The Evolution of Modern Fantasy

From Antiquarianism to the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series

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macmillan

some cohesion. On the other hand, this approach tends toward oversimplification and breeds a kind of tunnel vision.

One area which that tunnel vision has largely eliminated from consideration in histories of fantasy has been the narrative poetry, some quite long, of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: work that engaged similar subject matter, identified itself with similar areas of premodern and traditional narrative, and was widely read by many of the writers of the BAFS canon. Another area, not neglected but needing some refinement of perspective, has to do with those "epics and romances and sagas": they are generally alluded to rather indiscriminately as stuff from (vaguely) "way back then." But modern access to these works is via scholarly editions, translations, epitomes, and retellings, themselves reflecting modern perspectives; to readers of two centuries ago, the medieval Arthurian romances seeing print for the first time were as new as *Pride and Prejudice*. My contention is that what we call modern fantasy was in fact a creative extension of the antiquarian work that made these older works available. The history here, then, begins in the eighteenth century.

This is, obviously, a wide arc to cover, and the following, of necessity, treats individual authors and works with brevity; detailed close reading has been avoided. No doubt, some will take issue with what I've said about this author or that author, but regardless, I hope that the present framework will contribute to a much needed reformulation of the literary history extending back over two centuries prior to the Tolkien explosion of the 1960s.

With the emphasis on the arc, a note on the bibliographic apparatus is in order. Taken to one extreme, a book with the broad canvas this one has could easily generate a webwork of reference longer than the work itself. In order to avoid undue intrusion, and also—particularly—with space limitations in mind, I have taken a sparer approach, as follows.

Quotations, direct paraphrases, and facts/information that stem from one specific source I have cited.

For more general background information, and facts/information that appear in multiple sources sufficient to be considered "common knowledge," I have listed under "Secondary Work Consulted" those works that I frequently referred to over the span of my writing.

I have not provided an extensive list of primary sources, insofar as in-text references provide sufficient information (author, title, sometimes publisher) for readers to track down copies. The listings under "Some Primary Source Editions" include anthologies that include material discussed as well as editions that, generally for scholarly reasons, stand above others that might be available.

Finally, the apparatus appears on a chapter-by-chapter basis rather than in one cumulative listing.

I

Introduction

Charting the Terrain

The coalescence of fantasy—that contemporary literary category whose name most readily evokes notions of "epic trilogies" with "mythic" settings and characters—into a discrete genre occurred quite recently and abruptly, a direct result of the crossing of a resurgence of interest in American popular "Sword and Sorcery" in the early 1960s with the massive commercial success of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, the paperback editions of which had been motivated by the former, in the mid-1960s.

Previously, there had been no identifiable genre resembling contemporary fantasy, and the work that is now identified as laying the groundwork for it ("pregenre" fantasy) appeared largely undifferentiated in widely dispersed areas of the publishing market. In the pulps between the wars, and in American genre book publishing between World War Two and the early 1960s, fantasy by writers like Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, Fletcher Pratt, Fritz Leiber, and Jack Vance hovered between science fiction, horror, and action adventure fiction. On the other hand, work by Lord Dunsany, E. R. Eddison, James Branch Cabell, and Tolkien, who found "reputable" literary publishers, was not, in presentation, readily distinguishable from the work of Edith Wharton, D. H. Lawrence, E. M. Forster, and Ernest Hemingway, and it was apt to seem anomalous. Other work was absorbed by that modern catchall "Children's Literature," whether it reflected the authors' intentions (as with C. S. Lewis's Narnia series) or not (as with Kenneth Morris's *Book of the Three Dragons*). It was a common perception that stories with the elements of content now associated with fantasy were, by their nature, suited especially to children.

A differentiated genre did emerge quite rapidly on the heels of the Sword and Sorcery revival and Tolkien's great commercial success, however— its form and contours most strongly shaped by Ballantine Books and its

crucially influential "Adult Fantasy Series" (1969–74). By the early 1980s, fantasy had grown to a full-fledged sibling, rather than an offshoot, of science fiction and horror. By now, it has been around in more or less its present form long enough to be taken for granted. A brief account of the construction of fantasy as a genre, then, is an appropriate place to begin the present discussion.

Assembling a Genre

In 1960, there was no commercial fantasy genre, and when the term was used to designate a literary type, it did not usually connote the kind of material that came to typify the genre when it coalesced, particularly in the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series (hereafter BAFS).

But in the early 1960s, there was a swell of interest in what then became identified as "Sword and Sorcery" or, somewhat less pervasively, "Heroic Fantasy." At the heart of this was reprinted material that had originally appeared in pulp magazines between the 1920s and the early 1940s,[1] and occasionally later, or in hardcover book editions from genre publishers.[2] Published as, functionally, a subcategory of science fiction, Sword and Sorcery rapidly became very popular. Newly identified and designated, there was not a huge amount of back material for competing publishers[3] to draw on, and given the general unmarketability of such work during the preceding decade and before, it is not surprising that few writers were actively producing Sword and Sorcery.[4] Demand soon overtook supply.

In this context, Ace Books science fiction editor Donald Wollheim became interested in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, which had generated something of a cult following among science fiction fans, though it had been released in hardcover in 1954–56 as a sort of prestige item by literary publishers (Unwin in the United Kingdom, Houghton Mifflin in the United States). The elements it had in common with the Sword and Sorcery that had been appearing were sufficient for Wollheim to suppose it would be popular with aficionados of the new subgenre. Duly described as "a book of sword-and-sorcery that anyone can read with delight and pleasure" on its first-page blurb, Ace Books published their unauthorized paperback edition in early 1965.

The minor scandal attending the unauthorized status of the Ace Books edition, and its replacement later that year by the revised and authorized Ballantine Books edition, no doubt drew some crucial initial attention to the book, but that can scarcely account for the commercial explosion of the following year or two, which has now sustained itself for five decades. *The Lord of the Rings* sold quite well to Sword and Sorcery fans, but it also sold quite well to a substantial cross section of the remainder of the reading public, and it became a bona fide bestseller. The Tolkien craze in fact ballooned into something quite close to the literary equivalent of the then-contemporary Beatlemania.

The result of this was something of a split phenomenon. There can be little doubt that the Tolkien explosion bolstered Sword and Sorcery to some degree and drew new readers to the subgenre who may otherwise have remained unaware of it. But Sword and Sorcery never became something that "everyone" was reading, as was the case with *The Lord of the Rings*, and its core readership remained centered in the audience that had grown up prior to the Tolkien paperbacks. In presentation, there was little to distinguish those Sword and Sorcery releases that followed the Tolkien explosion, through the second half of the 1960s and into the 1970s, and those that had preceded it. So there was Sword and Sorcery, and there was Tolkien.

Ballantine Books clearly recognized this dichotomy. Not a major player in the Sword and Sorcery market, the firm was eager to strike out in a more Tolkien-specific direction. The initial results over the next few years were a bit halting and haphazard. *The Hobbit* followed *The Lord of the Rings* in 1965, and the remaining work by Tolkien then accessible was gathered in *The Tolkien Reader* (1966) and *Smith of Wootton Major and Farmer Giles of Ham* (1969). The works of E. R. Eddison, a writer Tolkien had read and enthused on, appeared from 1967 to 1969. The year 1968 saw the less Tolkienian Gormenghast trilogy of Mervyn Peake, as well as *A Voyage to Arcturus* by David Lindsay. Like *The Lord of the Rings*, these works were originally released by "reputable" literary publishers. *The Last Unicorn*, a newer work by young writer Peter S. Beagle published in hardcover by Viking the previous year, appeared in 1969. The more impressionistic cover artwork of these releases served to distinguish them from the Sword and Sorcery releases of Lancer, Pyramid, and Ace: no doubt Ballantine wished to attract Sword and Sorcery readers, but they were also attempting to attract that uniquely Tolkien audience that Sword and Sorcery did not necessarily draw.

Enter Lin Carter. A younger writer who had begun to publish Sword and Sorcery, including Conan spin-offs in collaboration with de Camp, during the mid-1960s, Carter approached Betty and Ian Ballantine in 1967 with a proposed book on Tolkien. This was accepted and published as *Tolkien: A Look behind the Lord of the Rings* in early 1969. One of the chapters, "The Men Who Invented Fantasy," gave a brief account of the nonpulp fantasy tradition preceding Tolkien, which dovetailed with what Ballantine had been attempting with their editions of Eddison, Peake, Lindsay, and Beagle. Sensing a good source for editorial direction, Ballantine contracted

Carter as "Editorial Consultant" for their subsequent Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series, which commenced in spring 1969 (see 1Carter 269).

The importance of the BAFS in the shaping of the fantasy genre cannot be overestimated. It was the first time that fantasy was presented on its own terms as a genre in its own right. Though the volumes were inevitably destined for the science fiction sections in bookstores, the "SF" tag was gone, replaced by the "Adult Fantasy" Unicorn's Head colophon;[5] the garish, often lurid cover art became softer colored, drifting toward the impressionistic and the surreal; the muscle-bound swordsmen battling ferocious monsters (with the free arm around a scantily clad wench) were replaced by Faerie-ish landscapes. It was also the first time the peculiar cross section of work now considered seminal in the genre was drawn together under a unified rubric; to this day, it stands as the most substantial publishing project devoted to (mainly) pre-Tolkien fantasy.

Sheer quantity also lent the BAFS indelible impact. With 66 titles in 68 volumes published between 1969 and 1974 (regularly one and sometimes two a month before a slowdown in late 1972), the BAFS rapidly became the dominant force in fantasy publishing (whether tagged "SF" or not). There was no real competition. The bully pulpit engendered by this dominance gave the BAFS far-reaching influence in two crucial respects.

First, it gave the BAFS the power of defining the terrain. In *Tolkien: A Look behind the Lord of the Rings, Imaginary Worlds* (a study of the newly demarcated fantasy genre published in tandem with the BAFS in 1973), and in dozens of introductions to Series titles, Lin Carter repeated an operative definition of what was now simply termed "fantasy": "A fantasy is a book or story . . . in which magic really works" and, in its purest form, is "laid in settings completely made up by the author" (1Carter 6–7). Carter further stipulates that fantasy circles around the themes of "quest, adventure, or war" (2Carter ix). Some four decades later, a wildly prolific body of work unambiguously reflects the terms of this template, then newly formulated under the aegis of the BAFS.[6]

Second, the quantity of titles, with primary emphasis on reprints,[7] gave to the BAFS the power of determining a general historical canvas and implicitly shaping a "canon" of fantasy. Carter's introduction to the 1969 BAFS edition of William Morris's *The Wood beyond the World* begins with the portentous declaration: "The book you hold in your hands is the first great fantasy novel ever written: the first of them all; all the others, Dunsany, Eddison, Pratt, Tolkien, Peake, Howard, et al., are successors to this great original" (2Carter ix). This basic contention, like the aforementioned definition, was repeated over and over again in Carter's commentaries and books, with Cabell, Clark Ashton Smith, de Camp, Leiber, Vance, and a few others rotating into the list of Morris's followers, depending on

which recitation you encountered. The dispersal by author of the BAFS titles suggests how the canon-shaping nature of Carter's declarations were given body. The "major authors" were William Morris (four titles in five volumes), Lord Dunsany (six volumes), James Branch Cabell (six volumes), E. R. Eddison (four volumes), Clark Ashton Smith (four volumes), and Tolkien (six volumes).[8] That the relevant work by Howard, Pratt and de Camp, Leiber, and Vance included in the BAFS was minimal in quantity[9] reflects the fact that it was already available in editions by Ace, Lancer, and so on at the time, and Ballantine was not interested in issuing competing editions. On the basis of Carter's oft reiterated "list," however, those authors' work should rightly be considered part of the BAFS canon, though little of it actually appeared in Series releases.

Like the BAFS template, this informal canon has held through the succeeding decades. Despite its massive proportions and the breadth of the permutations of fantasy covered, John Clute and John Grant would declare in the introduction to *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1997) that the late nineteenth- and twentieth-century authors representing "the heart of this enterprise" were "George MacDonald, William Morris, Lewis Carroll, Abraham Merrit, E.R. Eddison, Robert E. Howard, J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt, Fritz Leiber . . . and so on" (Clute and Grant viii). This is, more or less, the Carter/BAFS canon.[10] Since the millennium, no doubt partly spurred by the renewed Tolkien boom following the Peter Jackson films, small publisher Wildside Press has mined the BAFS for titles for its classic fantasy series—even reprinting some Lin Carter introductions. It doesn't always seem to be remembered that this "canon" was functionally constructed by Carter and Ballantine Books three to four decades ago, cobbled together from work of widely disparate publishing backgrounds.

By 1974, then, a discrete genre, with a definition and a canon, had demonstrably emerged. Such a thing had not existed at all in 1960, and even in early 1969 it had consisted of a cross section of work appearing as a subbranch of science fiction (Sword and Sorcery) or as books for young readers,[11] with a few titles presented as loosely "Tolkienian." But while the discrete genre that emerged was predominantly shaped by Lin Carter and the BAFS, the series itself was not to last.

BAFS releases decreased markedly through the latter part of 1972 and 1973, and in 1974 they ceased entirely.[12] The degree of Ballantine's dominance in the field can be seen in the partial vacuum left in its wake.[13] No new BAFS appeared in the commercial market, though a small press, the Newcastle Publishing Company, followed Ballantine with its Forgotten Fantasy Library, augmenting but not repeating BAFS titles with 24 trade-sized volumes between 1973 and 1979. Elsewhere, Bantam Books and Avon

Books released a few newer books in BAFS style.[14] But when a refurbished Ballantine reentered fantasy publishing in 1976, with a new look marked by the "fantasy realism" of the Brothers Hildebrandt and Darrell Sweet, and now edited by Judy Lynn and Lester del Rey, initial reprints were as often culled from work previously revived by the now defunct Lancer and Pyramid[15] as from the former BAFS, and the latter usually appeared in garb reflecting the new aesthetic, with the Carter introductions eliminated.[16] These works, and particularly the pre-Tolkien titles, were clearly no longer the core focus of Ballantine's fantasy-publishing agenda.

The major shift in focus from the mid-1970s on was an increasing emphasis on new rather than "classic" titles. As noted, few writers had been actively producing such work in the 1960s. But by the mid-1970s, this had begun to change fairly rapidly. While newer work and first publications had been in the minority in the BAFS, the frequency of reprints suggests that they were among the bestselling titles. Unlike the bulk of the "classic" reprints, Peter S. Beagle's *The Last Unicorn*, Katherine Kurtz's initial three Deryni books, H. Warner Munn's *Merlin's Ring*, Joy Chant's *Red Moon and Black Mountain*, and Evangeline Walton's tetralogy based on *The Mabinogion*[17] all continued to be reprinted frequently through the del Rey period, with Kurtz's series spawning uncounted sequels. In a reversal of previous proportions, five of the final seven BAFS titles in 1973–74 had been new titles. With an established genre, new writers began more frequently to write to its specifications, and when the distillation of a more formulaic, Tolkien-derivative approach produced two major bestsellers a couple years later,[18] the "classic" BAFS authors and titles were overshadowed. The BAFS volumes were less frequently reprinted and became progressively more difficult to find.

Since the focus of this study is the "canon" that was assembled by the BAFS—augmented by the relevant work available at the time through Ace Books, Lancer Books, and so on and hence not included in the series—I will break off the chronology here. Suffice to say, the bestseller genre that mushroomed in the late 1970s and early 1980s was an outgrowth of (and dependent on) developments in publishing that stretched back to the early 1960s. At a point in time when this bestseller genre has been around long enough to be taken for granted, it is important to note that it is not simply a timeless, unchanging entity, but was constructed, quite deliberately, to meet a new demand. The basic stages of the genre's construction can be summarized thus: (1) the revival of interest in American Sword and Sorcery and the sudden commercial explosion of Tolkien's work in the 1960s; (2) the isolation, naming, definition, and canonization of fantasy as a discrete genre between the late 1960s and mid-1970s, accomplished largely through the BAFS; and (3) the distilling of a bestseller formula for fantasy

in the late 1970s, which completed what Ballantine had initiated in turning fantasy into a sibling rather than a subcategory of science fiction. The BAFS serves as the crucial and necessary hinge between the first and third, consolidating the former into a fully articulated genre and laying the necessary conceptual groundwork for the latter.

Criticism: Fantasy and Fantasy

With the distillation of the genre, of course, came criticism. That fantasy was indeed constructed is borne out by the notable dearth of critical discussion of it in any capacity prior to the 1970s.[19] Tolkien's essay, "On Fairy-Stories," given as a lecture in 1939 and first published in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* (1947), edited by C. S. Lewis, is probably the most often cited essay from the pregenre period for critics laying out their conceptual groundwork. Tolkien's discussion—unsurprisingly, given the role of *The Lord of the Rings* in shaping the genre—floats ideas that cross fairly well with the contours of the genre. However, the modern works he cites tend to be Victorian and Edwardian works published for young readers.[20] And of course, the literary form that Tolkien discusses is the "Fairy-Story": "Fantasy" vacillates between a power of the human mind often evident in fairy-stories and a literary quality discernable in work in various forms. It is not treated as a literary form or genre. (I will return to this.) C. S. Lewis begins to chart something akin to the contemporary genre in his essay "On Science Fiction," given as a lecture in 1955 and published in *Of Other Worlds* (1966), edited by Walter Hooper. But here fantasy is presented as a subbranch of science fiction. L. Sprague de Camp's aforementioned introductions (see note 6) to his Pyramid Books anthologies, *Swords and Sorcery* (1963) and *The Spell of Seven* (1965), sketch the subsequent BAFS ground fairly precisely, though de Camp more specifically terms his focus "heroic fantasy," and his approach is brief and highly summary. The first full-length studies focusing on the genre as it emerged through the 1960s date to the 1970s.

The first of these was the aforementioned *Imaginary Worlds* (1973) by Lin Carter. Penned by its editor, and included as a title in the BAFS, the focus is, quite naturally, the canon constituted by the Series and related releases by Ace, Lancer, and so on. The core genre definition, the BAFS template, is the center of gravity, and Carter outlines in detail his historical framework, beginning with William Morris (with a nod back to traditional epic and romance) and proceeding through Dunsany, Eddison, Howard, and so on. The closing chapters form a kind of "how to" for aspiring "fantasy writers"—presumably for those writers whose work now proliferates on bookstore shelves.

Another work of popular criticism was, not surprisingly, by L. Sprague de Camp, whose *Literary Swordsmen and Sorcerers: The Makers of Heroic Fantasy* was published by Arkham House in 1976. Apart from continuing to designate the form "heroic fantasy" and his rather arbitrary terminal date of 1950, de Camp's ground is virtually identical to that of Carter (who provided the introduction to the study). His characterization of his subject as "tales of swordplay and sorcery in imaginary settings, where magic works" (1de Camp 4) is functionally identical to Carter's. At the same time, de Camp takes a bit more of a "major authors" approach,[21] includes more detailed (and often more reliable) biographical information, and demonstrates rather more critical acumen.

A more academic study, C. N. Manlove's *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 1975. Unlike de Camp and Carter, Manlove was not an active player in the shaping of the genre, but his focus is, on the whole, amenable to the BAFS template. Manlove's operative definition of fantasy, while couched in distinct terms, foregrounds similar concerns: "[A] fantasy is: *A fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms*" (1Manlove 1; italics are Manlove's). Of Manlove's five authors (Charles Kingsley, MacDonald, Lewis, Tolkien, and Peake), only Kingsley was an addition to the core BAFS canon, and while some of the works discussed hover on the borderline of the BAFS template,[22] they do not dramatically depart from it.

Over the subsequent years, other studies followed the essential parameters of these: Manlove's *The Impulse of Fantasy Literature* appeared in 1983; the first version of another popular study, Michael Moorcock's *Wizardry and Wild Romance: A Study of Epic Fantasy*, appeared in 1987 and has been revised several times since;[23] Richard Mathews's *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination* was published in 1997. And again, the "heart" of John Clute and John Grant's massive *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1997) situates itself in the BAFS canon.

However, some other studies of "fantasy" that appeared close on the heels of the genre's emergence were apt to seem confusing to readers whose idea of it had largely been shaped by Tolkien, Sword and Sorcery, and the BAFS.

W. R. Irwin's *The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy* appeared in 1976. While many of the names associated with the BAFS canon are liberally sprinkled throughout its pages (Tolkien, Morris, Dunsany, Eddison, Lewis, MacDonald), most are simply passing references, and sustained discussions of their work or ideas are few. Conversely, works by Anthony Burgess, G. K. Chesterton, William Golding, David Garnett, and others not

generally associated with the popular genre are discussed frequently and at length. It is quite clear that Irwin's focus is not that of Carter, de Camp, and so on. Not surprisingly, Irwin's delineation of fantasy as "that kind of extended narrative which establishes and develops an antifact, that is, plays the game of the impossible" (Irwin ix) carries a range of suggestion that is not particularly keyed to Morris or Eddison or Tolkien. Ironically, Irwin states that after 1957 the "spate [of fantasy] has all but run dry" (Irwin x)—implicit evidence that his focus is not what Ballantine dubbed fantasy.

Rosemary Jackson's *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* appeared in 1981 and moves more explicitly further from the BAFS canon and template: "The best-selling fantasies of Kingsley, Lewis, Tolkien, LeGuin, or Richard Adams are not discussed at great length . . . because they belong to that realm of fantasy which is more properly defined as faery, or romance literature" (Jackson 9). Closer to Jackson's concerns are Maturin, Hawthorne, Kafka, and Pynchon. Jackson's definition of fantasy reflects her key texts: "[F]antastic literature points to or suggests the basis upon which cultural order rests, for it opens up, for a brief moment, on to disorder, on to illegality, on to that which lies outside the law, that which is outside dominant value systems. The fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made 'absent'" (Jackson 4). This is clearly afield from the territory staked by Carter, de Camp, and so on; though developed in more overtly psycho-cultural terms than Irwin's "game," phenomenally it points in a quite similar direction.

Again, these studies were apt to seem confusing to readers whose ideas about fantasy literature were shaped by the genre constructed in the wake of Sword and Sorcery and the Tolkien explosion.[24]

It is tempting to ascribe this discrepancy to the conventional popular-versus-academic rift, with the former flawed for sloppy and imprecise terminology, while the latter, ensconced in the Ivory Tower, stubbornly ignores the fact of common usage. And there may be some substance to this: both Jackson's and Irwin's books are emphatically academic works of literary theory and criticism; all three of the nonacademic studies (Carter, de Camp, Moorcock) reflect the popular genre. In the introduction to his *The Oxford Book of Fantasy Stories* (1994), Tom Shippey remarks that "current academic definitions [of fantasy] . . . leave one wondering whether those who produce them ever stray into an ordinary bookshop at all" (Shippey xi).[25]

However, to simply ascribe the confusion, such as it is, to academic pique centers attention on who is disagreeing with who rather than on the actual substance of the disagreement. The essence of the issue circles on the

use of the signifier *fantasy*: when Carter uses the term, he means one thing; when Jackson uses it, she means something quite different. Aptly, Shippey muses, "It is possible these arguments over definition are caused simply by reference to different things" (Shippey xii).

The academic definitions of Irwin and Jackson in fact represent a continuation of the term's usage prior to the 1960s. While the peripheral status of "fantasy" of any kind in the literary world prior to the 1960s meant that it bred little criticism, and there are no book-length studies, there are anthologies, the contents of which suggest what types of stories "fantasy" connoted at the time. Probably the two most widely circulated anthologies of "fantasy" stories between the latter years of World War Two and 1960 are Philip van Doren Stern's *The Moonlight Traveler: Great Stories of Fantasy and Imagination* (1943) and Ray Bradbury's *Timeless Stories for Today and Tomorrow* (1953).[26] Both present their stories as, without any qualification, "fantasy." Neither contains any stories in keeping with the BAFS template; nearly all the stories would respond well to the theoretical frameworks of Irwin or Jackson.[27]

In the BAFS sense, the term was appropriated. Note that during the initial push during the earlier 1960s, the protogenre material was dubbed "Sword and Sorcery" and, secondarily, "Heroic Fantasy." The qualifier *Heroic* suggests that some qualification was needed, that just *Fantasy* was not enough.[28] When Carter dubbed this work simply "fantasy" (with "Adult" qualifying audience, not form or content) in the late 1960s, it was the first time it had been collectively so designated. However, coming with an association with as widely read a book as *The Lord of the Rings*, while the earlier usage came attached to a fringe literary entity, common usage was bound to be affected considerably. *Fantasy*, later abetted by such extraliterary phenomena as Dungeons and Dragons, came to predominantly connote stories set in preindustrial invented worlds where magic works.

The two are essentially different things. Sometimes they jockey for claim to the term; sometimes attempts are made to define the term so as to be inclusive of both. In the latter case, the bonding consideration is that both contain elements that are contradictory to our post-Enlightenment consensus reality. But this runs dangerously close to simply dividing literature in half, with one half adhering, in content and presentation, to the "real" (or, perhaps more appropriately, the demonstrable) and the other half not. "Fantasy," in this case, becomes so broad as to be virtually useless as a term indicating anything about narrative form. This bonding consideration, however, is also the point of distinction. In the case of Irwin and Jackson, the most representative work focuses on a character who shares our post-Enlightenment consensus reality, and the narrative tension tends to emerge from that character being confronted with some phenomenon that

contradicts the basic tenets of what he or she considers to be "reality." This may come in the form of an inexplicable déjà vu that turns an emphatically common scene into something with a feeling of the "unreal"; it may be a radio that inexplicably begins to "tune in" to other residences in an apartment complex;[29] it may be something that, deceptively, seems to connect it to the Carter/de Camp end of things—say, a water gnome appearing in mid-twentieth-century Long Island.[30] In such cases, the dislocation resulting from the rationally inexplicable is precisely the point: for Irwin, this is the "Game of the Impossible"; for Jackson, it manifests something "outside" dominant cultural perceptions. The result may, at one extreme, be the dissolution of the protagonist's perceptual center, loss of identity, and madness.[31] At the other, the use of hardheaded, rationally (and scientifically) based common sense may, humorously, negate the seemingly impossible.

But the "impossibilities" (what Carter and de Camp simply term "magic") in Morris or Dunsany or Tolkien do not exist as such within the contexts of the worlds of their stories. The magical powers of the Lady of *The Wood Beyond the World*, of Ziroonderel in *The King of Elfland's Daughter*, or of Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings* are not "impossibilities" in their fictional contexts, and they do not open up any rifts in the fabric of the protagonists' fundamental conceptions of reality. If Golden Walter, Alveric, or Frodo are at all shocked by such powers, it is by their degree (as a 747 might shock one used to propeller airplanes), not by the fact that they exist. If there is any "dislocation" caused, it is restricted to the reader, and the occurrence of magic does not so much challenge our consensus reality as disregard it: we must simply accept that magic is a part of the fictional reality.[32]

Though there do not seem to be any widely circulated discussions delving into the background of the mildly contradictory use of the term *fantasy* as signifier of a literary form, this does not mean that the essential phenomenal distinction is new. In the introduction to his anthology *Black Water: The Book of Fantastic Literature* (1983), Alberto Manguel distinguishes between "fantasy" and "the fantastic": "Unlike tales of fantasy (those chronicles of mundane life in mythical surroundings such as Narnia or Middle-earth), fantastic literature deals with what can best be defined as the impossible seeping into the possible" (Manguel xvii). Jane Mobley divided her 1977 anthology, *Phantasmagoria: Tales of Fantasy and the Supernatural*, into two sections, "The Wondrous Fair: Magical Fantasy" and "The Passing Strange: Supernatural Fiction," the first containing work amenable to the BAFS template, the second work more in keeping with the frameworks of Irwin and Jackson. Robert H. Boyer and Kenneth J. Zahorski, in their series of fantasy anthologies from the same period, distinguished

between fundamentally the same things with their tags "High Fantasy" and "Low Fantasy."[33] The terminology is, perhaps, confusingly various, but the phenomenal distinction is strikingly consistent.

Since the focus of the proceeding discussion will be on fantasy in the sense of the BAFS template, there is no need to labor this discussion beyond distinguishing, for purposes of clarity, between the term's conflicting uses as a signifier and giving some account of that conflict. And my use of the term is strictly as a signifier: I have no intention of attempting to "define" fantasy beyond using it to point to a particular body of writing that (appropriately *and* inappropriately) was used to build a genre. Nor is there any need to argue about which usage of the term is "really" correct: the Irwin/Jackson vein holds seniority, and perhaps keys itself more strongly to the psychological ramifications of the term; the Carter/de Camp vein reflects the popular genre and hence common usage.

The BAFS Template and the Problems of Retrojected Homogeneity

So *fantasy*, as the focus of the balance of this study, will be used to refer to work that is, more or less, amenable to the BAFS template—the type of narrative corollary to, or including, what has at various points been termed "high fantasy," "epic fantasy," "heroic fantasy," or "sword and sorcery." Using de Camp's and Carter's formulations as the most straightforward articulations of a functional lowest common denominator, this means narratives set in worlds in which the supernatural or magical are part of the fabric of reality and that center on the themes of quest, war, and adventure. To adapt that slightly for my own purposes, the worlds in which the supernatural or magical are part of the fabric of reality are not necessarily strictly "invented" and may include the world of the Arthurian legends (White's *The Once and Future King*), the world of the Welsh *Mabinogion* (Kenneth Morris's *Fates of the Princes of Dyfed*), the world of Scandinavian myth (Anderson's *Hrolf Kraki's Saga*), or romanticized regions (the Spain of Dunsany's *Don Rodriguez* or the China of Ernest Bramah's Kai Lung stories). Carter's "quest, adventure, and war" I take to refer to the types of themes and tropes endemic to traditional heroic romance, epic, saga, and so on. De Camp's stipulation of "preindustrial" with regard to settings I will take to implicitly mean settings modeled on those endemic to the preindustrial narrative forms just mentioned.

However, as noted, the focus here will be on the pregenre material canonized by Lin Carter and the BAFS[34] and on tracing the ancestry of this material back to the pre-Romantic period of the eighteenth century. It bears reiterating that this canon was a product of particular impeti (the

early 1960s Sword and Sorcery revival and the mid-1960s Tolkien explosion) at a particular period in time (from c. 1960 to c. 1975), with a particular motivation (creating a viable publishing category) with particular results (among other things, a generic based criticism). In other words, the terms of the genre are largely retrojected onto the body of work that constitutes the canon, which was produced in contexts in which those terms had not been formulated and in which the collectivity presupposed by the genre did not exist. As mentioned, the paperback phenomenon of the 1960s and 1970s, with the BAFS as its centerpiece, was the first time this material had been drawn together under a unified rubric.

What is the significance, and the degree of significance, of this fact?

On the one hand, it may not seem particularly significant. Something previously without a collective name and identity was given a name and an identity with the advent of the genre. Certainly the relevant works of William Morris, Lord Dunsany, Robert E. Howard, and Fletcher Pratt fit the terms of the BAFS template well enough, and certainly their works stand as the natural forerunners of the genre as we now have it. There is certainly a logic in treating their work collectively—as I am doing in the present study.

On the other hand, while the terms of the genre may serve as a convenient pointer to prior work "of interest," and work that influenced later writers consciously writing fantasy, a more detailed and totalizing framework may easily become misleading.

For example, on the simple level of original publication context, a cursory look at the canon reveals an immediate rift. As I have noted, Morris, Dunsany, Cabell, Eddison, and Tolkien emerged in the world of "literary" book publishing. By contrast, Lovecraft, Smith, Howard, Pratt and de Camp, Leiber, and Vance emerged in the ephemeral world of popular publishing—pulp and early genre-book publishing. The literary writers, with the exception of Dunsany, wrote primarily book-length narratives, while long works by the popular authors, with the exception of Pratt, rarely reached the length of the shortest of Morris's romances. When the literary writers published in periodicals, it was in *Harper's* rather than *Weird Tales*; when the popular writers published books, they were published by Arkham House rather than Houghton Mifflin Co. The work by the literary writers on the whole stands apart from other contemporary forms of fiction, whether literary or popular; the tropes and conventions of science fiction, horror, and adventure fiction actively inform the work of the popular writers. The prose styles of the popular writers (excepting Smith) tended to be unadorned and contemporary; the literary writers often developed carefully nuanced, archaized, poetic styles.[35]

An unreflecting jump, assuming the contours of the genre as a timeless constant, can lead quickly to the contention that, though the details of

publication were different, the two groups of writers were, all told, doing the same type of thing: narratives set in worlds where magic works and so on. The stylistic and formal differences are simply the result of adapting this same type of thing to different publishing venues.

But were they really trying to do the same type of thing?

The terms of the "same type of thing" are essentially the terms of the BAFS template: both the literary and popular writers include elements— the magical worlds with their attendant wizards, magic swords, dragons, warriors, and so on—which became, essentially, generic trademarks when the genre coalesced. But again, the foregrounding of these elements as definitive in pregenre work comes predominantly with hindsight. There is little evidence suggesting that our pregenre writers considered these elements *in themselves* to collectively signal a particular literary form.

On the other hand, the differences noted previously, taken collectively and without consideration of the later genre, are really rather substantial and underline the fact that the two groups of writers existed in very different literary worlds. Discernable "crossover" influence is limited. Simple chronology, of course, renders any influence of the popular writers on the literary largely impossible. However, it might be countered, some earlier popular writers who strongly influenced the popular fantasy of *Weird Tales* and *Unknown* were also read enthusiastically by some of the literary writers. H. Rider Haggard is perhaps the most noteworthy of these. But the nature of Haggard's influence on, say, Howard, is broader and more generic than his influence on (to choose a literary writer who conceded his influence) Tolkien.[36] In the latter case, the influence is predominantly evident in the atmosphere surrounding certain places: the Gates of Argonath, the ancient twin cities of Minas Tirith and Minas Morgul, the Paths of the Dead. It is not particularly evident in Tolkien's prose and only occasionally in the textures of his narrative. In contrast, Howard's prose and the action-based fabric of his storytelling are quite reminiscent of Haggard: both did write "swashbucklers."

From the other angle, some influence might be discerned moving from certain of the literary writers to the popular writers. But even in the most notable case, that of Lord Dunsany, this is as limited as Haggard's discernable influence on Tolkien. While the evocative names and fabulous atmosphere of many of Dunsany's tales are clearly echoed in Lovecraft, Smith, and Leiber, his narrative distance, mannered irony, and the King James Bible–infused rhythms of his prose are not.

Much of this will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6, so I will not elaborate further here. Suffice to say, the fantasy canon is not, from the standpoint of the contexts of the writers themselves, anything like a unified tradition that descends in linear fashion from the romances of William

Morris to the 1960s and beyond. The retrojection of the BAFS template that underscores the contemporary genre can suggest otherwise. But rather than saying that the literary and popular writers adapted the same type of thing to their respective contexts, it would perhaps be better to say that the two moved out of distinct literary territories (with, as I shall develop, distinct literary ancestries), developed vocabularies of content similar in notable respects, and converged in the 1960s. Out of this convergence emerged the present day genre. But from the standpoint of the pregenre context, we should really speak of two traditions.

A significant factor in the tendency to treat these distinct strands as a single literary tradition was the abrupt and subsequently widespread adoption of the unifying label *fantasy*. While, again, I do not oppose the use of the term as a convenient shorthand, the ramifications of its use with regard to pregenre work, and its limitations, have not on the whole received much consideration. For example, little attention has been paid to the fact that adoption of the generic term entails a shift in the consolidating point of reference from terms that may have been used by the authors in question, such as "romance" or "fairy-story," to a word that the writers before the 1960s rarely used to classify their work. The comparative lack of attention, in turn, suggests that this is not particularly significant.

Just as I contend that the differing contexts of the popular and literary branches of the pregenre fantasy canon are rather more significant than generally affirmed, I would contend that this shift in the terminological point of reference is more significant than might be supposed. First, a study beginning, naturally enough, with a close discussion and definition of "fantasy" (both Carter and Manlove do so) thereby consolidates itself around the etymological and semantic associations of that term. But if the authors in question did not classify their work by the term, but by other terms with (however subtly) different associations, and a critic professes to be concerned to a significant degree with "what they were trying to do" (1Manlove 258), this practice must be, to some degree, problematic.

Second, the associations are not only etymological and semantic: studies of fantasy have, as I have noted, proliferated only since the genre was constructed. That is, they have emerged in a context where such a genre is widely recognized. In consequence, contours and emphases, not to mention a strongly articulated sense of collective affinity, are, with little question, imposed retroactively. My distinction between the popular and literary branches of the pregenre canon indicates that this, too, is problematic.

I will pursue this in terms of the two key features on which critical discussions of fantasy tend to hinge: invented worlds and magic. The critical preoccupation with these features and issues contingent on them is mirrored in the concerns of many, perhaps most, contemporary fantasy

writers working more or less within the BAFS template'—Lin Carter's series of "how to" chapters in *Imaginary Worlds* can be seen to provide a fairly accurate, if reductionist, sketch of these concerns. Certainly the maps, formulated background "mythologies," attention to issues of sociopolitical history (often in the form of quasi-historical appendices), and so on that so frequently form a part of the apparatus of work from Le Guin's initial Earthsea trilogy (1968–72), to Guy Gavriel Kay's *Fionavar Tapestry* (1985–86), to Robert Jordan's Wheel of Time series (1990–2013) underscore the notion that the practical mechanics of developing invented worlds that will generate the illusion of existing independently of the author's story are an explicit, and prior, concern of "the fantasy writer." Likewise, the frequent overt preoccupation with the practical structure and nature of the magic in those worlds, from the Eleven Kingdoms of Katherine Kurtz's Deryni series (1970–) to the Dales of Jane Yolen's Great Alta trilogy (1988–97) to the recently concluded Harry Potter series (1997–2007), underscores the notion that this, too, is an explicit, and prior, concern of "the fantasy writer": the magic itself must be given a clear, conceptual base and framework to be "credible."

As noted, both the work and the criticism that have followed the emergence of the genre can be said to reflect each other in lifting these crucial, defining issues into relief. But what of the earlier work that was written without the generic publishing and critical apparatus?

Regarding "invented worlds," most of the pregenre writers canonized during the BAFS period, both literary[37] and popular,[38] did employ some form of invented world (or, at least, country) in their relevant work.[39] It scarcely takes Dunsany's "we have new worlds here" (Dunsany Preface) in *The Book of Wonder* (1912) or Pratt's introductory reference to "this other world" (Pratt xi) in *The Well of the Unicorn* (1948) to be persuaded that they were doing so quite consciously. At the same time, there is a great deal less development of the kinds of practical mechanics that are now commonplace. Maps appear in only the last of Morris's romances (*The Sundering Flood*), in the Pape illustrated edition of *The Silver Stallion* but no other Cabell volumes, in Eddison's Zimiamvia trilogy but not *The Worm Ouroboros*, in Pratt's *The Well of the Unicorn*, and in Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, but not in the pre-1960s editions of any of the other relevant work. Apart from Tolkien,[40] only Dunsany, and to some extent Lovecraft,[41] articulated anything much resembling a "mythology"[42]—and the "mythology" of Dunsany's first two books, *The Gods of Pegana* (1905) and *Time and the Gods* (1906), has no integrated dramatic structure, unfolding in an almost whimsical fashion, and it had no connection to Dunsany's subsequent work. Apart from Tolkien,[43] none of the above developed sociohistorical contexts that extended beyond the immediate issues related

to their stories, and even this only Eddison and Pratt did in considerable detail. In some cases (most notably Morris and Dunsany), "one has," in C. S. Lewis's words, "an uneasy feeling that the worlds . . . weren't there at all before the curtain rose" (1Lewis 86).

Regarding "magic," in virtually all the pregenre work, magic is, of course, present in some form. But it is only rarely that we find a clear attempt to elaborate a conceptual framework with regard to its structure or function. Fletcher Pratt does so in *The Blue Star*, abetted by its rather *Time Machine*–ish prologue. The magic in Pratt's Harold Shea collaborations with L. Sprague de Camp is constantly subjected to logical scrutiny, as is the magic of Poul Anderson's *Three Hearts and Three Lions*. But elsewhere this does not tend to occur.[44] For example, Eddison describes King Gorice's "conjuring" in considerable detail in Chapter IV of *The Worm Ouroboros*, but the description, while an aesthetically powerful evocation of magic working, offers nothing of substance in terms of the conceptual nature of magic as an isolated phenomenon in Eddison's world. The same may be said of Gandalf's magic working in both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. It is difficult, in either case, to see magic in itself as a thematic concern of the author. Magic does arguably emerge as a theme in some of the work of Lord Dunsany, but the interest rarely becomes practical, moving rather in the direction of magic's relation to Dunsany's romantic conception of the imagination. When practical issues connected to magic arise, as in *The Charwoman's Shadow*, Dunsany tends to become tongue in cheek. In Morris, magic is often quite muted and in some cases does not substantially affect the story at all.[45] But even in those works where it does play a major, foregrounded role, as in *The Wood beyond the World*, there is even less extrapolation than with Tolkien and Eddison. This is not to say that magic is random or insignificant in this pregenre work but that its presence reflects a congruity with the styles and settings of the stories, and with the characters who wield it, rather than a "thematic" concern as such.

The point here is not, obviously, that these defining elements of contemporary fantasy do not occur in the earlier, pregenre material. As these examples affirm, they do. Nor is it to say that there is anything amiss, in itself, in the critical discussion of these elements in the earlier work, with an eye on the background of the genre. However, the preceding examples do suggest that, with the possible exception of work connected (whether through publication, author association, or influence) to *Unknown*,[46] invented worlds and magic were not accorded the same isolated significance, in degree or kind, by the pregenre writers as has come to be assumed over the past several decades. It is questionable in virtually all the cases (again, with the possible exception of the *Unknown*-connected work) whether the practical mechanics of "world making" formed an explicit and

prior concern. There is, naturally, a concern with internal consistency, but this in itself can be seen as simply an extension of the concerns of fiction writing in general. But even in the cases where there seems to be a more involved preoccupation with such mechanical issues, there is room to suppose that other concerns than fantasy "world making" are at work. For example, Eddison's thematic interest in Machiavellian intrigue and "High Politic," particularly in the Zimiamvia trilogy, would provide sufficient explanation for his focused attention to political nuance and historical context. Nowhere in his fairly lengthy letters of introduction to either *A Fish Dinner in Memison* or *The Mezentian Gate* does he so much as mention a specific concern with "world making" (or magic). Fletcher Pratt's meticulous attention to political and historical context in both *The Well of the Unicorn* and *The Blue Star* may simply be seen as an extension of his personal interest in history itself. A crucial paragraph in the "Author's Note" to the former work expands on repeating patterns in "histories real or imagined (and this is not to draw a line between the two)" (Pratt xi). It should come as little surprise that the freelancing Pratt was, in fact, a popular historian, more well-known at the time of his death in 1956 as a historical writer. Magic, as I have noted, is lifted into consistent practical thematic relief only in *Unknown* and following.

On this basis, then, I would contend that to profess a concern with "what they were trying to do," while simultaneously adhering to the notion of invented worlds and magic as elements to be isolated as definitive to pregenre work, is problematic—just as working out of a definition built on the etymological and semantic associations of the word *fantasy*, if the authors did not categorize their work as fantasy, is problematic.

The problems this practice engenders are often evident in the criticism, and it is particularly unfortunate when the criticism becomes evaluative. For example, C. N. Manlove states that the goal of his *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies* is "to take a range of modern 'imaginative' fantasists and show what they were trying to do and how well they do it" (1Manlove 258). "What they were trying to do" finds its bottom-line summary in the definition cited earlier, which thereby becomes the basic yardstick for determining "how well they do it." But the works Manlove discusses, by the five authors also noted earlier, are extremely heterogeneous, even without considering the absence, in their respective time periods, of any collective genre resembling that which Manlove articulates. To what degree can Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Kingsley's *The Water Babies*, MacDonald's *Phantastes*, and Mervyn Peake's *Titus Groan* be meaningfully measured against an identical yardstick? Yet Manlove uses his uniform framework to conclude that "not one of the people we have looked at sustains his original vision"

(258) and that the willingness to tolerate the failings must be left "to the cultists" (261).

It should be noted that Manlove is not, in practice, simplistically reductionist, and he does affirm that there is a substantial "variety" in his choices of texts and authors—that there are among them "a range of approaches to the supernatural" and to the "fantastic worlds"—but he nevertheless persists in classifying them as a "kind" (12). He does begin with, and returns to as the basis of his evaluation, his definition, and he clearly assumes a generic affinity sufficient to support the definition as such. And the features distinguishing the works he discusses as a "kind" are the "fantastic worlds" and "supernatural" that mark the core BAFS template. The individual "original vision" of each author is subsidiary to the generic collective. But if one really takes the works he discusses on their own terms, these features must be seen as limited, and rather misleading, lowest common denominators,[47] not definitive features indicating sufficient commonality that a uniform evaluative framework might be derived from them.

This certainly does not mean that there are no aspects of these authors' work that may be taken as flaws: this is not the indignant rejoinder of a "cultist." But it does challenge Manlove's framework as an apt basis for articulating those flaws, and in places there is arguably a subtle manipulation of the texts that serves to give credence to his essentially categorical judgment.[48] Needless to say, Manlove is retrojecting the contours of a formulated genre onto work written before that genre had become a discrete collective entity.[49]

The BAFS template can be used to expose "flaws" in pregenre material even more reductionist. Morris's failure to develop his invented settings in more detail can be taken as a flaw. Lack of attention to application of practical anthrohistorical "knowledge" can lead to the idea that the lack of organized religion in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* undermines the "believability" of Middle-earth (see 1Carter 122–24). In general, lack of explicit attention to the mechanics of magic, or failure to provide a systematic conceptual structure within which magic operates, may be seen as injurious to the supposed need of readers to have the seemingly impossible given a "credible" framework, if not explanation. And so on.

The underlying assumption that begins to take shape is that the pregenre writers did not really know what they were doing (writing fantasy) and must be seen as anticipating in (at best pardonably) primitive terms what became more clearly understood later.

I will return here to the question of generic signifiers. That the pregenre writers did not class their work as fantasy (replete with the post-BAFS web of associations)[50] does not mean that they did not use other signifying terms. Though there was no systematic, single designation, the two most

frequently recurring were *fairy tale/story* and *romance*. That *fantasy* is in fact a substitution, a shift in the signifying referent away from the authors' chosen term(s), does not seem to have been widely remarked on, and there has not been in the criticism much to suggest that it is of any significance. Manlove, for example, opens his study noting the widely various ways the term *fantasy* is used, and he states in response, "[A]ll that matters ultimately is the isolation of a particular kind of literature . . . the name is relatively unimportant" (1Manlove 1). That he does not devote any focused attention to such generic terms as may have been used by the authors he discusses implicitly suggests that those terms are interchangeable in their significance with *fantasy*. But are they in fact interchangeable?

That this is not merely semantic hairsplitting can be seen by examining a passage from another critical study of fantasy, Ann Swinfen's *In Defense of Fantasy: A Study of the Genre in English and American Literature since 1945* (1984).[51] She is one of the few critics to even note that there has been a terminological shift, but she sidesteps it in a curious passage. Noting the importance of Tolkien's understanding of "fantasy" to an understanding of "the genre," she writes,

> Tolkien's lecture ["On Fairy-Stories"] is concerned with the nature, origins, and purpose of "fairy-stories," a term which proves not easy to define. A study of the genre reveals that such stories are rarely concerned with fairies. "Most good 'fairy-stories' are about the *aventures* of men in the Perilous Realm or upon its shadowy marches" (Tolkien 113). The nature of the fairy-story thus depends on "the nature of Faerie: the Perilous Realm itself, and the air that blows in that country" (Tolkien 114). The term "fairy-story" is thus misleading, and though Tolkien continues to use it in his lecture, it will not be used in this study. Instead, the term "fantasy" has been preferred, as having perhaps a wider currency now than in the 1930s. (Swinfen 4–5)

The essence of this suggests that, to Swinfen, the shift from *fairy-story* to *fantasy* as the consolidating point of reference is little more than incidental, a simple replacing of one word with an equivalent with "wider currency." Implicitly, her suggestion is the same as Manlove's: the name is "unimportant"; the "isolation of a particular kind of literature" is.

Of course, the question, once again, is whether or not the two terms are in fact sufficiently equivalent as to be treated interchangeably. Certainly Tolkien, a meticulous linguist particularly absorbed in the issue of names, would have contended that a change in name entails at least some change in meaning. "Fairy-story" is the narrative form he discusses, however expansive his sense of it may be; "fantasy" is, alternately, a power of the human mind and a literary effect, often evident in fairy-stories (as well as

in other literary forms), subsidiary to it. Swinfen says the term *fairy-story* is "misleading," but Tolkien's qualification of the term is meticulously clear: "Fairy-stories in normal English usage are not stories about fairies or elves, but stories about Fairy, that is Faerie, the realm or state in which fairies have their being" (Tolkien 113). What there is about the term that may potentially be misleading, Tolkien clarifies: the *fairy* of *fairy-story* refers to setting, not character. Ironically, the preceding suggests that *fantasy* has the potential to be considerably more misleading.

But to return to my question, are the two terms in fact equivalent? Some of Swinfen's subsequent discussion is interesting in this regard: a few pages after she adopts *fantasy* in lieu of *fairy-story*, she writes, "In the sub-creative art of fantasy, Tolkien detects three faces: 'the Mystical towards the Supernatural; the Magical towards Nature; and the Mirror of scorn and pity towards Man'" (Tolkien 125). Unfortunately, by deliberately choosing to exclude two types of tale—the beast fable and the Lilliputian story—Tolkien largely excludes the mirror of scorn and pity" (Swinfen 6). Swinfen's objection here does not accurately reflect Tolkien's text. According to Tolkien, the "three faces" are not aspects of fantasy but of the fairy-story: Swinfen's citation is immediately preceded by "fairy-stories as a whole have three faces" (Tolkien 125). Tolkien's chief discussion of "fantasy" comes later in the essay, where, again, it does not refer to a literary genre but to a power of the human mind and a literary effect.

Nor does he say that "the beast fable and the Lilliputian story" are not fantasy: he says they are not fairy-stories. His reasoning in both cases is clear enough: while fairy-stories concern themselves with "the *aventures* of men in the Perilous Realm," human beings are peripheral or absent in the beast fable, and the beast form itself is simply "a mask upon a human face" (Tolkien 117). The human interface with Faerie, which he contends is a key feature of the fairy-story, is largely absent in the beast fable (see Tolkien 117–18).[52] The "Lilliputian story," Tolkien says, "belongs to the class of traveller's tales," and the travels of Gulliver do not lead to Faerie but remain "in this mortal world in some region of our own time and space" (Tolkien 115). By eliminating these tale types from consideration as fairy-stories, he does not exclude "the Mirror of scorn and pity towards Man," or satire, as a possible element in the fairy-story: "I do not rule this story ["A Voyage to Lilliput"] out because of its satirical intent: there is satire, sustained or intermittent, in undoubted fairy-stories, and satire may often have been intended in traditional tales where we do not now perceive it" (Tolkien 115). If Tolkien had rejected Andrew Lang's *Prince Prigio* (which he accepts as a fairy-story, though he is critical of it) or his own *Farmer Giles of Ham*, Swinfen's contention that he had excluded satire might have some validity. As it is, she has simply misrepresented Tolkien's text.

It is clear that this interpretive confusion and misrepresentation stems, to a considerable degree, from terminology. Swinfen has, with virtually no qualification, substituted the word *fantasy* for Tolkien's term *fairy-story*, implicitly suggesting that the two are functionally identical. But, though she does use Tolkien substantially in developing her working definition of fantasy (she also uses Dante, Coleridge, and Aristotle), it is quite evident that, though what she means by *fantasy* may overlap with what Tolkien means by *fairy-story*, the two are not identical. The beast fable and the "Lilliputian story" may not be fairy-stories according to Tolkien's framework and yet be fantasy according to Swinfen's. While Tolkien contends that these two tale types are out of place in Andrew Lang's *The Blue Fairy Book*, it does not follow that he would have contended that they were out of place in Swinfen's discussion. Indeed, he does affirm that tales such as Swift's "report many marvels" (Tolkien 115) and that the beast fable is a "type of marvellous tale" (Tolkien 117), while Swinfen states that the "marvelous element . . . lies at the heart of all fantasy" and characterizes the marvelous primarily as "what can never exist in the world of empirical experience" (Swinfen 5). Needless to say, Tolkien does not suggest that Lilliputians or talking beasts "exist in the world of empirical experience" but that where the marvelous may be sufficient to make a story fantasy to Swinfen, it is not sufficient to make a fairy-story to Tolkien.

In a sense, Swinfen's discussion of Tolkien may be seen as a sort of microcosm: in quite condensed form, we can see the essential nature of the problems that arise when "fantasy," with all its contemporary generic associations, is equated with the form—in this case, "fairy-story"—with which a pregenre writer consciously identified his or her work. Misrepresentations and misperceptions become inevitable. If one is to discuss the pregenre work and its origins with some emphasis on "what they were trying to do," there is a need to divest that material from a too ready (and rigid) association with the terms of the contemporary genre.

This is not to invalidate extant studies (such as Manlove's) but to call attention to a common underpinning whose significance has largely gone unnoticed: contemporary terms and a contemporary framework are being projected backward onto work by writers who did not share precisely those terms and framework. If the interest is restricted to earlier manifestations of what became definitive elements of the fantasy genre when it coalesced,[53] this is fine. However, if the interest is in how those writers saw their own work with regard to then-recognized narrative forms, and with what earlier strands of literary tradition they allied their work, the terms of the contemporary genre may be relevant in identifying who/what is "of interest," but little more. Instead, one must centralize the associations those writers attached, insofar as can be ascertained, to the narrative forms they recognized and identified their work with: forms such as "fairy-story" and "romance."

"Faery, or romance literature"

As the foregoing suggests, not only did the pregenre writers whose work collectively constitutes the *de facto* canon that emerged during the period of the BAFS not write with the specifications of our contemporary fantasy genre in mind; their work cannot on the whole be said to have comprised, in the consciousness of the authors, a singular genre under any other name either. Yet I am treating them collectively here. Can some feature common to the work as a whole, apart from the retrojected generic features of invented worlds and magic, be discerned that would not simultaneously impose an undue sense of homogeny?

One thing that can be said is that the work characterizing the core, pregenre canon all draws to a substantial degree on themes and subject matter ultimately derived from what might be termed nonmodern, or traditional, narrative forms: myth, legend, epic, saga, romance, and fairy-story. The link is apparent not in the form of allusion (as in Joyce's *Ulysses* or Eliot's "The Waste Land") but in the elements informing the actual narratives as narratives directly. This connection is implicitly made when Lin Carter asserts, rather portentously, that "fantasy is no less than *the original form of narrative literature* itself" (1Carter 4) and then moves on to cite *Gilgamesh*, *The Odyssey*, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, *Shah-Nameh*, *Beowulf*, *The Kalevala*, Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, and others to support the assertion (see 1Carter 13 and following).[54] A quarter of a century later, Richard Mathews makes the same implicit connection when he states in the opening pages of his *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination* (1997) that "fantasy is . . . pervasive in the early literature of every culture" (Mathews 2) and precedes his text with a "Chronology" that begins with the same works that Carter cites (Mathews xv–xvi). Needless to say, these assertions need considerable qualification, and I will return to this. There is, nevertheless, a certain validity to Carter's and Mathews's point, and the generic terms used most frequently by our pregenre authors, *fairy-story* and *romance*, by their nature suggest something of this connection, while *fantasy* does not.

Both of these terms, and particularly the latter, have proven rather resistant to set definition and have (like *fantasy*) been treated in enormously various ways. I do not propose to define them here. However, something might be said of some of the associations the terms carried for those of our authors who used them. The persistence with which they appear during the pregenre period in reference to works by Morris, Dunsany, Eddison,

and Tolkien seems to suggest that they would be more apt signifying terms than *fantasy*: they would at least more clearly reflect which narrative traditions the authors connected their work with.

Fairy-story is, in some senses, problematic: for more than two centuries, fairy-stories have been popularly classified as "children's literature" in Britain and North America. Given this, it is not surprising that a writer like E. R. Eddison, whom many adults find difficult, would distinguish his work from fairy-stories. Eddison's assertion in his "Letter of Introduction" to *The Mezentian Gate* that the work is "not a fairy-story" is followed immediately by "not a book for babes and sucklings" (Eddison xiv). That he is assuming the common association of the two is obvious. Later, when fantasy was emerging as a genre, Lin Carter would assert that a fantasy was "not a fairy-tale, not a story written for children" (1Carter 6). This longstanding and deeply rooted association was no doubt why the term was not that frequently used, even when a given work—say, Dunsany's *The Charwoman's Shadow*—played on motifs derived quite plainly from the traditional fairy tale.

Tolkien, of course, was not shy of the term, and his use of it is a major reason for discussing it here. It is clear that he associated both *The Hobbit* (a work for children, though he later regretted it) and *The Lord of the Rings* (a work for adults) with the subject of his essay "On Fairy-Stories." James Stephens's collection of short narratives based on traditional Irish tales—akin to Evangeline Walton's interpretations of *The Mabinogion* or T. H. White's of the Arthurian legends—is titled *Irish Fairy Tales*. Tolkien's friend and contemporary C. S. Lewis was unapologetic in his enthusiasm for fairy-stories, and his adult work, *That Hideous Strength*, was subtitled "A Modern Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups"—a subtitle that implicitly affirms the common associations. In the previous century, George MacDonald had also written unapologetically of the fairy-story in his essay "The Fantastic Imagination," stating somewhat ambiguously of his own work, "For my part, I do not write for children, but for the childlike, whether of five, or fifty, or seventy-five" (MacDonald 317). But the pervasiveness of the idea that children were the natural audience for fairy-stories is evident in the fact that Tolkien, Lewis, and MacDonald all addressed it as a matter of course, and all three saw at least some of their fairy-story work published for children.

Tolkien's accounting for this has often been quoted:

> [T]he association of children and fairy-stories is an accident of our domestic history. Fairy-stories have in the modern lettered world been relegated to the "nursery," as shabby or old fashioned furniture is relegated to the playroom, primarily because the adults do not want it, and do not mind if it is misused.

> It is not the choice of the children which decides this. Children as a class—except in a common lack of experience they are not one—neither like fairy-stories more, nor understand them better than adults do; and no more than they like many other things. (Tolkien 130)

The reference to "domestic history" points to a fact that Lewis and MacDonald were also aware of: previous to the nineteenth century, fairy-stories, whether literary or oral, were not composed specifically for children. The French *contes de fees* of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the work from which the modern literary fairy-story form emerged as a distinct entity, were composed in the salons of Louis XIV's France by adults for adults, and the process of making them amenable to children in later periods frequently involved extensive abridgement and bowdlerization, even full rewriting, so that later versions of the tales, for children, often bore the same relation to the originals that "A Voyage to Lilliput" as adapted in Andrew Lang's *The Blue Fairy Book* bears to Swift's work. The literary *märchen* of the German Romantics (by Novalis, Hoffmann, Tieck, and others), a particularly strong influence on MacDonald, were also for adults, sufficiently so that few of these were even adapted for children. The oral tales, such as began to appear adapted to written form in the collections of the Grimms, were composed and told in contexts that included adults as much as children. The fact that Eddison and Carter both distance themselves from fairy-stories does not mean that they were necessarily unaware of this: they were clearly speaking of fairy-stories as perceived in their literary historical contexts and dispensing with the issue in as efficient a manner as possible. Indeed, the fact that they felt constrained to mention it indicates awareness that at least some of the external features of the works in question had some connection to the fairy-story.

That modern fantasy is strongly allied with the tradition of the fairy-story (which more often than not is set in an invented world in which magic works) has, of course, been widely recognized. New interpretations of traditional tales and original fairy tales, from Robin McKinley's *Beauty* (1978) to the tales collected by Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling in *The Faery Reel: Tales from the Twilight Realm* (2004), abound in the fantasy sections of bookstores. Criticism has not neglected the connection: C. N. Manlove, for example, opens his second study of fantasy, *The Impulse of Fantasy Literature* (1983), with the statement, "Modern fantasy owes its existence in large part to the traditional fairy tale" (2Manlove 1). This is true: the prolific output of literary fairy tales in France three centuries ago, in Germany two centuries ago, and in England during the Victorian period is not simply closely allied to but in fact a crucial part of the development

of modern fantasy. And all three clusters of literary fairy tales drew directly on the narrative conventions of the traditional fairy tale for their substance.

But Manlove's claim, while along the right lines, is not entirely sufficient. Two of the authors he devotes full chapters to, Charles Williams and Mervyn Peake, owe a marginal debt at the very most to the fairy tale, traditional or literary.[55] Eddison, to whom he devotes an unflattering nine pages in his curious chapter about what he calls "anaemic fantasy," owes little beyond some surface features, even in *The Worm Ouroboros*, to the traditional fairy tale as Manlove demarcates it—that is, as seen in the collections of the Grimms and their folkloristic followers. The insufficiency of the claim is not that it is wrong but that it is unduly restrictive: one emerges from the opening chapter of *The Impulse of Fantasy Literature* with the sense that such traditional tales are *the*, rather than *a*, determining factor in the development of modern fantasy. He does not discuss, beyond suggestion in some of the titles he cites,[56] any of the other types of narrative that also began to proliferate in print during the first half of the nineteenth century, interest in which was akin to the interest in the traditional fairy tale but which were not, formally, fairy tales.

Tolkien's discussion of the fairy-story is of more use here. In "On Fairy-Stories," Tolkien refers to literary tales (such as those of MacDonald and Lang) and to traditional tales in keeping with Manlove's main thrust ("The Frog Prince" and "The Juniper Tree" from Grimm, for example). But he also refers to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the Arthurian legends generally, *Volsunga Saga*, poems from *The Poetic Edda*, and the ancient Egyptian "The Tale of the Two Brothers"—narratives that, in form, resemble the folk fairy tale to some degree but are formally distinct from it. Of course, all these works date to periods long before the emergence of the fairy tale proper.[57]

While Tolkien's sense of the fairy-story is highly expansive, and he is retroactively imposing the (relatively) modern term on these latter works as much contemporary criticism has imposed the term *fantasy* on pregenre work, he does open up the field of inquiry to types of narrative, the modern interest in which dates to the period just preceding and contemporary with the Grimms, that Manlove neglects. These other types of narrative are as important to the development of modern fantasy as the traditional fairy tale.

Tolkien's passing equivocation, "fairy-story (or romance)" (Tolkien 155), at the beginning of the "Epilogue" to his essay invokes the second term. In its context, it also partly accounts for, in a general sense, Tolkien's expansive use of the term *fairy-story*. But unlike *fairy-story*, which hovers only occasionally invoked despite its obvious connection to the pregenre material, *romance* was much more commonly used. Though William

Morris generally did not discuss his work, and usually referred to his "fantasies" of the 1880s and 1890s simply as "tales," contemporary reviewers and editors/critics from May Morris[58] on tended to unqualifiedly refer to them as "romances." George MacDonald's *Lilith* is subtitled "A Romance," and *Phantastes* "A Faerie Romance." In the ersatz scholarly apparatus to *Domnei* and *Jurgen*, Cabell refers to his work in terms of romance. Eddison's *The Worm Ouroboros* is subtitled "A Romance." Kenneth Morris's preface to *The Fates of the Princes of Dyfed*, in its concluding section, implicitly classes his work as a "Romance." Poul Anderson's "Forward" to the original edition of *The Broken Sword* begins, "This is frankly a romance."

Romance is also, in its own way, problematic. As I have mentioned, it is, unqualified, at least as vague and inclusive a term as *fantasy*. In the past two centuries, it has been used to designate work as various as Walpole's *The Castle of Oranto*, Hawthorne's *The House of Seven Gables*, Wells's *The Time Machine*, and Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, not to mention its current degraded association with "Candlelight" and "Harlequin." C. S. Lewis, in his "Preface to Third Edition" of *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933/43), writes of the cognate "romantic(ism)," "I now believe it to be a word of such varying senses that it has become useless and should be banished from our vocabulary" (3Lewis 5).

However, specific details, such as Tolkien's equivocation of *romance* with *fairy-story*, MacDonald's designation of *Phantastes* as a "*Faerie* Romance," and Anderson's immediately subsequent qualification of *romance* as "a story of admittedly impossible events and completely non-existent places" (Anderson Foreword), do suggest somewhat more precise associations. Cabell's mock comparison of the tales of Manuel the Redeemer to the "several cycles" of King Arthur and Charlemagne in the foreword to *Figures of Earth* (Cabell xvii) goes further, implicitly connecting *romance* to the work to which it was originally applied: medieval romance.

Of course, *romance* was not being used in an entirely restricted sense formally, and there is an implied extension to include other traditional narrative forms that bore some relation to medieval romance. For example, of the older works Tolkien mentions in his essay, only *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is technically a romance. *Volsunga Saga* belongs to the Scandinavian genre of the *sogur*, or "saga," specifically the "Sagas of Ancient Times." The poems of *The Poetic Edda* are mythic and heroic lays. The narratives of King Arthur and Charlemagne, which Cabell refers to, are not restricted to romance but exist in quasi-historical chronicles, such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannia*, and in the *chanson de geste*, heroic poems such as *The Song of Roland*.[59] More recently collected tales, such as those of the Grimms, were not romances in the technical sense.

So if we take *romance*, as used by these pregenre writers, as something sufficiently narrow as to exclude *Gone with the Wind* and *The Time Machine*, but sufficiently broad as to not be restricted to its technical medieval application, we at least have a general notion as to the term's implied associations. We also open up the field to narrative forms that were often of greater significance to the writers than the traditional fairy-tale form Manlove discusses. By taking this web of association as a general "glue" for discussing the pregenre canon, we will come closer to "what they were trying to do" than by centering discussion on the terms of the BAFS template. We also have a viable collective that does not misleadingly suggest consciousness of a contemporary genre per se.

But these "traditional narrative forms" warrant some further discussion. What of the common practice that designates them fantasy? Certainly there are in common with contemporary fantasy elements of content that do not, shall we say, conform to a post-Enlightenment consensus reality: dragons, monsters such as Grendel, gods and goddesses appearing as dramatic characters, and so on. The attraction to such narrative material quite undeniably overlaps with the attraction of works like *The Lord of the Rings*. In this sense, it is not amiss to apply the term *fantasy* to these older narrative forms.

But again, this necessarily centralizes a modern perspective on such narrative material. In their original contexts, *Gilgamesh*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *The Mabinogion*, and so on were not conceived as fantasy. This has, of course, been duly noted. But the main distinction, implied or noted specifically by Carter, Mathews, Lewis, and Tom Shippey, has centered rather simply on the issue of belief. Citing the reference to dragons in the generally sober *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Shippey notes that "in earlier periods they [dragons] may have been regarded as unusual rather than impossible," whereas for us, living in a world with "no space left . . . for proper fire-breathing dragons to exist . . . they have accordingly moved firmly into the realm of fantasy" (Shippey x). In discussing a permutation of *romantic* that corresponds fairly closely to our *fantasy*, Lewis writes, "The marvellous is 'romantic,' provided it does not make part of the believed religion" (3Lewis 6). And Carter, implicitly suggesting the element of belief in the writers of "ancient fantasy," asserts that "the earlier writers . . . wrote from a naïve and wide-eyed *Weltanschauung*" (4Carter 4).

There is certainly validity to this basic point, though one may well posit that individual "belief" in all eras was various, as it is in our own, and speculate that there were probably Anglo Saxons of a thousand years ago who did not believe in dragons, just as there are now people who believe in fairies; most likely, Homer and the Gawain poet were not "naïve and wide-eyed." I believe a more apt distinction would be that, for the earlier authors,

the narrative matter generally formed a part of a living, received tradition, which may or may not have been literally "believed," whereas the narrative matter of what we now call fantasy is not, or was not, part of a living tradition as received by its authors. The relationship between the fantasy of the pregenre canon and Carter's "ancient fantasy" is predicated on not continuity but discontinuity and distance: it is through the salvaged relics of forgotten times, ancient or collected oral texts transformed into modern books, that the modern writers found their inspiration. Their choice of subject matter was decidedly against the grain in terms of what was deemed proper practice in the literary world (during the pregenre period) and founded, to a substantial degree, on an aesthetic in which the remote, the miraculous, and that which conforms to an order counter to the post-Enlightenment consensus reality, are key. In contrast, the "ancient" authors' choice of subject matter was congruent with their contexts (i.e., there was nothing "against the grain" in a poet of the Middle Ages turning to the Arthurian legends) and affirmed the orders, if not necessarily in a literal manner, of their respective worlds.

A look at the particular traditions that those of our writers who wrote modern interpretations of extant stories (as opposed to creating original "mythos") engaged can underline the idea of a relation founded on discontinuity with and distance from the source tradition. Among the writers of the pregenre canon, we have Kenneth Morris and Evangeline Walton reworking parts of *The Mabinogion*; James Stephens reworking old Gaelic tales; and T. H. White reworking the Arthurian legends, specifically Malory's redaction. At a remove, we have Pratt/de Camp dropping Harold Shea into the worlds of Scandinavian myth, the Irish Ulster cycle, the Finnish *Kalevala*, Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*;[60] at a greater remove, we have the Scandinavian/Celtic/European faerie cosmos of Poul Anderson's original tale, *The Broken Sword*, and the extrapolation on the Carolingian-rooted world of the legends of Ogier the Dane in his *Three Hearts and Three Lions*. Needless to say, none of these works represent the passing on of living, received traditions: Morris was not a bard who derived his narrative matter from a living bardic tradition, White was not a medieval troubadour passing on his variation on what he had heard or read in handwritten manuscripts of King Arthur, and so on. All these authors were engaging creatively the written remains of narrative traditions long dead—remains that were processed by antiquarians and scholars after having been largely forgotten for centuries,[61] transformed into mediated texts and translations, and then *read* in the form of a nineteenth- or twentieth-century book by the authors. What the modern authors "knew" of the living contexts that bred the works that inspired them were the reconstructions (including mediated texts) of linguists, historians, anthropologists,

and archaeologists. Again, the modern fantasy versions of these tales are predicated precisely on distance from the living contexts in which the matters originated. For example, White's extrapolations on Malory, such as the assertion that "the central theme of Morte d'Arthur is to find an antidote to war" (White xvi), suggest not an organic development of tradition but the imposition of a twentieth-century pacifistic perspective on a work far removed from the twentieth century. In *The Once and Future King*, we see a modern writer using a body of story sufficiently remote as to be open and malleable advancing ideals that medieval authors such as Malory never would have dreamed of. We find a similar situation with Kenneth Morris and his imposition of the Theosophically hued notions of "the human soul on its evolutionary journey" (Morris xviii) on the matter of the "First Branch" of *The Mabinogion*. The distance implied by the fact that these works had to be recovered during the eighteenth century and following is the space that permits them to be creatively reimagined and drastically reconceptualized.

By way of contrast, it is striking to note the virtually complete lack of fantasy interpretations of (suitable, it would seem) narrative material from the Bible, which does occupy a central place in the living, received traditions of European and Euro-American Christianity. This is not to say that the texts that compose the Bible are not, in fact, more ancient than most of those noted previously or that the world that bred the texts is not as or more remote. But it is to say that, since the introduction of Christianity, the Bible has had a continuous, unbroken presence in Western culture, its stories forming part of a living, received tradition, and there is attached to it a webwork of established exegesis that does not encourage the kind of creative reshaping we see in the work of White and Morris.[62] But at least as significant as the hostility of certain orthodoxies to this kind of thing is the simple fact that the Bible—though it may be chronologically distant from the modern world, though the world from which it emerged may be culturally distant from the European and European-rooted cultures for which it became a sacred book—has been a constant presence for centuries up to nearly two millennia and a stable, known quantity that never had to be "recovered." A stable, known quantity, I would suggest, is not what the modern imagination geared to "romance, or faery literature" most readily turns to for subject matter.[63]

The Greek and Roman classics stand in a somewhat ambiguous position here: Latin was, of course, the core language of educated culture (as well as the language in which the Bible as a text was known) in Western and Northern Europe throughout the medieval period, and many of the Roman classics, including mythic and legendary works such as Virgil's *The Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, were, like the Bible, widely known in

some form. Though Greek arrived in the West only during the sixteenth century, it was rapidly integrated into the educated culture, augmenting Latin. It was only at this point that the texts of Homer's epics, for example, became known in the West, though they had been known of, and their subject matter familiar, throughout the Middle Ages. The Latin classics, therefore, a constant presence from the time of the late Roman Empire, were never lost and forgotten—never had to be "recovered." Though Greek was only introduced in the sixteenth century, the recognition of its classic works by Latin authors, as well as the substantial derivation of Roman mythology from Greek, meant that it was not entirely an "unknown quantity." Its integration into educated culture was decidedly different in nature from the halting retrieval and reconstruction by antiquarians of the works of the medieval period and of Celtic and Scandinavian antiquity— fundamentally unknown quantities circa 1750—several centuries later. At the same time, this work, not attached to the strictures of orthodox Christian belief, was more open to reinterpretation, and original works founded on its parts abound throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

The relation of the Greek and Roman classics to modern fantasy is somewhat checkered: while it is less restricted than the relation of the Bible to fantasy, neither has it had the presence of medieval and Arthurian, Celtic, and Scandinavian material. For example, though figures from classical mythology appear in the works of Eddison, in Stephens's *The Crock of Gold*, and elsewhere, there are no fantasy reinterpretations or expansions of classical narratives in the core pregenre fantasy canon.[64] And while classical, and specifically Greek, material had a vigorous presence in some of the Romantic and Victorian work I will discuss in the following pages, the eighteenth-century push that led to it, where I will begin in Chapter 2, was marked by reaction against the classicism of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

I have suggested that a consolidating characteristic of pregenre fantasy is its peculiar relation to traditional narrative forms. The foregoing suggests that "traditional narrative forms" by itself is perhaps too specious and that certain traditions are more particularly significant. That those of Western and Northern Europe, and of Britain and Ireland, figure most prominently suggests that to many of our authors there was a more specific concern with the traditional narrative forms of their own perceived heritage. The work of James Stephens and Kenneth Morris can be said to carry a patriotic dimension; less explicitly, Tolkien's work may be seen likewise, as well as, to a degree, William Morris's. In a sense, these works may be partly seen as an imaginative recovery, an attempt to center the imaginative impulse in indigenous tradition, or an act of ethnic imagination—a creative answer to the scholarly process of antiquarian text recovery. While not universal

among the pregenre authors, this apparent urge to connect to a perceived heritage is common enough to note as a significant force in the development of modern fantasy, and in fact it finds its initial manifestation in the Gothic Revival of the eighteenth century, which, I will argue in Chapter 2, is where this conscious attempt to engage archaic narrative forms from outside established tradition first began to manifest.

While this underlying "patriotic" motivation was sufficiently common to cite it as a force in the development of modern fantasy, it was, again, not universal. James Branch Cabell engaged the conventions of medieval romance, in a manner not dissimilar to that of William Morris, with no apparent concern for any idea of "heritage" (he was, of course, American). With Eddison, whose British and Northern inspirations were crossed with Greek and Italian Renaissance inspirations, any conventional concern for heritage is remote. Yet, in literary terms, both were nevertheless engaging the vocabulary of "faery, or romance literature" in a sufficiently similar manner to the others as to be seen as part of fundamentally the same phenomenon.

More entirely removed from any vestiges of a patriotic urge, yet still characterized by an imaginative preoccupation with the remote, the miraculous, and that which conforms to an order counter to the post-Enlightenment consensus reality, is that branch of fantasy that first emerged in the eighteenth century following the appearance of Antoine Galland's French translation, and the subsequent English translation from French, of *The Thousand and One Nights*: the pseudo-Oriental tale. Examples from the post–William Morris, pregenre period of the BAFS canon are comparatively thin: Ernest Bramah's Kai Lung stories are the only major body of what is explicitly pseudo-Oriental work, to which one may add some of the short tales of Kenneth Morris and Donald Corley. However, many of the tales of Lord Dunsany, as well as the Zothique cycle of Clark Ashton Smith, are pervaded by an atmosphere indebted to the pseudo-Oriental tale; so, too, to a lesser degree, are the fantasies of Jack Vance and Fritz Leiber. There are occasional pseudo-Oriental touches in Tolkien and Eddison. And it is primarily in the pseudo-Oriental tale that Lin Carter found "forerunners" of William Morris: Beckford's *Vathek* (1786), Meredith's *The Shaving of Shagpat* (1855), and F. Marion Crawford's *Khaled* (1890). The pseudo-Oriental tale, as I will discuss in Chapter 2, was in fact a far more prolific genre in the eighteenth century than Carter conveys, and it is arguably here that one finds the first substantial body of modern English narrative fantasy in prose.

The "traditional narrative modes" underlying fantasy, then, are not simply the universal, leveling "myth, epic, saga, and romance" sometimes conveyed. We have a particular weight given to Celtic, Scandinavian, and

medieval romance traditions; a less frequent recourse to classical tradition, and usually Greek rather than Roman; and a strong current derived from a specious "Oriental tradition," itself largely a European invention,[65] with *The Thousand and One Nights* serving as the most continuously influential constituent work. The Bible lurks as an indirect presence, the mytholegendary historical structure of the Old Testament sometimes influencing the shape of fantasy constructs, the King James version sometimes influencing prose styles, Old Testament narrative sometimes coloring the pseudo-Oriental tale.

I have put a certain emphasis on those fantasy works that explicitly constitute interpretations of actual traditional narrative material or take place in the locale of some traditional narrative, as an easy way to identify what traditions figure most significantly in the BAFS canon. These centers are largely maintained in the work of those writers working within the "invented world/country mode" as well: Morris's worlds align themselves clearly with Germanic antiquity, the Middle Ages, or an amalgamation of both, and his narrative techniques rely heavily on his readings of saga and romance; the substance of Dunsany's worlds draw heavily on the pseudo-Oriental and Greek traditions, with an influx of medieval romance and the fairy tale, melded together by a style echoing the King James Bible; Cabell's Poictesme is an imaginary French province, and his "medieval" narratives, such as *Figures of Earth* and *The Silver Stallion*, are presented as ersatz medieval French romances; Eddison, as noted before, drew from a cross section of Greek, Italian and English Renaissance, Celtic, and saga elements; Tolkien's world emerged from the desire to create an imaginative English mythology, and his construct represents a syncretistic merging of elements drawn, most notably, from Germanic and Celtic legend. Pratt's *The Well of the Unicorn* is strongly informed by saga narrative techniques.

The work of these writers is, in a sense, no less dependent on, variously, Celtic, Scandinavian and Germanic, medieval, Greek, and "Oriental" sources than is the work of Kenneth Morris, Stephens, Walton, and White, though one might say the "source" material is more distinctly processed. I have noted that some of the distinct individual elements informing the work of Kenneth Morris and T. H. White betray a uniquely modern distance from the traditions they invoke and are in fact reliant on that distance. The inherent syncretism of the latter, "invented world" writers is absolutely predicated on distance: elements defining distinct, autonomous, living traditions become "literary" through the process that results in mediated texts, and these elements are mixed and matched by modern writers who wish to evoke an aesthetic associated with actual legendary, romance, and saga traditions while simultaneously not being constrained by those traditions. This results in, for example, Elizabethan-talking Homeric-cum-Celtic

heroes existing in a world of Renaissance castles, Greek goddesses, and Jacobean revenge tragedy–style intrigues (i.e., E. R. Eddison).

This body of background material is, then, what was connoted by the formal terms *fairy-story* and *romance*, and these were what our pregenre authors clearly allied their own work with and often looked to for models. But the models were not, as the preceding discussion suggests, rigidly deterministic: they were fluid and freely melded and adapted according to the intentions of the authors, even when the model was a single work (as with White and Malory). The models were not literary works of fantasy, in the sense connoted in our modern context; neither are the modern works organic developments of received tradition, even when there is an underlying strand of patriotism motivating them.

But though this recourse to "traditional narrative forms" may be taken as a viable template for the discussion of the pregenre fantasy canon beginning with William Morris, taken by itself it can suggest something akin to Lin Carter's, shall we say, reductionist representation of literary history: "Cervantes' bravura lampoon of the chivalric romances and Spenser's chaotic *smorgasbord* of the whole school, resulted in the death of the fantastic story for a couple of centuries. Then William Morris came along to draw it forth, like Lazrus, from the tomb" (2Carter xi). If one narrowly defines modern fantasy as a prose narrative form characterized by invented worlds and magic, something like this viewpoint may perhaps be viable—with a good bit of qualification. However, if we look at the canon of pregenre fantasy in terms of its recourse to traditional narrative forms, and do not restrict the two centuries preceding Morris's romances to *prose* narrative, we find that, in fact, Morris was continuing a modern practice that extends back to the eighteenth century, the period when the retrieval of, and construction of modern mediated texts derived from, traditional literatures was inaugurated under the aegis of antiquarianism.

But I should pause here to note an important distinction within the pregenre fantasy canon, proceeding from the divide between the "literary" and "popular" branches discussed earlier. I mentioned that the latter, unlike the former, developed in close proximity to other forms of popular genre fiction—popular forms of romance narrative, in fact—most notably horror, science fiction, and action adventure fiction. In the absence of any articulated fantasy genre along the lines of the BAFS template, it is probably more apt to see what I am calling popular fantasy as developing from those recognized genres. Each has a clear history—and the histories often overlap—stretching back through the nineteenth century: to the Victorian tales of ghosts and the supernatural, to the swashbuckling lost race romance, to the "scientific romances" of H. G. Wells; and from there to the Gothic novel and the romanticism bred by Hoffmann and Poe, to

the historical adventure romance, to Mary Shelley and Jules Verne. While the popular strand of the canon does draw on themes and subject matter derived, ultimately, from older, traditional forms of "faery, or romance literature," the relationship exists at a remove. For example, the tales of Conan the Barbarian may in some capacities be described as a "heroic cycle" and likened to traditional tales and cycles of tales concerning heroes such as Cuchulainn, Sigurd, or Jason. However, in their telling, Howard's Conan tales betray little if any debt to *The Tain*, *Volsunga Saga*, or the *Argonautica* as texts. On the other hand, they do bear ample debt to Haggard and Burroughs, among others. What might be said here is that Howard adopted elements of content derived *ultimately* from works such as *The Tain* and so on but sublimated them to the conventions of swashbuckling adventure fiction. The primary determinant of narrative style and strategy is the popular genre of fiction, not the texts, or close translations of the texts, of the older, traditional works. What Howard has in common with those older texts he could as well have gotten from sources like Bulfinch. A similar remove marks virtually all the popular fantasy canon.[66]

The popular strand of the canon, then, connects very clearly to other recognized forms of prose fiction, contemporary and earlier, which mediate its connection to traditional narrative forms. Characteristically, the popular pregenre canonical writers adopt traditional elements of content, which are then sublimated to the narrative strategies of recognizable modern forms. The literary ancestry here is fairly clear and in fact includes those areas conventionally cited in studies of fantasy concerned with the pre-Morris roots of the genre.[67] For this reason, while some attention will be given to this eighteenth- and nineteenth-century material—the Gothic novel, and so on—in the following chapters, the ancestry of the popular strand of the canon per se will be accounted for relatively briefly in Chapter 6.

As noted previously, the literary branch of the canon, in contrast, was much more removed from other contemporary forms of prose narrative of the English-speaking world. The general absence of a speculative dimension in the literary work puts it in a different world from science fiction. While Gothic and Poe-esque touches are not infrequent, particularly in the auras surrounding evil characters and the atmospheres of the places associated with them, these darker effects are part of a larger fabric, not themselves the chief concern. While the plots are adventurous, and often build to "thrilling" conclusions, the literary works on the whole do not operate like stereotypical nineteenth- and early twentieth-century adventure fiction, whether of the historical variety or the lost race variety: they are not, on the whole, breathlessly paced "yarns," a substantial part of whose attraction lies in the piling of thrilling event on thrilling event. Distant from

these forms of romance narrative, the literary work is, needless to say, also distant from the dominant literary narrative form, the novel. This leaves the literary fairy tale, but, as we have seen, in the English-speaking world this was considered children's literature, and the authors of the pregenre literary fantasy canon were not writing for children—as Eddison's vociferous remarks in the "Letter of Introduction" to *The Mezentian Gate* indicate.

So where does this leave us?

First, it turns us to our traditional narrative forms. Where the popular writers largely adapted traditional elements of content to the conventions of modern narrative forms, the literary writers would be more aptly described as writing modern works actively engaging the conventions of traditional "faery, or romance literature." From Morris to Tolkien, a common effect sought by the literary writers is the illusion that their work is traditional, the product of another age (and, often, place). There are numerous elements keying the reader to this intention. First, there is the "bardic" narrator persona, such as we find in Kenneth Morris's *The Fates of the Princess of Dyfed* and *Book of the Three Dragons*, or scribal narrator persona, such as we find in William Morris's *The Sundering Flood*: "I, *who gathered this tale*, dwell in the House of the Black Canons [on the Thames at Abingdon]" (my italics, 1Morris 2). There is a frequent allusion to received tradition as authority, as when William Morris's narrator, after Ralph of Upmeads has told his tale to "the good Prior of St. Austin's at Wulstead," informs the reader that "it has been deemed not unlike that from this monk's writing has come the more part of the tale above told" (2Morris 277). This is further cued in Morris's conventional openings—"It is told . . . ," "Long ago . . . ," "Once upon a time . . . ," "The tale tells . . . ," and so on[68]—and in James Branch Cabell's oft repeated variations on "It is a tale they narrate in Poictesme . . ."[69] Both Cabell and Tolkien extend this to suggest whole manuscript and oral traditions, which are often discussed in quasi-scholarly apparatus,[70] implicitly placing Cabell and Tolkien both in the role not of author but of editor and translator.

But the literary writers do not restrict themselves to these, what could be, sleight-of-hand flourishes that share with the "letter in a bottle" ploy used in some popular fantasy the creation of an authorial fiction. But whereas, in the latter case, we begin reading the firsthand account of the end of Atlantis, or of the end of Arthur's Britain,[71] only to find that the ancient narrators have a solid command of Victorian and early twentieth-century popular adventure fiction conventions, with the literary writers we find narratives that actively echo the conventions and textures of traditional romance and saga—the kind of narratives that formed some part of the content of medieval and ancient manuscripts.[72] In many instances,

this included the crafting of an archaized prose to emphasize the medieval/ancient aesthetic.

So the "traditional narrative forms" are on the whole much more directly significant *as texts* to the literary writers than to the popular writers. Where contemporary popular forms of romance shaped the popular work, more traditional forms of romance shaped the literary work. At the same time, it is important to reiterate that most of this material had been, as of about 1750, completely unknown, and its currency as of about 1900 was the result of "scientific" research. It is as post-Enlightenment phenomena that this material appears to modern readers: scholarly texts, translations, paraphrases and epitomes, adaptations for children. The framework for the understanding of the archaic literature that so informs the work of the pregenre literary fantasy writers was itself a tradition that had its origins in eighteenth-century antiquarianism.

The literary writers also inherited a narrative tradition predicated in part on texts "recovered" and transformed into mediated texts of various sorts in the wake of eighteenth-century antiquarianism, as well as on a rethinking along Romantic lines of classical (particularly Greek) tradition. Discussions of the ancestry of fantasy, particularly as pertains to the pregenre literary canon (Tolkienian fantasy, we might loosely term it), have been hampered by an almost exclusive emphasis on prose narrative. William Morris, an unarguably important author, nevertheless looms a little too largely as a result. He was the first author to produce a large body of the kind of narrative I am discussing here in prose. If we look strictly to prose for predecessors to Morris, we are restricted to scattered, single works: MacDonald's visionary *Phantastes* (1858), Sara Coleridge's fairy-tale romance *Phantasmion* (1837), Thomas Love Peacock's Welsh-based *The Misfortunes of Elphin* (1821), Thomas Hogg's eccentric cross-hatch of border legend and the legends of the medieval magician Michael Scott *The Three Perils of Man* (1822), and scattered shorter tales by Benjamin Disraeli, John Sterling, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton.

However, the work of William Morris's earlier literary career includes the work on which his considerable contemporary reputation rested: a large body of extended narrative poetry comprising versions of various classical, medieval, and Germanic/Scandinavian myths and legends.[73] Though verse, this body of romance stands as a natural forerunner to the prose romances in terms of style and language: it is fantasy.

If we thereby open up the field to other such extended fantasy verse narrative, we find a prolific tradition, beginning tentatively in the eighteenth century, flowering during the Romantic period, and reaching a somewhat baroque conclusion in the Victorian period—at which point, with Morris and the subsequent literary writers of the pregenre fantasy

canon, such narrative moved predominantly to prose.[74] Oddly, though the body of early and traditional material generally considered to be "ancient fantasy" includes both poetic[75] and prose[76] works, discussions of the post-seventeenth-century fantasy narrative tradition have omitted any serious consideration of verse narrative.

Yet Romantic and Victorian narrative poetry must be considered an important shaping force on the post-Morris literary writers. Having grown up in the late nineteenth and pre–World War twentieth centuries, their formative early encounters with the Arthurian cycle would have included the work of Tennyson and Swinburne. Formative early encounters with the legends of the Volsungs, and early Scandinavian narrative tradition generally, would include poetic versions of those legends by Morris, Matthew Arnold, and Longfellow (along with the libretto of Wagner's *Ring* cycle). Encounters with Celtic tradition would have included the largely invented *Ossian* of MacPherson as well as Ferguson's *Lays of the Red Branch*. Other widely read narrative poems that would have colored the literary writers' conceptions of "faery, or romance literature" include, among others, Keats's "Lamia," Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Moore's *Lalla Rookh*, Southey's "epics," Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, and Shelley's "Alastor." That Morris produced a large corpus of such work before moving to prose narratives that similarly feature archaized language and (though no longer retellings) direct engagement of traditional romance conventions suggests a natural continuity. That he wrote tentative verse fragments of at least three of the late romances,[77] before turning to prose, suggests that the initial story ideas were not inherently attached to the prose medium. Tolkien's later "The Lay of the Children of Hurin" and "The Lay of Leithian," substantial narrative verse fragments of tales that also exist in prose versions, suggests a similar fluidity in the presumed connection of what we might call "fantasy narrative matter" with the poetic and prose mediums. These two fragments find their obvious ancestors in the extended narrative verse fantasies of the immediately preceding eras, some of which (notably those of Morris and Longfellow) Tolkien greatly admired.

Like the literary prose fantasies of Morris and his followers, this material—in most cases quite obviously, considering that its subject matter, like that of Kenneth Morris or James Stephens, was most often adapted rather than invented—follows quite clearly on the heels, and in fact accompanies, the "recovery" of the traditional material and its transformation into mediated texts. That the elevated, archaistic language of these Romantic and Victorian "epics" and "poetical romances" is of a piece with the elevated archaistic language characterizing most nineteenth-century translations of traditional material (including those of William Morris) is suggestive of how closely the two were associated in the nineteenth-century imagination.

The cadenced, archaistic language of Morris's followers, in addition to the romance- and saga-based narrative textures and the general nature of the subject matter, would suggest that the pregenre literary fantasy canon was an organic outgrowth of both the scholarly tradition that built the framework within which the traditional material could be understood, and thereby processed imaginatively, and its contemporary poetic narrative tradition, which existed in fundamentally the same relation to the traditional material as the later prose work.

The following three chapters, on the eighteenth century, the Romantic period, and the Victorian period, respectively, will attempt a relatively detailed account of the parallel development of these mutually interconnected phenomena (along with related issues along the way), with the intent of creating a viable context for the discussion of the late romances of William Morris, "the man who invented fantasy," at the end of Chapter 4 and then the literary work from Morris to Tolkien in Chapter 5. The bulk of the focus, therefore, will be on background specifically pertinent to the literary strand of the pregenre literary canon.

A Time and a Place

Before moving on to the main body of my discussion, a few further notes are perhaps in order concerning, first, the choice of the eighteenth century as a beginning date and, second, the implicit (at this point) restriction of emphasis to British, Irish, and Anglo-American literature.

The reasons for my choice of the eighteenth century rather than the Victorian period and the prose romances of William Morris as a beginning point should be evident from the preceding discussion and do not need to be repeated here. However, something further might be said with regard to earlier possible beginning points. For example, why would a work like Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590–96), which does engage antiquarian (for its author) romance elements in an idiosyncratically individual manner and in fact takes place in a largely invented world, not provide an equally appropriate starting place? Or why not begin with the indubitably fantastic "artificial" Chivalric prose romances of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, such as *Amadis of Gaul* and *Palmerin of England*?

It is with these latter that Michael Moorcock, in his *Wizardry and Wild Romance: A Study of Epic Fantasy*, suggests "popular fantasy fiction" begins, and he bluntly lumps them together with Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and Howard's *Conan the Conqueror* rather than with the *Nibelungenleid* and *La Chanson de Roland* and Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, which are "not fantasy fiction." The former are distinguished from the latter, which

Moorcock classes as "myth, legend, and folk-tale," and marked by "definite authorship and not genuinely purporting to be . . . true account(s) of historical or religious events." Further, Moorcock asserts that, unlike the latter, the likes of *Amadis* and *Palmerin* "were fantasies in that their chief purpose was to amaze and shock. They are packed with wizards, magic weapons, cloaks of invisibility . . ." (Moorcock 25–26).[78]

In the terms he sets up, Moorcock does make sense, and there is a certain validity to his basic point. At the same time, there are a variety of considerations he does not take into account. *Amadis*, which provided the functional template for the other romances Moorcock refers to,[79] is known through the Spanish text of Garci Rodriguez de Montalvo, written over the decades preceding its author's death in 1505 and published in 1508. But Montalvo's work was itself a reworking of an earlier *Amadis*, and scholarly opinion seems to situate a proto-*Amadis* in the mid-fourteenth century. In other words, the degree to which one might speak of "definite authorship" in relation to *Amadis of Gaul* as we have it is limited. Like Malory, Montalvo worked with sources. Though it is quite possible that the lost original (as is supposed) was a pure invention on the part of its author, it was developed by a series of hands over a century and a half, and it is apt to say that Montalvo (again, like Malory) is more a redactor than a "definite author."[80] In other words, the *Amadis* cycle as a literary entity evolved in much the same way as the stories attached to the "mythic" or "legendary" cycles of medieval romance, regardless of whether it was, in its written inception, invented. Lastly, with regard to style, *Amadis* as we have it is fully imbued with medieval romance narrative conventions[81]—conventions that, while beginning to be a bit old fashioned by Montalvo's time, were still sufficiently part of the literary landscape to spur a flood of derivative texts throughout the sixteenth century (Place Preface).

In terms of dissemination, development, and style, then, *Amadis of Gaul* is more aptly seen as signaling the last flowering of medieval romance than inaugurating the modern fantasy genre. And while the multitude of sequels and spin-offs,[82] coinciding with the introduction of the printing press, may be seen as the sensational inventions of "definite authors," their immediate debt to *Amadis*, as well as to the body of romance it drew on, tie them far more strongly to what immediately preceded them than to what followed several centuries later.

A look at the subsequent history of *Amadis of Gaul*, its sequels and spin-offs, serves to underscore this. There is no doubt that these late chivalric romances were enormously popular through the sixteenth and into the seventeenth centuries and were widely translated, especially into other romance languages. But the excesses of length and the proliferation of "new" works founded in a limited and increasingly strained narrative

vocabulary combined to create something of a surfeit by the early seventeenth century, and the vogue began to dwindle: it is perhaps indicative that the great work of seventeenth-century Spanish literature, Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, is a satire of the sensibility associated with these romances.

The vogue for *Amadis* and the chivalric romance stretched to England, though it was primarily reliant on French translations, and translations of *Amadis* into English did not appear until the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries,[83] when their popularity had begun to decline. The influence of *Amadis* and the others can be seen to some degree in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and in Sidney's *Arcadia*, though it cannot really be seen as a model for either work,[84] and that influence quickly becomes sparer from the early seventeenth century on.[85] The English translations did not become perennial, oft-reprinted staples of literate reading, and though *Amadis* remained well-known enough to inspire an opera by Handel in 1715, it was clearly known more by reputation than by close textual familiarity.[86] It was only with the editions of Southey in the opening decade of the nineteenth century that *Amadis* and *Palmerin* again had some currency in English in something approximating their original form.

To return to Michael Moorcock's contention, not only are *Amadis* and *Palmerin*, despite being inventions and despite the obvious sensationalizing of martial and magical content, far closer to the worlds of Arthurian and Carolingian romance as literary works than to J. R. R. Tolkien and Robert E. Howard,[87] but it is difficult to ascribe to them much influence on the development of fantasy in English that is not indirect and at a remove. The imaginative sensibility of the eighteenth century that, together with the burgeoning of scientific-minded antiquarianism, initiated the continuum leading to William Morris and ultimately Tolkien was driven by, on the one hand, an often patriotic interest in "antiquities" indigenous to the British Isles and, on the other, a preoccupation with the exotic and the remote, catalyzed by the appearance of *The Thousand and One Nights* during the opening decades of the eighteenth century. Southey's editions in the early nineteenth century did spur a new flurry of enthusiasm for *Amadis* and *Palmerin*, but it is difficult to discern an influence on either the poetic or the prose narratives of the period separable from generic romance influence.[88] Nor did Southey's editions become perennially available staples; by the early twentieth century, the two romances were available in English only in antiquarian volumes. Apart from Cabell, who borrowed some names from *Amadis* and whose *Biography of Manuel* no doubt found some inspiration in the Iberian material, there is little in the work of the pregenre canon that suggests any particular or direct debt at all.

Amadis of Gaul and *Palmerin of England* are medieval chivalric romances, following the conventions of their day, not works built on an antiquarian

knowledge of relics from a forgotten past crossed with a modern romantic sensibility. I would argue that these continuities with the literature of the world they were ultimately part of are more significant than the reasons Moorcock suggests for considering them the beginning of the modern fantasy genre.

To turn to English literature, a rather better case could be made for Spenser and *The Faerie Queene*.[89] Spenser is as much the poem's "definite" author as Tolkien is the definite author of *The Lord of the Rings*, and while much of the content is traditional in rather a piecemeal sense, as much or more is invented, and the overall construct is very much Spenser's invention. The poem is emphatically not the last form of a work that evolved from an exemplar preceding it by a couple centuries. At the same time, the romance narrative conventions that the poem may be said to have in common with modern fantasy were perhaps old fashioned by the late Elizabethan period, but the poem did not follow on or accompany an intellectual movement bent on recovering a lost past, nor was it founded in an aesthetic in which the remote and the miraculous were *in themselves* the central interest. Spenser's Arthur, the legendary emperor from whom the House of Tudor claimed descent, was the byproduct of a very practical bit of political propaganda. *The Faerie Queene* is crisscrossed by a Byzantine web of often intractable allegory, sometimes historical, sometimes moral, and pervasive to a degree quite alien to modern fantasy. The traditional matter woven into the fictional construct includes elements derived from both the ancient epic and the Italian Renaissance epics of Boiardo and Ariosto, from classical myth and popular Christian legend (such as the tale of St. George and the Dragon), and from medieval English Arthurian romance.[90] This was all part of the received tradition of Spenser's time.

Thomas Warton, in 1754, would implicitly typify the immensely complex and multilayered poem by saying of its author, "It was his business to engage the fancy, and to interest the attention by bold and striking images" (Woods 79). While *The Faerie Queene* may in fact be seen to do these things, it is doubtful that Spenser would have described his poetic goals in such terms. There is a large distance between Spenser and the post-Augustan eighteenth century, and *The Faerie Queene* did not emerge from the same aesthetic world as Warton's "The Grave of King Arthur" or *Ossian*.[91]

There was a wealth of romance narrative aside from *The Faerie Queene* that appeared in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, from poetic treatments of Greek myths[92] to prose romances indebted to the (new to England) ancient Greek works of Heliodorus, Longus, and others,[93] but from Sidney and Lyly forward, the romance trappings became increasingly a frame within which to explore political philosophy. Closer to the age of Warton, we have Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1667) and Swift's

Gulliver's Travels (1726). But Bunyan's work is a determined allegory, and Swift's is a very specific political satire couched as a traveler's tale. While the work I will be discussing here, from the eighteenth century on, often contains allegory or satire, individual works are not thorough allegories or satires. And while political philosophy may be explored, the works are not disguised essays on political philosophy.

The choice to develop archaistic modes of narrative in the eighteenth century and following was a predominantly aesthetic choice, though that choice might have inherently religious or political implications. This I would take to be the major point of transformation in the eighteenth century, the pertinent result of which, here, is a trajectory that leads directly to William Morris and J. R. R. Tolkien.

As I have said, the focus will be on fantasy, as I have loosely delineated it, in British, Irish, and Anglo-American literature specifically. This choice is, foremost, motivated by the need for containment: to extend the discussion in any comprehensive way to the literatures of the continental European languages, much less to the literatures of other parts of the world, would make this study impossibly large and substantially remove the possibility of any cohesive (if loose) organizational frame related to the emphatically British/Irish/Anglo-American canon established by the BAFS.

Of course, this tradition did not develop in a vacuum, and certainly (for example) the *contes de fees* and quasi-Oriental tales of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century France, and the literary *märchen* of the German Romantics a century later, had both direct and indirect shaping effect on the pertinent areas of the British/Irish/Anglo-American literary traditions. For that reason, they will not be ignored here. But it is, at the same time, interesting that while work bearing a clear relation to British/Irish/Anglo-American fantasy (with regard to both form and influence) appears in the continental European literatures, the kind of tradition that ultimately culminates in the establishment of a separable literary phenomena, a separable genre, does not. Perhaps this is due to the fact that "fantasy" was, on the continent, generally less taboo: for example, most of the "great" German writers right through the middle of the twentieth century wrote *märchen*—sometimes quite a few—at some point during their writing careers, with no apology and no "for children" qualification. However it may be, neither in Germany nor France nor elsewhere on the continent is there the kind of "countertradition" of romance/fairy-story/fantasy, becoming, in the twentieth century, a body of work by authors largely ignored by the literary establishment(s).

As we move outside of the European sphere, some of the crucial literary-historical circumstances that produced fantasy as it culminated in the BAFS evaporate. For instance, the traditional Laguna Pueblo stories, told in

verse, which constitute a large portion of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller* (1981), may be read as fantasy on the basis of their surface content, but these stories are Silko's individual articulation of a living oral tradition she grew up in the midst of. Invented worlds, magic, and an aesthetic founded on the remoteness of lost ages are simply not concerns of the author. Likewise, the writings of the late Yoruba writer, Amos Tutuola, may also be read as fantasy on the basis of their surface content.[94] But the aesthetic associated with modern fantasy writing is as strikingly absent as it is with Silko: he is quoted in Michael Thelwell's 1984 introduction to *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952), his first published work, saying his intention was to "tell of my ancestors and how they lived in their days" (Tutuola xvii). His work is an outgrowth of the oral Yoruba culture that, however beset by European colonialism, Tutuola grew up in. Neither writer chose their subject matter from the standpoint of the same circumstances that led Marion Zimmer Bradley to the Arthurian legends or O. R. Melling to the Ulster Cycle.[95]

Even in the context of a culture with a long written tradition, where a modern writer engages a work far older, in its first written form, than *Beowulf* or *The Tain*, the aesthetic associated with fantasy is largely absent. Of the subject of his *Ramayana* (1972), R. K. Narayan wrote, "It may sound hyperbolic, but I am prepared to state that almost every individual among the five hundred millions living in India is aware of the story of the Ramayana in some measure or other ... The Ramayana pervades our cultural life in one form or another at all times ... Everyone knows the story but loves to listen to it again" (Narayan xi). Narayan's treatment of the Ramayana, in its cultural context of twentieth-century India, is more akin to the non-fantasy-related twentieth-century biblical adaptations of Kazantzakis and Thomas Mann than to Walton's treatment of *The Mabinogion*.

To attempt to adequately cover continental fantasy here, much less that of the rest of the world, would be hopelessly unwieldy, not just in terms of the bulk of material, but in terms of the questions of cultural and literary context that would need to be addressed. For these reasons, references and discussions of works from outside Britain, Ireland, and English-speaking North America will reflect the period, circumstances, and form in which they became accessible to English readers rather than the cultural background of the original texts. In other words, *The Thousand and One Nights* will be considered primarily as an eighteenth-century (and subsequent) literary phenomenon in English rather than as a medieval Arabic work.

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2

The Eighteenth Century

The Forgotten Past

The Canonical Narrative

The standard canonical narrative of eighteenth-century English-language literature during much of the twentieth century, which still figures as part of the lens through which the writing of that period is quantified, conveys little that would suggest important ties to fantasy as demarcated in this study.

Poetry, according to that narrative, begins with Pope and the extreme formalism of the Augustans and closes with the appearance of *Lyrical Ballads*, which ushered in the Romantic period in 1798. The movement from one to the other involves a reaction against a poetry founded on objective rules, satiric in its nature, and tending to moralize, as well as an embracing of the notion of the poet as visionary and prophet. The resulting emphasis on the capacity of the poet, which set the poet apart from the nonpoet, transformed the individual's making of poetry into a theme in its own right. The frequent preoccupation with the subjective, individual internal processes of the poet, which marks much work from the subsequent Romantic period, was a direct outgrowth of this.

Prose fiction, through the work of Defoe, Fielding, and Richardson particularly, became marked by a content increasingly grounded in the familiar and the probable. The subsequent nineteenth-century work of Austen, Dickens, and Hardy descends from this.

This summary is, of course, brutally terse. But even allowing for some reductionism,[1] the key point is that the canonical narrative simply leaves a great deal of the eighteenth century out. An explanation for this is not difficult to find: the narrative itself solidified during the second quarter of the twentieth century, at a point when the major contemporary developments