

Narrative Artistry in *Attar of Roses*: A Study of Tahir Naqvi's Storytelling

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the narrative artistry of Tahira Naqvi in Attar of Roses. The research focuses on her distinct way of storytelling techniques that captures the socio-cultural realities of Pakistan. By scrutinizing narrative structure, character development and thematic intricacies, the research defines how Naqvi weaves poignant tales that resonate with universal human experiences while keeping the cultural specificity intact. The research is qualitative in nature and utilises content analysis approach, through a close textual analysis of selected text, the story reveals her skillful use of vivid imagery, nuanced dialogue and layered symbolism to depicting themes of identity, gender and societal constraints. This research contributes to understanding Naqvi's literary craft and her significant role in contemporary South Asian literature.



Introduction

Writing a narrative is an important component of literature that deals with the culture, society, and psychology of a people. Stories assist readers, who often dwell between history and imagination, to see the ideological projections of life from the author's perspective. In this regard one of the most outstanding Pakistani life, culture and identity representations can be found in the book of Tahira Naqvi, *Attar of Roses* and *Other Stories of Pakistan*. As a writer of short stories, Naqvi has been able to develop strong plots largely because of her skilled narrative devices, descriptive language and her technique of weaving particular concerns into more general issues.

In her novels, Naqvi employs myth as *trung tâm* which forms the backdrop for narrative processes like characterization, point of view, and language and culture integration. Commonly, her fiction tells the story of the life of a common man and expounds on the issues of relationships, the society and life itself. Among these, *Attar of Roses* that gives the book its title is unique in that it combines

cultural embroidery with poetic art. It serves as a perfect example of how various narrative devices can be used to reconstruct identity, erase history and represent emotions in the context of Pakistan.

The short story *The Attar of Roses* by Tahira Naqvi depicts a constant tension between human relations, individual desire, societal expectations and impulsiveness. Story was published in 1997, the short story provides a feminist perspective over the issues and problems of the Post Zia-era. This research is one of its kind, opening new pathways for further investigations. The lack of a combined approach limits the existing papers.

The focus remains on an individual aspect only leaving room for a comprehensive analysis that can combine both macro and micro-structural perspectives. The absence of a combined approach limits the understanding of how both narrative structure and finer elements of linguistics contribute to the depth, diversity and depiction throughout the text. This study addresses the proposed gap by investigating a narrative discourse analysis that examines the model of schematic structure by Paltridge (Paltridge, 2000) at the macro level and lexical, grammatical cohesive analysis at micro level.

Research Objectives

1. To perform a cohesive analysis, identification and interpretation of hyponymy, meronymy and cohesive within the linguistic elements of the short story.
2. To conduct a grammatical cohesive analysis, exploring the use of references and conjunctions to uncover their role in maintaining the flow and coherence of the narrative.

Research Questions

1. What function does the narrative perspective and lexical shifts perform in the creation of psychological and emotional depth of the story?
2. How does the macro-structural design of the story mirror societal attitudes, challenges and problems on a major level?

Literature Review

The section of literature review informs us about the different contributions, pre-existing research and knowledge on the subject by different and diverse scholars across the field. A study was conducted by a group of researchers (Shah et al., 2024) that analyzed macro and micro elements from Ernest Hemingway's short story soldier's home. Their research revealed that Hemingway disclosed the post-world war trauma in his story. The world where a lot of people stopped following their religions and began to practice Nihilistic approach towards life, people's faith was shaken by the huge drama and trauma that the war bought over them. Hemingway used a significant combination of macro and micro perspectives to unravel the complex literary discourse.

Another study was conducted (Gad, 2023, 291-336) analyzing Rory McCarthy's *Nobody Told Us We Are Defeated*: short stories from new Iraq the study analyzed narrative through the technique of narrative discourse. The study proved that the short story of McCarthy was filled with personal experiences, the structure in McCarthy's text was complicated and in ordered but still significantly influential due to event's nature and the way of narration the first-person narration approach portrayed by a witness author narrating the shocking events as an eyewitness focusing on what rather than how a novel having both complicated and influencing nature.

A researcher conducted a study (Gan, 2021, 247-252) over the narrative structures of the novels of Victorian era revealing the concepts of narratology of the writers study proved that the three narrative structures are adapted throughout the Victorian novels that include binary opposition structure, triple formula structure and circular structure it defines that the mentioned narrative structures are adapted from the folk culture and influenced different age groups it further mentions that the trend is no longer is in practice in modern times due to the idea that modern readers no longer looks for the relaxing pastimes.

Another study was conducted by a researcher (Sari, 2016, 109-127) focused on grammatical cohesion from the short stories of Edgar Allan Poe, the study proved the use frequent use of two different kinds of cohesion lexical and grammatical and the use of conjunction on different occasions to keep the text hooked together, the study was conducted using descriptive quantitative survey design.

Furthermore, another scholar (Abdul Aziz, 2022, 75-87) studied the folk Arabic flash stories of Ahmad Jaraullah from his collection *The Adventures of Sindibab*, researcher presented a hypothesis that despite the presence of some resemblance between Arabic and English macro-structure items in the flash story, due to the different understanding of the macrostructure elements and the real meaning of the flash story by each translator. He aimed to evaluate the discourse renditions of microstructure using an eclectic model developed by the researcher that depends on the model of Nida. The study concludes that there are some significant differentiations throughout the translations and it is based on different types of comprehension by different type of translators that contributes to the spirit, context and the meaning of the narration including the macrostructure of each dedicated language.

In a further study over the analysis of love metaphors from the texts of Mowlavi (Shabanlu, n.d., 270-314) he mentions that the love is a basic component of Islamic mysticism and an essential element to know and understand it. Mystic speech is often articulated in an unconscious state though it remains completely metaphoric and symbolic though he claims it is not necessary to analyze them and interpret them. He used the conceptual theory of metaphor to uncover basic mystic concepts that are used by the narrator. Identifying metaphor first then the category or domain and examination of relationship with cultural and intellectual origin at last.

The researcher found that the metaphors like love is a lover, love is a king, love is God are the conceptual keys of love derived from the metaphor love is God paper concludes on the brief of love metaphors present in Mowlavi's text and the knowledge of love he reached without will and considered it to have such characteristics.

Research Methodology

The current study uses a mixed-method approach to understand the delicacies, complexities and intricacies of the narrative of "Attar of Roses" by Tahira Naqvi. The study will use the model of Schematic structure by Paltridge as a framework of guidance. The model effectively decomposes the short story's encompassing narrative in a systematic manner. The significant elements proposed are orientation, complicating actions, evaluation, resolution and coda. By performing this macro-structural analysis, the study aims to uncover the hidden and translucent dynamics of plot, character evolution, thematic subtleties and dimensions of psychoanalysis integrated in Naqvi's narration.

Although at micro level, the study imposes the method of lexical cohesive analysis and grammatical cohesive analysis. The lexical cohesive analysis carries the scrutiny of metonymies,

hyponymy and cohesive ties inside the linguistic elements of the short narration. This specific type of examination is aimed to uncover the elusive lexical choices of the author that contributes to a specific type of meaning in the story. Furthermore grammatical cohesive analysis aims on conjunctions and references, to explain their role in preserving the narrative coherence and a smooth flow of the story.

This methodology merges both approaches the macro analysis and the microanalysis and provides an in depth and detailed investigation of the strategies of narration adapted by the Pakistani writer Tahira Naqvi in “Attar of Roses” (Naqvi, 1997).

Macro-Structural Analysis

It is essential to scrutinize a text on a deeper level to have a clear understanding of the narration and its features, the macro-structural analysis will help us to gain insights into overall structure, plot, complications and the gradual progression of characters throughout the text. We get an idea about how the smaller arrangements within the text contributes to a bigger and larger notion building. The process of macro-structural analysis involves the examination and scrutiny of generic elements of the narration such as plot structure, thematic advancements, and character development to have a wide and detailed meaning of the literary texts. Basically the macro-structural analysis is focused over the high-leveled components that contribute to the general development, consistency, connectedness and conceptual weight of the narrative.

Plot Analysis Using (Paltridge, 2000)

Throughout history, different scholars, discourse analysts, and literary critics have been successful in proposing their own models for a successful narrative analysis. Providing us the common elements to analyze that comprise narrative. In recent decades Labov, Stein and Paltridge have proposed their own structures for analysis containing a bit similar elements mentioned in the **Table 1** Describing different terms that comprise the same move.

Table 1: Similar terms

(Labov, 1972)	(Stein, 1982)	(Paltridge, 2000)
Abstract	Background/Setting	Orientation
Orientation	Triggering Event	Complication
Complication	Response	Resolution
Evaluation	Action Step/Attempt	Comment
Resolution	Outcome/Consequences	Coda
Coda	Reaction/Result	

From the above-mentioned models we will use Paltridge’s model of schematic structure as the guideline of the analysis of the short story “The Attar of Roses” by Tahir Naqvi.

Data Analysis

Orientation describes the information about the different characters, their background, the workplace, and their action time, the basic function of orientation is to perform orientation tasks. "Who or what is involved in the story and when and where did the events take place?" (Labov, 1972). In this narration the orientation familiarizes us to Saeed and his inner state and develops a base for his emotional conflict and moral triggers. Story opens with a stand...located in a busy section of Alam Market and Saeed tries to read a poem while standing over a shop jostled by passersby as he tried to concentrate. This not only describes the physical conditions but hidden turmoil in the nature of Saeed, a sense of confinement, tension and unease that will be depicted further in the narration too. a river of people pressed in all directions with great urgency, this also reflects the restlessness present in Saeed's nature already waiting for the right direction to pursue.

It was either the magazine or the mangoes. The depicted character of protagonist is filled with the responsibilities of daily life and sacrifices making him vulnerable and unsatisfied earlier on and a easy victim for seduction either direct or indirect but his decision of buying mangoes over magazine defines his manliness and sacrifice for family showing his values and discipline prioritizing responsibilities over self-satisfaction.

Soon he forgot the crowds, the perspiration that covered his face like a film of oil, the cacophonous din of traffic. The need for beauty and fulfillment is deep rooted in the nature of saeed and yet unmet. Earlier the poem was melodic and richly textured that made him forget his surroundings for a while.

Complication

To provide the necessary information narrative clauses are used to introduce the actions of complication that provides the information about different happenings in the narration. "then what happened?" (Labov, 1972) describing an action that moves the story forward also known as sequential action connected to main events having a lack of dependency over surrounding structures.

In the narration the complication begins when the protagonist becomes obsessed by a mysterious woman in burka and the deep rooted fantasies, desires and longings of Saeed's nature begins to tackle him in with new vivid and unacceptable imaginations making him lose senses and behave irrationally. The initial attraction begins when protagonist is drawn in by the beauty of fragrance of attar of roses later marked as a huge symbol of his unmet desires the black linen also contributed a huge role in evoking the beauty of the women excessively in Saeed's mind never had he seen hands of such extraordinary beauty. The skin was pale and unlined, the color a pearly shade of jasmine this description not only describes women but also showcases how Saeed turns her into an object of fantasy and unmet imaginations as he tries to focus on her features that were delicate the thin blue veins...like delicate shadows across the face of a rose petal. This describes the idealization of women in Saeed's mind, making him yearn for something that was not real or beyond his ordinary life.

During his scrutiny the time of stare increases so does his obsession to the point of touching her imagining how her hands will feel and according to his dedicated imagination they will feel like a promise of love further intensifying his desires and internal conflict between moral sense and the impulsion of attraction leading him to the point of senselessness when he wants to see her face and pursue her feeling anxiety raise in him like a dry cough, panic gripped him. But the guilt keeps him in check, reminding him of his duties and sense of self of being a teacher that he was an educated school-master who attempted every day to instill in his students the moral and ethical values of his society. Saeed was completely aware of the impropriety of his actions but yet he was unable to

control his urges feeling completely powerless against his attraction and this tension not only makes him vulnerable to seduction but deepens the complexity of his character. How could he have considered pursuing a strange woman merely in order to satisfy a foolish, impulsive whim?

Resolution

In the section of resolution the overall built tension takes its way reaching towards the climax throughout the complicated actions. The audience is familiarized with what will come next. Being failed in his attempt to reconnect with the realism resolution showcases Saeed's confused figure with an escalating obsession and delusion both.

Losing is focus from daily life Saeed struggled to perform minute daily tasks and routine fixating over a women and disturbing his whole being including the performance at workplace and spending unnecessary time over the bus stop or purchases fruit just to find another glimpse of her, He didn't need and fruit he couldn't afford in the workplace setting he frequently misquoted Ghalib and Iqbal even losing his focus from his the favorite thing literature. Furthermore it didn't stop on to the workplace setting Saeed's domestic life was affected drastically too including his dreams, In dreams he often visualized dark nebulous clouds symbolizing the mystery and unattainability of his induced desires furthermore he clasped in his arms a woman wrapped in a burka, a clear symbol of his desperate attraction towards the pursuit yet never clearly receiving any glimpse of her face a symbol of inaccessibility of and impossibility of fulfillment of his longing.

Silently he took the package from her hands and emptied it on the bed...Gingerly Razia picked up the bottle. 'Attar of roses?' she said, looking at him incredulously Saeed tries to channel his desires through the boundaries of marriage through the purchase of similar items for his wife to make her resemble like the woman he desire but it all fell as the reaction of Razia was not similar to his expectations a disconnect between Saeed's fantasy and the realism of marriage.

Comment

The section indulges broader terms and themes of the story such as a constant turmoil between personal choice/longing and social duty and the restrictions/limitations of idealized love. It is proper that one's heart be guarded by intellect, But sometimes let it be alone. This notion is further enhanced by the presence of two major Urdu poets that supports the notion of passion and reality the Iqbal and the Ghalib a confused protagonist between his individual desire of love and affection and the reality of serving social responsibilities as a father, husband and a teacher realizing the violation he did but yet helpless to curb his desires. He tries to obsess an unattainable ideal without prior information or knowledge and fantasizes projecting his need for mystery, beauty and passion yet not able to realize it these remain forever out of reach because of him being in delusion in the end projecting his disappointed idealization on to his wife when he tries to identify similar traits in his wife Razia.

Coda

The coda is the final part making the end of the narrative and the audience is introduced to where the story began. Despite trying and deluding for so long Saeed remains unsuccessful in attaining or curbing his desires ending story over an unresolved tension and openness. Looked at him incredulously the black bangles and the attar of roses suggests longing of saeed to bridge his fantasy with the reality but it all fails with the reaction of Razia to the gifts a disconnection and incomprehension not understanding any significance of the gifts he had bought for her, ending in Saeed's obsession still unfulfilled and unmet showcasing us a continuous and ongoing nature of

his internal conflict. The story ending suggests the reader that the Saeed's longing will continue to haunt him in the upcoming future too and his attempt to find solace and peace in his marriage only suggests and highlights the gap between his idealized love and the limitations of real world relationships.

Discussion

In Tahira Naqvi's short story "Attar of Roses", the character of protagonist Saeed undergoes sudden changes throughout the narration the protagonist Saeed is introduced first as a devoted family man fulfilling his daily responsibilities without any delay sufficing all societal demands and fulfilling needs of his family and environment first but beneath this responsible and devoted exterior his yearns were too high for beauty, romance and mystery his fascination to poetry and art hints an inner self that is drawn to the art, beauty, emotional expression a perfect base for setting up the internal conflict. An internal conflict between disciplined life and artistic world that he loves. His life takes a sudden change after an encounter with a woman in burka without any conversation or so on he gets mesmerized by her appearance and way of handling herself falling for her fragrance the attar of roses that she wore every time protagonist Saeed got her glimpse this encounter flamed the earlier present internal conflict of Saeed and intensified it further awaking a side of him that demands sensory and emotional fulfillment. Daydreaming about that woman in black burka with the fragrance of roses all the time Saeed makes her an object of fantasy, she becomes more than a person for him symbolizing an unreal ideal filled with beauty, mystery and freedom from the daily routines that the Saeed faces each day. This was fascination earlier on but later it developed into obsession. He began to wait for her at the bus stop, looking for her in the magazine shop and market, a sign of growing depression that shifted it from admiration to obsession, a significant and clear turning point for the protagonist that disrupted his common life. As the obsession grew larger the focus of Saeed depleted from family work and life, he began making mistakes in common school tasks such as grading and quoting. The neglect of responsibilities shows that the inner turmoil has taken over his external life describing how his desires are taking away and dismantling the established identity of him. He frequently misquoted Ghalib and Iqbal, showing how deep the internal fixations had affected his academic performance and professional excellence.

Saeed develops himself by a re-approach as he knows and recognizes that impropriety of his actions and the responsibilities of his role as a teacher including the societal values that he upholds clash due to his personal desires and fulfillments leading him to a state of shame, guilt and disgust. The same social values cause the problem for him to embrace his real desires, building a barrier of morality, self-restraint and societal principles making him to feel the feeling of attraction, a forbidden act preventing him from embracing his desires fully and resulting in an amplification of his internal conflict. Final attempt of bridging the gap between imagination and reality is performed by Saeed at the end of the narration when he purchases similar items for his wife that includes black bangles and other items including the main one attar of roses. It can be considered a hopeless/desperate attempt by Saeed to merge both the harsh reality and the false imaginary world although the reaction of Razia his wife made it impossible to make it happen for Saeed looking at him incredulously. This incredulous look made Saeed realize the real situations that were in front of him, bringing him out from his fascinated world of seduction leaving him with an unfulfilled sense of longing and turmoil. Though from this situation the character of Saeed develops with a deep realization of unresolvedness of his desires, unable to bridge the giant gap between both reality and fantasy with a state of emotional dissatisfaction Saeed accepts his inner conflicts symbolizing human nature of pursuit to pursue the ideals that the reality can never attain or fulfill.

The character remain constant between realism and idealism reflecting moralism culture and individualism although the idealization leaves a lasting impact on his character in a continuous cycle of yearning an idealized version of love he can never attain a certain shift from moral controlled and responsible man to an emotionally unstable individual leaving all the responsibilities unchecked for a momentary satisfaction.

Conclusion

The narrative analysis of Tahira Naqvi's "Attar of Roses", utilizing Labov's model for the analysis of both macro and micro method while examining the grammatical features attentively uncovers the diverse method of explanation carried by Tahira Naqvi for the short story. This analysis reveals the significant and continuous shift between different thematic nuances, character development and broader narrative describing daily roles, delusion, reality, confusion and clarity. The protagonist significantly undergoes multiple changes and psychological turmoil depicting fragile human nature tendencies and social conditions. The main character remains in a pre-existing delusional internal conflict further flamed by the conditions created at that moment leading him to fantasize and crave for an escape that he does not achieve leaving story on an open ending Naqvi keeps the readers hooked into the character and signifies that he can re-repeat his pre-created patterns of destructions. The protagonist remains deeply confused between the social acceptance or social boundaries and his personal desires and tendencies leading to his downfall. Author has tried to convey the message to all of the audience and conveys it in a simple language using multiple grammatical elements to make the audience question and think regarding the idea that the author wants to convey and has a deep impact on the mind of the reader. This analysis not only covers the significant analysis but it also provides how creative the author was to cover multiple complex themes in a single short story, a combined piece of art, talent and creativity.

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