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Narrative Interpretive Centers in Ray Bradbury's Cistern: Exposing Internal and External Human Conflicts

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Abstract

In the light of the inevitable twinning of linguistic theory and literary critical interpretation and appreciation, Ray Bradbury's narrative techniques constitute his thematic and aesthetic discourse. Bradbury's stylistic narrative discourse evokes a set of narrative tools through which characters communicate ideas, thoughts, and feelings, creating aesthetic effects that appeal to readers. These blended artistic elements are interpreted in the light of the theoretical fictional context of narrator-character, character-character, and narrator-reader interactions. Exploring a web of narrative-characterization centers in Bradbury's story Cistern, the paper sheds light on the centers of the point of view, dialogic narrative technique, and thematic concerns that include internal and external conflicts. Meantime, the paper draws on Gérard Genette's analytical method of study of narrative discourse, among others. Moreover, Bradbury's the mato-narrative techniques offer a modern interpretative community for understanding his characterization centers and serve as a receptionist case study for scholars and critics of modern literary criticism.

Keywords: Ray Bradbury, human conflicts, narratology, narrative-stylistic centers, characterization.

1. Introduction

Ray Bradbury's Cistern is a composite story for it has a set of competing elements. For example, there is a bifocal narrative center: the external and the internal; there are two levels of time: one is centered in the present, while the other goes back to the past. Also, Peter Barry (2009) refers to focalized centers that constitute the viewpoint from which the story is narrated, stating that there is an "external focalization" which signifies "the viewpoint outside the character" (224). Likewise, "internal focalization" as a narrative center enables the reader to sense the characters' feelings and thoughts with no explosive words and get "access to the character's mind" (Ibid). The modern fiction of Bradbury grants the elements of language, the point of view, characterization, and discourse more emphasis. In this respect, a stylistic structure in a narrative formulates its characterization, action, chronotope, and plot (Barthes, 1975: 285). Such artistic elements then make the narrative structure dynamic and reliable and arouse readers' mental and emotive fancy and imagination. Also, the basic aim of a narrative is to "arouse the reader's sympathy or antipathy for certain characters" and to develop a normative structure for both the narrative and the recipient's apprehension of it (Fludernik, 2009: 27). On his part, Paul Simpson (2004: 8) points out that:

contemporary stylistics ultimately looks towards language as discourse: that is, towards a text's status as discourse, a writer's deployment of discourse strategies and towards the way a text 'means' as a function of language in context.... the way a text is constructed in language will, after all, have a crucial bearing on the way it functions as discourse.

Thus, narrative discourse stylistically entails exploring its various cultural, social, and psychological implications. Also, the stylistic deconstruction of Bradbury's story exposes the impacts of the textual language and "the mores in which all types of realities are fabricated through language" (Birch, 1989: 171).

Moreover, the story has two spatial centers: one is thoroughly realistic, and the other is imaginative. Meanwhile, Wolfgang Iser refers to two basic centers in a narrative: the artistic that refers to the text created by the author,



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and the aesthetic that refers to the realization accomplished by the reader. Somewhere between the centers is the literary work, which readers create by reading or realizing a text (1978: 274). Such structural centers produce a set of suggestive binaries of dual perspectives; one is objectively comprehensive, and the other is subjectively narrow. Based on these intertwined structural strands and their internal complexities, the narrative interrelations play a significant role in deepening the background of a puzzling and exciting text. Indeed, the textual structure is an artistic creation that presents dynamic and static characters, and subtly organizes the various positions of the characters and their roles exquisitely. For Yujun Liu (2009), narrative structure constitutes “a thread, which stitches together the plots, the depiction, the characters, and their dialogues together,” arousing readers’ suspense and excitement to trace the diachronic narrative events (141). This stylistic fusion creates the aesthetic glamor of the text or discourse. Bradbury starts with a narrative description that bestows aesthetical effect on the story to expose modern man’s relationship with reality. The narrator begins the story with a descriptive narrative of the place,

It was an afternoon of rain, and lamps lighted against the gray. For a long while, the two sisters had been in the dining-room. One of them, Juliet, embroidered tablecloths; the younger, Anna, sat quietly on the window seat, staring out at the dark street and the dark sky. (Bradbury, 1947)

This is a metaphorical description of a thematic implication and an aesthetic flavor of the story’s diction. Furthermore, the story uses the stream of consciousness technique to allow readers to ponder modern realities and identify with the inner souls of characters, who may represent the modern public man. According to Iser, readers “incorporate both the restructuring of the potential meaning by the text and the readers’ actualization of this potential through the reading process” (1978:xii). Therefore, Bradbury uses his talented narrative experimentation to create a textual aesthetic that describes the modern relationship between man and cosmos. Bradbury continues depicting the tempo-special narrative sphere in a thematic way, “Then there’s lightning and then thunder and the dry season is over, and the little pellets run along the gutters and get big and fall into the drains” (Bradbury, 1947). Ostensibly, Bradbury uses this metaphorical tempo-special description to establish his suggestive aesthetics.

This paper discusses the suggestive the mato-stylistic qualities and aesthetic expressions in Bradbury’s story, *The Cistern*. It explores the writer’s use of stylistic devices and interprets the artistic qualities and aesthetic effects of this style in conveying his ideas and themes to readers. Meantime, the paper aims at appreciating the structural beauty and the thematic depth in Bradbury’s literary diction. His story is a crucible of thematic-oriented expressions that offer distinctive and aesthetic qualities that convey to readers the ideas of the psychological and realistic experience of the narrator.

2- Narrative Opposites and Competing Elements

2.1 Narrative Frame

The story narrates the life of two autistic sisters in a setting of one day; they spend a long time sitting in the dining room. They are Juliet, the elder sister, who occupies her time in embroidering tablecloths, and Anna, the younger sister, who is quietly sitting next to a window, staring into the street, where rain is falling. Stylistically, this setting proves the three structural unities of time, place, and action in the story. For instance, in the opening scene, the narrator describes the tempo-spatial setting where the characters live, “It was an afternoon of rain, and lamps lighted against the gray. For a long while, the two sisters had been in the dining-room” (Bradbury). Here, the narrator condenses the narrative description with images, metaphors, characterization, and flashbacks. *The Cistern* exposes Anna’s internal feelings and ideas, out of her fantasy in a superstitiously fictitious dead city under her neighborhood street. She wanders in her allegorical city of the love of two dead persons in a cistern, which is immersed someday in water that traps both man and woman and grants them life. Anna narrates that the water carries both persons, allowing them to open their eyes and smile. Anna’s fantasy crowns in her confession that she is the woman and Frank is the man in the cistern. While she contemplates the evening in the street, Anna surprises Juliet with a strange idea, that there is a realistic dead city under their city. While Juliet is



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poking a needle in her white dress, Anna resumes her exotic story, where she imagines that there are a man and a woman living inside a cistern under the road in that dead city. At this particular event, Anna flashbacks her past, in which she has had a desperate love story with a man who loves her much, but she could not get him, and he mysteriously dies. This dramatic action causes Anna a deep wound, and she recalls this tragedy the way she has experienced it and tells it to her sister.

In a stream of consciousness manner, Anna narrates the plot of her tragic story to Juliet in detail. Juliet thinks of this exotic story terrifyingly and stands up horrified to look for Anna, thinking that she goes out for a moment and will be back immediately. Soon, she crazily screams at Anna to promptly come back home. However, Juliet's intuition is not precisely true. When she jumps out of place and begins running toward the hall in search of Anna, the cistern lid moves up and then claps to its place. Thus, this suggests that Anna's and Frank's life has vanished successively. This account is a brief plot of the story, which entails delving into its narrative discourse to stylistically analyze its narrative elements that include the sole narrator, narrate, characters, themes, techniques, and images. The British critics Sandy Louchart and Ruth Aylett argue that the story has two systems of signs as "personal and a-personal" that compose any narrative (2004: 513). These signs establish the dialogic and semantic diction of the story that grants it the aesthetic readerly flavor. Moreover, word choice is Bradbury's stylistic tool to darken the mood of his short narrative. He uses an inclusive language that creates illusive episodes drawn from quasi-realistic milieu. Bradbury's fiction is meant to show events and episodes not to tell them, paying special attention to diction, style, characterization, techniques, points of view, the plot as basic components of true art. On his part, Zhiqin Zhang (2010) emphasizes that the center of critical literary stylistics examines the "thematic and aesthetic values generated by linguistic forms" (155). As such, Bradbury presents characters through his technique of contextualization that touches modern man's real life, which matches his technique of artistic thematic textual characterization. David Birch (1989) argues that Bradbury presents his fiction full of "complex knowledge about his international theme or the psychological enlightenment" through his aesthetic pleasure of language and intellectual wit (169).

Furthermore, Bradbury uses structural devices of characterization, narration, the stream of consciousness, flashback, description, and foreshadowing to dynamically present his characters, themes, and motifs to readers. Descriptive narration is a thematically stylistic technique that relates the plot of any story to "the content of the text and its social and cultural (or extra-textual) context" (Zhang, 2010, p. 59). Having such artistic creativity in publicizing his ideas and reflections, Bradbury can gain his readers' identification and awareness of modern man's dilemmas of loss, fragmentation, confusion, and madness due to exposure to technology, industry, the decay of social and moral systems. Bradbury fuses the basic features of "post modernity, met narrative, simulacra, and hyperreality" to expose modern man's puzzles, paradoxes, and alienation (Raeisian, 2013: 6). Bradbury presents a narrative "social cognitive paradigm, which attempts to explain the drives, forces, and processes that explain and determine individual behavior" by which modern man is trapped (Brown, 2017: 215). Bradbury's narrative style is modern that talks about various deconstructive dilemmas and crises. In this concern, Timothy Whiffen (2013) remarks that Bradbury's artistic style "suits the tone of his narratives," in which he evokes various thematic images "to place his readers within the oppressive worlds that encompass his plots."

2-2 Characters and Characterization

The characterization of the three dynamic characters, Anna, Frank, and Juliet, exposes these characters' feebleness, despair, panic, bewilderment, self-renewal, and boldness in a tumultuous world. This metamorphosis of the characters is located in the context of the thematic aesthetics manifested in their struggle, transformation, and challenge. In this view, Gerard Genette states that any narrative is a "signified or narrative content," of realistic or fictional situations in which actions take place" (1980: 27). There are two major dynamic characters in this story: Anna the narrator - and Juliet the narratee. Anna is an introvert character dominated by various visions and fantasies and obsessed by death. She escapes in the past because of a sharp emotional trauma that



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seemingly becomes her syndrome for the rest of her life. Meanwhile, this kind of modern fiction is in “a need for unique narratives” with distinctive ordinary characters like Anna, Juliet, and Frank (Louchart and Aylett, 2004: 507).

Furthermore, in its chronotopic discourse, the story enables its readers to “understand the degree of empathy, the connection in mind between the present and past selves, and the method and process of reflecting the past” of the modern realities of its characters (Shigematsu, 2016:52). Accordingly, the past constitutes an enduring element for Anna’s survival, while her present seems frozen or paralyzed, so all attempts by her sister to bring her back to the present are in vain. Bradbury implies that humans should be cautious with the modern age and its emergents to survive peacefully and safely. Meanwhile, Juliet is on the opposite extreme of her sister’s; she is a flat character, inconsistent with what is narrated to her about the underworld of the dead city. This inconsistency makes her realistic beliefs collide with the narrated discourse which is full of phantasies; she is a character that tends to practical thinking, a thing that makes the ideological conflict between the two sisters poignant and influential.

Bradbury formulates a narrative discourse that recollects and describes a series of actions or episodes in the life of human characters. For Simpson (2004), such a discourse, “comprises two clauses which are temporally ordered, such that a change in their order will result in a change in the way we interpret the assumed chronology of the narrative events” (18). Furthermore, Genette connects this narrative chronology to the study of “the temporal order” of the narrative discourse (1980: 35). Commenting on the story’s thematic characterization, Louchart and Aylett (2004) state that interactive characters such as Anna and Juliet live with the effects of their actions; such characters such are “narrative engines” with no control over their “virtual lives” and with limited choices (507). Meantime, Frank is another character who is as equal as Anna and Juliet in playing significant roles. Frank is an imaginary character invented by Anna’s sub consciousness. Despite being a character with no dramatical presence in the story, and we hardly see him in the plot except through Anna’s cognitive realm. However, he is a character of a real active and influential presence in the past life of Anna. He might be her lover or finance in the past, but now he is dead/absent. The reason for his death is mysterious, and his past constitutes a packaged world, but we get little information about his life through Anna’s mental processes during her narrative.

3.3 Narrative Vision

The story has two narrative centers; the first is the major one that manifests the external cognitive milieu of both Juliet and Anna, while the second is the internal one that embodies the individual milieu of the characters. The latter thoroughly dominates the plot, in which two narrative paths arise from the interference of the two centers. An external narrator tells the major basic center, represented by an implied author in an objective narrative way. Furthermore, Monika Fludernik (2009) states that the narrator is a “philosopher or moralist who articulates universally valid propositions, especially in the case of sentences in the so-called gnomic present” (27). In this respect, Bradbury presents his sole narrator in this way to delve into the heads of his characters that have their agenda and expectations in a world of absurdity and confusion. Meantime, a dramatized narrator assimilated by Anna, subjectively narrates the internal center. She sometimes uses the first person, when talking about herself, and at other times, she uses the third person to talk about Frank and the woman whom she mirrors.

Such a dual narrative yields a double perspective; on the one hand, there is a perspective that assumes a comprehensive vision, manifested by the implied author, whose role is limited in depiction and observation. The narrator tells us that, “It was an afternoon of rain, and lamps lighted against the gray. For a long while, the two sisters had been in the dining-room” (Bradbury). This narrator is an omniscient one who observes the characters and their behaviors and thoughts. According to Fludernik(2009), a narrator of any type has a basic narrative task which is to present “the fictional world,” where the narrator “comments or expounds” (27). On the other hand, there is a narrow and subjective perspective, manifested by the internal narrator, whose role is entitled to the life experience of Anna herself, “It just came to me. There’s actually a city under a city. A dead city, right here, right



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under our feet” (Bradbury). Then, the narration of the two centers overlaps, the internal and the external, resulting in a fused style, in which the external narrator accompanies the internal narrator. The American writer Colleen Eagan (2014) argues that there are certain facets of a text’s narration; they are “part of the narrative voice,” which states the manner the story is narrated; either by “fully omniscient, limited omniscient, and objective” narrator. In this light, Bradbury’s narrative examines cross-cultural conflicts of human societies, using third person narrator, techniques of flashbacks, and a stream consciousness. Moreover, Bradbury’s fiction embodies both “external focalization,” “internal focalization,” and “zero focalization,” in which he depicts his characters’ physical countenance, actions, diction, and thoughts” (Genette, 1980: 56).

The story’s process of narration entails an omniscient narrator who is familiar with almost everything about the dynamic characters and actions in the story. This process gives a reason for a dominant technique of stream of consciousness in the narrative plot, which enables readers to invade the heads of such characters, exploring their feelings, emotions, thoughts, and dreams or expectations. Hence, Bradbury emphasizes the basic external settings that constitute a source of internal conflicts and anxieties. Sometimes, the voice of the implied author is heard, and at other times, the voice of Anna comes loud in “Didn’t you ever think of the Cisterns before? They’re all through the town, there’s one for every street, and you can walk in them without bumping your head, and they go everywhere and finally go down to the sea” (Bradbury). Anna says these words while fascinated by the rain falling on the pavement outside the home, and then she disappears into the net of bars at the crossing nearby. In his article, “Why Do the Heavens Beckon Us?,” Christian Ylagan argues that Bradbury’s “characters reflect [a] paradoxical desire to establish home while in exile” (2017: 32).

Stylistically, the two narrative centers form one narrative path, yet each one is chronologically independent. While the present of the narrative is confined to a rainy evening in the essential center, it is flashbacked in the first passages of the story. In the preface, the narrator says, “The rain whispered on the street and fell upon the closed lid all the rest of the night,” and it ends where darkness sweeps the room of the sisters (Bradbury). Meanwhile, the time of the internal plot spans for years between the past and the present, foreshadowing the future and creating a dynamic plot of both centers. In addition to having two narrative times, linear and multi-dimensional, the story has two patterns of places. The first one is realistic, where the two sisters spend a long time in a dialogue in the dining room. For Barry, the dialogue is “the purest example of the synchrony of the story time with the narrative time” (2009: 183). The second one is imaginative, where the underworld in the dead city becomes a part of the metaphorical structure of the frustrated Anna and a symbol of her spiritual vacuum in a world devoid of any objective or purpose. Anna says, “I know just what it’s like under the pavement, in the big square cistern [...] It’s all empty from the weeks with nothing but sunshine [...] The whole cistern is like a dry, hollow camel bone in a desert, waiting” (Bradbury). Thus, Bradbury evokes paradoxical images to expose modern life absurdity as a universal phenomenon, in which people lose trust in everything around and life becomes senseless. Such paradoxical images are suggestive when Anna tells Juliet that Frank is paradoxically sick and good-looking, “Yes. Very ill and very handsome. You know how it is with a man made handsome by illness? Illness brings out the bones in the face” (Bradbury). Thus, Bradbury offers a fictitious modernist narrative to present Anna’s conflicting character.

Moreover, Bradbury evokes thematic signs and symbols to promote his themes of fantasy and absurdity in grim human life. For instance, the narrator tells us that “Anna didn’t reply, so Juliet went back to her needle. There was no color in the room; neither of the two sisters added any color to it. Anna held her head to the window for five minutes” (Bradbury). This symbolic description suggests both characters’ feelings of destruction, loss, and fragmentation. For Whiffen(2013), Bradbury thematically “uses narrative structure, imagery, and characterization to exaggerate and create the oppression and conflict,” needed to expose a world of grimness and loss. Also, the narrative structure has its own “communicative level” that comprises characterization as one of the major aesthetic and semantic techniques that bestow narrative energy and intensity on the whole story (Fludernik, 2009: 48). Accordingly, the text has its binary structure made of the two centers of the narrative process. The two figures of the first center are Anna and Juliet, while the other center includes Frank and the woman with



whom Anna identifies. Based on its narrative structure, the story signifies both the entities and the characteristics of powerful modern prose that invokes readers' identification and moments of suspense. For example, Anna's descriptive statement, "A man ... and a woman. Down in that cistern, under the road" stands for a narrative object and its features that make readers identify with Anna herself (Bradbury). Thus, Bradbury presents his own artistic and thematic diction, characterization, the point of view, and discourse, evoking the major stylistic features of modern fiction. Then, he endeavors to "create structures where the sign plays freely, and the reader finds occasion for practical criticism and interactive interpretation" (Birch, 1989: 163). So, the main center enacted by the two sisters in the realistic world constitutes the primary tale, and the internal narrative center is an independent one. Hence, the internal center is described as an altruistic sub story; a linear story that is narratively different from the content of the first story, as suggested by Genette. Here, Genette argues that exposing events and actions entails a "temporal level of narrative with respect to which anachrony is defined as such" (1980: 48). However, The Cistern constitutes an autistic story for Anna, for it cognitively and emotionally explains Anna's life in the past and present.

For the sake of the story's narrative centers, there is another narrative technique in the story: foreshadowing manifested in Anna's attempt to reveal the leading actions from her past and restore the secrets of her own life. It is through her narration eye that readers can understand the significance of the tender, sentimental tone that discloses a lot about her internal tensions. When Anna recalls the story of Frank, she does so to narrate her story; once she thinks of Frank, she ends up thinking of her human self. Therefore, she uses the technique of foreshadowing to connect the past and the present with the future. Thus, there are two semantic levels of Anna's narrative discourse: the first level is dedicated to Frank, and the other is dedicated to her. In this sense, Anna's anticipation disturbs her future; she uncertainly lets her mask foreshadow her expected end. And, the more she advances in her narration, the more her life secrets are revealed and resolved; she dramatizes her death in advance. Meanwhile, the presentation of the actions in the major external narrative center is simple, but it is very complex in the internal center. Louchart and Aylett (2004) view the story as "a narrative [with] a logical sequence of actions," and every action possesses some relative functions (509). For instance, when Anna relives her tragedy with Frank in the past, she sinks into her narrative phantasies. This narrative's ambiguity relies upon the gap of the precise time in the past where Anna's story happens.

Narratively, the story is a matter of an hour in daydreaming while standing next to the window, Anna whispers to Juliet, "All this water put me to sleep a while, I guess, and then I began to think about the rain and where it came from and where it went and how it went down those little slots in the curb" (Bradbury). If the matter of the story is like what Anna states in this paragraph, then she may have lied about her narrative about the underworld; therefore, this story is misleading and unreliable. However, if Frank's presence is a reality and his story has happened in the past, as stated in Juliet's words "Poor Frank," he is no longer anywhere in the present. His mother spoiled him for the entire world! So, he saw the cistern and saw how secret and fine it was. Oh, poor Frank. And poor Anna, poor me, with only a sister. Oh, Julie, why didn't I hold onto Frank when he was here? Why didn't I fight to win him from his mother?" Accordingly, Juliet has told the truth about the underworld, and the narrative is reliable, manifesting its genius plot for it transforms the current reality into a temporal flow, using the technique of stream of consciousness that deletes the boundaries between reality and fantasy. The story then is a true manifestation of Bradbury's "fantasy, science fiction, and weird/horror pulp" (Eller and Touponce, 2004: 44).

2.4 The Narrator's Function and the Narratee in the Process of Phantasy:

Each narrative is characterized by a narrator as a mediator between the author and the story, and by a narratee as a mediator between the narrator and readers/listeners. In this sense, Gerald Prince (1980) affirms that the narratees are responsible for the basic functions of a narrative, one of which is that the narratee "assists the reader in identifying the implied author's emphasis upon certain theme" (23). Meantime, the narrator has a discursive function that deals with the "communicative situation of narration, in which he addresses the narratee



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and meta-narrative comments on the story-telling process (Fludernik, 2009: 27). Obviously, in this narrative, there are two narrators: the external undramatized one embodied in the voice of the implied author whose role is confined to the process of diachronically informing and describing things. This narrator-character enriches the text to perpetuate the narrative spontaneity. In this respect, utterly excluding the narrator is an unlikely matter throughout the narrative for this exclusion results in ridding the novel of its basic feature: fertilizing the readers' imagination. In this respect, Iser reinforces the significance of imagination, "the literary text needs the reader's imagination, which gives shape to the interaction of correlatives foreshadowed in the structure by the sequence of the sentences" (1978: 277). Although the imagination of a reader can run as fast and far as the reader lets it, the text's correlatives would only permit a reasonable amount of expectation for the reader.

Moreover, the implied author in Bradbury's narrative is limited-omniscient characterized by ignorance; he does not enable his self to invade the consciousness of his characters, he also knows when to appear and to disappear. Based on the concepts of authorship and readership, the narrator and the objective reader are "recognized as the same 'I' in the first-person narrative;" the first is the narrated self and the second is the experienced self (Shigematsu, 2016: 51). Both conflicting selves offer fused viewpoints about modern human life that is full of absurdities, confusion, fragmentation, disappointment. Bradbury blends both "the metanarrative of speculation and the metanarrative of emancipation" to delve into the minute details of modern human life and emotional and physical hardships (Raeisian, 2013: 10). Meantime, the author has a low-toned voice and does not directly tell us what readers would like to know, leaving this process to the characters themselves, a thing that bestows on the text an immense aesthetic flavor and offers readers a chance to participate in reproducing the text creatively.

Semantically, Bradbury relies heavily on his "literary, psychological, and philosophical theory" that simulates modernized realities (Eller and Touponce, 2004: 104). On the other hand, the second narrator (Anna) has a double function: as a narrator and as a major character who reflects her presence as a narrator who observes and depicts people and things around her and identifies with a certain character. Anna starts her story by daydreaming, "No, really. Didn't you ever think of the cisterns before?" (Bradbury). Here, when Juliet asks her about the cistern, she responds "It just came to me. There's a city under a city. A dead city, right here, right under our feet" (Ibid). Then Juliet realizes the dreaming nature of her sister and fears her sinking in such a sort of thinking, telling Anna "Come away from the window. That rain's done something to you" (Ibid). But, Anna does not respond, and later the dream becomes a dangerous game that may lead her to destruction. Anna immensely identifies with her narrative's heroine in a full psychological consistency; she becomes haunted by the image of the dead woman she shapes, "It takes death to make a woman really beautiful, and it takes death by drowning to make her most beautiful of all. Then all the stiffness is taken out of her, and her hair hangs up on the water like a drift of smoke" (Ibid). In this prophecy, the metaphorical death in the story attains a real meaning that Anna translates into her suicide. Thus, Anna may have retaliated for Frank against herself as she realized that she is the cause of his death.

On her active part, Juliet is an objective narratee whose role is to enrich and deepen the plot of the imagined story. In this sense, as long as the narrator narrates everything, he/she is a different character from the reader. The former is an imagined character who immediately responds to actions and events around, embodying his/her character. In Louchart's and Aylett's view (2004), such a story is "episodic in nature" that presents dynamic events and characters (p. 507). Meanwhile, the reader lays his expectations until the end of the imagined story, he/she is also an abstract character whose identity cannot be figured out. For Ylagan, Bradbury presents his ambiguous "perceptions of notions of identity and selfhood" (2017: 29). Moreover, the narratee is characterized by spontaneity with a lot of rhetoric, manifested by his/her instantly stated reaction, while the reader has the chance to interpret the discourse. The narratee is concerned with the immediate narrator alone, they both constitute the momentum of the poetic narrative as "there is no narrative without a narrator without the entity" (Iser, 1978: 9). However, the reader aspires to fill up the ambiguities in the entire text and then reproduces a paratext. Also, Bradbury's plain language presents readers with horrific events that excite and



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surprise those readers. This language is rich with powerful suggestive images, which allow readers to imagine the narrative events realistically and relate them to the characters.

Stylistically, Bradbury evokes water images as a referent to rebirth and revival for both Anna and Frank. For instance, the images of the rain and water that submerges the cistern imply spiritual water for Anna and Frank together. In addition, Frank leaves his state of death-in-life in the human world to a watery world where he can find tranquility and peacefulness of body and mind. On her part, Anna indulges in a watery demise that eventually suggests her survival and rebirth. Antithetically, it is only through this deadly spiritual water that brings a meaningful life to both characters. Bradbury describes the rain as a character who shares with others their concerns and interests, "That rain's done something to you," says Juliet to Anna (Bradbury). The personification of the rain enables readers to identify with the Anna while it is being consumed by the fantasy and illusions of the dead city. This repulsive image shocks and horrifies readers. Bradbury presents configurative nonhuman objects such as the rain, cistern, window, and tree; all are common to humans. Accordingly, readers should not worry about the realistic reader; rather, they should show a major concern about the narratee in the plot, being a part of the narrative. For Prince (1980) the narratee helps to establish a narrative framework, in a way the narratee becomes "a spokesman for the moral of the work" (23). Both the narratee and the narrator exchange suggestive words and concerns express them to readers. However, readers do not feel this narratee's presence, except the narrator's cognitive field. For instance, the narrator tells his readers – including the narratees-, "The room got darker, Juliet sewed on, and Anna talked and told all she saw in her mind. She told how the water rose and took the woman with it, unfolding her out and loosening her and standing her full upright in the cistern" (Bradbury). Here, the narrative distance between the narrator and the narratee is dissolved in the stream of consciousness that informs the readers of Anna-Juliet's dreams and passions. In the fiction narrative plot, there is a constant shift in the narrative voices, manifested in the tongue of the narrator, who, in this case, is seen as a cameraman or an observer, reporting events, episodes, and actions among mainly the dynamic characters. Creating his fictional characters, Bradbury encourages his readers to contemplate their relationships with the environment and its "dynamics" and to realize their true human character (Ylagan, 2017: 34).

Furthermore, the passive narrator in the story plays the sole role of a commentator on the narrative, using brief, flat, and ordinary phrases, such as "of course, well, and what else." In this view, Barthes argues that a narrative is adiscursiveentity that is an extended "large 'sentence' (...) in the same way that a sentence, allowing for certain specifications, is a small 'discourse'" (1975: 240). Such a discourse is enough to understand the qualities and identity of this narrator, a thing that makes the narrator's authority totalitarian. This authority results in a similar one for the narratee who internalizes it to endure the narrative and its plot, which ends with "The rain whispered on the street and fell upon the closed lid all the rest of the night" (Bradbury). Here, readers get some stylistic devices such as personification, description, imagery, and flashbacking." In this sense, Simpson illustrates that "narrative discourse represents the realized text, the palpable piece of language which is produced by a story-teller in a given interactive context" (2004:20). Another stereotype is the dialectical narratee, who manifests cause and effect equation. Juliet (narratee) intentionally provokes the narrator's (Anna's) grudge and annoys her by raising curious questions such as how, when, and why things happened, saying fewer words such as "Oh, What, This and this, and right back." Such questions and words would reveal the mysterious centers of the narrated story. This provocative narratee not only shows objections to things but rather she seeks to compete with the narrator to become both a narrator and a narratee. Again, for Prince, the narratee is "someone, whom the narrator addresses," the character who receives this narrator's voice (1980: 7).

Likewise, Juliet plays an active role in shaping the thematic of the narrative through her dialogue with her sister, which reveals her energetic and significant personality that cultivates the text. The following words are taken from a lengthy dynamic dialogue when Anna narrates to Juliet the imagined man and woman sitting in that cistern under the road,



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“Must they have a reason?” ... They’re in love, these two.” ... “They’ve been there for years and years,” ... “Dead. He’s dead and she’s dead.” “... a man made handsome by illness? Illness brings out the bones in the face.” (Bradbury)

This dialogue, dominated by a stream of consciousness, implies that Juliet represents a cynical and sarcastic stereotype, as a narratee. While she is supposed to be immensely surprised by this exotic story, she does not pay great importance to what is narrated to her, mocking the story and satirizing the narrator. Both sisters stand opposite to each other on intellectual, cultural, and ideological levels. For Brown, Bradbury presents “cultural narratives” that characterize individuals, places, or actions that have serious “thematic content across individuals and settings and are transmitted through images” (2017: 209). So, readers may think in other dialogues between the two sisters in the narrative. In this effect, the role of the omniscient narrator is to generate identification and confidence in readers’ awareness. It is when Anna and Juliet launch another vivid dialogue,

Anna: But wouldn't it be fun ... To live in the Cistern and peek up at people through the slots and see them and them not see you? Like when you were a child and played hide-and-seek and nobody found you, and there you were in their midst all the time, all sheltered and hidden and warm and excited. I'd like that. That's what it must be like to live in the cistern.

Juliet: Sometimes, the way you talk, I think Mother found you under a tree one day and brought you home and planted you in a pot and grew you to this size and there you are, and you'll never change. (Bradbury)

Juliet tries to stop Anna to end the story that may bring to the latter aversion and boredom and to the former more grief and pain, creating an emotive and intellectual balance. The following dialogue, as a dominant artistic technique, illustrates the mixed tone of both characters:

Juliet: “Stop it, this minute, do you hear, this minute!” ... “Are you finished?”

Anna: “What?”

Juliet: “If you're done, come, help me finish this, I'll be forever at it.” (Ibid)

Here, Juliet refers to Anna’s story that does not appeal to her, which seems endless as many other modern life stories. Through this conflict, Juliet fairly succeeds to cultivate the narrative story significantly. Thus, Bradbury’s fiction implies a “skeptic of technology,” which advocates “the originality of science” that matizes the endless conflicts among human society, individuals, and modern industrialized civilization (Raeisian, 2013: 2). In this respect, Juliet makes Anna reveal a new surprising matter; without her, readers do not know that the heroes of Anna’s story are dead, and Frank is like other men of similar psychology. Bradbury’s story then belongs to psycho-narration, in which it invades Anna’s internal consciousness and cultural values. So, Juliet’s supplementary questions open new horizons to determine the circumstances of the story.

Based on the structural tension of the story, Anna addresses Juliet, “All the schools and etiquettes and teachings in the world can't make a woman move with this dreamy ease, supple and reply and fine” (Bradbury). Implicitly, Anna suffers from an internal conflict manifested in her disability psychologically accommodate with the emerging technological structures and patterns. For Liu (2009) Anna also undergoes an external conflict in which she “struggles against frustration ... developed by a series of scenes,” which create moments of suspense and mysterious destination (143). Once Bradbury characterizes the narratee (Juliet) within the frame of the above-mentioned stereotypes, as in the first and the second case the implied and the passive - he will not achieve the purpose of his story. Rather, he intentionally composes Juliet’s polemic discourse because he knows that her objections certainly evoke her human nature. For Prince, “The narratee is one of the fundamental elements of all narration ... [whose representation] can lead to a more sharply delineated reading and a deeper characterization of the work” (1980:23). In this respect, Bradbury introduces flat characters who are often passive and cannot be a source of temptation for human temperaments. They are also static characters with overabundant silence, and then readers will realize only one face of their common appearances. Dynamic



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characters, such as Anna and Juliet, keep raising argumentative questions that suggest their spirited personalities, which refuse immutability and silence, and then they are multi-dimensional characters who represent the essence of human life in dynamicity and durability. Ostensibly, dramatic narrative techniques empower the narrator to explore his characters' consciousness and allusive emotive indices of modern humanity. In this view, Shigematsu (2016) argues that characters' psychology in any narrative helps readers "experience, perceive, know... what is happening" for such modern individual characters (51).

Stylistic techniques play a significant role in the way readers receive and appreciate the events and themes of any text. Both implied reader and author interpretively guide public readers and scholars through the narrative, being influenced by the mood, mode, and tone the narrative is presented. For Iser, the implied reader as a concept has his roots firmly planted in the structure of the text; he is a construct and in no way to be identified with any real reader (1978: 34). In this sense, Eagan (2014) emphasizes that "narrative mode refers to the way that the author chooses to convey information to the readers and to articulate the plot of the story." Bradbury employs various artistic techniques to cast a light on his major events, actions, and dominant ideas and thematic concerns. Based on the detailed plot, Bradbury foreshadows the potential dangers in the future, which jeopardize humankind, non-human creatures, and achievements. Commenting on Bradbury's narrative devices, Whiffen (2013) argues that Bradbury employs different narrative techniques to expose his main characters to public readers in a "dystopian society." Ostensibly, Bradbury uses diverse structures, indicative diction, and figurative images to present his unique stories full of puzzling mood. He characterizes both places and persons, "In the rainy season they'll live. But in the dry seasons [...] they'll lie in little hidden niches, like those Japanese water flowers, all dry and compact and old and quiet"(Bradbury). Therefore, Bradbury typically uses juxtaposed sentences of various lengths full of images and signs to convey his plot and aestheticism his writing style. Also, Bradbury uses staccato sentences to express the dialogue between the two sisters. In this regard, Bradbury's images are so ominous for some readers that they create a jeopardizing reality to readers. Such stylistic techniques thoroughly enable Bradbury to ingrain his ideas in his readers' minds. The futuristic tone of the story serves as a cautionary implication to the future generations that societal problems will be so hard to resolve. The temperament in this story emphasizes the grim implications of a modern human world where nonhuman objects overcome humanity.

3. Conclusion

In the light of the inevitable twinning of linguistic theory and literary critical interpretation and appreciation, Ray Bradbury's narrative techniques constitute his own thematic and aesthetic discourse. Bradbury's *The Cistern* is a story that embodies thematic narrative centers that entail using some stylistic techniques to convey its basic themes and ideas. It is a modern literary text that has its ideological significances, which necessitate evoking creative devices to deconstruct its social and realistic codes of fragmentation, absurdity, miscommunication, lack of trust, among others. Bradbury invents and invests his major characters like Juliet, Anna, and Frank, who lost their human sense of joy, reality, spirit. He evokes characters from social reality; they interact and express their feelings, thoughts, and anxieties. Such characters seem linguistic images and expressions of an integrated alienated social world. Bradbury presents his characters based on his interaction with daily experimental reality an imagination, aiming to present a vision of the modern world in which he lives. The characters are vivid reflections of stereotypical and realistic embodiment of social and cultural consciousness. They become occupied by modern estranged life and its preoccupations and concerns.

Accordingly, the story tries to create an alternative reality, away from dilemmas, internal and external conflicts, and mysteries. To depict such concerns, Bradbury composes his narrative discourse with technical centers of characterization, monologue, focalization, point of view, chronotopes, dialogue, paratexts, prolepsis, and analysis. Such thematic narrative techniques offer a fresh interpretative community for understanding his narrative characterization centers and serve as a receptionist case study for scholars and critics of modern literary criticism. Moreover, with these techniques, the narrator frequently takes the reader (narratee) by the



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hand back and forth into the fictional socio-political history of the story, delivering denotatively and associatively the emerging parallels between contemporary events, their sources, courses and future.

Furthermore, the analysis of Bradbury's artistic elements is based on the analysis of descriptive thematological assumptions as a method to analyze diction, narrative structure, rhetorical style, and contextual tools. The article concluded that Bradbury uses impressionistic tools to embody the bi-faces of the real world that implies the implicit and implied realism of modern man. Therefore, the paper draws on Gérard Genette's analytical method of study of the narrative discourse, among others. Finally, the article recommends the use of creative literary critical techniques that use artistic and stylistic approaches as tools in the analysis of high-end literary works of a realistic and human nature.

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