

The Fantastic in C.S. Lewis' *the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*

Mambwe Kilondola Dadi Christine

Junior Lecturer

Université Lubumbashi

Faculty of Arts

English Department

Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C.)

Abstract

The fantastic as its name indicates, reflects a representation of man's perception of reality (natural) and the supernatural. In fact, man is facing two opposed worlds. The paper here undergoes the perception of the human in the supernatural world which is different from the real world. Lewis tried to show the children's adventure in the secondary world through a magic passage which is the wardrobe that brings them in the new land called Narnia where they were faced to strange creatures. In doing so, Lewis brings a kind of dilemma in human's mind, this means a person is opposing to two different worlds (the real and the supernatural). The fantastic is a term that is misunderstood and sometimes confused. To Dorov (1975:25), defines the fantastic as the hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature confronting an apparently supernatural event. The fantastic is a literary term that can be used in myths, tales, and modern writings in which it represents two different kinds of life among characters, the natural and the supernatural. This paper pointed out the fantastic elements in Lewis' novel where we find talking beasts, powerful Witch who transforms anything that disobeyed to her orders into stone; the Lion that is considered as the savior of the four children called Sons of Adam and Daughters of Eve in Narnia, and also the savior of all the land because all that had been turned into stone recovered life, and the four children went back to the real world through the same magical passage the wardrobe.

Keywords: fantastic, supernatural, reality, dream, lion, witch, wardrobe, dilemma

Introduction

The Fantastic in C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* had been formulated in seeing the way of living non-humans in the secondary world, through fantastic events experienced by characters. It aims at showing how human beings had reach that place and come to a better understanding of their own lives. Although the fantastic is not a major literary strain in the present day literature, it has always been one important feature of literature. It deals some seemingly irrational features of literature in which the irrational side of man appears. How that side unveils our dark side of life is worth studying. The fantastic is not only the province of children; it is also involves in adult as well. The intrinsic method is useful when dealing with facts in the target novel which is the principal source of our data; the extrinsic one whereas is using to the external world to understand a work of art, it will be helpful to understand the facts observed in the magical world; and a structural approach determines the perspective from which the target novel is understood so far as the fantastic is concerned. Furthermore, let us say a word on C.S. Lewis' novel. C.S. Lewis' novel deals with the story about four children who went on holidays in strange house belonging to Professor Digory Kirke. When playing hide-and-seek game, they found a magic wardrobe through which children discover the New Land. The first among them was Lucy to go there, but she was lucky to be saved from Jadis (the queen of Narnia) by the Faun called Maugrin who showed her the way back to the real world. The second was Edmund the too young who was convinced by Lucy's story and went to the same wardrobe; there he found the queen herself; he was afraid but also curious to know who she was. The queen gave him some delicious Tarkish delight that he had never eaten before and told him to bring the others so that he will eat as he wants. Since Edmund had met the queen, and ate the Turkish Delight, he was so happy to bring his brother and sisters to the witch's court, but did not know that was a way to capture them, because the Faun had met a daughter of Eve and did not tell the Witch and that was disobedience to her orders. Once getting into Narnia, the four children went to the Faun's house and found a letter writing by the captain of secret police which said: "*The former occupant of these premises, the Faun Tumnus, is under arrest and awaiting his trial on a charge of High Treason against her Imperial Majesty Jadis Queen of Narnia,also of confronting her said Majesty's enemies, harbouring spies and fraternizing with humans.*" Signed Maugrin, the captain of the Secret Police. P.57

So, they started thinking, and wondering how they could do to save the Faun. Fortunately, they found the Beavers' family which told them about Aslan the King and the Lord of the wood who can save the Faun Tumnus, and said that: "*wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight, at the sound of this roar, sorrows will be no more, when he bares his teeth, winter meets his death, and when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again, p.75* Mr. Beaver had shown them the best way to save Mr. Faun Tumnus and added in saying: "*When Adam's flesh and Adam's bone sits at Cair Paravel in throne, the evil time will be over and done. P. 76*

The quotation above tries to tell how Lewis demonstrated the trust of the beaver into son of Adam and daughters of Eve (the four children) to deliver Faun Tumnus and all inhabitants of Narnia from Jadis (the magician queen of Narnia) when they will sit on the throne. While discussing about Aslan and how to save the Faun from the Witch, Edmund disappeared and went to meet the queen, telling her everything he heard in the Beaver's family. Furious, the Queen was about to fight with Aslan, and ordered the spell (the stone table) to break when the king of the wood is near it. Children went and meet Aslan, then the battle started between the lion and the witch, but each one was seeking to get the four children and the witch triumphed because of her deep magic written on the stone table. She thought that she killed Aslan but, he awaked after a long time with the same deep magic of the stone table and the statues of the royal court started breaking. Overall, the four children were crowned Kings and Queens of Narnia by Aslan. "*Once King or Queen in Narnia, always a King or a Queen*" p.165 Finally, children came back to their real world through the same wardrobe, and that was the end of the wardrobe's adventure. This paper will be discussing the following headings, the theory of the fantastic in which will be depicted the definition of some key words such as the fantastic, marvelous, fantasy, and the supernatural; the fantastic in literary works as in tales and myths, in modern writings (science fiction), the fantastic and realism; the fantastic and meaning, and a partial conclusion. All these constitute the first point of the study. The second point is constituted with the fantastic elements in C.S. Lewis' novel such as fantastic characters, fantastic setting, fantastic events, the interaction between the fantastic and the real, and a partial conclusion. Thirdly, the fantastic and meaning in C.S. Lewis' novel as the fantastic as metaphor or symbol, the fantastic and dream, the fantastic and reality and a partial conclusion. Finally there will be the general conclusion that summarizes the whole work and the bibliography.

1. Theory of the fantastic

The term fantastic is often misunderstood and confused with other closer terms which are not its substitutes. In literature, the term is not to be confused with "marvelous", "fantasy" and "supernatural". Fantastic is the adjective means "strange" or "imaginary". According to Tzvetan Todorov, the fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature confronting an apparently supernatural event. The fantastic requires the fulfillment of three conditions: first, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character, thus the reader's role is to speak entrusted to a character, and at the same time the hesitation is represented; it becomes one of the themes of work-in the of naïve reading, when the actual reader identifies himself with the character. Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as "poetic" interpretation. The marvelous is something which is extremely impressive. (**Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 3rd Ed., 879, col.1**). It is also the class of narratives that are presented as fantastic and that ends with an acceptance of the supernatural. The fantasy is a story that shows a lot of imagination and is very different from real life: science fiction and futuristic fantasy. It is also a pleasant situation that you enjoy thinking about, but which is unlikely to happen, or the activity of thinking itself. (**Cambridge Advanced..., 511, col.2**) It is also a genre that uses magic and other supernatural forms as a primary element of plot, theme and/or setting. In the supernatural, events are related which may be readily accounted for by the laws of reason, but which are, in one way or another, incredible, extraordinary, shocking, singular, disturbing or unexpected, and which thereby provoke in the character and in the reader a reaction similar to that which works of the fantastic have made familiar. Todorov's definition of the supernatural might be applied to stories in which the character realizes she/he is mad or has just awakened from dream. Thus, the supernatural is an "experience of limits". The fantastic in tales is usually about woodcutters and princesses, human behavior in a world of magic, and often incorporated in legends. In myths, the fantastic is about gods, creation of all things, and the origin of evil and salvation of man's soul. The nature of myth is to "invite interpretation". These stories do hold a mirror up to nature, but they do not reflect the world as we perceive it with our senses at the present moment. Characters are not realistic; they are often supernatural or at least fantastic and the human beings in them are not three dimensional people with complex motives and temperaments. (Elisabeth Cook, 2nd ed., 187). J.R.R. Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings* shows that the world of fairy is no dead world. These secondary world of myth and fairytale is a world of fighting, of sudden reverses of fortune, of promises left and broken, of commands obeyed and disobeyed, of wanderings and quests, of testing and judgment, gratitude and ingratitude, and light and darkness.

Those who decry myth and fairytale as “irrelevant to modern industrial civilization” usually rely on still narrower concepts of “relevance” and reality which exclude even personal reality and psychological symbolism. The experience of the past few years suggests that many young teachers are not simply unaware of these stories, but positively determined never to look at them and that, this is not just because they hold it as matter of faith that anything fantastic and anything ancient must be “irrelevant”. This conviction often coexists with violent dislike of the present pattern of society and manners, a dislike which produces a demand for “alternatives” and ought in all reason to produce a sympathetic interest in those alternatives in history and in fantasy. Science fiction is the literature of things that might someday be possible. According to C.S. Lewis, the fantastic in modern writings consists in an explanation of things which are borrowed to the planets of science of fiction such as reincarnation of Anderson’s Snow Queen, the existence of the diverse races of rational beings, dwarfs and Talking beasts and Marsh-Wiggles. Characters (children) in the story are real creatures, whereas in Narnia there are creatures from Northern Legend and Arthurian Romance, as well as creatures from fairytales.

C.S. Lewis takes these characters into Narnia in the company of modern children who are not disposed to believe in magic or secondary time, and he writes in the language of their own period, which he turns into brisk, firm prose, untainted by the dying fall of Romantic cadences. A clear distinction between the fantastic and the magic realism is that, the latter does not privilege either realistic or supernatural elements, not ask the reader or character to do so. The fantastic is sometimes erroneously called the Grotesque or supernatural fiction, because both the grotesque and the supernatural contain fantastic elements, yet there are the same, as the fantastic is based on an ambiguity of these elements. Magical realism is first of all, a branch of serious fiction, that is to say, it is not escapist. C.S. Lewis observes that the only person who opposes escape is, by definition, a jailer, entertainment, release, fun...these are all good reasons to read and to write. Serious fiction’s task is not escape, but engagement. Serious fiction helps us to name our world and see our place in it. It conveys or explores truth. Magical realism is always serious, never escapist, because it is trying to convey the reality of one or several world views that actually exist, or have existed. Magical realism is a kind of realism, but one different from the realism that most of our culture now experiences. It tells its stories from the perspective of people who live in our world of experience a different reality from the one we call objective. Magical realist depicts the real world of people whose relation is different from ours.

Magical realism is a distinctive form of fiction that aims at producing the experience of non-objective world view. Its techniques are particular to that world view, and while they may at first look something like the techniques of sophisticated fantasy, magical realism is trying to do more than play with reality’s rules. It is conveying realities that other people really do experience, or once experienced. Fantastic is a literary term that describes a quality of other literary genres, and in some cases is used as a genre in and of itself, although in this case it is often conflated with the supernatural. The term was originated in the structuralist theory of critic, Todorov in his work *The Fantastic: A structural Approach to a Literary genre* as being a limitable state of supernatural. A truly fantastic work is subtle and leaves the reader with a sense of confusion about the work whether or not the phenomenon was real. Todorov compares this with two ideas: the supernatural, wherein the phenomenon turns out to have rational explanation such as in the Gothic works of Ann Radcliffe, or the Marvelous, where there truly is a supernatural explanation for the phenomenon. In my opinion, the fantastic is a science which describes the world of magic or the secondary world in which we find strange or imaginary creatures who are not real characters in the human life but they are realistic in the secondary world. What can be said for the first point is summarized in the following lines. In the fantastic things are principally based on “science fiction” which is a description of the secondary world or the magical world in which there are extraordinary things like magic, reincarnation, non-human life, thereby it can be also the presentation of characters’ behavior in the secondary world who are non-realistic, who use magical power to do something strange, frightening such as to give life to stones, to turn persons in objects, to give the power of talking to beasts, etc.. That is why we say, the fantastic is based on Science Fiction because it helps us to understand that world of non-real life.

2. The fantastic elements in C.S. Lewis’ novel

After general information about the fantastic, the present point is dealing with a survey of fantastic elements in the novel, namely fantastic characters, setting and events. A character is a person who plays a role in stories, movies, tales etc., and it can be a magical, a real, a strange or a supernatural world or typically supernatural beings. Fantastic characters which are our interest are those who play non-realistic roles in the secondary world or the world of magic or the New Land called Narnia as seen in the novel. Those characters have each of them a name and a role in the story. The main characters are the four children: Lucy, Edmund, Peter and Susan who went to the New Land/the secondary world called Narnia through a magical wardrobe and found non-human beings like the Faun called Mr. Tumnus who was the first creature found by Lucy in Narnia and had protected her from the white witch.

The white witch was also a main character because she was the queen of Narnia and the one who gave orders to all creatures of her land to bring to her every human found in her land. A dwarf was a conductor of the witch's scarlet; the Beaver's family which inform the four children about the arrest of the Faun by the white witch and show them the way to find Aslan who could help them to save the Faun and Edmund. The lion called Aslan king of the forest found by all of them and who saved Edmund and the Faun from the white witch's wish to turn him into stone. That one was the symbol of power, of royalty and success, because he vanished the Queen Jadis from her magical power. Maugrin was a policeman of the palace and who arrested the Faun; Robin is the messenger's bird; the wolf was among the guards of the white witch's house who has a charge to give the message to that one, the Fox and his family who were found by the Queen at the stone table enjoying their Christmas, Dryads and Naiads were tree-women and well-women who had stringed instruments and had made music, four great Dogs, two leopards, all of them were like soldiers and messengers keeper who gave favor to Aslan and to go out of the Court. These are fantastic characters found by children when getting into Narnia. Like in Lewis's *The Magician's Nephew*, Aslan appeared as a savior or a god who gives the power of speech to some animals, and Jadis as having an evil heart, because she has no pity. A setting is the time and the place in which the action of a book, film, play, etc. happens. (Cambridge...1307, col.1). As far as the fantastic setting is concerned, it is a non-realistic place. In the novel under study, it is a place where the four children entered through the magic wardrobe and started their magic adventures, and that place is called the secondary world or the magical world or Narnia in which bad things happen such as: turning people into stone, into objects, giving the speech to beasts, to trees, to birds, etc... Narnia is a magical world governed by white witch called queen Jinn who decided to live on that land and with only the snow season, no other seasons even in the Christmas' period.

In this world, there are non-humans or non-realistic characters and realistic ones, the four children called daughters of Eve and sons of Adam because they were the first human to get into Narnia and that was the first time for inhabitants of this world to find humans or realistic characters. A fantastic setting allows us to see into ourselves and it confronts us with realities that exist in our real world but we seldom realize. It is important to notice entrance to that world is made possible through an object of our world such as a wardrobe. A wardrobe is a representation of our vanity. In fact, wealth of one person can be judged through the worth of the wardrobe, that is, what is inside. Realistic events are combination of things that happen in a given time or a chronological order. However, fantastic events happened in the secondary world called Narnia. Here is how the fantastic events are structured. Through a magical wardrobe, children discovered the New Land in which they found non-humans. For the first time Lucy met the Faun called Maugrin who helped her to turn into real world, the world of humans because there was an order given by the Queen that, when finding a human or a son of Adam or daughter of Eve inhabitant of Narnia must bring her/him to the Queen to be possibly sentenced. The following time was the turn of Edmund, the too young of them. As he was not convinced of what Lucy told them, he went through the same wardrobe, and there he met the witch herself, he was afraid, but would like also to know who she really was. The queen gave him some delicious Tarkish Delight that he had never eaten before and asked him to bring the others, so that he would be the king of Narnia and would eat the Tarkish Delight as he would like. Another event was the meeting of children with the Beaver's family which told them about Aslan the lion who could help them to save the Faun and Edmund from the Queen's grieves. Then came the fighting of the white witch with Aslan through which the lion won the battle and crowned the children kings and queens of Narnia. Finally, children went back to the real world through the same wardrobe.

As it has been said before, the fantastic is a literary genre that deals with magical things, supernatural and frightening elements; it is based on fiction which is its concept. But the real is something which is true to life. In the real, things are natural, not supernatural or magical. The interaction between the fantastic and the real is a matter of awareness. As the fantastic is also a world, but this world is somehow estrange from ours or his supernatural or magical. Thus, everything that exists in the real world, also exists in the fantastic world such as: government, beasts, birds, trees, water, electricity, fashion, meals, etc... but, there is a little difference between them concerning human beings. In the real world, there are real human beings or realistic characters, and those humans are free to do whatever they want, and at the moment they want, this means there is a kind of democracy in the real. By contrast, in the fantastic world there is a reincarnation of that with magic, supernatural things such as: witchcraft, talisman, etc... and all these things are governed by someone who has great power, he/she has high level than the others, there is a kind of dictatorship in the fantastic world. Despite of all these differences described, the fantastic and the real are always going together. Everything which is done in the real, is also done in the fantastic like talking, feasting, walking, singing, etc... Fantastic characters, fantastic setting, fantastic events, the interaction between the fantastic and the real are the elements that constituted the second point of the study. They described everything that happened in the secondary world. The fantastic brings the real closer to the supernatural one and confuses them. It is then the mirror of the real. It points to aspects of life we often ignore. The fantastic therefore does not contradict the real world; it is on the contrary completes it, giving it significance. Indeed, as a literary genre, the fantastic compels us to see into our own lives.

3. The fantastic and meaning in C.S. Lewis' novel

This point presents the meaning of the fantastic in literature. The Macmillan English Dictionary for advanced Learners defines the metaphor as a word or a phrase that means one thing and is used for referring to another thing in order to emphasize their similar qualities. It defines the symbol as a mark, a letter number etc. used to represent something. Let us now see how the fantastic is compared to metaphor or to symbol. There are some images, pictures or symbols that can be taken with great importance in life particularly in the secondary world, because this world is represented by any symbols like a letter, a word or a code as seen in some movies. The indirection of metaphor or symbol as said an author, asks the reader to dig more deeply, to create a meaning that roughly corresponds to what the writer intended but is richer and more personal. They can call forth a response from those layers of the mind that are less straitjacketed by logic. Because metaphor and symbol are powerful in this way they are often used to represent spiritual realities. It is important to point out that fantastic turns the world upside down. The four children from the novel are strangely involved in political deeds, which facts they cannot achieve in the real world. They are able to repeat the powerful through their innocence. It appears that the fantastic and the real are the two sides of the same coin/ they belong together. It is an invisible side of our existence, ugly as it may be, from which we get the strength to life. From the realistic point of view it is a void, a nothingness that gives significance to one life. Fantasy provides a rich ground for metaphor and symbol, and some modern writers approach the mysteries of the sacred through the metaphorical and the fantastic. One of these writers is Ursula LeGuin, whose writings reflect her Taoist view of the world. In her book "Always Coming Home" in which she creates an archeology of the future, an anthropological description of a fictional culture where she represents the unity of all things.

Fantastic and real dream, in contrast, depicts an unprecedented adventure, a one-time event that never can be repeated (as the didactic impulse waxes stronger, as in C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1951), Tolkien's *The Lord of Rings* (1954), or Frank Herbert's *Dune Chronicles* (1965), the fantastic world that serves as its vehicles becomes increasingly routinized and is reencountered). Dreams moreover, refer to something either real or literary, whereas the fantastic refers only to something in a book or other artistic medium. Comparing dreams and the fantastic in literature should help us understand the role of dreams as part of a work of art. The real dream must of course be distinguished from the literary dream. The real dream seems to consist of a stimulus into images. How and why this translation occurs is open to "dispute". Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1967) believes that, unconscious desires forever straining to emerge into consciousness were blocked by the censor (the inhibiting function of the superego, or moral sense), and could find expression only in disguised form after undergoing condensation, symbolization and displacement. They would emerge as the symptoms of physical or mental illness, as paraphrases (sayings, writings or doing things we did not intend, accidents, mislaying, forgetting, and so forth), and as dreams. Through the real dream is what Freud has said, we can add idea that a mind like imaginations, thoughts and what things we develop during the night in an unconsciousness time. According to Todorov, the fantastic we have seen lasts only as long as a certain hesitation common to reader and character, who must decide whether or not they perceive, derives from reality as it exists in the common opinion. At the story's end, the reader makes a decision even if the character does not. He opts for a solution or the other, and thereby emerges from the fantastic. If he decides that the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomenon described, he says that the work belongs to another genre: the supernatural. If, on the contrary, he decides that new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, we enter the genre of the marvelous. Later in his study, Todorov uncovers one of the central themes of the fantastic "To think that someone is not dead... to desire it on one hand, and to perceive this same fact in reality on the other... are two phrases of one and the same movement, and the transition between them is achieved without difficulty". Only the thinnest line separates the experience for the return of the dead and actually seeing them return fantastic works, he argues, repeatedly cross it.

The word reality is a lived experience in life of everything that exist and what we can prove.

Conclusion

The topic of the study is summarized through these lines saying that, the fantastic dealt with in the dissertation is the representation of the secondary world or the magical one. The first point has mainly presented the theory of the fantastic which describes the phenomena of the fantastic in tales, myths and modern writings. It had been seen that fantastic is dubious world swaying between the natural and the supernatural. This means, some authors describe or represent reality in the supernatural way; that is the case of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* in which there are a lot of mysteries and fantasies. The second point described the behavior of fantastic characters in the secondary world. The unfolding of fantastic events. The fantastic characters are real characters who take another role in the secondary world where there are talking beasts, and other characters which have reincarnated the appearance of real persons such is the case of the of Glaurung the dragon in Tolkien's *The Children of Húrin* (2007). And, the last point described the meaning of the fantastic in literature. As far as fantastic is concerned, it plays an important role in literature.

Many writers refer to it in order to draw readers' attention on what can be considered true in an imaginative way. It can be considered as a figurative language in literary writings, because of its representation of reality, Like in Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), LeGuin's *The word for World is Forest* (1976). Fantastic in literature can also be seen as metaphor, symbol, and personification through its reading. Lewis' "*The lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*" is a story that makes hesitation between what belongs to adult and children. Children are tomorrow's adults and the latter are former children. It makes us hesitate between the natural and the supernatural, and it thus unveils the strangeness of our being rational and irrational, good and evil, cunning and stupid.

Bibliography

- Lewis, Clive Staples; (1951). *The Lion, The Witch and The wardrobe*. New York: Macmillan.
- Ann Radcliffe; (1791). *The Romance of the Forest*. U.K.: T Hook ham & Carpenter.
- Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary**; (2008). Cambridge University Press.
- Elizabeth Cook; (1976). *The Ordinary and the Fabulous: An Introduction to Myths, Legends and Fairy Tales*, 2nd ed. Cambridge University Press.
- Franck Herbert; (1965). *Dune chronicles*. U.S.A. : Chilton Books.
- Freud, Sigmund; (1967). *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Paris: Harper & Brothers.
- Le Guin Ursula K.; (1976). *The Word for World is Forest*. U.S.A.: Berkley Books.
- Le Guin Ursula K.; (1985). *Always Coming Home (Cultural as Spiritual Metaphor)*. U.S.A.: Harper and Row.
- Lewis Clive Staples; (1955). *The Magician's Nephew*. U.K.: The Bodley Head.
- Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners**; (2002). Malaysia: Bloomsburg Publishing Plc.
- TodorovTzvetan; (1975). *The fantastic: A Structural Approach to a literary genre*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Tolkien J.R.R.; (1954). *The Lord of the Rings*. United Kingdom: Allen & Unwin
- Tolkien J.R.R.; (2007). *The children of Hûrin*. United Kingdom: Harpercollins.