

THE FANTASTIC. STYLISTIC ELEMENTS IN THE TEXTUAL SEQUENCES

FANTASTICUL. ELEMENTE STILISTICE ÎN SECVENȚELE TEXTUALE

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In memoriam: Dumitru Irimia

Abstract

The Fantastic. Stylistic Elements in the Textual Sequences. In the attempt of describing some stylistic procedures which make possible the unity of a text with at least one non-verisimile sequence, I analysed Mihai Eminescu's *The Avatars of Pharoa Tlá*. The purpose of this article is to show how name and verbal repetitions, the descriptions which create space and time, and the construction and de-construction of the characters' names manage to create (textual) unity and sequence cohesion.

Keywords: description, fantastic, repetition, space, textual sequence, time

Cuvinte cheie: descriere, fantastic, spațiu, secvențe textuale, timp

Motto: "In the fantastic image the language provides something to stand in for the inexpressible. The fantastic encodes into language what cannot be said, says what cannot be known." (David Sandner, *The fantastic Sublime*)

0. Starting from the fact that generally *the fantastic, too, is notoriously difficult to define* (Sandner 2004: 19), its approach was determined for a long period of time by a series of ontological concepts according to which *the objective reality is one of the limits of fictions* (Berrio 1992: 331). Considered to be *the primary literature of the creative imagination* (Sandner 2004: 19), the fantastic embodies the elements of the dark, while reality relies on the forms of the light. This division is determined by the anthropological structures of the imagination. The three conditions that the structural reading of the fantastic imposes upon us refer both to the text and the reader: firstly, because the text has to oblige the reader to consider the character and the world *as a world of living person and to hesitate between a natural and supernatural explanation for the events described*. Secondly, because this *hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus the reader's role is so to speak entrusted to a character and at the same time the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work*. Thirdly, *the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as "poetic" interpretations* (Todorov 1975: 33). A change of perception is caused by the complex perspective on the possible worlds which operates distinctions between *the real, proposition of reality, and proposition of fiction* as constitutive elements of a literary text; starting from the judgment that *the fictional world is constructed beginning with the necessary presence and contrast of the world* (Berrio 1992: 324), the same orientation distinguishes between *three types of world model in which the referents of concrete texts may be inserted, classifying them as real, verisimilar fictional and non verisimilar-fictional. The world model of the real are formed instructions which belong to the real world; the referent obtained from them are real. The world models of the verisimilar fictional contain, in turn, instructions not belonging to the real world, but constructed in accordance with it. Finally, the world models of the non-verisimilar fictional are composed of instructions which neither correspond to the real world nor established in*

accord with it the rules of said world (Berrio 1992: 323). The main paradox of the fantastic is that, although it is located in a possible, but unreal world (thus, functioning as fiction and *non verisimilar*), it relies on the verisimilar to place itself in the text in reality or in reality's immediate neighbourhood in order to differentiate itself from it. The elements the researcher is interested in are the practices used to demonstrate how a fragment from a text illustrating a non-verisimilar world can be placed after a scene that creates a referent in the real, functioning as a proposition of the real.

1. In order to demonstrate a part of this practice starting from the opposite idea, namely the fact that *the fundamental characteristic of fantastic is displacement* (Sandner 1996: 62), the article will analyse Mihai Eminescu's work *The Avatars of Pharaoh Tlà* which offers the symmetries necessary to study the insertion of the fantastic into a literary text. I will start from the consideration that there are three scenes presented in the text: the first real scene named R_1 , the second scene-a fantastic one-named F_1 and a final real scene named R_2 as in the diagram:



The first real episode in *The Avatars of Pharaoh Tlà* is represented between the pharaoh's ritual journey towards the origins of the Nile River and the pharaoh's death. The fantastic scene takes place between the symbolic exiling of the beggar by the children from Seville and Marquis Baltazar Bilbao's revelation of his power. The final scene R_2 describes the departure of beautiful Ella from the group of admirers and the final event of the text. In order to define the episodes identified as real and fantastic in the text, I will consider them as a set of textual events (S.T.E.). Then, it is necessary to analyse the special elements that constitute the inner geography of the text and to consider them as a set of textual space elements (S.S.E.) because *space configuration has a crucial importance in defining artistic and stylistic effects, being the highly plausible element of the universal value* (Berrio 1992: 390). The importance given to this factor in text theories resides from the fact that *our conscious knowledge of artistic text includes articulating the known inventories of symbols and patterns of fantastic-imaginary spatialization* (Berrio 1992: 5). The researcher who operates a reduction of the perspectives in the text should also operate similar reductions of the referent and the world in order to consider them only from the point of view of the events that they include and to reduce them to a set of world events (S.W.E.) and a set of space elements (S.S.W.) mainly because *the fantastic is defined as a special perception of uncanny events* (Todorov 1975: 91). As the role of the similarities has already been accepted as a means of connecting worlds in the attempt of detaching the frame of the fantastic (Langford 1990: 122), a scene can be considered real when one can establish a relationship between S.S.E. and S.S.W. and between S.T.E. and S.W.E. and it will be considered fantastic when S.S.E. and S.T.E. on the one hand, and S.S.W. and S.W.E. will not correspond.

1.1. According to the principle of correspondence between S.T.E. and S.S.W., one can consider the first scene as real because the elements that create the geography of Eminescu's Egypt are recognizable in the geography of Egypt described objectively (Vandenberg 1982). The descriptions offer the short story a cinematographic structure and assure the connection of the worlds (Langford 1990: 126). Thus, the narrow streets and the paved labyrinths with long white stones from Eminescu's Memphis become a correspondent of the narrow streets paved with white stones in Vandenberg's description. Moreover, Eminescu's palaces and the colossal stairs with symmetric gardens correspond to Vandenberg's descriptions. The floor which was a single golden mirror may correspond to the sparkling floors with a lake and lotus flowers painted on them in real Egypt whereas the room without a ceiling may be associated to those rooms whose ceilings represented the sky and the stars and the walls were painted in gold. The room imagined by Eminescu, *with a black plate and a big red circle drawn on it, with creatures representing a ladder with minerals on the ground where one could notice the roots of the plants and how the animals were staying on them* may correspond to Vandenberg's room with the painted floor representing a

lake covered with lotus flowers and swimming fish, ducks, dragon flies and brightly-coloured birds. The equivalences are not meant to demonstrate the identity between Eminescu's elements and the Egyptian motives, but they show the possibility of establishing space configurations in objectively described spaces in Eminescu's style. Continuing the series of equivalences, one can notice that the elements composing a pharaoh's tomb (e.g. Pharaoh Tlâ) are essential in setting up an objective image of Egypt: *the stairs labyrinth which lead to a lake* and *the stairs that start from a stone urn* correspond to the description of similar stairs which lead to other stairs, and then to a square fountain with an entrance on the left towards an anteroom communicating with a passage and other stairs.

1.2. In what the principle of correspondence between S.T.E. and S.W.E. is concerned, the ritual and ceremonial events from the text correspond to the ritual-ceremonial events in the ancient world of Egypt. *The journey in the boat that flies as a thought among the impressive paintings on the right and the left of the Nile River* is similar to that of Vandenberg's who describes a journey in a black boat towards to origins of the Nile or the sacred home prepared for the dead pharaoh; *crossing the gardens, entering the great chamber of the potential oracle, going downstairs under the pyramid, and crossing the water* can be associated with Egyptian integration rituals described by Vandenberg as well. The repetitive throwing of the torch into the water and the urn represent the magical process of lighting and showing the way to the dead pharaoh.

1.3. The inventory of the correspondences that can be established can continue by invoking profane gestures or space elements. The succession of all equivalences will demonstrate the correspondence between S.T.E. and S.W.E. on the one hand, and S.S.E. and S.S.W. on the other allowing us to consider the first episode as belonging to real elements.

1.4. The second description in the text will be considered fantastic because the elements that form S.S.E. are unrecognizable in S.S.W. and the constituents of S.T.E. are unrecognizable in S.W.E. Thus, such events as the beggar's death, coming out from the tomb and returning, all identifiable in S.T.E., cannot be found in S.W.E.; the difference between the appearance and gestures in front of a mirror and the image reflected by the mirror are present in S.T.E. and, obviously, absent in S.W.E. The situation is similar in the case of the knights' dance in the old castle's basement (a dance of stoned faces *which started swinging on their pedestals with their hands making the floor howl under their heavy granite feet*) which is present in S.T.E. but completely absent in S.W.E.

1.5. Going from the configuration of events to the elements that constitute the space of the event, I would like to underline the fact that the elements that form S.S.E. are at the border between the visible and the invisible. This proximity will not deny the proposed criterion. On the contrary, it underlines a certain manifestation of the fantastic consisting of the attempt to discredit a belonging to the real elements of the common components of S.S.E. and S.S.W. (meaning that this will discredit the real characteristics of reality). Due to this manifestation of the fantastic literary text, I am determined to consider as absent some space elements belonging to S.S.E. in the S.S.W. system, for example *an old castle with a destroyed garden, more a pile of stones than a construction, with dried out trees whose walls now shelter new and young trees which are growing on its walls*. Due to the temptations of a fantastic literary text, elements found in the S.S.E. system, (*the stone wall which turns in a hinge and the mirror which turns in hinges allowing a dried face to come out from a passage in the walls*) will be considered absent from S.S.W.

1.6. The non-correspondence between S.S.E. and S.S.W. and between S.T.E. and S.W.E., marked by the lack of repetitions of the space elements in the text and the world, determines the interpretation of this event as fantastic.

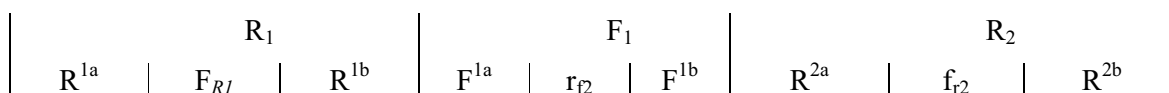
1.7. The application of the correspondence criterion led to the identification of sequence R₁ as belonging to the real. I will limit the application of the same principles to the space and event elements which appear significantly in the text in order to prove the *reality* of the final scene-R₂. The space elements found in S.S.E. such as *the long street covered with snow of the deserted town*,

the rooms with huge chandeliers with sugar-white candles lit in the dark, rooms with silver air, softly flavoured, lonely streets with arched gates and a rotten fence, the ceiling whose coal-like walls were covered in oil are obviously noticeable in S.S.W. as well.

1.8. Similarly to space units, events such as sledges going down the streets covered with snow, the entrance into the house with two floors, going through the gardens and even Angelo's mysterious journey accompanied by the Count of Lys, found in S.T.E. can be easily detected in S.W.E. The entire R_2 episode is poorer in events; gestures, especially with erotic connotation, in internal and external spaces, the scenic game, and the living room existence replace the events anchored in the real in the first scene, in the fantastic in the second scene and in the real again in the final scene.

1.9. The correspondence established between space levels and event levels justifies the interpretation of this scene as belonging to the real.

1.10. The correspondences thus identified allow a clear distinction between real scenes and fantastic scenes; this aspect of the fantastic can be named "inter-scene fantastic" because it appears between two sequences belonging to the real and functions as an episode in itself. However, there are many fantastic aspects which do not form an episode, but rather constitute space and event units of the fantastic immersed in the real scenes. This type of fantastic incorporated in a real scene can be named "intra-scene" fantastic." On their turn, units of the real can appear inside fantastic scenes. The "intra-scene" fantastic existing within the frames of a real scene leads to the dispersion of the elements of the real and the delimitation of sub-units of the same scene. The real element not organized as a scene can cause the dispersion of the fantastic elements and a sub-division of the fantastic scene. A text where the fantastic would appear in different scenes and the real would manifest itself in a dispersed way is represented by the following diagram:



where R^{1a} and R^{1b} are dispersed sub-episodes of R_1 ,

F^{1a} and F^{1b} are dispersed sub-episodes of F_1 ,

R^{2a} and R^{2b} are dispersed sub-episodes of R_2

and f_{R1} is a fantastic sub-episode inserted in R_1 ,

r_{F2} is a real sub-episode inserted in F_1 ,

f_{r2} is a fantastic sub-episode inserted in R_2 .

1.11. The successive identification of the intra-scene fantastic and the units of the real unorganized as an episode can lead to imagining a text as infinitely divided. Any fantastic intra-scene unit can manifest itself at the level of the sequences that it re-structures into subordinated units. I consider that in *The Avatars of Pharaoh Tlà* the reader faces a game between the fantastic and the real. The initial sequence R_1 can be sub-divided in two sequences R^{1a} and R^{1b} identifiable when the mirror becomes damp and the god hidden in the mirror reveals himself. The fantastic scene undergoes a similar fragmentation when Dona Ana's castle appears with its rooms and servants in the S.S.E. configuration. The final real scene is also subject to division when the androgen character Cezar/Cezara appears or the cave turns into a living room. These manifestations of the intra-episode fantastic do not deny the criteria decided upon for detaching the real scenes from the fantastic ones. They underline the necessity of diversifying the criteria and elaborating new criteria which could accompany the principle ones.

2. The study of the procedures necessary to realise the insertion of the fantastic has a triple justification. Firstly, I will analyse the insertion into the constitution of the text and the necessity of explaining the scenes: *The Avatars of Pharaoh Tlà* is a sequential text with different successive elements. Secondly, an analysis of the mentality which constructs the existence in time and space of the character of such a text is necessary: in *The Avatars of Pharaoh Tlà* the successions of lives

connected to each other are considered to be a sequence of one character's existence which would correspond to the metempsychosis doctrine accepted as a source of prose. (Călinescu 1979: 22), but denied with more or less arguments by recent interpretations. Finally, a justification can also be found in the identification of the criteria meant to delimit the extension of both real and fantastic scenes by studying the way in which the different lives are connected to create the succession of the events. The means of insertion can be found in the S.S.E. system, the S.T.E. system, and at the linguistic level of the text. I will describe only two ways of inserting the fantastic in S.S.E., namely space equalization through different attributes and the identity of the constituents.

2.1. Space equalization through attributes can be achieved through the presence of some space elements with the same characteristics both in the real and the fantastic scenes. This practice is noticeable when connecting F_1 to R_1 and F_1 to R_2 . The most frequent attribute of equalizing the space elements from the two scenes can be found in the expression *moon snow*. Elements as *the desert land of Nubia, the pyramids and the streets* found in scene R_1 are equivalent to *the castles, cemeteries, and streets of Seville*. The expression *moon snow* creates a monochromatic space common to the two scenes. Spaces such as Nubia and Seville are connected by another attribute that marks the sensation of barrenness. In the same way, by using an attribute which communicates the feeling of stiffness, Tlă's tomb with its stoned kings corresponds to the underground chamber from the marquis' castle where the stoned knights dwell.

2.2. The space correspondence determined by the identity of the constituents assumes the presence of the same space elements both in R_1 and F_1 . Creating spaces by using the same items causes a feeling of space repetition to appear; the difference between the space units consists in the fact that other actions take place within their frame. The space in R_1 includes streets paved with stones, colossal gardens and pyramids with labyrinth stairs that lead to a passage which continues with other stairs. The same streets, gardens, and castles with the same stairs and corridors seem to be repeated in the fantastic scene. Thus, this procedure creates a common space for the character that dies and the memory of the character that follows him in the sequence of different existences.

2.3. The procedures used to create the insertion are numerous and can be easily identified in S.S.E. It is essential to observe the author's intention to make the transition from a space with realistic attributes to a fantastic one unobservable. This intention makes us try to find a correspondence between the real scene and the entire S.S.E. of the fantastic scene. This intention is responsible for the feeling of space homogeneity transmitted by the two scenes.

2.4. A series of insertion methods are observable in S.T.E. I will refer to the identity of the sensations experienced by the characters of the existential series and the identity of the spaces of that existence.

2.5. The characters of the existential sequences situated in different scenes have the same sensations. The common perceptions in different scenes connect worlds and hide differences. Each character appears as a reduction to the sensation of *nothingness*. The first stage of this reduction consists of a return to more primitive forms of life: (Tlă) *seemed a black bug in the light of the night; in his dream, Baltazar was a rooster whose wings were growing*; the second stage leads to a reduction of all perceptions to a black spot: Tlă *seemed to be a black spot while Baltazar felt he was quickly contracting until he became the middle of an egg's yolk*. The first stage of this reduction is a feeling of *nothingness*: Tlă *felt that his heartbeat was disappearing... he felt that life was vanishing from his chest, he felt that nothing... nothing...* and Baltazar *closed his eyes and saw the darkness as an infinite black horizon of nothingness... nothingness*. This procedure contributes to the previous character's annulment in order to introduce the new character; paradoxically, it ensures the unity of the existential series.

2.6. Another way of connecting the scenes manifests in the identity of the spaces experienced by the characters. Analyses of the way in which the fantastic manifests itself confirmed the importance of the actions and the itineraries adopted by the characters, the alternation of space elements implying time change, and the participation to events belonging to different worlds

(Langford 1990: 124). The characters undergo similar itineraries in different scenes of the text. Thus, living in identical spaces, but with a different organisation, Tlà and Baltazar *descend* to underground rooms, under pyramids or in cellars and open and close heavy doors of inexistence by crossing gardens and temples.

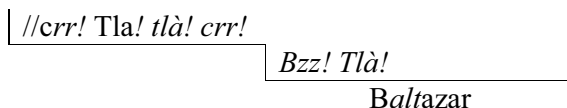
3. The sub-chapter will describe two ways of insertion from a linguistic point of view: the lexical substitution of the name and the propagation of the name among species.

3.1. The lexical substitution of the name is a way of inserting the fantastic used when R_1 and F_1 and F_1 and R_2 become connected. The procedure leads to the substitution of the name in the existential sequence. When connecting scene F_1 with scene R_1 , the characters are mentioned with their title and name: Pharaoh Tlà or King Tlà. The title substitutes the name and the character becomes The King. In the same way, the pronoun substitutes the title and thus, Tlà becomes *He*. The whole succession of substitutions contributes to the annulment of the previous name. In the scene connected to R_1 , namely in F_1 , the order of the substitutions is opposite; *He*, the new name of the character, is substituted by the title of the character; on its turn, the title is replaced by the name. The character's journey from one scene to another requires an initial annulment procedure of the character's personality which makes possible a new process according to the new scene's requirements. The substitutions taking place at the moment in which the character becomes *He* can be represented in the following way (by taking into account the connected scenes):

R ₁	Pharaoh Tlà	Name annulment
	King		
	<i>He</i>		
F ₁	<i>He</i>		Name attribution
	Beggar, Marquis		
	Baltazar		

The two substitutions allow the insertion of the fantastic through personalisation and de-personalisation. The second substitution starts from a pronoun and ends with a name. The insertion of the fantastic is dependent on the transformation of Pharaoh Tlà into *He* and the progression to Baltazar. The regression to *He* weakens the control over identities. The progression to the new name authenticates the world in which the new character will function. This procedure offers a supplementary criterion for the delimitation of the scenes; after all the substitutions take place, the real scene ends and the connection with the fantastic world is established. In similar texts, each scene will be equal with a text unit contained between losing a name and gaining another one.

3.2. The propagation of the name among species as a way of inserting the fantastic consists of the iteration of character Tlà's name in the scene subsequent to his existence. Elements of inferior species mark phonetically the space of the new existence with the previous name (e.g. in *The Avatars of Pharaoh Tlà* in scene F_1): *on a pile there was a crow crying out crr! Tla! tlà! crr!* The sounds follow the character (who doesn't have a name yet) into his sleep causing a reduction of all his perceptions to nothingness previous to his birth. In the same scene, a frog woken up in the grass *started jumping and calling Tlà, tlà to the moon until he woke up a mosquito on his skin: Bzz! Tlà!* If we consider the onomatopoeic elements in the order they appear, we can notice that the sounds spread will constitute the name of the new character called Baltazar, which contains in a reversed order the components of the previous name:



This iteration of the constituents of the initial name is the basis for all the names mentioned in the text. The presence of all the constituents of the initial name in a reversed order in *Baltazar* is not random; in the following two names, two of the constituents are repeated: *Alvarez*, *Angelo*; *Alvarez*, who appears later, keeps the two elements of the pharaoh's name at the beginning. In the name of the character farthest from the origin, two elements are preserved, but dispersed in the entire lexical unit. This selection of names is due to an attempt of connecting the scenes according to a belief in a chain of existences that the text is built on. The importance of the name is confirmed in questions and statements such as: *What are you, king... You are but a name!* The character and the name serve the organization of the scenes. The character is subject to substitutions and transformations integrating himself in the chain. The name of the character undergoes the same transformations.

4. Understanding the mechanisms of inserting the fantastic element into the text helps us understand the structure of the text. By analyzing the way in which the text is formed as a succession of connections, it is possible to discover the strategies of the one projecting the text and differentiating between fantastic and realistic scenes subordinated to imagination.

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