

STABILITY AND INNOVATIONS OF TEXT-CONSTRUAL OF “ARABIAN NIGHTS”

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Abstract

This article was aimed at the study of structural-semantic variations and changes of text-construal of tales of “One Thousand and One Nights”. The architecture of those, originally mediaeval, texts demonstrated unusual for that time but instantly revealed contradictory features at the borderline of the usage of more traditional narrative stability and irregularities of all sorts. This, hardly expected, by the scholar research gap called for the discovery of new, more efficient methodology able to reflect, more objectively, on this controversy. The paradox lay in the absence of the proper adequate methodology for revealing this specificity. The actual problem was that some of the technologies used by the authors of mediaeval tales of that time were based on the expressing of notions technically discovered only by contemporary modern literary science determined only at present as fractals, frames, embeddings. Thus, the keys to reopen Scheherazada’s secrets of specific text-construal of “Arabian Nights” were to be discovered at the crossroads of different, relatively new, closely correlated scientific disciplines: discourse and textual linguistics, cognitive poetics, synergetics. The unity of different methods applied by the latter resulted in the discovery of new multi-disciplinary methodology. Selective empirical analysis undertaken in this article based on the new methodological background brought successful positive results in more explicit description of different violations and changes of the architecture applied for different levels of structural-semantic text-construal.

Keywords: text-construal, stability, narrative prototype, innovations, multi-disciplinary methodology, macro- and mega-structures

1. INTRODUCTION

“One Thousand and One Nights”, also known as “Arabian Nights” or “alf Layla wa Layla”, presents today an internationally renowned, enormously big literary collection of differing narratives united by the general frame story about Shahryar, his wife Scheherazada and her wonderful tales which let her escape her death from her jealous husband. The source united the stories from different parts of the world: from Middle East and South Africa, namely, from Arabic, Egyptian, Indian, Persian, ancient and mediaeval, oral and, later on, literary folklore. Today it exists in the forms of innumerable versions, original and adapted ones, in practically all translations and languages of the world. Nevertheless, the fact is that children from all the world know very well such fairytales from this collection as “Aladdin’s Wonderful Lamp”, “Ali Baba and Forty Thieves” and many others. The content of the frame story and basic tales remain identical, practically in all versions, retaining, the so-called deep structure. Within the limits of this paper, the texts of the English version of tales from the most contemporary English source published by Penguin Classics, in translation by Malcolm Lyons and Ursula Lyons (2008) was chosen for my empirical analysis. (Lyons, Malcolm and Ursula 2008).

The first English translation of the whole source appeared earlier in 1706. Europeans were charmed from the start by the unknown Eastern novelty, realia, fascination; although literary recognition was not acknowledged from the start. Only specialists in the field of artistic imagination: well-known painters, poets, musicians valued highly the emotional and aesthetic atmosphere of the tales from the very start.

At the end of the XX-th century specialists in the fields of literature and linguistics demonstrated much interest in the investigation of the collection of tales of “One Thousand and One Nights”. Partly it was determined by new discoveries of earliest editions (and even several new unknown before pages) of the source; and also by the appearance of different new translations of the collection. Strict philological studies also gained popularity: Beaumont 1998; Gerhard 1963; Grotzfeld 1985; Ghazoul

1996; Mahdi 1983; Naddaff 1991; Pinault 1992. New scientific discoveries in linguistics, literary studies, as well as in correlated disciplines marked the beginning of the new century. Three hundred's anniversary since the first European publication of the collection was specially marked off even by UNESCO, as a significant scientific occasion. In the UK in 2004, and in 2016 two special international scientific conferences: at the university of Sheffield were held to celebrate this event. At one of these conferences the well-known words by I. Borges were used as the motto: "Centuries went by, and we are still hearing Scheherazada's voice ...". But the most prominent event was presented by the publication of "The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia", in two volumes, in 2004. The two main authors who prepared the edition of "Encyclopedia" were Ulrich Marzolf and Richard Leeven. (Marzolf, Ulrich and Von Leeven, Richard (2004). "The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia (in 2 Volumes). A B C C L I O, Santa Barbara, California, Denver Colorado, Oxford, England.

Some special publications relevant for the present research deserve special mentioning. Thus, one of the articles of Ferial Ghazoul was connected with structural –semantic division of the text. Supporting the opinion of Roman Jakobson who stated that "meaning resides in the form" the scholar applied it to the organization of the text of "One Thousand and One Nights". Hence, the proposed division included the following parts: 1. The story of Shahryar as king; 2. The story of Shahryar as a traveler seeking knowledge; 3. The story of Scheherazada; 4. the frame story as narrated by the vizier (Ghazoul 1996). David Pinault and Daniel Beaumont paid much attention to the structural identity of the texts of the collection. They discussed the problem of story-telling techniques. Daniel Beaumont mentioned specially the narrative character of the stories of "1001 Nights". He also noticed the importance of constant use of identical repetitions of the whole narrative parts of the text (Beaumont 2004). The attempt of this article to find innovative technologies of analysis was unexpectedly connected with the ideas proposed by Mahsa Hashemi and Farideh Pourgiv who discussed the use of two postmodern images used by John Barth in his novel "CHIMERA". The images were SPIRAL and CIRCLE. In accord with the ideas of the cited article the image of spiral was the most powerful in the text production due to its ability to transfer infinite space, the processes of impulse and creation. The image of circle symbolizing regress in circular movement ending by death trap was restricted in usage. (Hashemi and Pourgiv 2012). These ideas also appeared to be closely connected with the basic fractals of linguistic synergetics used later in the present research.

To conclude this very brief synopsis, with innumerable thanks for valuable contributions of all the scholars to the exploration of this vast territory of ideas and approaches, a certain RESEARCH GAP was, nevertheless, found out. The need was obviously felt in proposing fresh, innovative multi-disciplinary methodology able to explore innovations and irregularities as relevant parts of text construal of this unique collection of stories more systematically, with the accent on text-oriented approach, based on special macrostructures.

Hence, this aspiration determined the GENERAL PURPOSE of this research which could not, however, be fulfilled at once. The first step in this direction (and the most important one) was working out the mentioned methodology able to fit the complicated nature of the text of the collection revealing highly contradictory features of classical stability and highly unexpected INNOVATIONS AND VARIABILITY. The latter presented the basic AIM of EXPLORATION in this article.

Actually, this is my second article devoted to this general complicated problem. The first (previous) article, was written earlier: under the title "Enigma of Scheherazada's Tales Text-Construal". It investigated scrupulously the problem of working out multi-disciplinary paradigm of research of the collection and presented more extensively the traditional stability of textual narrative macrostructures. It only planned to explore different cases of marginalization, partly with the help of synergetic approach. This first article was sent to the "Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities", in April, 2018 and now is still under the process of blind reviewing. The present article is new: in content and form, was not published before and is devoted especially to the cases of marginalization and violations of narrative stability of "Arabian Nights".

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The materials of empirical analysis of the present article (limited within the scope of this publication) included the texts of fairytales of the collection extracted from the latest edition (2008) of Penguin Classics, in three volumes. The source was (as was mentioned above) translated into English by Malcolm Lyons and Ursula Lyons, and published under the title "The Arabian Nights: Tales of 1001 Nights". Nineteen tales were chosen in the present article, as the best known and admired not only by children but by many grown-up readers. Hence, the analysis presented in this part would be transparent enough for understanding even for young researchers.

The list of the chosen and examined magic tales included the following items:

1. "Tale of the Merchant and Jinni";
2. "The Tale of King Omar bin al-Nu'uman and His Sons Sharrkan and Zau al- Makan";
3. "Tale of the Ensorcelled Prince";
4. "The Hermits";
5. "The Woman whose Hands were Cut Off for Giving Alms to the Poor";
6. "The Ebony Horse";
7. "Abd al-Rahman the Maghribi's Story of the Rukh";
8. "The Angel of Death With the Proud King and the Devout Man";
9. "The Angel of Death and the Rich King";
10. "The Angel of Death and the King of the Children of Israel";
11. "The Devotee To Whom the Allah Gave a Cloud for Service and the Devout King";
12. "The Queen of Serpents";
13. "Ibrahim of Mosul and the Devil";
14. "Ishak of Mosul and his Mistress and the Devil";
15. "Abdullah, the Fisherman, and Abdullah, the Merman";
16. "Abu Al-Hasan of Khorosan";
17. "Sindbad the Seaman";
18. "The Story of Aladdin, or the Magic Lamp";
19. "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves."

The text of the tale "The Story of Aladdin, or the Magic Lamp" was selected, as an illustrative example of the pilot experiment of this study. The source was the most representative, the biggest one in this collection. It occupied one thousand and fifty two pages in the cited edition. The INNOVATIVE METHODOLOGY had to correspond to the special character of the chosen material, due to its textual organization combining general STABILITY and unexpected VIOLATIONS. The experimental methodology was created, as was mentioned, as the result of the union of specific technologies borrowed from different, mainly closely correlated disciplines: classical linguistics, literary studies, stylistics, narratology, cognitive poetics and linguo-synergetics. The merging tools of analysis were organized into a special multi-disciplinary paradigm. The most universal and valuable among them appeared to be the following: narrative prototypical tools for detecting principally stable narrative character of the majority of the examined texts and also the so called method of "synergetic fractals". The more detailed description of narratology and linguistic synergetics, as well as the description of their basic methodological devices (as was stated above) were given in my previous article, under the title: "Enigma of Scheherazada's Tales' Text Construal", sent to Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities, in April, 2018. Brief commentary concerning this analysis

would be given in the next section of this paper. But it must be reminded again that the main task of this paper was the representation of violations of stability, innovations and variability.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the previous pilot research appeared to be convincing and conclusive. Practically all chosen fairytales proved their narrative stability corresponding to the narrative prototypical paradigm. It must be mentioned that the testing of the latter was based on the so-called “diamond scheme” worked out first by the American scholars William Labov and Joshua Valetsky (Labov and Valetsky 1972; 1973; also later Prince, Gerald 1988; Toolan, Michael 2001, 2009).) The scheme included six basic functions: 1. ABSTRACT: What, in a nutshell, is the story about?; 2. ORIENTATION: Who?, When?, WHERE?; 3. COMPLICATING ACTION: What happened?; 4. EVALUATION: So what? Why is this interesting?; 5. RESULT OR RESOLUTION: What finally happened?; 6. CODA: That’s it. I’ve finished and am coming back. (Labov, Valetsky 1972). The testing of application of these criteria to the fairytales was successful and proved their universality for the objective stating of their narrative nature.

The text of the fairytale “The Story of Aladdin, or the Magic Lamp”, chosen for this illustrative analysis was first divided into twelve thematic episodes .The functions: COMPLICATION – RESOLUTION were represented in all of them. Later on, scholars specially noticed that in other cases not all six functions were expressed , although COMPLICATION –RESOLUTION were obligatory and were always to have some special point: funny or sad, or terrible, frightening (Michael Toolan 2001, 2009). More information about this methodological technology could be found in my previous article (Andreeva, Kira 2018).

The results of the present article’s general research revealed the following situation. Specificity and complexity of the space of “Arabian Nights”, of the whole corpus of tales was enormous. The last published English version of Michael Lyons and Ursula Lyons contained two big volumes. Antoine Galland presented his French version in twelve volumes. So even the endeavour of presenting of this enormous text construal of tales appeared to be impossible. However, by present time linguistics from correlated disciplines managed to work out some innovative special notions which could be applied first to some less spacious phenomena and today suitable even for this unique case. Here belonged such notions as: ARCHITECTURE (used metaphorically for objects having global space), FRAME (as a structure able to contain smaller parts), EMBEDDING (putting smaller parts into bigger ones). Their use helped to represent, for example, the initial basic tale of “Arabian Nights”: about the main event concerning Scheherazada’s marriage and her artful plan to stop Shahryar’s cruel murder of innocent brides with the help of her fabulous fairytales, as a FRAME STORY, the MEGA – STRUCTURE of the whole text-construal. Such an approach was outlined in WIKIPEDIA (Wikipedia 2017).

Similarly, Daniel Beaumont while discussing story-telling techniques in one of his articles defined the whole structure of “ONE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS” in this way:” narrative architecture ...is pyramidal, with many layers” and also “Narrative artistry of the “Arabian Nights” is especially evident in embedding of one narrative within another” (Beaumont 2004). The skillful and surprisingly innovative and elegant art of mediaeval storytellers of the source found in these quotations well-deserved perception.

Numberless big and small tales with their special macrostructures were embedded into this enormous megastructure. Their significant parts followed prototypical narrative paradigm. However, some of them presented peculiar violations and surprising variations deserving the application of special methodological technologies of analysis. They were partly discovered in the new interdisciplinary science: synergetics: in fractal models (for more special information: Melnik, Vladimir 2009; Olizko, Natalia 2009, Mamonova, Natalia 2015).This part of analysis was also included into my previous article. The following types of text construal in the forms of different fractal models were included there: TREE, CIRCLE, SPIRAL and also Wheel, Camomile.

Still other types of variations may characterize not whole macrostructures of text construal but their parts. They might include FOREGROUNDING, EMBEDDINGS OF PARTS OF THE TEXT, REITERATIONS (MULTIPLE REPETITIONS) OF PARTS OF THE TEXTS as a way of special FOREGROUNDING. Some examples would be adduced below.

Actually, all these possible changes could be treated as sort of interplay of authors with different semantic and structural variations inside and also outside the text construal. Several examples could be adduced even from the biggest analyzed text of the story "Aladdin, or the Magic Lamp". One of them exemplified the case REPEATED USE OF SOME definite NOUNS, AND LATER ON, WHOLE DESCRIPTIONS. In one of the initial places of the story the magician while giving the detailed instructions to Aladdin concerning the actions of the latter in the cave specially warned Aladdin not to touch anything on his way mentioning specially "A GARDEN PLANTED WITH BEAUTIFUL TREES LADEN WITH FRUIT". So Aladdin following obediently all the instructions first crossed the garden without stopping but on his way back with the magic lamp "stopped in the garden to look more closely at the fruits which he had seen only in passing". And right after that the description followed:

"The trees were all laden with the most extraordinary fruit, each tree bore fruits of different colors- - some were white; some shining and transparent like crystals; some pale or dark red; some green; some blue or violet; some light yellow; and there were many other colors. The white trees were pearls; the shining transparent ones diamonds; the dark red were rubies, while the lighter red were spinel rubies; the green were emeralds; the blue turquoises; the violet were amethysts; the light yellow were pale sapphires; and there were many others, too. All of them were of a size and a perfection the like of which had never before been seen in the world". The last two sentences were intended for the special attention of the readers, whereas Aladdin did not recognize either the quality or the worth of the fruits and would have preferred real fruits as he was very hungry. He thought the fruits were made of glass.

"But the many wonderful shades and the extraordinary size and beauty of each fruit made him want to pick one of every color. In fact he picked several of them". And only some years later the fruits with all their beauty were mentioned in the text again. At that time Aladdin was aware of their monetary value, he sent them over to the princess (he was in love with her) and, hence, got the permission to marry her. In this way the repetition of the description, as well, as the corresponding nouns: "garden", "fruits" and different color adjectives from ordinary enumeration became a way of FOREGROUNDING. Other cases of similar repetitions were used regularly in the tales of "1001 Nights".

One more example (similar to the previous one) could also support the stated phenomenon. In another fairytale "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" the main character Ali Baba occasionally discovered the treasures hidden by the thieves in a secret place. Among them there were precious stones, big pieces of gold and silver, beautiful expensive clothes, the luxury never seen by any man before. Ali Baba was lucky enough to grab a big part of treasures which he hid in a big pit in a secret place. The detailed description of the treasures was fantastic and fabulous. Later on, after many years, at the time of material problems Ali Baba remembered the hidden treasures, dugged them out and began to sell them by and by in his shop getting very nice profits. The same self-similar description was reproduced again, with all identical vocabulary and details, as another evident example of TEXTUAL REPETITIONS.

Another, very usual device, typical for the text-construal of "1001 Nights" was also regularly used in the tales acknowledged officially by the term "EMBEDDINGS". Thus, in the text of "Tale of Sindbad the Seaman and Sindbad the Landsman" even double encoding was used. First, Sheherazada continued entertaining her cruel husband for several nights (from night 536 up to night 566, since the first day of her marriage) by telling him about seven voyages of Sindbad the Seaman. She mentioned that she learnt about all this from one story-teller. So, all the information was embedded into the "Nights". And in the middle, in her desire to impress her husband even more and make the narrative more exciting Sheherazada entrusted her previous narrative to Sindbad the Seaman's, himself, changing the same story to his, first-person narrative. EMBEDDING was successfully used for the second time. It is noteworthy to repeat here again that Daniel Beaumont (who was one of the first to observe this rhetorical phenomenon) not only supported the relevance of such cases but even stated that "narrative

artistry of the “Arabian Nights” is especially evident in embedding of one narrative within another”. He also thought that repetitions could be used specially: “relatively simple style masks a sophisticated mastery of narrative. Narrative architecture, according to Daniel Beaumont, was pyramidal with many layers. No better characteristics concerning “1001 Nights” text-construal could be given. Beaumont, Daniel 2004).

4. CONCLUSION

The results of this pilot study devoted to the analysis of variations of text-construal of the collection of tales of “One Thousand and One Nights” could be summarized in this way.

- 1) Preliminary stage of analysis discovered unexpected cases of innovative changes of textual organization of the investigated source. The latter included the forms of different deviations from the traditional narrative prototype. It demanded working out new, more efficient methodology able to describe and explain their specificity. Such methodology was to integrate more traditional and new scientific tools of analysis from correlated disciplines. The basic paradigms of technologies included prototypical narrative ones and special innovative linguistic synergetic tools of analysis. Recent scientific discoveries of innovative approaches in analysis were also very helpful.
- 2) The results of probing of this multidisciplinary methodology appeared to be promising and efficient. The whole global architecture of the immense building of tales was presented as a global FRACTAL CONSTRUCTION, MEGA STRUCTURE EMBEDDING almost countless number of macrostructures of big and small tales. Most of the latter were built with the help of prototypical narrative structures, although several presented irregularities and deviations from prototypes. A number of the latter were described as FRACTAL MODELS of different types: CONCENTRIC CIRCLES, TREES, SPIRALS, BIG WHEELS, CAMOMILE.
- 3) At the lower level of text-construal other, but no less important, variations were noticed: FOREGROUNDING, EMBEDDINGS. REITERATION OF BIG PARTS OF THE TEXT, MULTIPLE REPETITIONS OF MOST IMPORTANT WORDS.
- 4) Although the results achieved in this article appeared to be significant, it must be stated that the pilot study had limited character being restricted only to one type of stories of the collection of “One Thousand and One Nights”, namely to fairytales. The experiment should be continued and enlarged. The immense scope of the material of this collection of tales deserve more extensive analysis, possibly, it should be continued and be later provided with the help of special statistical calculations.

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