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POPULARITY OF FANTASY FILMS: LOVE FOR CREATIVITY OR MERE ESCAPISM?

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Cinema is one of the most popular and contemporary modes of representing life and its various aspects creatively. There was a time when movies used to imitate life and human behavior with utmost resemblance and closeness to it. With the increasing importance of creativity and imaginative sensibility in the media sector, various art forms and their approach towards visualizing and presenting the humane and natural world have received a new dimension. Most importantly with the changing perceptions of the audience towards the representation of life, the way they live and the way they want to visualize it has led to the evolution of various genres of films and cinema, Fantasy films being one of them.

Over the last few years, media and market in order to cater to the changing demands of seeing and experiencing the unreal in the real world have started emphasizing upon delineating a world marked by unusual and extraordinary. However, while doing this, there is also an attempt to keep fantasy and mimesis close to each other. The rising popularity of the movies like *The Lord of the rings*, *Harry Potter* corroborates it.

Since its inception cinema has been representing arts and media by acting as a mirror to the society. We find the reflections of life, human behaviour, actions and its various forms being projected on the silver screen with absolute justice. It is believed that the film has the ability to replay the reality; it can also show the lapse of time, so it facilitates creation of the narrative space which is far more attractive to people than any other art form. Moreover, man is mimetic by nature with an inborn urge to imitate, and it's our world that is narrative. Films with their imitative potential provide that pleasurable experience to man that he derives out of watching the representation of the real world, and it's even better when they are technically perfect and excite the imagination.

Over the period of time, this longing for seeing the reflection of life and nature has seen some transformation. The monotony and repetitiveness of life has led to increase in desire to see and be with the unusual and extraordinary. To cater to the audience seeking representation of their existing world on the celluloid using imaginative genius and creative aptitude, filmmakers

appreciated by the audience of all age groups. Now the question arises, while living in a world of reality why is there an increasing need for relating with the world that is so remote in experience and existence. Frances Pheasant-Kelly, author of *Fantasy Film Post 9/11*, says it's due in part to the fact that our own world is one we no longer feel at ease in. In her book examining the correlation between fantasy genre consumerism and new millennial anxieties in the 21st century, she draws from a wealth of published fantasy scholars over the years to suggest that, in addition to "a complex range of commercial, sociocultural, and technological aspects" (such as CGI advances, and the fact that many fantasy films are sourced from already commercially successful novels), we turn to such films for their capacity to "address or rearticulate collective anxieties and traumatic histories." (6)

Focusing on the elements generated out of the creative and imaginative skill of the presenter that made the movie Harry Potter appeal to the audience, we can highlight the world of magic that the whole movie is based on. Though the art of magic and witchcraft is not totally an unacceptable or unrealistic feat for the people all over the world but in this modernized and scientific world, it is indeed fantastic to view supernatural aura in the world inhabited by the human beings.

The ingenuity of the filmmaker lies in creating an imitative parallel of the real human world through a world of wizards. We find in the movie the real humane world fused with the occult world of magicians. It is a story of a young boy Harry Potter born to magician parents but left with the uncle and Aunt to be saved from the evil sorcerer who has already murdered his parents. At the age of 11 he is to return to the world he belongs and that is the world of magic. Here we see a counter world where everything looks real but has phantasmagoric appearance to it. Thus we see markets with shops of brooms and wands; streets inhabited by owls, bats and people clad in robes and pointed caps. The banks are run by Goblins who also know and perform magic like skill for all their operations. The school of education for Harry Potter has everything like any human school but the whole manifestation is suggestive of fantastic aura. The old building of the school has hanging candle in place of chandeliers, moving staircases and talking portraits. Thus the world of wizards is an imitative representation of the real world but with the creator's imagination it has been made to look more adventurous which is one of the prime reasons for the success of the movie. Charles Cox rightly remarked "Readers and viewers want something that gives us a sense of wonder, a glimpse at the impossible made real, sights we'd never otherwise see," said. "But we don't want something so utterly fantastical and unfamiliar that we can't see ourselves reflected in it." And thus the modern fantasy films are more appealing

and captivating for the balance of realistic and unrealistic experiences that they have been successful in creating and projecting.

Though the history of fantasy fiction and films goes back to 1940s yet why is fantasy experiencing a renaissance of sorts? The answer is in the current tumultuous times marked by fears and anxieties, Fantasy not only offers us temporary refuge from a dangerously shifting climate, but a means of making sense of it. In a 2012 interview with The Lavin Agency, Grossman explained how J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, the godfathers of modern fantasy, found themselves in a similar situation to our own while writing in the 1920's and 30's:

"Tolkien and Lewis were both combat veterans of World War I. They were both fighting at the Somme. And that generation presided over the complete destruction of the world that it knew as children. Those people saw the electrification of cities, they saw the horse replaced by the automobile, they saw the rise of mass media, and they saw the rise of psychoanalysis and mechanized warfare. The world they lived in looked nothing like the world of their childhood. And this kind of trauma that they lived through is what I think gave birth to fantasy, which is a literature of longing, a longing for things that are lost." (*Highbrow Magazine*)

Thus it can be concluded that one of the prime reasons for increasing popularity and attraction for the fantasy films is that they provide the mind with a world to explore and relax while dwelling on its elements of creativity and imagination. At the same time they fascinate the psyche while projecting an illusory world with corporeal manifestations. Moreover, with technological advancement in animation and graphic, creative mimesis has achieved new heights of acceptance and popularity as the rendition of fanciful becomes more believable and the dreamlike world more convincing.

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