REVIEW OF NARRATIVE STRUCTURES IN BURMESE FOLK TALES. BY SOE MARLAR LWIN, AMHERST, NY: CAMBRIA PRESS, 2010. XVI + 178

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This is a review of a book containing a Narrative Analysis of the plots of 27 Burmese folk tales in English translation. As applied here, Narrative Analysis is an insightful set of research methodologies to discover regular features of plot structures; however, it does not include the aspects of Textual Analysis that dig deeply into the structures and features of the original language. In this book, no actual features of the Burmese language are discussed. Both Narrative Analysis and Textual Analysis fall into the same broad set of methodologies and inquiries that are covered by the term Discourse Analysis. This book is valuable in understanding and guiding analysis of narratives following in the tradition of Vladimir Propp and his study of the morphology of Russian fairy tales. The book proposes a clear, imitable method that allows comparison of folk tale structure using form, function and field. It also suggests ways that Narrative Analysts and Folklorists can examine cultural influences reflected in the folktales.

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Before one opens a book on Discourse (or Textual) analysis, one wonders which of many approaches and schools of methodology the author will follow. Will it focus on the analysis of language-specific foregrounding and participant reference techniques (e.g. Longacre 1996, Burusphat 1991, 2016), or on some of the many other language-specific possibilities? Or perhaps it will center its analysis on folklore or folk-literature (e.g. Dundes 1980, Propp 1968), and narratology (Toolan 1988)? The present book is in the tradition of the last three authors. This book investigates the aspects of a story that can be analyzed without reference to the original text, as in a paraphrase or a translation. This is much as one can study the structure and other features of a translated book like Augustine's Confessions without being able to read Latin, in the same way these Burmese folk tales are studied in an English translation. Twenty-seven folk tales in English translation from Burma (Myanmar) are analyzed for narrative structure: Tales 1 to 17 were originally in the Burmese language, and Tales 18 to 27 came from non-Burmese languages spoken in Burma.

Folk tales have their origin in a generations long, orally transmitted folk tradition that came before the development of writing. Marlar acknowledges that the transmission, writing and printing of these folk tales has inevitably resulted in some modification of the tales. However, those modifications are not crucial for Marlar's research. The narrated events and the participants, which she calls the "fundamental events forming the story structure," can be transferred "from medium to medium, from language to language" and can survive in a faithful paraphrase or translation (3). What can be transferred through the translation process? Narrated events and their structure, including indicators of connectors and participants. These elements are the focus of Marlar's study. What about other elements? Prominence, cohesion, word choice, style, language-specific phonology, morphology and syntax, and such are not easily studied in translation without access to the original production of the narrative. Language-specific elements reside in the original narrative.

Narrative may be difficult to define precisely. A basic working definition of narrative would be a monologue discourse relating chronologically connected events. Marlar states the basic axiom that by nature, narrative is dualistic: "narrative comprises a what ([story, fabula]; narrative content, such as events, actors [agents or experiencers], time and location) and a way ([discourse, the textual realization of the story]; how the narrative is told)" (6). Marlar's book is primarily concerned with the narrative, that which can potentially be completely transferred into a translation or paraphrase.

In the Preface, Marlar explains her three of her goals: 1. investigating "the narrative structures in the folk tales of Burma (Myanmar), collected and translated into English by Maung Htin Aung;" 2. identifying "the functional events in these tales as the basic components of a story structure [and] how these events are linked into various plot structures in different types of tales;" and 3. attempting to relate "the form (narrative structure) of a folk tale to its function (social purpose) and field (narrative content) by comparing two structural patterns identified in [these tales] with those proposed by other studies of folk tales from different cultures" (xi).

To some extent, the book follows the outline of a typical doctoral dissertation: e.g. Chapter 2 "Narrative and its structures" contains many definitions and a review of relevant literature, and Chapter 7 is "Conclusions and recommendations." Both chapters are helpful in understanding and applying the goals and methods the author explains. Marlar draws concepts from several different analysis schemes and shapes them into one method. Her book takes much of Chapter 2 to introduce and discuss the different approaches, concepts and methods of Narrative structure analyses of her source authors.

According to Propp (1968), a structural (or 'morphological') study of folk tales identifies the component parts and how they are related to each other and the story as a whole. For Propp, a Russian fairy tale's Functional Events (maximum 31) and the characters (the dramatis personae) that perform them are stable, limited in number, in a fixed sequence and characteristic of one type of fairy tale structure. Marlar builds on Propp's foundation—applying, modifying and expanding it. These Functional Events have descriptive names such as Interdiction, Violation, Villainy and Guidance.

Marlar's overall method of investigating narrative structure can be gleaned from various places in the book, covering not only description of one tale, but also a corpus of tales and even cross-cultural comparisons of folktales. There is much more to her several steps (6 steps the way I have numbered them) than is summarized below. Steps 1 and 2 are necessary but preliminary steps leading to the analysis that she focuses on. I have broken out a few more steps to allow me to arrange most of her proposed method in one place. There is no place in the book where the various steps are all brought together in one list like this.

- Step 1 is to identify the participants (Propp's dramatus personae).
- Step 2 is to classify the participants into appropriate narrative roles, such as Propp's Villain or Helper. In theory, all of the active participants in a tale can be grouped and analyzed into the seven leading dramatis personae who perform the functional events.
- Step 3 is to identify the fundamental constituents of one tale: Functional Events, Moves and Connectives, and the order they occur in the Plot. These fundamental constituents, including the dramatus personae, are the four components of a folktale's structure. (Step 3 is broken down into sub-steps a, b and c below to allow description. Much of Marlar's book is focused around these issues.)
- Step 3a is to identify each Functional Event. Marlar summarizes a Functional Event (the most fundamental requirement of a narrative) as "an act of a character defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the [overall] action" (24). A Functional Event to some extent correlates to what others call Episodes, in that it can be narrated using anywhere from one to several event clauses (11). For instance, in Marlar's analysis of 'The Big Tortoise' tale, one Functional Event, 'Guidance,' is composed of two substantial paragraphs beginning with event clauses headed by the event verbs 'come', 'sell', 'rest', 'fall' and so on (152).
- Step 3b is to identify the Moves in the plot; for Propp a Move is a new series of Functional Events initiated by a new act of villainy (27).
- Step 3c is to investigate the linkage of functional events of the narrative's storyline. Marlar uses Jason's (1977) Connective (connecting parts of the narrative) to describe how events are "interlocked with each other linearly in a plot structure" (22). "Connectives should be regarded as another type of fundamental constituent, like Functional Events, which serves as a device through which tales are arranged into a well-organized storyline" (29).

- At the end of Step 3, one would have analyzed the dramatis personae, and the ordered structure of Functional Events, Moves and Connectives for each of the narratives in the corpus one wants to analyze.
- Step 4 is to classify the various analyzed narratives into groups of similarly ordered fundamental constituents in similar plots. Arrange all the selected tales into groups to identify different models (types) of tales. Each group is a Model. The focus here is to identify the different structural patterns of a typical model, using the previously identified dramatis personae roles, Functional Events, Moves, and Connectives. In Marlar's study of Burmese folktales, she identifies six basic models reflected in the story structure, including Reward/Punishment Tales, Interdiction/Violation Tales, Problem/Solution Tales, Trickster Tales and Fairy Tales.
- Step 5 is to build on this discussion of narrative structure (form) by relating it to social purpose (function) and story content (field). The analysis in the previous steps identified only the form of each model. By the end of Step 5, all of the narratives in the corpus have been used to identify characteristics of prototypical narrative models (form, function and field), and each tale fits in one of the models (or is a hybrid of more than one model).
- Step 6 is an invitation to move beyond the boundaries of the culture of the original corpus. After Marlar identified the six narrative patterns of these Burmese folk tales, she gives some examples of structural likenesses that may be found in some other cultures. Marlar proposes that models of story structure can be used as possible criteria "in the categorisation of different types of tales in a culture, and probably also of tales across different cultures" (21).

Marlar broadens the narrow dramatis personae categories of Propp's Russian fairy tales. For instance, sometimes Protagonist A and Protagonist B (and indeed Protagonists C, D, etc.) are more suitable labels (rather than Hero, Princess or Villain). Protagonists compete on equal terms (25).

Marlar's goals of investigating Burmese folktales' narrative structures, identifying the Functional Events and Connectors in these tales, and organizing them into various plot structures in different types of tales, are carried out thoroughly and transparently enough to imitate. Consistent with its nature, another of Marlar's goals, attempting to relate "the form (narrative structure) of a folk tale to its function (social purpose) and field (narrative content) by comparing two structural patterns identified in [these tales] with those proposed by other studies of folk tales from different cultures" (xi), is accomplished in an exploratory and suggestive way rather than exhaustive.

Dundes (1980), Marlar (2010), Propp (1968) and many other narrative analysts have suggested that the identification of orderly sequences of events ("distinct story structures") in stories is a legitimate and useful approach. The somewhat contrastive approaches of analysts such as Longacre (1996), Burusphat (1991, 2016) and others are more focused on the way a narrative is told, i.e. the texture of a discourse, the "concrete level of textual realisation," and the language specific lexemes and grammar that are used to actually tell the story (e.g. 16).

Some context on how this book compares with other literature on discourse analysis can be helpful. A comparison with Burusphat's work (1991) illustrates what the book under review is and is not about. The authors' contrasting methods of analysis are reflected in their differing techniques. Yet both authors analyze the structure of selected folk tale narratives from their respective cultures. Both authors describe the parts in the progress of a narrative, and both are concerned with those narratives' participants, storyline and macrostructures (although with slightly different definitions).

Burusphat (1991) collects, transcribes and translates a corpus of narratives from Thailand. After investigating the macrostructures of the narratives, she investigates which words, sentences and paragraphs in the Thai language are used by the narrators to tell their stories. For example, the elements of the Thai language that indicate storyline events (foreground) and supporting (background) clauses are discussed, as well as the resources of the Thai language that the narrators used to indicate participant rank in identifying and referencing participants. STN refers constantly to features of the Thai language from Thai phonology and grammar to Thai particles, based on Longacre's (1996) text analysis method (STN:1). The appendix of STN contains the transcribed Thai with interlinearized glosses of nine narratives. Thus, her quest is to investigate how a folk tale is told in the Thai language to listeners who are of the Thai culture. Her methods can, and have been, used to investigate other languages and narrating techniques, but the ultimate goal is not

a comparison of types of tales but a description of utilization of Thai language resources to narrate Thai folk tales in their original language. This is discourse analysis of the textual analysis variety.

Marlar (2010) also discusses macrostructure and storyline events, albeit with slightly different identification techniques. However, that is where the similarity ends. NSB focuses on the cognitive and semantic plot structures of 27 Burmese folk tales in English translation; no reference is made to any Burmese language features. Instead, the focus is on analyzing and classifying the plots of these narratives so that the tales can be compared to each other and to folk tales in other languages.

Marlar's goal is to identify similarities and differences in the structures by identifying the patterns of functional events and transitional elements associated with the various types of tales she identifies. She examines and expands Propp's (1968) list of 31 Functional Events and Moves (Propp's morphology) of the Russian fairy tale. She explores how well Propp's morphology fits these Burmese tales, and she identifies arrangements of these patterns to classify at least 5 types of folk narratives. Marlar (2010) is looking for plot descriptions that can be investigated across cultures. She proposes that these folk narrative types should be looked for in the folk tales of other Southeast Asian cultures in the quest for a classification scheme that would allow comparison across cultures. Ultimately, her quest is to analyze how a story is told, not just in the Burmese language but in several languages. Thus her investigation utilizes translated tales, because it is the elements that translate best that interest her. This is discourse analysis of the narratology variety.

Both Burusphat's and Marlar's books discuss events on the storyline, but with different definitions. For Burusphat (1991), the storyline is composed of the foregrounded Thai clauses used to tell the story including the Thai language elements that identify the storyline clause by clause. Thus it is necessary for Burusphat (1991) to discuss Thai lexemes and clause structure. For Marlar, the storyline is a summary of the functional events, moves and connectors in an abstracted format and is not directly concerned with each event verb. Underlying NSB are Propp's conclusions that functional events and the characters that perform them are stable, limited in number, in a fixed sequence, and characteristic of one type of fairy tale structure. For Marlar, an event is a Propp Functional Event at the highest level of plot, but for Burusphat (1991) an event is portrayed in one clause having tense and aspect, contrasting with states (non-events) and various other elements.

Admirably Marlar moves deftly beyond looking for narrative models with parallel structure in different cultures; she gives examples of how narratives can be examined for cultural influences, too. Folk tales preserved for generations not only reflect a culture but also instill certain concepts in the society [what some call enculturation]. Marlar uses her reward/punishment model and the interdiction/violation model to "explore the possibility of making claims on the relationship between the narrative structure (form), the social purpose (function) and the story content (field) of folk tales" (109). In looking for the interaction of form, function and field, Marlar compares the Theravada Buddhism influence she finds in Burmese folk tales with the Confucian influence she finds in Korean folk tales (Grayson 2002). Grayson labels Marlar's reward/punishment folktale as a 'contrastive narrative structure' for Korean folk tales (115). A primary cultural function of narrative is imparting moral teaching about "psychologically significant themes of honesty, kindness, generosity, jealousy, arrogance, greed, and so forth" (117). The Burmese tales reinforce Buddhist values of contentment as opposed to greed. Korean tales reflect kindness amid cultural norms of social assistance (117) as well as the Confucian values of proper elder/younger brother relations (118).

Similar tales are described by Dundes (1971) in African folk tales for instilling "the significance of friendship in the African culture" (Marlar 2010:122). But in certain similarly structured tales in American Indian tales, the theme of friendship is absent. Burmese is similar but not limited to friendship; there is more emphasis on maintaining equilibrium. The tales from various cultures have similar structure and purpose but the content remains culturally specific. Thus if all three (form, function and field) are to be considered, then there is no universal grammar of folk tales. But perhaps folk tales from adjacent countries may share more characteristics due to mutual influence. Looking more deeply at folktales through form, function and field could lead to a better understanding of related narrative structures from various cultures (Marlar 2010:123).

Marlar ends the body of her text with recommendations for future research. Among other suggestions, she invites development of a research schema that will allow for comparison of similar tale types across languages and cultures. She asks questions such as whether there are narrative patterns characteristic for Southeast Asia.

This book is stimulating for anyone interested in how stories are told in any culture and language, as well as anyone who is interested in the folktales of the various cultures of Southeast Asia, cross-cultural

studies, comparative literature, even translation studies. This book has a more cognitive approach, addressing mental ideas evoked rather than linguistic cues which point to mental ideas. Marlar's suggestions also converge with textual analysis terms, such as theme, structure, and genre/typology. The book is a good introduction to narrative analysis, perhaps helping to broaden one's definition of discourse analysis, especially for those for whom discourse analysis is practically a synonym for textual analysis.

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