

Rebecca Graham

Shifting Landscapes: Meaning and Place in Fictional Realms

Fantasy in all of its incarnations, whether it is found in ancient mythologies or oral traditions, remains a part of the human experience that is given little credence or respect in day-to-day academic interactions. Yet, as time goes by, the genre of fantasy becomes more a part of the human landscape. Not only is it one of the fastest growing literary genres, it remains a force with which to be reckoned in both film and television. However, this popularization of the genre may have served to dilute its literary impact. Many people escape into fantasy as a way to find meaning in a life that is not constrained by reality. Without the constraints of reality, they are able to fill a void they feel exists. Why is it important to reconcile this discrepancy? By exploring the fictional landscapes of several key fantasy authors, it is possible to do just that, looking not only at the literal landscape, but the cultural one as well. Readers and viewers alike, by looking through the lens of a geographer, can further this discussion using both non-representational theory as first suggested by Nigel Thrift or super-organic theory that was outlined by anthropologists Alfred Kroeber and Robert Lowe. The first novel of any series sets for the reader the landscape they will be exploring. Using landscape theory to explore the worlds of three prominent fantasy authors, J.R.R. Tolkien, Brian Jacques and Robert Jordan, this can be done. What this new discourse will do is create a causal link between the reality we live in and the one to which man escapes.

I developed a love of Fantasy after first reading J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit over fifteen years ago. I am currently pursuing a Masters of Humanities at the University of Colorado Denver and I hope to continue on for a PhD in the fall of 2015.



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