

Magic Laws and The Functions of Fantasy in A Fantasy Novel

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ABSTRACT

Martin (2007) argues that limitation is one component which makes Harry Potter story work. Limitation is a part of magic laws that were investigated in this research, along with the functions of the fantasy and how these elements work to construct a story in *The Lightning Thief*, a fantasy novel written by Riordan (2005). Magic Law theory as proposed by Nikolajeva (1988) and Tolkien's function of fantasy (1966) were used as the framework theory. Textual analysis was used to find out the answers to the research questions. This research finds that the kinds of magic laws used in *The Lightning Thief* are limitation and consistency while recovery and escape are two functions of fantasy served in the novel. The magic laws and functions of fantasy construct the story to be interesting, believable, and related to human life by creating the element of wonder, creating the element of surprise, maintaining the balance between primary and secondary world, composing the inner logic of the story, and conveying some interesting issues..

Keywords: *The Lightning Thief, Fantasy Novel, Magic Laws, Functions of Fantasy*

INTRODUCTION

The Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling has become one of the most successful book publishing sensations of all time (Pooley, 2007). Martin (2007) argues that limited power of magic is one of components that make Harry Potter story work. Moreover, Nikolajeva (1988) argues that limitation, as part of magic laws, is important in a fantasy novel.

This research aims to investigate kinds of magic laws and functions of fantasy in a fantasy novel entitled *The Lightning Thief* which is considered to share similarities with Harry Potter novel. In addition, this research also investigates how these elements work to construct the story of the novel. Magic Law theory as proposed by Nikolajeva (1988) and Tolkien's function of fantasy (1966) are used as the framework theory of this research to analyze the data. This research uses the e-book pdf version of *The Lightning Thief* from *Readers Stuffz Articles & Ebooks* in March 2011. The fantasy novel is written by

Rick Riordan (2005) and consists of 22 chapters.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

There are many definition of fantasy. One of them comes from *The Dictionary of World Literary Terms*, as cited in Nikolajeva (1988), which states that fantasy includes some things which are impossible under the ordinary conditions or normal human events, in the actions, characters, or setting of the story.

Although there are many definitions of fantasy, the key element of fantasy is the same, which is the presence of magic (Saricks, 2009, Nikolajeva, 1988). Magic always occurs in fantasy and can be depicted through the magical abilities or magical creatures and objects related to characters (Sammons, 2010). In other words, the presence of magic in a fantasy novel is a must.

In addition, believability is another key quality of fantasy. Fantasy novel is not merely about fantastic elements or magic but also the combination of fanciful elements

with realistic elements (Greenby, 2008). A successful fantasy is composed by the author's skill in creating a believable, albeit magical world (Saricks, 2009) with an internal consistency through its rules (Tuttle, 2005). The discussion of consistency in fantasy text is also discussed by Nikolajeva (1988) who says that consistency and limitation are two types of magic laws which are important in a fantasy text.

Limitation refers to the idea that magic must be limited. Magic as the key element of fantasy story cannot be unlimited and omnipotent (Nikolajeva, 1988). On the other hand, consistency means that secondary world must be constructed logically by creating and then obeying its rules. Swinfen (1984, as cited in Nikolajeva, 1988) finds that to make a secondary world acceptable to the readers, the physical nature of the secondary world should be comprehensible and logical, having reasonable cause-and-effect relationship.

In relation to this, Tolkien (1966) offers three functions of fantasy which are recovery, escape,

and consolation. Recovery is regaining of a clear view. By reading fantasy, the readers are able to rediscover reality, see things more clearly, and change the view of real world (Lewis, 1982, as cited in Sammons, 2010). Meanwhile, escape is the functions of fantasy which focuses on the recollection of a desire for some qualities that can no longer be fulfilled in real world. Fantasy deals with what is fundamental and real and also escapes the modern world. The last function of fantasy is to give readers sudden joyous turn of events when good triumphs which is called consolation (Tolkien, 1966, as cited in Sammons, 2010).

METHODS

The present research uses descriptive qualitative method and textual analysis to find out the answers to the research questions which are what kinds of magic laws are found in *The Lightning Thief*, what functions does the fantasy serve as evidenced in the text, and how do these elements work to construct the story. Reading the novel thoroughly,

identifying and selecting the textual evidence to answer the research questions, categorizing the data, interpreting data, drawing conclusion based on findings, and making suggestions for further research are the steps taken to conduct this research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data are categorized into magical characters, magical settings, and magical objects. Based on the data analysis, the research finds two kinds of magic laws in *The Lightning Thief* which are limitation and consistency. The consistency consists of (1) magical characters, settings, and objects are based on the on Greek mythology, (2) magical characters and objects have particular nature and ability, (3) magical characters, objects, and settings adjust themselves into the mortal world when they interfere with mortal world, (4) magical characters are immortal, (5) there is motive behind the living of the magical characters in mortal world, (6) the gods move along with Western Civilization, (7) magical

settings have particular condition and mechanism, (8) Mount Olympus and Underworld move as the gods do, (9) magical settings have boundaries that contact them to primary world, (10) mist is generated to obscures the vision of humans whenever divine elements mix with the mortal world, and (16) there is spoil of war comes from killed monster remain.

On the other hand, the limitation of magical characters consists of (1) the magical power of magical characters, settings, and objects are limited, (2) the actions of magical characters are limited by prohibition, (3) immortal magical characters can be wounded or killed, and (4) magical characters do not have authority.

The analysis also finds that there are two functions of fantasy served in the novel which are recovery and escape.

The function of fantasy as recovery can be seen through (1) magical characters' nature and ability, (2) magical characters, objects, and settings' adjustment, (3) magical characters' motive, (4) magical characters, objects, and

settings' limitation of ability, (5) magical character's prohibition, (6) magical characters' vulnerability, (7) magical characters' authority, (8) magical settings' condition and mechanism, (10) magical setting's boundary, and (11) the obscurity created by the Mist.

The magical characters, settings, and objects function as recovery because they gain clear view about some issue, for example about the grand struggle against evil force that becomes the theme of the novel. In addition, they also maintain the balance between primary and secondary world which can be seen for example through their adjustment to mortal world. It gains clear view that there is certain quality which is hidden behind things that look normal or considered to be bad. It shows that the novel does not only use the element of magic from Greek mythology but also transform them in order to suit modern view of the story.

Meanwhile, the element of surprise is created for example through the limitation of ability and its function of fantasy as recovery.

The limitation of ability of magical characters, magical settings, and magical objects function as recovery because it gains a certain way of looking at life that a power is balanced with weakness and that nothing is perfect. The limitation and its function as recovery give the element of surprise to the readers because it gives unexpected turn after the readers have been pampered with the magical nature and ability.

On the other hand, the function of fantasy as escape can be seen from (1) magical character, settings and objects are based on Greek mythology, (2) magical characters and objects' nature and ability (3) magical characters' immortality, (4) magical character's motive, (5) the gods' movement, (6) magical character's limitation of ability, (7) magical characters' prohibition, (8) magical settings' condition and mechanism, (9) magical settings' movement, (10) magical settings' boundary, and (11) magical objects as spoil of war.

The magical characters, settings, and objects function as escape because their nature, ability,

condition, and mechanism do not appear in real world and also escape modernity such as technology and machine. They create the element of wonder because they show things differently from the real human condition and out of normality.

Meanwhile, the inner logic of the story can be seen for example through the gods' movement along with Western Civilization and its function an escape because it explains the history of the world by using magic and ancient mythology instead of using history, modernity, or technology. The movement creates inner logic of secondary world by giving a logical explanation about the setting which is in USA instead of Greece. The reason why the gods live in USA is because they move along with Western Civilization.

The finding shows that magic laws and functions of fantasy which are seen from magical characters, settings, and objects create the element of wonder, create the element of surprise, maintain the balance between primary and secondary world, compose the inner

logic of the story, and convey some themes which construct the story in *The Lightning Thief* to be interesting, believable, and related to human life. In other words, *The Lightning Thief* can be considered a successful fantasy novel based on the idea proposed by Sammons (2010) who argues that a successful fantasy is interesting, believable in story and related to human life by carrying deeper meaning of human's society and reality. The research shows that the success of a fantasy novel can be contributed by the magic laws and functions of fantasy. The author of fantasy novel should be aware of the existence of magic laws and functions of fantasy in the fantasy novel they write.

CONCLUSION

This research has investigated the kinds of magic laws used in *The Lightning Thief*, the functions of the fantasy as evidenced in the novel, and how these elements work to construct the story. The research finds that limitation and consistency are two kinds of magic laws found in the novel. The magical objects,

settings, and characters in *The Lightning Thief*, which are categorized under two kinds of magic laws, shows two functions of fantasy which are recovery and escape. The magic laws and functions of fantasy construct the story to be interesting, believable, and related to human life by creating the element of wonder, creating the element of surprise, maintaining the balance between primary and secondary world, composing the

inner logic of the story, and conveying some interesting issues.

Further research regarding magic laws and functions of fantasy should use a bigger number of fantasy novels to arrive at more strongly grounded findings. In addition, further research can focus only on one element of fantasy novel, for example magical characters and its functions to construct the story.

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