroic fantasy lends itself to the creation of wholly different geographies, but it is not confined to them. **Heroic behaviour** is possible in any setting and is the real criterion of this type. It means that physical courage and exciting events are not enough; every action must have a serious thought."²⁰ William Morris, Lord Dunsany, E.R. Eddison and J.R.R. Tolkien are some of the famous writers who have written heroic fantasies.

**Science fantasy** is a relatively new direction in high fantasy. It is a type of fantasy that offers scientific explanation for the existence of the secondary world, and, usually, for the portal by which one can pass from the
primary to the secondary world. Once in this secondary world, which is the principal setting of the work, magical causality takes the spotlight, and this remains non-rational, unexplained by science. In science fantasy, the major focus is on the magical secondary world; in most, but not all cases, science and the primary world are soon forgotten. Jules Verne and H.G. Wells are some of the famous writers of science fantasies. C.S. Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet* and Poul Anderson's *Three Hearts and Three Lions* and *A Midsummer Tempest* are some of the popular science fantasies of the modern times.

Utopian fantasy is another popular form of fantasy. In such fantasies, the writers create utopias. "Utopia," as Robert C. Elliot puts it, "is the application of man's reason and his will to the myth of the Golden Age; man's effort to work out imaginatively what happens - or might happen - when the primal longings embodied in the myth confront the principle of reality. In this effort man no longer merely dreams of a divine state in some remote time: he assumes the role of a creator." Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* and William Morris's *News from Nowhere* are some of the popular utopian fantasies. A utopian fantasy is not a fanciful departure or escape from that everyday reality; it is a vital part of that reality. William Morris's *News from Nowhere* which is only one of the hundreds of utopian fantasies written in English in the first decade of the
nineteenth century exemplifies the use made of utopian fantasy at this time to discuss contemporary society.

**Feminist fantasy** is the ninth type of fantasy. Feminist writers claim that the non-mimetic nature of fantasy allows them to construct incidents and characters impossible in realist fiction. They can, therefore, use fantasy as a way to explore both the oppression of women in contemporary society - the situations in which women are oppressed and the stereotypical representations of women (and men) which facilitate this oppression - and new kinds of social organisation which would liberate women from the economic and social oppression they now experience. Having scrutinised the category of the "real" and found it to be phallocentric construct, they use the fantastic to deconstruct that reality, realign, reform it and so constitute a critical practice which has unlimited subversive potential. This use of fantasy is consciously and publicly political. It is aimed at the structures and institutions of our society as the determinants of our reality. This conscious politicization of fantasy was a major characteristic of late nineteenth century feminist fantasy.

V

Fantasy has always remained a popular mode of writing. It has always been enjoyed by people of all ages
and classes. One of the reasons why fantasy has been the most favourite form of literature with all kinds of readers is that it has "therapeutic" power. Fairy tales and myth-based fantasies help the young readers by defusing anxieties and resolving emotional conflicts, as Bruno Bettelhein analyses them in *The Uses of Enchantment*. Even if this were its only function, it would still be a vital one. But, while adults may overcome infantile conflicts, they acquire others no less acute; and, no less than children do they need ways that help them make sense of their inner and other worlds. Fantasy operates on adults with the same strength as on the young. An adult may respond to fantasy on one level, a child on another. But respond they do. Magic does not discriminate according to age, sex or ethnic origin.

Secondly, fantasy, as in all true magic, declines to reveal its ultimate secret. We may only guess. We recognize its power to refresh, to give new perspectives, to fill us, in Tolkien's words, with "awe and wonder."; and certainly to delight us and entertain us - itself no mean feat. Effortlessly, it engages the deepest and most abstract questions of theology, cosmology and metaphysics. Or for the sheer joy, it plays like a juggler with ideas, relationships and possibilities. It can with equal ease, evoke ancient archetypes and resonances of the Jungian Collective unconscious; and simultaneously reflect the most immediate contemporary problems. Its meanings can be both clear and
elusive, suggestive yet never fully grasped. Lloyd Alexander has rightly said, "Great fantasy has the direct impact of a dream and the strength of a metaphor. Dreaming, indeed, is to consciousness what metaphor is to language. And what metaphor is to language, fantasy is to literature."22

Third function of fantasy literature is, as Roslynn D. Haynes puts it, "to expand our awareness, freeing it from its customary imprisonment in 'here and now'"23 Once we enter the world of fantasy, we are persuaded to shed the preconceptions and prejudices which in our normal world appear as iron-cast necessities, either forgetting them for as long as we are absorbed in the fantasy world, or, in more sophisticated treatments, questioning their validity, not only within the fantasy realm but subsequently on our return to the real world. This, of course, is the device used by much utopian literature in which there is an implicit purpose of social reform. Siebers also believes that fantasy literature is not a literature of escapism; on the contrary "it may be a means of examining and reinterpreting social formations."24

Thus fantasy literature is not "escapist nonsense" as some critics have said. What fantasy does, in fact, is to confront readers with inescapable, perhaps unpalatable, truths about the human condition - cultural, social, psychological and spiritual - and then to posit alternatives
which address the particular injustices, inequalities and oppressions with which the writer takes issue. Social change, cultural revigoration and spiritual regeneration can only be achieved through the painful procedures of admission of wrongs and then repentence; and facing, ultimately, the difficult task of social restructuring. There is no easy solution. Far from being escapist, fantasy literature may be at the very least morally discomfiting, its demands uncompromising, its ideals attainable only at great cost— involving self-sacrifice and self-denial, and finally the development and maintenance of an acute social conscience. Hence so long as writers are informed by the potency of metaphor as argument and as vision, they will feel tempted to write in this metaphorical mode of fiction which presents "not fact, but truth." So long as the man needs dreams and visions, not only to escape but also to confront reality, the writers will spin yarns hoping that one day the straw will become gold.
REFERENCES

2. Ibid., P.51.
3. Ibid., P.50.
7. Ibid., P. 218.
11. Ibid., P.114.


16. Ibid.


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