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Space and Time: Narrative Analysis of Najdi's Selected Short Stories

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ABSTRACT

This research presents a narrative analysis of selected short stories of Bijan Najdi by using Fowler-Upensky's model of point of view, aiming to shed light on the significance of spatial and temporal perspectives in shaping the narratives and exploring their impact on the lives of characters. The selected four selected short stories are A Rainy Tuesday (2019), Trusted to Earth (2021), Pool of Nightmares (2020), and An American Indian in Astara (2019). The research objectives revolve around examining the role played by time and place in the selected short stories and their significance in character development. The findings indicate that Najdi skillfully employs spatial descriptions and locative expressions to create immersive settings, while temporal markers add depth to the narratives by exploring past and present. Through this analysis, this research provides a deeper understanding of Najdi's modern writing technique. The interplay of spatial and temporal perspectives contributes to the multi-dimensional nature of the stories, presenting a compelling portrayal of human experiences amidst various contexts. It underscores the enduring power of storytelling as a means to reflect on the human condition, societal dynamics, and the quest for meaning in a complex world.

Introduction

Bijan Najdi was an Iranian poet, writer, and literary critic who was born in 1941 in the city of Qazvin, Iran, and passed away in 1997. Najdi's most renowned collection of short stories, titled *The Leopards who have Run with Me* (1994), earned him the literary Golden Pen Award of Gardoun in the same year. His other works, including *Once Again the Same Streets* (1997), *The Sisters of This Summer* (1997), and *Unfinished Stories* (2001), were published posthumously by his

wife. Despite his highly poetic and imaginative style, Najdi's short stories received a rather modest reception in Iran. Najdi incorporates various strategies in his writing. These include harnessing the archetypal potential of language, manipulating and utilizing linguistic elements, tapping into the climactic possibilities of language, and maintaining structural and semantic equilibrium. Simultaneously, he presents his stories in a distinctive style, making deliberate efforts to eliminate monotony and repetition (Safikhani, 2018).

Narrative

A narrative is a carefully organized portrayal of events, experiences, or fictional happenings, presented in a coherent order, often featuring characters and a plot that embodies the art of storytelling (Abbott, 2020).

Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis is a systematic approach that examines the structure and substance of stories to unveil hidden themes, patterns, and emotions. Its objective is to bring to light the profound meanings woven into narratives and understand their influence on individuals and society (Riessman, 1993). Narrative analysis encompasses various aspects of a narrative, with its central focus being on the story itself. In social research, the term "narrative" is used to refer to both a tale or story and a form of communication, whether spoken or written.

Point of view

Point of view in a story pertains to the narrative perspective, determining through whose eyes the reader perceives events and whose emotions and thoughts are unveiled. This element has a substantial impact on the reader's comprehension and engagement with the narrative (Abrams & Harpham, 2014). Point of view is defined with reference to the perspective through which a story is told (Simpson, 2004).

Short Story

A short story is a short narrative in literature with its history in background. It deals with fewer characters and its focus remains on one main incident in the story. It is not filled with many characters and sub plots, which is a basic feature of a novel. (King, 2016).

Research Objectives

1. To explore the significance of space and location in the story.
2. To analyze the importance of time from the lens of temporal point of view.

Research Questions

1. What is the role played by place in the selected short stories?
2. How temporal point of views is significant in the lives of characters?

Literature Review

According to Al-Dihaymawee et al. (2022), the stylistic analysis of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* shows that the Point of View serves as a gateway for readers, enabling a deeper understanding of British society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By exploring linguistic theories, this approach unveils multifaceted aspects of human nature, including the psychological and ideological realms. The spatial point of view within this novel is depicted

through the utilization of specific verbs signifying movement either closer to or farther away from the speaker. Temporal point of view refers to historical events. The novel *Pride and Prejudice* set in rural England, particularly Hertfordshire and Derbyshire, during the Napoleonic war.

According to Şahin (2021) various stylistic tools, including deixis, techniques of speech and thought presentation, transitivity, and verba sentiendi can be employed for analysis. It includes spatial perspective in the narrative *train* by Alice Munro. In spatial point of view short story contains numerous deictic markers of space, such as *on the bed*, *entered into his head*, *enter this room*, and *stood up*, which indicate narrator's viewing position.

Madhu and Mani (2019) argues that Khushwant Singh's short story *The Mark of Vishnu* aims to explore how Singh effectively portrays spatio-temporal, ideological, and psychological perspectives through his language choices. In story the Temporal point of view the time adverbial *every morning* indicates the timing of the action in the story. In Spatial point of view the place adverbial *his forehead* helps readers identify the location of the sandalwood paste as the narrator describes Gunga Ram's physical features.

Madhu & Mani (2016), worked on a short story *The Portrait of a Lady* by Khushwant Singh which allows us to observe the grandmother, who is a central character, through the perspective of the narrator. The narrator's spatio-temporal point of view is established through the use of various deictic expressions associated with place and time. Demonstratives, such as *There was no chirping*, *She broke it into little crumbs*, the way my grandmother used to and *threw it to them*, contribute to this spatial point of view. Adverbials and adverbs, like *Even before* and *After a few hours* further enhance the temporal point of view. Verbs of motion, such as *We went to her room* and *he sun was setting*, add to the overall portrayal of spatio-temporal point of view.

Ratcliffe (2014), analyzed the development of narrative voice in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* to explore the construction of condemnation and conscience within the text. In spatial point of view Coetzee establishes the spatial organization by designating Lurie as the central point within the story, around which all other events revolve. In temporal point of view the present tense has been used very sparingly in fiction, perhaps for speech, universal aphorisms or real-time opening sentences.

In Safikhani's (2018) work, a thorough examination was conducted on the language formalism utilized in Bijan Najdi's stories collection *Leopards who have run with me*. For instance in short story *A Pool of Nightmares* he describes Morteza's throat by using simile like a sand paper illustrating the roughness or harshness of the character's throat.

According to Pourjafari's study, Najdi has effectively employed the technique in short story *My Button Eyes* from his collection, presenting the human world through the lens of a nonhuman and inanimate protagonist. This study suggests that one method of defamiliarizing the narrative mode is by associating the act of storytelling with inanimate objects.

Barghani and Toyour (2017), conducted a comparative study of the literature of Bijan Najdi and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, focusing on the theme of gaining through bereavement, gives psychological inside of the character in the Bijan Najdi's short story *Trusted to Earth*.

According to Ravari and Bahadori (2016), Bijan Najdi's stories exhibit distinct characteristics through the abundant use of similes and metaphors. His unique perspective on nature, humanity, and objects is intertwined with his personal experiences, resulting in vivid imagery that reflects his modern outlook.

Aramfar et al. (2020), they explored that the significant presence of subjective elements in *Wet Tuesday* by Najdi, resulting from the extensive use of anachronism and the interplay between emotional development, symbolism, and intellectual struggles among the characters.

Mehraban and Zeinali (2012) analyzed artistic language of story-poetry in Najdi's three fictional works *The Panthers that have run with me*, *From the street again*, and *Unfinished stories*. Results showed that Najdi skillfully employs a rich and precise poetic language, successfully blending the elements of storytelling and poetry.

Methodology and Framework

In 1973 Boris Uspensky, a distinguished scholar in narratology, presented a four-fold framework for dissecting the notion of narrative perspective. As time passed, Roger Fowler expanded and improved upon this model in 1986 and further Simpson in 1993. As a consequence, it's frequently referred to as the 'Fowler-Uspensky model'.

The model identifies the following four components for analyzing point of view:

- Psychological point of view
- Spatial point of view
- Temporal point of view
- Ideological point of view

The Spatial point of view

It establishes the particular position from which objects or occurrences are witnessed, whether that stance is nearby or from a more distant site. According to Simpson (2004), the spatial dimension of point of view becomes evident through concrete grammatical cues found in deixis. These deixis consist of locative expressions. This perspective is effectively conveyed through adjectives like "long," "steep," or "steeper" to convey dimensions and extent. Additionally, strategically deployed prepositional phrases indicate directions, such as "under the tree," "from the wall," or "from the gate." Furthermore, locative phrases like "where," "westward," or "here" reinforce the observer's spatial orientation. Collectively, these linguistic instruments play a pivotal role in constructing the spatial point of view, offering readers a window into the narrator's or character's outlook within the narrative (Fowler, 1986).

The Temporal point of view

The temporal point of view involves the interpretation of the tempo and sequence of occurrences within a narrative. It relates to the sense of timing a reader acquires about the swiftness at which events transpire, whether in an unbroken stream or as distinct segments. The temporal point of view employs storytelling tactics like flashbacks (analepsis) and flashforwards (prolepsis) to disrupt the chronological advancement of time. Linguistically, the temporal viewpoint is communicated through the employment of time deixis, including adverbs like "now" and "then." "Now" indicates the current moment in the narrative, whereas "then" alludes to events that transpired before the present time frame. These linguistic signals aid in establishing the temporal alignment and arrangement of events within the text (Simpson, 1993).

Discussion and Analysis

Najdi's five selected short stories, *A Rainy Tuesday* (2019), *Trusted to Earth* (2021), *Pool of Nightmares* (2020), and *An American Indian in Astara* (2019) are analyzed by using Fowler-Upensky's model of point of view specifically focusing on Spatial and Temporal point of views.

Spatial Point of View

1) *A Rainy Tuesday* (2019)

There are a lot of locative expressions which are used to show location of protagonist in the story. In the given lines "Inside the windows lining both sides of the alley [...]" (p.1). The writer gives the scene inside of the window by using preposition *inside*. In next few lines narrator gives the falling position of umbrella by using proximal adverbial deixis *there*. In lines "Hitting the tree trunk, the umbrella fell right there beneath autumn's arboreal limbs" (p. 1).

Deictic pronoun for distance *those* is also used in this story. "[...] She couldn't find Siyavash amongst all those prisoners' eyes [...]" (p.2). Deictic proximal adverb *Here* is also used in the story. "[...] Amir Hussayn, Amir Husayn, I'm here" (p. 2). In these lines "Two or three people helped Maliheh get on the minibus behind her father" (p. 4) the narrator describes the sitting position of the protagonist Maliheh in the bus by using the preposition *behind* and *on*. "Maliheh stopped in front of a door" (p. 5) in these lines the standing position of maliheh is described with the help of locative expression by using prepositional phrase *in front* this shows that she was near to the door.

2) *Trusted to Earth* (2021)

In these lines "Taher stopped singing in the shower and listened to the sound of the water." (p.1) the locative phrase is *in the shower* to show the standing position of the protagonist in the room. "Their room had a balcony that opened to only cobblestone street in the village" (p. 1) in this line deictic demonstrative pronoun *that* is used to show a distal location of balcony. "That man called me mother" (p.3). In this line distal deixis for demonstrative pronoun *that* is used to point out a distant person who was not near. In this line "These days you can't understand what people are saying" (p. 3) demonstrative deictic pronoun *These* is used to point out the nearest places and events. "Will be keep here till tomorrow" (p. 4). In this line proximal deixis adverb *here* is used to show the nearest position of the body by pointing out the nearest place. "In front of a café, the man put the basket under a lamp post" (p. 4) in this line locative expressions *in front of* and *under a lamp* are used to show the position of man with help of preposition *front* and *under*.

3) *Pool of Nightmares* (2020)

Lieutenant inquired about the woman in the police station. "That woman here again" (p. 1). In these lines *that* is used as deictic pronoun and deictic proximal adverb *here* is used to show the nearest position. With the help of locative expressions narrator gives a view inside of the room of the Lieutenant where he laid his hat on the table and stood near the window. "The lieutenant came in. He laid his hat on the table and run a hand through his hair as he stood next to the window" (p. 1). In these lines *came in* and *stood next to* are locative expressions with preposition of place *in* and *next*. These prepositions are used to show the viewing position of narrator. Some locations represent places of social interaction and human connection within the story's spatial landscape. The hostel, although no longer functional, still holds significance as a spatial marker of the past. "Morteza looked up at the sign above the door which read, Iran Hostel. Is this not the hostel?" (p. 3). In these lines the specific place *Iran Hostel* is highlighted from where the narrator captured the

scene. These spaces add depth to the narrative by providing a sense of community and highlighting the characters' interactions.

4) *An American Indian in Astara (2019)*

The setting of the story is in *Astara*, the city of Iran. Story begins with description of the city. "I am saying there's American Indian here" (p. 1). In this line adverb of place *here* is used for position in the city. "Grabbing the back of the chair, he moved it over to carpet, next to the heater" (p. 1). In this line locative expressions *next to the heater* and *moved it* are used to describe the position of Morteza by using preposition of place *next to* to show the sitting position of Morteza in the room. "I walked over to that guest house" (p. 3). In these lines distal pronoun *that* is used to show something far away in past. "[...] Moscow is around here somewhere right" (p. 3). Adverb of place *here* is used where the whole story was told by the American to Morteza. "Grandfather yelled, take the women behind those stones" (p. 4). In these lines place is mentioned with the help of distal deictic pronoun *those*. Morteza gave the description of presence of American Indian in Astara to the narrator. He saw him at the coffee shop. Here Morteza told the whole incident in which he saw American Indian. "[...] he sworn he'd saw an American Indian at Bivak Aga's coffeeshouse [...]" (p. 2). In these lines locative phrase is *at Bivak Aga's coffe house* in this phrase preposition of place *at* is used to show the location of American in Astara. "I walked over to that guest house, where no Indian had ever opened the door with the toe of his boot [...] i stood there as the sleet came down" (p. 3). In these lines the viewing position of narrator is in the house of Indian. This position is pointed out by using distal pronoun *that* to show something far away in past. In these lines deictic adverb of place *there* is also used to point out the place farther away. The viewing position of narrator shifted towards inside of the bathroom where he put his head under the tap and was continuously thinking about Morteza's shocking experience. "I went to the bathroom and stuck my head under the tap [...]. A person messed up in the head to anything Morteza says" (p. 5). In these lines locative expressions *went to* and *under the tap* are used to point out the place of narrator by using preposition *to* and *under*. In these lines deictic expressions are used to point out the place of action.

5) *My Button Eyes (2020)*

This story is told by first person singular point of view by using pronoun I. "I have a big head." (p. 1). "[...] leave me in my velvet blue dress in the niche behind the window" (p. 1). Here locative expression *Behind the window* is used with preposition *behind* to show the position of narrator. "One day, from that very same window. I was thrust into the street" (p. 1). In these lines deictic distal demonstrative pronoun *that* is used to refer some distant place. In the same lines locative expression *into the street* is used by using preposition *into* to elaborate place and the place is into the street. After some days the place of narrator is described that it was lying on the floor motionlessly. "My head had stayed on the ground for so long [...]" (p. 2). In These lines locative expression *on the ground* is used to show the place and position by using preposition of place *on* to show the position that narrator was lying on the ground.

Temporal point of view

1). *A Rainy Tuesday (2019)*

This story is based on historical and political background of Iran during 1945 to 1978. Nationalization of the Oil Industry (1951-1953), The Reign of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (1953-1979), Rise of Opposition Movements and Islamic Revolution (1979) are Important historical events. Time as a whole in this story is viewed as subjective manner. Narrator examines time by narrating the events with in a single day by using protagonist's emotions. "The next day

the face of a woman [...] was on the front of the newspaper” (p.2). In these lines the phrase “the next day” is showing the passage of time. Furthermore the narrator tells the time by the help of *dexies now* which is showing present time in the story. “now it was dark [...]”(p. 7). Moreover time is non-linear in this story to cross the traditional boundaries of time. There is no chronological sequence of time in the story. There is a flash back in the story. The narrator tells the story of seven years ago when Maliheh’s father was executed behind the potato store by firing squad.

2) *Trusted to Earth* (2021)

The seasonal time in the story is winter. Taher’s wife Maliheh said, “Make sure the window is closed. You will catch a cold”. (p.2). These lines are showing that it is season of winter. A specific day *Friday* is mentioned in the story to point out a specific time period “Friday was behind the window.”(p.1). “[...] is the coldest region in the country with -11 degrees Celsius”(p.1). In these lines the adjective *coldest* is pointing out winter season. In this story adverb of time *twice a week* is used to mention time. “Twice a week, the sound of a train ran through it, [...] on the cracked craving on the ceiling”(p.1). The story is revolving around the lives of two old age characters. Age of female character is 60 years. There is a flash back in the story. “[...] remembering that sticky summer morning and argue over choosing a name” (p. 2). The season was *summer* and the specific time of the day was *morning*.

The mention of different days, *Sunday* and *Monday*, highlights the temporal sequence of events and the passing of days. “Taher was sleeping on a bed full of Sunday’s sun [...]” (p. 2). In the given line specific day *Sunday* is mentioned. Deictic adverb *now* is used in this story to show the recent time. “Even right now, I love [...]” (p. 4). These lines are showing that her love for baby is still fresh in her heart. Time is objective in story as the feelings and thoughts are told by omniscient narrator. Time is not linear in this story. Some events are told with a gap of two days or one week. These temporal aspects contribute to the narrative's sense of continuity, change, and the characters' experiences within the passage of time.

3) *Pool of Nightmares* (2020)

The major historical point of view in the story is The Persian Gulf War Oil Spill 1991. The story was based on the oil spill incident. The story starts with the line “After twenty years, Morteza was arrested his very first day back in his hometown [...]” (p. 1). This line is showing that he came back after *twenty years* in his home. The seasonal time in the story is *winter*. Winter is the symbol of death and decay. The first scene of story starts at *morning* time. “That morning, just as Morteza had stepped off the bus in his hometown after twenty years away [...]” (p. 2). The use of phrases like this *morning*, *now*, and *just a minute* emphasizes the flow of time throughout the story. These markers serve to establish a temporal framework and create a sense of progression. “[...] but then the gasoline surrounded the boat [...]. Now I, the boar, the filth, and swan were all mixed up” (p. 5). In these lines adverb of time *Then* and *Now* is used here to show past and present time. The juxtaposition of present events, such as Morteza's arrest, and references to past incidents, like the old woman's stories, reflects the interplay between different temporal dimensions within the narrative.

There is an element of Flashback in the story when the Morteza explained the past incident of oil spill. Time in this story is nonlinear because narrator told some events in present time and others in past. This technique is successfully used by modern narrator to break the continuity of time. Time is objective in the story because the thoughts of protagonist are told by omniscient narrator not directly by protagonist.

4) *An American Indian in Astara (2019)*

The Iranian Crisis of 1946 occurred prior to 1947 but had implications for U.S.-Iran relations. Soviet troops had occupied parts of Iran during World War II and refused to withdraw after the war ended. The crisis was eventually resolved with the intervention of the United Nations and negotiations between Iran, the Soviet Union, and Britain. Oil Nationalization Movement is one of the significant events in Iran during that time was the emergence of the oil nationalization movement led by Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh. The presence of warfare or violent conflicts is indicating a historical context of violence and bombings. “Years later I realized that only firing automatic rounds could create such rattling noises, and that the sudden exploding sounds were called bombs” (p. 5). These lines give historical aspects of war.

The story gives flash back about the life of American Indian.). “In 1947 two days before the American attacked [...]”. Narrator also gives flash forward in the story when he was told about the death of Morteza. “Nine years later when they brought me the news that Morteza had been buried [...]” (p. 8 (p. 4). “By now it was night” (p. 5) in this line adverb of time *now* is used to mention present and near time. Time is subjective and nonlinear in the story where all the elements are told directly by narrator in both past and present time. This style is distinctive feature of modern writers to break the continuity of time and traditional concept of time.

5) *My Button Eyes (2020)*

In this story the historical event is occupation of Khorram Shahr by Iraqi troops during the Iran-Iraq War, which lasted from 1980 to 1988. In September 1980, Iraqi forces launched a large-scale offensive with the aim of capturing strategic territories inside Iran. This story is about flashback of Iraqi attack. “One day, from that very same window [...] people were running around me [...]” (p. 1). In these following lines it has been shown that time has passed after the attack and narrator told the situation after some days. “The next few days when people were leaving the city [...]” (p. 2). Time is not linear in the story. Story begins at day time and includes several days and night scenes. Time is subjective in the story as all the events are told by the narrator himself. In this way the inner conflicts and inner ideas are shown by narrator himself.

Conclusion

The location plays a vital role in the lives of characters in any narrative. Najdi has successfully elaborated the importance of location by using deixis and locative expressions in his stories. In all the short stories *A Rainy Tuesday*, *Pool of nightmares*, *Trusted to Earth*, *An American Indian in Astara* and *My button eyes* the Spatial Point of View is described through the use of locative expressions by using preposition and deixies to point out the physical positions of the characters in different scenes. Spatial or place deixis is primarily expressed through locative adverbs like *here* and *there*, as well as demonstratives or determiners such as *this* and *that*.

Time and context play a vital role in the lives of characters in any narrative. Najdi has successfully elaborated the importance of time by using time specific events like historical events, seasons, days of week and different phases of day including morning and evening in his stories. The story *A Rainy Tuesday* is set in a specific historical period, between 1945 and 1978. This story uses objective perspective of time by some omniscient narrator with non-linear temporal point of view also deixies like *next day* and *now* to elaborate the time. In the short story *Trusted to Earth* specific days like *Friday*, *Saturday* and *Monday* are mentioned to break the continuity of time, the season is winter it also includes flash back to give the previous thoughts and connection of past with present. Time is objective in story as the thoughts are told by omniscient narrator. *Pool of*

nightmare discusses a historical incident of The Persian Gulf War Oil Spill 1991. The seasonal time in the story is *winter*. The use of phrases like this *morning*, *now*, and *just a minute* emphasizes the flow of time, it also includes flash back technique to give a glimpse of past.

The story *An American Indian in Astara* is written in context of Oil Nationalization Movement, Truman Doctrine, The Tudeh Party. Time is subjective and nonlinear in the story where all the elements are told directly by narrator in both past and present time. Mostly deixis of time *now* is used furthermore flash back is used to give the past views. The story *My Button Eyes* explores Iraqi attack on Khorram Shahr, Iran in September 1980. Time is subjective and nonlinear in the story as all the events are told by the narrator himself.

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