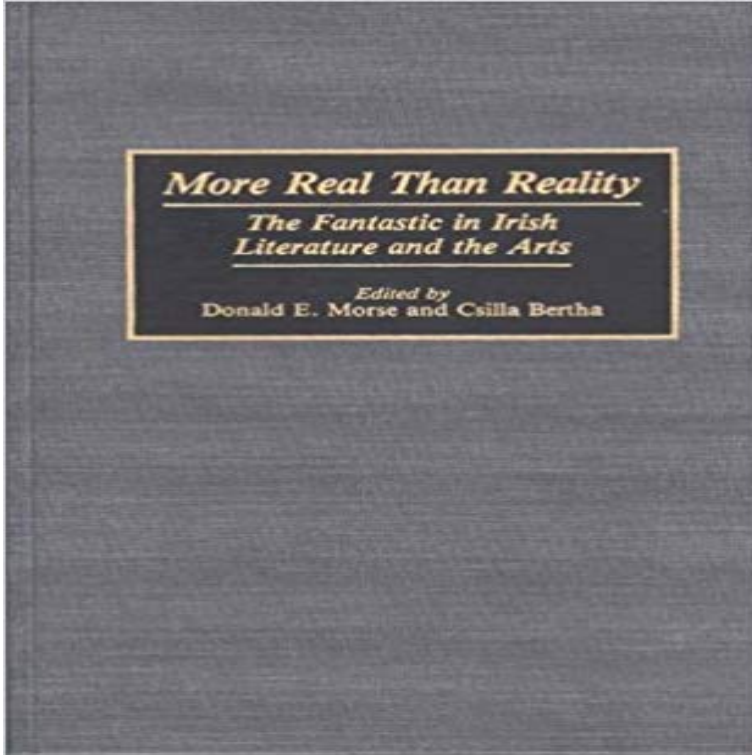


More Real Than Reality: The Fantastic in Irish Literature and the Arts (Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy)



For many readers, the Irish and the fantastic are synonymous. From the ancient texts and medieval illuminated manuscripts to 20th century poetry, painting, drama, stories, and novels, Irish writers and artists have found the fantastic not only congenial but necessary to their art. In his introduction to this collection of fifteen essays that focus on the fantastic in Irish literature and the arts, Donald E. Morse contends that the use of the fantastic mode has allowed Irish writers and artists to express ideas, emotions, and insights not available through the direct imitation of everyday reality. Morse argues that for the Irish, the road to insight was often through the territory of the marvelous and the fantastic rather than through literalism, rationalism, or logic. In seeking to arrive at a definition of what constitutes the fantastic, Morse looks at work by Sean OCasey and Seamus Heaney and finds that the fantastic occurs during encounters with what is considered to be the impossible, a concept contingent upon personal beliefs. To demonstrate how the fantastic may yield new insights into human beings, their behavior, feelings, and thoughts, as well as lead to innovations in art, Morse scrutinizes Circe from James Joyce's *Ulysses*, probably the most famous use of the fantastic in all modern Irish literature. The works of Yeats, Field, Shelly, Synge, Beckett, Swift, Coleridge, and others are examined in incisive chapters written from the point of view of the fantastic. The four-part study begins with a section on Ancient Knowledge and the Fantastic in which four chapters discuss Yeats's plays; The Figure of the Mermaid in Irish Legend and Poetry; Ghosts in Irish Drama; and The Only Jealousy of Emer. In a section devoted to Irish theatre, music, and painting, the paintings of Jack B. Yeats are examined for fantastic content and Peter Egri finds parallels between the work of John Field and Chopin, Shelly, and Turner.

The plays of Synge, O'Casey, Beckett, and Thomas Murphy are the subject of Part III. The final section considers The Occult, Fantasy, and Phantasmagoria in Swift, Dunsany, Joyce, and Yeats. The coeditors afterword, Looking Backward, Looking Ahead, concludes the volume which also contains a select bibliography on the fantastic. Generalists in literature or the arts, students and scholars of Irish Studies and the fantastic in the arts, as well as those enamored of things Irish will find this collection resonant with rich insights into the genre.

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