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CONSIDERING THE SENSE OF "FANTASY" OR "FANTASTIC FICTION": AN EFFUSION^{*}/
(1999-2001, 21,780 words)

[Le tourist naïf] frissonne au passage des chasses et des hordes. La comédie goutte sur les tréteaux de gazon. Et l'embarras des pauvres et des faibles sur ces plans stupides!... La même magie bourgeoise à tous les points où la malle nous déposera! Le plus élémentaire physicien sent qu'il n'est plus possible de se soumettre à cette atmosphère personnelle....

[The naive tourist shudders at the passing of hunts and hordes. Drama drips onto these lawn stages. And the superfluity of poor and weak people on those stupid levels!... The same bourgeois magic wherever our suitcase sets us down! Even the most rudimentary physicist knows it's no longer possible to submit to this individualist atmosphere.]

Arthur Rimbaud, "Soir historique," 1875

Der Kapitalismus war eine Naturerscheinung, mit der ein neuer Traumschlaf über Europa kam und in ihm eine Reaktivierung der mythischen Kräfte.

[Capitalism was a natural phenomenon with which a new dream-sleep overwhelmed Europe, and with it a reactivation of mythical powers.]

Walter Benjamin, 1930s

Managed affluence has slid into an anxiously managed but perhaps unmanageable depression. . . . It is then not surprising that the dominant messages are of danger and conflict, and that the dominant forms are of shock and loss.

Raymond Williams, 1979

O. Fantasy: Why Bother?

Si scopron le tombe, si levano i morti
I martiri nostri son tutti risorti.

Luigi Mercantini, 1859

[The graves do ope, our dead rise up/ Our martyrs have all
revived --Mercantini, "Hymn of Garibaldi"]

Criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers off the chain not
in order that people continue to bear that chain without fantasy
or consolation but in order that they throw off the chain and
pluck the living flower.

Karl Marx, 1843

Fantasy with a capital F is in the 20th Century a literary genre or group of genres^{1/} whose audience and characteristics are in a close though empirically confusing (multiple, unclear, love-hate, complementary, contradictory) relation with SF. Though fantastic fiction has a long pedigree in most European countries and the USA, for the first half of the 20th century in the USA it "flourished only as a parasite on its more popular cousin, science fiction" (Scholes 12-13). In the 1960s, the Tolkien craze – and the Conan resurgence – began to change this relation by infiltrating and inflecting the US SF subculture. At the centre of publishing in the field, David Hartwell encapsulated this precisely: "In the latter half of the twentieth century, with certain best-selling exceptions, fantasy is produced by writers of science fiction and fantasy, edited by editors of science fiction, illustrated by SF and fantasy artists, read by omnivore fantasy and SF addicts who support the market. Fantasy is not SF but part of the phenomenon that confronts us." (20) He also noted that Arthurian romance and the occult horror best-seller à la Stephen King, whose mass success starts after the 1973 *Exorcist* movie, are for commercial reasons exempted from this symbiosis. This unhealthy confusion – grounded in the fact that "[t]he fantasy audience seems to be a whole lot less critical and demanding than the inner SF community, satisfied with whatever magical images are given it..." (Hartwell 156) – prompted my delimitation in MOSF which identified the "fantasy tale" as "ghost, horror, Gothic, Weird [tale]" and "a genre committed to the interposition of anti-cognitive laws into the empirical environment." While noting that it is qualitatively significant when it keeps the "tension between... supernatural phenomena and the empirical norms they infiltrate," I concluded that the frequent absence of such tensions reduces the fantasy tale's horizon to indisputable Death, and that its commercial lumping into the same category as the disputable horizons of SF is a "rampantly socio-pathological phenomenon" (8-9).

This as it were drawing of borders for SF – not in order to preserve any illusory purity but in order to be able to speak about it – now has to be revised in the light of a change in epochal experience. That change condenses for me in the present instance around two foci. First, the huge quantitative burgeoning of Fantasy from the late 1960s on, when Tolkien's term of "Fantasy" also

1 fant posted 8-'15

came to the fore, constitutes a new lay of the land whose sense a materialist critic may to a large extent rightly dislike but cannot treat as not very pertinent to her/his concerns; it has to be mapped. Significantly, this burgeoning accompanies a quantitative stagnation of SF (see Hartwell 185-92) and certainly also a qualitative stagnation of its bulk. In 1987, the most knowledgeable John Clute estimated that, if one eliminates reprints and anthologies, out of 650 novels published in USA as "fantastic literature" 298 are SF and 352 "fantasy and horror novels."^{2/} The data we all use stem from the year-end breakdown of publications in the *Locus* magazine, which I find not wholly reliable as they put into SF a number of titles that are to my mind partly or wholly Fantasy. Even so, Clute estimates that in their 1992 data, the total of new novels is: 308 SF, 275 Heroic Fantasy, 165 Horror (e-mail communication to me of 30/1/2000), or a proportion of 440 titles of what I'd call Fantasy vs. 308 SF. And the equally knowledgeable Brian Stableford concluded from the sharp drop of SF titles in the 1990s (down 1/3 from 1991 to 1994) and the fact that by 1994 the ratio in new novels was 204 SF vs. 234 Heroic Fantasy plus 178 // Horror that SF – which I believe has a better chance of cognitive approaches to history – "will soon be the least produc[ed] of the three genres..." (49). A glance into any bookstore teaches that this 2:1 preponderance is continuing and solidifying. Furthermore, the economically and consumer-psychologically important bestsellers were by far drawn more from Fantasy than from SF. Indeed, Stableford went on to gloomy speculations that perhaps habitual SF readers have always had much in common with Fantasy readers, since the two genres as it were have a common denominator in "futuristic adventure stories which were essentially exercises in costume drama" and which always constituted a solid majority of SF (51-52). These facts delineate a whole different lay of the land for SF too, so even those much less interested in Fantasy (like me) have to take the new lay in.

The second focus, which stems from the evolution of my horizons about SF, genre theory, and semiotic meaning in general, is the conviction reached in the early 1980s that the parable is a key form for understanding SF and other "metaphysical" genres, which entails a re-evaluation of the significance to be allotted to the textual foreground (whose characteristic elements and figures are the main obvious feature singling out fantastic fiction from any possible neighbours). For, the parable consists of a narrative body as "vehicle" and an intended meaning as "tenor," as a way of intimately relating art to truth or narrative and metaphoric imagination to conceptualised, normative doctrine – and vice versa (cf. the final essay in my *Positions*). If all estranged genres aspire to be read as parables, then each Fantasy text also has a tenor and cannot be simply dismissed because of its vehicle. However, the vehicle is not simply a ladder or raft to be jettisoned and forgotten after reaching a restful goal. The goal itself is not entirely (or at all) available before the reader has worked through the story; the story's shape and values – what it is seen to be – are constituted by the feedback with the narrative world. The cognitive import of even such idiosyncratic and watered-down allegories as Fantasy, which approximate meaningful parable only in the clearest cases, consists in the experimental feedback between vehicle and tenor. One has to negotiate a text, or a class of texts, in each particular case. Most of them may (or may not) turn out to be socio-pathological: but they cannot be ascribed such a quality simply by virtue of dealing with necromancers, magic or horror. In what I suspect is a precious fraction, they may be vehicles of beneficence, critiques of alienating powers.

I should add that Marx's favourite tropes include the fantastic creatures – spectres, vampires, zombies, idolatrous fetishes, sorcerer's apprentices – that pullulate in his writings; see my "Transubstantiation" and Suvin-Angenot). My work on some of his texts, and more recently on Kafka's, has confronted me with the fact that they abundantly used in some key positions strong

1 fant posted 8-'15

fantastic elements to a clearly cognitive and most illuminating effect. If Marx and Kafka could, why not others?

Let me therefore revoke, probably to general regret, my blanket rejection of fantastic fiction. The divide between cognitive (pleasantly useful) and non-cognitive (useless) does not run between SF and fantastic fiction but inside each – though in rather different ways and in different proportions, for there are more obstacles to liberating cognition in the latter.

Finally, I confess at the outset I've been unable to do even partial justice to the burgeoning commercial genre of Fantasy, whose spread and my partial assayings from it have contributed to convince me we should indeed bother about this field, in a way that Cabell, Lovecraft or even Dunsany could not convince me. Indeed, one of the problems of the term "Fantasy" is that it almost inextricably stands for three corpuses of different historical scope: 1/ the post-Tolkien corpus of "heroic" plus "horror" fantasy; 2/ the Morris-to-just-after Tolkien corpus of what may by now be called "classical" Fantasy, up to say the mid-1970s; and 3/ the tradition that can be retrospectively identified as having shaped these corpuses, beginning in Gothic novels and German Romantics and continuing in a phase of inserting the fantastic *Novum* into realistic surroundings after 1830-40 (Gogol, Poe, Hawthorne, etc.). Most of my examples come from the second corpus: I cannot delve into the world's most successful writer Stephen King (120 million copies sold worldwide by 1996) nor, in fact, accomplish the necessary mapping of Fantasy at present. I hope here merely to indicate some pertinent historical and theoretical parameters for doing it. While fantastic fiction always and necessarily introduces forces that suggest some powerful other dimension or world, it is only in phase #2 that this suggestion crystallizes into articulated Secondary Worlds. My impression is that such parameters and elements are in present-day Fantasy again recombined with everyday and also with past-history settings, indicating greater historical urgencies confronting the reader (this too was pioneered by some Wells, such as *The Wonderful Visit* or "The Door in the Wall"). But perhaps some of my findings may be used for somebody else's investigation of a field grown so huge that I may not be able to survey it in this one life.

This essay is therefore what the root meaning of that word implies: it is frankly an experimental assay to see whether whatever sense I may draw from the accumulated splendours and miseries of fantastic fiction mostly until the mid-70s, and from the secondary literature up to our days, can begin to make sense also for corpus #1 above. I'm not sure this can succeed, for the pressures of the Post-Fordist mutation of capitalism may have produced a burst of fictional Fantasy mutations that would need further mediations (for example, a context incorporating the rise of occultism, as attempted by Ben-Yehuda). But even if my experiment fails, a "negative experiment" may be cognitively useful, indicating what roads not to take.

1. Some Preconditions for Approaching Fantasy

Our motto must therefore be: Reform of consciousness not through dogmas, but through analyzing the mystical consciousness, the consciousness which is unclear to itself, whether it appears in religious or political form. Then it will

transpire that the world has long been dreaming of something that it can acquire if only it becomes conscious of it.

Marx, letter to Ruge 1844

1.1. Patrick Parrinder wrote in 1982 a brief essay, "The Age of Fantasy," which begins by noting that "Fantasy, a word with a long history, has recently emerged as a name of a loosely conceived literary mode or genre.... [Its] commercial exploitation... has spread from advertising to pornography... and other forms of mass entertainment. Billion-dollar horror and science-fiction movies satisfy a double taste for wish-fulfilment and for a mild dose of the occult..." (109-10). Parrinder notes that Fantasy begins where deep belief ends, and relates Herbert Spencer's somewhat invidious but not wholly unjust terms, in which "barbarism and superstition, having been eradicated by advancing civilisation, take on a new kind of social utility as the subjects of pleasing tales [... about] witches, monsters, ghosts, wizards, devils, and the like." (109) Beside the historical point which I shall discuss later, this may to begin with serve to remind us that one should take with due seriousness the tons of murderous gore blithely justified in Conan the Barbarian or the high-minded racist Tolkien,^{3/} and of course in most horror tales down to Peter Straub and Clive Barker. But then, it is also high time for me to remember Benjamin's great historical insight which makes civilisation (read: class society as presently constituted) coextensive with its hidden face of barbarism, and to eradicate any kinship with Spencer's liberal triumphalism. First because it implied that civilization was synonymous with bourgeois horizons, and second because it implied that it had finally and irreversibly won out over obscurantism. I am diametrically opposed to both of these positions. But though I never shared them, having experienced what the bourgeoisie leads to in Fascism and the Second World War, in retrospect the horizon of my MOSF can be seen as mutedly triumphalist, expecting a long and difficult but ultimately probable socialist victory. This hope was rapidly becoming untenable even as I was wrapping up MOSF in the 1970s. Today it is clear that the present horizons require an agonizing rethinking of all such positions – though not of final orientations: I do not appreciate renegades. I see our global horizons as at best a struggle lasting for several generations against the amok runs of financial capitalism with a bestial face that rapidly spreads hunger, wars, drugging, brainwashing, and prostitution, and at worst a descent into full super-technoscientific barbarism. This rethinking does not at all mean an abandonment of ethical ideals and political imperatives, but it does mean a re-examination of all tools and mediations. Advancing on firm ground one can scorn rafts, but amid a deluge one has to use all means at hand, however flimsy.

1.2. Parrinder proposes to link Fantasy strategically with desire; and already Tolkien had recognised that Fantasy stories "were plainly not primarily concerned with possibility, but with desirability" (40). What desires were responsible for Tolkien, Conan, and Co. encountering such favourable ground in the US and then European (for example French) counter-culture of the 1960s? A very brief answer would be that at that point a revolt had spread in depth and breadth against a stifling military-cum-bureaucratic Establishment, whose main institutionalised ideology was (and with suitable changes still is) technoscientific rationality subservient to profit-making. Possibly the best depth diagnosis of it was given by the prescient Karl Marx who in the 1850s pinpointed the central building block of the alienated mega-oppressive apparatuses of capitalist industry and organization

of life (market intertwined with State), in general overview as well as in its central cell, the industrial shop-floor:

In the machine, and even more in machinery as an automatic system, the use-value, i.e. the material quality of the means of labour, is transformed into an existence corresponding to fixed capital.... The worker's activity, reduced to a mere abstraction, is determined and regulated on all sides by the movement of the machinery, and not the opposite. The science which compels the inanimate limbs of the machinery to act purposefully, by its construction, like an automaton, that science does not exist in the worker's consciousness but rather acts upon him through the machine as an alien power, as the power of the machine itself. Living labour [is appropriated] by the objectified labour inherent in the concept of capital.... (*Grundrisse* 692-93, transl. modified)

The worker becomes "a mere living accessory" of the machinery, which includes the bureaucratic private and public apparatuses, measured against which any personal "value-creating power... is an infinitesimal, vanishing magnitude" and which "destroys every connection of the product with the direct need of the producer... " (693-94). The domination over Nature by technoscientific apparatuses is consubstantial with their domination over the producers or creators: "The right of property originally appeared to be based on one's own labour. Property now appears as the right to alien labour, and as the impossibility of labour appropriating its own product." (458) Machinery (fixed capital) is objectified past labour, now dead, that zombie-like seizes the living. The program announced by the young Marx in the epigraph to this section has to cope with this demonic possession.

Thus, for all the mealy-mouthed celebrations of reason, in the practice that determined the life of a huge majority, rationality decayed from the Enlightenment hopes and split into what was reasonable and perfectly functional in terms of personal and sensual goals for individuals and large classes of people (self-determination, shorter working time, psychophysical use-values) but irrational to the ends of the ruling apparatuses – and viceversa, into what was an apparatus reasoning perfectly meshing with the military-bureaucratic complex (cf. Gorz 53 and passim). The rationality claimed by bureaucracy and technoscience is in fact an impoverished pseudo-rationality: for example, a huge quantitative and functional improvement of means for genocide and ecocide. This could not but give reason a bad name. The immense potentialities of science and technology for making people's lives easier are themselves as alienated as the people affected by them. In war, the condensation of everyday politics by other means – and there were over 30 wars in 1999 alone! – dehumanised humanity looks through the media "at its own annihilation as an esthetic pleasure of the first order" (Benjamin GS I: 508). It is scarcely surprising, even if not healthy, that some strata of the population began to place their hopes in all kinds of occult sciences, magic, or a return to reactionarily refunctioned religious beliefs, flying from alienated reason to unfalsifiable doctrine. As dogmas go, the Invisible Hand of the Free Market making for universal contentment was no better than being washed in the Blood of the Lamb or the UFOs.

In particular, sad to say, technoscientific culture as developed in, by, and for capitalism is as a rule non-culture in relation to all that is not technoscientific: not merely arts, but all non-violent and sensual activities. Post-Modernist cultists often claim that the new "clean" techniques of the computer have changed all that. Well, they certainly have not changed the horrible exploitation of the young Chinese women producing microchips. Have they changed the life of us users? We could

have a discussion about the effect on intellectuals such as myself: I think the jury is still out on that, though it is already clear the computer and the Web have deepened the chasm between global North and South. On the industrial shop floor, computerisation has made plant operation much less transparent to the workers, whose erstwhile skills have largely been frozen onto the software instructing the machines, which they do not understand. The abstracting or "ephemerisation" of work is even clearer in the "service" sectors and offices, where "the product itself is abstract" (Chapman 307). In sum, technologies without self-management "have boxed far more people into a life of artificial, animated stupefaction. To these people. . . [l]ife becomes a kind of phantasmagoria of. . . technological features" (idem 308). Technoscientific culture subservient to the profit principle necessarily disregards the cost to the environment and to the degradation of human senses (such as the hearing faculty subjected to the bellowing amps). It has proved incompatible with respecting fleshly bodies of other people or exalting their sensitivity and pleasure (cf. Gorz 113), which is the only way to exalt one's own sensitivity and pleasure. True, for a privileged mercenary minority in the field of, say, molecular genetics or informatics, "[f]etishism has never been more fun, as undead substitutes and surrogates proliferate.... Ask any biodiversity lawyer whether genes are sources of 'value' these days, and the sources of commodity fetishism will come clear." (Haraway 134) But treating workers or employees as means to a misnamed "productive" end, as mere labour-power, is a repression of the subalterns' as well as of the masters' sense and sensitivity. Beside the workplace, this is evident in our housing, urbanism, noise, pollution, lighting, materials, and other matters over which the ordinary citizen has no control, including most education. Marx's diagnosis has been confirmed in spades.

The culture of ruling institutionalised violence is thus, deep down, a barbaric culture. In such circumstances, which dominate most people since the Industrial Revolution, life outside work ("leisure") becomes the opposite of and compensation for life at work. The exploited human and non-human nature rebel: but only humans can do so in a conscious, goal-oriented way. How can we from this vantage point view the delight in Conan and similar less brawny heroes? As a complex mixture of ideology and utopia, I'd suggest: on the one hand a condensed reproduction and reaffirmation of cruelties from the readers' alienated reality, and on the other a compensatory glimpse of use-value qualities which that reality lacked. The Heroic Fantasy stories have at least the merit of, first, showing this openly, second, marrying it to individual initiative and sensuality, and third, holding at arm's length the particular causal nexus of the violence around the reader or moviegoer which has made the simplified circumstances of Iron Age life seem less alienating. This does not cancel out their overall stultifying, sometimes frankly semi-fascist, horizons. So we must weigh the pros and cons.

2. Preliminary Delimitations: On What Fantastic Fiction Is Not

This novel is set in a world where there are no television talk shows, no income taxes, no commuter trains, no air pollution, no nuclear crises or campus riots or midi skirts. - A world blissfully innocent of detergent commercials, thirty-cent subway fares, Spiro T. Agnew speeches, freeze-dried coffee, electric toothbrushes, pornographic movies from Denmark,

draft dodgers, Women's Lib, and the Los Angeles Freeway. -
It is a world that never was but certainly should have been.

Lin Carter, 1971 (the book is dedicated "To the
greatest living creator of swordplay-and-sorcery, J.R.R.
Tolkien")

2.1. Once again, I find myself considering how to define what we're talking about. Labels and categories are not sufficient to dispose of any matter; but they are indispensable to begin with. I start from the hypothesis that fantastic fiction is a literary genre (more probably, a family of genres), and adopt Jameson's pragmatic approach to historical genres which mediate between formal analysis of texts and their history as social life: "Genres are essentially literary institutions, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artefact" (106). To my mind this stance happily and unavoidably brings about a number of simplifications for the inevitable initial concern of whoever wishes to speak about genres: how can one restrict one's field so as to make it both synoptically manageable and true to one's bedrock prejudices and pragmatic evidences about the existing lay of the fictional land. We are dealing here with two interpenetrating jungles: a jungle of existing genres is rendered almost impassable by the jungle of approaches. So my concern is, to begin with, what is it that we do not have to deal with in a generic approach to Fantasy. As to corpus, we don't have to include much self-conscious "high lit." Modernism, any and all Post-Modernism, or anything before about the end of 18th Century. As to approach, we don't need to deal with "realism," with psychoanalytic explanations nor with "the Fantastic."

2.2. More clearly than other genres, *fantastic fiction is entirely a creature of history*. Except for its de-schooled fans, everybody from Walter Scott on agrees that it is not thinkable before overriding mythological or religious belief suffers an epochal political breakdown, as a consequence of which some of its aspects and elements become available for fictional manipulation. Its beginnings can be dated – at various times in various countries – to a time when the bourgeois laicizing cleavage into natural vs. supernatural begins to dominate at least in the literate classes, and yet the alternative to realism is no longer straightforward allegory. The puzzles begin as to what do the manipulated signifiers come to signify when imported into the various new semiotic wholes, beside the meta-signifier that the author's hegemonic reality is being held at arm's length as insufficient or outright disgusting. The first, or diachronic, paradox of Fantasy (and what I've called in MOSF the other "metaphysical" genres such as fairy-tale and horror tale) is that it begins where deep belief in supernatural values disappears: Dante or Milton did not write fantastic fiction but religious, political, cosmological epics. A present-day reader looking backward at the epic of *Gilgamesh* or at Spenser could for some purposes – such as building a list of reusable Fantasy props – licitly treat it as Fantasy (Lin Carter and C.M. Manlove do so illicitly). But a heavy toll is paid for flattening out historical imagination. Except that they are, evidently, not illusionistic realism of the middle-class type, in no historical sense are the function, intent, audience, and all other aspects of Homer, animal fables (cf. Tolkien 15-16), Malory, Hamlet's father or any other writings before (roughly) Pre-Romanticism commensurable with fantastic fiction as discussed here. When Tolkien reuses

elements from *Beowulf* or the *Nibelungenlied*, and Eddison from Ariosto, they have been digested and metamorphosised.

The relationship of modern Fantasy to many other genres of fantastic fiction, such as Gothic fiction and ghost stories, is equally unclear. There are indications that these could be treated primarily as early horror stories of given social imaginations, e.g. the Gothic of the generation before and after the French Revolution (cf. Lévy, Punter, Monleón, Ringe, and Runcini *Paura* for the Gothic, and Briggs for the ghost story). "Fantastic fiction" might conveniently be divided into the historical phases suggested above, very roughly allotted to ca. 1764-1830, 1830-1880, 1880-1960 (the high modernist phase), and the contemporary, post-Tolkien moment. The massification and acceleration How capitalist reification is evident in this filiation. I shall mention here two elements: first, success brought increasing autonomy to fantasy fiction's themes and figures: a vampire or werewolf could be treated ironically, science-fictionally, or just neutrally, as an adventure prop. Second, the scope grew. Before ca. 1880, horror tales used the malevolent intrusion as primarily a local one; as late as Wilde's *Dorian Gray*, it destroys simply the (no doubt representative but still singular) protagonist. There seem to have been very few equivalents to a completely different country or world: the great pioneers were, I think, the fairy tales, and then the *Alice* books and the national, continental, and finally global SF after the Future Wars, *Flatland*, and the black or rosy utopias of Jefferies, Bellamy, and Morris. It is reasonable to suppose that the major impulse toward fantastic fiction is the violence engendered by capitalist violations of personality, spreading from the countryside, city, and shop floor to the shrinking world map. And it is certain that at least one major source of globalization, consubstantial with global economic nets of exploitation, is the advent of incredibly massive world wars, with all the political and technoscientific revolutions they bring along – faced more directly in SF from Wells on and by eversion in Fantasy. This would provide a handle to explain the shift of Fantasy's center of gravity from the old imperial countries of England and France to the USA, so that even the medievalist nostalgia of Tolkien could only there find a mass resonance and become a form-building impetus (cf. Aldiss 136). It is there, after the same First World War which shaped Tolkien, that Lovecraft advanced from a haunted house (building and dynasty), wood or village to a whole town, and by slow discovery our whole contaminated world.

From all such fascinating topics, here I can enter only upon some central matters after ca. 1848 in Europe and the USA, when the state of affairs described in Marx's above X-ray of industrial society begins to impinge on writers and readers. Were I writing a history I would certainly start with Poe and Morris, and probably even with Walpole and Hoffmann, and put the Kafka-Borges vs. Tolkien opposition at the beginning of a further phase characteristic for this century.

As to the *Alice* books by Lewis Carroll, I shall here limit myself to indicating that I'd allot them to a separate genre of fantastic fiction, which Clute in the Clute-Grant *Encyclopedia* calls *Wonderland* (1030) but does not fully define. I'd interpret Rabkin's discussion of reversal in *Alice* (109-12), or possibly broaden it, so as to envisage Wonderland as a playful subversion of scientifico-logical rule-making (primarily categorisation) and gamesmanship, such as had passed into contemporary commonsense. Elements of Carroll's unique fusion of dream story, akin to nonsense in poetry, with strict rules (as in the games of cards and chess) were often imitated but never even distantly equalled. Heroic fantasy from Tolkien on is in a strange "zero way" parasitic on the model of fully separate and self-contained, yet quite non-religious, Secondary World in

Wonderland, and by way of stronger opposition on the horror tale and SF too (Tolkien could be described as twisting Wells through Tasso, *Alice*, and *Beowulf*).

Finally, I adopt two important delimiting arguments by Clute. The first is of a general nature, stressing as it does that any fantastic fiction must be a coherent, "thick" narrative in order to render believably present the "impossibility" impinging upon this world or the "otherworld" (cf. Heinlein 23 and Tolkien 37). It needs a plot whose figures traverse a landscape that possesses enough consistency so as to evoke the illusion of an inhabitable place modelled – with the pertinent modifications – on our familiar "zero world." This rules out non-narrative verse and shorter lyrical prose, for example of Surrealism, and dream tales (cf. Tolkien 13-14). The second is historical, noting that much 20th-Century fiction found "mimetic" illusionism insufficient, but that to call Fantasy such "enterprises of Modernism and Postmodernism" is "to strip the term 'fantasy' of any specific meaning" (in Clute-Grant 338). Insofar as Post-Modernist writers follow their programmatic denial of ontological stability in reality, so that the norms of their narrative universe are undecidable, the question of genre cannot be posed for them (how far program accounts for practice is another matter). However, I shall, while adopting this for my initial enquiry, take leave to doubt it for some products of Modernism, such as Kafka and the Latin-American "magic realism," or Woolf's proto-feminist estrangement of history in *Orlando*, where the norms are clear and their tenor discussable as parable. I do acknowledge that much more work and insight is needed to probe the interaction of fantastic fiction and Modernism.

2.3. As to approach: first, it was pragmatically unavoidable for the practice of all "estranged" writing as of (say) late 18th Century to relate by contraries to the absolutely dominant bourgeois positivism. In literature and the arts this meant a more and more narrowly conceived realism, naturalism or mimesis, and in that historical sense fantastic fiction is the coeval mirror twin of "realism." The early theory was constrained to follow this. But for quite some time now it has not been helpful to define SF simply as "the other side of realism" (Clareson) or fantastic fiction as all non-realistic writings minus (maybe) SF and the fairy-tale. Such an extensive *omnium gatherum* allowed only a delimitation by contraries: I tried to protest in *Victorian SF* against "confusing SF and supernatural fantasy on the purely negative basis that their imagined realities are not identical with the author's empirical reality" (91). Since no definition *ex negativo* can be theoretically defended, theoreticians have often preferred employing a kind of essence or meta-principle of The Fantastic opposed to banal illusionism. Yet meta-principles need the most solid historical anchorage in order to make any sense. I shall continue this discussion in my third point.

Second, as Joanna Russ once complained about criticism of supernatural stories (*To Write* 60; cf. Carroll 168-77), psychoanalytic explanations are in most cases insufficient or totally inapplicable. I mean by this the orthodox Freudian limitation to a-historical *individual* psychology, though Jung's a-historical collectivism (not without influence in Fantasy) is still worse and academic "cognitive science" quite irrelevant. Neither the subconscious nor archetypes can deal with institutions, social contracts or proper uses of artefacts. Obversely, any psychology will be able to deal with everything in suitably impoverished terms: so there's no difference between fantastic fiction and any other fictional (or indeed non-fictional) text or semiotic artefact as to its phallic vs. castrating or animus vs. anima tenor. Spacetime forces me to let these stand as a more or less self-evident, undefended though highly defensible, propositions. I hastily add that I love reading Freud's

novels (certainly more than Tolkien's) and that cognitive illuminations from his or other analysts' shrewd observations about particular texts or syndromes--such as the uncanny--may prove useful in their proper place.

Instead, I'd follow the path ably pioneered by Jack Zipes in his investigation of the cognate estranged genre of fairy-tale. He shows clearly how its tradition began in 17th-18th Century France as a co-optation of current folktales. Their plebeian concerns were with counteracting ruling power and brutal oppression by means of magic possibilities allied with the daring and self-reliance of the Third Son or Young Girl. No superordinated other world appears: the magical and miraculous "represent metaphorically the conscious and unconscious desires of the lower classes to seize power," to affirm a more just outcome at least for the hero/ine (8). This was superseded by Perrault's male-dominated upper-class didacticism, socializing children into the absolutist compromise between the Court aristocracy and the high bourgeoisie, which was at the same time pitilessly murdering thousands of reputed witches and werewolves as well as religious and political heretics. Perrault's, and later the Grimm Brothers', codification was a clearcut cultural politics which presented an image of properly acceptable behaviour for the readers, adhering to the new code of bourgeois moralism: domestic industry and self-sacrifice for girls, courage, competition, and acquisitiveness for boys (Zipes 8ff., 28ff., 46ff.). I conclude from this that the parallel world of the fairy-tale can be seen as a spread of possibilities between the poles of a subversion bringing out the social repressed (the political unconscious?) and a use that reaffirms and "naturalizes" repression.

Third, on The Fantastic as meta-principle. This is a German-cum-French Romantic invention, recoded by Todorov's influential 1970 book rendered into English with that title. As his whole earlier phase, the book is vivacious and stimulating, but also held within rigid limits of quasi-linguistic doctrine (structuralist poetics) and national corpus. I won't here delve into the peculiar linguistic imperialism, which for example relegates SF to an ill-advised footnote or two, except to indicate that it seems to me the founding wrong swerve of all modern appeals to The Fantastic divorced from a corpus of stories. More modestly, I would argue that Todorov draws exclusively on possibilities present in French fiction 1650-1950 (including what can be fitted into it from German Romantics, primarily some Hoffmann) and codified in French literary criticism from Nodier on. The validity of his categorisation into uncanny vs. marvellous plus oscillation between them is therefore very small for the Anglophone and even German traditions, it is restricted to cases where some of those writings (for example James's *Turn of the Screw*) operate within ideological conventions similar to the French ones. This is not to prejudge whether a non-generic quality of *le fantastique* may not be of use for some purposes, as was for example attempted by Rabkin and Jackson. But just as confusing utopianism with utopian fiction has led to direct critical aberrations (cf. MOSF ch. 3), and it eventually turned out that utopianism could only be discussed with some hope of clarity after delimiting utopian fiction, so in my opinion uses of the fantastic can only be fruitfully envisaged *after* the actual classes of fantastic fiction and Fantasy have been at least centrally identified and discussed with some degree of exhaustiveness. If one attempts to discuss both at the same time, one risks doing too much (as Rabkin's fantastic in detective fiction, pornography or English architecture) and also too little as far as generic precision goes. Finally, any human qualities are historical. They may be long-duration affects or horizons, but they cannot be a spirit above the waters of history--an Idealist beast of a hypostasis.^{4/}

In my own first clearing of the ground I cannot pretend to any thorough argumentation, only to methodological consistency. I shall attempt to discuss what I take to be defining parameters for Fantasy, and what follows from them.

3. In medias res: The Genres of Ahistorical Alternative Worlds

History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.

A character in James Joyce, 1922

History is a laboratory in which we learn that nothing works, or ever can.

A character in Michael Swanwick, 1991

In such a Case they talk in Tropes,

And, by their Fears express their Hopes...

Jonathan Swift, 1731

3.1. What I have in MOSF called the "metaphysical" stories all present worlds of "arresting strangeness" (Tolkien 47-48), that is, not vouched for by empirical observation or common sense: though inevitably using most elements – events, existents, and relationships – from the author's "zero world." Within this group, how may fantastic fiction be differentiated from fairy tales or old myths and folktales?

The main differential parameter that fantasy fiction, in the widest of my three senses, is supposed to be necessarily defined by is in scholarly debates usually called *the impossible*. Almost everybody and his grandmother up to and including the first wave of writings on it – Delany, Irwin, Manlove, Rabkin, Todorov, Traill, with Tolkien as the Great Ancestor of Fantasy theory – make use of it (the exception would be some Jungian, occultist or neo-fascist myth peddlers in Europe). But what does this mean? As Gary Wolfe observed in a thoughtful essay almost 10 years ago, without much echo in theoreticians, "the notion of the impossible itself raises a number of intriguing questions, not all of which can be adequately addressed by the resources of literary scholarship" (2). I won't go either into the ontological niceties of "possible" or into the esthetic debates about verisimilitude from Aristotle on, but turn to C.N. Manlove, a textual analyst not surefooted in the fields of theory who therefore shows the resulting aporias more clearly than (say) the sophisticated Rabkin. Manlove requires of "a fantasy" to contain "a substantial and irreducible element of supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects..." ("Nature" 16 – the parts I left out here seem to me unnecessary). Is impossible the same as supernatural – the latter meaning, I suppose, what does not accord with the laws of physics and other "hard" sciences? Manlove denies this by citing Peake's Gormenghast books whose world is simply laterally alternative to ours but has no supernatural elements, Gary Wolfe adds to this Peter Dickinson's *The Blue Hawk*, and one could

cite a number of further alternative worlds without magic in the English tradition of some W.H. Hudson, Norman Douglas, Saki, and Rex Warner, or in Maurice Maeterlinck's turn of the century plays of gloomy castles and woods (such as *Pelléas et Mélisande*) – and on. True, there might always be a suspicion that the worlds of Peake or Douglas might exist in an exceedingly odd and out of the way corner of our world, whose main historical tendencies happen to have passed it by. But if there is no internal evidence to that, and/or if the coherence and quality of strangeness are sufficiently marked, they cannot be put into a kind of grotesque Ruritania. For most of these writings the suspicion won't hold, and we are left with what I'd call *historically unanchored worlds*, without any changes in cosmic ontologies or natural laws. Even the horror fantasy's intervention of a second world with different, maleficent laws into the realistic world does not mean that the former must be a supernatural world – say in most Poe and in many of his followers, from Lovecraft to King. The anchors are then ideological, mainly in the guise of the protagonists' psychological reactions.

Sufficiently valid exceptions demolish a presumed rule, and these examples demolish the identification of "impossible in our empirical world" with supernatural: to adapt a phrase from kindred investigation of Geertz, magic is "a kind of dummy variable" for the defining factor we are seeking (79). If we still wanted to go on in these terms, then impossible would have to be superordinated to supernatural, and there would be a supernatural and a natural impossible. . . What then is impossible in Peake and Hudson, or complementarily in Poe and Lovecraft, if it is not different ontologies or physical laws? If the fantastic fiction's "unreality" is "unlikeness to the Primary World" and "freedom from the domination of observed 'fact'," as Tolkien held (47), what kind of unlikeness is at work here?

The way out may be found if the schema of fantasy fiction is compared to the Alternative Histories of SF, where at some cusp point – say, of a key battle or invention – history has diverged from our "normal" Terran history. Discussing the rise of this subgenre after 1871 in the UK, I defined it as "an alternative but believable locus used to articulate different possible solutions of problems possessing a sufficient magnitude to alter the overall history of the narrated world (intertext – all the varieties of historiography)" (*Victorian SF* 394-95). In that light, I submit that what Fantasy reacts against, and as a result inscribes itself into, has primarily to do with *experiences of everyday life, arising out of ongoing socio-economic history, that stifle central aspects of personality*. The laws of gravity, biological aging, intra-atomic composition or speed of light can be challenged in SF; Fantasy's worlds as a rule do *not* delve into them – though gods or magicians when necessary may overcome them by higher (unexplained) powers.

Fantasy's alternative locus presents an alternative concept of "history," or better, of the flow of human affairs, usually reduced to personal power relationships around or among the principal narrative agents: it is only within such relationships that interest in abrogating our empirical physical laws can be found. It is *not* used to articulate any major – or even minor – problems from the reader's history: this is why Delany's *Nevëryon* books, concerned with such historical matters as gender ironies, slave revolt, and the rise of patriarchy and of AIDS, fit uneasily into, or to my mind mostly fall out of, Fantasy (cf. Clute, in Clute-Grant 916). It is also why the – to my limited knowledge – best text by Fantasy authors I've read in the 90s, Steven Brust's and Emma Bull's *Freedom and Necessity*, is not Fantasy (nor SF) but a historical novel. Fantasy creates a world where one or more all-important *individual agents intimately interact with a spacetime* not only

radically different from the author's historical moment of social life but also, and primarily, *denying history as socio-economic lawfulness*. This is effected in two complementary ways, giving rise to two different genres of Fantasy. A gradual discovery of evil and superior forces occulted (as a rule literally) underneath the "realistic" textures of existence and taking those textures over has for its *telos* the thrill of a peculiar type of fear, and shapes the horror tale; "... or else, [stories are] cast altogether in the realm of phantasy, [... an] exotic world of unreality beyond space and time..." (Lovecraft 87), shaping the "heroic fantasy." While identifying both genres, I shall focus mainly on this second one; and I shall, as set out at the beginning, have to leave out all the recent narrative interferences between these "pure" paradigms and the empirical present and past life-worlds.

In it, the spacetime or world is consubstantial with a plot traversing a landscape so as to evoke the illusion of an inhabitable place modelled on our familiar "zero world," and by the same token boldfacing the differences to it. This movement into a different and radically simplified, *expurgated Otherwhere* is the founding gesture of cleavage and distancing as constitutive of Fantasy as King Utopus's cutting off the New Island of Utopia from the old continent or Cyrano's flight to the Moon and the Sun is for SF. It is explicitly foregrounded in the influential (if still mainly SF) model of Burroughs's John Carter leaving 19th-Century USA for Mars; a number of early fantasy tales – for example, the *Alice* books and Eddison's *The Worm Ouroboros* – also use this "transfer" opening, until it passed into the generic memory and could be more elegantly dispensed with. Howard's (et al.) Hyborian Age or Cabell's Poictesme or Tolkien's Middle-earth are not Alternative Histories in the sense of the eponymous SF subgenre, but Alternative Worlds forsaking the author's history and society, asking our own social time to have a stop and start again in some other way – usually running in a circle or on the spot – with a new deal of the cards for the individuals unhappy in our social history.

3.2. A powerful exception to – or is it variant on? – the arrested history seem to be the works of a writer of considerable power and grace, J.R.R. Tolkien (I shall concentrate on his *The Lord of the Rings* to the detriment of the cognate C.S. Lewis, whose planetary trilogy seems to me a slide from SF to Fantasy)^{5/} Though there is no overt religious activity in this book, it is because the Catholic apologetics are omnipresent in its temporality and agential system. Catholic ideology is predominantly, since the Council of Trent if not since Constantine, conservative Providential collectivism: the history of the whole human species has a preordained sense with a happy ending, what Tolkien called a "eucatastrophe." There are admirable aspects to its grand sweep and, at best, its feeling for incarnate beauty which makes all natural (including imaginary) creatures kin and which Tolkien possessed in no small measure. But in the doctrinal Master Plot the forces of Good and Evil, working through natural as well as supernatural existents, must battle it out between a Fall and the Happy Ending; and for purposes of both wonder and persuasion this may be shown in a "thick" Alternate World where no capitalist economics – neither the pesky human labour nor finance and technology – cloud our sight of what is really essential. The turn to medievalism and quasi-pastoral (it could be a new category for Empson's varieties of pastoral), where you can go in meticulously for landscapes, battles, and psychological states, fits both anti-technological rural nostalgia and the need to reconcile persuasive description with evacuation of economic collectivism. One could formulate the problem with Tolkien by isolating two aspects of his writing, say as the graceful and the rigid. He often writes with a powerful simplicity, a hate of ugliness, and

a deep love of not only some Fantasy creatures – the melancholy, non-fallen but also non-redeemable Elves, the magnificent Ents – but also, as he said, of "the earth, and all things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread, and ourselves, mortal men, when we are enchanted" (9). Here he is comparable to that atheist lover of a kindred poetic enchantment and even greater master of Fantasy, whom he somehow manages never to mention in his considerations, fellow-Oxonian William Morris.

Yet the comparison of these two anti-propertarians is most revealing. No doubt, Tolkien has a right to his own doctrinal premise about forces of history, and it is quite refreshing to see them converge upon a happy ending. But once a reader refuses to swallow their constellation and unavoidable goal, Tolkien's bold simplification begins to seem useless (how to talk about evil without talking about wage slavery?) and indeed bloody-minded. They can only work within a polarisation in which all industry is the province of Sauron and Saruman, while the good pole is a Disraeli-like "historical block" whose legitimacy comes from dynastic descent of the old landowning and pastoral rulers renewed by blood-and-fire baptism (Aragorn), and allied with the little people (Frodo) against the upstart modernizers (see Zanger 232-35 for that tradition in English Fantasy). Furthermore, there are strong hints that, for all their creatural failings, the Good heroes are providentially enabled to triumph (cf. Manlove, *Modern* 168-93). Now since this is the ideational backbone for everything in the narrative, it will contain and largely override its graceful aspect. Thus, I must contest the quality of Tolkien's admirably combative partisanship. Given that we do not live in the age of Sigurd the Volsung or Beowulf vs. Grendel but in the age of capitalist world wars, which deeply affected the trench officer Tolkien (see Jones 70, Turner 11-12), the blithe wiping out of entire armies or races may make us pause before the pervasive horizons of his text. Of a piece with it is the total shutting out of labour, scarcity of women figures (see Zipes *Breaking* 154) as well as sensuality and erotics in general, which feeds into the sharp allotment of black vs. white moral evaluations to separate species – as in the Morlock-like Orcs, proletarians seen as sex-maniac and anthep ogres (cf. Helms 69 and Glover 203-07). Racially too, the goodies are pale-skinned, mostly also beautiful and tall Northerners – though the cast is redeemed by Hobbits, Elves, Dwarfs, and Ents – and the baddies are swarthy skulkers, while all of them together seem adolescents playing splendid games (cf. Turner 19 and 23-24). This seems benighted by the standards of Morris, never mind of 1940. The sum effect of a kind of short-circuit between these dogmatic rigidities and his techniques of believability is that these "almost secretly transform readers from secular appreciators of a text into something like parishioners" (Clute, in Clute-Grant 953) – as we've seen in his fan clubs and many descendants including *Star Wars*. To despise, as Tolkien himself rightly did, the practice of Henry Ford or Adolf Hitler, and yet to exalt the cleansing violence of his type of Crusade, clearly a variant of "state ideology" (Jones 67), seems contradictory. That he was taken up by the anti-Vietnam War generation of the 1960s is highly ironic, and testifies to its internal contradictions, or is it soft core?

The Tolkien model, then, structures its narrative time in strict analogy to Christian temporality, in which the arrow of creature-made history is finally a relatively brief interval in the Creator's cycle. The climax at the end of the Third Age is borrowed from the battle at the end of the time against the Great Enemy: Sauron is a figure of Antichrist with industrial power coded as magic. The preordained victory of the Good finally rejoins the more banal one of arrested history: there was a crisis but it is necessarily resolved in "eucatastrophe" (cf. Jones 70). The price may have been high, and there is an appealing elegiac note making good use of the paradoxes attending beauty and loyalty in the Fallen World as the Elves leave Middle-earth taking Frodo along, but

"recovery and consolation" triumph, bringing time back to its cyclical nature. The Eucatastrophe is rather what Brian Aldiss has called a "cozy catastrophe," a scare ending in coziness and a dinner at the pub (see Wilson "Oo" and Turner 20). Safe again in Ye Merrie Olde Englande!

3.3. Not wishing to further the Babylonian confusion of critical tongues, I am following the convention of calling this genre *Heroic Fantasy* (though "hero fantasy" might be, as Clute suggests, just as appropriate, see Clute-Grant 464). Its world is not, as SF, a development of historical – technological, overtly political or other – tendencies within the reader's environment; rather, it salvages from it, as its only horizon, ideology and strong affects in search of a loyalty. It is a modified type of history organised around an individual hero (or in Tolkien a collective hero) within a correlatively simplified landscape. Heroic Fantasy may have some elements in common with, yet it is centrally different from, the horror tale à la Poe, Stoker, Lovecraft or King – which is what, following Caillois, I actually had in mind when I spoke in MOSF of a "genre committed to the interposition of anti-cognitive laws into the empirical environment." The elements that may be common to both (principally, the supernatural forces) are in Heroic Fantasy not horrifically inserted into a simulacrum of the reader's empirical world. In Heroic Fantasy the "intimate interaction" from my definition in 3.1 is to be specified as *decisive intervention by the hero* into his world, while in the Horror Fantasy it is to be specified as *decisive impingement of hidden malevolent powers* in the world upon the "hero." The horror tale must operate with superior, usually supernatural, entities such as gods, magicians, demons, werewolves, witches, vampires (and after Freud the occult powers may shift into the psyche). This can only be cognitively recuperated by an allegorical tenor, as happens in much "high lit." from Gogol's *Nose* to Wilde's *Dorian Gray* or in Klein's pioneering interpretation of Lovecraft as horror of the individualist subject at the coming about of the monopoly phase of capitalism (130 and passim; to my mind, the real Novum of a story such as "The Shadow over Innsmouth" is not only the extension of point-like horror to a whole civic microcosm but also the gentleman-narrator's realisation of his family or class complicity with it). The rather different Heroic Fantasy ontologies in Tolkien, Douglas or the *Conan* stories may or may not use magic or gods (my judgment for those three cases would be yes, no, and sometimes). How the supernatural factor is manipulated makes for important differences in the wished-for effect and some key elements in the story; but this does not seem to me the founding *differentia generica* of Heroic Fantasy. As Heinlein noted long ago, "a fantasy story is one which denies in its premise some [I would add sufficiently significant, DS] feature of the real world, it may be quite humdrum in all other respects" (23).

Thus, the defining parameter of Heroic Fantasy is that the presented world is definitely neither the author's and original (or subsequent) reader's historical web of forces, nor even any attempt at a reasonably representative "encyclopedia" of them. To the contrary, it is an alternative, opposed and radically expurgated, structure of human relationships bereft of technology, ignoring capitalism. Magic or supernatural forces are then a formal and ideological addition which strikingly emphasizes the otherness by enlisting the pre-capitalist aura of such beliefs and ideologemes. The determining parameter of Heroic Fantasy is the satisfyingly simplified alternate world, as a rule akin to reverie or daydream by situating the reader "in a world and not in a society" (Bachelard, cited in Wolfe 7). I would argue this is the case with Fantasy in general, since the Horror Fantasy's necessarily monomaniacal concentration on revealing the horrible forces which invade the empirical world also simplifies and degrades it to their arena. I shall take an example from the

deeply reactionary but not ineffective rhetorics of perhaps the most politically committed Fantasy after Tolkien, Norman's *Gor* series. It usually contains an emblematic obligatory scene of *anagnorisis*: the come-uppance for our bluestocking feminist miss, who had refused to understand that she is no more in her Terran environment of egalitarianism frustrating both the men and herself, but with the super-macho warrior hero on an anti-Terra where delicious female enslavement fosters full S/M erotics (since the *proton pseudos* here is that women can only enjoy when they're physically dominated). Both the enslaved woman and the enabling literary device (*priëm*) of a reversed world – in that sense, Rabkin is right – are in that moment shown naked to the reader (cf. on recognition Clute in Clute-Grant 901). As other Fantasy, this world is not ontologically but politically adrift: not a cosmological but a historical anti-Terra.

We have, I think, so far identified at least three full-fledged genres within fantastic fiction: Wonderland, Heroic Fantasy, and occult or Horror Fantasy.^{6/} None of them is either an archivally registered locus from, or a tendentially possible locus directly continuous with, our social history. But of course: they are just as closely (perhaps more closely) related to it: as an *a limine* refusal of that social history, yet condemned to use elements abstracted from it as seed for its anti-world. The more emphatic a negation of X, the stronger some kind of determination by X.

3.4. The forms of Heroic Fantasy are much richer than these first delimitations. I shall mention here some of the most salient aspects and elements from its phenomenology.

The reader's imaginative transfer from her empirical or "zero" world to the Heroic Fantasy world has to be given a landing point. The ahistorical elsewhere has of course a geography – one is tempted to say: the less history the more geography. Geographic gigantism, the flight from time to space, runs rampant in the invention of huge worlds with bizarrest races, for example in Vance or in Tolkien's huge epic landscape with men, orcs, ghosts, Elves, Ents, wizards, dwarves, hobbits, and supernatural Entities. But Fantasy sometimes has a "secondary" or other history (strongly so in Tolkien, almost none in the dreamy Cabell or present-oriented Leiber). The Russian Formalists called this the "motivation" (which has fortunately nothing to do with psychology, but may be rendered as justification) of the new environment. It may be a never-never land, whether legendarily incantatory or humdrum, in the spread Dunsany - Cabell - Peake; or situated in a legendary age before our recorded one, as in *Conan* or in Tolkien; or in a legendary age after and at the end of our history, usually totally gloomy, as in W.H. Hodgson's *The Night Land*; contrariwise, activist and go-getting, strongly admixed with SF, on other planets or at the Earth's core (Burroughs's Mars, Venus, and Pellucidar cycles); ascending from legendary spacetime to "higher planes" of beings with godlike powers, as in the Corum cycle by Moorcock and some similar almost-SF by Farmer. Or it may dispense with a precise spacetime reference and simply adopt a barbaric Iron Age and as it were settle the arrested moment, as with Leiber's pair of appealing rogues attempting to survive in it, the Two Musketeers as underdogs in Conan-land. Etc.

But such variations are less important than the "intertexts" on which various kinds of Heroic Fantasy lean, and which as a rule decisively mediate its "relationship to our reality" (the latter key notion will recur in this essay). I have suggested it is sometimes SF, mostly its sub-genre of planetary romance, but this tends to diminish with increasing genre differentiation between SF and

Fantasy up to the 1970s and then – I think – to get recontaminated or "crosshatched" (Clute). Other, more frequent candidates to take the place historiography occupied in Alternative Histories are, singly or often admixed, the nostalgia of Medievalism and of the clean pastoral or yeoman existence. Catholics and Anglo-Catholics such as the Inklings are particularly prone to this, but the radical socialist Morris proves how national extremes may meet, whereas the US slambang tradition – intertext: Westerns, pirate and other adventure stories – is prone to "hard" primitivism (*Conan*). It is difficult to imagine a technological Fantasy, since in it the current runs strongly against technology and "cold reason"; nevertheless, they can be found transposed into the power of baleful magicians in Heroic Fantasy or of the superior gods in Horror Fantasy. Retaining a sense of power-conflicts over the use of technology tilts the story into SF, as in Marion Zimmer Bradley's fine Darkover series, which has even progressed to strong feminist themes. The quite high technology of the steel blade or ocean-going vessels is admissible, I suppose because of the safe intertext of Arabian Nights. But just as in SF, and quite different from myths, we never meet a smith or shipwright in Fantasy, the field of production is under a total proletarian taboo; while female adventuresses, like C.L. Moore's Jirel of Joiry, are few and far between before the 1980s. Most cities there also derive from Oriental stories, they are always far from the heart's desire (never mind Tolkien's hellish industrial district, a nonce appearance in Fantasy I suspect): they are doomed to decay in Dunsany, or alienatingly aseptic like the Zamyatinesque one Titus finds leaving Gormenghast, or simply givens of barbaric scenery, set against the ubiquitous deserts and glaciers (Jameson might rightly call them aspects of Fantasy's strongly marked world-reduction). Fertility, whether in women or jungles, is very rare, and then short-lived and/or menacing.

As different from Horror Fantasy, usually narrated from the vantage-point of the impinged upon, often with an initial disbelief in the malevolent incursion (cf. Clute, in Clute-Grant 909), Heroic Fantasy is organised around the *hero/es* for whom their world is as a rule familiar. This protagonist role is as a rule taken by a single individual (*Conan*) but it can also be a pair (Leiber), and on the other end of the spectrum Tolkien's (and Eddison's) anti-individualist throwback to a heroic group – say with war leader and ideological leader, as Aragorn and Gandalf – where the torch of leadership can pass from one group member to another. The individualist heroes have brawn and martial – plus sexual – prowess (as *Conan*), or swordsmanship and cleverness (as in Leiber), or faith and dogged overcoming of obstacles in serving the Good (as in Tolkien). In his "salvational history" variant, the scope of their intervention is epoch-making (with the refreshing addition of the "little man" Frodo) but this is an exception; on a lower level of naked power struggle *Conan* supposedly makes a difference in the Hyborian Age; or the protagonists are, more realistically, marginal to life in the story's world (the Leiber duo). In Heroic Fantasy the hero "does not age in the mind's eye; he or she fights on, for ever..." (Clute, in Clute-Grant 915), a swashbuckler updated from Dumas, pirate stories or the Douglas Fairbanks movies.

The *supernatural* element may include benevolent forces or figures in the rare religiously oriented writers of the Tolkien type; it may even be neutral and used for comic effect, as in Thorne Smith's *The Night Life of the Gods*; but most often in Heroic Fantasy and always in Horror Fantasy, it is malevolent (especially when it represents crushing cosmic indifference to humanity, as in Lovecraft's Old Ones, or mocking disregard, as in Machen). It always impinges upon the protagonist, it is there to aid or combat him, a cypher, often multiply removed, for the historical forces – and sometimes simply for the upper classes – the Fantasy thinks it escapes. In Horror Fantasy malevolent forces always invade empirical space, they are absolutely or strongly dominant. In Heroic Fantasy, as argued earlier, they may be absent in the Peake-Douglas or many Dunsany

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stories, on and off present in the languid irony and elegant effrontery of Cabell, a more or less important part of the scenery as in *Conan* and Leiber, or all-important as the Enemy in Tolkien. It must be techno-bureaucratic rationalism or bourgeois positivism (aided in places by religious orthodoxy) which impelled taxonomists to make of the supernatural the be-all and end-all of Fantasy.

Indeed, taking magic or the supernatural in general at its face value seems to have prevented depth investigation of its signifying tenor. Its operators or "shifters" are after all kidnapped props bereft of the sense – the doctrine and the ritual – which they had in their original systems, so that they necessarily become cyphers for our concerns today (for example Pan usually connotes the lust and/or innocence of sex as against Christianity, cf. Merivale). My impression is that as a rule the gods connote power beyond the individual's influence and signify the capriciousness or malevolence of our power apparati; they can be used to show strongly the affects of the individual at their mercy but very little of the causal nexus that brought the power about and could conceivably counteract it. Magicians however, when not simply plot devices, often connote human power – through manipulation of transcendental forces for empirical ends – and even revolt.⁷⁷ Except for some late feminist sympathy for witches, and the rare cases where magician equals struggling artist, as in Le Guin's first *Earthsea* trilogy and Moorcock, magic as a rule stands as cypher of evil to be defeated and marks Fantasy's ambivalence toward, or panic flight from, not simply technology but all superindividual struggle for power. We should meditate on the implications and drawbacks of Leiber's pithy synonym for Heroic Fantasy, "sword and sorcery," and why it has stuck.

3.5. I do not enjoy the role of Roman censor, and I abhor the pedantically hidebound schoolmaster. I would much rather, in Tom Moylan's terms, deal in annunciations than in denunciations. But Cato was right, within his premises, to insist that Carthago must absolutely be destroyed, and while I do not share Fichte's supernaturalist terminology, his insistence that in our historical period we are living in a state of "perfect sinfulness" translates an insight much deeper than Tolkien's. In this world, denegations are not only the logical complement of each and every affirmation but also the pride and glory of an intellectual. Saying No! in thunder to anything that makes of man a "degraded, enslaved, abandoned, contemptible being" (Marx, "Critique" 18) remains the ABC of what I see as proper, civic professionalism. Nonetheless, there are twenty-odd letters after C, and I am, out of respect for the sufferings inscribed in Fantasy, attempting to bend over backwards and weigh it not only justly but even mercifully. Yet I arrive now to "*science fantasy*," where I cannot forbear a more radical refusal.

The uncouth term names a hybrid sub-genre mixing elements and motivations from SF and Fantasy in more or less arbitrary manner. This subgenre goes at least from Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, through a lot of genre writers from the 1920s on like Abraham Merritt, and a whole wave from the late 1960s on that culminates perhaps in the various ambitious and lexically innovative series by Gene Wolfe, beginning with *The Book of the New Sun* tetralogy from the early 1980s. In MOSF, I noted that the narrative logic of Stevenson's famous tale cheats where the cause of the Jekyll-to-Hyde switch is concerned: it begins by means of a chemical concoction, not explained but presented as continuous with accepted Positivist science; but this is soon shelved in favour of Hyde's "returning" simply by force of desire and habit, which foregrounds the muck-

raking allegory of the respectable bourgeois professional hiding abjection under respectability (69). This unclear oscillation between a horror tale and older moral-cum-religious allegory undercuts any allotting of responsibility for Hyde's horrible deeds, using the alibi and red herring of a science dangerous by and in itself rather than by who uses it how and for/against whom (perhaps what I miss may become clear if we compare it with the opposition between Timothy Leary's experiments on himself with LSD and the CIA's and KGB's experiments with such psycho-drugs on defenceless human guinea-pigs). While Stevenson's deft footwork then shifts to detection from various points of view, I cited approvingly James Blish's opinion that in "science fantasy" as a rule "plausibility is specifically invoked" for an important part of the story "but may be cast aside in patches at the author's whim... [in] a blind and grateful abandonment of the life of the mind" (68).

I'd here only partly qualify this strong medicine by allowing for several kinds of exceptions based, *first* of all, on whether the two incompatible plausibilities or verisimilitudes are situated in the vehicle or the tenor. The story with an unclear tenor, as in Stevenson and to my mind – if I understand him – in Wolfe, may have all kinds of incidental felicities and intriguing, even splendid, aspects, but it finally cannot be esthetically, and therefore also ethically, exemplary. Yet the use of, for example, telepathy in many stories from Bester through Le Guin and on seems to me as a rule a fairly clear parable of the yearning for collective understanding and/or for a balance of rational and emotional in contacts with animals (Norton) and other Others (women vs. men or humans vs. the elfin *chieri* in Bradley), which I'd have no problems of reading as SF or as superior Fantasy. To the contrary, much of the "science fantasy" I went on to discuss in *Victorian* (90-94), culminating in the Christian occultism of Marie Corelli, led me to conclude that her type of narration – echoing down to C.S. Lewis and present-day US "militia" ideologies – is a fraudulent reconciling of a totally superordinated (here religious) world with currently dominant sexual, religious, and political taboos, whose narrative logic is simply overt ideology within a proto-fascist horizon plus quasi-Freudian erotic patterns. This genre convergence can be explained as a strong, obfuscatory ideological necessity of given social classes, but it does not seem to me either valid SF or valid Fantasy.

That is my major complaint against this hybridisation. I hold it as perfectly legitimate that not only the sociopolitical role but, even more, the epistemological "deep structures" of Galilean science should be held up to pitiless scrutiny, say in Nietzsche's vein of showing up its umbilical cord to power structures, evident from Bacon on (I have done so in "On the Horizons"). To do that, it is not enough to show revulsion against "materialist civilization" or similar bogeys, but rather to show an intimate understanding of that epistemology and respect for its achievements – would most of us really wish to throw electricity overboard? As different from SF, Fantasy seems poorly equipped for that; and "science fantasy" runs the risk of having the worst rather than the best of the two worlds between which it sits (cf. Le Guin 134-35). It seems then to reproduce the post-1848 bourgeois compromise between reason and occultism (say in Maupassant's exemplary "Horla" or Meyrink's *Golem*). At its best, it may warn against overmuch meddling into our delicate life-world by scientists blindly following the hegemonic liberal assumptions about linear perfectibility – compare, just as one example, today's molecular geneticists building up billions for pharmaceutical companies and unknown horrors for us – and develop this into "thick" descriptions of the fruits by which the intervention should be judged, as in Le Guin's *Lathe of Heaven*; or it may examine how useful are some old myths today, as in Delany's *The Einstein Intersection* (significantly, both cases lean toward an SF explanation of the fantastic aspect).

Second, the SF-Fantasy blend may be clearly overridden by comedy (from humour to satire), by adventure (as in Varley's *Titan/ Wizard/ Demon* trilogy), and for aught I know by other narrative modes. In such cases it should be judged by the success of the dominant mode (considerable in Varley, as different from most E.R. Burroughs), and the Biblical injunction not to begrudge their fill – i.e. the minor "science fantasy" element – to the kine who do there thresh the corn should be charitably followed in lieu of Cato's grimness. Finally, third, we may be seeing a reversion to and/or innovation on allegory, as in the case of the tortured Gnostic psycho-allegory of David Lindsay's *A Voyage to Arcturus*, a work I admire as I would any great failed experiment (for its intensity and consistency) without sharing its premises.

Useful critical spadework has come out of the post-Tolkien swell of "fat-volumed trilogies detailing marvelous exploits of gods, warriors and wizards – a thing which is with us still, and which in recent years... has taken on the overtones of ersatz scripture" (Zelazny 59); and some of it deals with "science fantasy." I wish to briefly consider two overviews arguing for it, written since my *Victorian* strictures, Brian Attebery's article of 1981 and Carl D. Malmgren's chapter (final form 1991). I'm afraid I cannot find much in Attebery to agree with. His erudite listing of a number of works starts from the premise that "Whereas science fiction portrays a universe ordered by logic, fantasy revives the outlook of a child or savage" (236); but I doubt that his exemplars – such as Norton, Crowley, Delany, Zelazny or Wolfe – can be usefully interpreted as halfway to reviving a childish and/or savage outlook. It is simply too easy to set up a strawman consisting of official rationalism, "hard" science, and schematic logic, and call any interference between this type of norm and a world which does not fit such norms "science fantasy."

As for Malmgren's rich discussion, it goes in for David Allen's definition of "science fantasy" as stories that assume an orderly universe but "propose that the natural laws are different from those we derive from our current sciences" (cited on 140). I find this too fuzzy for use, for two reasons. First, the "different" laws may or may not be continuous in *method* with our long-duration cultural logic. If they are not, then the story is probably straightforward Fantasy, to be evaluated by criteria proper to it. And if they are, then the story is probably squarely – as all Alternative Histories – or mostly – as McCaffery's *Dragonrider* series – within SF, to be evaluated by criteria proper to it. Second, and just as important, the narrative proportions and balances of the story (the way it is read) are not mentioned here. This, I think, is acknowledged in a number of instances by Malmgren's careful dissections; for example, of the time-travel story, which may be "science fantasy" only when it is not a narrative enabling device of marginal importance. Thus, of Malmgren's two "test cases," Lem's *The Investigation* and Leiber's *Conjure Wife*, the first one refuses any and all laws for the epidemic of disappearing corpses, while in the second one "[t]he scientific explanation of magic is based on analogy and is not particularly convincing" (144); either alternative can scarcely aspire to the dignity of Allen's and Malmgren's "different natural laws." The article claims all of Doc Smith as well as Sturgeon's *More than Human* and Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* as "science fantasy"; if this were so, what would be left as SF (maybe the literature of R&D?) would scarcely be worth the bother: in which case, hybrid forms wouldn't matter either.

I've been sometimes suspected of over-theorizing, and I confess there are some spidery lures in the proper spinning of a conceptual web, as in any exercise of craft mastery. But I've never thought of myself as a theoretician, only as a historian deeply conscious that all our "seeing as" (Wittgenstein) is always already theoretical (as well as historical). The only chance to articulate our histories critically was then to foreground the theory according to which it is seen as X. However,

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this has to my mind entailed as much explicit theory as necessary – but no more. In the case of "science fantasy" we may have arrived at the limit of necessity (Occam's Razor). The search for a clear definition of what Blish saw as a patchy and whimsical narrative form may be trying to pin down a will-o'-the-wisp. Is there anything we can understand better by using this category rather than by saying that there are some marginal forms of SF (and of Fantasy?) using elements of the other genre? If there isn't, might it not be better to give it up?

4. Some Dilemmas on Uses and Values of Fantasy

I... come to the last and most important of the three questions: what, if any, are the values and functions of fairy-stories now?

Tolkien, 1947

4.0. Since by "fairy-stories" Tolkien meant more or less what is today called Fantasy, I shall come to my end by speculating about this overriding question.

Tolkien also presents one of the first and still one of the best arguments in favour of Fantasy, with a family resemblance to Brecht's simultaneous plea for an "estrangement effect":

... we need recovery. We should look at the green again, and be startled anew (but not blinded) by blue and yellow and red. We should meet the centaur and the dragon, and then perhaps suddenly behold... sheep, and dogs, and horses – and wolves.... Recovery (which includes return and renewal of health) is a re-gaining – regaining of a clear view...; so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity – from possessiveness.... [T]he things that are trite... are the things that we have appropriated, legally or mentally. (57-58)

This is seconded by Rabkin and Jackson, who sound in their books a clarion call in favour of fantastic fiction as a general epistemological subversion of encrusted habits of thinking and perceiving; but since this clearly doesn't apply to much of banal Fantasy, it is then restricted to some subset ("high lit." Modernism in Jackson) or indeed to the principle of "being fantastic." From the Marxist side this was shared by Zipes's work on fairy tales and by Runcini's plea for understanding *il fantastico*, which he intriguingly saw as situated between the religious and the erotic discourses ("È possibile"; cf. also Ceserani's parallel to romantic love). And lately this uplifting horizon has been as it were codified by Clute's crucial claim that Fantasy characters may be "good to think with." Now, let me generously add to his claim all other pertinent narrative elements, such as landscapes or plots, and let me further, as against the Puritanical or business barbarians' discomfort at or even hate of new stories, wholeheartedly agree that narrative, because it is "the most important mode, from times immemorial, chosen by humans for the conveyance of meaning," is *potentially* "a primary technique... for the inculcation of lessons inimical to the Thought Control Police who... notoriously hate and fear the anarchic, freeing power of the raw tale" (Clute 899). Indeed, I've argued, on the traces of Jameson, that storytelling is a privileged cognitive method, *al pari* with and irreducible to

the conceptual abstractions of philosophers or politicians. In my pantheon, narrative is – together with image – one of the Supreme Goods. But the corruption of the best is the worst, and capitalism is notoriously the social formation most efficient at co-opting potentialities into Darth Vaders. It is therefore useful to confront Tolkien's argument with Freud's in *Civilization and its Discontents*:

Life as we find it is too hard for us; it entails too much pain, too many disappointments, impossible tasks. We cannot do without palliative remedies...: powerful diversions of interest, which lead us to care little about our misery; substitutive gratifications, which lessen it; and intoxicating substances, which make us insensitive to it. (25)

I won't argue here whether Freud enumerated the "palliatives" either fully or quite precisely but only attempt to situate his categories on a good-bad scale, which I take to mean "enhancing vs. poisoning life." Let me note that I'm much in favour of gratifications, or even of any momentary escape from unbearable pain. But I'm here asking about the price all of us pay for any of them. The diversions paralyze doing anything against the impossible hardships of being, so that I'd situate them toward the bad end. Even worse are the intoxicating substances, drugging ourselves into debilitating insensibility. The substitutive gratifications are ambiguous: good if their lessening of pain doesn't entail buying more pain in the long run for most of us, bad in proportion to their entailing such augmentation of pain. Insofar as the play-acting of Fantasy's worlds is taken seriously as diversion, they are debilitating drugs. They then fall within "fantasy" as antagonistically defined by Simone Weil: "a proliferation of...self-centered aims and images...in the service of consolation, domination, anxiety, and aggrandizement... [, protecting the psyche] from insight" (Ruddick 358). Only insofar as the everted gratifications of Fantasy may not only momentarily ease and dull the pain of being, but also contribute to deeper or more lasting eradication of pain, they can be seen as salutary.

Granted, as Le Guin has repeatedly reminded us, what Tolkien punningly called a recovery can be thought of at one level as play: "a pure pretense with no ulterior motive whatever... the game played for the game's sake." But in our extremely threatened times, as competing new and very rough beasts slouch toward Bethlehem, the kind of critic I am must insist on the other level: "a game played for very high stakes.... an alternative technique for apprehending and coping with existence" (84). I call this level *political* (a more ingratiating name would be civic, but that to me lacks the epistemic component favoured by Tolkien and Brecht). Fantasy is – and seems to have historically always been – a literature for "the time of troubles" (cf. Jameson, *Political* 118), when central authority is markedly weakened, gangs of official and unofficial brigands abound, and ideological hegemonies totter: millenarian sects and false prophets arise and all of us search for new sacred books, so that in art too individualism gives ground to "additive and composite" creativity (Eco 502, whom see for all the above). Surely almost all Fantasy comes out of experiences of subaltern social groups. The optimistic Elkins and Rabkin, and with some hesitation Jackson and Zipes's earlier works used here, add to this the romantic idea that the repressions in and of the lower and the middle classes *have to* result in cognitive liberation rather than in a black mimicry of hierarchic oppression. This for me does not follow, the middle classes being particularly prone to self-deception (cf. Benjamin GS III: 220) Writings which articulate anti-hierarchic self-determination, surely present in the spread of Fantasy – so as not to resort always only to Le Guin, let me mention some works of C.J. Cherryh – do not, alas, seem to me too frequent in the orgies of new hierarchies, suffered as fate in Horror Fantasy or gladly reimposed in the swashbuckling Heroic Fantasy and even in Gene Wolfe. My criterion to test Clute's "good to think with," or Le Guin's claim that Fantasy "tries to hint at an order and clarity underlying existence" (87), is: Do the

narrative structures and their upshot (tenor) hinder or help the reader to orient herself in her everyday world? Do they supply what I'd call points of intervention or application – as a lever must be applied at a point to gain purchase, or as a surgeon must cut at a precise point? Is Fantasy as a tradition and present institution a tool of the reigning ideology of wars for profit, locking out cognition (in Kracauer's phrase) as workers are locked out when demanding an economic basis for dignity, or is it an induction of cognition, however partial and metaphoric? Hurray for an escape from alienation: but is, or is not, the "escape from the phony" also one into a mirror-image phony (Le Guin 205)? Isn't very often a degraded pseudo-utopianism at work here (see Marin, and Suvin "Utopianism")? This has to be decided for each text or grouping of texts.

4.1. But then, what would be the context and criteria for analyzing any group of Fantasy texts? They should probably center around the implications of *transgression*, of a Fantasy text going beyond the spacetime of capitalist history; Jackson has called it, with much exaggeration, "a desire for... all that is in opposition to the capitalist and patriarchal order" (176), one that puts this order in doubt by estranging it. But if this oppositional verbiage is seriously meant, such imaginary transgressions will be seen as situated between the poles of a *compensation substituting for* vs. an *exploration preparing for* (or at least *allowing for*) empirical oppositional action. The former favours alternative, rigid hierarchies founded on individual power in a simplified world, the latter alternative, supple causalities founded in the dialectics between a resisting world and collective action (so far best shown by Tolkien, who however then subsumes the action under preordained historical cycles, and by Le Guin, who escapes that subsumption). Benjamin opposes in another context the dream of the anaesthetised patient with the intervention of the surgeon: the former has no distance to the events, the latter has the distance needed for perspective and prospects (GS IV/1: 131). This seems a proper image for the two poles.

According to Lotman, literary functions may be divided into two main groups: the active forces and the obstacles. Roughly up to the middle of 18th Century, consubstantial with the laicisation discussed at the beginning, the obstacles are non-human and superhuman forces which can at best be ethically queried by the tragical hero and author but which cannot be influenced by either. Such a mighty obstacle, called in semiotics the actant of Arbiter determining the outcome (cf. my "Can People"), is literally transcendental: so that whether it may in a given culture be called The Gods, God, Destiny, Nature or even History is for that culture perhaps crucial but in a "long duration" perspective secondary. The great enlightening act of the ascending bourgeoisie was to have reduced the world to people, that is, to relations among human groups and institutions, which among other matters meant the identification of obstacles with reachable and possibly removable people or human classes. Accordingly, I would pose two consubstantial central questions about Fantasy texts: what kind of *Destiny* and what *plot structures* obtain in it? My very general answer would be that in Horror Fantasy Destiny is absolutely superordinated and plot structure is subordinated to inducing the affect of fear and horror; while in Heroic Fantasy Destiny is within the hero's will to power and plot structure a serial manifestation of that will which could go indefinitely on (it would even be possible to write further Tolkienian epics about his First, Second and Fourth Age). In both cases, impotence and omnipotence, the plot is cyclical, whether the cycle closes with a whimper or goes on indefinitely. This differs from SF, where the struggle against Destiny may succeed or fail, depending on the constellation around its novum, but its outcome is not preordained. The norm for a protagonist in a Horror Fantasy is that he must gruesomely fail, and in a "heroic" tale heroically succeed; in an

SF tale, she depends on the mutable forces of the thick history being challenged: the plot opens up the closed, mythical cycle. Historically speaking, I'd still suspect that those who want to purge More, Swift, and Cyrano – that is, utopia, satire, and wit – from the roots of SF reduce it to an R&D ideology (or horror thereof, as in Mary Shelley), while there's no possible doubt that fantastic fiction cannot be imagined before mid-18th Century.

To specify further what happens between the poles of substitutive compensation vs. exploration allowing for empirical opposition, we could begin, as I broached in 3.1, by noting what may Fantasy's ideational structures legitimately be or not be set *against*. Many critics have noted a central characteristic of Fantasy is its lacunary and *en creux* character. The central energy shaping its narrative is a strange, sometimes banal and sometimes most ingenious, anamorphic modelling: the concave inversions and eversions are moulded by the convex pressures impinging upon personalities in high capitalism. From a humanist perspective this was early on (from the Romantics to Marx) identified as capitalist alienation, then as technological hyper-urbanisation (Morris), bureaucratic rationalism and disenchantment (Weber); and most intricately, updating Marx's hard-headed analysis of the springs of capitalism, as the total invasion of our life-world by commodity relationships hand in hand with the hype and brainwashing, from advertising to the "entertainment industry," that covers it up and makes it palatable (Benjamin and Jameson). But it has remained, to my mind, quite unclear how the esthetic aversions inside a Fantasy narrative relate to quite different pragmatic subversions outside the narrative. Well-meaning critics of various shades of pink, from liberals to humanist Marxists, have simply assumed an equation between Fantasy's semantic range or elasticity on the one hand, and political openness on the other hand, as a matter of faith, as a – dare I say? – magical effect. Alas, no such short-circuit obtains.

Negt and Kluge note about the experience of alienated labour that "[t]he unbearable real situation experienced by the worker leads to the creation of a defense mechanism," but that the faculty of fantasy is, as a blind libidinal counterweight, not only "an unconscious practical critique of alienation" but also an inverted expression of this alienation (33). Thus, what if the esthetic gratifications in our commercial, Disneyfied, dehistoricised arrested moment of history use the "fantastic" alienation as a substitute and pre-emption of efficient critique? So that (as Jameson said about the cognate Post-Mod genre of "fabulation") "the making up of unreal history is a substitute for the making of the real kind"? As an inveterate formalist and lover of tales, I would say this does not have to happen – Jameson continues by noting that the "new multiple or alternate strings of events rattle the bars of the national tradition and the history manuals" (*Postmodernism* 369) – but how come it usually does? To put it most bluntly, why should Tolkien or the Conan stories or the frenziedly racist Lovecraft not be legitimately usable by neo-fascism (as its ideologists in Europe have vociferously claimed)? If Hoess, the commander of Auschwitz, relaxed by playing Haydn, why could not a future Hoess of genetical-nanophysical oppression be a fan of Dunsany, Tolkien or *The Exorcist* movie? Is there anything intrinsic to Fantasy that militates against it? Has it not, after all, been used several times by the most bloody oppression, in Hitler's Wagnerian Valhallas and Werewolves or the Ku Klux Klan's Imperial Wizards?

Thus, I believe we need more precision about which elements or aspects of capitalist rationality, commodification or organization does Fantasy usually react against. What ways out of them does it take, to living or dead ends? And as the end-all, what is the *main effect* of its (perhaps various) ways out?

4.2. The common denominator of Fantasy seems to me the resolute refusal of any technology, urbanisation, and finances associated with the capitalism of Industrial Revolution and "paleotechnic" (Mumford) machinery, as well as the refusal of the opacity and sheer loss of synoptic overview which follow for all efforts to understand relationships between people. This is consubstantial to a full evacuation of both the constraints for human relationships, and of what Jameson calls the object world, of late capitalism. Carried over from the everyday pressures are, however, three factors, which follow in ascending order of shape-shifting in relation to the reader's empirical world.

First is the omnipresent hugely *endangered status* of life and liberty, stemming from our global avalanches of unemployment, hunger, epidemics, wars – you name it.

Second, *power politics* are installed in place of any overarching historical laws, whether of bourgeois "progress" or of socialist sublation of capitalism that retains the achievements of industrialism; even the nostalgic collectivists of the Tolkien kind cannot show a monotheistic religion or Saviour. Heroic Fantasy and Horror Fantasy divide according to whether personal salvation through the action of saviour-heroes is on the agenda or not. If it is, the reader's alienation is countered by the attempt to wipe the historical slate clean and try the pursuit of happiness in a rougher but more understandable environment, the landscapes and cities using 18th-Century Arabian Tales or similarly filtered legends of "harder" primitivism, and often intermingled with power from polytheistic godheads and wizardry. If it is not, the power politics are transmuted into the intervention of immeasurably superior crushing godheads or entities into everyday spacetime, which yokes the reader's alienation into the pleasure of esthetised horror. In a further ideational compromise characteristic for our history of scaled-down hopes, parts of Heroic Fantasy may also be seen as shelving the very thought of salvation in favour of little oases of privatised survival, either still against the backdrop of a whole age (*Conan*) or simply in the interstices of a city (Leiber).

Third, and for this initial hypothesis final, the most keenly felt disenchantment (Weber) or loss of aura (Benjamin) pervading all aspects of capitalist hegemony, is replaced by *new thrills or affects*. Even Lovecraftian horror maps a kind of demented causality that is more bearable than the isolation, fragmentedness, and alienation imposed by bureaucratised rationality yoked to the profit principle – and even more so the re-enchantments of Dunsany or Tolkien.

There is no doubt the sociological bearer of Fantasy is a large group of alienated readers at the margins of the Post-Fordist social hegemony, drawn from the marginalised intellectuals, the young, the lower classes, and the women, and that a good part of them would be Benjamin's narcotised dreamers escaping its pain. Hugh Duncan exemplified this for the USA in the 1960s as follows: "[t]he American Negro, the poor [W]hite, the impecunious adolescent, are urged daily and hourly, by some of the most persuasive magicians known to history, to want everything that money can buy, yet because they are black, unskilled, or too young, they cannot satisfy those exhortations. . . . they must repress [their] desires" (in Elkins 25-26, and cf. Russ *To Write* 61). But how are we to update this for the last quarter century?

My hypothesis is: The long-range structural crisis of capitalism coincides with the mass growth of fantastic fiction in and at the end of the high modernist phase (see 2.2), in direct parallel to the widening of its readership from the Poe-to-Morris disaffected intellectuals into a mass appeal to

the marginalised social groups. In particular, this includes a large segment of the young generation whom the collapse of the Welfare State and all other organised opposition to savage capitalism has left without economic and ideological anchorage. The hugely encroaching commodification of everything means that when work is obtained, it is very rarely related to pleasure any more. Subjectivity is being bereft of most private oases (work, family) which used to alleviate subjection and marginalisation: it is now sold like Peter Schlemihl's shadow. This results in a huge rise of everyday humiliations in shamelessly exploited labour buttressed by sexism and racism--up to a score of extremely dirty wars which openly institute global surveillance and reduce people to data murdering or being murdered, but carefully occult the motives. One resentful response is then hugely swelling yearning for a world where goods are not commodities and people are not alienated by the omni-pervasive machinery of bourgeois war of each against each, or at least the reader's representative is top dog. In them, the sympathetic heroes are often pirates or thieves (in *Conan* and Leiber), or average people faced with with inexplicable opportunities or resentfully yoked to overwhelming horrors (as in King's *Carrie*). To the empirical world out of joint there are opposed inverse worlds "in joint," though as a rule in a simplified joint (plaster cast?). Ever since the Romantic predilection for fantastic fiction, Bessière notes, "the fracture of history is resolved in a kind of narcissism of the imaginary" (44); "the fantastic is called for to indicate the absoluteness of exclusion, the overarching perversion of human reality" (222).

Building on Klein, I'd think SF appeals to social groups with confidence that something can at present be done about a collective, historical future – if only as dire warnings. This entails as a rule a comfortable neighbourliness toward, and mostly actual alliance with or indeed commitment to technoscience (Morris was representative of possibilities of exception). To the contrary, in a situation where people's entire life-world has in the meanwhile undergone much further tentacular and capillary colonisation, Fantasy's appeal is to uncertain social classes or fractions who have been cast adrift and lost that confidence, so that they face their own present and future with horror or a resolve to have a good time before the Deluge – or both. There seems to be wide agreement among editors and writers, based on polls, that Fantasy is read predominantly by younger people, perhaps up to their mid-30s and 70% male (Kelso 440 and 445), who have internalised the experience of lacking safe and permanent employment. A number of them are university graduates (as in SF), but in Post-Fordism this no longer ensures entry into the professional-managerial class; and a number seem to be already the de-schooled generation – certainly their education is markedly inferior, especially in science subjects, to the pre-1960s. Therefore the epistemology of SF can appeal to the cognitive universalism of natural and/or social laws, however renewed, while an individualistic and pluralist epistemology of Fantasy appeals to occultism, whimsy or magic, opposing the SF model while leaning on it. As the ideologically pioneering anthropology began, with Lévi-Strauss, delving into "cool" societies "without history," short-circuiting myth and mind outside of history, the young people of the urban middle classes, mostly employees and university educated, rejected accepted (or any) cause-and-effect relations (Ben-Yehuda 75-77, 85).

Both Klein and Ben-Yehuda note how exactly parallel in time and largely overlapping in horizons are the rise of occultism and the new developments in what is by now all lumped together into the mystifying category of "speculative fiction": the SF in the wake of *Dune*, and all Fantasy. Though all of us from Klein to Kelso lack hard data, it is clear Ben-Yehuda is correct when he cites as enabling conditions for this, first, the decomposition of the political horizons of the 60s' counter-culture – or any other oppositional mass politics – and the privatisation of organizing belief, and second, the tremendous loss of prestige by technoscience because of wars and ecological disasters

(87-88, 98-102). It is not by chance that Freud's hypothesis of an unconscious out of time was published in 1915, while an entire generation was being slaughtered in the horrible stasis of the World War 1 trenches. But in these straits, SF has to my mind on the surface three but in fact only two sustainable options (see my "The Final"). The first option is to continue with what Stableford calls "futuristic costume dramas," erasing more and more their difference with Fantasy as to any rational credibility or causality involved; the best writer of this option – which can now claim the trendy cachet of a Post-Modern sensibility – is surely, as of *Dhalgren*, Samuel Delany. The second option is to defiantly embrace the NASA use of hard sciences as the only rightful claim to SCIENCE Fiction – let me call it the Ben Bova school. But this is then going to become not perhaps totally extinct, as Stableford prophesies, but the fiction of those engineering and science students who still read fiction – a dwindling group. For the genre as a whole, it is no option. The third is the Le Guin to K.S. Robinson line: which, whatever its present politics, must be called a Leftwing one insofar as it has inherited from European philosophy and the Welfare State age (from Lenin to Keynes) a commitment to the use of reason to effect radical changes in the way people live together – which practically means today enmity to the new NATO-cum-WTO/IMF supremacy. I would include here all thoughtful and self-critical feminist SF from early Russ through Charnas and Pamela Sargent to C.J. Cherryh and Gwyneth Jones. In sum: either SF will become integrally critical, or it will eventually be outflanked by Fantasy and fail as a mass genre.

4.3. Any imaginative world is defined by notions of probable or verisimilar *causality*. How this is handled may be a crucial test for Fantasy. Let me stress again, as I did in Section 1, that to my mind cognition is much richer than, and in some ways even opposed to, scientific rationalism, so that I do not wish to apply the latter to Fantasy (or to SF). I'm quite out of sympathy with exaltations of bureaucratic or any other rationality as against emotion⁸, or of unhistorical Truth in any dogmatic sense, be it religious or "scientific." My main watershed criterion for the use of reason would be: does it "include people" (Kracauer 57), do singular people have each a name and a face in that Truth? That is: is it couched exclusively in terms of the no doubt indispensable but also insufficient abstractions (the "god words" Science, History, Nation, Gender, Race – you add to it), or does it gather in the interests and desires of embodied people and their groupings (classes)? Defining those desires is notoriously tricky – who has an infallible definition? – so that I can only give some suggestive examples. Are we talking about blind Justice, forbidding with equal majesty the millionaire and the beggar to sleep under the bridge (as Anatole France put it), or about the possibility of gaining a reasonable livelihood for all working people? About Loyalty or the need to live with the people you choose irrespective of any above god word (you can find this affirmed in *We* or *The Left Hand of Darkness* but denied in *Lord of the Rings*)? About Piety or the desire to subject even our most cherished assumptions to the test of doubt?

I recognize that Fantasy, in opposing its "fulgurant and precise immediacy" to "normal perception," departs from "conventional causality" (Bessière 180-81), but at least the reactions of the protagonist necessarily participate in some flexible causality (not necessarily of the "positive," linear and monocausal, kind). This allows, at best, some articulation of the pros and cons of various forms of pressure and resistance to be tried out for the delight and instruction of the reader needing tools against Clute's Thought Police. In Benjamin's late work a powerful sociopsychological theory can be found of capitalist modernity as a hypnotic dream-world; the Weberian disenchantment of the world provokes a compensatory collective dream that Benjamin, like Marx, wanted to interrupt by

"dissolving mythology into the space of history" (GS V: 1014; cf. also Buck-Morss, Ch. 8 on Benjamin's "Dream World of Mass Culture"). If not, what would Fantasy deal in? It could be simply adventure, from mild thrills of surface novelty to sensationalism, which is in my experience the case of a majority of writings in Fantasy (and SF). This fits very well into the enduring US tradition of "romance," characterised – as against the French, English or Russian, but also against a whole other strand of the US "novel" – by "an assumed freedom from the ordinary novelistic requirements of verisimilitude, development, and continuity; a tendency toward melodrama and idyl; a more or less formal abstractness and... a tendency to plunge into the underside of consciousness; a willingness to abandon moral questions or to ignore the spectacle of man in society, or to consider these things only indirectly and abstractly" (Chase ix, underlined DS), to sacrifice the thickness of relations between people in favour of a world elsewhere. But in that case Fantasy's undoubted inventiveness turns repetitive and banally underdeveloped, a simple obverse of empirical taboos, and the forces impeding personal development can no longer be beheld or articulated. In Spinoza's words, "their idea of freedom is simply the ignorance of any cause for their actions" (86, transl. modified). Fantasy then often intersects with what Joanna Russ has called "dream literature": an attempt "to turn the work of art into vicarious experience – to arouse emotion or appetite directly without the inevitable alloy of reflection given by art and without any of the embarrassments of thought or the mixedness of real experience" ("Dream" 13). On the non-cognitive end of the spectrum, such monophonic sensationalism easily generates texts complicitous with war lust and power lust in general and plotted as individualistic – often "superman" – enforcing of same. In the US context, the latter texts can be seen as the literature of potential or actual armies, including semi-fascist or three-quarters-fascist Aryan militias, that rely on an non-debatable system of belief – whether religious, openly magical or occultist (i.e. racist) is here not central. They violently enforce ruined certainties of bourgeois Family, Self, Nation or Race. The most brilliant critical book I know of in the field, Mme. Bessière's, seems to conclude (if I read her richly deceptive clarity correctly) in the same vein: "... the Fantastic is not the place of a liberated writing (because the text would gain independence from the current extra-textual conventions), but of a writing (*écriture*) of non-pertinence.... In fact, we are here dealing with a literature of lack." (240) In view of the new Leviathan in whose belly we must live, capitalism without a human face, I do not think the total, *a limine* refusal of Fantasy by illustrious critics, such as Aldiss or Klein, is useful any longer. Yet all of the above suffices perhaps to explain why I impenitently see as hugely sociopathic one pole of Fantasy's mass effect in itself, as well as its swallowing up SF that had in the era of civic and youth protest developed considerable anti-hegemonic and truly subversive tools of cognitive estrangement (cf. McClintock 35). The effect of such Fantasy is to contain SF by redirecting attention and money away from it.

4.4. And what is the relation of emotion, *affect* or desire – put on our agenda by the pioneering work of Rabkin, Bessière, and Runcini – to cognition? Alas, we know even less about emotions than about most other matters discussed in this essay. Emotion is a survival tool, no more sacred than any other: it may be life-furthering or genosuidal, and I have argued (in "Cognitive" and "Haltung"), following Brecht and some feminists, that it can only be the former if it is articulated and clarified. Is it to be treated as a license to dispense with narrative coherence and richness of figures – that is, as inimical to cognition – rather than intertwining with them as an aspect of integral cognition? Is the explosion of Fantasy to be strategically linked with desire as the great buzzword of Post-Fordist cultural theory, and in particular with narcissism à la Christopher Lasch's thesis in the 1970s that Americans

were driven to act out of self-regarding assertion in lieu of historical continuity and social justice, and that this is based on the highly ideological assumption – touted by PR merchandizing – that "the individual and his or her desires were the only tangible reality" (Parrinder 110)? I refuse to believe that the stringent diagnosis of Bessière's – "[t]o the absence of meaning (*sens*) corresponds a totalisation through the effect of fear or anxiety," as a "substitute of signification" (198) – is necessarily constitutive of all fantastic fiction (she meant it mainly for classical horror tales): substituting usually rather primitive and banal affects for all cognitive logic seems a total dead end both in esthetics and in ethics. For, semantic organization is a model derived and modified from but relating to the readers' orientation toward and within pragmatic organizations of work and then buying and selling, "leisure," etc. A signifying organization is crucial if we want to talk about causal nexus permitting orientation in the interests of working people: especially for people in mass societies, "organization is the proper medium within which the reification of human relationships is played out" (Benjamin GS III: 221, and see the discussions with Brecht recorded in his diary, GS VI: 525-29). The point seems to me not simply to call "the fantastic" an affect (Rabkin 213) but to find which dosages of which affects in Fantasy dovetail (quite inevitably) with which semantic, sense-making propositions, and to which end. As a rule, primitive or muddy emotions correspond to primitive and muddy concepts; and obversely, I cannot think of any conceptually and semantically clear articulation that doesn't also require and generate clarified emotions--and vice versa.

A case in point would be the strong affect of horror, which combines fear and disgust. I've suggested earlier a possible defence of Lovecraft (cf. also Klein, and Russ, *To Write* 60ff.). A first approach to the reasons for horror tales was given by Edmund Wilson – whom I consider one of the premier critics of the 20th Century, a man of great erudition and acumen, as well as a distinguished novelist himself. They are

first, the longing for mystic experience which seems always to manifest itself in periods of social confusion, when political progress is blocked: as soon as we feel that our own world has failed us, we try to find evidence for another world; second, the instinct to inoculate ourselves against panic at the real horrors loose on earth... by injections of imaginary horror, which soothe us with the momentary illusion that the forces of madness and murder may be tamed and compelled to provide us with mere dramatic entertainment. (173)

Wilson's first reason applies to all Fantasy. For Horror Fantasy in particular, I'd call the reasons, a bit more sympathetically, a longing for salvation and a homeopathic accommodation. But both remain ambiguous: fake salvation easily slides to perdition, and poisoning oneself in small, safe doses easily escalates to shoreless craving. Two polar possibilities seem again to present themselves, which I'll call, following Russ, *subversion* and *addiction*. On the one end, as Benjamin argued about Baudelaire, our empirical world may be cognised as horrible: go into any bank and look at the strained faces of the not yet "rationalised away" employees, or listen to the talk in any campus pub, and you'll see where naked fear comes from. Seeing the profit system not merely "as" victorious but "as" life-destroying is subversive. Or on the other end, as is usually the case, horror literature and film has nothing to do with an interest-bound estrangement but tends to sensationalist addiction, heaping gore upon gore, slanting the story – as Lovecraft recommended – towards a culmination in fear, which has been properly called an anti-cognitive or "cognition hindering"

estrangement (Fischer 16). The price paid for the explanation of a lone person's fear and horror seems to me too high if it enures us to the perpetuation and indeed escalation of that horror.^{9/}

Curiously and most characteristically, even though the "taproot" medieval or Antiquity texts from which Fantasy abundantly draws comprise some of the most significant love stories we know (Tristan and Isolde, say), erotics are scant in it. Horror Fantasy finds little or no place for it, though Poe thought the death of a lovely maiden was the most affecting story possible; but even in Heroic Fantasy erotics are (at least up to the 80s) usually stiff, derived from melodramatic subliterate of realism, as in Tolkien – if not derived from bourgeois harem fantasies and rape pornography.

4.5. I arrive now at my final, unresolved point: the place of Kafka (which I can only begin sketching in). In spite or maybe because of its extreme pessimism and bleakness, the Kafkian parable may have, within a generic space not too far from Fantasy, come nearest to a useful diagnosis inimical to the organizational forces policing us. Its sad and grave humility does not pretend that the lone subaltern individual, caught like a bedbug or other endangered animal in the cages and burrows that define it, can miraculously transcend the nightmare of Father-society. On the contrary, it "places the fantastic as a determinate, marked *absence* at the heart of the secular world" (Jameson, *Political* 134) – and at its best identifies this absence with the pressures of the institutions (of family, judicial system or the ruling "castle" power) which dehumanize the tracked little man. In a characteristically complicated twist, Kafka seems to me to go back to the Bakhtinian carnival which – just like satire – identified the enemy: it is a black, Boschian carnival, but the communal values are at least its absent horizon. Obversely, Fantasy seems constitutively inclined to treat armies, guilds or any other good or bad community only as backdrops for "hero fiction." In the SF of Le Guin – whom I take to stand for the best in our field – the reader can find a lot about the effects of gender reorganization in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, and about the interaction of political and planetary organization in *The Dispossessed* and *The Word for World Is Forest*. In the splendid *Earthsea* trilogy, the best of her "psychomyths," she seems in comparison to deal in individualist anxieties of the nuclear Self, cathartically healed after a lapse: the mage school is a backdrop, the wonderfully apposite archipelago world a necessary allegorical equivalent to the stations of Ged's progress but not a "thick" society as in the SF novels. (In what we could call her "second *Earthsea* trilogy," the horizon changes and the investigation becomes considerably wider; I plan to return to this in a separate essay.) For the rest, she could have said with Flaubert: "Ged c'est moi," and what she did say is that "The trilogy is, in one aspect, about the artist" (53). No genre Fantasy I know has advanced from empathy into and identification with the protagonist-hero. No doubt, this our narrative representative needs defending, but how far will this be accomplished by reducing Kafka's K. vs. Castle tension – an investigation of obscure causalities – to K. alone?

I'm here getting at one of the central contradictions of the bourgeois horizons: an officially individualist society without a space for the individual. It is a twist on one of the oldest problems of philosophy, the subject-object relation: "[The fantastic tale] can no longer pose simultaneously the reality of the Ego and of the World" (Bessière 68). Its transfer into worlds that have been bereft of our history and world means it is no longer believable that "everyday life contained a probability of a free relationship of subject to society" (idem 222). And since we have arrived at political philosophy, the rise of Fantasy coincides not only with that of occultism but also with the Foucault

moment (though no writer except Delany was conscious of this). Both Fantasy and Foucault – and after him, the deluge of French Deconstructionists, repackaged for wider consumption in the US – now worked up the collapse of Leninist socialism and of the Rooseveltian (Keynesian) response to it, or in short the collapse of any overarching renovation of society. What remains on the ruined battlefield is no longer strivings of entire dominant and dominated classes, it is their reduction to simple will to power: "Once hypostatized as a new First Principle, Zarathustra-style, power loses any historical determination: there are no longer specific holders of power, nor any specific goals which its exercise serves" (Anderson 51). At this point the Welfare State horizon of history as long duration gives pride of place to "getting a thrill," "the intensity of the instant" (Virilio and Lotringer 99, and see 98-102). The undoubtedly always present power struggles lose their historical anchorage and rich causal overdetermination: enter Conan & Co.

The Kafka model (to which, *mutatis mutandis*, many Latin Americans like the more playful Cortazar may be adjoined) loses on the one hand the thrilling safety of vicarious fear from Horror Fantasy and on the other hand the overt compensations in the manageable worlds of Heroic Fantasy: the judgment on this will depend on just how threatened we feel to be in these grim times. Further, a Kafkian parable is indirect, delving below the reified "positive" surfaces. But its indirections then delve directly into at least some characteristics and manifestations of the forces of oppression, without too much energy expended on the separate world. A burrow or an office waiting room suffice; the abnormal powers, huge and menacing, reside in the familiar but not understood (Hegel's *bekannt aber nicht erkannt*) world. Kafka does not transfer the endangered individual out of our thick, multiply causal, institutionally reified, entangled history: the nightmare from which we cannot awaken into a dream.

Notes

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1/ The term is probably unfortunate but we're stuck with it. All the multiplicitous earlier meanings of "fantasy" as a mental faculty are irrelevant, and so are the claims that this faculty is more present in Balzac's *Peau de chagrin* (*Wild Ass's Skin*) than in his *Père Goriot* (*Old Goriot*). If

one throws into the mix phantasy or fancy (from 19th Century to Herbert Read) or even imagination (as if this wasn't what made the stone stony), the confusion is compounded and we are in a Borgesian labyrinth. A sexy new recipe for expressive hollowness in the second half of our century, from Judith Merrill and the New Wave on, is "speculation," prophetic of the present stockmarket.

I hope I have taken cognizance of the main writings in English and French (from Scott and Nodier on) as well as a large sample of writings in German and Italian dealing centrally with what is here called Fantasy, but I shall adduce only those on which I rely by citing or accepting arguments.

2/ Clute 18; he endearingly adds: "For this writer, bad sf can be seen as a category of trash, and can be junked at sight. Bad fantasy... is *junk-food*, an addictive mockery of the true meal, which sticks to the stomach, and eats it." But I must caution here that nobody has a solid statistical basis: Clute's as well as Hartwell's data are between 7 and 20 years old.

3/ The somewhat one-sided Alpers is right on this crucial point.

4/ See on this Jameson's strictures in his "Magical Narratives" essay (*Political* 115-17), indispensable for situating Fantasy. It belongs squarely to Jameson's Romance, the preconditions of which he identifies as "the category of worldness, the ideologeme of good and evil felt as magical forces, a salvational historicity" (148) – with my proposed added parameter of "ahistorical historicity" as *differentia specifica*.

5/ I can posit the more easily that Lewis's strengths are subsumed in Tolkien after the remarkably apt demolition job done by Gwyneth Jones, who sees in all of Lewis's fantastic fiction "the same taint... a deliberate investigation of pain and shame,... but distinctly, childishly orgiastic," always in service of conversion to his Anglo-Catholicism (63). This entails huge Neo-Platonic narrative improbabilities (66, 72) and, more important, leads into Hollywoodian moral oversimplifications: "you can tell the Good creatures because they are Beautiful" (66).

6/ Once a literary genre, figure or other convention is established, it can be treated comically or ironically. We should probably also allow for the rather rare *comical Fantasy*, for example of Thorne Smith, Max Beerbohm or of W.S. Gilbert's *Iolanthe* play, and nowadays of Terry Pratchett; this borders on the more somber and less rare grotesque, such as Gogol's *Nose*. And there are other cognate forms, as Russ argues in the case of "the Modern Gothic" that is different from Horror Fantasy (*To Write* 94-119).

7/ The definition of magic in the parenthesis, as opposed to religion, is adapted from O'Dea 7. By the way, Tolkien agrees that the object of the magic by Magicians is power (and therefore dislikes it as meddling domination, which is theologically quite proper – 10 and 52-53).

The eminent Italian historian of religion Di Nola identifies the relation of poor peasants in past ages – or indeed of modern oppressed marginal groups – who turn to witchcraft /wizardry or "the horned god" (Satanism) in order to deny the majority's belief systems as oppressive and incapable of salvific efficacy, as *inversion of traditional religious beliefs*. Such magic functions both as homeopathic therapy and occult ritual (discussed in Runcini, *Paura* 166-67). The diametrically

opposed polarities of use would for me here be simple inversion (for example black vs. white magic), which keeps the unverifiable structure of what it inverts and thus reproduces the hegemony it contests, as against a spiral twist into the unknown new relations by means of old but anti-hegemonic symbols, which is potentially cognitive.

8/ See my writings refusing this dichotomy ("Cognitive," "Utopianism," and "Haltung").

9/ Carroll's book-length investigation of what he calls "art-horror" notes how its threatening and impure bearers (monstrosities) defy our commonplace categorisation, so that they are often connoted by locales outside – or, even worse, at the margins – of the "normal" world of social intercourse. The aesthetic frame, the verbal or cinematic story, lets the audience share in the characters' disgust without themselves being "really" threatened. This builds on much similar speculation, whose fountainhead is Burke's book on the Sublime and Beautiful, where he attributes our comfort at tragic or horrible fiction to "the contemplation of our own freedom from the evils which we see represented," 41 and ff., also 36-37 and 123.

Indeed, Carroll poses there is a centrally cognitive pleasure in the process of discovering what was so far occulted and then (most often) cathartically evacuating the monster. I doubt the virtues of catharsis, and I think Carroll doesn't see that any genuine cognition must subordinate disgust to imaginative contact with the fearful Novum (as, say in the original Creature of *Frankenstein*, or today with the necessity of understanding Post-Fordist orchestration of impoverishment). I'd allot more weight than he does to Stephen King's argument that horror fiction is deeply conservative : "as Republican as a banker in a three-piece suit," "a reaffirmation of the order" (quoted on 199). Nonetheless, Carroll's spadework is important, not least in his insistence that emotion includes beliefs and thoughts.

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