

Decoding the Paradox in Garcia Marquez's One-Sentence-Long Story, "Great Enchanter"

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Abstract

The present article studies one unique postmodernist experiment of a complete violation of the traditional story construction by the Nobel Prize winner Garcia Marquez. One of his stories: "The Last Voyage of the Ghost Ship" is written in the form of one sentence, although, graphically occupying six or seven pages of the text. The genius of the writer let him combine such evident (but actually specially planned) violation of the norm with complete semantic transparency which led to the enthusiastic reception of the story by the press as well as by his readers. The aim of my article is to decode this evident paradox with the help of more traditional and modern cognitive approaches and technologies of text analysis. Thus, we make use of such several well-known and accepted linguistic notions as narrative structure, ekphrasis and others alike with innovations of general cognitive approach. The latter has the power to explain the surprising phenomenon of the readers' complete embodiment into the picture created by the author (scientifically called "mental ekphrasis"). Different forms of multimodality contribute to the general effect. The whole architecture of the text is supported very elegantly and simply with the help of mainly coordinate conjunctions. The results of our empirical analysis prove our explanation of the evident effect of all these special tools of linguistic text construal expertly chosen by Garcia Marquez.

Keywords: Marquez's anniversary, one-sentence-long story, norm violation, traditional and cognitive technologies, ekphrasis, notional ekphrasis, narrative structure, multimodality.

Introduction

In 2017, people of Latin America will mark off the 90 years anniversary since the birth of the well-known writer Gabriel Garcia Márquez, called "the Great Enchanter" by one of the reporters: A. Feinstein in 1982 [1].

G. Márquez was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for his novels and stories reflecting the life and conflicts of the whole continent via intricate mix of the mundane and the fantastical. His literary style was characterized as magic realism. Once the author himself remarked that he wrote for people to read him and for people to love him. There is no doubt that this desire was wholly realized. However, there is one more obligatory condition in between these two wishes. This is the ability of the readers to understand completely the message, the content of his books.

The aim of this article is to make a tentative attempt to decipher the riddle of Márquez's literary technologies with the help of innovative ideas and special tools of modern linguistics. To achieve this aim I have chosen G. Márquez's the most mysterious and exciting (for many readers, and linguists, in particular) one-sentence long story: "The Last Voyage of the Ghost Ship",

translated from Spanish by Gregory Rabassa [2]. It is noteworthy to mention that Márquez's novels and stories have been translated into more than 35 languages of the world, but he himself said that he even preferred the English version of Gregory Rabassa better [3].

"Collected Stories" (translated into English by G. Rabassa) was received with great enthusiasm by the readers and by the press as well. Remarks were very flattering. Only some of them placed on the cover of this book sound in this way: "An exquisite writer, wise, compassionate and extremely funny" ("Sunday Telegraph"); "No lover of fiction can fail to respond to the grace of Márquez's writing" ("Sunday Telegraph"); "Márquez has insights and sympathies which he can project with the intensity of a reflecting mirror in a bright sun. He dazzles us with powerful effect" ("New Statesman"); "Of all the living authors known to me, only one is undoubtedly touched by genius: Gabriel Garcia Márquez" ("Sunday Telegraph") et cetera [3].

And in the press, there was one more complimentary remark which could refer to our special object of analysis: "The Last Voyage of the Ghost Ship", the most unusual story, consisting of only one sentence, without any punctuation marks, and occupying six pages: a real "treat" for analysis. This quotation is "Every word and incident counts, everything hangs together, the work is a neatly perfect organism" ("Financial Times"). As for the story, our preliminary judgment coincides with the above-said. The story "The Last Voyage of the Ghost Ship" does answer all necessary criteria: having semantics and form, which appear to be even traditional. But how could the author do it in just one sentence?

Now in the next part, it will be time to pass over to some innovative theoretical assumptions: notions, technologies which may be useful in solving this riddle. But before that, we are to give very brief information about the general content of the story and its construction.

Actually, the very construction of the story looks even usual. Technically, it consists of several episodes including instances of descriptions, narratives and represented speech. The story can even be easily retold as most of the words are used in their denotational meanings. However, it tells us about some strange incidents happening to a boy. The story has cyclic repetition: at the definite time of the year and of the date the boy, in the dark, at the sea-shore, sees the strange abandoned ship without lights passing slowly by; the boy grows up, and the same sight is still regularly repeated. Nobody in the village believes him; they mock at him and even beat him. But the story goes on coming to some unexpected and also unusual end.

This extremely brief information concerning the story under analysis discovers evident linguistic and stylistic contradiction. On the one hand, the above-mentioned text is written like "a normal" story consisting of several episodes; on the other hand, the "normal" one-sentence stories of several episodes, according to general common and scientific knowledge, can never be written. To settle this evident challenge we will try to use some innovating ideas, notions, and methodologies [4].

Methods and Materials

In this part of my article, I have outlined the basic contemporary linguistic notions and, partly, the existing specific tools of analysis which can discover the secret of the success of Márquez's small masterpiece: the story "The Last Voyage of the Ghost Ship". However, keeping at the back of my mind that the basic obligatory parts of any analysis are limited to getting the answer to two questions: What and How, we have started from a very simple supposition. The interest and enthusiasm of the readers are explained by the fact that they have recognized in the story the

possible imaginary fate of the denotat known better by the name "The Flying Hollander". And they are greatly excited by Marquez's variant (quite in the genre of fantastic realism) of the story's possible end written with artistic elegance and charm. From the scientific angle, I have identified in Marquez's text, recognized by M.A. Halliday, the so-called ideational meaning with its three components: cognitive (mental), affectionate and perceptual [4:99-102]. Elements of corresponding analysis will follow in our empirical research.

For returning to the main purpose of this part, I have to state that the tools of my empirical analysis are based on the integrated contemporary methodology of traditional linguistic and especially stylistic data, as well as data of narratology and cognitive poetics. We have restricted this knowledge to very brief commentary on basic notions proper for the sake of analysis of this special source. They have been given earlier as keywords: narrative structure, multimodality, ekphrasis, and notional ekphrasis. The first two have been explored most efficiently in the book by the authors N. Norgaard, B. Busse and K. Montoro under the title "Key Terms in Stylistics" providing key approaches, concepts, terms and called "Stylistics tool-box" [4:6]. According to their approach, the contemporary cognitive poetics explores mental processes involved in the creation of literary texts and investigates mental constructs. Being under the umbrella of correlated disciplines cognitive poetics is closely linked to psychology, narratology and other disciplines. In my previously written book (in Russian) I have endeavored to explore notions: narratology and narrative [9]. I have used the definitions from G. Prince's book "A Dictionary of Narratology: Narratology: the Form and Function of Narrative" [10]. So, then I have adduced them, "'Narratology': The (Structuralist – inspired) theory of Narrative. Narratology studies the nature, form, and functioning of narrative and thus, to characterize narrative competence" [9:46]. "'Narrative': The recounting (as product and process, object and act, structure and structuration) of one or more real or fictitious events communicated by one, two or several (more or less overt) narrators to one, two or several (more or less overt) narrates [9:43]. Usually, such most important features of the narrative are mentioned as expressing a sequence of events. Prototypicality of the narrative is re-opened in the following six macro-structural elements described first by the American scholars W. Labov and J. Waletzky: Abstract, Orientation, Complication Evaluation, Result or Resolution and Coda. They are universally known by the term "the diamond scheme". Their presence is explicitly realized in several episodes of Marquez's story.

Multimodality is a new but broad contemporary discipline of integrated character. It includes general modality as "the potential of the language to project the speaker's or writer's attitude about the proposition expressed" [4:113]. Hence, it is closely connected, in its turn, with the studies of the point of view, focalization and mind style [4:113]. In my previously mentioned book, I have explored the notions "Voice" and "Point of view" as the basic ones in structural and cognitive poetics. Below, I give the definitions because they are explicitly presented in Marquez's story.

To generalize, I state that G. Márquez successfully succeeded to transfer to the readers of the story complete embodiment, involving the impact of all verbalized ways of sense perceptions: visualization, acoustic (auditory), olfactory, tactile, gustatory ones. All these contemporary innovative special terms explaining the readers' comprehension have been offered to linguistics by the result of the synergy of correlated disciplines in the cognitive science, in general; and, in this particular case, of the linguistics' interface with psychology.

One most important factor in this process of achieving complete mental immersion of the readers into this imaginary reality is, undoubtedly, transferred with the help of verbalized

descriptions of the story. At this stage, the linguist comes to the forgotten but newly revived rhetorical device: “ekphrasis”.

According to Wikipedia, **“Ekphrasis** or **ecphrasis**, from the Greek description of a work of art, possibly imaginary, produced as a rhetorical exercise, and is a graphic, often dramatic, description of a visual work of art” [5]. And, further on: “a painting may represent a sculpture and vice versa; a poem portrays a picture; a sculpture depicts a heroine of a novel ... any art may describe any other art [5].

We cannot but mention and admire an example of a perfect and impressive illustration of ekphrasis described by Peter Verdonk who used William Carlos Williams’s poem “The Dance”, as a verbalized image of Peter Brueghel the Elder’s picture “The Kermess”. His analysis was based on innovative ideas and tools of cognitive poetics and psychology (experience, memory, perception, imagination, emotion) [6]. In our previous article: Andreeva, K. & Beloborodko, E. “New Approaches to Very Traditional Notion “Ekphrasis” in the Dialogue of Linguistics and Art”, we also endeavored to analyze the ekphrasis based on the correlation of a piece of painting: Peter Brueghel’s picture “Hunters in the Snow” and poetry: three poems by J. Berriman, W.C. Williams and W.de la Marr who presented their individual visions and interpretation of Breughel’s masterpiece [7]. Actually, ekphrasis, originally and more commonly used as a rhetorical or stylistic device (or notion transmitting description or picture), has recently broadened the sphere of its application by acquiring wider semiotic significance in the process of explaining recipients’ complete visual immersion into the created (verbalized) image. The development of the notion led to its further division into different types: direct (factual), intertextual, complete or partial, implicit, monological or polylogical, static or dynamic and others. The most essential gradation is based on the really existent media object or only imagined one.

However, in this present article, we come across a special type of it as a part of the written text which is called notional. **“Notional ekphrasis** may describe mental processes such as dreams, thoughts, and whimsies of the imagination” [5]. In the story under discussion, notional (mental) ekphrasis used by Márquez made a deep impression on usual readers as well as on critics. The imaginary object of “The Ghost Ship” was created in the form of several verbalized descriptions. Thus, they may be analyzed as cases of **notional ekphrasis**. In addition to these innovations, contemporary poetics has also contributed greatly to proposing new tools for stylistic analysis, such as the categories: **Perspectivization, Point of View, Voice**. Structural-semantic organization of the text is determined by the chosen **Point of View** revealing differing opinions concerning the presentation of factual information. Voice usually implies the existence of the narrator of the events: the author or different characters, the latter is verbalized in different ways: direct or indirect speech, first or third person narratives. Perspective and Point of View (as well as Focalization) are often understood as synonymic expressions, and as the most important categories of Structural and Cognitive Poetics. Gerald Prince defines Point of View as the perceptual or conceptual position from which the events of the story are narrated [10]. In one of our previous articles, we made reference to the opinion of M. Bal who affirms that Perspective depends on the peculiarities of perception: position to the object, distance, light, direction, psychological positions. And J. Lotman claims the presence of the doubtless connection between the point of view and foregrounding in visual art [9]. The authors of “Key Terms in Stylistics”, presenting Katie Wales’ typology of different varieties of Point of View, especially single out the following: “Point of View, in the figurative sense, entails not only the presence of a conceptualizing character or focalizer, but also a particular way of conceptualizing a world view or ideology” [op.cit.,4]. The typology of Point of View includes the following types: visual,

psychological, the inner and the outer ones, objective, subjective, fixed, dispersed and multiple ones (coming from different personages) [8, 9]. In our research of interplay of linguistics and image making, we rely especially on psychological points of view and visualization.

Results of Empirical Research

All the above-mentioned innovative approaches and tools have made the basis for the practical analysis of the one-sentence story by Márquez "The Last Voyage of the Ghost Ship". The text is written in the 1st person (in the voice of a boy, later, growing up to become a young man). The main point of view in Márquez's story is the boy's, it is subjective, dispersed, visual (when he is looking at the illusionary ship) and psychological (what he thinks about it). It has dynamic character (from: it is a dream, an apparition – to: it is real). The boy's point of view is opposed to that of his mother and to the opinion of villagers (subjective ones). The description of the 'Ghost ship' is coming in differing kaleidoscopic fragments. No graphically marked passage has been employed by the author. Still the story clearly falls into eight situations telling the reader about cyclic (once in every year) appearance of the Ghost Ship having prototypical narrative structure.

Notional ekphrasis is presented via very expressive descriptions in all the eight situations. The progress of the ship is given with the help of **dynamic descriptions**. This very slow progress of the liner passing near the village, like a ghost without any lights and sound, every year in the month of March and observed by the boy only, is expressed lexically by the verbs of motion: to pass, to head, to sink, to grope its way, to disappear, to reappear; and as a rule, all verbs are used in Simple Past Tense. The description is verbalized by the nouns modified in their turn by descriptive adjectives, denoting size, form, and others: 'the huge ocean liner', 'illusory liner', 'the unlikely apparatus', 'inconceivable size'; some denote emotions: 'overwhelming revelation', 'vision miracle'. The nouns with slightly differing nominations are used as well: 'apparition', 'a great palace' (metaphor), 'a dream', 'illusion', 'vision'. The phrases often display the use of stylistic devices: similes: 'longer than the whole village', 'much taller than the steeple', 'like a great uninhabited palace', 'like a sleep walker', 'bigger than any other thing in the world', 'darker than any other thing on land or seas', 'as if it were a sea-lamp'.

At the end of the story, G. Márquez uses only one but a very expressive metaphor: 'the last key of the enchantment'. The episodes appear to be unreal, mysterious, even fantastic, resembling a dream, illusion, apparition which perfectly coincides with the definition of notional ekphrasis. All these cyclic night scenes are presented via the sight of the only spectator: the boy. G. Márquez skillfully uses new signals of multimodality: words of sense perceptions denoting visualization: the verbs see, watch – with the objects of seeing and result: 'the flash', 'the light': verbs: to illuminate. Acoustic perception is very special. At first, there is not a sound coming from the liner. But closer to the end the ship becomes as if alive: 'the great roar of the whistle', 'to wheeze', 'clatter', 'wing flap'. The boy's perception is expressed by the verb to hear. Olfactory perception is verbalized by the nouns: 'fragrance', 'fearful shark's breath'. Perceptual information is vividly expressed here via marks of verbalization.

The verbs in different forms and as parts of phrases express tactile perception: throbbing, be soaked with the downpour. Multimodality in its broader sense is evident here.

Discussion

Our empirical analysis shows several opposing tendencies of development of the action of the story "The Last Voyage of the Ghost Ship" by Gabriel Márquez concerning its content, form and

even genre. Most part of the story is written in the form of represented speech of the boy coming very close to the stream of consciousness. The boy himself doubts whether what he saw was real or just a dream or vision and he was even beaten for his attempts to tell people of his village about this incident. The reader is inclined to share his uncertainty. But in the middle of the story the boy becomes convinced of the reality of existence of the Ship: the liner was there, with all of its inconceivable size, lord, bigger than any other big thing in the world...The whole story is accompanied by the boy's refrain: 'now they are going to see who I am'. The Ghost Ship becomes by and by even more alive: silence turns into the whistle, its lights go on, some fragrance of laurel is felt, the sounds of the orchestra on the moon decks and even the throbbing of the arteries of high sea lovers. The boy makes up his mind to show the way to the ship and directs it straight to his village, to the last place of its rest for the astonishment of all people. This unexpected part reminds us rather of fairy tales. So, it lies with the reader to decide if the events are real or just imagined.

To single out affectionate information I can afford quoting the last part of the story. The heading of the ship appears to be symbolic and even turned out to be the point of special discussion at forums. Actually, it appeared to be in Hungarian, and it means "The Star of Death".

... it was too late, because there were the shells of the shoreline, the stones of the street, the doors of the disbelievers, the whole village illuminated by the lights of the fearsome liner itself, and he barely had time to get out of the way to make room for the cataclysm, shouting in the midst of the confusion, there it is, you cowards, a second before the huge steel cask shattered the ground and one could hear the neat destruction of ninety thousand five hundred champagne glasses breaking, one after the other, from stem to stern, and then the light came out and it was no longer a March dawn but the noon of a radiant Wednesday, and he was able to give himself the pleasure of watching the disbelievers as with open mouths they contemplated the largest ocean liner in this world and the other aground in front of the church, whiter than anything, twenty times taller than the steeple and some ninety-seven times longer than the village, with its name engraved in iron letters, *Halalcsillag*, and the ancient and languid waters of the sea of death dripping down its sides [2:233].

The form of the story is utterly unusual for this genre. So many events of eight episodes on six pages of the text are practically packed into one sentence without any full stops inside, but still, the discourse looks very natural. The narrative structure appears to be normal, containing prototypical for the genre's basic functions: **complication** – **resolution** [10, 8]. The only grammatical admission of G. Márquez is the usage of commas in the text. He also uses traditional connectives inside the text keeping the parts of the narrative together. R.W. Langacker especially underlines the importance of conjunctions as the conceptual basis for text construal [11], and Márquez skillfully uses this particular technology helping him even to avoid the usage of separate sentences. The most frequently used conjunction is "and". I have counted its appearance in 42 cases. The conjunction "but" occupies the second position being used 16 times. Still, the most impressive feature of the text is the use of notional ekphrasis: the dynamic surprising description of the Ghost Ship is exciting to complete reader's embodiment. To achieve this effect Márquez uses most skillfully all possible ways and tools of the text construction: choice of words, special stylistic means and even all forms of reader's sensual perception. So this is a very successful example of what literary critics called magic realism.

Conclusion

Thus, the synergy of contemporary ideas, tools of linguistic analysis and their application to this most unusual one-sentence-long story by G. Marquez contribute to the better understanding of readers 'and critics' universal acclaim of it as a very special but not common case, violating all possible norms but yet undoubtedly providing all the readers' complete immersion into the final stage of the tragic fate of the "Flying Hollander" in accordance with the artistic talent and skills of "the Great Enchanter".

To sum up, I state that my analysis completely support the evaluation given by "Sunday Telegraph" concerning this most unusual one-sentence-long story by Márquez: "The exactitude and felicity of his imagery are so great that reading a five-page story written as a single sentence of "The Last Voyage of the Ghost Ship" – is a pleasure rather than a chore" [op.cit. 3]. To add to this, we have every right to call this story by G. Márquez's "the smallest possible magic miracle" in the genre of short stories.

At the very end of my article, I present the image of "The Flying Hollander".



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