

Abstract

The purpose of this research project is to take a fresh look on symbolist short stories. Through the study of some French and Belgian authors from Symbolism (Édouard Dujardin, Marcel Schwob, Remy de Gourmont, Rachilde, Henri de Régnier, Jean Lorrain, Georges Rodenbach, Hector Chainaye), a 19th century literary movement, we analyze how fantastic literature has to be considered according a diachronic way of thinking. Indeed, a lot of theoreticians looked at fantastic literature and tried to give a general definition of it: Tzvetan Todorov, Louis Vax, Roger Caillois and Nathalie Prince among others. But according to us, there is a wide variety in fantastic literature, and it is impossible to consider works from the 19th century with the same eye as recent productions. That is why we decided to define the fantastic symbolist, and we focused on its spatial characteristics.

Thereby, the main purpose of our work is to show that fantastic short stories from Symbolism can be considered as heterotopias, from Michel Foucault's terminology. Therefore, reading those stories can become a way to know better your inner self. As reading consists of an imaginary exploration, we focus our study on represented spaces and how they can influence the figured ones. That means we analyze how space is depicted by symbolist authors in their fantastic short stories, and how this interacts with the perception of their environment by their characters, and readers.

First, we observe how important the reader is in a fantastic short story and how he is creating himself the space of what he is reading. Since descriptions from the author are incomplete (places of indeterminacy from Ingarden), the reader participates in what he is reading. Their energy is required to fulfill the text. Therefore, we consider fantastic short stories from Symbolism as transitional spaces as Donald Woods Winnicott defined them in *Playing and Reality* (1971). We then consider the text as a co-creation between the author and the reader. The latter has to play with what the author left them in order to live the experience of the fantastic. Cultural representations, individual psychology but also myths or archetypes interfere (consciously or unconsciously) with how the reader is able to read a text. In the current thesis, we study all those elements to see how they contribute to the creation of a fantastic space, and how this space could stimulate the development of the ego.

The analysis of the space is mainly based on works from Roman Ingarden and particularly his distinction between three kinds of space: real, figured and represented ones. Ingarden's method enables us to study space through the perception of the author, the narrator, the characters, and the readers. We will also be using Rachel's Bouvet works (which

derive from Iser's and Eco's ones) on the indetermination of the text, and how they help the reader to model spaces of fantastic literature. Donald Woods Winnicott, among others, helps us to present the texts of fantastic literature as games where the reader has to get involved. We also resorted to various works about: a/ fantastic literature (Tzvetan Todorov, Louis Vax, Irène Bessière, Roger Caillois, Roger Bozzetto, Arnaud Huftier, Nathalie Prince, Renata Bizek-Tatara) ; b/ the reader's experience (Wolfgang Iser, Umberto Eco, Vincent Jouve, Raphaël Baroni) ; c/ Symbolism (Michel Décaudin, Noël Richard, Valérie Michelet Jacquod, Bertrand Vibert) ; d/ short-stories (Vladimir Propp, Daniel Grojnowski).