

THE FRAME STORY OVER TIME

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*Abstract:*The frame story is a category of the epic genre with a long tradition, from ancient literature to the present one, from *Halima* or Boccaccio's *Decameron*, continuing in a modern form, putting it in the abyss by Gide until a renewal of the initial frame tale by the Romanian contemporary Mircea Cărtărescu.

A feature of Oriental stories would be that the characters do not live only under the will of master, but also under the will of Divinity. As Slavici's characters in *Moara cu noroc* believed in "fate was given to me", also Scheherazade said: "Let Allah's will be."

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The tale has been used since ancient times for various purposes: to spend time in a pleasant way in a sitting room, around a fire, during a journey, to inform a receiver or simply to convey some happenings worthy of not being forgotten.

The narrative aims, on the one hand, to inform or train the audience and, on the other hand, to convince him of the justice of the defended cause. The narrator must present his deeds under a certain light to make the public give a valuable judgment. Thus, the narrative is a staging, where some elements are highlighted and others are intentionally omitted.

The tale has been studied since Antiquity, starting with the *poetry* of Aristotle, which is considered to be the first theorizing of the story. However, the restraint, clarity and veracity of the story were established by B. Quintilian, and later a work dedicated to the story was written by C. Bérardier de Bataut. The modern evolution of narratology has its theoretical and methodological origin in the work of Russian formalist Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*. Contemporary narratology has moved from a mere description of structural facts to communication analysis, as evidenced by the works of Gérard Genette, Umberto Eco and Paul Ricoeur, but not only.

The simplest definition of a story is: a narrator tells a real or imaginary story, and other people listen to it, the story assuming a single mouth and innumerable ears. Thus the emphasis falls, when it comes to storytelling, on an event and not on the characters. But when it comes to the frame story, things are changing a bit, because the focus lies on the story as well as the narrators and their organization.

Literature opens a wide list of story types. Regardless of the form, written or oral, the stories are divided into: oratorical, historical, dramatic or theatrical, mythical, framed, etymological (legends of beginnings), police, fantastic, parody or eccentric, tragic stories (inspired by bloody events 16th-17th centuries), comic history or the story of the Traummärchen dream, reaching a modern form of storytelling, namely the storyline story, which is the story of "the books whose heroes are you, is one of its most popular forms.

A special type of story is the frame story, a story-telling process that has appeared in the literature of the oldest writings, and has evolved with the new demands of the listeners.

The frame story was not forgotten by contemporaries. It has only undergone a transformation, and continues to concern modern writers.

The frame story is a category of the epic genre with a long tradition, from ancient literature to the present one, from *Halima* or Boccaccio's *Decameron*, continuing in a more modern

form of the frame story, putting it into the abyss (*mise en abîme*) of Gide until a resumption of the frame story by the contemporary Romanian Mircea Cărtărescu. Through the stories narrated in “frame” - *Rahmenezählungen* “setting” - *frame stories*, “drawers” - *à tiroirs*, in series or decameronics.

Stories of this kind were in vogue in the eighteenth century with the launch of the *One Thousand and One Nights*. From the beginning, they were called “romans à tiroirs” in France a virtually incorrect name because it is known that the novel is built around constant central characters, among which there is no lack of the protagonist inherent to be the binder of the ensemble, and around this main character secondary characters also appear to help or hinder the evolution of the main character. Thus, the frame stories are distinguished by the joining, by juxtaposing or perusing some episodes and missing characters, independent from the narrative angle.

Although at first glance the frame stories appear to be quite difficult for the reader, to our surprise, the storytelling is a way used by the author for an easier understanding of “confused” texts.

In his book *The Frame Stories*, Sergiu Pavel Dan highlights two types of frame stories: the Oriental type and the western type of frame story.

The Oriental type of frame stories are some stories told to postpone the punishment or to win the goodwill of the master: “Inspired by the dark background of a grave and imminent threat, dependent on the will of the master, frame stories constitute a means of adjustment, a postponing the punishment.

Another feature of Oriental stories would be that the characters do not live only under the will of the master, but also under the will of the Divinity.

Thus, Sheherazada tries to postpone her sentence during the one thousand and one nights telling Shahriar different stories, but also using different methods for postponing the moment, such as: in the morning she left a story started to stir the curiosity of Şahriar and so in the morning Sheherazada was not killed. All these methods demonstrate the intelligence of the characters.

If, in the oriental type of the frame story, telling stories is due to the abusive right to life and death of the sole master, the titan to one of the subjects, in the Western type of the frame story, the determination of telling stories is due to the occurrence of a harmful or destructive phenomenon on a whole or more large community: the scourge of a great epidemic, a war, the unleashing of a storm, etc.

Among the potential victims of the calamity, a more enterprising or fortunate group manages to find a refuge which is meant to be the place of salvation for the deliverance and even the good mood, a mood made by the act of storytelling, sometimes according to the rules established by the group, sometimes to win a prize, or just to not feel the passage of time and to forget about the problems in the world they have just succeeded or have had the luck to escape. In order to demonstrate that they have entered a free world, narrators often tell stories often no too moralizing.

The most common theme of frame stories is the love story. In *Hanu-Ancutei* we have the passionate love between Marga and Neculai Isac, but not only. Sensational incidents resulting from strong conflicts also exist in embryonic stories such as *Don Quixote*, *Adam and Eve*, and even in the story *Florin writes a novel*, the childhood love between Florin and Ana (the girl who “was snatched away by the boy from the eighth.”)

The atmosphere and ceremony are obligatory in the frame story, as they are related to the oral essence of the narration. But in embryonic frame stories this ceremony disappears because the man who crosses the threshold of the Renaissance and reaches up to Post-modernity has no time to listen to stories around the fire, being concerned about the existential problems of mankind.

In *Hanu Ancuței*, the one who creates the atmosphere is Ancuța, who "shared wine and food," laughter and good talk ". In this work we also encounter a spectacular ceremony, illustrated when the narrators drink in their honor, when the whole ceremony is described: "It is proper to sip the fruit of the earth and the sun for Zechariah too, the well sinker. The water he brings to light with great craft is not as tasty as wine, but it is more holy and more pleasing to God. We people are sinners and we concern ourselves with other things too. (*Hanu Ancuței*)

The atmosphere helps the narrators to tell their stories better. Fărâmbă (the character in the novel *Pe strada Mântuleasa*) not being able to create an atmosphere, he fails to convince the listeners of the truthfulness of his stories. In the intermediate stories, the atmosphere of the stories is lacking, because the stories are no longer presentable, but they are life problems they face themselves.

In these stories, the characters are more likely to suffer from the disease of the story telling because there is a lot of attention for the way they are told. Fărâmbă is lost in countless details because he wants to convey everything he knows, and even this tangle of stories is also a part of a ceremony. At Hanu-Ancuței stories are narrated from time immemorial: "At that time, we were still in this place, near the fire and the wagons with grape must ... (...) Since I remember, since the time of the old Ancuța, we have been habitually founding councils and concerned ourselves with Dutch wine."(*Hanu-Ancuței*)

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The plot of the story develops in a given space (the inn) what happened to me, years ago (in another space). Another observation for the narrator of the frame story is that the narrator can turn into a listener.

In the case of the novel *Adam și Eva*, the stillness of time and the abstraction of life and death in *Hanu Ancuței*, they can mean a way of survival and a means of repentance, as a result of which you can receive forgiveness, as is the case of Fărâmbă in the novel *Pe strada Mântuleasa*, or they can express pure and simple aspects related to the construction of a text, namely the relation between the narrator-author-character, which is presented to us in the novel *Florin scrie un roman*. However, those who narrate need to be careful what, how and to whom they are telling, and those who listen also because we as people are different and any kind of story does not fit to anyone. Maybe someone likes to listen to love stories, but some prefer other historical stories. Of course, everything depends on the audience, the period of the story telling, because the stories told to uncultured listeners, during some inappropriate historical times, are damaging as were the stories to Fărâmbă.

The narrator in the story assumes the role of speaking for himself, and he often comments and explains the events. Thus, the remembrance acts the space of the image and therefore it is related to the imagination, the difference between remembrance and fiction being that "remembrance affirms things of the past" and "fiction, imagination is radically outside the presentation."

The gap in the chronological order of the facts can be reflected in retrospection - the return to the past of events (time specific to modern novels) or in anticipation - is rarely used because it kills the curiosity of the reader. If there is no gap, the story is linear. Always time is specified in the incipient by acting as a general rule of the story. Time always has duration, a stretch, and a "back and forth" position to the moment of happening. Genette was of the opinion that temporal determinations are more important than spatial determinations because a work can be written and understood without the place being

specified but time cannot be forgotten by the narrator because it represents its relative position in relation to history: "a story can be well narrated without telling where it is happening or whether this place is closer or further to the place where it is told while it is almost impossible not to be in time with the narrative act since the story necessarily refers to a present, past or future time. "

The time of the frame story is the past. The order of the act composing the event is broadly chronological and the sometimes postponed outcome is always peremptory, so the story clearly cuts up a closed event between an absolute beginning that can occupy an important space in the textual economy and an explicit, closed or open ending, but always marked.

A concrete past or an approximate period of the story: is the past in which a narrator tells a story he has heard, to which he took part or even happened to him. A mythical time, the one of timelessness: "In a golden autumn, I heard many stories at Hanul Ancuței. But this happened a long time ago, in the year when of Sântilie there were mighty rains and people said that they had seen a black dragon in the clouds, above the torrents of Moldavia. (*Hanu Ancuței*)

At first, the man listened charmingly to myths, which are actually stories, where chaining plays a bigger role than the fantastic, the storytelling.

In the past, men returning from hunting, fishing or wars were telling the wonderful or extraordinary happenings they lived. The women, always waiting for the men left, stuck around the fires, holding their children around or preparing food did the same.

Nicolae Manolescu says "the childhood of mankind is lost in the night of stories, a forgotten paradise of our species. Its memory remains, like a nostalgic shadow, in all the old books, as it is for us the Bible, every community, continent or island, with its own. The story is the genuine form of human imagination.

Through the narrative, man could pass on to another time, the one of youth or the one he imagined, whether conscious or not. Where the story begins life stops, it freezes. Stories are usually the first readings for a child. With their help, the child creates a world of his own, "the child thinks Șeherezada has narrated, and King Shahriar really listened. For him the characters and the happenings are part of the reality. The child enters the story as in a world from which he is divided only by time and space."

This change of perspective was also observed by the Russian linguist and theorist, Mihail Bahtin: "If I tell (or write) an event that happened to me myself, as a narrator (or writer) of this event, I am outside that time-space in which this event took place. To identify absolutely my own "me" with the "self" I'm talking about, it's just as impossible as it's impossible to get up from the ground by pulling yourself of your hair."

In the pure frame stories often appear, as seen in the first chapter, parables. In intermediate stories the parables disappear altogether, the focus falls on the issues of the affective social life of the protagonists. This is what happens in the novel *Adam and Eve*, in which appears the idea of reincarnation to fulfillment, a process described with the help of *story in story* technique.

In the novel *On Mântuleasa Street* we are dealing with the theme of "the blameless guilty man" and the man who has to live under the threat of an absurd political system.

Intermediate stories are not said to spend time delighting the hearing, with beautiful or funny stories, but by need, as seen in the novel *Wuthering Heights*, where Lockwood's curiosity is spurred by a strange happening during a night at Wuthering Heights. He asks Ms. Dean to tell her the story of Heathcliff, where we are dealing with a story of unfulfilled love and one with a happy ending.

In the novel *Heart of Darkness* we have the theme of adventure, but also a modern theme, the man in search of the truth.

Nevertheless, the theme of love remains predominant, because the Eros has preoccupied mankind from ancient times to modernity, whether it is a fulfilled love or the one that goes on beyond time.

People tell stories because it is in their nature. If at first the stories were communicated aloud, they began to be put on paper. The human being tells everything at any time, what matters is what we learn from the stories of others, what information we find, how we fill our time and how we can get to know ourselves through the act of storytelling. It could have been noticed how stories have an important role in our lives, such as finding the soul mate and the fulfillment of love, the frightening of time and the stealing of life and death, they can mean a way of survival and a means of repentance.

Of course, it all depends on the audience, the time it is told, because the stories told to uneducated listeners, during inappropriate historical periods, lose their value.

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