

The Narrative Structure And Its Role In Highlighting The Central Theme In *A Land Without Jasmine*

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Abstract

This paper intends to trace the narrative structure of *A Land Without Jasmine* and find out the correlation between it and the central theme of the novel. *A Land Without Jasmine* is a novel by the Yemeni novelist Wajdi Alahdal. The book runs into ninety pages and is divided into six chapters. Each chapter is narrated by a different narrator resulting in six different points of view which enriches the narrative. These different views make the narrative of the work complicated and consequently complicated narrative structure. Narrative techniques and strategies are traced and analyzed with the help of the modern structuralist approach. G. Genette, T. Todorov, M. Bakhtin are among those whose views and critical writings are used as guidelines in scrutinizing the text.

Key Words

Analepsis: flashback

Narrative: "a telling of some true or fictitious event or connected sequence of events recounted by a narrator to a naratee". (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*)

Paradox: "a statement or expression so surprisingly self-contradictory". (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*)

Theme: "a salient abstract idea that emerges from a literary work's treatment of its subject-matter". (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*)

Introduction

The legacy of mankind is preserved throughout history by passing it from generation to generation. The way how this legacy is transferred could be determined by a number of factors depending on the degree of civility and sophistication in this or that society. Drawings and paintings of our ancestors which were found in caves and on stones are ways of transferring that legacy. Those drawings and paintings reveal how those people could survive in wild and aggressive surroundings, and how they cultivated lands and hunted and tamed animals. In course of time, man could develop new ways and techniques of transferring his experience to the succeeding generations.

Narrating stories became a major tool in passing experience, and from generation to generation techniques of narrative developed following necessarily the human development. Narrative has, therefore, to incorporate the various aspects of human culture. Stories were told and written on various and different topics ranging from love stories to adventure stories and heroic epics mainly to widen and enrich human experience. For utmost impact more innovative ways of storytelling and story writing were adopted to attract the attention of the audience. Narrative has become a characteristic feature of certain people in a certain place at a certain time. So, it is no wonder to trace the extent of civility of a nation in the narrative of that nation.

Modern Yemeni fiction penetrates to the present cultural issues encountered by Arabs and all humanity. The role of women in society has been a painstaking task for intellectuals and literary figures all over the world. Laws and regulations have been passed to preserve and insure the vital role of women in society. Wajdi Alahdal, a Yemeni vocal writer, is in full

support of women's participation in political, social and cultural life. *A Land Without Jasmine* is his outstanding piece of narrative that addresses the issue of women's repression in a conservative society like Yemen. The position of women in a conservative society, where there is a lack of public liberties, like freedom of speech and freedom of choice, is a major theme in Alahdal's novel.

Narrative techniques are used to organize the narrative by combining together the fragmented parts in order to foreground the cultural dimensions of Yemeni narrative and draw the overall picture of the narrative structure. In other words, this paper is an attempt to explore the correlation between the narrative structure and the central theme of the book.

The Objective of the Study

This study intends to address the issue of narrative structure of *A Land Without Jasmine*, and find out how the fragmented narrative techniques and strategies are combined to structure the narrative of the novel.

Methodology of the Study

This study adopts the structuralist approach in tracing and analyzing the narrative structure in *A Land Without Jasmine*. It is believed that adopting this approach is convincing, because the structuralist's task is, according to D. J. Hale in his introduction of the third part of *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900 – 2000*, "to theorize the underlying rules that govern the production of narrative and to identify its basic components." (2006:190). Besides, the structuralist approach studies and investigates the text itself as a whole. It does not import anything from outside.

Story, Plot and the Narrative

These two terms are vital in novel writing. Story in a novel is simply, Genette states, "a succession of events," (1980:26). It is, he adds, "the events themselves, rather than the way they are told, comprise the story," (1980:26). One could follow the storyline of *A Land Without Jasmine* from the events themselves right from the first chapter to the last one. At the inception of the novel Jasmine wakes up in the morning and gives an account of herself and those people around her. She tells how she is harassed by male people in the street. In the following chapters she disappears and the police carry out investigations with different people but fail to know where she has gone. Towards the end of the novel and in the last chapter, a conjurer tricks Jasmine's family and makes them burn a tree thinking it to be the place where their daughter was put after being kidnapped by jinni. By burning a tree, they are told, they burn the jinni and the daughter and remove shame.

Plot, on the other hand, is significant in narrative. What is told constitutes the story and how this thing is told constitutes the plot. Technically story and plot are not the same. Shklovsky (1990:5) states that Plot "denotes the sequence of events as they occur in the narrative." It is governed by cause and effect notion and always answers the question why this or that thing has happened. It is, as Aristotle (1985:4) says in his *Poetics*, "the skeletal mimetic ground for a proper narrative." Moreover, in his well-noted article "The Grammar of Narrative", Todorov reveals his point of view on the narrative plot. He (1977:110) says, "[t]o study the structure of a narrative plot, we must first present this plot in the form of a summary."

When considering the plot of the work under investigation, *A Land Without Jasmine*, one ought to look for the reason why this or that event has happened, rather than what has happened. Jasmine's disappearance in the story is the central event around which the whole story is

built. The thing that causes this disappearance and the events that follow as consequences of that disappearance is what matters in tracing the plot of the novel. Jasmine's disappearance leads naturally to the act of searching for her. Ali Nashwan, the young neighbor of Jasmine, is the one who devotes himself to the mission of searching. Why is that? Readers come to know in the fourth chapter that Ali is in deep love with Jasmine. He is the one whose life is turned upside down when Jasmine was instructed by her family not to talk to or see him. This voluntary mission leads to his murder. In his non-stop search for Jasmine, he finds some of her personal belongings; her handbag, notebook and later the clothes she was wearing including her underwear. This thing cannot be tolerated in Yemeni society specially by the family members and tribal relatives of the missing girl, because it is considered shameful. The family strongly believes that Ali must be engaged in one way or the other. That is why he is kidnapped, tortured and eventually murdered in a brutal way.

It is, therefore, clear that the link and sequence of events in this way is made to enhance the major theme of the work which is looking at women as the source of shame and disgrace in a conservative society like Yemen. People in such a society consider a girl a source of evil and bad things that might happen in life. Jasmine in her narrative tells about her father's fear of shame that she might bring to him. She says, "[e]ver since I became a young woman and my breasts developed, he has been prejudiced against me and apprehensive, fearing that I will sully his honor, disgrace him, and besmirch his reputation," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P 12). One can realize that plot plays an important role in the narrative structure for it sheds light on generating the events in a way that highlights the purpose of the literary work as a whole.

The organization in the plot of *A Land Without Jasmine* is complicated. The whole of the first chapter is a descriptive discourse in which Jasmine introduces the basic conflict that makes up the story of the novel, stressing on the inferior look towards girls inside and outside home. This description paves the way for and gives an insight to the nature of the coming events. Some statements seem vague and unjustifiable, but later on, in the following chapters, they become clear. For instance, in the beginning of the novel, Jasmine says that whenever she gets up in the morning, she examines herself in front of the mirror to make sure that everything is ok. She says, "[o]nce I am sure that I haven't lost any of my body, I praise God and sigh with relief," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P 6). The justification for saying so is retrieved from her diary in the last chapter of the novel, as narrated by her mother, when she says, "... she would wake up intoxicated, although she would feel every part of her body to make sure she hadn't lost any of them," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P 86).

In the fifth chapter, readers come to know that something weird happened the night of February 27th. Ali Nashwan is seen by the night watchman around one in the morning entering the building where he and Jasmine's family live. He was hiding something under his overcoat. "The next day Ali Nashwan was missing too,," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P 75). No further clue is given in this chapter about what Ali was hiding and the reason why he was missing. This is revealed, however, in the last chapter of the novel by Wahibah, Jasmine's mother. She explains that when Ali reached them late at night with Jasmine's clothes including the underclothes, they went mad and nobody believed the story he told. Next morning Ali was kidnapped by Jasmine's relatives, as planned by their Skaykh, and was tortured and killed savagely.

The events of the story are scattered in the different chapters. They are also narrated by different narrators. So, building on these narratives constitutes the plot in the story. This plot has to be followed and obtained in different chapters. It is not linear, and it should not necessarily be. An event is narrated in, say, the first chapter and the consequences of that event are presented in the last chapter. Likewise, the consequence of an event comes before we are told about the cause of that event. This technique of what seems to be displacement of cause-effect relation is what creates the complexity of the plot.

To illustrate the above point of displacement of cause-effect relation, let's examine the following. In the fifth chapter of the novel Ali Nashwan is reported missing. Next morning he is found dead. We are not given any clue in the fifth chapter why Ali was killed. It is only in the sixth and last chapter that Wahibah, the narrator, reveals the cause for that killing. The plot of the novel, one can realize, is set in a way that seems unusual and ground-breaking in the contemporary Yemeni novel writing. The techniques employed in the storytelling cause thrill and enthusiasm to pursue the events from chapter to chapter with no less attention.

The Role of the Narrator

M. Bakhtin, in his article "Discourse in the Novel", defines novel as "a diversity of individual voices artistically organized." (2006:484). According to this definition, the whole work of novel writing is a recollection of the voices in the work. Voices are mostly the narrators in the story. The narrator in a work of art is the author's creation. It is the instrument by which the author exposes the world of the story since he/she doesn't appear directly. It is the task of the narrator to reveal what happens in the course of the story.

Narrators can either be direct participants in the development of the storyline, or just

narrate from a distance and have no role in the course of action. In some works the narrator is introduced as an omniscient one who knows everything, even the narrative thoughts of the protagonists, and in some other works the narrator knows like other characters and may be less.

The work under investigation in this paper, *A Land Without Jasmine*, has multi-narrators, and thus multi points of view which could be an enrichment of the narrative. *A Land Without Jasmine* is a novel comprised of six chapters and each chapter is narrated by a different person. Each one of them is assigned a task to expose some aspects of the storyline. Some narratives are merely descriptive and do not actually add to the advancement of actions. Rather they create backgrounds for the advancement of actions.

The narrator of the first chapter is Jasmine Nashir Al-Ni'am, the female protagonist. In her narrative, she lays the foundation for the whole story. First, she gives information about herself. She is a girl of about twenty years and a first year student in the Faculty of Science at Sana'a University. It is realized that right from the beginning she introduces the main conflict of the work; a twenty-year old girl suffers from every male around her including her father and older brother. They either suspect her of having or about to have a sexual relationship with someone, or sexually harass her. As most of the discourse in this chapter is descriptive, the narrator uses present simple tense. For example, Jasmine says, "[w]hen I enter the bathroom first thing in the morning. . .," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P. 6). Whenever there is a recall of incidents that happened earlier in her life, analepsis as a narrative technique is used. Jasmine says, "[d]uring my childhood, I considered sex so vile that it should be forbidden even to spouses,"

(*A Land Without Jasmine*. P. 12). This technique shifts the narrative focus from present to past and back to present and it is

much relatable to shaping Jasmine's character. It shows her obsession with how intimate relation is developed. T. Dawson (2004:4) emphasizes this point by saying, "[t]he remembered past is always governed by its relation to the present."

Inspector Abdurrabbih Ubayed Al-Adini is the narrator in the second chapter. As long as he is an inspector, his narrative is dominated by interrogation and analepsis. He narrates using the past tense because he tells about what he did the moment he received, as he says, "a missing person's report on a girl of twenty," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P. 15). That girl is none but Jasmine. Unlike the narrator in the first chapter, who seems to be omniscient, knowing everything and everyone there, Abdurrabbih commences to interrogate the probable suspects, a university professor, a young neighbor and incidentally a grocery owner whose store happens to be opposite to the victim's window. The narrator pretends to be neutral most of the time. No much descriptions or comments are passed. He simply asks questions about Jasmine's disappearance and gets answers. But Bakhtin has a different point of view on a narrator being neutral. Whenever the narrator happens to be a character in the work, Bakhtin (1981:293) says, "... all words and forms are populated by intention." He argues that words seem as neutral, but, he (1981:293) carries on, "... they lose their innocence." To put it differently, narrators who have something to do in the story cannot be neutral even if they present themselves otherwise. Then is seen clearly when the inspector expresses his doubts about Dr. Aqlan earlier. He believes that Dr. Aqlan knows about Jasmine's disappearance, but he does not want to cooperate with the police.

The third chapter is narrated by Nasir Salim al-Utmi. He owns the snack bar in the Faculty of Science. Assigning the role of a narrator to a minor character like Nasir, I would assume, is nothing but an authorial desire to pass some criticism

against the university educational system. For the sake of objectivity, the narrator is a person who has a wide experience of the place and is close enough to notice everything that happens in the campus, yet far enough from the academic circle. It is noticed that a reasonable quantity of the narrative in this chapter is devoted not to the disappearance of Jasmine but rather to the uselessness of university education in producing real scholars, and the ill treatment students receive from their professors. The disappeared girl spends nearly five hours almost every day in that place, and she was last seen there before her sudden disappearance. The narrator doesn't give a satisfactory answer to the question of disappearance. He rather explores possibilities of finding out the reasons behind that disappearance.

Ali Nashwan is the narrator in the fourth chapter. He is Jasmine's neighbor and lover. Again the analepsis as a narrative technique is dominant here. Most of the narration focuses on past memories, where Ali shows his deep love and infatuation to Jasmine since they were younger. The significance of this narrator lies in the fact that his actions are vivid evidence of the daily male harassment Jasmine has to go through every day. Although the narrator tries to show his love, he unconsciously provides an evidence of man degrading practices against women in Yemeni society. In the first chapter Jasmine expresses her deep annoyance of male sexual harassment. She mentions names of those male people who harass her including Ali's. His narrative in the fourth chapter drives home Jasmine's claim of the harassment.

The narrator in the fifth chapter is Muti' Radman, the deputy inspector. His narrative is the shortest since it runs into only eight pages in which he stands as a representative of the unscientific mob culture. An excessive use of supernatural elements in this chapter is noticed. Though Ali Nashwan in the previous chapter

mentions something about Jinn, saying that it might be a jinni that is responsible for Jasmine's disappearance, Muti' here provides what seems to him to be a solid background for the unexplainable disappearance. He says, "[w]e searched for Jasmine in all of Yemen's provinces and achieved nothing. It seems that a sorceress had turned her into a mare," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P. 73). When describing the man who was seen with Jasmine a few minutes before her disappearance, the narrator says, "[i]n the end I personally became convinced that he wasn't human. He was one of those jinn who love to play with our nerves," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P. 76). Such a justification shows the inability of the police to protect women and present a realistic account of the actual reasons behind the crimes against them.

The role of the narrator in the sixth and last chapter of the novel is assigned to Wahibah, Jasmine's mother. Among all narrators, Wahibah seems to be the least educated and the least cultured. She is just a wife of an ordinary tribesman, Hajj Nashir. She is assigned the task of winding up and narrating the end part of the story. This is justifiable when readers are put face to face with a fictional unreal end. The disappeared girl is said to be kidnapped by Ifreet, unseen being. This is at least what is told to the agitated and violent family members and relatives of Jasmine, and readers are left there with nothing more realistic suggested.

Character-making and the Narrative

Characterization is the subtlest and most sophisticated task a novelist may undertake. It is indicative because it measures the degree of closeness to reality of the living and non-living beings in the work of art. *A Land without Jasmine* is quite a piece of narrative that exposes characters as real sometimes as ourselves, and as fictional some other times as no real body. According to the realists, characters are representative of reality and therefore

they ought to be as real as possible. Tracing the character-making of the protagonist in *A Land without Jasmine* sheds light on the way the whole narrative is structured. It shows how character-making could develop the storyline to serve the ultimate goal of the whole narrative.

Jasmine's name appears in the title of the book. She is the central character around whom the whole story revolves. The making and development of her character can be configured from her conducts in the course of the story as well as from different narrators and characters in the novel, no matter how contradictory the description may seem.

At the inception of the novel, Jasmine passes a piece of information about having a dream that suggests intimate relation with someone. She says, "[r]eturning to my senses, I realized I've merely had a beautiful, harmless, enjoyable dream. It was just one of those delighted dreams when a girl sees herself as a bride on her wedding night," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P. 6). Towards the end of the novel, sexually provoking details of this dream are exposed in her diary when checked by her mother one year after her disappearance. In a conservative society those details seem daring and rude for a girl is not supposed to give such an account like that of herself. She says, "I began laughing for no reason at all. I removed all my clothes, stripped naked, and then stretched out on the bench," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P. 86). She also adds in pages 88-9 of her diary:

I would see this man who claimed he was my bridegroom, open the locked door of my room. Then he would enter and close the door as if zipping up a pair of trousers. He looked at me lying on the bed, as naked as when my mother brought me into the world. The room's only illumination slipped dimly through the window from lights in the streets.

He approached, embracing me with his eyes. Then he began to circle me, holding a sparkling white book and reciting under his breath. Eventually I sensed that waves of delight were flowing into me as I felt sexual gratification flood from my head to my feet time and again.

This exposes a daring character who doesn't care much for the restrictions over women's behavior in conservative societies. In fact, she defies the ill treatment she passes through when confronting men on the streets. She says, "[o]n the streets most men look at me lecherously and all of them want to screw me. If they weren't all watching each other, I would be raped on the pavement at least twenty times a day," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P. 8).

When it comes to her physical appearance, it is noted that two narrators in the novel praise her incomparable beauty. Nasir al-Utmi, for example, says, "I swear to God that my eyes have never seen a girl this beautiful at any time since I arrived in the Faculty twenty years ago," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P. 37). Ali Nashwan, too, says, "What bewildering secret in her face so enchanted me that I couldn't take my eyes off her, not even for a second," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P. 46). She is an attractive young girl, and that may explain why she has been a target for the male harassment every time she goes out.

Her conducts are always under close watch from her family members including her father and her oldest brother. They suspect that at any moment she will bring shame and disgrace to her family by eloping with someone or having an out-marriage sexual relationship. She says, "[a]t home I have to put up with my oldest brother's covert attempts to read my diary. He suspects that love may have found its way into my heart. Ever since I enrolled at the University, where instruction is coed, he has been searching my papers for my hypothetical friend," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P. 12). This is the burden

Jasmine has to live with. This misbehavior expected from her, as they believe, is foregrounded in the account of Sultan Atiq, the grocery store owner. When he is asked by the inspector about Jasmine, his response is, "... I mean she bites into a cucumber while looking at me and winking. She licks ice cream and sticks her tongue out. She chews gum and makes bubbles that pop as if she's throwing me a kiss," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P. 22). Dr. Aqlan, Jasmine's university professor, also speaks ill of her when he is interrogated by the inspector. He says, "[s]he's a loose girl who claims virtue, though virtue claims her not. She makes a show of being pious and devout while actually she's the reverse," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P. 17). Moreover, her mother painfully says that whenever she has to meet with the Shaykh of their tribe, he says to her, "[y]our daughter's a whore who ran away with some guy who took her fancy," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P. 82).

It is, therefore, noticed that three male characters in the novel believe that Jasmine is not morally a good girl, though Nasir and Ali, two other characters, speak high of her. To illustrate the reason behind the likely aggressive discourse against Jasmine, it is important to quote T. Dawson (2004:2) when he says, "... a male character behaves unconsciously toward a female character and the latter suffers." He (2004:2) adds, "... the cruelty takes different forms: from more or less unconscious psychological pressurizing to more or less deliberate physical abuse."

Presenting intimate relation with a guy is obvious either in her narrative or in her diary. She expresses her delight of having an affair in her dreams and she waits impatiently for having it in reality with her future husband. She says, "I have nothing against sex. In fact, I await with bated breath my bridegroom arrival," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P. 9). This repressed desire in reality is outpoured gallantly in her dreams. The outrageous sexual desire

outweighs the repression imposed by family and society.

Investigating her way of thinking, her narrative in the first chapter as well as her diary in the last chapter reveals a longing for freedom and independence. The basic source of annoyance and suffering for her is the constant intrusion of her family members in her own affairs, beside of course, the sexual harassment from other people on the streets.

The character-making of Jasmine and the development she undergoes are inseparable from the storyline as well as the plotline and consequently the narrative structure of the novel. Jasmine is put face to face with all patriarchal prejudice towards women. The interaction between these two forces is the dynamic conflict that makes up the whole story of the book.

Time, Place and the Narrative

The combination of the two words in the subtitle would result in something essential in constructing the narrative structure of a story. Narrative time is the term by Todorov in his book, *The Poetics of Prose*, to distinguish the time of the story from the time of the narrative. He explains that time of story "can be multi-dimensional, [and] allows more than one incident at the same time," (1977:87). This is true when we come to think of storytelling and realize that the one who tells the story can talk about something in present, then at the same time recalls something from the past, or foretells something in the future. Time in narrative, Todorov (1977:92) says, "is chronological [and] determined by novel-writing demands." To illustrate this point, let's examine the following from *A Land without Jasmine*. We are told in the first chapter of the novel that Jasmine likes writing her diary. One year after her disappearance, her mother goes through the diary and finds some comments on almost everyone around Jasmine. In the storyline Jasmine writes her diary, but what is there in the diary becomes known

only after one whole year. This is the story time. When it comes to narrative time, the case is different. Knowing that Jasmine keeps records in her diary, and what she writes go side by side in the narrative.

G. Genette highlights this distinction between story time and narrative time saying that the latter "concerns the speed of the narration," (1980:43). He introduces two strategies of narrative time, which are summarizing and deletion strategies. They suggest, according to him, fast movement in the narration. There are two other strategies he also introduces which suggest slow movement in the narration, and these strategies are scenery and description strategies. These strategies have been manifested in *A Land Without Jasmine* and helped in tightening the narrative structure of the work. The following is an explanation of how these strategies are employed.

In his account of himself and his failed endeavors to see Jasmine again, Ali Nashwan says, "[s]ix months later, a thought occurred to me ..." (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P. 52). Such a phrase like 'six months later' and alike are common in narrative since they reduce the real time of the story. One may ask what happened during all these six months. This becomes problematic in story time. In narrative time, however, this is solved by using the deletion strategy as shown in the above extract.

Furthermore, the deputy inspector, Muti' Radman says, "we searched for Jasmine in all of Yemen's provinces and achieved nothing." This is an example of the strategy of summarizing. He doesn't mention how they searched. Neither does he mention the number of days they took in that search. By employing such strategies the narrator jumps easily on the timeline from one point to another without being held responsible for any gap in timing.

On the other hand, scenery and description strategies can be seen in Jasmine's

narration in the first chapter and Nasir Salim al-Utmi in the third chapter. Both narrators describe and comment on things and people around them. They describe the places in detail to show how each place is set for this or that kind of action and its relation to this or that character. These two strategies slow the motion of the narrative. They are mainly used to elaborate on the psychological and social aspects of the characters.

Locations in narrative, Almusawi (2003:287) says, "change meaning as they pass through reflection, refraction, or association." University campus is a significant place, since it is connected to science and knowledge. However, the use of that place as a crime scene makes it undesirable. University campus, as in the narrative of the snack bar owner, is the place where students are harassed by some of their professors and the place where Jasmine disappeared and probably killed. The significance of the place is related to the way that place is drawn.

Paradoxical Narrative

This term is coined by Mieke Bal in her theorizing on the ontology of narrative. She claims that inside narrative there are opposing forces that pull apart and this techniques helps in tightening the narrative. Narrative as defined by Genette (1980: 24) is "the oral or written discourse that undertakes to tell of an event or a series of events." It is the term that Brooks (2006:330) gives to "knowledge reconceived experientially, as a dynamic and temporal process." Therefore, the written text in *A Land Without Jasmine* is considered to be the narrative of the novel. It consists basically of descriptive discourse and narrative discourse, and on occasions, as Genette (1980:27) phrases it "... becomes difficult to separate them."

There are six different narrators in *A Land Without Jasmine*. Each narrative comprises a portion of the overall narrative and each one carries the point of view of the

narrator. This is something important and adds to the structure of the novel. What seems challenging and raises questions is the obvious contradictions in different narratives in the novel. These contradictions are spotted and suggestions are provided to account for these contradictions.

In his account of himself, Ali Nashwan says, "[A]fter I dreamt of Jasmine, I was afflicted by enormous regret that I had awakened before consummating my lovemaking with Jasmine," (*A Land Without Jasmine*. P55). He also says somewhere else in his narrative, "[w]hen I turned thirteen and reached puberty, I became a devoted practitioner of masturbation, jerking off at least once a day and occasionally two or three times in a single day," (*A Land Without Jasmine* p. 55). These two extracts from Ali's account of himself show that he has bad intentions toward Jasmine and this is what she considers male sexual harassment. One can consider this as teenagers practices and could be justifiable. In the other extract Ali has developed a habit that is considered to be morally bad. However, in Muti's narrative in the fifth chapter, we are encountered with something contradictory about Ali. Muti says, "[t]he inquiries we made about him indicate that Ali Nashwan was rather pious and keen on the five daily prayers at the right times. The clique he hung out with were religiously committed young men," (*A Land Without Jasmine* p. 74). By looking closely at the extracts in the two narratives, one can easily spot the paradoxical narratives. It would have been usual, had it been for different points of view. But they are not. Muti's narrative here stands as an opposing narrative to Ali's.

Furthermore, Muti' also says about Ali that he is "a pampered boy who is afraid of his own shadow," (*A Land Without Jasmine* p. 71). In the same narrative by Muti', we are told that Ali "spend[s] the whole night by the pomegranate tree," (*A Land Without*

Jasmine p.74). This tree is in the garden of the Faculty of Science and after classes are over no one stays in that place. How come, one may ask, that a person who is afraid of his own shadow stays at night near that tree which is believed to be haunted by supernatural beings? This is again a vivid example of paradoxical narrative. It is claimed that Muti's psychological state of mind is not stable. He is distracted by the excessive thinking over what seems to be a supernatural being with whom Jasmine was last seen. This can be understood when he himself says, "[n]ow I'm trying to erase his image from my imagination. Whenever I think of him I feel my spirit is fluttering, attempting free itself from my limbs," (*A Land Without Jasmine* p. 76). He also adds, "I don't know any reason for this persistence, for this overwhelming presence," (*A Land Without Jasmine* p. 76). He gives a clue at the end of his narrative that there is something wrong with him and he has to see a person to treat him with a holy Quran.

In the course of the story, it is reported to the police that Jasmine disappeared on February 14th. In Muti's narrative he says, "[s]omething weird happened the night of February 27th," (*A Land Without Jasmine* p. 74). We come to know that Ali Nashwan is put under close watch while being in the garden of the Faculty. That night he is not seen in the garden after midnight. Later, the police were told by the night watchman that Ali was seen around one a.m., entering the building and hiding something under his overcoat. Next morning, Ali was missing and then murdered. In the sixth and last chapter, Wahibah mentions a different date. She says, "... , I occasionally recall the way the doorbell rang continually at 1 a.m., one morning. That was ten days after Jasmine had disappeared. When we opened the door, Ali entered, breathless ...," (*A Land Without Jasmine* p. 80-1). A simple calculation shows that Ali came to

Jasmines' family house on February 24th. In Muti's narrative that incident happened after thirteen days of the disappearance. This contradiction is indicative. It indicates that one of the two narrators is mentally and psychologically distracted. Who might it be? A deep look at the personalities of the two narrators one can conclude that Muti' is the most confused narrator. Wahibah is the least educated narrator among the six narrators, but a date like that won't be forgotten easily especially by a mother that has lost her daughter. Besides, Muti' admits his obsessive preoccupation by that seemingly supernatural being that is believed to be the cause behind Jasmine's disappearance.

Concluding Observations

Narrative is an act of bringing together different actions and artistically combining them in order to communicate human experience in such a beautiful way. Through narrative people can sense and trace dynamic relations between the work of art and a cultural concern; i.e., social and/or political. The purpose of bringing questionable cultural values and societal vice in the narrative could most likely be for the hope of addressing and evaluating the existing cultural institutions.

Story and plot, similarity and differences, are investigated in this paper. It is realized that for the sake of tracing the narrative structure of *A Land Without Jasmine*, more emphasis is given to the plot line, including the structure of the significant logical sequence of events in the novel. It is noticed how the central theme of the work could be driven home through what seems to be unusual complicated lines of related actions. Some events take place in a chapter, their plot line takes us to another chapter to clarify the consequences. Sometimes the consequences are revealed before presenting the causes of this or that action. Ali Nashwan's murder is reported in the fifth chapter by Muti, and the reason

for that is revealed in the last chapter by Wahibah.

Narrators are employed dexterously to communicate the fragmented narratives throughout the story. Each narrator is assigned a specific task in revealing his share of the overall narrative. Six narrators are there in the novel, two of them are female narrators and the others are male narrators. The narrative of the female narrators seem to be in opposition to the males' narrative. They actually defy the patriarchal system of language. Jasmine and Nasir are presented as omniscient narrators who know almost everything about events and characters. This is because most of their narratives are descriptive. Two other narrators are police inspectors who appear to be narrating their attempt to find answers for the disappearance of Jasmine. Muti', the deputy inspector is the one whose narrative seems closer to the commoners' way of thinking. His justifications for the disappearance of the girl is unreal and fictitious and display the police failure in their duty. The other two narrators are Ali Nashwan and Wahibah. Ali represents the premature lover who gets killed at the end because of his childish behavior. Wahibah is presented as a mother who never admits the misconduct of her child.

Despite the different and contradictory views of the narrators over Jasmine's character, all narratives are orchestrated eventually to serve the ultimate goal of the overall narrative, showing the conflict between Jasmine and male ill-treatment of women in conservative societies. Jasmine is an advocate of women's right to choose and speak freely, but she stands against an inherited patriarchal culture nourished throughout the ages.

The narrative structure of the novel, *A Land Without Jasmine* could defy the patriarchal culture and male privilege over women. Those males are presented as fools who siege a tree and eventually burn

it thinking that their shame has been cleaned and their superiority is regained.

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