

The Reality and Permanence of Fantasy Literature

"Fantasy is hardly an escape from reality. It's a way of understanding it." (Lloyd Alexander)

The activity of reading implies, among other things, a process of actualization of the fictional world the readers are given access to. It is the instance when readers, have to decide what they believe and what may become factual as a result of their decision to read a particular book. In the case of a fantasy work, the readers are taken to another world that apparently has characteristics similar to the common, material one. But this world is also different from the material world since the fictional world can deny many of the laws of nature and, to a larger extent, even actual reality. The aura of realism of any fictional world is the result of the readers' unconscious decision to believe that what they see is true and actually exists or, at least, may be so. At any given moment the readers are aware of the fact that a certain fantasy world has established a link with theirs, has borrowed characteristics from theirs and has transferred them to another dimension and given them different shapes and functions. For example, C.S Lewis creates a transition between the actual world and Narnia through passages and portals, J.R.R. Tolkien in his Middle-Earth denies any connection to the actual world, even though he re-cycles his own experience from the First World War to generate his own mythology. Lewis Carroll's Wonderland is a distorted and grotesque reflection of Victorian England. Others, such as J.K. Rowling, create a different kind of transition by showing that both worlds are one and the same, but still different and less visible to uninitiated minds. George R.R. Martin's world is a surrealistic Jurassic park and hyper heroic replica of medieval society thrashed by dynastic wars. All these fantastic authors made use of the willing suspension of disbelief to initiate us into seeing and believing that there *was* something else beyond the confines of daily existence. The representations of the fantasy worlds make the readers become aware of the fact that, out there, other dimensions and relations exist. A string of back-to-reality translations, projections and re-creations can provide the knowledge and ability to better understand the real world. It can thus enable the readers to empathize with what they see and feel and realize that visiting a fantasy world does not necessarily mean departing from actual reality in an exercise of imagination but discovering that they are endowed with extra power and lucid vision to better perceive and understand the real world and existence.

In this context, the Summer 2019 issue of *The ESSE Messenger* invites contributors to submit articles on:

- (i) how the actual world may be reassembled and (re)presented as another possible, fictional or fantasy world;
- (ii) how the "willing suspension of belief" functions in the process of actualization of fantasy worlds;
- (iii) the possible embedded cognitive functions of fantasy literature of better knowing and comprehending our reality.