Metamorphosis in fiction:
A supra-sentential analysis

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes an innovative approach to the analysis of fiction texts through the combined means of three points of view, viz. FSP, discourse subjects (DSs) and their cohesive chains, and cohesive ties. It explores the theme of metamorphosis of the characters as it appears in all the three examined aspects, and the influence the metamorphosis exerts on them.

Three main problems are discussed in the paper. Firstly, it deals with unexpected tokens in the identity chains of the DSs undergoing the metamorphosis and the cohesive ties through which they are incorporated in these cohesive chains. Secondly, it addresses seeming abrupt switches between two thematic progressions which in fact form just one progression. Lastly, the paper discusses the function of the features detected in the texts in relation to the complexity of the idea of metamorphosis.

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to propose an innovative approach to a supra-sentential analysis of fictional texts. The idea is to combine three distinct points of view: functional sentence perspective with a special focus on thematic progressions, discourse subjects and their cohesive chains, and cohesive ties. For this purpose, the paper explores the theme of metamorphosis of the characters in two short stories by Angela Carter and a fairy tale on which they are based.

From the point of view of the functional sentence perspective the utterance can be divided into two main parts, theme and rheme (Červenka 1982: 16). The division of an utterance can be more detailed (see Firbas 2006), but for the purposes of the present pilot study we will restrict ourselves to the distinction between the thematic and the non-thematic part of an utterance. It is "the theme that plays an important constructional role" (Daneš 1974: 113). Since the idea of metamorphosis is likely to influence the build-up of the text, the main focus of the first part of the analysis lies in the thematic progressions.

The concept of thematic progression is understood in accordance with Daneš (1974: 114) as "the choice and ordering of utterance themes, their mutual concatenation and hierarchy, as well as their relationship to the hyperthemes […], to the whole text, and to the situation". The classification used for the purposes of the analysis follows Daneš's three criteria of classification of thematic progressions, viz. what is

thematised, if it is adopted as a whole or derived, and whether the thing thematised immediately precedes the utterance in question (i.e. the contact or distant thematisation) (Daneš 1985: 208–210). Detecting those thematic progressions in the text that include the characters undergoing metamorphosis can help determine their position and participation in the text.

The discourse subjects, which are central to the second part of the analysis, can be defined as "anything — i.e. objects, properties, states, relations, processes, actions, events, stories, even text parts — that the speaker has in mind when employing this or that naming unit" (Daneš, in Pípalová 2003: 62). The main discourse subjects, such as the main characters in a story, appear in the text repeatedly. It is this repeated appearance in the text that realizes the coherence of the text (Červenka 1982: 20). The naming units that are used to refer to a discourse subject form a cohesive identity chain, i.e. "a set of items each of which is related to the others by the semantic relation of co-reference" (Halliday and Hasan 1985: 84). By looking at these chains it is possible to track the changes of the individual characters as the story develops.

The coherence as the "underlying connectedness of the text" is mainly realized as cohesion, i.e. the "surface structure linkage between the elements of the text" (Tárnyiková 2002: 30). Therefore, the analysis of cohesion seems to be crucial in understanding how a certain motif is developed throughout a text. The basic unit of cohesion is a cohesive tie, i.e. a semantic relation between two elements of the text (Halliday and Hasan 1985:73). The present paper follows the comprehensive account of cohesion and the classification of cohesive ties presented in Halliday and Hasan (1976, 1985).

2. MATERIAL

The present paper analyses three texts. The first text is the fairy tale "Little Red Cap", originally related by brothers Grimm. The other two texts are short stories written by Angela Carter, published in the anthology *Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*: "The Werewolf" and "The Company of Wolves". These short stories are based on the fairy tale and to a certain extent mirror its structure. Therefore, the theme of metamorphosis is present in all the three texts.

The metamorphosis in the texts is of two distinct kinds. The first type, present in the original fairy tale, is a metamorphosis achieved through the means of a disguise. In the fairy tale, the wolf first changes his voice and pretends to be the Little Red Cap. Then he puts on clothes and pretends to be the grandmother. This type of metamorphosis features in the short stories as well. The idea of metamorphosis is however taken further and developed into the second type, i.e. a real physical change of one character into another. In both short stories it is the wolf who undergoes the change. In "The Werewolf", he is identical with the grandmother, and in "The Company of Wolves", he is also the young man (aka the huntsman).

3. METHOD OF THE ANALYSIS

The paper proposes a combined analysis of the theme of metamorphosis[1] from three points of view, i.e. the analysis of FSP with a special focus on thematic progressions, the analysis of discourse subjects and their cohesive chains, and the analysis of cohesive ties. The methods applied to perform these three parts of the analysis are presented separately in the following three subsections.

3.1 FSP: THEMATIC PROGRESSIONS

Since this paper presents a preliminary exploratory study into the use of this combined approach, the analysis of the FSP and thematic progressions is carried out only to a limited extent. The first restriction is that the basic distributional field is understood to be the main clause. The second simplification is the division of each distributional field into only two parts, i.e. the thematic layer and the non-thematic layer. Both of these limitations can be disposed of in future research to obtain more comprehensive results.

For the purposes of the present analysis of the thematic progressions, the texts were first divided into individual distributional fields. The distributional fields were then noted in an analysis chart, based on the FSP analysis charts proposed by Adam (2007: 42, 43). The original chart was modified to suit better the analysis of the thematic progressions (see Table 1). Each distributional field is denoted by the number of the sentence it occurs in (S) and the number of the field itself (F), numbered separately for each text, irrespective of the sentence boundaries. Each distributional field is divided into the thematic layer and the non-thematic layer. Conjunctions, if they were present, were entered into a separate column (Con.) for the sake of clarity.

S	F	Con.	Thematic layer	Non-thematic layer	TP	TP type	Distance
1	1		It	is a northern country;	T1		
1	2		they	have cold weather,	T2 < R1	1b	contact
1	3		They	have cold hearts.	T3 = T2	2a	contact

TABLE 1. An example of the FSP analysis chart (the beginning of "The Werewolf")

The original chart (Adam 2007) was augmented by three extra columns which reflect the thematic build-up of the texts. The source of each theme is denoted symbolically in the TP column. The symbols used are adopted from Daneš (1985: 208, 209). The

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1   This paper draws partially on the diploma thesis *On the Interface between Thematic Progressions and Cohesive Ties in Selected Modern Short Stories and a Fairy Tale* (Malá, 2017). The methods applied are therefore rather similar. The example tables used in this section were adopted from the thesis.

codes in the next column designate the type of the thematic progression. The clas-
sification follows that of Daneš (1985), which takes into account both the source of
the theme and whether the theme is reiterated as a whole or derived (e.g. the type 1b
refers to a derived thematisation of rheme; 2a refers to a thematic progression with
constant theme, where the theme is reiterated). The last column completes the infor-
mation about the thematic progression employed by marking whether it is the case
of a contact or distant thematisation.

3.2 DISCOURSE SUBJECTS AND COHESIVE CHAINS

Since the paper focuses on the theme of metamorphosis in the texts, this part of the
analysis was restricted to those discourse subjects that undergo the metamorphosis
of either of the two types described above. In all the three texts the discourse subject
of the wolf was central from this point of view. The character is referred to through
both grammatical and lexical naming units. All of these were manually excerpted
from the text and organised into the identity cohesive chain of the discourse subject
(see Figure 1).

the wolf → a wicked beast → he → him → he → wolf → you → the wolf → himself → you
→ you → he → he → I → the wolf → Θ → I → Little Red Cap → (you) → the wolf → he → Θ
→ he → Θ → Θ → grandmother → her → …

FIGURE 1. An example of the cohesive identity chain of the discourse subject "wolf" (the "Little Red Cap")

As can be seen from Figure 1, the chains include even first and second person pro-
nouns used in direct speech and also instances of elliptical subjects, denoted by Θ.
The chains contain naming units found within the same sentence as well as across
the sentence boundary.

3.3. COHESIVE TIES

The analysis of cohesive ties present in the texts draws on the framework of Halliday
and Hasan (1976, 1985). The three texts were carefully examined, and all instances
of cohesive ties were recorded in an analysis chart (Table 2). The location of the tie
within the text is specified by the location of its cohesive item, both in a sentence and
in a paragraph.

Paragraph	Sentence	Cohesive Item	Type	Distance	Presupposed Item
1	2	her	R12	0	a dear little girl
1	2	her	R12	0	a dear little girl
1	3	loved	L1	0	love
1	3	her	R12	M[1]	her → little girl

TABLE 2. An example of the cohesive ties analysis chart (the beginning of the "Little Red Cap")

For each cohesive item the table includes the information about the presupposed item it is linked to, the distance of the tie (immediate (0), remote (R), mediated (M), or cataphoric (K)), and the type of the tie. The classification of the cohesive ties by Halliday and Hasan (ibid.) was slightly modified to describe the detected ties more precisely. Meronymy and antonymy were included in the subcategories of lexical cohesion based on sense relations, and the category "superordinate" was extended to involve also co-hyponymy. The category "collocation", present in the original work, was replaced with a more specifically delimited category of lexical cohesion based on "semantic contiguity" (Daneš 1985: 205). Some minor adjustments in the original coding system followed from these alterations.

4. FINDINGS

The combination of the three points of view outlined above points to the ways in which the metamorphosis of the characters is manifest in the text and how it affects the three aspects of analysis. We will first focus on two ways in which the metamorphosis seems to be manifested, and then on the functions that the detected features may perform in the texts.

4.1 UNEXPECTED TOKENS

The identity cohesive chains of the discourse subjects undergoing the metamorphosis were found to include certain unexpected tokens. These tokens are unexpected in the sense that the discourse subject is referred to by such a naming unit that would not be conventionally expected to be used in reference to it. For example, a lexical naming unit *grandmother* is used in reference to the discourse subject "young man" (ex. 1).

(1) … **the young man** sat patiently, deceitfully beside the bed in granny's nightcap. Rat-a-tap-tap. […] So she came in, […] and perhaps she was a little disappointed to see only her **grandmother** sitting beside the fire. But then **he** flung off the blanket and sprang to the door … ("The Company of Wolves")

While the naming unit itself is not surprising in the context, since it was used as a modifier in the previous sentence (*granny's nightcap*), it is important to realise that these two items do not belong to the same identity chain. The first mention, *granny's*, refers to the discourse subject "grandmother". The token *grandmother*, on the other hand, refers to the discourse subject of the "wolf".

These unexpected tokens can be both of the lexical type (as in ex. 1) and of the grammatical type (ex. 2). The unexpected lexical naming units are always such as would be regularly used in the identity chains of other characters of the story (e.g. the "grandmother" in ex. 1). In the case of grammatical reference a pronoun is used that does not correspond to the conventions including gender and other criteria governing the pronominal reference (in ex. 2: *she* in reference to "wolf", instead of *it*).

(2) **The wolf** let out a gulp, almost a sob, when **she** saw what had happened to it; wolves are less brave than they seem. **It** went lolloping off disconsolately between the trees … ("The Werewolf")

The cohesive identity chains exhibit this anomaly with both types of metamorphosis: ex. 1 exemplifies the metamorphosis through the means of a disguise, in ex. 2 a physical metamorphosis of the character is hinted at.

These unexpected tokens are incorporated in the cohesive chains of the discourse subjects through unusual cohesive ties, which could be characterised as cases of "instantial cohesion" (Halliday and Hasan 1985: 81–82), i.e. relations specific to the present text.

4.2 SWITCHES IN THEMATIC PROGRESSIONS

The second way in which the metamorphosis is visible in the texts involves apparent abrupt switches between two thematic progressions. In other words, a thematic progression with themes realised by one discourse subject is seemingly suddenly interrupted by another thematic progression, whose themes are realised by what seems to be a different discourse subject. This can be seen, for example, in the distributional fields 80 to 91 of the fairy tale (Table 3). The thematic progression with constant theme "grandmother" runs through the fields 80 to 89, alternating with another thematic progression with constant theme "Little Red Cap". However, this progression appears to be abruptly interrupted in the distributional field 90, where the theme is suddenly realised by the "wolf".

F	Con.	Thematic layer	Non-thematic layer
80		Grandmother there	was lying … with her nightcap pulled down over her face.
81		She	looked very strange.
82			„Oh, Grandmother, what big ears you have!"
83		[grandmother][2]	„The better to hear you with."
…		[…]	
88			„Oh, Grandmother, what a big, scary mouth you have!"
89		[grandmother]	„The better to eat you with!"
90		No sooner had the wolf spoken those words than he	leaped out of bed
91	and	[he]	gobbled up poor Little Red Cap.

TABLE 3. An excerpt of the thematic progressions analysis chart for the "Little Red Cap"

2   The stretches of direct speech were understood as subordinate clauses, and accordingly assigned to the non-thematic layer (see also Červenka 1982: 26). The theme of such distributional fields is taken to be the speaker, even if he or she is not expressed overtly. For the sake of clarity only the relevant speaker themes were noted in this table.

The seeming abrupt switch in the thematic progression can be explained by the meta-morphosis of one of the characters. The naming units *grandmother* and *she* in fact belong to the cohesive identity chain of the "wolf". Therefore, there is only one dis-course subject realising the themes of the mentioned distributional fields. Conse-quently, what appears to be two distinct thematic progressions is in fact just one TP with constant theme.

These apparent TP switches can be found in all the texts. They appear in connec-tion with both the metamorphosis by disguise, as was the case in Table 3, and the physical metamorphosis.

As the above examples suggest, the analysis of thematic progressions and their interaction with cohesive chains would be more revealing and precise if its scope were widened. This applies in particular to the possibility of considering subordinate clauses, and thus also the direct speech, as individual distributional fields. This initial study reveals that the metamorphosis is often apparent in the subordinate clauses. Whether the tendencies observed in the main clause distributional fields are pre-served in the subordinate clause fields remains to be investigated.

4.3 FUNCTIONS

The two features suggested by the analysis and described above, viz. unexpected to-kens and switches in thematic progressions, seem to have two main functions in the texts. These functions are closely connected to the complexity of the idea of meta-morphosis present in the texts.

The presence of the unexpected tokens in identity chains as well as a seeming abrupt switch in the thematic progression may emphasise the point of view of one of the characters. Their function is to bring about the perspective of the character, e.g. the "little girl/Little Red Cap" sees the "young man/wolf" as her grandmother in her grandmother's cottage (ex. 1, 3).

(3) **Grandmother** was lying there with her nightcap pulled down over her face. **She** looked very strange.
[…]
"Oh, **Grandmother**, what a big, scary mouth you have!"
"The better to eat you with! " [**he** said.]
No sooner had **the wolf** spoken those words than **he** leaped out of bed and [**he**] gobbled up poor Little Red Cap. ("Little Red Cap")

This appears to be the case with the metamorphosis through disguise. In these cases, the reader is aware of the identity of the discourse subjects. Consequently, such an abrupt change in the theme is possible without the loss of coherence.

The second role these features may play in the texts is linked to the physical meta-morphosis of the characters and therefore appears only in the short stories. The char-acter undergoing metamorphosis is not explicitly pointed out. Therefore, the reader is at first led to believe that there are two separate characters (discourse subjects), e.g. the "wolf" and the "grandmother" in "The Werewolf". The unexpected tokens in cohesive chains and the disrupted thematic progressions can be assumed to serve in

these cases as clues for the readers by which they can uncover the identity of the two discourse subjects. Examples 2 and 4 are representative of such moments.

(4) **He** strips off his trousers and she can see how hairy his legs are. [...]
The last thing the old lady saw in all this world was **a young man**, eyes like cinders, naked as a stone, approaching her bed.
The wolf is carnivore incarnate.
When **he** had finished with her, **he** licked his chops and quickly dressed himself again, [...] ("The Company of Wolves")

In ex. 2, the unexpected token *she* in the identity chain of the "wolf" hints at the human aspect of this wolf, as it really refers to his "grandmother" form. In ex. 4, the thematic progression of the discourse subject "young man" is suddenly interrupted by the theme *the wolf*. Since the reader presupposes coherence of the text, this abrupt appearance of the "wolf" in the thematic layer can be understood as a clue that the token belongs to the same thematic progression and therefore that the naming unit *the wolf* is used for the same discourse subject which was elsewhere referred to by *young man*. The identity of the two seemingly distinct discourse subjects is not stated openly in the short stories. Therefore, the reader has to rely on these clues for understanding the narration.

5. CONCLUSION

The paper proposes a combined analysis on the supra-sentential level from three points of view, viz. the functional sentence perspective, discourse subjects and their cohesive chains, and cohesive ties. Three fiction texts are analysed from this perspective. It is shown that the combination of the three aspects of analysis is potentially productive and might provide a deeper insight into the structure of fiction texts.

It is clear that to delineate the metamorphosis in the three texts to a full extent, a more detailed analysis would be necessary. The findings presented in this paper, however, suggest that this particular type of analysis has the potential for yielding interesting insight into the complex structure of the text . Even in this restricted form, the analysis indicates that there are two main tendencies of how the metamorphosis is manifested in the text. Moreover, it can be assumed that the surface manifestations of metamorphosis play an important role in the development and understanding of the texts.

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