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MODELING FANTASTIC REALITY IN LITERARY DISCOURSE: MECHANISMS OF WORLD-BUILDING IN THE WORKS OF XOJAKBAR SHAYKHOV AND H. G. WELLS

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Abstract: This article examines the mechanisms through which fantastic reality is modeled in literary discourse, using the works of Xojakbar Shaykhov and H. G. Wells as comparative material. The study focuses on world-building, cognitive estrangement, scientific plausibility, narrative focalization, and the ethical function of the fantastic. It argues that both writers construct alternative realities not by rejecting the real world but by transforming its scientific, social, and moral coordinates. Wells builds fantastic worlds through the logic of experiment, technological hypothesis, and social projection, while Shaykhov combines scientific imagination with moral didacticism, national-cultural sensitivity, and humanistic reflection. The article demonstrates that fantastic reality emerges as a dynamic discourse model in which the reader is invited to compare empirical reality with a speculative version of it.

Keywords: fantastic reality, literary discourse, world-building, Xojakbar Shaykhov, H. G. Wells, science fiction, cognitive estrangement, comparative literature

Introduction

The comparative study of Xojakbar Shaykhov and H. G. Wells makes it possible to observe how fantastic reality is constructed in two different literary and cultural systems. Wells represents the English and European scientific-romance tradition, where the fantastic frequently grows out of a rational experiment, technological speculation, and the anxiety of modern civilization. Shaykhov, one of the important names of Uzbek science fiction, develops the fantastic within a different cultural horizon, connecting scientific imagination with ethical responsibility, social education, and a humanistic view of progress. In both cases, the fantastic is not a decorative element. It is a special model of reality through which literature tests the limits of knowledge, human will, social order, and moral choice. The purpose of this article is to identify the central mechanisms of fantastic world-building in the literary discourse of the two authors. The word mechanism is used here not in a mechanical sense, but as a set of narrative, semantic, and pragmatic procedures that make an impossible or extraordinary world acceptable within the logic of a literary text.

From a discourse-analytical perspective, the fantastic text functions by negotiating between credibility and impossibility. If the text becomes too realistic, the speculative element loses power; if it becomes completely arbitrary, the reader loses the sense of meaningful connection with reality. Wells and Shaykhov both maintain this balance through internal consistency. Their invented situations are extraordinary, but once the initial premise is accepted, events follow a recognizable logic of cause and effect. This internal logic is essential because it transforms imagination into a model rather than a random dream.

Another important point is the role of the reader. Fantastic discourse requires an active reader who compares the represented world with empirical reality. The reader notices similarities, differences, projections, and warnings. In this process, the fantastic becomes a comparative structure. Wells encourages the reader to compare Victorian civilization with its possible degeneration or defeat. Shaykhov encourages the reader to compare the present with a scientifically and morally improved future. In both cases, reading becomes an act of interpretation directed toward the real world.

Theoretical background: fantastic reality as a discursive model

Fantastic reality in literature is not identical with pure fantasy or arbitrary invention. It is a textual model that establishes its own laws and then persuades the reader to accept those laws for the duration of reading. Tzvetan Todorov explained the fantastic through hesitation between natural and supernatural explanation, whereas Darko Suvin described science fiction through the principle of cognitive estrangement. These approaches are useful for the study of Wells and Shaykhov because both writers create a distance from ordinary reality while preserving the possibility of rational interpretation. The fantastic becomes a laboratory of thought: it displaces the familiar world and allows its contradictions to become visible. In literary discourse, such displacement is achieved through repeated references to scientific language, technical description, spatial organization, causal motivation, and the voice of an observer who tries to understand the unusual event. The reader is not simply told that another world exists; the reader is gradually trained to perceive that world as logically coherent.

The cultural difference between the two authors should not be understood as a simple opposition between West and East. Rather, it shows how one genre can be adapted to different literary tasks. Wells uses the scientific romance to question imperial confidence, social inequality, biological optimism, and the myth of rational control. Shaykhov uses science fiction to develop the educational potential of speculative imagination in Uzbek literature. The genre is therefore flexible: it can become satire, warning, philosophical parable, social projection, or moral instruction.

The comparative approach also reveals that fantastic reality is built through repetition of motifs: journey, experiment, encounter, transformation, discovery, and return. These motifs give structure to the unknown. They guide the reader from ordinary reality toward an extraordinary situation and then back toward reflection. The return is especially important because the value of the fantastic is realized when the reader reconsiders ordinary reality after contact with the speculative world.

Scientific plausibility and the rhetoric of explanation

One of the most important mechanisms of fantastic reality is the rhetoric of explanation. Wells often begins from a scientific or pseudo-scientific premise that looks limited and precise: a machine can move through time, a procedure can make a man invisible, biological experimentation can modify living organisms, or Martians can invade the Earth with superior technology. The initial hypothesis is usually simple, but its consequences are expanded into a full narrative world. This is why Wells's fantastic discourse is persuasive: the extraordinary event is introduced as if it were an extension of scientific inquiry. Shaykhov also uses scientific plausibility, but his explanations are frequently connected with educational and ethical purposes. His fantastic situations do not merely ask what technology can do; they ask what kind of person must use it. Thus, explanation in Shaykhov's prose often has a double function: it rationalizes the fantastic and simultaneously directs the reader toward moral evaluation.

In both authors, the fantastic has a strong epistemological dimension. It asks how human beings know the world and what happens when their knowledge becomes insufficient. Wells dramatizes the limits of observation and reason when characters face invisible power, alien technology, or deep time. Shaykhov similarly uses the unknown to expand intellectual curiosity, but he often frames knowledge as a collective and ethical value. Thus, the fantastic is connected not only with invention but also with the discipline of understanding.

The relevance of these writers today lies in the fact that modern society continues to live under the pressure of technological acceleration. Artificial intelligence, biotechnology, space exploration, ecological crisis, and digital transformation make the questions raised by fantastic literature more urgent. Wells helps readers understand the dangers of uncontrolled power;

Shaykhov helps readers remember the need for humanistic direction. Their works therefore remain useful for contemporary literary criticism and for broader cultural reflection.

Spatial modeling and the construction of alternative environments

Fantastic reality requires space. In Wells, space often becomes a stage of crisis. The future landscape in The Time Machine, the isolated island in The Island of Doctor Moreau, the English countryside under Martian attack in The War of the Worlds, and the social environment transformed by invisibility in The Invisible Man all show how the setting changes when one abnormal factor is introduced. Wells constructs space as an experimental field. A new law enters the world, and the world begins to reorganize itself around that law. In Shaykhov's works, spatial modeling is also crucial, but the emphasis often falls on contact between the cosmic and the human, between advanced scientific imagination and familiar social values. The fantastic space becomes not only a place of danger or discovery but also a place where responsibility, friendship, courage, and knowledge are tested.

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Narrative voice and reader orientation

Another mechanism is narrative mediation. Fantastic reality becomes credible when the narrator guides the reader through confusion. Wells frequently uses narrators or witnesses who are educated enough to report strange events rationally but limited enough to experience uncertainty. Their partial knowledge creates tension: the reader believes the report because it sounds observational, yet the reader also understands that the represented reality exceeds ordinary categories. Shaykhov's narrative voice is often more pedagogical and humanistically oriented. The narrator may lead the reader from wonder to understanding, from technical novelty to moral conclusion. This difference reflects two traditions of fantastic discourse. Wells emphasizes epistemological shock, while Shaykhov often emphasizes moral and educational clarification.

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Ethical modeling of the fantastic

The final mechanism is ethical modeling. Fantastic reality is never neutral. In Wells, the fantastic exposes the fragility of civilization. Time travel reveals class degeneration and evolutionary anxiety. Invisibility exposes the danger of power separated from morality. Biological experimentation questions the boundary between human and animal. Martian invasion reverses imperial hierarchy and makes the powerful English subject feel the terror of colonized vulnerability. Shaykhov's fantastic discourse also treats science as morally ambivalent. Knowledge can open the future, but it can also become destructive if separated from conscience. His fiction therefore models a reality where technological progress must be guided by humanistic values. In this respect, both writers transform the fantastic into a form of ethical diagnosis.

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Conclusion

The modeling of fantastic reality in the works of Xojakbar Shaykhov and H. G. Wells is based on several interrelated mechanisms: scientific plausibility, spatial reorganization, narrative mediation, cognitive estrangement, and ethical evaluation. Wells constructs fantastic worlds as experimental systems that reveal the hidden crises of modernity. Shaykhov builds speculative worlds that combine scientific imagination with moral responsibility and social optimism. The comparison shows that fantastic discourse is not an escape from reality. On the contrary, it is a special literary method for intensifying reality, making its problems clearer, and projecting possible futures. Fantastic reality becomes a model in which literature thinks about science, society, and the human being at the same time.

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