The Influence of Anachronism in Showing the Gap Between Anglo-American and Arab Literary Canons

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to examine the role of using anachronism in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Thousand and Second Tale of Scheherazade* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *The New Arabian Nights*. By implementing the qualitative method, the study explores how these two rewriters endow their stories with new images and allusions. Throughout the analysis, the study reveals how these stories reflect the cultural, chronological, and historical elements of the host culture. It also unfolds the ways in which the ST was rewritten, adapted, and for some demands to suit new ages, cultures, and zones. The study concludes that both writers use anachronism to present issues and themes that reflect their time in a literary conventional mold.

Keywords: Anachronism, chronology, culture.

الملخص

تهدف الدراسة إلى استكشاف دور استخدام المفارقة التاريخية في قصة "شهرزاد الثانية بعد الالف" لإدجار آلان بو، وقصة "*الليالي العربية الحديثة*" لروبرت لويس ستيفنسون. باستخدام المنهج النوعي، تسعى الدراسة الى توضيح الكيفية التي اعتمدها هذان الكاتبان في منح قصصهما صور وأبعاد وإيحاءات جديدة. من خلال التحليل، تكشف الدراسة كيف يعكس هذان العملان العناصر الثقافية والزمنية والتاريخية للثقافة المستهدفة. بالإضافة الى ذلك، تكشف الطرق التي تمت بها إعادة كتابة النص المصدر وتكييفها لتلبية متطلبات الأوقات والثقافات والمناطق الجديدة. وتختتم الدراسة إلى أن كلا الكاتبين قد استخدما المفارقة التاريخية لمعالجة قضايا وموضوعات تعكس عصرهما في قالب أدبي تقليدي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المفارقة التاريخية، التسلسل الزمني، الثقافة.

Introduction

Adapting the collection of *The Thousand- and One-Nights* manifests how writers have used various techniques and strategies, such as anachronism, satire, and parody to present some images and allusions in different eras and places. Julie Sander (2006, p. 19) asserted that adaptation is a process of "proximation and updating" the texts to make them comprehensible and relevant to a new audience. Such view has been implemented by Poe and Stevenson who have adapted, reinterpreted, and recreated the source text of Scheherazade's folktales, and reframed it "in a context-a time and place, a society and culture" according to Hutcheon (2006, p. 142). Adaptation is implemented according to specific literary rules, ideologies, imagination, and interpretation. Consequently, new stories with different images are presented to new readers. She (2006, p. 176) added that adaptation is "how stories evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places". Based on this premise, the discussion includes how the source text of The *Thousand and One Nights* has been rewritten, adapted, developed, and deviated for some demands, to suit new times cultures, and places.

This research is a descriptive and analytical study of using anachronism in the selected stories. It demonstrates how Poe and Stevenson used chronological inconsistencies, intentionally or unintentionally to present their stories to different audiences and at different time. Strictly speaking, they use anachronism to present issues and themes that reflect their time in a conventional mold. The strategy of anachronism is described as "textual phenomena, typically allusions to institutions or places that were not yet in existence at the time of the events being described," according to Carol Atack, Tim Rood, and Tom Phillips (2020, p. 9). In this study, the emphasis is mainly on the role and the purpose of using the technique of anachronism in adapting the ST of *The Thousand and One Nights*. This study is limited to discuss the technique of anachronism in Poe's *The Thousand and Second Tale of Scheherazade*, and Stevenson's *The New Arabian Nights*. The cultural and chronological gaps between the ST and the TTs are demonstrated by the explanation of the differences in time, characters, themes, and textual features.

Literature Review

Susan Bassnett and Lefevere (2003, p. xi) pointed out "all rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and

a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way". Rewritings that are produced for any demands and needs mirror ideological trends that dominate at a specific time and manifest aesthetic precepts that prevail in the literary system. Hence the manipulations that are committed upon a rewritten text play another function in the host culture. In her volume A Theory of Adaptation, Hutcheon suggested that adaptation also can be explained from three perspectives; first, the notion can be seen as an "extensive transposition of a particular work or works" (2006, p. 7). This means transcoding the literary work and changing it from one genre to another. It also means changing the context and retelling a piece of literature from different perspectives. The second meaning is "a process of creation". The third is that adaptation can be viewed as a reinterpretation process but from a new perspective.

According to Hutcheon (2006, p. 142), "adaptation is always framed in a context–a time and place, a society and a culture". By this token, the writer does not repeat the source material in the adaptation process, but changes and modifies the source text in a new context. One can say that such changes occur according to the language, history, and politics of the host culture. Hutcheon (2006, p. xvi) suggested that: "adaptations can and do have different functions in different cultures at different times". The reason is that any text, either the source text or the adaptation, mirrors particular culture and society at any given time. It is noteworthy that the source texts always hunt adaptations, and if the reader knows the source text, s/he always sees its presence in the secondary text. In addition, the concept of adaptation refers to the relationship between two literary works. In the case of Stevenson's *The New Arabian Nights*, and Poe's *The Thousand and Second Tale of Scheherazade*, readers can easily recognize that they are adaptations of The Thousand and One Nights, therefore from the first story, the readers start comparing what they read in both texts. However, using the techniques of anachronism reveals the juxtapositions between the ST and the TTs, which can be recognized in characters, time, culture, language and the subject matter of the stories.

The roots of the concept of anachronism have deepened in the Greek tradition. It is a compound of ἀνά and χρόνος, which mean against time, according to Stephen Davies (2003, p. 29). There are many debates about the first use of this concept. Carol Atack, Tim Rood, and Tom Phillips claim that many scholars and literary

historians like Joseph Luzzi and Peter Burke agree that the first appearance of this concept is in Ancient Greek documents. As a literary phenomenon, anachronism has emerged into use, first in Latin and Italian, then in English and French in the seventeenth century (Atack, Rood, and Phillips, 2020, pp. 15. 16). Atack, Phillips, and Rood claimed anachronism can be used by mixing some elements of two different periods, such as places, institutions, and allusions (2020, p. 9). These elements can be events, characters, things, and ideas of one era with another. Tambling suggested that anachronism is the events or the textual elements that show "what is out of time, what resists chronology" (Tambling, 2010, p. 1). Based on this definition, anachronism denotes a chronological incongruity, referring to an event, object, or concept that is situated outside its proper historical or temporal context.

Anachronism can be used particularly in fictive works that have a historical base. Atack, Rood, and Phillips suggested that this strategy can be deliberately or unintentionally implemented reflecting the ideas and lifestyles that feature different eras. Many motivations alert the writer to use this strategy either in an adaptation or translation (Atack, Rood, and Phillips, 2020 p. 35). The reasons might be cultural or political. Some writers carry out this strategy to promote political, or national ideologies or deliberately blur or emphasize the differences between two periods. Unintentional anachronism arises from errors in historical research or a lack of attention to detail, often considered flaws in historical accuracy. On the other hand, intentional anachronism employed as a deliberate literary or artistic device for various purposes. For example, it is employed to convey a specific message, create humor, evoke irony, or to highlight the cyclical nature of history or to critique contemporary society through the past lens. Atack, Rood, and Phillips stated that "the impetus for the use of anachronism [ ] was a view of history as a process and the growing belief in the possibility of progress in the future" (2020, p. 26).

Additionally, Walter Scott justified using anachronism in works of literature by suggesting that "it is necessary, for exciting interest of any kind, that the subject assumed should be, as it were, translated into the manners as well as the language of the age we live in" (1820, p. xvii). The writer here refers to the importance of using anachronism, which presents the text style to suit the time in which the audience lives. Scott also addressed Galland's translation of Scheherazade's folktales as an example of the accurate use of anachronism. In the eighteenth century, Galland

retained the Easterners' costumes and the wildness of their fiction, and he blended these with a very ordinary and comprehensible feeling. He abbreviated the long-winded tales, reduced the repetitive reflections, and rejected the perpetual redundancies of the Arabic recension. The tales, in this manner, and though they lose much of their original features, have been prominently superior fit for the European market and gained unrivaled fame among the public, which they surely would never have gained had not the conduct and styles been in a degree familiarized to sentiments and propensities of the Western audience (1820, pp. xvii-xviii). The writer here addresses Galland's version of *The Thousand and One Nights* as an example of the benefits of using anachronism. He abridges and omits the repetitions and humdrum stories. However, Galland retains the wildness and costumes of Eastern fiction and he has familiarized them with the demands of his time in order to fit the European market and the public favorable taste.

In addition to the use of satire and parody in their stories; Poe and Stevenson use anachronism, which manifests the gaps between the two texts. Atack, Rood, and Phillips stated that using anachronism can be intended or inadvertently used for humor, to expose the reader to some historical periods. Sometimes this technique is used when the differences between two historical periods or two cultures are ambiguous (2020, pp. 26-27). Using anachronism by Poe and Stevenson might be deliberate, as they use many elements of this strategy in their stories showing the juxtaposition between two different periods.

Methodology:

This study employs a qualitative method in order to provide a detailed description and analysis to the selected passages from the ST and TTs. Furthermore, by implementing a comparative analysis across these passages, the study seeks to elucidate the differences in the characters, thematic roles, the subject matter, language and the cultural representations within the TTs. By examining all these elements, this research demonstrates the role of anachronism in highlighting the differences between these literary texts which stem from distinct literary traditions.

Analysis:

In Poe's story The Thousand and Second Tale of Scheherazade, the

reader can recognize that the plot of the story is set in a different time and culture. The eighth adventure of Sinbad, which is rooted in medieval Arabic traditions is placed in the nineteenth century, and all the events are centered around technological facts and natural phenomena in America and England. Locating some technologies, such as the printing machine, air balloon, and locomotive, in traditional figure's adventure is an apparent anachronism in this story. The writer displays all these technologies by using satire and figurative language. This strategy indicates the historical and cultural distances between the two texts. The description of the machine that is used to hatch the eggs, for instance, as "a hen without feathers but bigger than a camel" (Poe, 2013, p. 23) is an example that shows anachronism. Besides metaphorical descriptions, some linguistic expressions can be classified as anachronisms. They are "hum! And then hoo!" (Poe, 2013, p. 10). The Sultan produces these words when Scheherazade tries to awaken him. The narrator comments that these "words are no doubt Arabic" (Poe, 2013, p. 10). These Arabic words are vague for the nineteenth-century English reader.

In his description of the "Cock–nighs dialect" (Poe, 2013, p. 15), as it appears weird and is not understandable to the nineteenth-century Sultan, Scheherazade says "Washish squashish, Sinbad, hey-diddle, grunt unt grumble, hiss, fiss, whiss" (Poe, 2013, p. 15). Then she takes permission and translates this sentence to the Sultan by presenting that "I am happy to find, my dear Sinbad, doing a thing which is called circumnavigating the globe" (Poe, 2013, p. 15). The term "circumnavigating" is recently used, and it shows the distance between the two far periods. According to Atkins "circumnavigation of the globe is a process by which explorers ultimately revealed that the earth is round and not flat" (2020, p. 326). This discovery is revealed after centuries of the appearance of Scheherazade's tales. The sense of anachronism in Poe's story can also be observed in the comments that Scheherazade produces while she explains the technological inventions and differences between languages. This term corresponds with Poe's claims, in which Scheherazade is described as a "Machiavellian reader." Therefore, one can assume that Scheherazade of Poe's story, is a nineteenth-century Scheherazade not the traditional Scheherazade of the source text.

Furthermore, the language of the text indicates an anachronism because it is related to the technologies as well as the topics that mirror different cultures. Although the characters of Poe's story appear in the source text, their role might be somehow different.

Sinbad and Dunya Zad's roles can be taken as examples here. Dunya Zad in the source text motivates her sister to start telling tales. She always shows her curiosity to listen to the tales and refers to Scheherazade's tales as marvelous tales. Additionally, on some nights she asks her sister to start telling the next tale though Scheherazade narrates her tale to the Sultan. For instance, on the third night, Dunya Zad states "my sister, complete your speech about the tale of the hunter and the goblin" (Al-Adawi, M, 1988, p. 13). Although she participates with her sister in introducing the tales in the source text, in Poe's story, she remains backstage and does not intervene while Scheherazade tells Sinbad's adventure.

Sinbad, similarly, in the source text undertakes his journeys for the tendency of adventure and seemingly out of a need for trade and to invest a fortune. He starts his seven adventures after he spends the wealth he inherits from his father (Lyons, M., 2010, pp. 728, 729). However, in Poe's story, Sinbad mentioned "I became once more possessed of a desire of visiting foreign countries" (Poe, 2013, p. 10). Here his speech refers that he wants to visit foreign countries and some lands he has not explored before. According to the comparative analysis, Poe's Sinbad does not endeavor to earn money throughout his adventure. Contrary to the ancient Sinbad whose poor life provokes him to compensate for what he has lost after his father's death. These differences in time, topics, and the role of the characters of the two texts indicate the juxtaposition, which is one of the main elements of anachronism.

The same case can be seen in Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights*. The differences in time, culture, characters, subject matter, and language can show anachronism. In Stevenson's collection, the reader can observe the chronological and cultural gaps between the two texts. The source text of *The Thousand and One Nights*, appeared in the tenth century or before, and represented the Arab and neighboring lands in the Arab Medieval ages. The TT was written in the nineteenth century. It also represented English society in the late Victorian age and the turn of the century. It can be noted that the writer considers these gaps and differences by demonstrating the progress in the life aspects in many situations. The embodiment of such progress can be seen in some scenes in the story of the "Young Man and the Cream Tarts." In this story, the young man presents the difficulties that young people encounter in their life and he explains how the doors of the suicide club are only the way for those people to get rid of their problems.

The historical difference between the two texts can be seen apparently in the language, topics, and characters. The language that is used in the source text is rooted in Asian-Arabic cultures, and it varies according to the topics and literary style. The topic of the frame tale, as it has been observed in (Lyons, M., 2010, pp. 36-37-38), is marital infidelity and the impact of past events on the future manners of people. Further, the general idea of the tales of the source text is about the significance of using the mind to get rid of the predicaments and problems that a person is exposed to in his life. All the tales in the source text serve artistic construction purposes and demonstrate their social, moral, and religious connotations. Regarding the characters of *The Thousand and One Nights*, most of them are from Asian-Arab lands. Some are considered Medieval characters and others are imaginative and appear in fictive tales. Scheherazade, Shahriyar, Amer Ahmed, and Harun al-Rashid are assumed to be real characters from Persia, India, and Arabic lands. Ala al-Din, Ali Baba, and Sinbad are considered imaginative characters.

In Stevenson's collection of *New Arabian Nights*, the title is apparently an allusion to the English translation of The *Thousand and One Nights*, and the writer adapts the narrative technique. He uses different fictional events, characters, and themes, which show the discrepancies between the source text and the target text. The general theme of this collection of stories, is the struggles of young fatherless men in the late Victorian period, and at the turn of the century. The stories are mostly a sequence of events linked by a mysterious character Prince Florizel, who voluntarily solves the problems of those young people. The incidents of the stories play an apparent part in interpreting the time that is reflected in the stories.

In some stories of *New Arabian Nights*, Stevenson includes scenes and incidents that occur in London and Paris alike, such as the stories "A Lodging for the Night-A story of Francis Villon," and "The Sire de Maletroit's Door." Irvine (2013, pp. 127-128) claimed that "these texts use contemporary France to explore the relationship between liberal and aesthetic values that critics have found at the center of late nineteenth-century British literary culture". By the same token, Gray suggested that Stevenson speaks the French language as a native speaker, and besides using translated French idioms, the subject matter of some stories is obviously French. The critic adds that in the story "The Sire Maletroit's door," Stevenson inserts some sentences showing the French allegories (2004, pp. 23-24). Stevenson, for instance, presents

that "two or three voices demanded who went there-some in French, some in English, but Denis made no reply, and ran the faster down the lane" (2019, p. 152). This example and the title of the story help the reader to acknowledge the time in which the TT was produced. In addition to using different topics that represent different times and cultures, the writer uses the names of places and characters to show the difference between the two texts. Although many critics stress the similarity between Harun al-Rashid and Baghdad in the ST, and Prince Folrizel and London in the TT, the time and culture in which each figure stems from and each place is located demonstrate anachronism.

Conclusion

To sum up, in the discussion of how the writers use the technique of anachronism in rewriting the source text, it can be induced some clues demonstrating the historical and cultural gaps between the ST and TTs. The subject matter of the stories, which represents a different time, and different cultures, European and American, indicates how different these stories are from the world of the tales of the source text. Although some critics cite the titles of the two stories, some characters, and the narrative technique, as intertextual elements between the ST and TTs, the incidents illustrate the shifts in time and discrepancy between the cultures. Therefore, juxtaposition can be recognized in the time, culture, characterization, language, and subject matter of the stories. Accounts about all these distances indicate the role of anachronism in understanding the cultural, chronological, and historical gaps between the readings; ST, and TT. The study also proves that although the intertextual elements between the text of Scheherazade's tales and the two short stories, using anachronism increases the level of differences between the literary canons.

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