Time Shifts in ʿĀlim's "The Great Serpent": Narrative Fragmentation Mirroring Historical Gentrification

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ABSTRACT

This study highlights the time-shattering narrative technique employed in Rajāʾ ʿĀlim's short story "Al-Aṣalah" "[The Great Serpent]," (1994) in light of Genette's theory in his *Narrative Discourse* (1972). It argues that ʿĀlim's deviation from the linear chronological order is not merely an aesthetic convention, but a mirroring of the fragmentary world outside the text, as perceived by the Saudi Arabian writer. With the modernization and gentrification of ʿĀlim's hometown, the holy city of Makkah, the author finds herself witnessing a time as bewildering, and as fragmentary as the narrative time employed in her short story. The methodological approach of this study is twofold. First, a narratological reading investigates the nonlinear relationship between "story time" and "narrative time," pinpointing techniques of broken chronology, or time shifts, as described by Genette: *duration, order,* and *frequency*. Then, a textual analysis validates ʿĀlim's use of each of these time-shift techniques on the narrative level to recount specific events on the story level. The findings of this study suggest the adequacy of employing this specific "shattered" narrative technique to interpret the resulting chaos outside the world of the text. Writing and reading are therefore acts of resistance: not only against narrative displacement, but figuratively speaking, against historical amnesia.

Keywords: Genette; narratology; Rajāʾ ʿĀlim; Saudi women writers; the short story in Saudi Arabia

INTRODUCTION

> *Everything I know about Mecca was told to me by my father and my mother. It's all oral tradition. That's my source. Everything which used to be there is now gone. The street isn't there anymore. Nor is the house of my grandfather. The house was still there when I started to write the book [The Dove's Necklace], but there was already a red sign on it, which meant it was going to be demolished. It was a beautiful house on a hill, and I was very shocked when I saw that red sign. By the time I'd finished writing the book, not only had the house gone, the whole hill had gone too.*
>
> *(2001, para. 12)*

The above is an elegiac message that ʿĀlim has stated in her interview with Irmgard Burner, following the publication of her novel *The Dove's Necklace* (which won her the prestigious Arabic Booker Prize in 2011). ʿĀlim's repetitive requiems to lost spatial landmarks in Makkah colors her literary production. Her mission as a writer is obviously fueled by her love for, and loyalty to her beloved hometown which she strives to resurrect through celebrating memory safeguarded through oral history. She documents landmarks, myths, legends, folktales, cults, and rituals related to Makkah in an oxymoronic mixture that is at once melancholic but celebratory.

This study aims to steer away from focusing on ʿĀlim's depiction of the local zeitgeist, for its own sake, which is an area that had been exhausted by researchers. It is a study that aspires to fill

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more than one research gap, offering a narratological examination of Raja ʿĀlim's short story "The Great Serpent" (1994). It, therefore, sheds the spotlight on Raja ʿĀlim's narratological strategies, and her skillful handling of the short story as a genre: two areas of inquiry that deserve more attention when discussing ʿĀlim's oeuvre within the Arabic critical corpus.

ʿĀlim writes in a time of swift, unprecedented socioeconomic changes in Saudi Arabia following the oil boom of the 1970s and 1980s. The thriving economy resulting from the revenue of fossil fuels manifested itself in ubiquitous and fast-paced developments. One sad result of modernization was the ruthless eradication of vernacular urbanism and historical edifices. This led to the displacement and scattering of the inhabitants who resided in the heart of the old city to free spaces for high-rises, commercial spaces, and offices for the newly emerging technocrats. The metamorphosed city took on a new identity with newly emerging *luxury* religious tourism. The architecture of the holy city which was based on Islamic philosophies of privacy which is shaped by the local and national identity is suddenly subverted and replaced by urban spaces favoring visibility, access, and commercialism, which creates an inherent conflict in the newly formed spaces, as Aylin Orbaşlı (2018) remarks.

Writers like ʿĀlim are direct victims of this newly spatial eradication and the resulting sentiments of rootlessness, as obviously implied by her reference to the disappearance of her grandfather's house. Like ʿĀlim, many citizens of the sacred city are haunted by the curse of modernity and the unfamiliar newly formed metropolitan spaces. Signs of modernity and capitalism invaded the city with fast food outlets, glitzy neon billboards, and luxury brand names shouting extravagant consumerism. Jerome Taylor (2014) states that 95% of the 1000-year-old buildings in Makkah and Madina (the first and second holy Muslim cities in Saudi Arabia, consecutively) were eradicated in the past 20 years. Taylor affirms that: "Bulldozers are quickly erasing Islamic archaeological and historical relics and replacing them with modern-day amenities such as glimmering skyscrapers, multi-story shopping malls and luxury hotels." *The Guardian* wrote, in 2016, that 13 of Mecca's 15 ancient neighborhoods have been bulldozed and replaced by urban commercial spaces and extravagant hotels.

The spiritual city is commodified and gentrified. The transformation of Makkah, from the serene, sanctified village-like space into a buzzing business hub is the epitome of the conquest of Mammon and commercialization of spirituality, sometimes in the most provocative manner. Towering over the holy mosque, stands the newly-built tallest edifice in Makkah: the clock tower that resembles Big Ben, featuring a luxurious hotel and exclusive commercial spaces. But the price of building it was the destruction of Ajyad historical fortress, which many considered worthy of UNESCO World Heritage protection. Its destruction created international waves of fury. The BBC wrote on 9 January 2002: "The 220-year-old al-Ajyad fortress was demolished last week to make way for a $533m project to house pilgrims to Mecca."

ʿĀlim's resistance is twofold: first, she strives to preserve the historical and collective memory of the place by documenting exterminated spaces insinuating their strong connection to the local identity and the character of the space; second, she employs a fragmentary, shattered narrative technique to reflect the resulting void and turbulence following the erosion of one's familiar setting. The anarchistic time-shattering strategies in her narrative mirror the turbulent, blurring background she is witnessing. The gentrification of the holy space transforms the local consciousness of one's own identity and sense of belonging. This uprootedness is translated through the displaced and scattered story events recounted through shattered narrative techniques. ʿĀlim's narrative connects the private with the public and portrays a setting in which fragmentation is the key, and the personal becomes inherently the historical (and vice versa). This study

historicizes the private by linking time shifts at the narrative level, with historical transformations beyond the boundaries of the text. The "personal is political," as Simone de Beauvoir famously affirms, and this is exhibited through a narratological analysis of "The Great Serpent," focusing on the relationship between the time of story and that of narrative. The narrator's microcosmic personal transformation (within the text) echoes the macrocosm of alteration in the larger historical and geographical frames in the world outside the text. ʿĀlim's narrative embodies the authenticity of literary representation, as she herself is a Saudi writer, and the text is depicted from an indigenous point of view that belongs to the time, place, and people represented.

My argument makes use of Genette's theory in his *Narrative Discourse* (1972) to examine the narratological shifts in ʿĀlim's story. These narrative shifts connote "displacement" and create effects of volatility on the narrative level, which I argue mimics the effects of gentrification outside the world of the text. The argument contends that the fragmentary narrative technique of the story is not simply an aesthetic convention, but a reflection of the unsettled, anarchic world that the writer witnesses outside the text. This is followed by a textual analysis that rationalizes ʿĀlim's employment of specific time shift techniques (duration, order, or frequency) to recount precise events at the story level, and finally, time shifts are linked to the gentrification theme which operates in the background.

Linking gentrification to the broken narrative technique contextualizes the local Saudi experience within the wider global contemporary setting. Other Saudi writers have discussed the effects of gentrification on the Saudi contemporary consciousness, such as Ghada ʿAbboud, who indirectly alludes to the results of gentrification on the local inhabitants by comparing the northern modernized part of Jeddah to the poorer south in her novel *Bipolar* (2018). The closest text that could be compared to ʿĀlim short story in terms of the effect of gentrification on the narrative technique is ʿAbdou Khāl's novel *Tarmi Bisharar* (2010), which presents unsettled narrative shifting between the present, past and future. Employing triggers such as images, newspaper clippings, collages, and handwritten letters, Khāl's narrator digs deep into his memory and activates his "stream of consciousness," juxtaposing puzzle pieces that finally expose a dreadful image: a clandestine, grotesque perception of the Saudi subculture. But again, the complex temporal element and its connection to gentrification tends to be subordinate in comparison to the amplified political messages the text encompasses.

In this study gentrification is applied to the local Saudi context, as the narrator of ʿĀlim's story laments the transformation of the holy city of Makkah, bulldozing its historical landmarks and creating a void that is being robustly filled by extravagant high-rise hotels and commercial zones. The space in Makkah has been effaced with the demolition of many natural geographical and topographical landmarks, such as mountains (Jabal Omar), historical edifices (Dar Al-Arqam School), and religious relics (the 17th-century portico of the Holy Mosque), to count a few examples. Countless private habitats had been destroyed for commercialization and urban development. In an obvious way, gentrification for the purposes of monetization of space stands as the antithesis of the spirituality of the religious space of Makkah and the spiritual dogma that enforces human equality. The word gentrification itself holds a divisive rhetorical concept, as it is derived from "gentry" a historical term describing persons of a high social status. First popularized in 1964 by the British sociologist Ruth Glass, gentrification described the influx of middle-class individuals into London, displacing the former working-class residents to live in their neighborhoods (Glass, n.p.). Cambridge Dictionary defines gentrification as "the process by which a place, especially part of a city, changes from being a poor area to a richer one, where people from a higher social class live" (Cambridge, n.p.).

Recent debates in gentrification literature have highlighted the globalization of this phenomenon throughout different parts of the world because of urbanization or modernization strategies (Smith, 2002; Smith & Derken, 2002). Saudi Arabia has a unique case within this context. Abu Lughod examines the urban development in the region observing that: "The Middle East has its own complexities within the literature of urban development. Of particular note is the discontinuity and disjuncture in the architectural and urban landscapes in the majority of cities that fall within the geographical and cultural boundaries of the region, which are historically linked with Islamic values and culture" (Abu Lughod, 1971). Cities like Makkah and Al-Madinah have undergone gentrification where "massive changes have occurred as a result of contact with modernity" (Amirahmadi & Razavi, 1993: 30). Studies on gentrification have been attempting to find empirical evidence attesting its effects on human displacement (Freeman, 2006). This study aims to look at this link from an artistic point of view, studying the impact of gentrification on narrative and temporal dislocations in texts, as represented by writers witnessing urban renewal.

ʿĀLIM'S OBSESSION WITH "TIME"

The critical corpus on ʿĀlim's work often focuses on the element of s*pace* rather than *time* in her work. This is justifiable given that Makkah plays a central role in almost all ʿĀlim's literary production. Critics such as Manal Almehaidly (2020) romanticize Makkah in ʿĀlim's *The Dove's Necklace* as an engendered space in which the female subject strives to find a room of her own. Elisabeth Vauthier, (2019) investigates how the space of Makkah inspires multiple identities in ʿĀlim's work. Agreeing with the hegemony of this space, Kholoud Al-Harthy, (2016) argues that Makkah, in ʿĀlim's work, is the purveyor of discourse: its streets presume a heroic status and acquire narrative authority. Loay Khalil (2008), likewise, investigates the sanctified power of the Makkan space in controlling the narrative of ʿĀlim's novel *Sidi Wahdaana* (1998).

ʿĀlim's infatuation with time cuts across her oeuvre right from her early production in journalism in the 1980s with her column in *Al-Riyadh* newspaper titled "The Sand Clock." This title reflects, as Saddeka Arebi ascertains: "ʿĀlim's consciousness of the dimension of time in human existence" (1994, p.111). ʿĀlim's play *Al-Raqs ʿAla Sinn Al-Shawkah* [Dancing on the Tip of the Thorn,] presents a narrator whose age freezes at thirty-three years old, an age well-known in Islamic tradition to be that of people in heaven who enjoy everlasting youth, defying the power of time. Many of ʿĀlim's novels employ creative reconstruction of narrative times including *Ṭouq Al-Hamām* [*The Dove's Necklace*], which won ʿĀlim the International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2011, is a requiem for historical Makkah: an imaginary homeland, whose relics are rapidly vanishing. We could safely say that ʿĀlim's literary production, in general, resists succumbing to a linear, chronological narrative order; there is not a conventional plot, but a "panorama," as Tom McDonough calls it, describing the thread that ties the events in her stories (2007, p.ix).

Time, and the change it imposes, inform ʿĀlim's philosophy as a writer. In her interview with Irmgard Berner in 2011, ʿĀlim expresses her deep grief about the gentrification razing ancient Makkah, a melancholy also shared by the voice of her narrator in "The Great Serpent." "They are leading the city to another identity," ʿĀlim bemoans in the interview: "to that of a city of skyscrapers made of glass and steel. The old Mecca only lives on in my books" (para.13). In the same interview, ʿĀlim declares that she dedicates her novel, *The Dove's Necklace* to old Makkah. She calls the novel "an elegy," emphasizing: "I wrote it out of sadness, because I'm angry about these changes. At the end of the book everything was destroyed" (para. 14).

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Yet, the significant role of *time* in ʿĀlim's narrative has never taken is due worth of research or critical acclaim. The rare references to time handling in ʿĀlim's work shows how unenthusiastically it had been received by commentators. Critics observe that her stories resist succumbing to a linear, chronological narrative order; there is no plot, beginnings, or endings in the conventional standard way, but a "panorama," as Tom McDonough calls it, describing the thread that ties the events of her tales (2007, p. ix). This may explain the reluctance of many researchers to approach her work from this viewpoint. ʿĀli Al-Qurashi, amongst other critics, find ʿĀlim's stories fragmentary in an unattractive way (2005, p. 877).

Another gap in research appears when trying to find critical work that specifically examine the narrative techniques of ʿĀlim. Many works focus, instead, on other areas in her oeuvre, whether thematic or theoretical. For example, some critics focus on the linguistic (and related thematic) analysis of her texts observing their complexity and obscurity, as argued by Su ʿād Al-Manāʿ (2008, p. 273), Saddeka Arebi (1994, p. 263), and Awaḍ Al-Qarni (1994, p. 263). Some critics examine her work from a theoretical feminist point of view, with studies such as that of Nojoud Al-Hawamda (2017), Laila Al-Sharqi (2016), and Miriam Cooke (2008). Others are inspired to examine the cultural, historical, or anthropological sides of ʿĀlim's work, as researched by Amira El-Zein (2017), and Abd Al-Rahman Al-Wahhabi, (2005) among others.

There is one significant study that investigates ʿĀlim's work from a narratological view by Hager Ben Driss (2005), yet it focuses on a different scope and a different text (her novel *Khātam*), arguing that the sanctified space of Makkah (again centralized) generates narrative strategies that elude censorship. As for gentrification in relation to ʿĀlim's work, it is very rarely researched. One noteworthy article by Sanna Dhahir (2016) investigates gentrification, but from a different viewpoint. It argues that through her creative work, ʿĀlim preserves the demolished history, geography, and heritage of Makkah (and space is magnified once more).

As for the question of examining gentrification and its effect on the narrative level (rather than the thematic level) in ʿĀlim's work, there is an obvious gap in research that needs to be addressed. For this purpose, this study aims to fill more than one gap: first it highlights the importance of *time* in ʿĀlim's work, proposing an innovative framework that benefits from, but enlarges, the previously established research focusing on *place*. Second, it focuses on the narratological side of ʿĀlim's work which is an area seriously under-researched in the Arabic literary critical corpus. Third, it links the shattered narrative technique in the story to the gentrified, turbulent world outside the text arguing that it is an organic mirroring of it.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TIME IN NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Time, as utilized by ʿĀlim is a basic element in the study of narratology. Janos Laszlo affirms that: "narratives are always about events taking place in time" (2008, p.16). Similarly arguing, Jerome Burner explains that: "a narrative is an account of events taking place over time. It is irreducibly durative" (1991, p.6). Narrative analysis, according to David Garson is the: "analysis of a chronologically told story, with a focus on how elements are sequenced, why some elements are evaluated differently from others, how the past shapes perceptions of the present, how the present shapes perceptions of the past, and how both shape perceptions of the future".

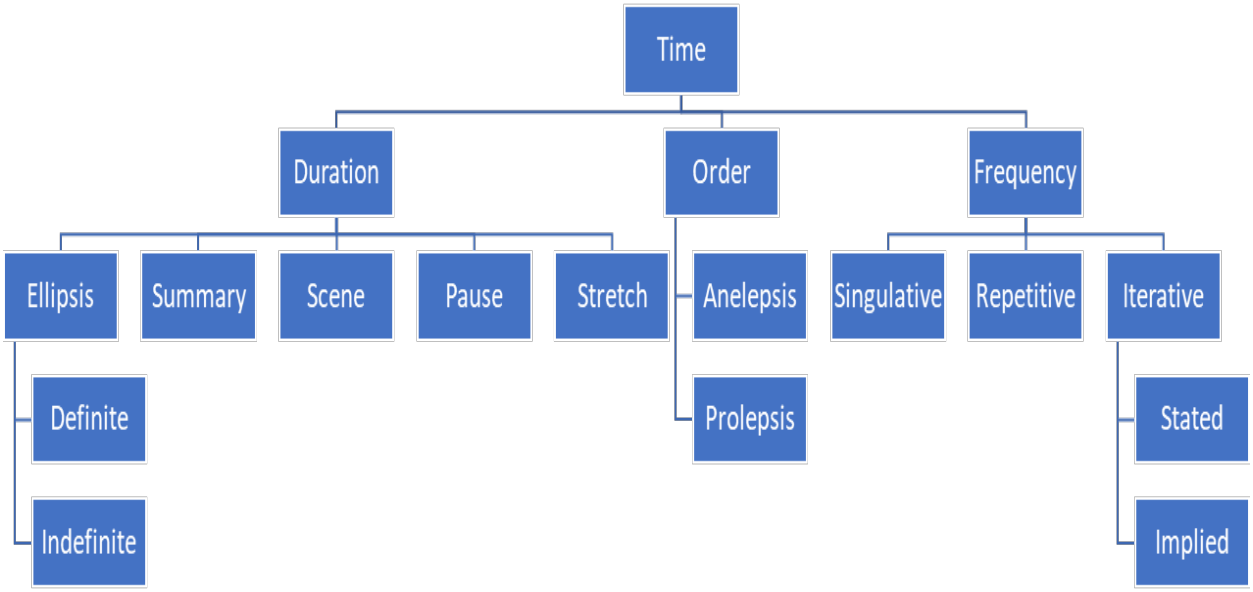
To examine ʿĀlim's short story, which is heavily episodic rather than linear, Genette's model offers a fitting methodology. Genette's theory of narratology, as a typology of narration, studies the relation between story time and narrative time, as Genette argues in his *Narrative Discourse:*

> I propose … to use the word *story* for the signified or narrative content …. To use the word *narrative* for the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself, and the use of the word *narrating* for the producing narrative action and, by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place. (1980, p. 27)

Understanding the relationship between this triad (story, narrative, and narration) explains the contribution of narratology to semiotics. To mark the relationship between story time and narrative time, Genette examines three techniques of time shifts: duration, order and frequency, which will be applied to ʿĀlim's "The Great Serpent" as illustrated below.

MIRRORING A HISTORICAL AND NARRATOLOGICAL READING OF *TIME* IN "THE GREAT SERPENT"

Time shifts connote change, but as ʿĀlim tragically exhibits, the transformation of the holy city has irrevocably usurped its historical identity and its tranquil reverence. To illustrate these effects in "The Great Serpent," ʿĀlim employs narratological time-shattering techniques according to Genette's classification, which appear in three main forms: duration, order, and frequency, as illustrated below.



Source: Summarized from Genette's theory, 2008 (pp. 35-95)

FIGURE 1. Time shift techniques according to Genette's theory, summarized in diagram form.

Type and Number of Time Shifts in "The Great Serpent"										
Duration					Order		Frequency			
Ellipsis		Summary	Scene	Pause	Stretch	Analepsis	Prolepsis	Singulative	Repetitive	Iterative	
Definite	Indefinite	13	1	8	2	9	3	50	9	Stated	Implied
3	6									9	15

Source: extracted from the text of "The Great Serpent" by the author of this article

FIGURE 2. Time shift techniques employed in "The Great Serpent," classified by type and number of recurrences

DURATION

Narrative duration, or speed, as defined by Genette is "the connection between the variable duration of these events or story sections and the pseudo-duration (in fact, length of text) of their telling in the narrative" (Genette, 1980, p.35). The events of years can be summed up in a few sentences, or hundreds of pages can describe the events of one day.

Since measuring the "duration" of narrative is not straightforward as measuring it in music or in cinema, as Mendilow contends (1965, p.58), narratologists like Genette propose, instead, studying "the relationship between a duration (that of the story, measured in seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, and years) and a length (that of the narrative text, measured in lines and pages)" (1980, p. 87). Genette has numbered four basic types of narrative movements that represent different narrative speeds in relationship to time. The relationship between story time (ST) and narrative time (NT) can be represented through ellipsis, summary, scene, and pause. (Genette, 1980, p. 95). Gerald Prince in 1982 added "stretch" as a fifth element (Prince, 1982, p. 56).

The maximum narrative speed is represented in ellipsis; the pause, on the other hand, represents the minimum narrative speed: (NT= narrative time, ST= story time).

1. Ellipsis: NT = 0, ST= *n*. Therefore: NT< ∞ ST
2. Summary: NT < ST
3. Scene NT = / ≈ ST
4. Stretch NT > ST
5. Pause NT =*n*, ST=0. Therefore: NT ∞ > ST

To analyze ʿĀlim's employment of duration, below are the samples from the text that illustrate each type of time-shifts and how it has been utilized.

ELLIPSIS

Ellipsis could be defined as that part of the story which is omitted in the narrative but deduced by later events or narrative. Ellipses, as explained by Genette, occurs when the story time has no counterpart/symmetry in the narrative time (1980, p.106). The difference between ellipsis and summary is: ellipsis omits parts of the story from the narrative, while the summary mentions them but in condensation.

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In "The Great Serpent," ʿĀlim uses ellipsis to fold multiple layers of times within a short narrative. The story runs from approximately the 11th century to the late 20th century AD, but what we are exposed to is an economic condensation of events in about 15 pages only (in the original Arabic text). The narrator, who lives in the modern-day Makkah which is time of publishing the story (the nineties of the last century), opens her narrative with this declaration: "Everybody knows me by the name of Fatima Al-Makkiah (Fatimah of Makkah). The truth I have managed to hide well over the eleven years of my existence here, however, is that I was not born in Makkah at all but in the Ashe Valley near Granada in the year 500H, AD 1061." ("The Great Serpent", p. 324).

Ellipsis in ʿĀlim's story appears in the two types described by Genette: definite, with a clear declaration of the temporal period omitted; and indefinite, with no clear indication of duration (1980, p. 106), which will be explained below.

DEFINITE ELLIPSIS

An example of definite ellipsis is when the narrator, Al-Zahrāʿ, recalls how she was reborn in her new identity and named Al-Zahrāʿ who is five years old: "Five years I lived in their environment, during which period Makkah had changed its skin for the third time. It had shed its former trappings, its rawāshīn, its red damask silk and its looming figure of Abdullah Ibn Al-Zubair whose shadows still hung on the walls of Al-Kȧba. Makkah had replaced all these with glass and aluminum windows and balconies" ("The Great Serpent", p. 330).

The narrative, in the quote above, opens in the domestic sphere, depicting a personal, internalized, perception of time. The latticed wooden windows of the narrator's house are replaced by modern aluminum and glass panels. This change echoes the larger transformation in the outer public sphere, with the whole city of Makkah changing "three times," which is a reference to the three major expansions of the holy mosque (up to the date of the story in 1994). Each expansion razed a larger entourage around the holy mosque, bulldozing houses, landmarks and historical edifices. The above quotation also refers to Al-Kȧba, the original cubic sanctuary built in the center of the holy mosque in Makkah by prophets Abraham (known in Islam as the father of all prophets) and his son Ishmael.

This definite ellipsis highlights a nostalgic yearning to the past, contrasting the old wooden lattice windows (rawāshīn), with the modern steel and glass panels. Natural elements like wood connote warmth and affiliation with nature, while steel implies coldness and mass industrialization devoid of personalized artistic touch. The implication here is clear: modernity is destroying the architectural (and historical) identity of the space, severing the filial bond between humans and nature, and even damaging the larger ecosystem by using mass-manufactured elements. The bygone horizontal skyline of Makkah, in which the holy mosque dominated the landscape and towered over all edifices, was annihilated by the imposing new high-rises in a symbolic representation of the hegemony of materialism.

The rawshān (singular form of rawāshīn) is the ancient wooden latticed window; it works as a link between the private and the public spheres, with its unique ability to conceal the lookers while including them within the outside world. Shirley Kay and Dariush Zandi observe the use of wooden screens as a means of protecting privacy in traditional houses in the Arabian Gulf area, elaborating: "Privacy for the womenfolk was one of the main criteria in the design of traditional homes – screens and balustrades enabled the women to see without being seen, so they were not cut off from the life of the house" (1991, p.11). Robert Hillenbrand writes about these "ornate wooden lattice-work screens" which protect from the "public gaze" (1994, p.248). The rawāshīn

have openings that allow light and sound in and out; it makes the room an extension of the outside world, a part of it, somehow, even though hidden from purveyors' eyes. It is therefore a strategic means of inclusion that challenges the imposed measures of segregation. Women inside their houses, for instance, would feel included within the larger, outer world, with its noises and scenes. It is an empowering architectural feature for the inhabitants of the traditional houses who can connect with the outside world: hearing, seeing, smelling, and even touching items from outside. Traditional vendors used to fill baskets dangled by women from their houses, with goods like vegetable, fruit and other items. The new steel and glass windows closed these possibilities and imposed an added barricade of alienation. Sealed windows are a metaphor of seclusion imposed by modernity.

The theme of alienation and nostalgia to the past, as a consequence of modernity has been articulated by Saudi writers by the end of the 1970s and into the 1980s and beyond. According to Akers and Bāgāder, the short stories produced then:

> … epitomize a conflicting attraction and resistance to the rush of modernity, covering themes that range from migration … to the materialism and social injustice that accompanied the differential increase in wealth following the discovery of oil. Moving from pearl diving and fishing to modern-day oil fields and glass-and-steel office buildings, the stories show that there is a price to be paid for modernization: the characters, nostalgic for the simpler ways of the past, lost touch with their core values and became alienated in their rapidly changing societies.
>
> (2008, pp.1-2)

The narrator in the story bequeaths the morning of the ancient Makkah, enmeshing personal agonies within the setting of historical extermination. The definitive ellipsis in the cases above works as historical marks of change in the history of the people in Makkah.

INDEFINITE ELLIPSIS

In indefinite ellipsis, there is no exact declaration of the time omitted, but the reader realizes the lapse of time through narrative hints. One example is when ʿĀlim's narrator describes the length of her imprisonment, saying: "Moons and solar circles passed with their countless years and I am locked up in that room they call Al-Makhlawan, a small enclosed space, long as a mummified serpent …." ("Serpent", p.328). The time lapse in the above quotation is indefinite "Moons and solar circles" and "countless years," but the exaggeration connotes the length of the temporal period involved. The reference to the moon is important, as the Islamic calendar is lunar; each month is determined by the movements of the moon. The moon acts as a "cosmic clock" by which many Islamic religious practices such as praying, fasting, and pilgrimage, are calculated. The temporal level is intertwined with the religious level to transcend the holiness of Makkah through strategies that exceed local colorings. Sketching the sanctified mood of the place through the calling to prayers, and cosmic indicators of time like the moon and the sun (that also indicates the daily times of prayer). This magnifies the sacredness of the location and the relationship between physical time and personal time – the universal time and the individual perception of it.

After her imprisonment, another indefinite ellipsis sees the narrator reincarnated this time as a pigeon: " … I was forgotten in that Makhlawan. And I stayed there till I was sure no one who knew me was still alive or still remembered me. The expansion of the Holy Mosque had already swallowed Souk Al-Sagheer [sic] by then …" ("Serpent", pp. 328-329).

The above quotation is a clear example of the difference between chronological time measured by hours and days; and psychological time (the personal perception of the speed of time

lapsing), as explained by Meyerhoff (1995, p.14). The narrator was forgotten in a *makhlawān* (a space whose name connotes void, *khalā ʾ*), where she felt the vacuum of being out of touch with the outside world, while the chronological worldly time continued in the regular rhythm. This is symbolized by the modernization of Makkah, and the disappearance of Al-Sūq Al-Ṣaghīr,[1] one of the most ancient open markets, a landmark in Makkah. Allegories of gentrification are highlighted through references to eradicated historical locations as such. It is important here to note that in the above quotation, two techniques of time shift are used simultaneously: ellipsis and summary, which is possible as Genette confirms (1980, pp. 86-112).

Al- makhlawān as a word itself, is an obsolete word, unknown to the new generation of Saudis. It was used by people in Makkah in the past to refer to a narrow passage common in the architectural plan of houses at that time and place. Therefore, language here acts as a *synecdoche*, or a part of a larger whole, positioning the reader historically in the past, and contextualizing the changes in the story with larger changes outside the fictional realm.

SUMMARY

Summary is a narrative technique that shortens and speeds up the narrative. It is present in the introductory lines of the story, when the narrator introduces herself as Fāṭimah Al-Makkiyyah, saying: "The truth I have managed to hide well over the eleven years of my existence here ... Is that I was not born in Makkah at all but in the Ash Valley near Granada in the year 500H, AD 1061" ("Serpent", p. 324). Here, a few centuries are reduced to one sentence. The present time of the narrative is estimated through chronological hints in the narrative corpus, enabling readers to locate the narrative time within the timeframe of the last expansion of the holy mosque (up to the date of publishing the story), which is in 1994.

Another summary of centuries follows, during which the narrator exists as a pigeon: "so I took off on a rainbow out of my Makhlawan and I roamed the skies with the pigeons of Makkah … I have come to assimilate centuries of prayers with my flight of grey pigeons" ("Serpent", p.325). This time, the centuries, is a "psudo-elipsis," or "a summary with maximum speed" following the classification of Bal, (1994, p. 69) as many centuries are summarized into one sentence.

SCENE

In a scene, the time of narrative is almost equal to the time of the story. This is possible, for example, in dialogues and conversations exhibiting an exchange of discourse between characters with elements that move the storyline forward. In such cases, the narrative tempo takes a slower pace than it would in a summary or an ellipsis. The actions of the story unfold as the speech progresses, making both the story and narrative move in a similar pace. Although scenes are common in literary works, this story is an exception as scenes are relatively scarce. Since scenes normally present themselves through dialogue, as mentioned, the lack of dialogue in the story symbolizes solitude. It reflects a state of alienation and dissociation from the outside world. The

[1] Al-Sūq Al-Saghīr was demolished in the expansion of the Holy Mosque in 1988. It was an open market featuring local goods: butchers selling different types of meats, greengrocers, fishmongers, bakers, and other foods shops selling dairy products, olives, pickles, sweets, local fruits from the famous nearby orchards in al-Ṭaif, pastries, and kebobs. This marketplace is mentioned in several sources by the likes of Abdallah Abkar (2004, p. 247), and Ḥassan Gazzāz (1994, p.55). These traditional shops were replaced by international food chains with giant neon billboards selling burgers and fried chicken close to the holy mosque.

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first narrator, Fāṭimah Al-Makkiyyah, presents the whole narrative as one long piece of interior monologue. There is only one single dialogue in this story. It comes in the form of a dream, in which one of the narrators, Al-Zahrā sees a tree from heaven that talks to her:

> Later, in my dreams, a tree appeared to me and said: I am Tuba, a blessed tree from heaven. The great serpent you nurture is one of my baby girls still suckling. I have been momentum nursing her for thousands and thousands of years and she is not weaned yet. She left me in response to your loneliness and I didn't prevent her. Please don't deny me the pleasure of breastfeeding her.
> ("Serpent", p. 330)

It takes a dream to have a dialogue. The message in the dream, which is an appeal from a mother figure (the Tree Tuba) to her daughter asking for connection, is an allegorical implication of the bond between the narrator and her mother homeland, Makkah. The narrator longs to keep the bond with ancient Makkah, the maternal figure, who is deeply rooted in heaven. The only way out of "loneliness" is to keep a connection with this guiding figure. By breastfeeding the little serpent, which the tree had already been nursing for "thousands and thousands" of years, the narrator preserves the cycle of healing and immortality. Serpents historically symbolize fertility, creative life forces, restoration, and rebirth, as they shed their skin through sloughing. The presence of the serpent from heaven as a worldly companion links the narrator to divine sources that bestow godly attendance.

From a technical narrative view, the narrator here defers the narrative authority to a tree. Yet the speech of the tree is not a real dialogue; it is a short message in a dream. It occupies only four lines in the original Arabic text. Plus, the time of the dialogue is extremely short in relation to the time of the story spanning over centuries. We could speculate the time of the dialogue by reading it out loud. The story time and the narrative time become almost equal. Adam Mendilow explains this phenomenon, differentiating between the chronological and the psychological tempo: "The former hands on the texture of the novel and resolves itself therefore into the relation between the chronological duration of the reading and the fictional time – the time taken to read a novel covering longer or shorter period of action" (1965, p.125). In comparison, the dialogue here takes an extremely marginal role.

PAUSE

In a pause, the story time stops, so the plot remains stationary, while the narrative discourse continues. This is exemplified through "static descriptions." An example in ʿĀlim's story is when the narrator describes her own incarnation in the body of the famous Ḥay Bin Yaqẓān[2] the fictional character of the twelfth-century writer Ibn Ṭufail:

> I let him generate me from earth (from a lump of clay fermented in the land of a deserted island). The hot and cold, wet and dry mud blended within me evenly and perfectly harmoniously – a blending of equal and matching powers … In the middle of the clay a sticky, gooey patch emerged with a tiny bubble in it … filled with a mild and aerated body in the maximum and most befitting temperance.
> ("Serpent", p. 325)

[2] *Ḥay Bin Yaqẓān*, known in the west as *Philosophus Autodidactus* is a twelfth-century philosophical romance and allegorical novel inspired by Sufism and Avicennism. This story is believed to have inspired Daniel Defoe to write *Robinson Crusoe* with a similar character and setting (a deserted island).

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All the ellipsis above work to speed up the tempo of the text, which is an important function of ellipsis, as the critic Amna Youssif confirms (2015, p.129). The narration goes on while the story stays stationary. Narrative time is longer than story time, the latter being zero as the plot makes no move.

STRETCH

Stretch is the opposite of summary; it is the state in which the narration of an action takes longer time than the time elapsing while the action takes place. Monika Fludernik explains that this technique is used when a character approaches death: "the whole of the protagonist's life unfolds before her/his eyes. The relatively brief moment when death occurs is filled out with many pages of description." (Fludernik, 2006, p. 33). In ʿĀlim's story there are two examples of stretch. This is especially significant given the short text of the story and the relative rarity of stretch as a narrative technique, as Manfred observes (2021, p. 65). One incident where the narrative is "stretched" is when Fāṭimah Al-Makkiyyah sees her past life flashing in front of her eyes:

> That night the moon came down so low it filled the tap water pool in the courtyard of our house just opposite the divan room. Up to that night I had managed to hide my old connections with Andalusia and with Ibn Ṭufail whilst at the same time I was trying to deal with the oncoming oblivion that constantly corroded their memory. I used to sleep on the terrace of our roshan and my mother used to prop me up with a red cushion lest I'd fall and break my neck. That cushion prop knew a great deal about my story, as its red damask silk has been the same old eavesdropper from the early days of the Arab caliphate, itself coming out of my dreams.
>
> ("Serpent", p.326)

The red silk is a memory trigger that links the present life of the narrator with the past, bringing quick cinematographic flashbacks of Andalusia in a clear stretch. Using dreams and prophecies as narrative devices is a common form of "prolepsis". In ʿĀlim's story, however, the role of dreams is subverted; they work not as a prophecy of the future, but a nostalgic and therapeutic connection with the dead past.

Back to "stretch," the whole story could be regarded as one stretched scene. The beginning and end are narrated in the present time of the story, using "the present tense," with everything else narrated in the past tense. This technique provides a cyclical image and a proper closure to the narrative, but it also emphasizes the difference between the psychological time and the chronological time of the events. Nūrah Almirri examines this point in literature in general (2012, p.68), suggesting that happy events are sometimes narrated using the present tense, while sorrowful ones are narrated in the past tense, as if coming back to the present provides a balm that treats the injuries of the past.

Finally, to conclude this section on duration with its different manifestations: ellipsis (definite and indefinite), summary, scene, pause and stretch, the reader can reach certain conclusions. Ellipsis has a stronger impact on shattering the narrative time than the other techniques of this section due to its power in fragmenting the storyline through skipping over certain events altogether. This creates a sense of confusion and disorientation mirroring individuals affected by gentrification, who may feel that their sense of place and identity is erupted or effaced. Summary proves to be the technique most used (as demonstrated in Figure 2), which is plausible given the nature of the text being a short story. The scene is the technique less used, as there is an obvious lack of dialogues or conversations normally relevant to scenes. This is, as explained, pertinent to the theme of loneliness and lack of communication in a gentrified, unfamiliar, hostile

world. The pause appears more than the stretch which is also apt for a short story, and in the world outside the text it may symbolize the need for a *pause* to reconsider the damages inflicted by gentrification.

ORDER

According to Genette, to understand the temporal *order* of a narrative, we must: "compare the order in which events or temporal sections are arranged in the narrative discourse with the order of succession these same events have in the story" (1980, p. 34). This means that the story could be narrated either following the chronological order or deviating from it, which Genette defines as anachrony. Anachrony, according to Genette, refers to the "discordance between the two orderings of story and narrative" (1980, p.36). There are two types of anachrony: analepsis and prolepsis: analepsis is when events from the past are remembered in the present of the narrative, thus changing the chronological order of events. Prolepsis is when the events of the future are hinted to in the present narration of events. Analeptic and proleptic details are necessary in offering background knowledge or prophecies that reveal major themes, events, or characters in the stories.

ANALEPSIS

Analepses are much more frequent than prolepses, as Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan argues (2002, p.50), which is the case with ʿĀlim's story here with events mostly recollected from the past. The discrepancy in the grammatical tense between the time of the story and the time of the narrative (using sometimes the past tense and other times the present one) can highlight their temporal anomaly. Tzvetan Todorov elaborates on this phenomenon saying that: "the activity of writing leaves in it traces, signs, or indices that we can pick up and interpret – traces such as the presence of … a verb in the past tense to indicate that a recounted action occurred prior to the narrating action" (1981, p.28). In ʿĀlim's story, memory triggers the narrative, offering multiplayers of temporality. There is a recurrent nostalgic return to historical Makkah, and the time of Ibn Ṭufail and his fictional character Ḥay Bin Yaqẓān. Ḥay Bin Yaqẓān is an intertextual reference, and curiously, a soul mate to the narrator. Then, the story jumps to the present time offering events narrated by different narrators in the story, such as Fāṭimah Al-Makkiyyah, a pigeon from the holy mosque, and Al-Zahrāʿ.

ʿĀlim employs narrative fragmentation as a strategic tactic of rebellious refutation to transformation, and an endeavor of rectifying the crimes of gentrification. The narrative structure is not barely an aesthetic feature, but a latent critique of the effacing of a heritage that has shaped the native identity. It is an attempt to open up the reader's investigation: a call for an act of defamiliarization, reevaluating modernity and its effects on obliterating the uniqueness of a local consciousness.

ʿĀlim's text is rich in analepses. Events of the past are recalled in the present time of the narrative to highlight factors influencing the story, or to act as narrative triggers; this technique offers creative reworking of the timeline of the story. Analepsis could appear in many different forms, including monologue, dialogue, stream-of-consciousness, or dreams breaking the chronological order of the story.

The introduction of "The Great Serpent" starts with an analepsis that offers instant levels of temporality, as the narrator declares:

> Everybody knows me by the name of Fatima Al-Makkiah (Fatimah of Makkah). The truth I have managed to hide well over the elven years of my existence here, however, is that I was not born in Makkah at all but in the Ashe Valley near Granada in the year 500H, AD 1061. A history pundit would know that this date coincides with the birth of Abi Bakre Muhammad, son of Abdul Malek bin Muhammad, son of Muhammad bin Ṭufail Al-Kaisi, known in short as Ibn Ṭufail. Ibn Ṭufail and I are soulmates and consorts, born of one and the same isthmus.
>
> ("Serpent", p. 324)

The introductory *mise en scene* offers the contextual details of time through the voice of the first-person narrator in the narrative threshold. It demonstrates the complex chronotope (in Bakhtinian terms) of the story: how time and place are represented - between Makkah in the present time of the narrative, which is late twentieth century, and Granada in 1016.

This analepsis also demonstrates that the narration is told *medias res,* meaning from the middle of actions, rather than *ab ovo* which is a phrase that describes a story that starts from the beginning*,* according to Horace's (65 BC –8 BC) definition (Horace, n.p.). This is only realized after the first reading. During the second reading, however, readers are able to recreate the omitted expositional events by employing anachrony, analepsis, and stream of consciousness, which is in operation from the beginning of the story and continues throughout as revealed through the anachronic narrations of events.

The opening (and closing) lines of the story employ another narrative technique related to anachrony. It is a traditional literary convention known in ancient Arabic poetry as *"Al-Waqfah Al-Ṭalaliyyah,"* الوقفة الطلليه, in which the ancient Arab poet as a nomad traveler "stands by the ruins," or the remains of the living quarters of the beloved ones who had left in search for better natural resources (water, plants, etc.) This technique reflects a philosophical reading of the present and the past, and the dichotomy of life and death. It is an established literary convention used in the introduction of canonical Arabic poems like the famous *Al-Muʿalaqāt Al-Sabʿah*, the *Seven Odes,* which are written in gold letters and honorably posted on the holy Al-Kȧba in Makkah. *Al-Waqfah Al-Ṭalaliyyah"* offers a collective ritual of crying over the past. Arab consciousness has always been obsessed with the crisis of death personified in the ruins, as ʿAli ʿAsha confirms (2005, p.12). The ruins embody an oxymoronic space of melancholic pleasure, as Robert Irwin argues: "Arab poets reveled in the sad pleasures of ruins" (1997, p.33). The location of the ruins can be regarded as a limbo, a hybrid location that juxtaposes both the past and present. It is a site of great temporal (and spatial) tension, belonging neither to the past nor to the present. It stands also as a heterotopic location, following Michel Foucault's definition (1986) – a space colored by disturbing and transforming "otherness". Heterotopias are worlds within worlds, simultaneously mirroring, but upsetting the world outside. It is a dire state of being "here" and "there" at the same time. It is exactly the space that ʿĀlim inhibits in the ruins of ancient Makkah. The artistic form she creates, a short story rather than a poem adorned in golden scripts, strives to work as a bridge between the past and the present, immortalizing her revered city - Makkah.

PROLEPSIS

Prolepsis, which forecasts future events, is used to evoke suspense, as Stuart Whalting describes it. An example of prolepsis appears in the description of Fāṭimah's neighbor, ʿĀishah Al-Sabakiyyah, and her complicated child labor. Without the blatant mention of her destiny, the reference to ʿIzrāīl, the angel of death in Islamic tradition, is a clear prolepsis that foreshadows ʿĀishah's approaching death: "… the loom of Izrail spinning" overcasts the narrative ("Serpent", p. 328). Yet the death of the woman until this point is never stated. The reader's tension escalates

as the narrator declares that the woman was mistaken for dead: "They began to wail and eulogize her, whilst her screams were frozen round her in a web that paralyzed her and prevented her from breathing or screaming for help" ("Serpent", p.328). The reader's expectations of Āishah's imminent death is confirmed when the sick woman was abandoned: "They laid her out in the men's divan room, because it was the nearest place to the road outside and the shortest cut for her funeral to go through the alleyway right to the cemetery" ("Serpent", p. 328). The reference to the cemetery ends all doubts about the destiny of the woman.

To sum up this section on order, which includes its two types: analepsis and prolepsis, it is noticeable that analepsis appear more times than prolepsis (Figure 2). This aligns with the argument of this paper, as *analepsis* is more powerful in reflecting the fragmentation of the text because it involves retrospective jumps in time, disrupting the linear progression of the story and creating a sense of disorientation parallel to the chaos of the gentrified, ever-changing world outside the text.

FREQUENCY

Frequency, "one of the major aspects of narrative temporality," according to Genette (1980, p.113), refers to the repetition between "the narrative and the diegesis," (1980, pp.113-114). It calculates the repetition of both: the narrated events (in the story), and the narrative statements (in the text). Certain events occur once at the story level but are repeated many times at the narrative level. Other events may occur every day but are referred to only once, with implied indicators of frequency. In ʿĀlim's story, there is a pressing return to the events that the narrator witnessed in ancient Makkah, and the characters related to that place, which emphasizes her nostalgic devotion to her roots.

When examining frequency, Genette established the following "system of relationships" between the narrative level and the story level:

1. Singulative narration: narrating once what happened once: 1 N (Narrative) / 1 S (Story)
2. Repetitive narration: relating more than once (*n* times) what happens once: *n*N/1S
3. Iterative narration: recounting once what happened several times: 1N/*n*S (Genette, 1980, pp. 114-116).

Below is a further elaboration of these samples of frequency in ʿĀlim's story.

SINGULATIVE FREQUENCY

As for singulative frequency, certain events are stated on the narrative level only once despite of their importance to the story and their substantial psychosocial impact on the narrator. An example is the death of Ibn Ṭufail, an event which is sidelined despite the importance of this character and his closeness to the narrator. It is an omission of a painful event that the narrator strives to forget. In her book *Narratology,* Mieke Bal argues that: "[events] which has been omitted – the contents of the ellipsis – need not be unimportant; on the contrary, the event about which nothing is said may have been so painful that it had been elided for precisely that reason" (1994, p.103). Despite of the brief reference to this event, its impact is emphasized through memorial references to Ibn Ṭufail, triggered by seemingly relevant events in the story.

REPETITIVE FREQUENCY

Repetitive frequency in ʿĀlim's story is frequently linked to the time of the narrator living in Makkah in past centuries. Nostalgic references to deceased historical figures, such as Ibn Al Zubair, and to demolished landmarks like the Small Market, are echoed throughout the text. This is a resistance strategy, commemorating the ruins, immortalizing history, and criminalizing gentrification. Repetitive frequency is an attempt of recreating and recollecting the trauma of loss. Memory is the umbilical cord between the past and present. Foregrounding the collective history of the nation is demonstrated in ʿĀlim's story via the recollection of the personal memorabilia and historical repertoire of the narrator.

ITERATIVE FREQUENCY

As for iterative frequency, used often in ʿĀlim's story, it is a technique that works in reducing the narrative. Iterative frequency occurs in its 2 shapes in "The Great Serpent". Sometimes iterativity is obviously stated with clear temporal indicators, while other times, there are certain semantic, interpretative hints from which we conclude that specific information is iterative, which will be explained below.

STATED ITERATIVE FREQUENCY

Some examples with obviously-stated time indicators appear in the story, such as the narrator's descriptions of her husband's habits: "He abandoned my bed to his men's guest room, where he spent endless nights playing cards with the boys," ("Serpent", p. 333), and again: "Night after night and game after game, he complained …" ("Serpent", p.333). Although the time span here isn't specified, certain words that indicate obvious temporality are used: "endless nights," and "night after night."

IMPLIED ITERATIVE FREQUENCY

In implied iterative frequency, certain hints indicate frequency. Readers conclude that what is mentioned once, is a repetitive action. One example that shows the passing of time, is when the narrator explains how she slowly grows up as a child – describing days passing while crying and being fed: "amongst the tears and the milk, I lived in Souk Al-Sagheer right under the minarets of the Holy Mosque of Makkah" ("Serpent", p.325). The long process of learning how to walk, as a child, is mentioned once: "I started teaching my body how to walk" ("Serpent", p.325). There is here an implied iterative frequency in which no clear temporal indicators are present to refer to the passing of time.

Later when describing the beginning of a chain of events that took place in the house, the narrator reduced the narrative to just one sentence: "Extraordinary hectic activity ensued in our house at Nazlat Al-Karara" ("Serpent", p.331). Suddenly, an animal river springs in the heart of the house. The presence of the animal river that runs through the place, is a constant condition, but is mentioned in a single occasion: "The animal river was in every corner and fold and behind every veil" ("Serpent", p.332). The river here is a metaphor. According to Meyerhoff, "Life is like a river, and as fixed, unutterable in unceasing movement and in changeless change as the great river is, and time itself" (1995, p.16). The river is related to the act of free narration, metaphorically:

both stories and rivers "flow". Meyerhoff confirms that: "The metaphor of the "stream" as attached to human consciousness has become a symbol for a literary technique. 'Stream of consciousness' signifies what the symbolism of time and the river has always meant to convey, namely, that time as experienced has the quality of 'flowing,' and that this quality is an enduring element within the constantly changing and successive moments of time" (Meyerhoff, 1995, p.16).

Writers like ʿĀlim regard the past as an essential ingredient into building a substantial present. Writings that revive and preserve the past not only immortalize it but give a sense of secure continuity. According to Amira El-Zein: "Through the intertextual juxtaposition of past and present, authors such as Raja Alem … situate modern Saudi Arabia within a historical continuum" (2015, p.17).

The ending is a return to the present time of the story, yet it is the "spacious present," according to Meyerhoff, who argues that: "From a psychological point of view, continuous flow and duration are often said to constitute the experience of the "spacious present." (1995, p.17). The flow of the river bestows the image of continuity and the power of resistance in the spacious present that implies permanency. The river is an image that connotes continuous motility between temporal, spatial and thematic areas.

To conclude this part on frequency with its different subdivisions, it is noticeable that singulative frequency is far more predominant in this text, which is relevant to its genre as a short story that averts repetition. In this story, frequency is associated with memories and recollections of events or individuals from the past who had an impact on the identity of the narrator(s). In the world outside the text, frequency metaphorically stands for regularity and consistency in revisiting and recollecting past details to keep the river of life flowing. Frequency, therefore, stands as an umbilical cord that links the past with the present, revolting against the effects of gentrification.

FINDINGS

Analyzing the different Genettian time-shattering techniques employed in ʿĀlim's story results in various findings. To start with, it confirms the main argument of this paper which states that time-shift techniques employed in the text capture the complexity and bewilderment of dislocation and uprootedness resulting from gentrification outside the world of the text. ʿĀlim's perception of the geographical, historical, and cultural fragmentations of Makkah makes her resort to breaking the linear order of her story as a means of expressing the incoherence of the kaleidoscopic reality surrounding her. In fact, the short story itself as a genre expresses the transient, fleeting nature of life as ʿĀlim witnesses it.

Employing time shift narrative techniques with their different temporal momentums varying from the rapid to the extended, also illustrates the mechanisms of change in the world outside the text which can be sudden or gradual, manifested by abrupt hits of ferocious bulldozers, or long-term contractual projects of urban development.

In addition, ʿĀlim's disenchantment with conventional narrative techniques, and her deconstruction of established forms of representation accentuate the supremacy of form over content. This is a symbolic representation of the venue under investigation, Makkah, and its transformation from a holy city into a commercialized, gentrified space stripped of its spiritual, divine uniqueness.

Furthermore, the disrupted chronological progression of narrative time reflects the disjointed and often violent nature of gentrification which severs the ties between the indigenous people and their familiar environment. Gentrification involves eroding personal habitats, leveling

historical edifices, bulldozing sites of cultural heritage, and razing natural landmarks. It leads to the displacement and relocation of entire neighborhoods and communities. Doing so, it influences the indigenous people, shifting their sense of identity and belonging. In the absence of recognizable familiar contexts, feelings of insecurity and anarchism prevail. The disorienting, chaotic effect of time shattering in the story reflects the uprootedness and uncertainty of the inhabitants in a swiftly changing city.

Finally, by mirroring the multifaceted, nonlinear processes of urban transformation and heritage eradication, the story challenges readers to consider the psychological, social, and historical implications of gentrification, engaging them in visualizing the perspective of those indigenous people most affected by it. Thus, the use of time shattering strategies in the story creates a critical, analytical, and more nuanced interpretation of the impact of gentrification on urban spaces, individual psyches, and local communities.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study demonstrate that the fragmentation of narrative time in the microcosm of ʿĀlim's story "The Great Serpent," reflects the greater shattering in the world outside the text. It is a dynamic replica with political valances, mirroring a time that writers, just like their fictional characters, eyewitness.

Handling time shifts in "The Great Serpent," highlights ʿĀlim's skillful interlacing of the aesthetic with the political. The story bridges the gap between the individual self and the world, demonstrating a time in which fragmentation is the key, and the personal becomes inherently historical. Publicizing the personal becomes a resistance strategy to articulate the prohibited.

With the cultural massacre and gentrification of many familiar historical localities and relics, writers inhibit a chronotropic limbo – a heterotopia of past memories and present void. It is a time climate that is as complex and mystifying as ʿĀlim's narrative time, with countless unexpected and unsettling shifts. The story, as a piece of resistance, bridges the gap between the past and the present and establishes an uninterrupted, free-flowing timeline. ʿĀlim's work is an attempt of redemption of the ancient legacies of Makkah and a combat against heritage erosion, highlighting the importance of resurrecting the national identity and the collective memory of a nation in order to survive the bulldozers of annihilation.

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