

Analysis of Narrative and Importance of Point of View in Novels

Iran Nasseris Sisakht

PhD student in Persian language and literature; Dahaghan Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran
naseri.tb42[a]gmail.com

Abstract: *The arrival of novel to Iran caused deep changes in Persian prose and caused the advance of Persian novel. The analysis of Persian novel and the influence of literary schools of the world have long been the topic of many articles and researches. However, this deep change is always in need of discussion and analysis. With the advance of Persian novel, first historical novel appeared and then social novel with realistic approach came into existence. In this paper, attempt is made to discuss the importance of the choice of narrative in novels by presenting a definition of novel, narrator, and point of view. Moreover, it tries to come to the point that choosing an appropriate narrator and point of view is of great help to authors to express the concepts they have in mind.*

Keywords: narrative, novel, point of view, narrator, narration, monolog, stream of consciousness

1. Introduction

Novel gradually developed during the seventeenth century and, in the early eighteenth century, it found an independent identity. The changes that appeared in this period became parts of the main foundation of cultural, social, and economic improvements of the Europe. Novel is the product of bourgeois society. In Iran, also, the advance of novel coincided with Constitutional Revolution that is the sign of the social movement from autocracy towards freedom. The birth of novel in Iran is expressive of a new outlook to the role of people in society and to their lives. The necessity of a new happening and struggle with the past literary tradition that had gradually lost its functionality and the need for a new happening that could be responsible for changes and could meet post-Constitutional needs of Iranian society was felt. An important part of every novel consists of narrator that, in fact, narrates the story. Following the existence of a narrator, the need to choose a point of view appears and the writer can best narrates his story by choosing an appropriate narrator and point of view. In this paper, this issue is discussed.

2. Statement of the Problem

Narrator is one of the most important elements of novel that shows the ability of the writer. The choice of narrator or the point of view is a sign of the deep outlook of the writer to the world. Usually, in realistic novels, the narrator is selected in a way that makes plausibility easier for the audience due to the use of third person narrator and sometimes first person one. The choice of narrator is influential in expressing the purpose and feelings of the writer to audience and this proves the importance of narrator and point of view in novel.

2.1 What is Novel?

“Novel is a complicated long prose narrative based on reality and mixed with artistic creation in which different characters are developed in organized and continuous happenings. In general, it makes an independent book” (Mahmoudian, 2003: 37).

Milan Condra, in his well-known work *The Art of the Novel*, says, “Novel is a wonderful form of prose in which the writer, through some experimental selves (characters) with some important topics, analyzes the area of existence to the end” (Condra, 1989: 254).

William Hazlitt, English critic and writer in the nineteenth century says, “Novel is a story written based on a close to real imitation of humans and human characteristics and, in some ways, reflects the foundation of society” (Mirsadeghi, 1987: 401). With these descriptions, novel includes happenings, cultural, social, political, and economical ups and downs by which the writer is inspired and choose his major and minor characters; as if he faces us with a mirror on which the circumstances of society are reflected and he displays the imaginations rooted in reality. He drowns the audience in bitter and sweet happenings rooted in society and its people.

The dictionary of literature and criticism reads, “Novel is derived from Italian *“novella”* meaning tales of news pieces and now it covers writings whose only common ground is the large area of narrative prose (Cudden, 2001: 272). Novel is a long story in prose that its adventures are rooted in human life and there are usually many characters and happenings (Anvari, 2002:176). Finally, novel is a piece with infinite area. It might be like “War and Peace” or as short as “Carmen” (Somerset Maugham, 2003: 13). With only little considering these definitions, one can find out that cases such as the narrative story of life description, existence of characters, etc. are common in all of them. Point of view is the same with the narration of the story that a writer can take advantage of its different ways. Of course, if his choice is not appropriate, he cannot represent the theme of the story well and the story will lose its natural mood.

Point of view is the most important unifying and constructive element, because (1) it directs the reader’s understanding of the story, and (2) it determines a writer’s relationship with the story’s world to provide his needed materials. Due to these two reasons, it is the main basis for the story’s criticism and evaluating its value system.” (Irani, 2001: 72).

“The choice of point of view depends on various factors such as intelligence and selectivity of the writer. The deeper the world views of the writer, the more complete his point of view” (Farzad, 1999: 143). “Point of view, considering its kinds, is not easily countable. Mainly, there are some kinds of point of view in stories each of which has to use a particular narrator, and the choice of point of view has actually a direct relation with that of narrator” (Daad, 2004: 259).

2.2 Types of point of view

Now, different kinds of point of view that are various and changeable depending on the particular viewpoint of the writer are analyzed as follows:

1. First person point of view

“In this method, the narration is on the shoulder of an ‘I’. This ‘I’ retells imaginative, historical, and realistic happenings that either the creator or hero is responsible for it or is a witness or observant of the happenings that have little relation with him or are not related to him at all. If this ‘I’ is the protagonist of the story, he is called ‘hero-narrator’, or else is called ‘observer-narrator’ (Mirsadeghi, 1987: 461).

2. Third person narration (omniscient point of view)

In this kind of narration, the writer names all the characters with third person pronouns and it is usually referred to a story in which he does not use the pronoun ‘I’ to refer to himself (Martin, 2003: 101).

The stories that have a great number of happenings and characters have to be narrated via omniscient narrator, because only he can see all the aspects and be aware of everything. “In this narration, the atmosphere provides the writer with enough room for searching and analyzing the man’s conscience and mental conflicts and gives him the needed room to depict great historical and cultural happenings” (Miriam, 1989: 405).

A super thought that is all-knowing of everybody and everything’s inner and outer side, past and present and such thorough awareness is not a weak point for him. “In this narration, narrator has a general view towards everything and might present many issues that are not much related to the story. Narrator not only does ‘say what goes on in the minds of characters, but also criticizes them’ (Okhovat, 1992: 104).

3. Limited omniscient point of view

“In this method, writer presents all the story via the point of view of one character, and looks through this at other characters” (Mirsadeghi, 1987: 464). Writer is both with him in the outside and penetrates his thoughts. However, because of the limited view of this character, the writer’s view toward others is limited, too. Therefore, the writer here does not have the vast authority of the omniscient narrator and the key character plays the role of his representative in the story.

(1) Monolog

“Monolog consisting of two Greek words (i.e., *Monos*, meaning alone, and *Logos*, meaning speech) means speaking with the self, is first discussed in dramatic art (poetic

stories)” (Daad, 2004: 181). Monolog is silent speaking or the reflection of the mind. This means that thought or self-narration of the character gets written or enacted. The character, without intrusion of the narrator (in some cases with his occasional presence) thinks aloud his internal life, experiences, feelings, and emotions. This method, in fiction writing, can be done in one or more pages or throughout the novel.

Internal Monolog

It is one way of offering stream of consciousness. In this method, contents go merely in the mind of a person and the writer’s task is that of reflecting what goes in his mind. Internal monolog is based on association, that is, a piece of thoughts and memories, which associate with each other, are put together. “This method is similar to a child’s speaking without having any addressee” (Rouzbeh, 2002: 47).

(2) Letter narration

In this method, the story is represented in the form of one or some letters between characters, and this method was in use in Europe in the eighteenth century. Some of the books written in this way are “*The Poor People*” by Dostoyovsky and “*The Beautiful*” by Mohammad Hejazi. This method has various kinds: (a) Sometimes the letters are one-way, i.e. from a particular person to an addressee or more, (b) sometimes they are two-way, i.e. two people write to each other, and (c) sometimes some people write to one another whose collection of letters makes the form and content of the story” (Mirsadeghi, 1987: 467).

(3) Stream of consciousness method

A method of narration by which the depth of character’s mental fluid that is a mixture of sensuous understanding, conscious and sub-conscious thoughts, memories, feelings, and accidental associations is expressed in the way they are. This way of narration is based on concepts that are the result of meaning association. “Mostly, stream of consciousness is equated with internal monolog, but some believe internal monolog is only one way of stream of consciousness” (Daad, 2004: 182). “Stream of consciousness is a dissolved collection of associations, moments, and emotions in which conscious and unconscious layers pass through each other” (Falaki, 2003: 45).

3. The Theory of Narration

In this subject, many theories from many people are offered, for example, Vladimir Prop. A majority of this Russian theorist’s ideas about narration is presented in “*The Structuralism of the Fairy Tales*”. “Prop calls this change of situation ‘event’ and regards it one of the main elements of narration. He, then, pays attention to the point regarding which ones of the constructive components of the folktales are fixed and which ones are variable. The last point is that the passing of one state to another is called ‘move’ by Prop. A story should have a move to be called story” (Okhovat, 1992: 819).

Roland Barthes (1915-1980) also considers narration as a means of communication that has a writer and receiver. He has a three partite division of narrative: (1) The narrator has the viewpoint of the protagonist. He does not write with first

person pronoun. Sometimes, he is the hero. (2) The narrator is impersonal, omniscient, and according to Flaubert, he narrates the story from 'Godly status'. He is simultaneously inside the characters and knows their outside actions. (3) In the most recent kind of narration whose complete model can be seen in Henry James' works, the narrator limits his narration to the knowledge and wisdom of the characters and everything goes in such a way as if each of the characters were narrators" (Ahmadi, 2006: 234).

4. The reasons for the choice of a particular narrator

Point of view is the most important factor in forming and giving unity to the materials of the parts of the story. It determines the relation of writer with the story's world, and directs readers' feelings towards characters" (Irani, 2001: 379). Narrators differ from one other in their amount of share in the story. In the first person narrations, narrator is either the witness of happening or involves in that while, in the third person narration, he is outside of the happening. Omniscient narrator is similarly outside of the happenings of the story, but has the advantage of, for example, being aware of knowing hidden thoughts of characters and things simultaneously happening in different places. "Every writer might himself start the narration. Then, he introduces a narrator who is the receiver of the story and there are some characters that they also might narrate in their own terms" (Cudden, 2001: 260-261).

Therefore, a writer should consider everything in choosing the narrator to be able to select his favorite, particular narrator of the story. "We, as readers mostly gaze at the narrator than communicate with him. While if we used to communicate with him, there would be changes of ideas. Particularly, in the *White Addie*, the narrator criticizes humane aspects and is merely like an incoherent sound" (Kooiman, 2004: 17).

5. The main parts of narration

- a) *Abstract*: It is a title or a brief summary of the situation that will follow; a brief expression of what the story is about. "Abstract is one of the optional margins of the narration that very briefly summarizes the narration and is never an appropriate quoting of a narration..." (Kooiman, 2007: 126). If the abstract is expanded, it changes into prologue and prologues are so important because their purpose is to attract and maintain the attention of the receivers of the text. Most of us bother ourselves to finish the story that had attracted us from the beginning. Then, the effectiveness of prologues influences the success of its ending. Prologue should work as the magnet of narration.
- b) *Orientation*: The most interesting function of orientation is where its components are practically delayed and at the end of the narration, fundamental facts are revealed to the reader. This might also, like retrospection, cause surprise and wonder and is particularly used where the narrator himself like a participant in the sequences of happenings, is aware of the fundamental facts of a situation, and finally wants to put his audience in the similar circumstance" (Kooiman, 2007: 128).

c) *Evaluation*: It is about this question, so what? Why and how the story became interesting?

6. Conclusion

The term novel is now applied to a great variety of writings that have in common only the attribute of being extended works of prose *fiction*. As an extended narrative, the novel is distinguished from the *short story* and from the work of middle length called the "novelte;" its magnitude permits a greater variety of characters, greater complication of plot (or plots), an ampler development of milieu, and a more sustained and subtle exploration of character than do the shorter, hence necessarily more concentrated, modes. As a prose narrative, the novel is distinguished from the long verse narratives of Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton which, beginning with the eighteenth century, it has increasingly supplanted.

In addition, point of view signifies the way a story is told -- the perspective or perspectives established by an author, through which the reader is presented with the characters, actions, setting, and events that constitute the narrative in a work of fiction. The question of point of view has always been a practical concern for the novelist, and there have been a number of scattered observations in critical writings since the eighteenth century. Therefore, authors have developed many different ways to present a story, and many extended works employ several ways within the single narrative. The simplified classification presented in this paper, however, is widely recognized, and will serve as a useful frame of reference.

References

- [1] Abdollahian, Hamid. *A report on contemporary prose*. Tehran: Puya Publishers, 1st ed., 2000.
- [2] Afghani, Alimohammad. *Ahoukhanom's husband*. 13th ed., Tehran: Negah Publishers, 2011.
- [3] Ahmadi. *The structure of hermeneutics*. 8th ed., Tehran, 2006.
- [4] Anvari, Mohammad. *Sokhan Persian Dictionary*, 2002.
- [5] Aryanpour, Yahya. *From Saba to Nima*. Tehran: Zavar Publishers, 8th ed., 2003.
- [6] Bayat, Hossein. *Fiction writing of consciousness*. Tehran: Elmi-Farhangi Publishers, 2008.
- [7] Bishop, Leonard. *Lessons on writing a novel*. Tr. Mohsen Soleimani, 1st ed., Soureh Publishers, 1999.
- [8] Cudden, J.A. *Dictionary of literary terms and literary theory*. Tr. Kazem Firouzmand. Tehran: Shadegan Publishers, 2001.
- [9] Daad, Sima. *A glossary of literary terms*. Tehran: Morvarid, 2nd ed., 2004.
- [10] Ebadian, Mahmoud. *An introduction to contemporary literature*. Tehran: Gahar Publishers, 1st ed., 2002.
- [11] Farzad, Abdolhossein. *Literary criticism*. Tehran: Ghatreh Publishers, 1999.
- [12] Falaki, Mahmoud. *Tradition of fiction; basic theories of fiction writing*. Tehran: Baztab-e-Negah Publishers, 1st ed., 2003.
- [13] Irani, Nasser. *Democratic crisis in Iran*. Tehran: Iran University Press, 1992.
- [14] Irani, Nasser. *The art of novel*. 1st ed., 2001.

- [15] Kaller, Jonathan. *Literary theory: a brief introduction*, Tr. by Farzaneh Taheri, Vol. 1, Tehran: Iran University Press, 2003.
- [16] Kazerouni, Jafar. *A criticism on Ahoukhanom's husband*. Tehran: Soheil Publishers, 1st ed., 1994.
- [17] Kooiman, Michael. *A critical linguistic introduction to narrative*. Tr. by Abolfazl Horri, Vol. 1, Tehran: Farabi Cinematic Foundation, 2004.
- [18] Mahmoudian, Mohammad-Rafie'. *Theories on novel and features of Persian novels*. Tehran: Pajouhesh Farzan Rouz Publishers, 2003.
- [19] Martin, Wallace. *Theory of narrative*, Tr. by Mohammad Shahba, Tehran, 2003.
- [20] Maugham, Somerset. *Novel and Short story*. Tr. by Kaveh Dehgan, 3rd ed. Tehran: Islamic Revolution Education & Publication, 2003.
- [21] Meskoub, Shahrokh. *The story of literature and society*. Tehran: Farzan, 1st ed., 1994.
- [22] Miriam, Allott. *Novelists on the Novel*. Tr. by Alimohammad Haghshenas. Tehran: Iran University Press, 1989.
- [23] Mirsadeghi, Jamal. *Famous Iranian fiction writers*. Tehran: Eshareh Publishers, 2003.
- [24] Mirsadeghi, Jamal. *Fiction*, 1st ed., 1987.
- [25] Mirabedini, Hassan. *One hundred years of Iranian fiction writing*. Vol. 1 & 2, Tehran: Cheshmeh Publishers, 2001.
- [26] Mirsadeghi, Jamal. *The elements of fiction*. Tehran: Shafa, 2nd ed., 1988.
- [27] Moshfegh-Kazemi, Morteza. *The scary Tehran*. Tehran: Omid Farda Publishers, 1st ed., 2011.
- [28] Okhovat, Ahmad. *The grammar of fictions*. 1st ed., Isfahan: Farda Publishers, 1992.
- [29] Rouzbeh, Mohammadreza. *Contemporary Persian literature*. Tehran: Rouzegar Publishers, 1st ed., 2002.
- [30] Sepanlou, Mohammadali. *Iranian leading writers*. Tehran: Negah Publishers, 6th ed., 2002.
- [31] Shamisa, Sirous. *Literary genres*. Tehran: Ferdows Publishers, 8th ed., 2001.

Author Profile

Iran Nasseris Sisakht is currently doing her PhD studies in the field of Persian language and literature in Dahaghan Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran.