TEMPORAL ASPECTS IN THE ROMANIAN FAIRY-TALE[1]

Abstract: *The present work aims to present a few situations related to tense aspects in the Romanian fairy-tale texts. It was mentioned in the literature that tense is one of the component elements of the narrative situation, which aims at the double temporal perspective: historical tense and narrative tense.*

According to researchers, one can identify in the texts a few situations that bring forward tense aspects, whether it is tense as paradox: once upon a time, or the relationship with the narrative is based on those oppositions, involving the transformation of grammatical tenses into narrative tenses.

Keywords: *narrative, narrative text, time aspect.*

Starting from Ispirescu's collection of fairy-tales, the present article aims to chronologically highlight the formal methods of narrative expression, on the premise that the popular epic text involves double reading of the text: narratological and pragmatic. The evolution of facts requires defining narrative. According to Genette, it is "a form of discourse (oral or written) that integrates the narrative of a sequence of real or fictional events, of human interest, into the same unity of action "(G. Genette *cited in* M. Mancaş, 2005: 50).

The analysis of the phenomenon in question, according to the theory of the mentioned author, makes researchers indicate the conditions of narrative building: "when telling events, there must be a sequence corresponding to their development; for a text to be narrative, it must include verbalized transposition of a unitary action; events must take place in a specified space-time dimension" (M. Mancas, 2005: 50). A more careful analysis concludes that any narrative involves three components: tense, person, and modality.

As regards the text of the Romanian fairy-tale, it should be mentioned that the space and time dimensions make reference to mythology through various expressions: "a fost odată ca niciodată, că de n-ar fi nu s-ar mai povesti. De când făcea plopşorul pere şi răchita micşunele, de când se băteau urşii în coade..." (*Tinerețe fără bătrânețe şi viață fără de moarte*), which place the character "in a tense which is not represented historically; it is a tense of paradox... At the same time, the real-fantastic relationship is between coordinates that develop a hyperbolic space-time dimension" (D. Irimia, 1999: 147).

It should also be noted that the fairy-tale text contains figures designed to quantify the time: *three, six, ten* are most often linked with the hero's journey: "de azi în trei zile plecăm, s-a dus, s-a dus trei zile şi trei nopți..." (*Tinerețe fără bătrânețe şi viață fără de moarte)*; the struggle between good and evil: "se luptară zi de vară până seară" *(Prâslea cel voinic şi merele de aur);* the hero's adventures: *"*în trei zile mă duc pe lumea cealaltă, rămase trei zile şi trei nopți plângând la mormânt" *(Făt – Frumos cu părul de aur*); "să mă îngrijeşti cu mâna ta şase săptămâni" *(Tinerețe fără bătrânețe şi viață fără de moarte).*

A thorough analysis of the text reveals that the punishments of the heroes are also in accordance with a mythical tense. This occurs in *Prâslea cel voinic şi merele de aur*: "iară împăratul chemă îndată pe argintar şi-i porunci sa-i facă o cloşcă cu puii cu

[1] Maria Chivereanu, University of Piteşti, mchivereanu@yahoo.com.

BDD-A5877 © 2011 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:52:00 UTC)

totul şi cu totul de aur, şi-i dete soroc de trei săptămâni, şi dacă nu i-o face, unde îi stau piciorele îi va sta şi capul".

Dawn is another component of mythical tense. *Făt-Frumos*, for example, begins his journey: "a doua zi când se revărsau zorile, ei se pregăteau să treacă pădurea" (*Tinereţe fără bătrâneţe şi viaţă fără de moarte*). These images of *dawn*, frequently present in epic texts develop a unique lyricism specific to popular creation.

Another temporal aspect is the *midnight*, a time of uncertainties, when sleep rules over the whole universe: "se întoarse trist la tată-său şi-i spuse cum priveghease până la *miezul nopţii,* cum mai pe urmă îl apucase o piroteală de nu se mai putea ţine pe picioare"; "cam pe la *miezul nopţii,* simţi că-l atinge încetişor boarea zorilor care-l îmbătau cu mirosul lor cel plăcut" (*Prâslea cel voinic şi merele de aur*).

Pe la namiezi, another tense full of mythological significance is frequently present in the fairy-tale: "iar pe la nămiezi, când venise slujitorii împăratului ca să-l cheme la palat, el se duse şi îi dete furca aceea care torcea singură" (*Ibidem*).

The fairy-tale is a prose of the absurd, which is nothing but an ancient poem. Absurd, improbable situations are created to tell whopping lies, so that the storyteller may defeat his opponent, who, in turn, also imagines similar situations. The temporal aspect is represented by initial forms which give the fairy-tale a specific narrative voice. This is where we grasp the nonsense and absurd of peculiar stories.

Starting from what was said in the literature: "the fairy-tale is pre-eminently a narrative species" (I.C. Chiţimia, 1971: 192), one can identify a set of distinguishing features in the narrative and conversational structures that function as formal accents. Our analysis starts from the idea that the narrative text is a particular form of statement, the result of the process of enunciation.

It was mentioned in the literature that tense is one of the constituent elements of the narrative situation which aims at the double temporal perspective: historical tense and narrative tense. It should be emphasized that narrative tense follows historical tense, hence the three possibilities of narrative text analysis from temporal perspective, corresponding to three levels of narrative tense: order, duration and frequency. Jean Pouillon identifies three phases and notices the existence of: *viziune dindărăt, împreună cu, din afară*. The last phase is the vision of fantastic fairy-tale. The beginning of the fairy-tale fits into *once upon a time*, as a monologue account. The part in which the character becomes narrator is much more developed. Most fairy-tales begin with an expressive part of the discourse.

In terms of narrative tenses, it should be noted that lack of synchrony between historical tense and discourse tense creates narrative anachronism at the text level. Genette distinguishes between analepsis, prolepsis and syllepsis. The fairy-tale discourse takes into account the sequence of events, the text coherence resulting from the placement of narrative sequences in the audience's field of expectations. In popular culture, there is no incongruity of mental models for transmitter and receiver of a text as in fantastic literature, where message decoding is based on hermeneutical means available to the reader.

The present research can start from the idea already expressed in the literature, that "in the analysis of the indicative tenses as narrative tenses, the temporal differences to be taken into account fall into several categories" (M. Mancaş, 2005 : 78).

It should be noted that past tenses and the imperfect in alternation with the perfect simple narrative, make a lasting narrative stereotypy keeping the same function even in the famous writers' works. According to researchers, "this pair will be the neutral narrative form at the level of temporal plans" (*Ibidem)*

BDD-A5877 © 2011 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:52:00 UTC)

It was specified that the imperfect is a tense that triggers expectation and curiosity. It was often mentioned that the imperfect evokes related events very well and creates a translatory motion to the mythical tense of tales. In the fairy-tale *Tinerețe fără bătrânețe şi viață fără de moare* we find this tense in the beginning: *de când făcea plopşorul pere...de când se potcovea puricele la un picior cu nouăzeci şi nouă de oca de fier şi s-arunca în slava cerului de ne aducea poveşti*.

The phenomenon is present in many of the collection texts. In this respect, we also mention: *toți împărații erau îndatorați, grija lui cea mare era, el sta pe gânduri (IS);* a fost odată un împărat, şi el *avea* trei feciori, nu-l *trăgea* inima, *mişca şi el piciorele (BTCF).*

The second tense, corresponding to the narrative level, the simple perfect, is frequently met in the texts studied. It is said to be the favourite tense of the storyteller. In contemporary Romanian language, simple perfect is also specific to the Wallachian dialect. Analyzing the relationship between dialectology and historical grammar, Matilda Caragiu says: "The Romanian language once knew the simple perfect as a general feature. Even if we don't find this verbal form in old Daco-Romanian texts, its presence in Oltenia, Crisana and Southern Danube dialects proves that the simple perfect was in the Romanian language before the division of the four dialects " (M. Caragiu-Marioțeanu, 1977: 29).

The simple perfect / past tense alternation also appears in the fairy-tale text "simple perfect becomes a cultured tense, specific to narrative tense, a living form which introduces new processes, ensuring a dynamic tale" (GALR, I, 2008: 423).

The simple perfect, as "narrative tense" belongs to the fairy-tale; it renders dramatic facts of mythical times, spectacular gestures of the heroes, and those situations that can change the epic trajectory of the narrative, creating suspense and excitement. Here are a few examples of simple perfect in the fairy-tale *Tinerețe fără bătrânețe şi viață fără de moarte*: atunci copilul *tăcu şi se născu,* iar slujitorii *deteră* în tâmpine şi în surle şi în toată împărăția *se ținu* veselie mare.

Sometimes the simple perfect alternates with the past tense in interpreting style: "După ce *trecu* afară de împărăția tatălui său şi *ajunse* în pustietate, Făt – Frumos îşi *împărți* toată avuția pe la ostaşi, şi luându-şi ziua bună, îi *trimise* înapoi, oprindu-şi pentru dânsul merinde numai cât a putut duce calul" (*Tinerețe fără bătrânețe şi viață fără de moarte).*

It can be concluded that space and time are present in the fairy-tale text at the level of the whole narrative, by all means available.

Bibliography

Bidu-Vrânceanu, A. (coord.) *Dicționar de ştiințe ale limbii,* Bucureşti, Editura Nemira, 2001

Caragiu-Marioțeanu Matilda, *Dialectologie română,* Bucureşti, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, 1977

Chițimia, I. C., *Folclorul românesc în perspectivă comparată,* Bucureşti, Editura Minerva, 1971

Guțu-Romalo, V., (coord.), *Gramatica limbii române, I,* Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 2008

Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, L, *Conversația: structuri şi starategii. Sugestii pentru o pragmatică a românei vorbite,* Bucureşti, Editura All, 1995

Irimia, D., *Introducere în stilistică,* Iaşi, Editura Polirom, 1999

Ispirescu, P., *Basmele românilor, vol. I, - O colecție nemuritoare,* Bucureşti, Editura Curtea Veche Publishing, 2010

Mancaş, M., *Limbajul artistic românesc modern. Schiță de evoluție,* Bucureşti, Editura Universității Bucureşti, 2005

Vrabie, Gh., *Structura poetică a basmului,* Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1975.

BDD-A5877 © 2011 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:52:00 UTC)