**Conceptual Metaphors in *Tales of One Thousand and One Night*s**

**Abstract**

This article examines how metaphors of sun, sky, sea, dawn, night, moon, and stars in the *Tales of the One Thousand and One Nights* strengthen elements of curiosity and tension within the reader. The hypothesis of this research is that the ways the narrators combine these metaphors within the *Tales of the One Thousand and One Nights* intensify the readers’ excitement, tension, curiosity, and enjoyment, and contribute to the advancement of the plot and to the increased desire of the reader to follow the development of the events in the story. In this article, we do not treat the literary metaphors as random comparisons between two objects from different domains, but rather as the conceptualization of one domain through another. This conceptualization advances the plot, ignites the readers’ imagination, and makes them want to follow the events in the story.

1. **Introduction**

*Tales of a Thousand and One Nights* (also called *Arabian Nights*) is a classic, undisputedly included among the treasures of Arab culture and literature in particular and of world culture and literature in general. This collection of stories, of which there are countless versions, is omnipresent in world culture: the adventures of Ali Baba, Aladdin, and Sinbad the Sailor continue to fascinate children today, who may read their adaptations as children’s books or watch their adaptations as cartoons, as well as adults who remember reading the stories during their childhood.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The *Tales of One Thousand and One Nights* paints a rich and compelling worldview. They fulfill needs that modern life has not erased: to be swept away by a story that is anchored in a physical, social, and psychological reality that is different from contemporary lifestyles, to be transported to another place while reading, and to encounter through imagination the fear of witchcraft and death, the difficulties of coping with life, and the enchantment of love and adventure. Genies and kings, porters and fishermen, singers and dancers, monks and slaves - all of these are the protagonists of the complex theater in which the *Tales* *of One Thousand and One Nights* takes place.[[2]](#footnote-2)

This article examines metaphors as the key to illuminating the desired meanings, and the contribution of metaphors in broadening the readers’ horizons and igniting their imagination in shaping and formulating versatile messages. In addition, we examine the contribution of these metaphors to strengthening emotional elements within the reader. The effect of metaphors that are anchored in exaggeration is to heighten the readers’ emotions, excite them, shape their way of thinking, and increase their desire to follow the events of the stories.[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. Metaphors

Metaphors are at the core of human creative thought. Metaphors are a type of image that shapes our feelings and thoughts. Metaphorical expressions fuel our emotions, outline our patterns of thinking, and consequently our patterns of behavior, regarding the narrative plot and its development.[[4]](#footnote-4) Examining the context in which certain metaphorical expressions appear helps readers understand them, and contributes to readers’ perceptions of the intentions of the speakers / writers who are behind the use of metaphors in the communicative event.[[5]](#footnote-5)

In this article, we have adopted the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which takes a different approach to metaphors than the traditional approach. Although we do not deal with political metaphors in this article, they should also be addressed, because such references make significant contributions to a deep understanding of the intended literary metaphors, although clearly for a completely different purpose.

One of the most influential works in the school of cognitive semantics, which broke through the boundaries of the world of linguistics and became well-known to the general public, is George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s book, *Metaphors We Live By*.[[6]](#footnote-6) Publication of this book laid the foundation for Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The authors sought to reveal the metaphorical nature of human thought by pointing to specific, common metaphors whose use is habitual and agreed upon within a culture. From this, it became understood that metaphors are incomparably effective tools for shaping and producing thoughts. Metaphors frame the world for us. One cannot really think, except through metaphors.[[7]](#footnote-7) Metaphorical linguistic uses reflect the way we perceive reality.[[8]](#footnote-8)

* 1. Metaphors of the Sun

2.1.1. Praise and glorification in the descriptions of a young woman’s charms

**أَشْرَقَتْ** في الدُّجَى فلاحَ النَّهارُ واسْتَنارَت بِنُورِها الأَسْحارُ (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 21).

1. She shone in the darkness, and the day appeared

As trees shed brightness over her.[[9]](#footnote-9)

The girl’s face glowed like the sun and illuminated the dawn.

1. Her radiance makes suns rise and shine,

While, as for moons, she covers them in shame.[[10]](#footnote-10)

مِنْ سَنَاها **الشُّمُوسُ** تُشْرِقُ لَمَّا تَتَبَدَّي وَتَنْجَلي الأَقْمارُ (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 10).

The glow of the young woman’s face is like the glow of the sun. Her face glows like shining suns and illuminates the moon.

1. Do not be surprised at her joy which makes clear the light of day.[[11]](#footnote-11)

لا تعجب من **بهجتها** التي تفضح **شمس** **النهار** (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 547)

The light of the young woman’s face is like sunlight, and even surpasses it in beauty.

1. Your appearance is like the appearance of the rising moon

Your face glows, shining with grace.[[12]](#footnote-12)

The young woman’s face is shining and illuminated with grace and beauty.

2.1.2. Praises for King Yunan

1. The brightness shining from your face removes

The gloom which shrouds each grave affair.[[13]](#footnote-13)

يا صاحِبَ **الوَجهِ** الَّذي **أنوارُه** تَمْحُوْ مِنَ الْخَطْبِ الْكَريهِ غَياهِبا (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 21).

The brightness and radiance of King Yunan’s face overcome the gloomy darkness that resulted from the offensive matter.

1. This face of yours will never cease to gleam,

Although the face of Time may frown.[[14]](#footnote-14)

ما زالَ **وَجْهُكَ** **مُشْرِقًا** **مُتَهَلِّلًا** كَي لا نَرى وَجْه الزَّمَانِ مُقَطِّبا (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 21).

King Yunan's shining and radiant face showers optimism on people and overcomes their pessimism.

2.1.3 Praise and glorification in the descriptions of a young man’s charms

1. A moon has perfected its beauties and ended,

So, the sun rises from the anemones of his cheeks.

قَمَرٌ تَكامَلَ في الْمَحاسِنِ وانْتَهَى **فالشَّمْسُ** تُشْرِقُ مِنْ **شَقائِقِ** **خَدِّهِ** (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 71).

The young man’s rosy cheeks resemble anemone flowers. The radiance that shines from his face is like the radiance of the sun.

* 1. Metaphors of the Sky and Heavens
		1. Praise and glorification in the descriptions of a young woman’s charms
1. As lightning flashes from her sanctuary

A rain of tears floods down.[[15]](#footnote-15)

وإذا أَوْمَضَتْ **بُرُوقُ** حِماها هَطَلَتْ باِلْمَدامِعِ الأَمْطارُ (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 10).

The young woman’s radiant face is bright like lightning that heralds the rains of abundance and blessings.

* + 1. Praises for King Yunan
1. Your liberality has granted me the gifts

That rain clouds shower down on the hills.[[16]](#footnote-16)

The kindness that King Yunan showered on Doctor Duban was like clouds raining down blessings.

* + 1. Description of a Palace
1. We saw an arched gate constructed with marble dome,

And within it was a palace erected from dust and suspended from clouds.

رأَينا بوابة مقنطرة بقبّة من الرخام مشيدة البنيان، وفي داخلها قصر قد قام من التراب و**تعلق** **بالسحاب** (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأَول، ص 60).

The palace with its head in the heavens is a metaphor for its impressive height.

* 1. Moon Metaphors
		1. Praise and glorification in the descriptions of a young woman’s charms
1. Her radiance makes suns rise and shine,

While, as for moons, she covers them in shame.[[17]](#footnote-17)

مِنْ سَنَاها الشُّمُوسُ تُشْرِقُ لَمَّا تَتَبَدَّي وَتَنْجَلي **الأَقْمارُ** (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 10).

The young woman’s face shines, and the intensity of her radiance overwhelms that of the moons.

1. O! Radiance of the bright full moon, I am

One whose heart is left torn from your love.

يا **طَلْعَةَ الْبَدْرِ المُنيرٍ** أَنا الَّذي في حُبِّكُم تَرَكَ الفُؤادَ مُمَزَّقًا (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الثاني، ص 664).

The young woman is as enchanting as the moon in all its glory.

* + 1. Praise and glorification in the descriptions of a young man’s charms
1. A moon has perfected its beauties and ended,

So, the sun rises from the anemones of his cheeks.

**قَمَرٌ** تَكامَلَ في الْمَحاسِنِ وانْتَهَى فالشَّمْسُ تُشْرِقُ مِنْ شَقائِقِ خَدِّهِ (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 71).

The young man is as enchanting as the moon.

1. Oh! glorious moon shining with its goodness!

And with a face that deflowers the bright morning

يا فاضِحَ **القَمَرِ** الْمُنِيرِ بِحُسْنِهِ وَبِوَجْهِهِ افْتُضِحَ الصَّبَاحُ المُسْفِرُ (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 84).

The moon is ashamed and humbled by the sight of the young man’s glowing face, which outshone the morning light.

1. Sun and moon have met in the same zodiac sign,

Rising with supreme beauty and good fortune*.*[[18]](#footnote-18)

**البَدْرُ** **والشَّمْسُ** في بُرْجٍ قَدِ اجْتَمَعا في غايَةِ الْحُسْنِ والإِقْبالِ قَدْ طَلَعا (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 91)

The young man appeared at the height of his splendor when the moon and sun appeared in the same zodiac constellation.

1. The people blame him for his wandering

While the moon is forgiven wherever it wanders.

يَلومُهُ النَّاسُ على تِيهِهِ **والبَدْرُ** مَهْما تاهَ مَعْذورُ (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 546).

The boy's beauty is beyond description, and he is as enchanting as the moon.

Praise and glorification in the descriptions of a young woman’s charms

1. The full moon is at her elevation, and the branch her extent,

And the musk is her fragrance, no-one is her compare.

**البَدْرُ طَلْعَتُها** والغُصْنُ قامَتُها والمِسْكُ نَكْهَتُها ما مِثْلُها بَشَرُ (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 545).

The young woman’s glowing face is as enchanting as the moon.

1. As if she were emitted from a pearl’s water

With a moon in every stream of her goodness.

كَأَنَّها أُفْرِغَتْ مِنْ ماءِلُؤْلُؤَةٍ **في كُلِّ جارِيَةٍ مِن حُسْنِها** **قَمَرُ** (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 545).

The young woman’s charm and splendor are like the grace of the moon.

* 1. Metaphors of the Stars
		1. Praise and glorification in the descriptions of a young man’s charms
1. The astrologer observed the night and it appeared to him

A stream of salt fading in its full moon.

رَصَدَ المُنَّجِمُ لَيْلَهُ فَبَدا لَهُ قَدُّ المَلٍيحِ يَمِيسُ في بُرْدَيْهِ (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 57).

The young man’s charm is no less than that of the stars in the heavens.

1. And Saturn strewed the blackness of its locks

And the calm, clean musk on his cheeks.

وَأَمَدَّهُ **زُحَلٌ سَوادَ** **ذَوَائِبٍ** والمِسْكُ هَادِي الخَالِ في خَدَّيْهِ (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة الجزء الأول ص 57).

Saturn is the farthest planet from the sun, so the young man’s curly black hair is described as being as dark as Saturn, the darkest of the planets.

1. And the redness of his cheeks emerges from Mars

And the bow fires arrows from his eyelids.

وَغَدَتْ مِنَ **المَرِّيخِ حُمْرَةُ خَدِّهِ** والقَوْسُ يَرِمي النَّبْلَ مِنْ جَفْنَيْهِ (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة الجزء الأول ص 57).

The rosy color of the young man’s face recalls the color of the planet Mars. This planet nourished his face with rosiness and enhanced his beauty.

1. And Mercury gave him his excess intelligence

And the slanderers refused to gaze upon him.

**وَعَطَارِدٌ** أَعْطَاهُ **فَرْطَ** **ذَكائِه** وَأَبَى السُّها نَظَرَ الوُشَاةِ إِلَيْهِ (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة الجزء الأول ص 57).

According to Greek and Roman mythology, the hot planet of Mercury controls the mind, writing, speech, communication and power of thought. The young man described is endowed with the wisdom that characterizes Mercury.

* 1. Metaphors of the Sea

2.5.1 Description of the voyage on the stormy sea

23) And we traveled no longer with the moderation of the breeze, until we left the sea of fear and entered the sea of security. And we traveled a few days until we drew close to the city of Basra and its buildings became clear to our sight.

ولم نزل سائرين مع اعتدال الريح حتى خرجنا من **بحر الخوف ودخلنا بحر الأَمان**. وسافرنا أَيامًا قلائل إِلى أن قربنا من مدينة البصرة ولاحت لنا أبنيتها (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 58).

Fear and terror are like a sea that threatens to engulf those traveling on it. The actual horror and uncertainty experienced by sailors reflect the intensity of the sea and its movements. The sea can roll overwhelm those sailing on it at any time. However, at times the sea can be absolutely serene and calm.

* + 1. Praise and glorification in the descriptions of a young man’s charms
1. And then I spoke with her while I drowned in the sea of her love.

ثم تحدثت أنا وإيّاها وأنا غارقٌ في **بحر** **محبتها** (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 99).

My love for the young woman was as vast as the sea.

* + 1. Description of the voyage in the stormy sea
1. Oh! sailor of the sea in terror and doom!

Curb your disquiet for a livelihood is not served by agitation.

يا راكِبَ **البَحْرَ** **في** **الأهْوالِ والهَلَكَة** أَقْصِرْ عَنَاكَ فَلَيْسَ الرِّزْقُ بالحَرَكَة (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 140).

The metaphorical phrase "sea of danger" emphasizes the intensity of the dangers in the sea that can befall fishermen and sailors trying to earn their living.

* 1. Metaphors of the Night
		1. Praise and glorification in the descriptions of a young woman’s charms
1. Her locks are the night yet, on her forehead,

The dawn will gleam should the day come.

**ذوائبها لَيْلٌ** ولكن جَبينُها إذا أسْفَرَتْ يومًا يَلوحُ بِهِ الفَجْرُ (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 126).

The young woman’s curly black locks are similar in beauty to the magic of the night.

* + 1. Praise and glorification in the descriptions of a young man’s charms
1. And Saturn strewed the blackness of its locks

And the calm, clean musk on his cheeks.

وَأَمَدَّهُ **زُحَلٌ سَوادَ** **ذَوَائِبٍ** والمِسْكُ هَادِي الخَالِ في خَدَّيْهِ (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة الجزء الأول ص 57).

The boy's black, curly hair is as dark as Saturn, the farthest from the sun and the darkest of the planets. This implies that his curly black hair is similar to the darkness of the night.

* 1. Metaphors of Dawn

2.7.1 Praise and glorification in the descriptions of a young woman’s charms

28) Her locks are the night yet, on her forehead

The dawn will gleam should the day come.

ذوائبهالَيْلٌ ولكن **جَبينُها** إذا **أسْفَرَتْ** يومًا **يَلوحُ** **بِهِ الفَجْرُ** (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 126).

The young woman’s forehead shimmers with light, and when it shines, the sun dawns.

1. She shone in the darkness, and the day appeared

As trees shed brightness over her.[[19]](#footnote-19)

أَشْرَقَتْ في الدُّجَى فلاحَ النَّهارُ **واسْتَنارَت بِنُورِها الأَسْجارُ** (قصص ألف ليلة وليلة، الجزء الأول، ص 21).

The young woman’s face glows like the sun illuminating the dawn.

1. How Do Metaphors in the *Tales of One Thousand and One Nights* Create a Conceptualization?

In cognitive semantics, the conceptualization of a target domain through a source domain is mapping. The target domain is mapped by the source domain, but not the other way around. For example, through the metaphor “life is a vessel” we understand the concept of life through the concept of the vessel, but we do not understand the concept of a vessel through the concept of life. The metaphor “love is a journey” is based on the image of a road, which is reflected in many expressions in the English language. For example, the lovers can be at a crossroads or reach a dead end, their relationship can run aground or become so bad that there is no way back, the lovers go through a long road full of obstacles, and so on. Each phrase has a point of origin and a destination, and each journey has its own characteristics: passengers, means of transportation, route, obstacles, etc. In every romantic relationship there are lovers, various events, development of the relationship, and more. The metaphor links the characteristics of the source domain to the characteristics of the target domain: the lovers are travelers, the course of the relationship is the route, the difficulties in the relationship are obstacles along the way, and the like.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Mapping the target domain (increasing the readers’ emotions, pleasure, curiosity, and imagination) by the source domain (sun, sky, sea, dawn, night, moon, and stars) is very common in the *Tales of One Thousand and One Nights*. It is likely that the narrators in the *Tales of One Thousand and One Nights* consider this source domain to be a core domain in the construction of these metaphors.

The following shows a mapping of the source domain of the sun to the above target domain:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Source: The sun | Target: Increasing the readers’ emotions, pleasure, curiosity, and imagination and shaping their way of thinking |
| Sun shining at dawn  | The young woman’s radiant and glowing face |
| Bright as sunlight and even surpassing it in intensity | The intensity of the light radiating from the young woman’s face |
| A sun capable of erasing the darkness that results from offensive speech | The splendor and radiance of King Yunan's face |
| A sun that brings optimism and overcomes pessimism | King Yunan's glowing face |
| Sunshine | The glow shining from the young man’s cheeks |

The following shows a mapping of another source domain, the sky, to the above target domain:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Source: Sky | Target: Increasing the readers’ emotions, pleasure, curiosity, and imagination and shaping their way of thinking |
| Lightning that heralds the rains of abundance and blessings | The young woman’s face radiating light |
| Rain clouds giving blessing rains | The kindness that King Yunan showered on the doctor |
| Clouds in the sky | The castle whose top ascends to the heavens  |

The following shows a mapping of the source domain of the moon to the above target domain:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Source: Moon | Target: Increasing the readers’ emotions, pleasure, curiosity, and imagination and shaping their way of thinking |
| Moon | The radiance of the young woman’s face |
| Appearance of the moon | The charm of the young woman |
| Enchantment/magic of the moon | The charm of the young man |
| The rising of the glowing moon | The young man’s glowing face |
| Appearance of the moon and sun | The appearance of the young man at the peak of his splendor |

The following shows a mapping of the source domain of the stars to the above target domain:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Source: The Stars | Target: Increasing the readers’ emotions, pleasure, curiosity, and imagination and shaping their way of thinking |
| Stars of the heavens | Beauty of one of the young men |
| The planet Saturn, farthest from the sun and darkest of the planets | The black curly hair of the young man |
| The planet Mars | The rosy color of the young man’s face |
| The rising moon | The glow of the young man’s face |
| Appearance of the sun and moon | Appearance of the young man at the peak of his splendor |
| The planet Mercury | The young man’s wisdom |

The following shows a mapping of the source domain of the sea to the above target domain:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Source: The Sea | Target: Increasing the readers’ emotions, pleasure, curiosity, and imagination and shaping their way of thinking |
| A sea that threatens to swallow those traveling on it | Strength of fear and terror |
| Endless sea | True and sincere love |
| A sea that threatens to swallow the fishermen | The dangers lurking for fishermen working at sea |

The following shows a mapping of the source domain of the night to the above target domain:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Source: The Night | Target: Increasing the readers’ emotions, pleasure, curiosity, and imagination and shaping their way of thinking |
| Magic of the night | The curly dark hair of the young woman |
| The planet Saturn and the darkness of night | The curly dark hair of the young man |

The following shows a mapping of the source domain of the dawn to the above target domain:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Source: The Dawn | Target: Increasing the readers’ emotions, pleasure, curiosity, and imagination and shaping their way of thinking |
| Sunrise | The light radiating from the young woman’s face |
| The rising dawn | The young woman’s glowing face |

1. Conclusions

The metaphors of the sun, sky, sea, dawn, night, moon, and stars are common in the *Tales of One Thousand and One Nights*. These metaphors intensify the readers’ emotions and increase their enjoyment. The emotional element contributes greatly to increasing the readers’ desire to follow the development of events in the story and enriches their imagination.

Contrary to the approach that metaphors in fiction and poetry are simply a matter of colorful decoration, we believe that these metaphors play a central role in deciphering meaning. They serve as a key to illuminating the desired meanings and contributing to broadening the readers’ horizons, igniting their imagination and shaping and formulating versatile messages. It is worth noting that the readers’ emotions reach their peak due to the effect of metaphors that are anchored in exaggeration, which heightens the readers’ emotions, excites them, shapes their way of thinking, and increases their desire to follow the events of the stories.

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2. Ibid: 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The corpus examined is *Alf Layla wa-Layla* Vol. 1 [Arabic] (Beirut: Dar Sader, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 3-6; J. S. Mio “Metaphor and politics,” *Metaphor and Symbol* 12 (1997): 113–33; V. Koller. 2012. “How to analyse collective identity in discourse: Textual and contextual parameters,” *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines* 5 (2012): 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. I. Agbo, G. C. Kadiri, and U. B. Ijem. “Critical metaphor analysis of political discourse in Nigeria,” *English Language Teaching* 11 (2018): 95–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*, 1980. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Z. Livnat, *Introduction to the Theory of Meaning*: *Semantics and Pragmatics* (Vol. 2. Raanana: The Open University of Israel, 2014): 368; D. Gavriely-Nuri, “War metaphors as women’s business,” (Hebrew) *Panim* 56: 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*: 3–6; Mio, “Metaphor and Politics,”: 117–26; Koller, “How to analyse”: 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *The Arabian Nights,* trans. Malcolm C. Lyons: 35 (London: Penguin, 2008) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid, 35 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Due to the great number of versions of the text, not all the quotations can be found in one of the standard English translations. In those cases, the translation is by the author. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The Arabic for this passage was unavailable. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *The Arabian Nights*: 66 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid: 67 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Ibid: 35 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid: 67 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid: 35 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ibid: 291 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ibid: 35 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Livnat, Introduction to Theory of Meaning: 124 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)