

A structural-cognitive semiotic analysis of the Qur'anic story

Joseph and his Brothers

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Previous work on the semiotics of Qur'anic narration is fairly sparse (cf. Hassanein, 2009b). In this paper I try to provide a semiotic analysis of the Qur'anic story *Joseph and his Brothers*, employing a model developed by Grambye and Sonne (2003a). The model draws heavily on the theories of structural-cognitive semiotics (Greimas, 1983; Brandt, 2004) and narratological terminology (Prince, 2003) and illustratively analyses the story's descriptive, narrative and argumentative propositional content, as well as enunciation, and discourse. The three facets of propositional content are examined in light of 3-D, transport, and thematic models, respectively. Enunciation and discourse are tested against enunciative and discursive models, respectively. The application of the general model offers a rich and insightful analysis of the story's text in a religious context, with particular focus placed on enunciation to serve a religious purpose. I find the model efficient in analysing narratives in a genre other than the folktale for which it was developed and I am thus recommending testing it against other narrative texts to figure out what it can further reveal.

1. Introduction

Previous research on the semiotics of a narrative has predominantly focused on narratives in literary genres and, to a lesser degree, in religious genres with specific focus on the Bible. In contrast, the Qur'anic genre has not yet received a comparable degree of attention. Previous literature falls into three categories: (a) semiotic studies (e.g. Blanchard, 1980; Orr, 1987; Guinard, 1993; Steven, 1998; Berger, 2004; Ugiomoh, 2004), (b) narrative studies² (e.g. Jurus, 1994; Adams, 1999, 2003; Grambye and Sonne, 2003b; Marzolph, 2004; al-Musawi, 2005; Božanić, 2005; Sharon, 2005), and (c) Qur'anic studies (e.g. al-Hawwārī, 1997; Bedeir, 2000; Halman, 2000; Elrod, 2001; Hassan, 2001; al-Disūqī, 2007). Three studies are especially pertinent to the present study. One is a recent but still unfinished study (Grambye and Sonne, 2003b) of a Danish folktale *The Princess with the Twelve Pairs of Gold Slippers* collected on Bornholm and published in the collection *Old Danish Memories in Folk-tradition by Svend Grundtvig* in 1861. The value of the study lies in its testing of the Danish folktale against the model developed by Grambye and Sonne (2003a). The other two are recent works (Hassanein, 2009a, 2009b) conducting a semiotic analysis of a Qur'anic narrative by using that model as their analytical tool. Based on the preceding review of the literature, it is apparent that only those studies by Grambye and Sonne (2003b) and Hassanein (2009a, 2009b) concern this study most here; the former for testing the model and the latter for validating it. This study seeks to re-examine the story from a structural-cognitive perspective, i.e. analysing it in terms of three layers constituting its deep structure (proposition, enunciation and discourse) and in terms of three sets of cognitive processes working

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² By 'semiotic studies', I here mean those scholarly attempts comprising the study of sign systems in genres other than the narrative. By 'narrative studies', I mean works investigating the narrative as a verbal or nonverbal representation of temporally arranged events.

together in forming the subjects' comprehension of their surrounding world (the imaginary perception, the real experience and the symbolic cognition). In doing so, the study raises three questions to answer during the analysis:

- 1) What is told in the story?
- 2) How is the story told?
- 3) Why is the story told and in this way?

These questions may seem simple in form but are complex in content. Question (1) deals with the *propositional* content of the narrated text; i.e. what is the text about and what is told about the narrated characters? The propositional content of the text is formed in the processual interplay between three types of propositions: descriptive, narrative and argumentative. These three are investigated through the 3-D model, the transport model and the thematic model, respectively (see Section 2). Question (2) considers the *enunciation* of the text; i.e. how the story is told in an exchange of speech acts between the narrator and the narratee(s) and which type of voice or point of view is adopted. An enunciational model is used to analyse these speech acts between the narrator and the narratee. Question (3) tackles the *discourse* of the text; i.e. the psycho-cognitive genesis of the narrated characters: their *Id*, *Ego* and *Superego* from the perspective of psychoanalysis (e.g. Freud, 1993); *perception (the imaginary)*, *experience (the real)* and *cognition (the symbolic)*, respectively, from the perspective of cognitive semiotics (cf. Brandt, 2004).³ There is a discursive model that analyses such psycho-cognitive aspects.

2. The theoretical model

The study endeavours to answer the aforementioned questions by testing the story under scrutiny against Gramby and Sonne's model (2003a). This is a complex model that combines the insights of Peirce (1992), Greimas (1983), and Lacan (in Leupin, 2004) into an integrated whole. I suggest the model be labelled "Wh-Model" since it structures the analysis the same way this study structures its queries: (a) What is narrated? (b) How is it narrated? (c) Why is it narrated? To recap then, this is a three-tiered model that analyses propositional content (What?), enunciation (How?) and discourse (Why?) by means of five constituent sub-models against which the narrative at hand is tested: three for propositional content (3-D,⁴ transport and thematic), one for enunciation and one for discourse. There are a number of characteristic features that give the so-called "Wh-model" reasonable academic merit. The model blends many different theoretical stances and methodological tools from the major figures mentioned above. Thus it gives a

³ Brandt (2004) understands cognitive semiotics in a more restricted sense than that used by e.g. Zlatev (2012). The former sees it as a specific discipline dedicated to analysing meaning, whereas the latter envisages it as an emerging field dedicated to the transdisciplinary study of meaning. This study employs Brandt's theory of mental spaces and his theory of ideology, body and society.

⁴ 3-D means "triple diegesis". *Diegesis* is Brandt's rephrasing of Greimas' "parcours narratif". So Greimas' model would be a "single diegesis": 1-D, i.e. one tour in the square. Brandt's diegetic model has a "double diegesis": 2-D, two turns in a double square (four main positions; P1: Contract, P2: Crisis, P3: Catastrophe, P4: post-catastrophic Discourse). (Brandt, 1990). The signs "+" and "-" indicate whether change in the characters' mental state is positive or negative. The biological symbols "♀" and "♂" stand for "female" and "male", respectively.

broader empirical application and offers plausible findings. The model schematises the analysis in a systematic and logical order. It also maintains unity and coherence in the transition between the three levels of analysis. I will try to show that the model can be efficient in analysing texts from different genres than the folktale, owing to its capacity for pointing out the deep structural features of narrative texts. In spite of such features, the model has been tightly used and is not well-known. It is worth consideration and institutionalisation as an analytically competent tool. The model can be schematically simplified as depicted in Figure 1.

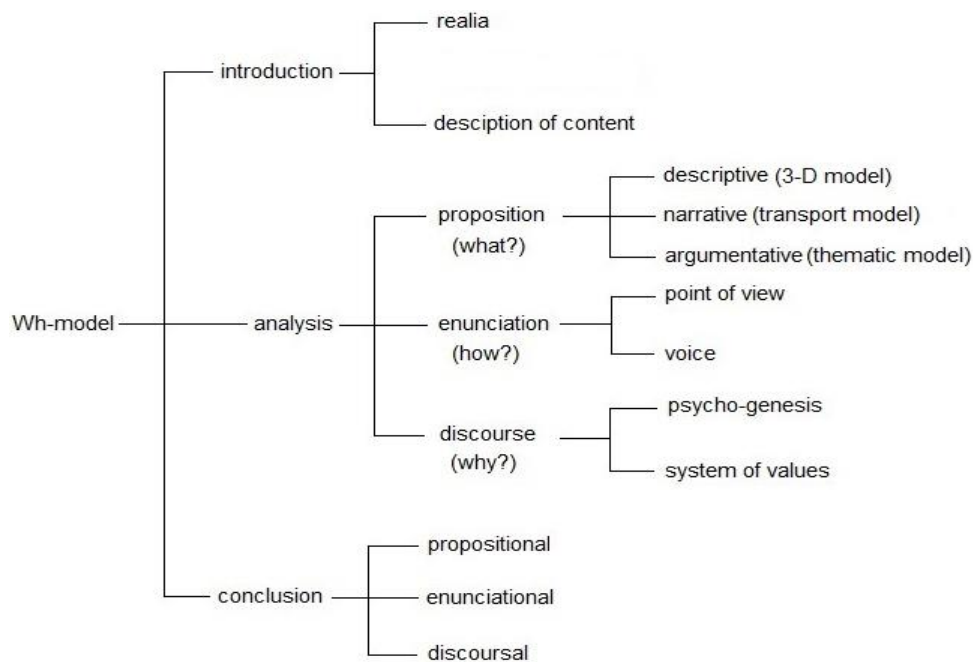


Figure 1. Grambye and Sonne's model schematised as a Wh-model

The following is an explication of the constituent sub-models with theoretical explanations adapted from Grambye and Sonne (2003a). Gerald Prince's *Dictionary of Narratology* (2003) is a reference point for the explanation of core terminology in the basic model and the sub-models.

2.1. 3-D model; analysis of descriptive propositions

The 3-D model was developed by a conceptual combination of Greimas's *simple square model* (1983) and Lacan's *schematizing psycho-genesis* (in Leupin, 2004). The simple square was extended from one turn between two positions into three turns between six positions. There is a combination of psycho-genetic and cognitive concepts. The *cognitive 3-D model* version gives an account of both the measures of the general-ternary-mental processes of appropriation, a ternary conceptualisation process, moving from perception to experience to cognition, and of the obligatory positions, states, and 'places', in the pre-catastrophic, catastrophic, and post-catastrophic descriptive spaces of the texts. So there is a distinction between an immature and disharmonious *pre-catastrophic* turn with ambiguously valorised places/states, which is often traversed

several times before the fatal transgression, the *catastrophic*, where both places are negatively valorised, and finally a *post-catastrophic* turn where immaturity and disharmony are conquered by worked-up knowledge, maturity, and harmony (see Figure 2).

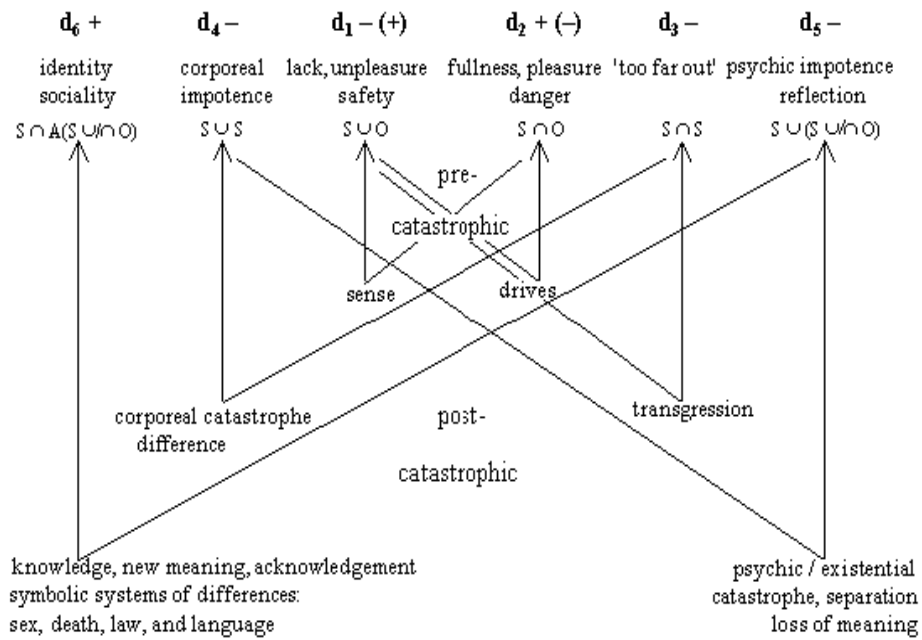


Figure 2. The general 3-D model

2.1.1. Square butterfly model, analysis of descriptive propositions

Greimas (1983) is the author of this classic model of analysis, the *square* or *butterfly model*. The simple square shows the movements between 4/5 positive and negative positions: 1. the domestic order, 2. unsafe middle position, removed from home, not yet arrived at, 3. abroad in the strange disorder, 4. a position just as unsafe returning to 1. where the domestic order is re-established and thereby confirmed, but where the state of each of the actants, however, has fundamentally changed into 5. The square model was developed for provision of a visual representation of the narrated places in the space of the story. According to Greimas (1983), the spatial course of a narrative can be said to correspond to four or five movements across this model (see Figure 3).

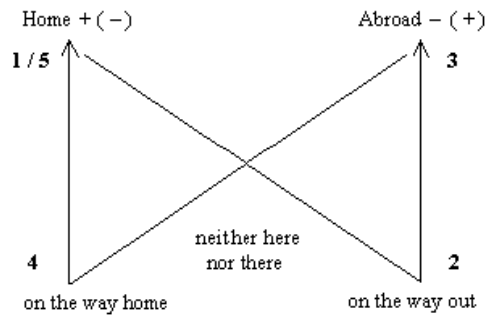


Figure 3. The semiotic square model - 4/5 places. *t* for transport function; *repr* for representational proposition; *caus* for causal proposition

2.1.2. Actant model, analysis of descriptive propositions

Greimas (1983) developed the actant model on the basis of V. Propp's morphological investigations of the Russian folktales (1968). It supplies a general diagram of some positions, relations, and functions common to the narrative development; the most important 3rd -person characters and their mutual relations. The *project-axis* depicts the *subject* and its project, its endeavours to appropriate the coveted *object*. The *conflict-axis* depicts a *helper* who promotes and an *opponent* who opposes the subject's project. Finally, the *communication-axis* depicts the action which is decisive for the accomplishment of the project, the *sender* and its *doing* which transfer the *object* to the *receiver*. According to the relational logic of the project-axis, two states of being are distinguished: (a) the subject lacks its object, formalised as $s \cup o$ (subject disjungated with object) or (b) the subject has its object, formalised as $s \cap o$ (subject conjugated with object). The transition from the first dysphoric state to the second euphoric state is mediated by the functional logic of the communication-axis, the doing of the action: the sender gives the object to the receiver. Finally, the conflict-axis represents the causal logic of the text, the opposite thematic values, motivating the actions and the consequent changing states (see Figure 4).

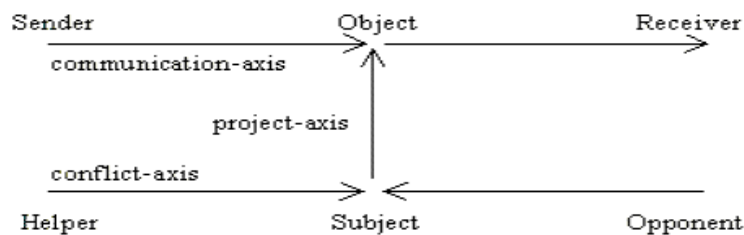


Figure 4. The actant model [with Brandt's denominations of the 'axis']

2.2. Transport model, analysis of narrative propositions

Grambye and Sonne (2003a) assume that any *narrative proposition*, any action, doing, can be formalised as a giving, and that a giving in general leads to an immediate or

postponed return. The causal relations of such an exchange are so complex that one exchange leads to the next. Grambye and Sonne (2003a) cite PerAage Brandt as providing a so-called *recursive, iterative* or *re-writing* function, which more precisely accounts for the syntax of the narrative proposition. The so-called transport function has the form shown on Figure 5, where *t* stands for transport proposition. This transport proposition consists of three variables: *object* (obj.), *receiver* (rec.), and *sender* (sen.). The object (concrete or abstract) is transported by the sender to the receiver, either in a *representational proposition* (repr) or in a *causal* proposition (caus). The representational proposition includes another embedded proposition, where one of the narrated characters tells - *gives knowledge to* - another character about an event having taken place outside his/her visual range. The causal proposition means one proposition gives rise to another proposition for a particular receiver (see Figure 5),

t (object , receiver , sender)
 repr (object , receiver , sender)
 caus (object , receiver , sender)

Figure 5. The transport model, decisive action schema

Key. repr (object = t, receiver, sender) [that is, a proposition is sent as object from sender to receiver]
 caus (object, receiver, sender:= cause) [that is, an event (t) or a person as sender causes the transport]

2.3. Thematic model, analysis of argumentative propositions

Besides the descriptive and the narrative proposition, the narrative text contains the so-called argumentative proposition, the value system which regulates the processual interplay between the descriptive and the narrative propositions. The argumentative proposition administers the interplay between actions and states which hold a causal relation in that actions cause new states which again cause new actions. This interplay is not arbitrary. Just as in our real world, law and order also prevail in the world of the story. To get at the argumentative proposition, we extract negative and positive values attributed to the dysphoric and euphoric places and to the actants representing or staying in such places. Thus the argumentative proposition is constituted in a pair of opposite thematic values notated in fraction bar *a vs b* (see Figure 6).

$\frac{a (+)}{b (-)}$ e.g. $\frac{\text{culture}}{\text{nature}}$, $\frac{\text{life}}{\text{death}}$, $\frac{\text{individual}}{\text{society}}$, $\frac{\text{♂}}{\text{♀}}$

Figure 6. The thematic model, opposite thematic values

2.4. Enunciation model

The *enunciation* of the text, *how* the story is told, forms a certain linguistic act in the shape of a process of exchange between the 1st-person *narrator* and the 2nd-person *narratee* about the particular narrative proposition, the representational propositions, comprising the speech acts of the 3rd-person narrated characters. The narrator gives the proposition to the narratee, who pays back by his running acknowledgement of the narrator or who rehearses the text to his people. The 1st-person narrator points to the here and now of the narration time by marking his point of view, the position from where the 2nd-person narratee can see what happens to the 3rd-person narrated characters in the narrative sequence, the space and time of the narrated story, there and then: the 2nd-

person narratee receives from the 1st-person narrator a *voice* which provides him with a view of what goes on in the scene of the 3rd-person narrated characters (see Figure 7).

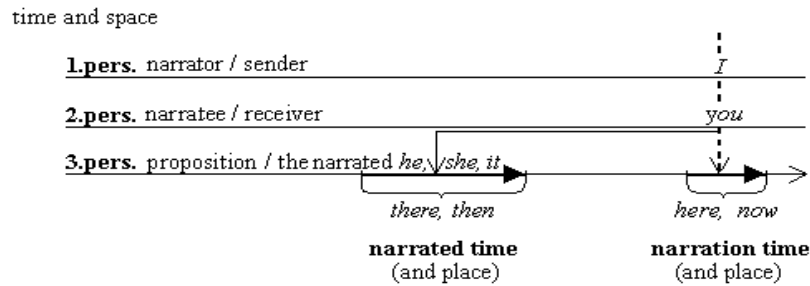


Figure 7. The simple enunciation model

2.5. Discourse model

The text with its propositional content and enunciation can be received only in continuation of the prevailing discourse, 'why is the story narrated?'. At the bottom of the cognitive production of the psychic apparatus, the *imaginary* appears, which is referred to by psychoanalysis as the *Id* with its repressed fantasies of immediate satisfaction of corporeal desire, and by cognitive semiotics as *perception* with its organisation around the notions of one's own body and those of others. The upper instance of the psychic apparatus includes the *symbolic*, the social ethical systems, which is referred to by psychoanalysis as the *Superego* that looks after the control of the satisfaction of desires by repressing unacceptable ideas and transforming more acceptable ones so that they can fill a social function. The symbolic is referred to by cognitive semiotics as abstract *cognition*, the final placing of the *experienced material* in a superior system of values. Between the *imaginary* and the *symbolic* comes the *real*, the surrounding world, from which the *subject* permanently receives a new input and creates a new output in communicative exchange with others (cf. Silverman, 1983; Leupin, 2004). The *real* is envisioned by psychoanalysis as the *Ego* that tries to manage the conflict between the reasonable *Superego* and the disturbing fantasies of the *Id*; cognitive semiotics views the *real* as *experience* of the *perceived material*. The sensual drives are roused by a series of cognitive processes: the immediate *perception*, the pointing out of the perceived objects different from their surroundings, *experience*, and the *knowledge* of what is experienced. These three sets of cognitive processes constantly work together in shaping the subjects' understanding of their worlds (see Figure 8).

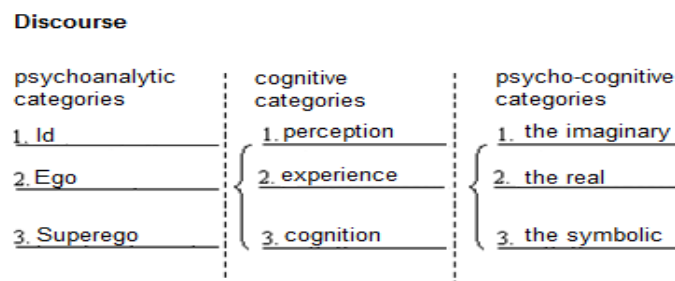


Figure 8. The simple discourse model

The previous theoretical elucidation of the so-called Wh-model makes it clear that Grambye and Sonne (2003a) have developed an innovative model for the analysis of narrative texts based on theories of structural and cognitive semiotics. The model has synthesised its constituent sub-models from Peircean and Greimasian semiotics and Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalyses. The value of bringing such scholarly insights together, e.g. blending the Greimasian square model and Lacan's schema R, in one model makes the model efficiently applicable in analysing narrative texts in different genres and across different domains.

3. Application of the model

3.1 *Realia*

The Qur'anic story *Joseph and his Brothers* is a full-length narrative which, according to the Qur'an, is recounted by God through the go-between angel Gabriel to the prophet Muhammad. It is related in a Meccan (i.e. revealed at Mecca) sūrah called 'Sūrat Yūsuf' (i.e. Joseph Chapter), which is part of a larger religious book known in Islam as the Qur'an. The spatial order of the sūrah in the Qur'an is no. 12; the number of its āyāt (i.e. verses) is 111; the temporal order of its revelation is no. 53. The sūrah was revealed in the aftermath of the prophet Muhammad's Night-and-Ascension Journey when he was severely harmed by the unbelievers just after the death of his supporters, his uncle *Abī Ṭālib* and his wife *Khadīja*. This narrative was revealed to relieve the sorrows of the prophet Muhammad and make him feel a huge surge of happiness (Ṭanṭāwī, 1993: 94).

3.2 *Brief description of the narrative content*

In his infancy, Joseph saw a vision that was unpalatable to his ten half-brothers, who plotted against him and cast him away to a remote land, where he was sold into slavery to a dignitary nicknamed al-'Azīz for few dirhams. Joseph was brought up and fostered by al-'Azīz. Al-'Azīz's wife attempted to seduce Joseph, but he refused. His refusal brought disgrace and imprisonment upon him. In prison, he began preaching to his inmates and he was known for his benevolence. One of his fellow prisoners, to whom he had interpreted a vision, was released and received into favor as the King's cupbearer. The King had a vision which was assigned by the cupbearer to Joseph for interpretation. In return, Joseph insisted that all the scandal that had been circulated around him be publicly cleared. He was welcomed with open arms and was appointed vizier by the King. Joseph's half-brothers were driven by famine to go to Egypt for grain ration and were treated benevolently by Joseph without their recognition of his real identity. He told them that if they brought their half-brother Benjamin, they would be rewarded with double ration. By a stratagem, Joseph managed to keep the brother, reminded his half-brothers of their conspiracy, forgave them, and sent them to fetch his father Jacob and the whole family from Canaan to Egypt. For a detailed paraphrase of the narrative content, see Ibn Kathīr (1998: 265-306).

3.3 3-D analysis of the descriptive propositions

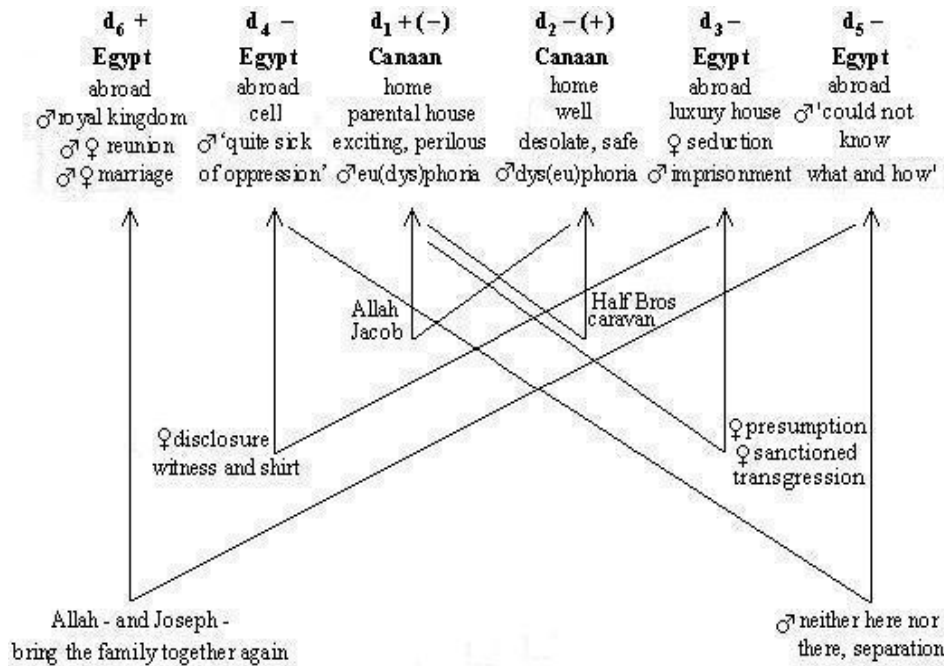


Figure 9. 3-D (triple diegesis) analysis of descriptive propositions: what?

The 3-D model depicts the subject Joseph with his physical and mental states, between not being and being with (s ∪/∩ o) his object Jacob in the first place and, of course, with the whole family. The temporal causal sequence of events has the impact that the main characters moved between different narrative value-defined places in the space of the story. The protagonist 'Joseph' moved between different places – from Canaan to Egypt as macroplaces and from home to the well, from the well to al-'Azīz's luxury house, from the luxury house to the prison, from the prison to the royal palace, and from the royal palace to the father's house as microplaces. In the narrative course, each place leads to another and in each place the hero Joseph undergoes a different mental state with different valorisations. From the outset, a family was shown in an ordered state of being, a state of equilibrium. Joseph felt so safe and comfortable that he had a wonderful and exciting vision in which his destiny was prefigured. He was the one to hold the prophetic rank long-awaited in the prophetic family descended from Abraham, then to Isaac, then to Jacob, then to Joseph:

Behold! Joseph said to his father: "O my father! I did see eleven stars and the sun and the moon: I saw them prostrate themselves to me!" [12: 4]

Knowledgeable about the half-brothers' jealousy of Joseph and of his full brother Benjamin, Jacob forewarned Joseph of their possible connivance instigated by the Devil who has declared war and enmity on humanity. At this stage, the home in d₁, which was quite exciting (+), soon turned perilous (-). Joseph felt euphoric, but Jacob felt dysphoric:

Said (the father): "My (dear) little son! Relate not thy vision to thy brothers, lest they concoct a plot against thee: for Satan is to man an avowed enemy!" [12: 5]

No sooner had the father Jacob given the advance warning than the half brothers started to conspire. They all connived to absent Joseph from home and cast him out to a remote land:

Slay ye Joseph or cast him out to some (unknown) land, that so the favour of your father may be given to you alone: (there will be time enough) for you to be righteous after that. [12: 9]

The ten half-brothers managed to coax their father Jacob into sending Joseph with them to frolic and play, emphasising that they would take care of him:

They said: "O our father! Why dost thou not trust us with Joseph, seeing we are indeed his sincere well-wishers? Send him with us tomorrow to enjoy himself and play, and we shall take every care of him. [12: 11-12]

His fears unfounded and rebutted, the father Jacob surrendered to their will and thus unwittingly assisted them with the execution of their evil project by sending Joseph off with them. The sending-receiving incident, formalized (S)+V+DO+IO+ADJ, was the mainspring of the next events.⁵ The half brothers took Joseph away from home, d₁, and threw him into the deepest recesses of the well, d₂. As soon as he was left alone in such a desolate place and got dysphoric, he received the divine afflatus that drove him euphoric and rendered the well safe:

So they did take him away, and they all agreed to throw him down to the bottom of the well: and We put into his heart (this Message): 'Of a surety thou shalt (one day) tell them the truth of this their affair while they know (thee) not'. [12: 15]

The next event met the elder half-brother's expectation. A caravan on its way to Egypt halted by the well to get a bucket of water, hauled Joseph out with a gasp of delight, ditched him as a precious commodity, and sold him into slavery to al-'Azīz in Egypt (in return for few paltry dirhams):

Then there came a caravan of travellers: they sent their water-carrier (for water), and he let down his bucket (into the well). He said: "Ah there! Good news! Here is a (fine) young man!" So they concealed him as a treasure! But God knoweth well all that they do! [12:, 19]

The opulent al-'Azīz took him along to his luxurious mansion, d₃ (-), where he passed the hardest of tests. The prettiest and richest of ladies, al-'Azīz's wife, Zulaikha, lusted after him because her urges eliminated her reason. However, her attempt was a total failure, because Joseph put up strong resistance:

But she in whose house he was, sought to seduce him from his (true) self: she fastened the doors, and said: "Now come, thou (dear one)!" He said: "God forbid! Truly (thy husband) is my lord! He made my sojourn agreeable! Truly to no good come those who do wrong!" [12: 23]

⁵ The formalisation (S)+V+DO+IO+ADJ stands for (Subject) + Verb + Direct Object + Indirect Object + Adjunct, respectively. These are the syntactic labels given in turn to the constituent parts of the imperative proposition addressed by the half-brothers to their father: "(You) Send him with us tomorrow to frolic and play." The subject 'You' is parenthetical since it is not part of the imperative proposition but it is contextually understood.

She went too far in her presumption when she invited over her women guests in revenge and confessed to her sin of seduction in front of them. Although she blamed the sanctioned transgression of seduction on herself, she had Joseph unfairly put in prison, d_4 (–) for years and did not feel any sense of guilt:

She said: "There before you is the man about whom ye did blame me! I did seek to seduce him from his (true) self but he did firmly save himself guiltless! And now, if he doth not my bidding, he shall certainly be cast into prison, and (what is more) be of the company of the vilest!" [12: 32]

Joseph resisted Zulaikha's seduction and refused to bite the hand that fed him. He was forced to choose between the devil (adultery) and the deep blue sea (a prison cell). He chose the latter and thus got out of the frying pan (the mansion, d_3) into the fire (the detention, d_4). The problems he faced were a real test of his character. In prison, he evinced such good manners and unrivalled knowledge of interpretation of visions. The King of Egypt had a vision which was hard for his cliques to interpret and which they deemed phantasmagorical. The cupbearer remembered how adept Joseph was in the interpretation of visions and asked for permission to go and get an interpretation:

But the man who had been released, one of the two (who had been in prison) and who now bethought him after (so long) a space of time, said: "I will tell you the truth of its interpretation: send ye me (therefore)." [12: 45]

Joseph interpreted the royal vision to the messenger who hurried back to the King and told him about Joseph's interpretation of the vision. Greatly satisfied and convinced, the King wanted to see Joseph himself and thus re-sent the messenger to fetch him. Getting sick of oppression and the persecution to which he had been subjected by the ladies and tired of being nowhere, neither here nor there, Joseph refused to appear before the King until his innocence was proved. The King summoned Zulaikha and the townswomen who testified for Joseph and acquitted him of the trumped-up charge:

The (king) said (to the ladies): "What was your affair when ye did seek to seduce Joseph from his (true) self?" The ladies said: "God preserve us! No evil know we against him!" Said the 'Aziz's wife: "Now is the truth manifest (to all): it was I who sought to seduce him from his (true) self: He is indeed of those who are (ever) true (and virtuous)." [12: 51]

The wife and the townswomen, when summoned for testimony before the King, also moved to the royal palace, where they repentantly told the truth, acquired a new moral identity and became good women. Upon acquittal, Joseph left prison, headed for the royal palace d_5 (–) at the King's request, and acquired a new social identity, i.e. a ministerial post as vizier at the royal palace, where he got together with his half-brothers who also moved back and forth between their father's house and their brother's palace, but from whence Joseph would not have known how to fetch his full brother Benjamin, but for the assistance of God:

Thus did We plan for Joseph. He could not take his brother by the law of the king except that God willed it (so). [12: 76]

Benjamin, too, moved from Canaan to stay with Joseph at the royal palace, now d_6 (+), where the latter, thanks to the two main tools (power and knowledge) endowed upon him by the omnipresent God, made his brothers atone for their sins and acquire new moral and social identities. He succeeded in reuniting ($s \cap o$) the whole family from Canaan to the

royal kingdom in Egypt after so many years of separation, where he got his own vision interpreted upon the prostration of his eleven brothers (eleven stars) and his parents (the sun and the moon) in front of him:

And he raised his parents high on the throne (of dignity), and they fell down in prostration, (all) before him. He said: "O my father! This is the fulfilment of my vision of old! God hath made it come true! [12: 100]

The descriptive space on the 3-D model can now be divided into different places shown on the so-called simple butterfly model, presenting movements between 4/5 positive and negative positions (see Figure 10).

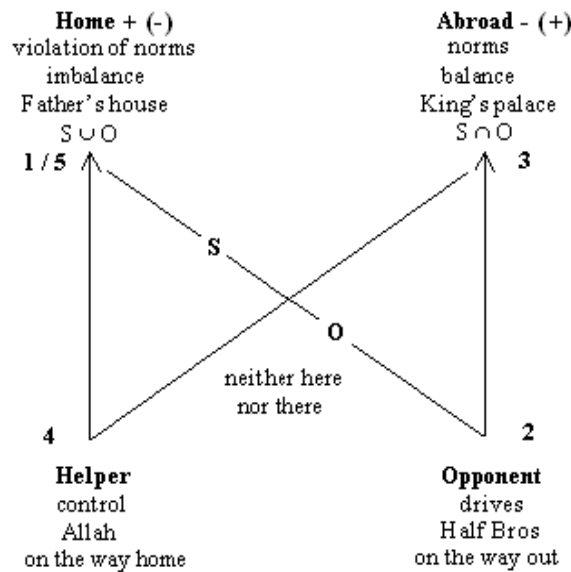


Figure 10. The Square and Actant models (Figures 3/4) intersected

1. Home where a state of order and balance was prevalent, 2. Opponent/On the way out where the subject was removed from home to the well ($s \cup o$) and where the balance was disrupted by the opponents' evil action, 3. Abroad where the subject was seduced (mansion), incarcerated (prison), and set free (kingdom), 4. Helper/On the way home where the disruption was repaired and the clear sight was restored to the object (a new lease of life), and 5. Home again where the domestic order was reinstated and the imbalance was redressed. However, all the family moved house and made Egypt their home, where the state of each of the actants fundamentally changed: the ladies became amenable, the half-brothers became amicable, and the whole family, thanks to God, were brought together again ($s \cap o$). I do envision the simple square model as an O-shaped Model (see Figure 11), in which the circular narrative begins at home (A) with a vision and ends at home (E) with its interpretation.

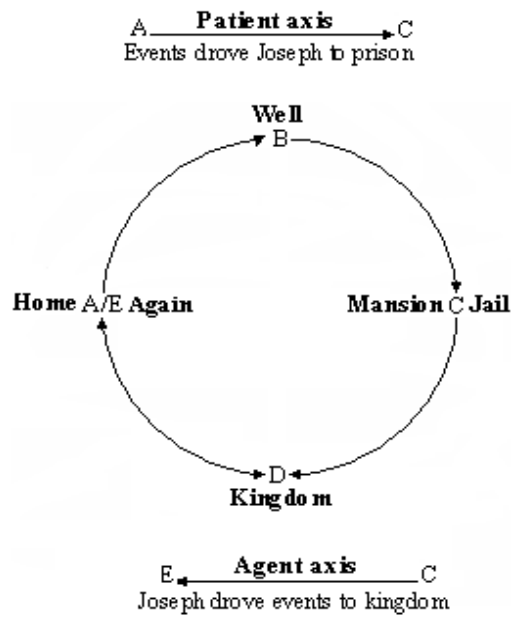


Figure 11. The story of Joseph as a circular narrative

From Point A to Point C, the subject Joseph had no control over the events until he was helplessly driven by the events into prison. From Point C to Point D he started to create the events and to make his way to the kingdom. He did not return to Point A (home again) in the physical sense of the word, but instead sent his shirt as a sign of survival and brought the whole family from Point A to Point D. What Figures 9, 10 and 11 share is the idea that the different places in the space of the story are associated with particular negative and positive values that cause the characters to move or to be moved from one state to another. The movement from and return to the same point brought about a circular mode of narration. These three Figures provide a narrative clue to the micro-spatial movements made by Joseph in the story. Figure 12 shows a GIS-designed map that provides a historical clue to the route of the macro-spatial transition taken by Joseph from Canaan to Egypt outside the story world.

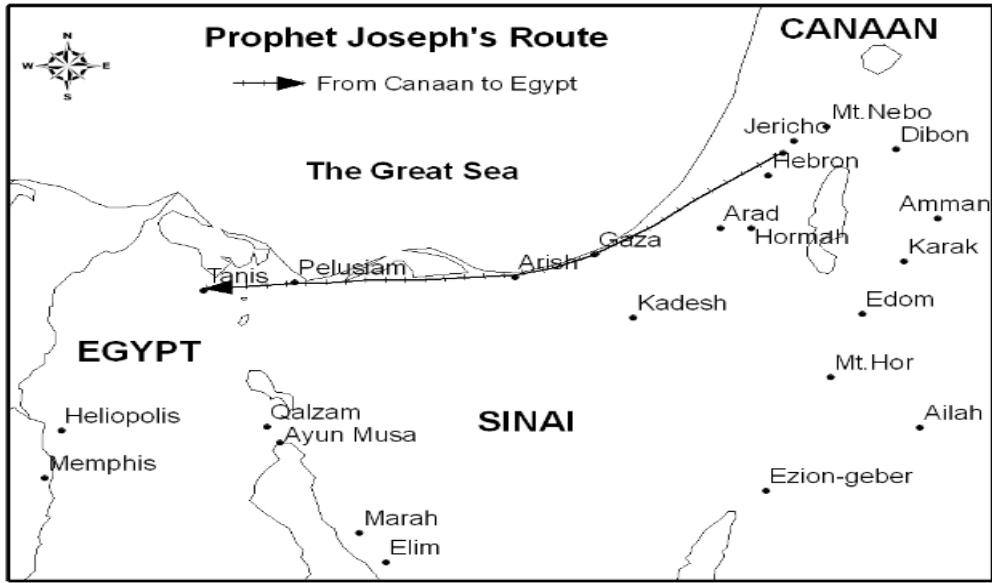


Figure 12. The route taken by the prophet Joseph (Translated from Abū-Khalīl, 2003: 68)

3.4 Transport analysis of the narrative propositions

		obj.	rec.	sen.
t function	1.	t (vision ,	Jacob ,	Joseph)
	2.	t (warning ,	Joseph ,	Jacob)
	3.	repr (2 ,	Joseph ,	Jacob)
	4.	t (Joseph ,	half-bros ,	Jacob)
	5.	caus (Joseph ,	passers-by ,	half-bros)
	6.	t (Joseph ,	al-Aziz's wife ,	al-Aziz)
	7.	t (son / benefit ,	al-Aziz / wife ,	Joseph)
	8.	caus (imprisonment ,	Joseph ,	al-Aziz)
	9.	t (vision ,	Joseph ,	inmate)
	10.	t (monotheism ,	inmate ,	Joseph)
	11.	caus (royal vision ,	Joseph ,	inmate)
	12.	t (royal vision ,	King ,	Joseph)
	13.	t (truth ,	King ,	women)
	14.	caus (vizier ,	Joseph ,	King)
	15.	t (provision ,	half-bros ,	Joseph)
	16.	t (Benjamin ,	Joseph ,	half-bros)
	17.	t (shirt ,	half-bros ,	Joseph)
	18.	caus (sight ,	Jacob ,	Joseph)
	19.	caus (prostration ,	Joseph ,	family)
	20.	repr (19 ,	Jacob ,	Joseph)

Figure 13. Transport analysis of narrative propositions: how? *t* for transport function; *obj.* for object; *rec.* for receiver; *sen.* for sender; *repr* for representational proposition; *caus* for causal proposition

The transport analysis remodels and retells the story in a number of take-and-give exchanges between the 3-person narrated characters, where a giving necessarily leads to a return. The given numbers count the transport propositions (take-give exchanges between the sending and receiving characters), causal propositions (lead-to and result-from propositions) and representational propositions (propositions embedded in other ones). The chain of causally connected actions of the narrative effectively begins with Joseph (sen.) relating a vision (obj.) he had to his father Jacob (rec.), who forewarned him against informing his half-brothers about it. Joseph (rec.) received an advance warning (obj.), which was completely outside his visual range, from his father (sen.) who acted in knowledge of the possible consequences: the fear that they might hatch a plot to get rid of him out of envy implanted in them by the Devil and the anticipation that Joseph would be chosen as a prophet and would be taught vision interpretation by God. In his premonition, Jacob (sen.) embedded God's conferment of prophethood (obj. represented as 2) upon Joseph (rec.):

Thus will thy Lord choose thee and teach thee the interpretation of stories (and events) and perfect His favour to thee and to the posterity of Jacob - even as He perfected it to thy fathers Abraham and Isaac aforetime! For God is full of knowledge and wisdom." [12: 6]

Jacob's misgivings became true. Jacob (sen.) sent Joseph (obj.) with the half-brothers (rec.) to frolic. The half-brothers (sen.) threw Joseph (obj.) into the well and a caravan of passers-by (rec.) took him out and sold him into slavery to al-'Azīz in Egypt. Al-'Azīz (sen.) gave Joseph (obj.) to his wife (rec.) and told her to give him benevolent abode so that he (sen.) might give them (rec.) some benefit (obj.) or they foster him. Instead of being a mother figure, the wife (sen.) gave herself to Joseph (rec.) who flatly refused her. In return, she told al-'Azīz (sen.) who sent Joseph (rec.) to prison (obj.) for a few years. In prison, two inmates (sen.) asked Joseph (rec.) for interpreting a vision (obj.) each of them had. Joseph (sen.) preached monotheism (obj.) to them (rec.) in return for the interpretation, thus qualifying⁶ himself by showing knowledge:

O my two companions of the prison! (I ask you): are many lords differing among themselves better, or the One God, Supreme and Irresistible? [12: 39]
O my two companions of the prison! As to one of you, he will pour out the wine for his lord to drink: as for the other, he will hang from the cross, and the birds will eat from off his head. (So) hath been decreed that matter whereof ye twain do enquire. [12: 41]

The King of Egypt (sen.) assigned a vision (obj.) he had to Joseph (rec.) to interpret. Joseph (sen.) sent the interpretation (obj.) to the King (rec.), thus qualifying himself further by passing the glorifying test. Joseph requested to be acquitted of the trumped-up charge. So the women (sen.) were interrogated by the King and told him (rec.) the truth of it. The King (sen.) assigned a vizierial post (obj.) to Joseph (rec.) in return for the interpretation. Suffering mass starvation, the half-brothers (rec.) bought provisions (obj.) from Joseph (sen.). Joseph (rec.) demanded that they (sen.) should fetch their brother Benjamin (obj.) if they wanted more provisions. Joseph (sen.) sent his shirt (obj.) with the

⁶ According to the story, God bestowed broad knowledge upon Joseph to qualify him for a glorifying test. The qualification corresponds to what Greimas (1970) terms "acquisition of competence along the axes of ability and knowledge" (cited in Prince, 2003: 80). Qualification enabled Joseph to pass the glorifying test of interpreting the royal vision, to make his way to the throne and reunite with the whole family.

half-brothers (rec.), by which he (sen.) restored the clear sight (obj.) to Jacob (rec.). On the throne, the family (sen.) bowed in prostration (obj.) in front of Joseph (rec.). Upon their prostration (represented as, 19), Joseph (sen.) interpreted his own vision to his father Jacob (rec.). That is, the enigma of Joseph's vision of the sun, the moon, and eleven stars prostrating before him is now interpreted as signifying his father, mother, and eleven brothers, respectively. This is why, I render the whole story into one transport function starting with a vision and finishing with its interpretation.

3.5 Thematic analysis of the argumentative propositions

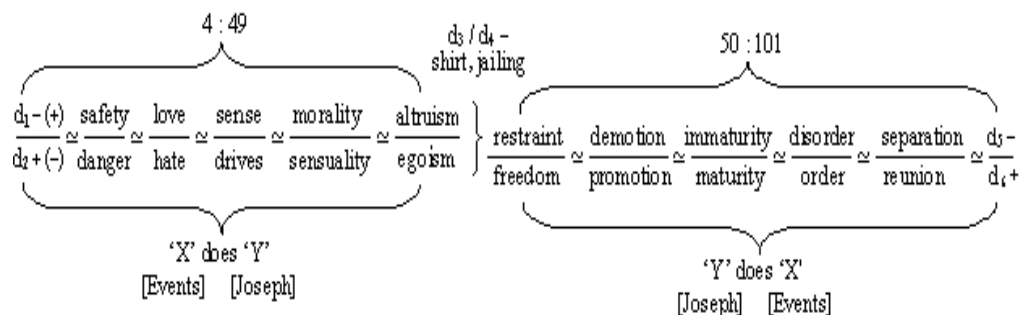


Figure 14. Thematic analysis of argumentative propositions: why?

Complementary to the 3-D model by means of which states and places in the spatial world of the descriptive propositions are defined and the transport model by means of which objects of exchange of the narrative propositions are analysed, the thematic model above regulates the story in terms of argumentative propositions that define narrative places as states where sets of contrasting values, opposite themes, prevail — values which support various aspects of the qualities of the narrated characters and motivate their actions. Joseph and his full brother Benjamin gained much of paternal love and led a safe life in their father’s house, while the half brothers found it plainly aberrant and rendered it highly dangerous. This great danger was brought home to us when the father Jacob cautioned his son Joseph against telling his half brothers about the vision. The father had the premonition that they might huddle together to conspire against Joseph. What the father feared occurred. They entered into conspiracy. They regarded their father's love for Joseph as a sin, which should be purged either by putting Joseph to death or by casting him out of Canaan. Heedless of sense, they gave in to their egoistic desires. Joseph ended up in Egypt where he moved to al-‘Azīz’s luxury house and passed the hardest test. Al-‘Azīz asked his wife Zulaikha to be generous and hospitable to Joseph so that he might help them or be their foster child. She herself was swept off her feet by the good-looking Joseph, who had grown into a charmingly angelic young man under her roof. Joseph grew on her and she found him irresistible. So she listened to her sensuality, set the scene of seduction by fastening the doors, locking him in, and inviting him to sex:

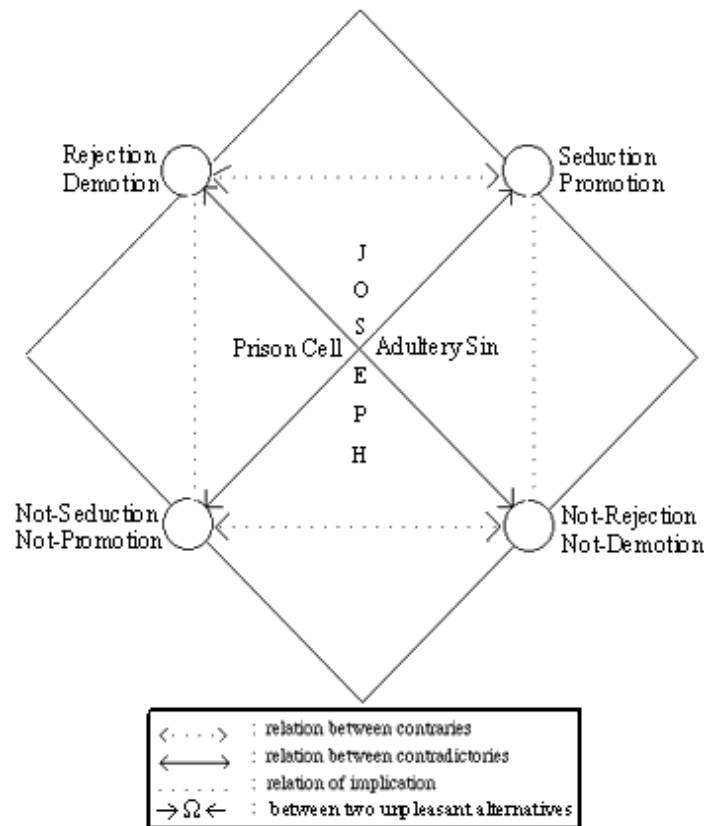
But she in whose house he was, sought to seduce him from his (true) self: she fastened the doors, and said: "Now come, thou (dear one)!" He said: "God forbid! Truly (thy husband) is my lord! He made my sojourn agreeable! Truly to no good come those who do wrong!" [12: 23]

But he declined the invitation and stood by celibacy and gratitude, his only weapons in so fierce a battle between morality (the call of reason) and sensuality (the call of lust). She

seemed to conquer (Arabic *hammat*) him, and he unwillingly came within an ace of surrender (Arabic *hamma*), but he did not give himself to her, thanks to his Lord's evidence. The seductive scene went on to inform us about the height of tension between the seductress and the seduced: the former attempted by all ways to involve the latter in committing a heinous sin. So Joseph rushed towards the door to escape; the wife ran after him to seize him and ripped his shirt from the back. At the door, her husband popped up and she, without a moment's hesitation, escaped the blame by pointing the finger at Joseph:

So they both raced each other to the door, and she tore his shirt from the back: they both found her lord near the door. She said: "What is the (fitting) punishment for one who formed an evil design against thy wife, but prison or a grievous chastisement?" [12: 25]

Cunningly, she charged Joseph with seduction and sexual harassment, by using the adjectival clause 'whoever wanted an evil to your family' to make a mountain out of a molehill and to make Joseph understand that her husband was twisted around her little finger and that the whole affair was in her hands. Thus, if Joseph did not respond to her craving for sex, he would be imprisoned or painfully chastised. The seduction-rejection episode can be visually represented on Greimas's semiotic square (1983) on which the extension of the meaning of a thematic value is defined as a formal logical relation of difference to three other terms: *contradiction* (arrows with heads at both ends) between *seduction/not-seduction*; *contrariety* (arrows in opposite directions) between *seduction/rejection*; and *implication* between *not-seduction/rejection*. Same rules apply to the binary *promotion/demotion* (see Figure 15).



On the square, 'rejection' takes the place of 'celibacy', while 'seduction' takes the place of 'transgression'. Zulaikha's insistence on gratification competes against Joseph's resistance to fornication. She gives him a choice between Scylla and Charybdis: the sin of adultery and the cell of prison. In a quandary over whether to go to prison (detention) or go astray (transgression), he chooses the prison.

Figure 15. The seduction episode on Greimas's Semiotic Square

In the thick of this complicated situation, God recruited one of her family, next of kin, to testify for Joseph, who was oppressively accused, and to render him incontestably innocent of the seduction:

And one of her household saw (this) and bore witness, (thus):- "If it be that his shirt is rent from the front, then is her tale true, and he is a liar! But if it be that his shirt is torn from the back, then is she the liar, and he is telling the truth. [12: 26-27]

In this complex-compound proposition, the contrary pair *front/back* also implies the negative of each term in the binary, the contradictory pair, which is *not-front/not-back* in this example. But the contradiction comprises much more than this: *not-front/not-back* include more than *front/back*. On the contradiction axis, alternative directional opposites, e.g. *right/left* and *above/below*, often posit themselves in the propositional analysis. Once

these terms are laid out on the square (see Figure 16), a relation of implication also exists logically between terms on the vertical axes: *front/not-back* and *back/not-front*.

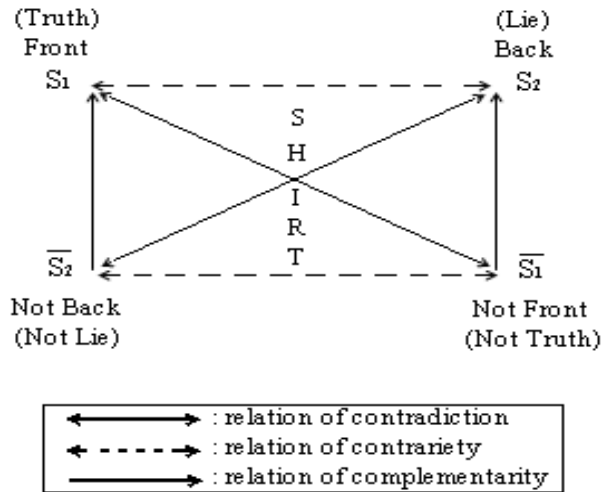


Figure 16. Oppositional analysis of seduction-incident investigation

Greimas (1983) defines the analysis of meaning at this level as *deep semantics*. The meaning of the single term is often defined by the neighboring terms in the cluster of themes in which it is placed. Despite the fact that the shirt and the witness proved Joseph innocent, the submissive husband passed his wife's infidelity by without a protest and carried out her threats against Joseph: bed or bars. Joseph was put by the wife on the horns of a dilemma (sin or cell); however, he never gave in to her threats and found prison preferable. Joseph got an unfair treatment, but resorted to God to keep him safe from fornication and the guile of the townswomen:

He said: "O my Lord! The prison is more to my liking than that to which *they* invite me: Unless Thou turn away *their* snare from me, I should (in my youthful folly) feel inclined towards *them* and join the ranks of the ignorant." [12: 33]

The pronouns *they*, *their* and *them* make it quite obvious that the townswomen, who cast aspersions on al-'Azīz's wife, soon made advances towards Joseph, upon seeing him, and became a party to what they regarded as sin. The wife, the townswomen, and the husband were selfish individuals. They thought only about themselves (*egotism*), not about others (*altruism*). Therefore, they did not mete out justice.

On Figure 14, the pre-catastrophic system of values 'safety, love, sense, morality, and altruism' as opposed to 'danger, hate, drives, sensuality, and egotism' broke down and left in its entirety the peri-catastrophic 'restraint, demotion, immaturity, disorder, and separation', which were finally replaced by the post-catastrophic values 'freedom, promotion, maturity, order, and reunion'. The valorisation is now inverted, integrated and controlled at the higher symbolic level of consciousness. Therefore, there is a distinction between three turns: an immature and disharmonious *pre-catastrophic* turn, a *catastrophic* turn with fatal transgression, and finally a *post-catastrophic* turn where immaturity and disharmony are conquered by experience, knowledge, maturity, and harmony. The first two turns span from verse 4 to verse 49 in which events (X) drove Joseph (Y) to prison; the third from verse 50 to verse 101 in which Joseph (Y) drove

events (X) to reunion at the kingdom. The story falls thus in two halves: one half for the pre-/peri-catastrophic turns; the second half for the post-catastrophic turn.

3.6 Analysis of enunciation and discourse

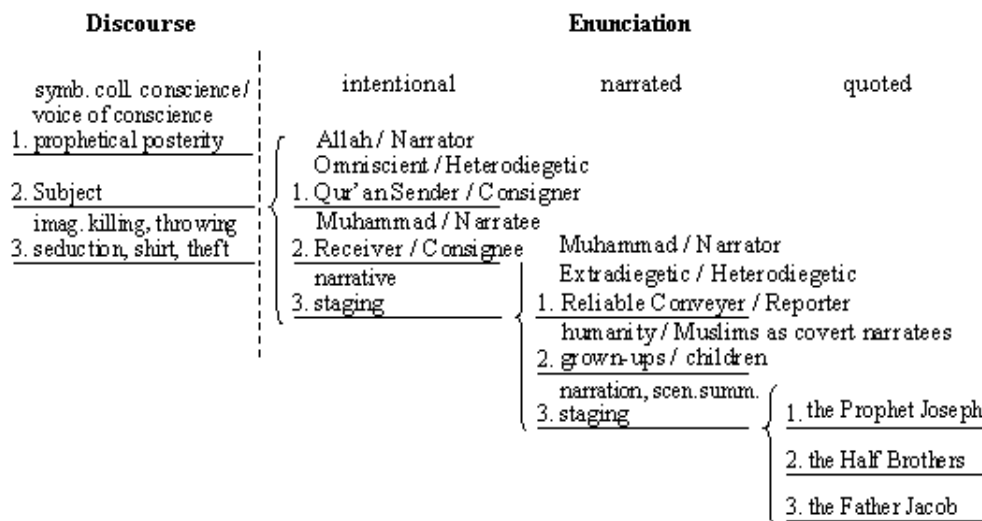


Figure 17. Enunciative and discursive analyses

Paraphrase

In resumption of the analysis, the main focus now is to lay bare how and why the story is told. At the level of *enunciation* (how?), there is an exchange between the first-person narrator (*I/we*) and the second-person narratee (*you*) about the narrative propositions, comprising the speech acts of the third-person narrated characters (*he/she/they*). At an initial narrative staging, the enunciator and the enunciatee are quite explicitly installed by the verbal indicators or deictic pronouns *We* and *you* (old English *thee*) in the opening section below:

We do relate unto *thee* the most beautiful of stories, in that *We* reveal to *thee* this (portion of the) Qur'an: before this, thou too was among those who knew it not. [12: 3]

The use of deictic words such as *We* and *you* automatically draws attention to the presence of a narrator narrating and reflecting on his narrative and a narratee receiving both the narration and the reflection. Figure 17 shows this narrative staging:

time and space

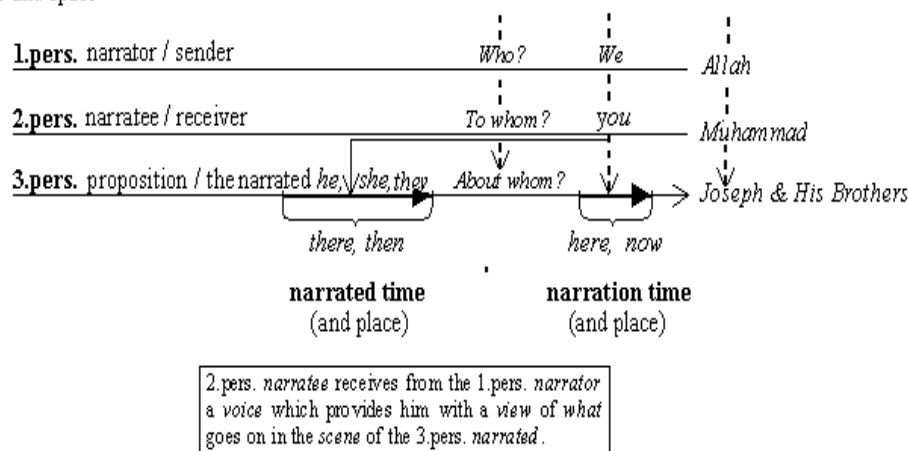


Figure 18. Simple enunciation model in the narrative

In the *intentional enunciation*, the first-person heterodiegetic (i.e. external to the story world) narrator (*God as the Sender of the Qur'an*) gives the proposition to the second-person intended heterodiegetic narratee (*the prophet Muhammad as the receiver*). He points to the *here* and *now* of the narration time by marking an 'omniscient' point of view, the position from which the prophet Muhammad can see what happened to or between *Joseph and his brothers* in the narrative sequence, the space and time of the narrated story, *there* and *then*. The narrator intervenes in the narrative to comment frequently on the actions of characters to make some point about their psychology or to drive home some moral lesson to the narratee(s). Table 1 highlights free direct discourses attesting to the omniscience of God as a narrator:

Table 1. Characters' free direct discourses (FDDs) showing God's 'omniscience'

Quoted verse	Verse no.
<i>For God is full of knowledge and wisdom.</i>	[12: 006]
<i>But God knoweth well all that they do!</i>	[12: 019]
<i>Verily He heareth and knoweth (all things).</i>	[12: 034]
<i>For my Lord is certainly well aware of their snare.</i>	[12: 050]
<i>But over all endued with knowledge is one, All-Knowing.</i>	[12: 076]
<i>For He is indeed full of knowledge and wisdom.</i>	[12: 083]
<i>For verily He is full of knowledge and wisdom.</i>	[12: 100]

In the *narrated enunciation*, the prophet Muhammad has a role as a heterodiegetic narrator, who in turn puts the text away, i.e. reports, conveys, and re-narrates it not merely to his Muslim followers (grown-ups and children), but also to the humankind in toto, as declared elsewhere in the Qur'an [e.g. 05: 67; 21: 107]. As the message conveyor, he also gives the proposition to his people as covert narratees, from which they can see *here* and *now* what happened *there* and *then* to the narrated characters in the sequence, and he stages the *quoted enunciation* where the narrated characters exchange propositions in the form of reported, direct, or indirect speech. In the diegesis (story world), the father Jacob is the bone of contention between Joseph as a hero and the half brothers as villains.

At the level of *discourse*, the main concern is to know why the story is told and particularly in this manner. According to Lacan (cited in Leupin, 2004), at the bottom of the psychic-discursive apparatus lies the imaginary, the *Id*, with its perceptive corporeal drives. In the pre-catastrophic stroke, readers are discursively informed by the father about the imaginary lack and desire of the half brothers. The half brothers perceive that their father Jacob is in plain error, because he shows much more love for his younger sons than for them. They arm themselves with two self-defensive mechanisms: they are constructing a subconscious justification for their clandestine plot to kill Joseph, thus building an invincible shield against a sense of guilt [i.e. *rationalization*]; they also go too far in laying the blame and projecting their unpleasant feelings onto their father [i.e. *projection* (cf. Freud, 1993: 51-53)]. The half brothers remain captive to their *id*, *perception* and the *imaginary*. Only in the post-catastrophic stroke, their regulating *Ego*, *experience* and the *real*, intervenes to render them healthy human beings with a new view of life. Being descendants of a prophetic family, they all atone for their sins and beg for forgiveness collectively. The imaginary instance of discourse also supplies another aspect of the material. Psychoanalytically speaking, the seduction scene can be summed up as a clash between *Id* and *Superego* and an imbalance of mind versus body. Al-‘Azīz’s wife turns very hostile with a tyrannous *Id* out of the seduction she gives “*Now come, thou (dear one).*” and the resistance she gets “*God forbid.*” As a result, she resorts to her bourgeoisie and her authority to force her proletarian inferior Joseph to do her sex bidding. No sooner do the townswomen gossip about al-‘Azīz’s wife’s affair than they partake in it. Not until summoned to the royal court, they collectively prick their conscience and repentantly tell the truth. The narrator intends the narrative to be more than an amusette, to be a morality story. Here the *symbolic* component of the psychic apparatus, the *superego* and *cognition*, emerges as an ethical system, a system of values, the themes of which sort, censor and suppress the immediately perceived *imaginary* material and the drives of the *Id* that religion considers unacceptable, such as the sins of murder, adultery and theft. Two major thematic values are extractable from the narrative text: patience and chastity. Jacob is the apotheosis of patience; Joseph of chastity.

4. Discussion

The application of the so-called wh-model to the analysis of the narrative leads to a variety of findings at the propositional, enunciative and discursive levels. At the propositional level, there is an opening section, an abstract (Prince, 2003: 1), which sets up the narrative scene for the narratee(s) or the reader(s). Basically, the abstract is so central that the narratee(s) are introduced by the narrator to the characters and the given situation (i.e. the message). The opening is unique for the following reasons: a) in-text inscription of the narrator (who tells?), the narratee (to whom?), and the narrated characters (about whom?), b) explicit presentation of the subject along with the antisubject, c) implicit description of the narrative as true historical story of a bygone nation, and d) identification of the motivation behind relating it. The narrative also centres on fulfilment of a goal. It opens with a descriptive metaphor of a young man’s vision and closes with its translation into a reality. Thus the common thrust of the onset and the coda is a vision that has come true. The object of the whole narrative is the realisation of this vision. The content of the vision is paramount and poses a pertinent question: ‘What would happen?’ Though in sleep, the vision has a real meaning and could be finally interpreted. Though it does not foretell the future, it has a foreshadowed significance. Though metaphorical, it is very much realistic.

At the enunciative level, the narrative is a third-person narrative related with an omniscient point of view. The third-person form is the narrative technique of telling the story, but the narrator intervenes, when necessary, to comment directly on any matter of interest. He allows the characters to speak for themselves and the narratee(s) to read the characters' minds. The narrative includes instances of anachrony which Prince (2003: 5) defines as 'the discordance between the order in which events occur and the order in which they are recounted'. In the diegetic world, the anachronies flash back to the past (*analepsis*) or flash forward to the future (*prolepsis*). These recur in such a technique as to retain a delicate balance between the retrospective and the predictive. There is a frequent narration type that precedes the events; a predictive narration technically termed 'anterior narration' (Prince, 2003: 6). This type of narration is exemplified in the prophet Jacob's anticipation [12: 6] whose predictive nature is confirmed by God [12: 21] and by the prophet Joseph [12: 101].

Stylistically, the narrative has a canonical narrative tempo which Prince (2003: 25) terms 'ellipsis'. Ellipsis occurs when there is no part of the narrative (e.g. no words or sentences) corresponding to narratively pertinent events. It is a break in the temporal continuity by skipping over one or several events. Spatiotemporally, the narrative holds a considerable account of space and time. It manipulates different temporal shapes that might be *around-the-clock* [12: 16]; *chronological* [12: 22]; *estimative* [12: 42]; and *fixed* [12: 47], [12: 48] and [12: 49]. Concerning frequency, which Prince (2003: 36) defines as 'the relationship between the number of times an event happens and the number of times it is recounted', the narrative is found to be a singulative narrative in which the divine narrator recounts once what happened once. Regarding technique in the narrative, the second-person narratee(s) receive the sober truth from the first-person narrator's proposition [12: 25] whereas the third-person narrated characters discover this stark truth from the binary opposition *front/back*. The intradiegetic truth is posterior to the extradiegetic truth (i.e. receiving the truth on the part of the narratee(s) is anterior to discovering it on the part of the characters). Readers are shown the inexorable role of binaries in the recognition of this truth.

The narrative abounds in the use of figurative language. Two tropes are prevalent: metaphor and metonymy. Metaphor and metonymy are too wide areas to fully discuss in the present context. Jakobson (1956) applied the notion of structural linguistics to narrative theory. Relying on Saussure's description of paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes, Jakobson formulated a theory, according to which discourse occurs along the two basic axes of selection and combination. Metaphor works on the vertical paradigmatic axis based on selection, substitution and similarity; metonymy on the horizontal syntagmatic axis based on combination, contexture and contiguity (cf. Hawkes, 1977). I find Leech's traditional typology of metaphors (1969: 158) pertinent and insightful here:

- The *concretive* metaphor, which attributes concreteness or physical existence to an abstraction: 'the light of learning'.
- The *animistic* metaphor, which attributes animate characteristics to the inanimate: 'an angry sky'.
- The *anthropomorphic* metaphor, which attributes characteristics of humanity to what is not human: 'This friendly river'.
- The 'synaesthetic metaphor', which transfers meaning from one domain of sensory perception to another: 'loud perfume'.

Figuratively speaking, the whole Joseph narrative text is a humanising metaphor rendered into a reality. The story begins with a vision in which eleven planets and the sun and the moon are bowing before the prophet Joseph and ends in interpreting the vision, conceptualizing the metaphor, in which the eleven brothers and the parents are bowing in front of him. In-text metaphors are found:

ascribing what is human to what is not human, as in:

- address to abstraction: 'non-person' for 'person'
(in *O good news! This is a youth*)
- address to an animal: 'camels' for 'cameleers'
(in *O camels, you are stealers*)
- assigning concreteness to an abstraction: 'find' for 'smell'
(in *I do find Joseph's smell*)

According to the narrative analysis, in-text metonymies substitute:

- 'place' for 'people': village for villagers or town for townspeople
(in *Ask the village where we were*)
- 'possessed' for 'possessor': camels for cameleers
(in *And ask the camels on which we travelled hither*)
- 'product' for 'producer': vinifying (wine) for pressing (grape)
(in *I see myself pressing wine*)

This figurative use of language is extraordinarily powerful and shapes much of, if not all, the Qur'an. The reason is that the whole story has been metaphorised as a dream that has come true. As the story begins, Joseph dreams that he sees eleven stars, the sun and the moon prostrating in front of him. As the story unfolds, Joseph himself transcribes his dream as signifying his eleven brothers, the father and the mother, respectively, upon their prostration before him on the throne. The readers are left in suspense as regards this macro-metaphor until the closing of the story. This macro-metaphor remains enigmatic until the end, whereby metaphoricity becomes a concrete reality and the enigma is resolved. According to the signification system, it is found that the narrative incorporates a significant leitmotif expressive of distinct narrative events. The shirt functions as a leitmotif and takes on different shapes — *mulatṭakh* (spotted), *maqḍūd* (torn) and *mulqā* (thrown). These are three different signifieds of one signifier, each of which bears a particular meaning and performs a specific function within the narrative: the first proves the half-brothers untruthful; the second proves al-'Azīz's wife untruthful and the prophet Joseph truthful; and the third proves the prophet Jacob truthful and restores clear-sightedness to him.

At the discursive level, two basic principles constitute the ways in which certain narrative occurrences are related to one another. These two are *intratextuality* and *causality*. To begin with, a considerable number of intratextual occurrences are found allusive to one another in the narrative text. For instance, the prophet Joseph quotes his father Jacob who blames the predictive wrongdoing of the half brothers on the Devil, also by putting the blame on this most diabolical figure [12: 5; 12: 100]. The prophet Jacob also quotes himself when he doubts whether the half-brothers are telling the truth [12: 18; 12: 83]. Another apparent intratextual strand is Jacob's prediction, God's promise, and Joseph's recognition of visional interpretation—i.e. expecting, giving, and thanksgiving,

respectively [12: 6; 12: 21; 12: 101]. What is notable about these three intratextual strands is the syntagmatic positioning of the partitive determiner *some* (Arabic *min*) in the source text, which asserts that the knowledge received, however broad, is not full. Causality also looms large in the narrative text where an oppositional system of values prevails upon the narrated characters and motivates their actions. For instance, the half brothers conspire to kill Joseph or cast him into a deep well, because he is closer and dearer to their father than they are. It is this devouring jealousy that instigates their actions till the end. The narrative is the most detailed Qur'anic story of a neatly spinned texture of thematic values causally interrelated where one causes the other.

5. Conclusions

The systematic application of this three-tiered semiotic model to the Qur'anic story *Joseph and his Brothers* yields a number of insightful conclusions that could not have been generated but for this analytical model. The 3-D propositional content analysis of the movements between different places in the space of the story reveals that the Joseph story, unlike other counterparts such as the Moses story (cf. Hassanein, 2009b), falls under the singulative circulative aspect of narration. It is singulative in that the narrative events that occurred only once are recounted only once, in a so-called one-to-one relation. It is circulative in the sense that the main character moves from point A to other points and then returns to point A once again. Three strokes can be said to structure these narrative places: a *pre-catastrophic* stroke at home where vision and conspiracy and separation occur; a *peri-catastrophic* stroke at the well where the divine afflatus occurs and in prison where the interpretation of visions takes effect; and a *post-catastrophic* stroke at the kingdom where justice, promotion and reunion take place.

The model provides the readers with a comprehensive enunciation of the story where the 1st-person narrator, the 2nd-person narratee and their relationships to the 3rd-person narrated characters are included in speech acts, the enunciative analysis of which explains how the story is narrated. In these enunciative speech acts, there is one signifier, i.e. *aḥsan* (*the best*), which describes the story at hand as the best of stories. Until now this signifier *aḥsan* remains too enigmatic to resolve. Many questions arose around it: Is it the best in form, in content or in both? Is it the best in comparison to other Qur'anic stories, to other non-Qur'anic stories, or to both? I understand from this signifier that this story is given a better narrative merit than others. The thematic model also brings home to readers a number of motifs or thematic values borne by the fierce clash between the *Id* and the *Superego*. It is the discursive model that shows the readers how the *Ego* intervenes to reconcile the *Id* with the *Superego*, whereby all the sinful characters obtain new leases of life and repent of their sins.

Triadic in structure, the model maintains unity and coherence from introduction to conclusion and arranges the levels of analysis in a sound logical order. Nonetheless, the Qur'anic narrative text demands a change in the order of the model as in the case of enunciation and discourse. Throughout their theoretical elucidation of the model, Grambye and Sonne (2003a) analysed their folktale text into proposition (what?), enunciation (how?) and discourse (why?) and positioned the analysis of discourse before that of enunciation, whereas the divine narrator arranges the Qur'anic story in a different order, starting with enunciation (how?), proposition (what?) and discourse (why?). I can argue that this Qur'anic order has been chosen to inform the narratees in advance that the Qur'an as a whole is the word of God, not a word of a human being. The narrator supports this argument in staging his narration at the onset [12: 3] and at the coda [12:

102], whereby he confirms the story as a historical narrative recounting actual events in the history of humanity. The narration time is not simultaneous with the narrated time. The temporal distance between the narration time and the narrated time is very vast: thousands of years. Hence, it would be impossible for the prophet Muhammad to tell stories of bygone nations without revelation from God.

Classical models alone are insufficient for accounting for verbal narratives on a multidimensional basis. The model I employed in this study offers a convergence, or rather a confluence, of previous theories, broached by Peirce (1992), Greimas (1983), Lacan (cited in Leupin, 2004) and Brandt (2004), and thus develops a multifaceted approach to the analysis of narrative texts. This approach shifts the focus from one discipline to a complex interplay between different disciplines—namely, semiotics, narratology, and psychoanalysis—and from one dimension to several dimensions—i.e. proposition, enunciation, and discourse. This renders the model static in nature as it combines these distinct classical narrative-semiotic theories into a unified whole. However static the model is, I tried to show that it offers a rich and insightful analysis of narrative texts in a religious context and is thus efficient in analysing narratives in a genre other than the one for which it was developed. Therefore, I strongly recommend testing it against further narrative texts to figure out what it can further reveal.

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