

Literary Texts II 4

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HELLO EVERYONE!

Today, we will move to talk about the *Narrative technique*.

Narrative Technique

First of all, what is the meaning of "Narrative Technique"?

Narrative Technique is "تقنية السرد" (who is telling the story?)

It is the voice that narrates the story; 'the teller of the story'.

Thus, in this section, we are going to discuss the idea of 'telling' and investigate its characteristics and techniques.

We have two major types of narrative techniques:

- *Subjective narrators* (راوي ذاتي)
- *Objective narrators* (راوي موضوعي)

It is 'subjective' narrative technique; when the narrator narrates the story from the 'I' point of view, or from the point of view of the person.

- *I woke up at 8 in the morning.*
- *I received a phone call*

In this way, the story is narrated by the **first point of view** (i.e. the narrator uses "I"), and it is the **subjective** vision of narration.

On the other hand, it is an 'objective' narrative technique when the narrator narrates the story from the **third person point of view** (s/he). (i.e. the narrator uses "he/she")

So, if I want to use the 'he' point of view; it is to describe the events from a distance.

In other words, I am not involved in the narration or I am not part of the narration. e.g.:

- *She looked at the door, she entered, and then she began asking about her failure in the exam, and so on.*



So, to sum up!

The novel is narrated through the mediation of two points of view.
OR Narrative technique can be divided into two parts:

1- Subjective: when the narration is narrated with (I) point of view, for example:

- *Omar gave me a phone call.*

2- Objective: when the narration is narrated with (he/she) point of view, for example:

- *He gave Her a phone call.*

I want you to pay attention to a very important point which is:

- *The voice of the narrator is not the author's voice.*

So, do not confuse between the author's voice and the narrator's voice.

Do not confuse between 'the author' (المؤلف) and 'the narrator' (الراوي)!

For example, in the story 'First Confession', the author is *Frank O'Conner* but the narrator is the child *Jackie* (he is also a character in the short story). So, the narrator is a child but the author could not be a child.

So, it is impossible to write a novel without a narrator, i.e. we cannot have a story without a storyteller.

In this case, novelists decided to tell the story using these narrative techniques by a personified narrator with a name or without a name, i.e. the narrator could be personified or could be human but without mentioning his name.

The first possibility (or choice) the novelist has is the personified narrator. Of course, it is logical to use narrators who look like us.

What do we mean by 'personified narrator'?

From the name, the 'personified narrator' is a distinct person with defined individual human characteristics (traits).

So, when the narrator is a human being with individual human characteristics, we call him a *personified narrator*.

At this point, they give us an example:

Some narrators may even have names and detailed personal

histories, as does Nick Carraway, the narrator of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925).

This is an example of a personified narrator. So:

- 'Nick Carraway' is the narrator
- 'F. Scott Fitzgerald' is the author.

A simpler example is the story 'First Confession' because we are going to study it. In this story:

- 'Jackie' is the narrator.
- 'Frank O'Connor' is the author.

So, the role of the narrator is to narrate or tell a story. His role is to introduce characters, describe scenes and *of course* to tell us about the conflict, i.e. to be the man of the author.

So, the author always hides behind his narrator because the author cannot tell you everything about his characters, of course, because it is a fictional work.

ويجب أن تلاحظوا الفرق بين الراوي والروائي:
- الراوي (الصوت الذي يسرد لنا الأحداث) ← narrator وهو الوسيط بين القارئ و الكاتب (Mediator)
- الروائي (المؤلف) ← novelist.

Again:

Some narrators may even have names

بعض الرواة لهم أسماء

.... and detailed personal histories,

وتواريخ شخصية مفصلة

... as does Nick Carraway, the narrator of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925).

"The Great Gatsby" is considered to be one of the most important American novels in the twentieth century.

So, Nick Carraway is the narrator of the novel *The Great Gatsby* and this narrator is *personified and named narrator*.

This is the first type. Now let's see the second type:

Other narrators may just indicate to us that they are persons – perhaps by the occasional use of 'I' in their narrative – but will tell us no more about themselves than this.

بعض الرواة يُعطوننا انطباع بأنهم أشخاص، ويمكن هذا من خلال الاستخدام المتكرر أو التناوب لـ (I) ولكن لا يخبرونا بالشيء الكثير عن أحوالهم الشخصية أو ماضيهم أو أسمائهم.
This is the second type of narrators, and it is called the human anonymous narrator.

What is the meaning of 'anonymous'??

When you do not know the name of someone, you say that he is 'anonymous'. Even if you know the name only, but you do not know any other thing about that person, you also describe him as being 'anonymous'.

So, the second type of narrators is called the human anonymous narrator.

Well, how do we know that he is HUMAN although he is anonymous?!

As they are saying in the book, we can know this through the occasional, frequent use of 'I' in the narration.

- 'occasional, frequent use': الاستخدام المتكرر

Let us read on:

We thus have a continuum of possibilities:

- (i) personified named, and with a full human identity;
- (ii) human but anonymous/nameless/unknown;
- (iii) not fully comparable with any human perspective/nonhuman.

- 'continuum': variety

Here, he is listing to us the three common types of narrators; they are:

1- the personified narrator with a full human identity

أي راوي مُشخصن ويتمتع بهوية إنسانية وله اسم أي أنه ليس بنكرة أو جماد.

2- the anonymous human narrator

أي أنه بشري ولكن مجهول.

3- the not-fully comparable with any human perspective.

أي لا يمكن مقارنتها مع أي منظور إنساني أي أن الراوي قد يكون جبل أو نهر أو حيوان.

Here, with this type of narrators, we do not have any indicator that he is HUMAN. We will not have any description of the narrator as



being human.

Also, we will NOT have any frequent use of 'I' in the narration.

So, these were the three types of narrators:

(1) personified named, and with a full human identity;

(2) human but anonymous;

(3) not fully comparable with any human perspective.

وهذا التصنيف ليس له علاقة بالـ (subjective) والـ (objective).

فلا (narrator) يمكن أن يكون (personified) و (subjective) ويمكن أن يكون (personified) و (objective)، وكذلك الأمر الـ (anonymous) قد يكون (subjective) وقد يكون (objective) وهذا يعتمد على الـ (point of view) هل هي (the first person point of view) أم (the third person point of view).

(The first person point of view) could be (we) not just (I) because (I) in the plural becomes (we). (The third person point of view) could be (they) because (he and she) in the plural become (they).

Narrative technique means the one who is telling the story (the voice) and from what point of view.

If the narrator is a part of the narration, we call him 'subjective' and he is a part of the plot and he is another character in the novel, so 'subjective' plays a double role (he is the narrator and a character).

We are now on (page 25): in the next paragraph we are going to a new level to characterize the narrator's mentality or set of mind:

Many critics have found it useful to distinguish between *reliable* and *unreliable* narrators.'

- 'reliability': الموثوقية

Here, we are presented with another classification of narrators.

When we talk about a narrator, we have to describe it as being either "reliable" or "unreliable":

a) 'reliable narrator' is someone who reports the facts or events as they happened without being emotionally involved (he is not against or in favor of a certain character), he *does not change his mind* every now and then. So, his point of view is **reliable**.

b) 'unreliable narrator' is the opposite; he keeps changing his

mind every now and then.

Generally speaking:

- All *objective* narrators are *reliable*.
- All *subjective* narrators are *unreliable*.

أي أنه هناك رواية يمكن أن نصدقهم أو ننتق بهم ورواية لا يمكن الوثوق بهم، فالراوي الذي لا يتدخل في الأحكام ويدع القارئ يستنتج ما هو جيد وما هو سيئ هو الراوي الذي يمكن الوثوق به، أما الراوي الذي يتدخل ويصدر أحكام فهو غير موثوق به.

Now, we will move to another level of classification of narrators, we will have:

1- *Consistent narrator*. 2 - *Inconsistent narrator*.

Let's read:

In general we can say that a single, consistent, un-personified voice is more likely to be associated with authorial beliefs than is a personified narrator in a novel with many narrators, although of course in both cases this depends upon the attitudes expressed in and revealed by the narrative.

In what follows, we are going to focus on the idea of 'consistency'.

What do we mean by 'consistency'?

- 'consistency': أن لا تقول الشيء ونقيضه ولا تبدل مواقفك و آراءك
- 'to be consistent': أن يكون عندك مصداقية

Well, according to the book, when we have a **single narrator** (voice) → it is more likely to be **reliable**.

BUT if you have more than one narrator → maybe each one of them is giving you a different story. So, they are **not reliable**.

Follow up with me, please:

Consistency is a crucial issue here. An inconsistent narrator cannot, logically, be wholly reliable,

- 'consistency' ≠ 'inconsistency'.

إن الراوي الذي يتسم بالثبات والاستمرارية ولا يقوم بالشيء ونقيضه هو منطقياً راوي يتمتع بالمصداقية.

Consistency is a crucial issue here. An inconsistent narrator cannot, logically, be wholly reliable, although we may recognize in fiction as in life that inconsistency may be the result of a continued

and painful attempt to be truthful and accurate.

Listen carefully: I want to repeat the idea:

بمعنى أن الراوي الذي لا يبدل أفكاره بين عشية وضحاها ولا يقول دائما الشيء ونقيضه هو (reliable)، بينما الراوي المتبدل والمتقلب الآراء الذي أحيانا يُعجب بسلوك معين ثم يكرهه هو (unreliable).

So, there is a very important link, as you have seen, between 'consistency' and 'reliability':

- 'a reliable narrator' must be *consistent* narrator.

- 'unreliable narrator' is *inconsistent* narrator.

So, when the narrator gives you facts and statistics, and gives you a realistic image or event or character, it means that it is convincing and I can believe it.

With this type of narrators, there are no gaps, and the narrator is taking me very smoothly and logically from one point to the other.

Thus, we trust a narrator when there is no contradiction in the narration, and when it is very much consistent and smooth.

Let's read on. Here, we are going to have two examples about what we have been talking about:

The fact that Swift's Gulliver in his *Gulliver's Travels* seems to vary from book to book,...

So, the narrator here always changes his views depending on the episode, and that is why critics consider it as (unreliable and inconsistent).

The fact that Swift's Gulliver in his *Gulliver's Travels* seems to vary from book to book, being alternatively percipient and obtuse, blindly patriotic and unchauvinistically humanistic, warns us that we can relax into no unguarded acceptance of his statements or opinions.

So, why is Swift Gulliver considered as unreliable in his '*Gulliver's travels*'?

Notice the reason:

...being alternatively percipient and obtuse,

أحيانا يكون ذكي وأحيانا أخرى بليد.

...blindly patriotic and unchauvinistically humanistic,

أحياناً يكون لديه حس وطني عارم وأحياناً يكون إنسانياً (يتجاوز المشاعر الوطنية).
inconsistent وبالثاني unreliable إذا هذا التذبذب يجعل الراوي

So Gulliver in "Gulliver's Travels" is an example of an inconsistent and unreliable narrator.

In short:

- if the narrator changes his mind a lot then he is inconsistent.
- if the opposite taking place then his is consistent.

Let us to another level of classification of narrators, we will have:

1. **Intimate narrator** (showing emotions / راوي عاطفي)
2. **Intrusive narrator** (راوي متطفل/يقحم نفسه)

Let us move to a new idea:

Narratives can also involve such elements as complicity, intrusion, and intimacy - things instantly recognized by readers but often tricky to analyse.

What do these three terms mean?!

- 'complicity' means (التحيز/التواطؤ)
- 'intimacy' means (الحميمية)
- 'intrusion' means (أي يقحم الراوي نفسه فيما لا يعنيه). (التدخل)

So, **complicit narrator** (الراوي المتواطئ): is a bias narrator; he has no neutrality, he collaborates negatively with a character.

- **Intimate narrator:** when the narrator is emotionally involved in the events or characters so that he cannot narrate or report the events objectively. ('Here we have positive relationship')

- **Intrusive narrator:** is one who crossed the boundaries of narration. So, intrusive narrators speak on behalf of the authors. i.e. the author may use the narrator as a medium to express his own views, or he may leave comments in the narration. (Here we have 'negative relationship')

For example, when a narrator talks about Sally:

As she dialled the number, I noticed that her fingernails were painted emerald green...

Listen to me reader, Sally is a very bad woman....



Notice that the author speaks to the reader through the narrator "Listen to me reader, ...". In this case the narrator is intrusive.

Well, let's think together of a possible relation between these three elements of narration and the subjective narrator:

A **subjective narrator** (when the narrator is a character in the narration) is usually **complicit or bias and unreliable**, in addition to be **intrusive, intimate and inconsistent narrator**.

Now, let us move to the conclusion and it is, as I said earlier, very important:

It is, in conclusion, important to be able to see narrative techniques in their historical context and development, as well as appreciating the 'internal' technical reasons for developments in narrative technique.

This means that there are 'external' reasons in addition to 'internal' reasons in relation to the developments to the narrative technique.

Now, let us see how these 'external' and 'internal' reasons have effects in the development of the narrative techniques:

The rise of the epistolary novel

- 'epistolary novel' means (رواية الرسائل)

Well, the first one is the rise of epistolary novel.

What is the meaning of 'epistolary novel'?

- an 'epistolary novel' is a novel which relies on writing letters like *Clarissa*.

في رواية الرسائل تكون الصفحات كلها عبارة عن رسائل.

...in the eighteenth century cannot be understood apart from the much greater importance of letter-writing at that time,...

Well, 'letter writing' is when the writer uses letters. Every time I want to communicate, I use letters. This is of course a narrative technique.

So, the external factor here, during the eighteenth century, 'letter writing' was more popular. So, novelists used this and started to use it in their novels.

This is number one, and the example is "Clarissa" by Samuel

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وهذا النوع من الروايات يكون لدينا (subjective narrator) حتماً.

In our example, "Clarissa" is revealing secrets about her personal private life, so the narrator here is "subjective."

The Algerian novelist (احلام مستغانمي) published a novel based on SMS technique. So we see that the novel and the narrative technique affected by communication means and technology and other factors.

Let us continue with a very important idea:

... and the emergence of the stream of consciousness novel in the twentieth century...

Well, another example is the 'stream of consciousness novel' which means (رواية تيار الوعي).

إذا رواية الرسائل في القرن الثامن عشر أثرت في شيوع هذا النمط من الكتابة. أما في القرن العشرين ظهرت هذه الطريقة (رواية تيار الوعي). في هذه الرواية تجلس الشخصية وحيدة و تستسلم لمخيلتها و أفكارها.

... and the emergence of the stream of consciousness novel in the twentieth century has to be related to the development of modern psychology and the increasing interest in mental operations that accompanies it.

- 'modern psychology' means علم النفس الحديث

إذا شيوع رواية تيار الوعي له علاقة بتطور ما يسمى علم النفس الحديث...

... and the increasing interest in mental operations that accompanies it.

... والاهتمام المتزايد بالعمليات الذهنية والفكرية وظهور منهج التحليل النفسي الذي ابتدعه سيغموند فرويد.

Let me read on:

The following factors are all important in assessing the significance of a particular narrative technique:

هناك مجموعة من العوامل التي أثرت في تقنيات السرد:

1. Changes in the dominant modes of human communication ...

التبدلات التي تحدث في الأنماط السائدة في التواصل الإنساني. حيث بدأ الإنسان بالتواصل بالحمام الزاجل ثم بالتلغراف ثم وصل أخيراً إلى الانترنت و شبكات الاتصالات الخلوية وهذا كان له تأثير كبير على تطور أسلوب السرد في الرواية.

Notice this again:

1. **Changes in the dominant modes of human communication** (think of the enormous effect that the telephone has had on us and that the computer is having).

إذا لنفكر في الأثر الهائل الذي تركه اختراع الهاتف في حياتنا كما نتذكر أيضاً لتطور الكمبيوتر. فالتأثير يمتد إلى كل ما يحدث تطور في مجال التواصل البشري الإنساني بمشعر و به و يوظفه في رواية ما!!

2. **The effect of different world-views, philosophies, and ideologies ...**

تأثير بعض الإيديولوجيات الأخرى كالماركسية (Marxism) والراسمالية (capitalism) والعولمة (globalization) الخ..

- 'world-views' means (عالمية) أفكار كونية
- 'philosophies' means (فلسفات)
- 'ideologies' means (إيديولوجيات)

Every ideology or philosophy emerged over time (class struggle, psycho analysis, surrealism, etc.) has affected the narrative technique.

Let us read on:

... loss of belief in such a God seems to have been paralleled by a disenchantment with the possibilities of narrative omniscience).

انتهت حقبة الراوي الذي يعرف كل شيء. أي أن الأمور أصبحت نسبية وأصبحت معرفة الراوي نسبية أيضاً. أي أن التبدلات التي طرأت على إيديولوجيات وأفكار وطرق تفكير المجتمع لا بد من أن تؤثر على تقنيات السرد القصصي.

Let us move to the third factor:

3. **Changes in readership patterns and habits** (it is perhaps harder to feel intimate with a larger, more amorphous and anonymous set of readers - or to feel at ease with readers mainly of the opposite sex from oneself).

Nowadays, you cannot keep using (he) to refer to man, so you change your language by saying (he) or (she), because the word (man) one of its meaning is (إنسان) and this includes (male) and (female).

لكن لماذا يمكننا أن نقول (كان الإنسان قادراً على) ولا يمكننا أن نقول (كانت الإنسان قادرة على)؟

Our language still looks down upon the female.

Now, the last factor:



4. Larger changes in human life and modes of consciousness (think of the growth of urban living, of mass communication, of modern science and politics).

As you noticed, number four is similar to number one.

نفي البداية تحدثنا عن (modes of communication) والآن سنتكلم عن (modes of consciousness).

- 'think of' means (أو تأمل في) فِكر
- 'urban living' means (الحياة المدنية)
- 'mass communication' means (الاتصال الجماهيري)

Those who are in big cities like Cairo, Paris, New York etc. tend to develop consciousness differently from those who are in small villages. We don't say those who are in cities are better, but the type of consciousness they reveal or express tends to be different. Those who live in cities are more nervous because cities are crowded; while those who live in small towns could be calm.

- Modes of consciousness: نماذج الوعي

Any writer should take into consideration these four factors while he is writing his novel.

So, there are **FOUR** factors which have affected the development of the narrative technique:

1. Changes in the modes of human communication.
2. Ideological changes.
3. Changes in Readership.
4. Changes in the modes of consciousness.

With this, we have covered the main ideas in relation to the narrative technique. Next time, we will talk about **CHARACTERS**, so prepare the pages 30, 31, 32, and 33.

«THANK YOU»



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