Ministry of Higher Education

and Scientific Research

University of Babylon College of Education

for Human Sciences

Department of English

FRAME TALE IN *LOST IN THE FUN HOUSE*

A Paper Submitted to the Department of English Language , College of Education for human Siene , University of Babylon as a partial fulfillment of the Requirement for Bachelor Degree in English Language and Literature

By

Zainab Anouz Fahad

Supervised by

Assis.Lec Ridha'a Ali

2024

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my family

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed to the successful completion of this University project. Your support and guidance have been invaluable, and I am thankful for your contributions to our work. Special thanks to my esteemed professor**.** Assis Lec Ridha'a Ali for her valuable insights and feedback which have significantly enriched in my project. And to the head of the department who Prof. Dr. Hussain Hameed works to provide the appropriate environment for study , Lastly, i express my gratitude to my family for their understanding and belief in my abilities. Your unwavering support has been a constant source of motivation throughout this journey.

Table of Contents

Abstract

John Barth's novel, *Lost in the Funhouse*, is a masterful example of how the frame tale technique may express novelistic expression. It is crucial to research this subject further in order to comprehend its significance for literary narrative.

This late modernist novel is an experience in and of itself, drawing the reader into the intricacies of the narrative structure and tactics while also offering us a narrative full of human experiences and philosophical quandaries.

The writer's life and career were discussed in this research, and we included a brief synopsis in addition to comprehensive details about the book (*Lost in the Funhouse*). We clarified the subject of (frame tale) in general and then discussed how (frame tale) specifically affected the novel, its significant elements, and its expressive riddles.

Chapter one

An Introduction

1.1 John Barth: Life and Carrer

American author John Simmons Barth was born on May 27, 1930, and is primarily recognized for his postmodern and metafictional works. The Sot-Weed Factor, a whimsical retelling of Maryland's colonial history, Giles Goat-Boy, a satirical fantasy in which a university is a microcosm of the Cold War world, and *Lost in the Funhouse*, an experimental and self-referential collection of short stories, are among his most well-known and influential works, all of which were published in the 1960s. For his episodic novel Chimera, he shared the 1973 National Book Award. Jack John Barth was born in Cambridge, Maryland. He has a twin sister named Jill and an elder brother named Bill. After graduating from Cambridge High School in 1947, he wrote for the school newspaper and played the drums. (Giles and Wanda , 2000,p38)

He attended Juilliard for a short time to study "Elementary Theory and Advanced Orchestration" before enrolling at Johns Hopkins University, where he graduated in 1951 with a B.A. and in 1952 with an M.A. His experiences at Johns Hopkins served as inspiration for his thesis book, The Shirt of Nessus. On January 11, 1950, Barth wed Harriet Anne Strickland. In the same year, he had two short tales published in The Hopkins Review and the student literary magazine at John Hopkins. In the summer of 1951, Christine Ann, his daughter, was born. In the subsequent year, John Strickland, his son, was born. (Giles, James, and Wanda H. 2000, p39)

While serving as a lecturer at Pennsylvania State University from 1953 until 1965, Barth got to know Shelly Rosenberg, his second and present wife.

Daniel Stephen, his third child, was born in 1954. He relocated to the State University of New York in Buffalo in 1965, where he worked as a professor until 1973. It was during that time that he first read "the remarkable short fiction" of Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges, which served as the basis for his book *Lost in the Funhouse*. (Barth,1984,p26)

Later, Barth was a visiting professor at Boston University in 1972–1973 and then an instructor at Johns Hopkins University in 1973–1995 until he retired.Barth began his career with The Floating Opera and The End of the Road, two short realist novels that deal wittily with controversial topics, suicide and abortion respectively. They are straightforward realistic tales; as Barth later remarked, they "didn't know they were novels". (John Barth,1987)

The Sot-Weed Factor (1960; the title is an archaic phrase meaning "the tobacco merchant") was initially intended as completing a trilogy of "realist" novels, but developed into a different project and is seen as marking Barth's discovery of postmodernism. (Clavier,2007,p165-167)

It reimagines the life of Ebenezer Cooke, a poet in colonial Maryland, and recounts a series of fantastic and often comic adventures, including a farcical revisionist account of the story of Captain John Smith and Pocahontas, eventually leading Cooke to write the narrative poem of the title predicated on the idea that a university could be the Cold War's world, with an exclusive East Campus and a more public West Campus. Raised as a goat, George Giles comes to terms with his humanity and embarks on a mission to become a "Grand Tutor," a messiah-like spiritual leader at the institution. Barth receives the story on a computer tape, although he explicitly states in the text that it is not his creation. Throughout the book, Giles does every duty ascribed to legendary heroes in Joseph Campbell's The Hero with a Thousand Faces. It was an unexpected best-seller, elevating Barth's stature and drawing additional attention to. Even more metafictional than its two predecessors, the novella collection Chimera (1972) and the collection of short stories *Lost in the Funhouse* (1968) highlight the creative process and showcase accomplishments like a seven-deep nested quotation. The U.S. National Book Award for Fiction went to Chimera in tandem. (Elias,2001.p224)

Barth writes LETTERS (1979), an epistolary novel in which characters from his other writings correspond with each other. Subsequent books in the same spirit, such The Tidewater Tales (1987) and The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor (1991), cast writers as protagonists who engage in complex interactions with both their own and other stories. In his 1994 film Once Upon a Time: A Floating Opera, Barth plays the lead role of the protagonist who, while sailing, runs into people and circumstances from earlier works. (Clavier ,2007,p165-167)

1.2 *Lost in the Fun House*: plot Summary

"He wishes he had never entered the funhouse. But he has. Then he wishes he were dead. But he's not. Therefore he will construct funhouses for others and be their secret operator" (p.97)

Often described as the ultimate metafictional text, Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse* clearly explores the author's self-referential position within the text. Not only does the author become a character in the story, but in addition, this narrative device also adds another exciting level Interesting to text. The story, becomes a fragmented written feature about writing that fits perfectly with Linda Hutcheon's useful definition of metafiction; "Fiction about fiction—that is, fiction that contains within itself a commentary on its narrative and/or linguistic identity." (Hutcheon, 1980, p. 1)

The author's loss of control over the text seems to be reflected in our heroes' lack of power and control - as he stands in the mirror room unable to recognize himself from a perspective other than the one presented before him "In the mirror room of the fun house, you cannot see yourself going on forever, because no matter how you stand, your head gets in the way" (Barth, 1988, p. 85).

This introspective vision of Ambrose trying to see himself is somewhat indicative of the entire postmodernist manifesto (not that there is such a useful thing) .

Any attempt to try to stray too far from yourself (or your work) will only frustrate you which is the exact sentiment that Barthes was trying to convey in his essay “The Literature of Burnout” when he said that imitating too often the same format of a novel being reproduced over and over again was... Randomly and that only the aspiration (to new compositional patterns) will lead to original works. In a metaphorical mirror room, the reader is presented with the same old, familiar vision, an arbitrary medium in which author and reader participate in vain.

“You think you’re yourself, but there are other persons in you.” (p.85)

Michel Foucault's book “What is the Author?” It is a comprehensive look not only at what the author's job is but also at what that means in terms of the author's presence, his responsibility for the text, and the preconceived idea of the author's job. In *Lost in the Funhouse,* Barthes mocks all the preconceptions the reader expects of the author's job, It is to compose a novel within a familiar discourse (through previous writing, genre expectations, etc.) to which the reader is accustomed. Barth does this by periodically interrupting the omniscient narrator to remind the reader that fiction is not real and can easily be violated in any way the author sees fit, revealing himself to be an omniscient author who has grown tired of traditional realistic narrative and is subverting the narrative. A story containing running commentary, usually reserved for footnotes and/or critical reviews. So, on the one hand, the reader might accuse Barth of violating the established relationship between author, narrator, and reader, but what if we also included the accusation that the author, Barth, is also the protagonist in the text? His first-person narrative voice ignores the already established third-person narrator, thus unnerving readers' preconceived notions about how a story is told within the text. In this way, Barthes unequivocally takes ownership of his decision to tell his story in this way, or as Foucault says, “…the relationship between the text and the author and the way the text refers to this form which…” (Foucault, 1998, p. 205).

As Ambrose and Barth find themselves *lost in the funhouse* of the same name, it seems increasingly likely that Ambrose is an autobiographical version of the younger Barth; "…How easily he deluded himself into thinking he was a human. He even expected, complaining of his appalling self-knowledge, that he would repeat the deception at rare intervals throughout his miserable life" (Barth, 1988, p. 93). By interrupting the narrative to become a character in his own text, Barthes appropriates Ambrose's mind to "foreshadow" his entry into his "future" text.
"This can't go on much longer; it can go on forever." (p.95)

In Lyotard's section of this site, I noticed a key quote from his text, 'The Postmodern Condition: An Account of Knowledge'; "By simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodernism as disbelief toward grand narratives." Although Lyotard was writing this text nearly twenty years after the publication of Barth's Simple Story, applying his sentiments to *Lost in the House* of Fun makes for an auspicious reading—the divine character of the omniscient narrator proves resilient, and considering the ease with which he abandons about narration, Extremely unreliable. Viewing Barth's story in this light certainly reflects a growing postmodernist sentiment, as pre-existing societies have demonstrated that pre-existing metanarratives are the same as Barth's narrator, malleable and unreliable. Very early in the story, the narrative is interrupted, and the author breaks down what appears to be realism to convey to the reader the process of writing and the literary and linguistic conventions associated with such a text. After presenting the reader with a small part of the story, the author writes it;

"...Initials, blanks, or both were often substituted for proper names in nineteenth century fiction to enhance the illusion of reality. It is as if the author felt it necessary to delete the names for reasons of tact or legal liability. Interestingly, as with other aspects of realism, it is an illusion that is being enhanced, by purely artificial means" (Barth, 1988, p.73).

As Simon Malpass noted in his book Postmodernism; “For Lyotard, the role of postmodernism is to make a fundamental critique of the structures of everyday reality.” (Malpas, 2005, p. 30) This is evident in Barthes's work at every level of narrative as he not only criticizes the frustration of composing a text, but effectively conveys his disregard for the voluntary suspension of disbelief. As Simon Malpass noted in his book Postmodernism; “For Lyotard, the role of postmodernism is to make a fundamental critique of the structures of everyday reality.” (Malpas, 2005, p. 30) This is evident in Barthes's work at every level of narrative as he not only criticizes the frustration of composing a text, but effectively conveys his disregard for the voluntary suspension of disbelief.

“Whose Fun House is for?” (p. 72)

Throughout this site, we have looked at just some of the basic elements of postmodern literature, some fleeting and some more profound, made possible through an analysis of John Barth's novel *Lost in the Funhouse*. Through his relatively short text, Barthes conveys a much broader contextual scrutiny of postmodernism – he gives the reader an opportunity to explore metanarratives, Metafiction, the function of the author, emerging forms of fiction and the art of writing fiction. The prevailing view is that Barth opposes realism but is *Lost in the Funhouse* not a more realistic version of realism? The reader is certainly given a more realistic view of writing a fictional story, and although it is an uncommon form of realism, I would argue that it should be classified as a “true nonfiction” text. By using metaphor to convey a bigger picture (not an uncommon device in realistic fiction) the funhouse becomes a symbol, not only of Ambrose's sexual frustration, but also of Barthes's frustration with the contemporary state of fantasy. There are many other features of Barth's novels that I could have analyzed, but for me, I wanted to explore Barth's attitude toward postmodernism and the ways in which he sought to articulate his ideas.

Chapter two

2.1 Frame Tale

A frame story (FRAYmuh STORE-ee), also known as a frame tale:- is a literary device in which an overarching story contains one or more related stories that unifies the narrative. (Wolf .W ,2006 , p 190)

It is a very common literary device that has been used in classical literature, including works such as Homer's epic poem The Odyssey, Geoffrey Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales, Ovid's Metamorphoses, and Giovanni Boccaccio's Decameron. It remains a popular narrative device and can be seen outside of literature in modern films and television shows, such as Inception, Titanic, and How I Met Your Mother. (Walton & Hoblitt ,1989 , p 104)

Frame stories occur when a main or supporting character begins to tell a story to other characters or to the reader, as in Emily Brontë's novel Wuthering Heights. They can also have a narrator who actively writes the story being told, as in William Goldman's The Princess Bride. The “frame” is the introductory and concluding narrative that surrounds the other stories. (Barkhuizen ,2014 ,p 15)

One way to think about frame stories is to imagine a sandwich. The introductory and concluding stories are the bread, and the additional stories within the frame are the fillings in the story sandwich. (Langellier & Peterson ,2004, p7)

Oral tradition and transmission play a major role in the creation of frame tales, which are medieval literary works in which characters take on the role of narrators by telling their own narrative. A large portion of the source material for these works comes from oral tradition, which also offers clues to current readers and medieval audiences about how to comprehend them. Frame stories portray oral storytelling events in a way that allows contemporary researchers to speculate as to how they might have happened. The Decameron illustrates how people use stories to amuse themselves and forget life's misfortunes, while the Canterbury Tales demonstrates how people tell stories to pass the time. The Thousand Nights and a Night describes a private storytelling event between a husband and wife. Thus, a knowledge of medieval orality in Europe and western Asia is influenced both in and out of the frame. (Bonnie , 1995 , p 27-53)

Oral narrative tradition here refers to the practice of crafting and presenting stories to an audience. By include an audience in the story, the author of a frame tale establishes a connection between the real oral storytelling traditions and the literary genre that attempts to portray them. Furthermore, manuscript copies of epics and ballads also have framing patterns, which suggests that frame tale composers took inspiration from oral performance culture for more than simply the idea of storytelling traditions. These made-up characters choose to recount a lot of traditional tales that are found in a wide range of settings and cultures. It's possible that medieval oral performers used prefabricated frameworks to organize their performances. Frame tales' narratives, motifs, and theatrical settings all . (Walter , 1977 , p 53-81)

The success of oral tradition academics that was most crucial to their research was the debunking of the myth of the "great divide" between orality and literacy because frame tales in their manuscript form are obviously the creation of literate traditions as well. A contemporary audience can read and understand frame stories on the premise of unrestricted influence between voice and text, performance and display. Frame stories were extremely popular throughout the medieval age and quickly lost popularity; this could also be partially explained by the energy created by the exchange between oralities and literacies. In this specific verbal context, frame narratives flourished, but as verbal creativity got increasingly literary, they eventually lost ground to the novel. By focusing on the potential meaning of medieval tales, scholars can move away from the never-ending quest for intertextual pathways for the transmission of these tales and instead focus on the oral tradition studies. We can approach frame stories and the stories inserted within them in a way that helps us comprehend what they could have meant to medieval audiences by concentrating on performance and culture. Manuscripts give us a glimpse into the past; oral tradition studies bring those traces to life . (Bonnie , 2003 , p 125-126)

2.2 Frame Tale in *Lost in Fun House*

According to Edward Said's analysis of the process of creation, the two beginning conditions of authority and molestation are the dynamic through which the novel as a genre functions. The ability or desire of a person to start something new or create "an increase over what had been there previously" is known as authority. Molestation occurs along with “one’s duplicity, one’s confinement to a fictive, ascriptive realm, whether one is a character or a novelist” (Said 1975 , p 83-84)

Put another way, even if each author uses language to construct a fictional universe, they constantly remind themselves—consciously or unconsciously—that the "world" of the book frequently doesn't seem to match the real one. Novelists are therefore inherently concerned about the connection between narrative and an indescribable reality outside the bounds of language. Often, at particular junctures in their story, something challenges the advancement of previous developments. The conventional theory of mimetic representation is no longer relevant since authors are starting to realize that starting a writing project entails "working a set of instruments." the tool used in linguistic tactics. Writing is the creative form in which the origin's duality is most obvious since its fundamental element the word refers to "two-faced monsters. (Said 1975 , p 24)

Maurice Blanchot discusses this by saying that literature has two "slopes" or sides: Between these two slopes is the literature... Meaningful prose is the first slope. Its objective is to convey ideas in a language that assigns meaning to things based on their intended interpretation. However, on this side of language, there comes a point at which art gives up on common speech after realizing it to be dishonest. What is the ordinary discourse that art complains about? It claims to be meaningless because art believes it is insane to believe that every word contains everything necessary for understanding because of the absence that defines it. As a result, art searches for a language that can capture this absence and convey the infinite movement of knowledge. ((Blanchot, 1995, p 332)

According to Martin, the funhouse "metaphorically represents both the self-consciousness of the artist who must create a maze of fictional devices in the struggle to portray reality and the confusion and self-consciousness of the adolescent who must deal internally and externally with a maturing body." (Martin, 1997 , p 153)

Singer has explained that the stories take the form of "self-perpetuation," whereby "these self-generations are created by an obsessive'return to origins' that leads the stories back to their own beginnings" and they in turn create more self-generations. (Singer, 2010 , p 37)

While the decline of language is a major theme in *Lost in the Funhouse*, Barth himself notes in "The Literature of Exhaustion" that this is "by no means necessarily a cause for despair" despite the genre's decline. (Barth 1984 , p 70)

As a result, John Barth chooses an alternative to passively bemoaning man's unfortunate historical placement into the maze of language: he uses weariness and crippling self-consciousness against themselves in order to create something novel and legitimate. Put differently, Barth makes the case that fiction should represent postmodern weariness while also acting as a performer of it. Consequently, "self-reflexive fiction is not nihilistic or devoid of presence." (Woolley, 1985 , p 465)

Mikhail Bakhtin's study of (*Lost in the Fun House*) for what he called “the polyphonic novel” is among the best available study of the artistic function of intertextuality. Bakhtin conceives of the ‘literary word’ as an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a fixed point of meaning. Each utterance is always caught up in the crowded space of interdiscursivity: “Every concrete utterance is intersected by both centrifugal and centripetal, unifying and disunifying forces” . (Bakhtin, 1981 , p 272)

Novels are enriched by such social heteroglossia, and by the fact that words do not live in dictionaries but in other people’s mouths ((Bakhtin, 1981, p 294)

A prime example of this idea of intertextual reliance on and transposition of other/prior textual systems is seen in *Lost in the Funhouse*, which incorporates an irreducible plurality of texts both within and behind itself. "Not only is all fiction about fiction, but all fiction about fiction is in fact fiction about life," as Barth himself states. (Barth, 1984, p 236)

The stories' intra- and intertextual relationships cut both ways. The intertexts define, restrict, and specify this narrative on the one hand. They provide both the imagination of old-fashioned tale cycles and the well-known comforts of traditional autobiographical realism. However, they also broaden the scope of this book to situate it within a larger historical, mythical, and legendary tradition, offering readers the required framework within which to explore at their leisure. In an interview, Barth explains how the stories are structured: Of all, it all depends on how broadly you wish to interpret the terms "novel" and "series." Because there is an exfoliation and a development, one with a double motion, it is intended to be a series. The period of the stories tends to shift from the present into the mythic past as the apparent narrator in the majority of the series' stories goes through his biographical development, and there is, of course, a cyclical return in the end. (Lampkin, 1988 , p 489)

The patterns in the novel (*Lost in the Fun House*) express "code" that life and art are said to be based on. The stories in this series together examine how heroes and fiction may be both classic and modern at the same time. They represent the similarities and differences between the literary style and human experience of their predecessors. Nothing is ever entirely different from anything else, or entirely the same. "Life and art almost repeat each other; life almost repeats art; and art almost repeats life." (Fogel & Slethaug, 1990 , p111)

However, the writer has not vanished. There is still opportunity for the author to use their own judgment and imagination, even when Roland Barthes limits them to a place where language and literary traditions meet. Similar to this, Derrida's perspective on the politics of authorship challenges liberal humanism notions of the writer while retaining the author in some capacity. Ultimately, "expressing a criticism of authority is inherently an authoritative act" . (Biriotti, 1993 , p 10))

Conclusion

In this research, we talked about the American literary writer John Barth, the author of the novel *Lost in the Fun House* . We talked in detail about his life, his works, and his most important writings.

We then talked about his novel *Lost in the Fun House* in particular, and he mentioned the events of the novel and the scenes in it that attract readers and critics. We touched on this aspect as well quickly, and we also discussed the method of his completion and writing of this creative work and the expressive symbols it contains.

Then we talked in general about the main topic of this novel. We mentioned the definitions, what Frame Tale is, what is the benefit of it, the reason for writing it, and the most important Stories and novels in which this method was used.

Then came the discussion about Frame Tale in particular in the novel *Lost in the Fun House* and the most important analyzes of critics and writers in this work, the stylistic creativity in presenting events in a way that suits the characters, the manifestation of art in this work, and the different way of writing to those before it and in its time.

Works Cited

- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquisr. Ed. Michael Holquist. Texas: U of Texas .

- Barth (1984) intro to The Literature of Exhaustion, in The Friday Book.

- Barkhuizen, G. (2014). Revisiting narrative frames: An instrument for investigating language teaching and learning. System, 47.

- Biriotti, Maurice. (1993). Introduction: Authorship, Authority, Authorisation. In Maurice

- Biriotti & Nicola Miller (Ed.), What Is an Author? (pp. 1-18). Manchester: Manchester UP.

- Blanchot, Maurice. (1995). The Work of Fire. Trans. C. Mandell. Stanford: Stanford UP.

- Bonnie D. Irwin. "What's In a Frame? The Medieval Textualization of Traditional --Storytelling." Oral Tradition, 10:27-53.

- Bonnie D. Irwin (2003) Frame Tales and Oral Tradition , March 2003, pp. 125-126 .

- Clavier, Berndt (2007) John Barth and Postmodernism: Spatiality, Travel, Montage pp. 165–167.

- Fogel, Stan & Gordon Slethaug. (1990). Understanding John Barth. Columbia: U of South Carolina .

- Giles, James, R. and Wanda H. (2000). American Novelists Since World War II: Sixth -Series. Michigan: Gale.

- Hutcheon, L. (1980). The narcissistic narrative: The metafictional paradox. Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University press.

- John Barth (1987) Foreword to Doubleday Anchor Edition of The Sot-Weed Factor.

- Lampkin, Loretta M. (1988). An Interview with John Barth. Contemporary Literature .

- Said, Edward. (1975). Beginnings: Intentions and Method. New York: Columbia UP.

- Woolley, Deborah A. (1985). Empty Text, Fecund Voice: Self-Reflexivity in Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse*. Contemporary Literature, 26, 460-81.

- Wolf, W. (2006). Framing Borders in Frame Stories. In Framing Borders in Literature and Other Media .

- Walton, S., & Hoblitt, R. (1989). Using story frames in content-area classes. The Social Studies, 80(3) .

- Langellier, K., & Peterson, E. (2004). Storytelling in daily life: Performing narrative. Temple University Press.