

NARRATOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF 'INTERPRETER OF MALADIES' AND 'UNACCUSTOMED EARTH' BY JHUMPA LAHIRI

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ABSTRACT

Jhumpa Lahiri, the eminent lexicographer preserves her image as a wonderful story teller. She is a celebrated name in contemporary Indo-American Diasporic Literature. All her four works are awash with immigrant characters and the struggle of their lives. Scholars have shown an intense interest in exploring the linguistic and thematic aspects of her writings. Lahiri has always been critically acclaimed for her art of story-telling, thus a Narratological study of her two story collections 'Interpreter of Maladies' and 'Unaccustomed Earth' becomes necessary. Narratology discusses the narration of any work in the language of literary terms. Their availability attribute compliment to the author's writing style.

KEYWORDS: Narratology, Tools, Style, Themes, Fiction World

INTRODUCTION

The astounding wordsmith Jhumpa Lahiri has earned an adorable place in contemporary Indo-American literature. Well-known for her writing style and thematic filament, Lahiri has contributed four works to her readers. She has been the most discussed and the most explored author of today. Her penmanship has been a subject of research among scholars. Scholars have tried to unknot many strands of her language, style and themes. Her characters, their identity struggle, their nostalgia for past, relationship among the first, second and third generation, food ecology, character development, beauty of her prose and art of storytelling have been the most debated aspects of her writing. Critics are satiated with appreciation for her writing style. "Lahiri's multiple gifts for storytelling, character development, and delicately precise imagery result in a rare and wonderful tale." —Orlando Sentinel

OBJECTIVE

Hence, the objective of this research paper is to explore the narratological tools used by the author in her short stories and how they help in shaping her works. The paper also aims at exploring the various narratological aspects of 'Interpreter of Maladies' and 'Unaccustomed Earth' to assess whether they enhance the quality of her works, and if yes, then how they supplement to the character and environment to grow at large.

RESEARCH TOOLS

"Narratology examines the ways that narrative structures our perception of both cultural artifacts and the world around us. The study of narrative is particularly important since our ordering of time and space in narrative forms constitutes one of the primary ways we construct meaning in general." (www.cla.purdue.edu) The study of Narratology consists of understanding and application of many terms as well, through which it examines the narratology of a work. And so, this paper is providing a list of these terms along with their short meanings in order to make it easier for readers' grasp

of their understand of them and of their usages. The terms are the following:

Analepsis and Prolepsis: What is commonly referred to in film as “flashback” and “flashforward”.

Diegesis: A narrative’s time-space continuum. The diegesis of a narrative is its entire created world. Any narrative includes a diegesis, whether one is reading science-fiction, fantasy, mimetic realism, or psychological realism.

Discourse and Story: “Story” refers to the actual chronology of events in a narrative; discourse refers to the manipulation of that story in the presentation of the narrative. The terms refer to the basic structure of all narrative form.

Fabula and Sjuzhet: Fabula refers to the chronological sequence of events in a narrative; sjuzhet is the re-presentation of those events (through narration, metaphor, etc. and so on)

First Person Narration: The telling of a story in the grammatical first person, i.e. from the perspective of an “I”.

Focalize (focalizer, focalized object): The presentation of a scene through the subjective perception of a character. The term can refer to the person doing the focalizing (the focalizer) or to the object that is being perceived (the focalized object).

Subjective Treatment: When one is looking through the eyes of a character in the present and seeing something that is happening in the diegesis of the narrative.

Third Person Narration: Any story told in the grammatical third person, i.e. without using “I” or “We”.

RESEARCH

Now, one can go through the Narratology of ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ and ‘Unaccustomed Earth’ consecutively. Pulitzer Prize successor, ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ was published in the year 1999 and comprises nine stories. The eight stories have third person narration, except the last one. The last story ‘The Third and the Final Continent’ has first person narrative.

In this story the unknown narrator is the *focalizer* and the life of Mrs. Croft is the *focalized object*. The reader cannot locate *frame narrative* in any story. The *frame narrative* is ‘A story within a story’. In all the stories one can find *reliable narrator*, because the narrator is either the writer or the unknown narrator who himself is the part of the story.

One finds a wonderful use of *flashback technique* or *Analepsis*. In the first story ‘A Temporary Matter’ Shukumar observes the passiveness which has filled Shoba’s life after the death of their first child. He recalls the time when in past Shoba used to be very conscious of preparing some food items beforehand so that it can help her to welcome the sudden arrival of guests. “When friends dropped by, Shoba would throw together meals that appeared by, Shoba would throw together meals that appeared to have taken half a day to prepare, from things she had frozen and marinated herself with rosemary, and chutneys that she cooked on Sundays, stirring boiling pots of tomatoes and prunes.” (7)

In ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ Mrs. Kapasi goes in flashback, and recalls her after marriage affair with her husband’s friend. In ‘A Real Durwan’ Boori Ma keeps on recalling her past good time. She remembers the time of her daughter’s marriage. “We married her to a school principal. The rice was cooked in rosewater. The mayor was invited. Everybody washed their fingers in pewter bowls.” (71) In ‘Sexy’ Miranda recalls a little incident about her one meeting with Dev on the bridge when he first time addressed her as sexy. The reader can have the instances of *Prolepsis* in The Third and Final

Continent'. The unknown narrator thinks that when his wife will come to America, how he has to take care of her every little need. And later on, he does that after the arrival of his wife Mala. In the very story, one can notice *subjective treatment* also.

In 'A Temporary Matter' the pictures of Shoba and Shukumar's daily life constitute the *diegesis* of the story. In 'When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine' Lilia's experiences with Mr. Pirzada, her seeking of information about his family form the *diegesis* of story. The *diegesis* of 'Interpreter of Maladies' is constituted by Mrs. Das's family tour of India and her revealing of her malady to Mr. Kapasi. In 'A Real Durwan' Boori Ma's daily life, her nostalgia and finally removal from the house creates the *diegesis* of the story. Throughout the story Boori Ma keeps on sharing her old pleasures and pains with her neighbours. In 'Sexy' Miranda's experience with Dev and her feeling of regret for having an affair with a married man, constitute the *diegesis*.

In 'Mrs. Sen's' ways of Mrs. Sen's taking care of Eliot, their meeting with an accident and Eliot's becoming self-responsible create the *diegesis*. The *diegesis* of 'This Blessed House' is constituted by Twinkle and Sanjeev's arrival to a new house and their routine discovery of objects related to Christianity. The *diegesis* of 'The Treatment of Bibi Haldar' is shaped by the worries of Bibi Haldar for not getting married. Though she is a beautiful woman, but because of being the victim of an incurable disease, she is not getting suitable marriage proposals. All her worries, different ways of her cures but finally a sudden discovery of her becoming pregnant pushes over the story. The last story's *diegesis* is created by unknown narrator's experiences with Mrs. Croft and his wife.

The *fabula* or the actual stories have single framework. Lahiri has preferred Hermeneutics code to give suspense to her stories. She uses capitalized sentences in the beginning of the story. "THE NOTICE INFORMED THEM"(1) The first story begins with it and it raises reader's curiosity about the notice and about further details. "BOORI MA": (70) The capitalized beginning of the story highlights the introduction of the central character of the story. Capitalization renders charming and exquisiteness to her stories. Among the nine stories, three stories have Indian setting and the rest have American setting or background.

In 'Unaccustomed Earth', there are eight stories divided into two parts. Part one consists of five stories and part two contains three. All the five stories in part one preserve different narratives. Only the second story named 'Hell Heaven' carries first person narrative. The others have third person narrative. In part two the first and second stories have first person narrative. In 'Hell Heaven' it is Usha, who narrates the whole story. In 'Once in a Lifetime', it is Hema and in 'Years End' it is Kaushik, who is the narrator.

In the story, 'Hell-Heaven' Narrator is the *focalizer* and the focalized objects are Aparna and Pranab. "Pranab Chakraborty wasn't technically my father's younger brother. But I had no real uncles in America, and so I was taught to call him Pranab Kaku. Accordingly, he called my father Shyamal Da, always addressing him in the polite form, and he called my mother Boudi, which is how Bengalis are supposed to address an older brother's wife, instead of using her first name, Aparna." (72) In 'Once in a life Time', Hema is the *focalizer* and Kaushik and his family are the *focalized objects*. In 'Year's End' Kaushik is the *focalizer* and his own family is the *focalized object*. The reader does not find any *frame narrative*.

The reader finds either first or third person narration restricted to the life of a single person or family. And all the stories have *reliable narrator* because the third person narrator is the author herself and the first person narrators are

themselves the part of the stories. The Researcher has ascertained that Jhumpa Lahiri makes a brilliant use of flashback technique or *Analepsis*. All the three stories, 'Hell Heaven', 'Once in a Lifetime' and 'Years End', the complex strings, are the examples of *Analepsis*. The reader could not uncover any example of flash forward or 'Prolepsis' technique. In 'Hell-Heaven' the reader comes across *Subjective treatment*.

Through Hema, one can peep into the lives of her parents Aparna and Pranab. In 'Unaccustomed Earth' Ruma's experience with different relations creates the *diegesis*. In 'Hell-Heaven' Usha's personal experience, her psychological understanding of her mother constitutes the *diegesis* of the story. The *diegesis* of a narrative is its entire created world. The *diegesis* of 'A Choice of Accommodation' is filled with the details of Amit's bachelorhood, his married life and his attending of his friend's wedding. The *diegesis* of 'Only Goodness' is made by Sudha's San different treatment to different relations, her behaviour towards her parents and later towards her husband and family.

In 'No body's business' Paul's experience with his roommate Sang is the *diegesis*. In 'Going Ashore' the *diegesis* is the account of Hema and Kaushik's reunion experiences. The 'fabula' or the actual story of all the stories have single frame work and the way the story is presented is called *Sjuzhet* or discourse.

CONCLUSIONS

After the Narratological evaluation of the two contribution The 'Interpreter Maladies' and 'Unaccustomed Earth' penned by Jhumpa Lahiri, the research concludes that Jhumpa Lahiri has taken all the narratological tools in her account to create a fantasy world of characters and their diasporic experiences of life. She displays her incompatible competence of narrating the stories and carrying her readers in to her invented world of characters that can be found in anyone's nearby.

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