

Similar Narrative Techniques in the Novels of Scott and Sharar

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Introduction

Narrative techniques form an important aspect of the novel as they play a vital role in making the novel interesting and coherent. Scott and Sharar are the pioneers of historical novel in their respective countries. In this paper I have explored some similar narrative techniques used by both the writers in their novels. It is a study of the use of Dialogue, soliloquy, epistolary method and scene depiction both the writers have employed these techniques very effectively in their novels.

The narrative technique of dialogue is used equally by both Scott and Sharar. They regard it as an important vehicle for presenting the various types of events and traits of character. For Scott dialogue is the supreme means for the revelation of characters and unfolding of events. The action is contrived simply to give the characters an opportunity to speak out. The characters put all of themselves into what they say. Their dispositions, moods, memories and philosophies are revealed through their dialogues. Scott knows that his main strength lies in the artistic depiction of dialogue as he shows in an ironic imaginary dialogue between Dick Tinto, a painter and himself at the beginning of **The Bride of Lammermoor**.

“Your characters”, Dick tells him, “make too much use of gabbox; they patter too much... there is nothing in the whole pages but mere chat and dialogue”; the author replies “the ancient philosopher was wont to say “speak that I may know thee” and how it is possible for an author to introduce his personal dramatis to his readers in a more interesting and effectual manner than by the dialogue in which each is represented as supporting his own appropriate character” (1)

Though Scott has defended himself here yet in an anonymous review of his own novels he criticizes this excessive use of dialogue and insists that

“The practice especially pushed to the extent we have noticed, is the principal cause of flimsiness and incoherent texture which his great admirers are compelled to complain” (2)

Due to the lack of a proper and coherent plot Scott has to make excessive use of the dialogue technique in his novels.

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David Daiches has paid tribute to Scott in the matter of dialogue construction he says that

“Scott’s novel lives by its dialogue, the magnificent pedantic monologue of old Buck the racy Scots speech of Edie Ochiltree, the chattering gossips in the post offices are the examples” (3)

Thus no action, in his novels, comes to life until some body talks about it whether in the sardonic tones of Andren Fair service, the vernacular declamations of Meg Merrilies, or the shrewd observations of Edie Ochiltree (The Birde of hammeemoor). It is also to be noticed that the dialogue is at its best when it is in the speech of humble people. Scott could make them live by simply opening their mouths.

Sharar’s novels also present fine specimens of dialogue writing but just like Scott sometimes his lengthy dialogues effect the flow of story. The language and dialogues of **Malik-ul Aziz Varjana** are not as perfect and mature as in his later novels It seems that in this novel Sharar has not used dialogue in order to project the personality of his characters. In the same way he has not succeeded in presenting the inner conflicts and psychological and emotional condition of his characters in his first novel. Through his dialogues Aziz reveals himself as a common man. Even the speech of Salahuddin does not project his great personality. The reason for this defect is that Sharar remains under the pressure of being purposeful while writing the dialogues of his characters. According to Mumtaz Manglori the dialogues of **Malik ul Aziz Varjana** are important because for the first time dialogues become part of the development of the plot in urdu novel and reflect the spirit of Sharar’s age and there is the same logic and relationship in them that marked the religious debates of sharar’s time (4)

Firdous-i-Barin can be regarded as the best novel in every aspect. Sharar has enriched it with literary and learned dialogues; especially the dialogues of Sheikh Ali Vajudi are perfectly suited to his personality, nature and temperament. The conversation between Vajudi and Hussain is a case in point Vajudi can read human nature and psychology. He wants Hussain to kill his (Hussain’s) uncle and benefactor. His dialogue with Hussain serves as a potent catalyst. He wants to develop a blind faith for himself in Hussain so that Hussain can not refrain from obeying his Murshad Hussain says:

Hussain: Undoubtedly I shall obey you in this manner but should the sins and bad deeds also be performed with the same devotion

Sheikh: (angrily, with red eyes) Do you suspect that Murshad will order you to commit bad deeds?

Hussain: (Scared and exhibiting moral weakness) But it is possible that Mureed may regard that act as sinful.

Sheikh: yes it is possible but its internal aspect is not sinful and results are determined only by the internal.

- Hussain:** But only from that internal which is in the heart of the doer. When I have bad intentions, the result will be according to them.
- Sheikh:** (eyes red with anger) will the intention of the Sheikh ever be suspective in your opinion and do you refuse to accept the original secret? (Pertaining to the virtue of Sheikh)
- Hussain:** Not at all but I argue only to seek the satisfaction of the heart and may God not show me the day when I doubt the intention of the Sheikh)” (5)

Thus the taming is complete on the part of the Sheikh and now he can exploit Hussain for his nefarious designs. Hence the dialogues of **Firdous-i-Barin** have a great artistic merit. They make a great contribution in the development of plot and building of atmosphere. A renowned critic Awais Ahmad Adeb, however criticizes Sharar’s dialogue technique and complains that Sharar has not written about events of every day life in his dialogue; instead he has concentrated on the debate about religion and philosophy (6)

Contrary to the practice of Scott, Sharar writes brief literary sentences. Some characters speak just one line. On some occasions Sharar makes use of verses. Arabic and Persian expressions are also common in his novels. These expressions lend heaviness to the sentence. That is why critics like Sayyad Waqar Azim tend to think that Sharar fails as a dialogue writer and his characters speak the language of the novelist himself. (17)

Thus both the novelists make the best use of the dialogue in their novels. In Scott the excessive use of this technique compensates for the weakness of plot in his novels, while in Sharar it strengthens the plot and contributes a great deal in the development of the story.

The Technique of soliloquy is used by Scott and Sharar on a few occasions in their novels. It informs the reader about the inner feelings of the character. Scott has used this technique in **Fortunes of Nigel**. Nigel delivers a significant soliloquy on his status and actions.

“She (Martha Trabois) is right and has taught me a lesson I will profit by. I have been, through my life, who leant upon others for that assistance which it is more truly noble to derive from my own exertions ... Whatever good or bad has been fallen me hath arisen out of the agency of others, not from my own ... Nigel olifaiunt, from this moment, shall owe his safety success and honour to his own exertions. I will write it down in my tablets, in her very word. “The wise man is his own best assistant” (8)

This soliloquy reveals the inner feelings of Nigel and also indicates the growth in his character from a passive to an active hero. It can be noticed that the use of Soliloquy

gives a dramatic style to Scott's novels. Another example can be cited from **The Bride of Lammermoor**. Towards the end of the novel, in the belief that Wolf's crag has caught fire, Edgar goes to watch the final ruin of his only remaining property. Instinctively he is disgusted at the attitude of the boys from the village who also run to watch the spectacle. He says to himself

“And these are the sons of my father's vassals” he said, of a men bound, both by law and gratitude, to follow our steps through battle and fire and flood; and now the destruction of their Leige Lord's house is but a holiday sight to them”(9)

Thus this method makes Scott's novels lively and dramatic. Sharar has used this method in his novel **Firdous-i-Barin** After murdering Imam Najmuddin Nishapuri, Hussain feels guilty and reflects over the saying of his Murshad that Mureed is only a life less tool in the hands of Murshad

“If these spiritual scholars are right in saying that reward and punishment is the name of the pleasure and sorrow which develop in one's mind as a result of one's own conscience and appreciations and condemnations of one's own actions by one's heart, then no one but the doer himself is responsible for his actions. For instance my deed may be good in other's eyes, but if I think it bad and condemnable, I shall feel guilty in my mind and if that condemnation is a punishment according to Shariat terminology, then I cannot escape hell and chastisement” (10) (Translation).

Hence the soliloquy reflects inner confusions and conflicts in Hussains mind. Hence both the novelists have used this technical mode to present the inner feelings of the characters, it also helps to reveal the inner traits of the character.

Scott and Sharar have utilized the epistolary method in their novels. Scott inherited it from Fielding and Richardson and used it profusely in one of his most important novels **Red gauntlet**. The first thirteen chapters of the novel are epistolary, consisting of a series of letters exchanged between Darsie, on his visits through the Scottish countryside and Alan in Ediuburgh. These chapters are headed Letter I, Letter II and soon. After letter XIII Scott changes his method of presentation to chapters. Because of this kind of structure Earnest Baker regards this novel as “irregular, easy going and almost haphazard than any of Scott's novels” (11) It is evident from Baker's comment that Scott failed to employ the epistolary technique successfully which had been effectively and popularly employed by Richardson and Fielding. For this reason he did not use it in any other of his novels. In **The Heart of Midlothian** he has included the letters of Jeanie Deans and Davie Deans but they are not contributive to any development of theme.

Sharar used the epistolary technique in two of his novels, **Juya-i-Haq** and **Firdous-i-Barin**. **Juya-i-Haq** covers the long history of pre-Islamic Arab days of Prophet Muhammad (peace is upon him) and reaches up to the Second Caliph Hazrat Umer's days. It starts from the story of a young man, Mah Banu who wanders in search of truth. He meets Bahira, a great Christian scholar, and his follower Istafanus. Bahira predicts the Prophet hood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) he asks Mah Banu (who was named Salman Farsi by the Holy Prophet after his conversion to Islam) to go and meet the Holy Prophet Salman Farsi informs Bahira about his various adventures through the letters. After accepting Islam he informs Bahira about the inspiring deeds of the Holy Prophet. Thus the whole story is told in the form of letters. Commenting upon the epistolary mode of this novel Ali Ahmad Fatimi says that by composing the story through letters an effort has been made to make it interesting and to impart to it the characteristics of a novel. The author has been successful at some places but basically it is more a history and less a novel. (12)

In **Firdous-i-Barin** Hussain receives the letters of his beloved from the so-called paradise created by the Batinia sect. through those letters he is instructed to perform some sinful deeds. Letters are the only source of communication between Hussain and Zamurad after their separation. One of the letters of Zamurad is addressed to Balghan Khatoon in which she exposes the nefarious designs of Batinia sect and helps Balghan Khatoon to take a serious action against the sect. Contrary to Scott, Sharar's epistles have helped him to create coherence, sequence and interest in the events of story. This technique has helped him to throw an illuminating light on the atrocities of the Batinia Sect as well as the political and moral conditions of those days.

Scott and Sharar excel in the art of Scene depiction. The pictorial quality of their novels is evident from their modes of describing the scenes. Scott gives an objective description of the landscape in his novels. In other words his scene depictions are more reader-conscious and less self-conscious. When he pauses to describe a scene, he either takes the attitude of a practical farmer or that of the gentleman of taste. He has a taste to admire the picturesque and at the same time cannot refrain from describing the natural beauty of "wild scenes" In **Guy Mannering** and **The Pirate** Scott describes the desolate country. In **The Pirate** he evokes the ruggedness of the Shetlands but feels essential to point out that only a particular weather produces:

"That variety of light and shade which often gives life to a bare and enclosed scene, for the time at least, a species of charm approaching to the varieties of a cultivated and planted country" (13)

The most illuminating example of Scott's mastery as a painter of the scenes can be quoted from **The Monastery** He describes his own Border Country:

"The mountains, as they would have been called in England ... rose abruptly over the little glen, here presenting the grey face of a rock,

from which the turf had been peeled by the torrents, and there displaying patches of woods and crops which has escaped the waste of the cattle and the sheep and which feathering naturally up the beds of empty torrents, or occupying the concave recesses of the bank, gave at once beauty and variety to the landscape. Above scattered woods rose the hill in barren, but purple majesty; the dark rich hue particularly in autumn, contrasting beautifully with the thickets of oak and birch, the mountains ashes and thorns, the alders and quivering aspens, which chequered and varied the descent, and not less with the dark green and velvet turf, which composed the level part of the narrow glen” (14)

The interesting and beautiful language shows Scott’s adherence to the Romantic period to which he belonged. The description is highly informative. The underlying interest in agriculture is also noticeable which signifies the interest in the human usefulness of the landscape. He also emphasizes the loneliness of the scene.

Angus and Calder have also appreciated Scott for his great skill in the depiction of scenes

“In fact to the roles of the historian and entertainer, Scott added that of the travel writer using the jargon of the day to do the job performed by coloured photographs in a modern travel agent’s brochure” (15)

Hence Scott’s greatness as an excelled portrayer of scenes and landscapes is evident from the various scenes of his novels. These scenes are full of visual, auditory and tactile images and provide an empirical characteristic to his novels.

In the same way Sharar’s artistry as a great painter of scene is evident from his various novels. Though Sharar has adopted many techniques of English prose in the mode of Urdu prose and pictorial quality in one of them, yet his prose especially in the matter of scene depiction is more illuminating and impressive than that of Scott. The scenes in his novels are more varied and have greater vitality as compared to Scott’s. There are three types of scenes in his novels, natural scenes, scenes of meetings and courts and war scenes. In this matter he is far superior to his Urdu contemporaries like Nazir Ahmad and Sarshar. He makes use of portfolio and illuminates the scene by a proper selection of words. He creates an appropriate combination of similes, metaphors, symbols, images and allegory. With the help of these poetic techniques he succeeds in giving life to a scene. Skillful handling of the scenes serves to highlight many events in the novels. The description of scenes matches the events and characters and one cannot be excluded from the other. This mastery increases the artistic and literary essence of his novels. He presents the scenes of the beautiful buildings, ancient castles, waterfalls, streams, mountains and garden in such an artistic manner that even a harsh critic like Ahsan Farooqi pays tribute to him. Talking about the first chapter of **Firdous-**

i-Barin he comments that the first chapter creates a new Romantic interest and new life has been infused into the novel. (16). The best examples of Sharar's sublimity in the pictorial and poetic description of a scene can be cited from his **Firdous-i-Barin**

“The Scenes of spring and the attractions of the flower season have vanished. A few flowers of the last season still linger and some where their lover, the nightingale, can also be heard. These mountains are not dry and barren like those of Arabia but they are full of shady trees and forests and provide respite and privacy to the lovers of nature. And where there were the clump of trees, there nature has provided the green and soft carpet of grass (17) (translation)

Sharar's mastery as a portrayer of scene is at its peak when he gives a verbal picture of paradise in Firdous-i-Barin

“Golden and silver thornes are spread every where beside the canals in these gardens. They are covered with silky and flowery cloths. People are sitting comfortably with charming and bewitchingly beautiful girls and are enjoying the carefree blessings of paradise. And relishing and domesticated birds pick the fruit from the trees and fly after putting it before them. These birds also bring stacks of kababs covered in cloth and provide these people all the sources enjoyment” (18) (Translation)

According to Maulana salahuddin Ahmad, Sharar excelled in the projection of a scene. Sometimes he prepared the appropriate background and atmosphere for the events of a certain chapter and his intelligent reader could guess the situation of events from the study of the atmosphere. (19) Pyam Shah Jahan Puri draws attention to Sharar's genius in the matter of creating horror scenes and says that while presenting them he makes such an appropriate choice of words that each word leaves an impression of horror on the reader's mind (20) these comments prove Sharar's proficiency in the depiction of all kinds of scenes. The example of his subtlety in drawing a verbal picture of a horror scene scene can be quoted from Mansoor Mohna

“Sindh that remote desert where the boundaries of India come to an end and Bahuchistan's mountains begin exists in a howling wilderness ... Many corpses ar lying on one side. They have rotten due to the sun. Vultures, the traditional guests of these corpses, are howering around them” (21) (Translation)

Thus Sharar in a greater expert of Scene depiction than Scott as he takes into account every detail of atmosphere and presents it to the reader with all its illuminating details.

Thus it can be concluded that the contribution of Scott and Sharar is incredible as far as the use of narrative techniques discussed above are concerned. This method has enabled them to enlighten, and enliven the dry facts of history with the artistic technique of dialogue, soliloquy epistle and pictorial quality. The lively presentation of history on their part has established the genre of historical novel for the forthcoming generations.

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