



Towards or Back to Human Values? Spiritual and Moral Dimensions of Contemporary Fantasy

Justyna Deszcz-Tryhubczak

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Towards or Back to Human Values? Spiritual and Moral Dimension of Contemporary Fantasy is a collection driven by two strong convictions. The first one is that issues related to spirituality, ethics, and the moral philosophy - thrown overboard as an embarrassing legacy of liberal humanism - need to be brought back to the center of discussion about literature. The second is that among literary conventions available to contemporary writers, fantasy is especially suitable to bring up the theme of values. Its uniqueness lies in its being subversive of the reductionist scientific worldview, which denies the reality and importance of anything beyond the scope of its empirical verification. In this sense, fantasy literature is a festering provocation, a phenomenon which - a cliché attested to by its marginalization by the academia - should not be, but persists. Against the dominant skepticism and cynicism of the age, fantasy points to hope and trust. Against moral relativism and abandonment, it makes us rethink the way we deconstruct ourselves as moral agents and responsible human beings. Against our abuse of the natural world and our resulting sense of isolation and frustration, it asserts that we are part of a larger web of life and that our future depends on how soon we will become aware of this fact. At its best, fantasy does much more; it troubles our oldest certainties and rekindles the hope we have almost given up, the hope of finding the meaning and reaching human fulfillment. Beginning with five theoretical essays on fantasy as a consideration of spirituality and human values, the collection moves to five studies of specific fantasies as commenting on the role of imagination in human life. These are followed by four essays on fantasy as asserting the interconnectedness of all life, stressing the need for cooperation and the cultivation of environmental awareness. Finally, our discussion concludes with five studies of fantasy seen as exploration of the human condition with its eternal dilemmas of life versus death, of chaos versus order, of rationality versus intuition, of fate versus free will, and of the real versus the imaginary.

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