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NARRATIVE MODES IN THE NOVELS OF YASMINAKHADRA

Dr. C. S. Arunprabu¹, Dr. K. Kaviarasu², Dr. S. Poornima³

¹Assistant Professor, Department of English, Faculty of Science and Humanities, Kattankulathur Campus, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, India,

ORCID: 0000-0003-0414-9614,

²Assistant Professor, Vivekananda College, Agasteeswaram, Kanniyakumari, India,

ORCID: 0000-0002-5273-4407,

³Research Associate, Department of English, National College, Trichy, India,

ORCID: 0000-0002-1563-495X,

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Abstract

Narratives in corporate elements like verisimilitude, focalisation, character, types of narration and so on. The author expresses his ideas through various modes of narration. The style of narration and the narrative tools differ from one text to the other, but certain tools like analepsis, prolepsis, in medias res and characterisation remains common in most of the literary work of art. Each of his novels exhibits various modes of narration. Hence the authorial narrative stands explicit throughout YasminaKhadra's seminal works.

Khadra produces each novel as the representation of society and its cultures, values and traditions where every novel is selectively written to achieve *verisimilitude* (McHale 627). He picks up themes of war, global domination, oppression, racial discrimination for his plot in almost all of his fictions. He amplifies war as the central phenomenon for the destruction of the society. The author designs each character as a replica of the real human being who is subjected to be victimized by the cruelties of war and its consequences. He chooses the events from the war history of world outside such as suicide bombings, air strikes, massacres, and kidnappings for his fictions. Khadra selects themes using the current history of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Israel and of his own country in his fictions.

In *The Sirens of Baghdad*, Khadra presents the conflict in Iraq due to American invasion and portrays how the common people could be transformed as involving in resistance forces performing suicide bombings and attacks amidst the own citizens of their country. It is a story which extracts the dilemma of a teenage boy, whose response to the unexpected change in his society constitute the novel. The plot of the novel is *dysphoric* (Prince 73), where it the events change for the worse regulated by the narrator's actions till the end. The plot is also internal, as it is based on the inner feelings and transactions of the protagonist narrator. The text disseminates the plot of character as it registers the protagonists moral change, which can be noted from the opening of the novel. Khadra's *The Swallows of Kabul* can be brought under the realist novel which gives a detailed and unsentimental description of the domestic life of the middle-class families. It depicts the dismal living conditions of the characters who become the passive victims of the environment of Kabul. It renders the events of ordinary life showing the plight of individuals within the convolution of group life which often leads to the analysis of societal change. The miserable living conditions in each country is chosen for the plot of the novel and concentrates much on the portrayal of characters who become passive victims of their environment. It exposes the strife of the characters in its story world. The novel is a plot of thought, where it presents the transformation of thought and feeling of the protagonist AtiqShaukat. Whereas, in *The Attack*, Khadra shows the Arab-Israeli clashes. The rudiment of the plot explicitly tells the effect of protagonist's situation. It generates the plot of action in which the protagonist Jaafari is brought into an immediate shock of his wife's death. The action of Jaafari speeds up soon after the drastic change in his situation in the atmosphere, caused by the bizarre death of Sihem. The plot moves gradually over the retrospection of Sihem's suicide bombing, initializing the search for reason. In *What the Day Owes the Night*, the tension and frustration and moral conflicts among the people during the time of war in Algeria is clearly revealed. He has created characters such as the young man in *The Sirens of Baghdad*, Dr. Amin Jaafari, Mohsen Ramat his mouthpieces to value the anti-social elements of their own land which affects the characters, whose motivations are centered around the effects of violence in regard to the circumstances of war. In the novel, *The Swallows of Kabul*, AtiqShaukat is assumed as a round character, whose moral dilemma promotes his decision of acquiring an opportunity to start a new life with the prisoner he loves. His character is complex though his actions could be predictable on the growth of the novel. The block characterization is used to describe the physical and psychological account of AtiqShaukat.

Mohsen Ramat and Zunaira's are flat characters, as they remain static throughout the novel, only expressing their discontent on the society in the voice of the narrator. Musarrat remains static until the climax of the novel, triggering the last-minute tension among the characters. Her decision to switch herself with the prisoner carries the turning point, breaking the tedious pace of the narrative. In *The Sirens of Baghdad*, the narrator is himself the protagonist, whose actions predominate the course of the text. The unpredictable nature of his character makes his characterization complex. The women characters are reflections of their respective societies ranging from the uneducated women to

employees. For example, in *The Sirens of Baghdad*, the narrator comes from a middle-class background in which his elder sister could not get education because of her baldness at the young age whereas another one becomes an educated nurse out of her stubbornness to learn even though she has been restricted to come back to her village for such a decision. In the novel, *The Attack*, Sihem is an educated woman, who in the progress of the novel turns out to be a suicide bomber. Sihem's character is multi-dimensional and complex throughout the rendering of the narrative by Amin Jaafari. Her characterization is dynamic as the progress of her characterization brings contradiction in the novel. She becomes the focalized character in the text where a range of opinions given by the other minor characters. When Jaafari is asked to look at his wife's mutilated body, his point of view discloses the *ocularisation* (Jahn 174), of his observation. The figural text concentrates on the center of consciousness of Jaafari, whose experiencing self becomes the core narrative element of the text. It invites the reader's response to witness and experience along with the focal character.

The Sirens of Baghdad begins with *prolepsis* (Ireland 591), where the events are presented in flash forward technique before the plot starts to show up. The fiction produces the anticipation of what is to happen. The proleptic detail is often hidden in the lines that the reader tries to comprehend the reference to the future event. For instance, the narrator hints the narratee, referring to Sayed's relation to him in the future says, "Our paths were to cross again later on." (TSB 69). One can decipher that the narrator of this novel is reliable and conscious of the story he tells. The story is told by an unnamed first-person narrator who comes to be known as a young teenage boy from a remote village called KafrKaram.

The narrator of this story is a homodiegetic narrator (Fludernik31), where he remains as a character throughout the novel as he tells every events and experiences from his own point of view. He introduces himself to the readers as: "I'm a Bedouin, born in KafrKaram, a village lost in the sands of the Iraqi desert, a place so discreet that it often dissolves in mirages, only to emerge at sunset" (TSB 2). The young narrator is the protagonist of the story as the preceding events are stimulated by his own deeds and actions as playing parts; initially as a silent humble human being later becomes a suicide killer. The protagonist's transformation in the plot or *sjuzhet* accelerates when the narrator begins to explain about his life in the calm village which was remote from all the evils of war and how the village got destructed gradually from the advent of foreign invasion. The text is constructed wholly in first-person narration. The narrator describes his own character informs the narratee of his nature and of his moral values: "I was an emotional person; I found other people's sorrows devastating. Whenever I passed misfortune, I bore it away with me. As a child, I often wept in my room after locking the door, for fear that my twin sister—a girl—would catch me shedding tears... I was made that way, and that was all there was to it" (TSB 96). The narrator sometimes hides the details for the narratee to anticipate the upcoming story. The writer makes use of the gaps and ruptures in the text so that the reader could fill it on the process of reading. *The Attack* starts with the narrator's thought which searches for the present situation he is in. The novel generates the anticipation through the narrator Amin

Jaafari's reference to the situation of bomb blast in which he is one of the victims and it creates an expectation on the narratee towards the events of the story. The novel's beginning is constructed in the prolepsis technique that it provides the end of the story at the beginning itself as the events are presented in the non-chronological order. The text starts with the lines of the protagonist Amin Jaafari creating an image of the aftermath of a bomb blast in which he is one the victims and explores his past life in the proceeding chapters. He is the narrator who already knows the order of events in the story as he switches over to the flashback mode to present details of why he is now in such situation. The narration jumps to homodiegetic analepsis (Ireland 591-92), where the sequence of events involving the narrator Jaafari who is the main character of the novel.

What the Day Owes the Night recounts the story of the narrator Jonas through the various stages of his life. The text is formulated as a bildungsroman, where it presents the development of the character parallel to the changes in the society. The novel provides an autobiographic detail of the protagonist Jonas whose life involves series of changes which are inseparable with the cultural aspects that influence the society. The text depicts the transformation of individual lives over the socio-political factors. It provides a sample through picturing Jonas as one of the individuals who was affected by such transformation in his country Algeria. The novel makes various expressions as *reference* (Margolin 493), to the protagonist Jonas through the representation of sequence of situations as he searches for his identity; being torn between Arab and the European identities as he becomes an adopted son of the European parents, his moral dilemmas while encountering the hostility shown by his friend to an Arab servant, the disappointment he faces resulting from the humiliations to constitute his development of character. The text has the etic opening where the *autodiegetic* narrator (Phelan 390), Jonas begins to talk about his father whom he knows better than anybody in the novel. The expressions of his name changing from Younas to Jonas ran throughout the text as it stresses the importance of such references. His name is mentioned interchangeably at various instances to highlight the crisis of identity that prevails throughout the suppressed people of Algeria. In this text the narrator Jonas is a *narrator-focalizer* (Jahn174), where he observes the other characters such as his father, his mother and his friends through his point of view. The events are presented through the internal focalization of the narrator where Jonas' tells the story according to his own set of beliefs and observations. He perceives the other characters' actions like those of his friends Jean Christophe or Germaine or Mahi. Jonas becomes the narrator-focalizer where his perspective on the other characters reflects the progress of the narrative. Jonas point of view extends throughout the text as he assesses each of them in through his own observations. His perception about his father confirms that he is a narrator-focalizer of the story.

The text, in many instances, follows the internal focalization through the perspective of the protagonist-narrator. In Genettean terms, the text follows the *auto diegetic narration* (Jahn 365), where the narrator Jonas himself is the protagonist of the story, who narrates events. Jonas is in turn the reflector character of the novel who witnesses the actions presented before him. He has

been one among the characters, who sees his friends' responses and actions. Stanzel's definition of the reflector character suits the character Jonas:

A reflector belongs to the figural narrative situation in which the narrator is replaced by a reflector: a character in the novel who thinks, feels and perceives but does not speak to the reader like a narrator. The reader looks at the other characters through the eyes of this reflector character. Since nobody 'narrates' in this case, the presentation seems to be direct. (Stanzel 5)

The implied reader's mood is handled by the implied author in the text so as to develop a consistency throughout the text. The implied author in this novel provides some foregrounding points to prepare the mood of the implied reader who anticipates the future events in the novel, begins by describing the horrors and disastrous events that is going to happen for his characters that sets the plotline of the story. Wayne C. Booth clarifies how the mood is manipulated by the implied author in the chapter "The Author's Voice in Fiction" in his well-known work *The Rhetoric of Fiction*:

The authors have simply tried to make clear to us the nature of the dramatic object itself, by giving us the hard facts, by establishing a world of norms, by relating particulars to those norms, or by relating the story to general truths. In so doing, authors are in effect exercising careful control over the reader's degree of involvement in or distance from the events of the story, by insuring that the reader views the materials with the degree of detachment or sympathy felt by the implied author. (Booth 200)

The plotline proceeds interchangeably in the text marking parallel developments in the narrative where *heterodiegetic analepsis* (Ireland 591), takes over the narration balancing the temporal order of the narration. The narrative travels through different plotlines of Mohsen Ramat and AtiqShoukat's story. The text is presented in the *authorial narrative situation* (Prince 89), where the events are presented in the chronological order and the characters are introduced one by one in a clear third-person narration by an omnipresent narrator who narrates the events of the two different plots of Atiq and Mohsen. There is a simultaneous narration in the novel, along the situation and events as the narrator constantly expresses his view by showing his spontaneous narration. He peers through the minds of the characters by jumping over one plot to the other. He alternatively narrates the happenings in the lives of characters and reproduces their speech acts over periods of time. The space of narrative also changes interchangeably, where it shows the places such as jail where Atiq works and the homes of those characters. The jail is the symbolically represents the dark shadow of death which implies the condition of the people of Afghanistan in the rule of Taliban. The proleptic hint of the place jail foreshadows (Prince 33), the miserable end of AtiqShoukat. The events are focalized from behind that it gradually brings out the characters' evolution on the narrative. In the text, there is a double-plot structure that run parallel: one is of the story of AtiqShoukat and his wife Musarrat, and the other

is of the storyline of Mohsen Ramat and Zunaira. The text incorporates variable focalizations where the variety of events are viewed through the important characters.

The other characters like Musarrat, Mohsen Ramat and Zunaira also take turns as focalizers of the story. For instance, Mohsen sees his wife Zunaira who has turned her face from him with the sign of hatred by wearing the burqa she never liked before. Mohsen as a focalizer views his wife in the course of action: "Zunaira is no longer the woman she once was, the courageous, vivacious woman who helped him hold on, who supported him every time he stumbled. Now having decided never again to remove her burqa, she has deliberately sunk into an odious world..." (TSK 125). The text follows the *mimetic mode* (Cobley 57), where the actions are represented prominently through dialogues between the characters framing them as close to the reality.

The novels generally possess *heteroglossia* (Williams 213), as its discourse includes various factors such as gender, region, or ideology. These selected novels have the purpose of expressing the intention of the author regarding the values and norms and the indifferences of the society and culture. A novel consists of polyphony of voices. The voice of the narrator sometimes expresses the voice of the whole people of the respective countries which suffer from war. The *voice* (Aczel 443), of the text is a significant factor on the textual analysis. Mikhail Bakhtin talks about the polyphony of voices i.e. there are combination of several voices emerge from the text when it is put to constant interpretation. Khadra has a voice of his own to reflect in the text he produces. All the four novels possess the core idea of violence and its impact on certain community. He also touches the post-colonial narrative that every country he has taken to describe has the thread of colonist impact. He creates the fictions to stand as a representative for the total Arab race who often been put into humiliation by the name itself. The narrative of these texts leads the readers to experience the effect of war, loss of hope to acquire an identity and even more the longing for a country of their own. In each of these texts, the chief characters linger between the two sects of people, and they become victims even though they try to move along with in a cordial relationship with the dominant side, who always prefer the path of non-violence. Especially in the novels *The Sirens of Baghdad* and *The Attack*, the first-person-narrators express their voice, representing the voice of their own people of the land. These voices correlate with the narrators' voices to constitute several different opinions submerged in the text. The *Attack* express the suppressed voice of Palestinian people. The protagonist Amin Jaafari is a typical representative of a common man, who tries to mingle in the society which often express hostility when it comes to his Arab race. The narrator in *The Sirens of Baghdad* voices out the imperial arrogance and the cruelties of war in Iraq in the wake of American invasion. Sayed stands for the voice to show Western attitude on the Arabs as he speaks out frequently on their perception towards them. The conversation between Jalal and Mohammed Seen, a novelist in the text, is so explicitly delivered that it highlights the overall spirit of the formation. The 'Us' (TSB 274) in the final sentence marks the inviting call of the author to take the responsibility of propagating the world about the suppressed community. The text serves its purpose in different levels through the organization and selection

of material by the author who frames the narratives and conversations. *What the Day Owes the Night* reveals the psychological contemplation of Jonas who strain towards understanding the cultural and ethnic differences. The text is dominated by the conversations rather than narrative aspects in order to achieve a reality effect. The text strives to achieve verisimilitude throughout the discourse where it confronts to the sets of beliefs of the readers. *In Swallows of Kabul*, all the characters suffer the impacts dominance of Taliban rule over their religion and culture.

The mind-style of the characters are carefully handled by the narrator of the text in which they are presented in the mimetic way. In *The Sirens of Baghdad*, the character's inner mind and perceptions are widely shown rather than told. The thought process of the narrator is described openly to the narratee about the consequences of war, and this is observed as: "There was a bunch of dead-drunk bums shrouded in rags, urchins stoned on shoemaker's glue, destitute women siting under trees and begging with their infants on their laps" (TSB 142).

All the selected novels document history in its own respective manner. The close reading of these texts provides abundant of historical material, which are embedded inside. The narrators of each of these stories express the anxiety and restlessness caused by the indifference in their society. Jonas in *What the Day Owes the Night* suffers between the double-identity, and Amin Jaafari too experiences the indifference as he is an Arab-Israeli in the country. Atiq in *The Swallows of Kabul* struggles over the moral conflict which arise out of his country Afghanistan's unstable governance. The narrator in *The Sirens of Baghdad* represents the youth who chooses to sacrifice their life for the country Iraq. All of these works implement the factual details streaming through the fictional narrative. The dialogues between the characters and the stream of consciousness of the protagonist narrators bring forth historical events although maintaining fictional aspects side by side. In Jonas narration, the historical and even the political facts and situations are revealed in the chronological order at several instances. The chronological order of the story goes hand in hand with the periods of historical timeline especially the times of the War of Independence of Algeria from France. The narrator's growth is constantly identified with the specific real historic time and at the same political scenario. The narrator informs the time of the emergence of the movement, Front de Liberation Nationale during the course of his narrative. The time of narrative coincides with the plotline.

The Attack, explicitly talks about the political situation as the narrator character witnesses the events. The narrative of the text incorporates the names of real political leaders and events in which they are mimetically presented in order to achieve *reality effect* (Bensmaïa 492). *The Attack* presents the reality in a close manner showing the impact of bomb blasts and killings which become a frequent issue in the country Israel and expresses the racial victimization of the character Jaafari. In this text, the historical events are presented through conversations between people to highlight the effect in the way that the common people talk among themselves about the situation in their country. The narrator prefers this mode of presenting details to gain verisimilitude: "Sharon's soldiers have occupied a good part of the town and closed off the

main roads” (TA 202). Such reality effect is brought up in the narrative in both the descriptions of the objects, atmosphere as well as the events in the text.

The *Swallows of Kabul* is narrated by an omniscient narrator, who tells the story in medias res. The narrator of the text can be called extradiegetic narrator (NDR 137), as he recounts the entire text. The novel comprises various focalizations as events are viewed from Atiq, Zunaira and Mohsen. The character Musarrat’s vision of life is expressed through the narrator’s voice in the sentence.

The omnipresent narrator in *The Swallows of Kabul* questions, suggests, and comments on the character’s actions and their attitudes towards their life in the story world. The *slant*(NR 98), which indicates the narrator’s attitudes is predominant in the text. It is recognizable wherever the narrator proposes his intervention with questions or comments. He even tries to seek opinion from the narratee. The double-voiced narration is explicit in the text as the narrator tends to assert his ideological view on the setting he illustrates: “Traditions were traditions; one had to live with them.” (TSK 73). The text has the authorial narrative situation as it remarks on the distinctive period of Taliban in Afghanistan and its impact on the society. The narrator often registers and affirms his view to his narratee.

At several instances, the narrator uses the gnomic present at different situations to speak directly to the *extradiegetic narratee*(Genette 137-8), of the text in *What the Day Owes the Night* as it is a bildungsroman which narrates the life-story covers a whole period: from a ten-year-old boy to an aged man. The narrator addresses the narratee in gnomic present when in the sense of sharing common ideas and beliefs about life.

The authenticity of narration can be identified through several references in the text. The time of narrative reveals wide historical facts in all the selected novels. The time and period of plot selection and events of the narrative are situated coincided with the real historical periods. There are certain codes of narrative which can be comprehended by the narratee about the concerned era in which the text is situated. These codes are abundant in all of the selected texts that they were created intentionally by the implied author’s choice. Barthes categorize five types of codes which can be identified at different levels of the text. One of them is the *referential code* (Kearns 66). All of these texts contain referential code which can be found explicitly by the reader relate them with a set of accepted frame of knowledge. Such code may be recognized through the close reading of words, phrases and terms embedded in the text. In *What the Day Owes the Night*, the narrator uses words which are italicized in order to highlight the reference about the common set of language used in their society. The words such as *bled*, *khammes*, *houri*, *gandurah*, *gouals*, *ulemas*, *roumi*, *anisette*, *sarouel*, *haik*, *douars* denote the references revolving throughout the text which the readers can sort out. These words are the cultural codes which determine the interpretation of texts. The references to the real persons such as journalists, writers, active leaders of movements and events signals the authenticity of information embedded in the texts.

The writer YasminaKhadra in all the four novels makes clear that he speaks for the struggles and the hard realities faced by the inhabitants of their land which provides unfavourable environment for peaceful living. He puts forth, in

every novel, the finest details regarding the nature of existence amidst such atmosphere either by the political conditions or by the geographic nature of the land, or by the cultural differences existing in each country. All the four novels tell the story of oppression either colonial or racial. It would be apt to present Willa Cather's definition of the novel which incorporates this notion: "A novel seems to me, is merely a work of imagination in which a writer tries to present the experiences and emotions of a group of people by the light of his own. This is really what he does, whether the method is 'objective' or 'subjective'" (Cather 48).

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