

Analysis of Women's Characters in the Novel "In Khiyaban Sorát Gir Nadarad"

Authors:

Fatemeh Abdellahi^{1,*}.

¹Mester's student in the persian language and literature program at Isfahan state University, Iran.

Corresponding Author:

Fatemeh Abdellahi

Mester's student in the persian language and literature program at Isfahan state University, Iran

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ABSTRACT:

The novel, as a mirror of real life, is a way to write and record what has actually happened or what has been created in the writer's imagination inspired by events. Female novelists often write about women's concerns, and their writings depict the bitterness and pain that the patriarchal system has inflicted on women. This article aims to understand the wounded characters and their interaction with life's adversities by examining the novel "This Street Has No Speed Bumps" by Maryam Jahani. The conclusion is that in this novel, women fall into three categories. The first group consists of powerful women who do not want to submit to men's domination and pursue their goals, experiencing many hardships in life, but are content to stand on their own feet. The second group consists of women who want to break free from this system and are incompatible with it, but lack the ability to build an independent life or succumb to family and society, leading to the destruction of their lives. The third group comprises women who make a life with all the good and bad, and try to familiarize other women with this way of living. More than being happy, they are incapable, but they are satisfied with their lives and do not complain, continuing to insist on their traditional beliefs.

Keywords: Women, Character, Novel, Static, Dynamic

INTRODUCTION:

The novel is a complete mirror of human lived life. In the contemporary period, with the emergence of novels and short stories, literature was revived. Iranian writers have made great progress over the hundred years of fiction writing, and in recent years, many women have taken up the pen and been active in depicting their own concerns and those of women in society. Novels by female writers are often replete with the adversities that befall women in patriarchal societies. Character is one of the main pillars of the novel, and without it, no story takes shape. The plot is created based on the events that happen to the protagonist. In every novel, there are different characters who are in conflict or interaction with each other, which causes conflict and incident. In novels by female writers, these conflicts are often internal and intellectual, occurring between the individual and society and traditional thinking. The narrator can introduce the character to the reader in several ways, and this is very important in understanding the character. In characterization, several factors are important: the appearance of the characters, moral characteristics, statics and dynamics, conflicts, relationships, reasonable or abnormal behaviors. The novel "This Street Has No Speed Bumps" narrates the life of a woman who does not want to have feminine characteristics and more readily accepts herself in a

masculine role. In this article, with the aim of understanding the female characters and how they are portrayed by the narrator/writer, we examine the characterization of this novel and answer the question of what specific characteristics women have in the narrative that distinguish them from men, and whether their character is comprehensive and dynamic or no transformation occurs in them and they submit to their destiny.

Research Questions:

1. How is the characterization of women carried out in the mentioned novel?
2. What is the interaction of women with the patriarchal world?
3. What is the main concern of the women in this novel?

Hypotheses:

1. The characters are introduced through the narrator's description and dialogue.
2. Some women fight against the patriarchal system while others come to terms with it.
3. The concern of housewives is maintaining their married life, but the main character seeks her dreams and independence.

Research Objectives:

1. Understanding the main concerns of women in the novel
2. Understanding how women interact with the patriarchal system

Literature Review:

Eskandari et al. (2020) in the article "Feminist Critique of 'This Street Has No Speed Bumps' by Maryam Jahani" examined the feminist components of this novel.

Jahan Ahmadi (2023) in the article "Critique of the Novel 'This Street Has No Speed Bumps'" analyzed this story and considered it a realist novel with a modernist approach.

RESEARCH METHOD:

This research is carried out through a descriptive-analytical method.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1. Theoretical Foundations

The Novel

In Abrams' literary terms dictionary, the novel is described as follows:

"The novel refers to a collection of writings that all possess the characteristics of lengthy fictional works and are written in prose. Compared to shorter narrative forms, the novel allows for the presence of more diverse characters, a more intricate and expansive plot, a broader social environment, and a more detailed and precise examination of the characters." (Abrams, 130:2001)

This definition outlines the characteristics of the novel as well as its difference from the short story.

In the dictionary of literary terms, it is stated that the common feature of all definitions of the novel is its narrative nature, which is also the distinguishing point from the short story. (Meghdadi, 1999: 258)

In another definition, we read: "A novel is a lengthy story that places one or more characters in a series of interconnected events. These events must move toward a specific goal. Novels are usually long and complex, and the course of events in them is inspired by human experiences." (Noruzi, 98:1996)

Mir Sadeghi considers the novel's difference from other fictional works to lie in its undefined length, meaning that if a fictional work is less than thirty to forty thousand words, it is called a tale, short story, or novella, but the novel has no maximum length and is an account and narration of life, involving conflict, characters, action, scene, plot, and theme. (Mir-Sadeghi, 1997: 24)

Character

"A character is a fictional individual who, depending on the type and genre of the story and whether it is short or long, as well as the character's position as main or secondary, possesses qualities that distinguish them from others." (Bi-Niaz, 2013: 69)

Each character has a specific realm of function and performs certain roles. Sometimes a character may enter the domain of another character's roles (Khadish, 2008: 118). This means that a helper character may become villainous, or vice versa. Therefore, one should not expect a character's function to always remain the same, which applies to dynamic characters who undergo positive or negative transformations or reach perfection over the course of the story. A static character, however, is one who does not change or undergoes minimal change throughout the story (Fuladi Talari, 1998: 62). A dynamic character constantly changes and evolves, with an aspect of their personality, beliefs, or worldview transforming. In other words, the events of the story occur around them, not within them (Mir Sadeghi, 2001: 94).

In a given narrative, each character can have more than one role, and it is also possible for multiple characters to have one role. Propp extracts the constant elements of stories from the body of specific elements. The particular events and participants make up the variable elements of stories and the statements extracted from them. The constant element is called a function, and according to Propp, it is the role of the character defined by its importance in advancing the action, even when the character changes, the functions remain constant. (Abdollahian, 2001: 33) Propp also classifies the attributes of characters into three main groups: the appearance of the characters, their specific mode of entry into the story, and finally, their place of residence (Abbasi, 2014: 310).

From the perspective of some structuralists, "in a story, the character is the structuring element. The objects and events of the story exist for the sake of the character, and in fact, objects and events are only coherent and believable in relation to the character." (Raymond Queneau, 2008: 51)

Characterization

Characterization is the creation of story characters, each of whom the writer brings to life with specific moral and spiritual traits in the world of the story and performance. The writer can create their characters in three ways: as an impartial omniscient narrator, as in characterization through interior monologue where characters are introduced through their inner thoughts and speech; another way is through direct description and exposition, which is seen in most novels; and the third way is through the demonstration of the characters' actions, which James Joyce employed more often. (Moghadadi, 1999: 335)

From a structural perspective, the manner of a character's entry into the story is also important. Characters are introduced in stories in several ways: 1. Direct presentation of character traits through the narrator's explanation and description 2. Introducing the character through their actions 3. Introducing the character through their speech (Mir Sadeghi, 2001: 92-87). Bi-Niaz says: In a strong text, the methods of characterization may be a combination of two or more types, such as direct description, dialogue, action, and

physical and bodily characteristics. (Bi-Niaz, 2013: 70) Other methods such as interior monologue or other characters' speech about each other can also be mentioned. At the same time, the narrator may use a combination of these elements to introduce the characters.

Static Character:

"A character who does not change or undergoes little change, in other words, is the same at the end of the story as at the beginning, and if the events of the story affect them, the effect is minimal. Usually, stories, whether short or long, often have static characters." (Mir Sadeghi, 2001, 93-96)

Dynamic Character:

"Unlike the previous case, a dynamic character is one who changes by the end of the story and undergoes a spiritual transformation. Of course, the character's transformation can be profound or superficial." (Parsi Nezhad, 103-104:1999)

2.2. Story Summary

Shohreh is the first character of the story who narrates her life. She is a taxi driver and due to her interest in this job and lack of feminine delicacy, she has divorced her husband and lives in a rented apartment. Mahboobeh, the narrator's cousin, has separated from her husband and due to her father's bad behavior, has taken refuge with the narrator and lives with her. This woman had a young daughter whom she hasn't seen for six months because her husband took the child to Tehran and refuses to let her mother see her. Mahboobeh suffers from depression and lives in hope of seeing her daughter, while her husband keeps her waiting with empty promises. Shohreh's mother is a traditional woman who is upset by her daughter's divorce and constantly admonishes her. Babak, Shohreh's cousin, loves her and they grew up together, both having feelings for each other, but due to an incident in their youth where Babak burns a few cats alive by setting fire to an abandoned house, Shohreh becomes disgusted with him and marries someone else. After Shohreh's divorce, Babak divorces his own wife and tries to win Shohreh back. Shohreh pays no attention to anyone and continues her work until one day a well-off looking man gets into her taxi and leaves his bag full of dollars and personal documents behind. From his documents, Shohreh learns that he is a wrestling coach. She and Mahboobeh go to the wrestling club to return the bag. From here, a relationship forms between Shohreh and the strange man named Farhad. The two communicate by phone and text for a while, and sometimes go to restaurants together. The narrator is drawn to the man and doesn't mind the connection with him. Meanwhile, Babak buys Shohreh a formal dress and ring, asking her to wear them to her nephew Soran's circumcision ceremony, but she refuses. Eventually, on the day Shohreh's mother holds Soran's circumcision ceremony for her grandson, Farhad asks the narrator to

go on a trip outside the city with him. During this meeting, the narrator realizes that Farhad intends to sexually exploit her, and she frees herself from him and goes to the family ceremony. Before getting out of the car, she notices something. Mahboobeh, who had lost hope of seeing her daughter, after completing a strange symbolic painting showing her severe depression, had thrown herself out the window and died. The celebration turns into mourning, and in the final pages of the book, as Shohreh pours her heart out at Mahboobeh's grave, she tells her that recently another woman in their city has started driving a taxi, which is good news.

2.3. Story Analysis

The differences in ideology between men and women also lead to differences in their perspectives on the world. From a psychological viewpoint, women are more meticulous and detail-oriented than men. Men's attention is always drawn to generalities, and many intricate and subtle matters escape their notice. For this reason, what causes distress to women might seem strange to them. This kind of perspective can also be seen in women's writings. In novels by women, the corners of their realm—that which they are occupied with—are illuminated, as they capably express it. On the other hand, in the opposition between men and women and the judgments and rights they have, the perspectives are set against each other. Women's works are not necessarily feminist, but they often stand in opposition to the patriarchal system and the problems women face at home and before the law.

"It seems that female writers, instead of emphasizing the historical roles of the characters in their works, strive to shape the world of their stories through the sensibilities and mental experiences of the narrator and her sense of individual identity. Hence, they display a more contemporary mentality in their works, as they seek to respond to the need for awareness of individual identity rather than dwelling on social excitements. They are more attuned to individual and internal sensibilities. Knowledge of the zeitgeist also arises through attention to one's own condition." (Mir Abedini, 2004: 66)

2.3.1. Types of Characters

In this story, we see three types of characters:

1. The Successful Incompatible Character

There is only one character in this story that has this trait, and that is the narrator herself who, despite being divorced from her husband, has been successful in life and endures difficulties. She possesses important characteristics:

Masculine Tendencies

The narrator of the story is a woman with masculine tendencies. The language of the story is influenced by these tendencies, and the novel begins with this sentence: "I shove the nozzle into the fuel tank hole"

(Jahani, 1398: 5). Her inner dialogues are crude: "I hit the gutter" (ibid: 14) "My brain radiator cools down" (ibid: 30).

In the traditional world, female upbringing is different from male upbringing, and there are things that are forbidden for women and not well-regarded conventionally, but this character does not care about these things and wants to do her own work. "The observable feminine and masculine differences between the two sexes are not innate but rather the result of gender socialization and sex-role standardization. The differential treatment of girls and boys begins more or less at birth and prevents the full flowering of female human potential." (Abbott, 288)

All of Shohreh's actions and thoughts resemble those of men who do hard labor and sometimes enjoy harassing people, venting their frustrations by blasting their car stereos or cutting people off on the road.

She is disgusted by women who think femininity lies in wearing formal dresses, dancing, childbearing, and housekeeping, and from the start wished to become a taxi driver.

The humorous sentences the narrator uses show her disregard for those around her and their opinions, preferring to act against everyone's wishes: "When I took her shopping, I drove in such a way that she would cling with both hands to whatever was at hand, like the door handle, door, dashboard and center console, and on the way back I made sure her blood was purified and she wouldn't miss taking her cholesterol medication for a few days" (ibid: 6). The narrator's behavior toward her mother is not affectionate, and she only fulfills her duty.

The narrator sees a woman driver sitting behind the wheel of a 206 at a gas station, with the attendant filling her car. To the narrator, the woman looks tired. The narrator guesses she has come from an office, shop, or court and compares herself to the woman, noting that despite her strenuous job as a driver, she is not tired: "But I'm not tired, I never get tired. When I get to work, I become like a shock-resistant tank. In our big city, you won't find a woman who changes the damn gears with as much pleasure as I do, or when her pocket is full, gets a kick in her gut and does a little jig, kissing the side mirror of the Benz parked on the street and honking the car alarm." (Jahani, 2019: 6)

She talks about women who drive cautiously and don't know "the prideful feeling of the wide-eyed look of the mechanic's apprentice when taking the car over a pothole for an oil change" (ibid: 6).

Lack of Feminine Delicacy

"The second year of our marriage, when he saw I was gradually becoming coarse, he tried not to treat me like a t-shirt. Not to toss me aside. He got to work. He wanted me to become someone else. He wrapped up saying: 'When you sit on the couch, don't spread your legs apart like a man...A woman without delicacy isn't even worth the devil's damnation'" (ibid: 56). She dislikes feminine clothing, especially if it has a skirt:

"Everything about the wedding was bearable except the bride's dress...When I took off the wedding dress, I realized then that I hate all dresses" (ibid: 81).

She likes to take big bites. She doesn't like being classy (ibid: 27). She even remembers from childhood refusing to wear a headscarf so Babak could take her out (ibid: 28).

Surprisingly, she likes to be a menace on the road, while women tend to be more cautious: "Where's my mother to beat her chest and symbolically claw at her face for her daughter? Where is she to see me side-swiping that fancy LX Persia Peugeot with this beat-up Pride?" (ibid: 42)

The Narrator's Relationship with Men

In most cases, the narrator's character can be understood through her actions. Baraheni says about character portrayal through behavior (action): "A person's behavior encompasses the greater part of their thoughts, feelings and deeds, and through the thoughtful, emotional or objective behavior of the characters, the storyteller grasps their situation" (Baraheni, 283:13). Naser Irani (1940) also considers the characters' actions defining in the story world, stating that if characters are vividly created, they reveal their worth through their deeds; especially through their speech, which is a kind of action (see: Irani, 200:2017).

Babak is Shohreh's cousin who loves her, but was rejected. After Shohreh's divorce and his own, he forcefully tries to win her over again.

A man gives her his phone number as he's getting out, and she tears it up right in front of him (ibid:21).

When a man advises her to fasten her seatbelt and drive slower, she snaps at him because she's not used to being told what to do: "Now those two bare wires in my brain have crossed. If he knew what a man's orders do to me, he'd have zipped it" (ibid:26). This narrator character challenges masculine superiority. Radical feminism sees male dominance as the root of oppression of women and rejects the class system (Woolf, 2010:346). "I half get out, slam my palm on the wet roof of the car: 'Hey brother! ...What kinda place is this where you can boss people around?'" (ibid:27) When the narrator wants to go to the gym to return the strange man's bag, she puts on makeup but wipes it off before getting out of the car so he doesn't get the wrong idea (ibid:49). With that said, she does need affection, and her femininity resurfaces when she feels attracted to Farhad: "Farhad calls and my phone becomes a piece of fire that burns both my hand and ear" (ibid:60). Elsewhere she says: "It's a good feeling to know someone doesn't lose interest in you. Hamed's infatuation and disinterest were unmatched and unparallelled" (ibid:55).

Self-Confidence

When Farhad talks about wrestling and how she could turn him into a wrestler, she confidently says something she doesn't believe herself:

"I could take down each of your students' shoulders to the mat right now without any training or coaching. Where's Mahboobeh so we can laugh together at my bullshit?" (ibid:140)

Determination

She was a determined girl who wrote in her middle school essay that she wanted to become a taxi driver (ibid:7). This job stayed in her mind since then, and to achieve it she even left her husband and family life, enduring all the taunts. She has feminist leanings and wants to be independent. Women's economic welfare and independence are central to Marxist feminist thought (Wolff, 2010:346).

When she used to get allowance from her husband, she saw herself as pathetic: "For nearly six years, seeing the allowance Hamed would leave on the kitchen counter before going to the shop, I saw myself as a pathetic woman whose only cheekiness was cracking sugar cubes and flower vases" (ibid:7).

Perseverance

"Thick skin is a blessing that doesn't come overnight. You have to hear enough of this kind of talk that your skin tells the rhino's 'what's up, bro?'" (ibid:10)

When she overcharges a boy for the fare and he protests, ready to fight, she makes a move but the boy just leaves: "'What's your deal? Think since you're a woman you can rip people off? God, look who's driving cabs in our town these days.'

I yank the hand brake. The hometown boy knows what that means (ibid:14).

Although she says her skin has thickened, this boy's behavior dampens her spirits (ibid:15).

The narrator doesn't back down against boys and doesn't ask for help: "A few boys leaning against the trees, laughing. One says 'I'll give you my number in case you need help.' Another says 'Promise to let me take you home and I'll change that flat for you'" (ibid:110).

She's not worried about standing by the roadside eating turnips and liver. She tells herself: "I'm Abbas body man's daughter and glad to be the unrivaled ruler of this body shop" (ibid:111).

Defending Women

The narrator is the defense attorney for women. His heart burns for Babak's wife who had obsessive-compulsive disorder and whom Babak divorced. (Ibid: 10)

"Didn't she do whatever you asked of her? Her modest clothes became a chador and veil because you wanted it. She gave up her makeup because you said you were disgusted by that 'clown act.' Her going out became conditional on your permission because you didn't like a loose woman." (Ibid: 11)

The narrator also goes shopping for Ms. Reyhani and suggests that she come live with him, even though his mother doesn't get along with her. (Ibid: 58-59)

Dynamism

Shohreh was a woman with goals who became trapped in family life, but at some point, she realized this wasn't her path and had to change direction, thus pursuing her desires. When she noticed her husband's abnormal behaviors, she decided to get a divorce. She thought to herself, "Why does he bring me the birth control pill every night, why is his phone locked with a passcode, why does he constantly check the time when he's home, and why doesn't he enjoy being with me? Why did my talent go to waste becoming a taxi driver instead of cooking delicious ghormeh sabzis or cleaning stains off the stove?" (Ibid: 25)

2. Incompatible, Unsuccessful Characters

The characters who rebel against the patriarchal system are not always successful; in fact, this rebellion and incompatibility leads to the destruction of their lives. In this novel, we see examples of such women.

Mahboobeh

Mahboobeh is a divorced woman who, after her divorce, had her daughter forcibly taken away by her ex-husband through the power of the law. He whisked the child off to Tehran and has since prevented the mother from seeing her little girl. The narrator has loved Mahboobeh since childhood, and they grew up together. After the divorce, Mahboobeh's father berated her and blamed her, leading Mahboobeh to attempt suicide several times by slitting her wrists, though she survived. The narrator's aunt, Mahboobeh's mother, suggests that Mahboobeh live with the narrator. Mahboobeh is a painter and had gifted a self-portrait to her husband when they married, but the man did not value this gift and crushed Mahboobeh's spirit. "Do you know which day my fear increased the most? The day I gave the painting to Mohsen. As soon as he unwrapped the gift and saw my portrait, he glanced at it carelessly and said, 'What good is a painting of you to me when I have the real thing?'" (Ibid: 74)

This woman separated from her abusive husband, hoping to live with her daughter, but the law took the daughter away from her, forcing her to attempt suicide. In fact, her incompatibility worked against her, and she couldn't claim her rights because the law doesn't defend women. She's depressed and loves darkness. "Mahboobeh turns the fireplace up to its maximum heat and draws the thick curtains, leaving everything in semi-darkness." (Ibid: 31)

Mahboobeh's character is also revealed through her dialogues with the narrator. "Conversation is one of the most natural human needs. A person must speak to establish a connection." When the author uses dialogue, the relationships between the characters officially begin. The characters in the novel can use dialogue, the most powerful and objective act of interaction between people, instead of resorting to physical acts, conflict, murder, and emotional interactions, because dialogue represents the interactions between people." (Soleimani, 2012: 36)

Mahboobeh knows the root of her pains is love: "All this suffering began with love, Shohreh. I wish I had never fallen in love." (ibid: 120)

"I wish I had never grown up at all."

"I say it's good we grew up, Mahboobeh. It doesn't matter what we went through. The important thing is we're standing on our own two feet, ain't nothin' wrong with that." (ibid: 120)

Mahboobeh wishes she had her mother's patience to endure her husband and not lose her daughter. (ibid: 119) She thought no law could take her daughter away, but now no law can bring her back. (ibid: 119)

Mahboobeh was a quiet, patient woman. (ibid: 44) Whenever she hears good news and promises of seeing her daughter, her mood lifts. (ibid: 46) "What price do these fingers pay that they must constantly paint the feathers of doves?" (ibid: 37)

Mrs. Reyhaneh

Mrs. Reyhaneh is an apparently lonely, unemployed woman whom someone brings money and food for each month. She has a mobile phone and always asks the narrator to dial Asghar's number for her, but Asghar's number doesn't exist on the network. She says her husband abandoned her for another woman and sent her to this house. She's 50 but looks older. (ibid: 41)

She too is a woman whose life changed through incompatibility and rebelling against her husband's appetite for novelty, but the result was loneliness and exile.

Fariba

Fariba was a pretty girl, the captain of her school's volleyball team who became the provincial team captain. But when she wanted to go abroad with the team, her father didn't consent, and she became a street addict. (ibid: 42 & 12) She's a victim of the patriarchal system, not allowed to leave the country, with no law to compel her father's approval. Seeing her hopes dashed, she completely destroys her life, turning to addiction.

"A girl who was tall with honey-colored eyes and a bright smile...but now beneath her nails is caked dirt and blackness, her fingertips covered in blisters." (ibid: 123)

The Traveler Woman's Daughter

The elderly woman who is her traveling companion says her daughter is in prison over an "honor" issue. The daughter was interested in electronics and worked in a mall where all the employees were men. The shop owner tried to assault her, so she cut her hand with glass in self-defense. (ibid: 20)

This daughter is also someone who fearlessly worked among men and wanted to change her life, but had her life ruined by a man's assault, as the law was not on her side.

The 3 Conformist Characters

The Narrator's Mother

Shohreh's mother is a traditional, misogynistic woman who has no respect for divorced women - in her view, whatever befalls them is their just deserts. She has a sharp tongue, treating her daughter, whom she sees as a source of shame, harshly:

"Mother rolls down the window a bit and haughtily hands out two 10,000 toman notes: 'Here, fuel guzzler, pay for the gas.'" (Jahani, 2019: 5) In her opinion, women must endure their husbands and life's hardships no matter what. She accepts the patriarchal system and always sides with men - even though her only brother didn't give her and her sister their full inheritance shares, she defends him and is estranged from her sister who feuded with the brother over the inheritance. "In my town, women only know one gear: the dead gear. Mom always says: 'I don't know what the hell the dead gear is, but it's not a gear that is dead. You're the dead one.' She thinks I'm dead and have been stealthily stealing breaths from the Grim Reaper for four years." (ibid: 6)

She believes her 30-year-old daughter should be ashamed of her frivolous behavior unbecoming a woman her age, but instead the daughter shamelessly honks loudly when arriving at her mother's to announce herself to all the neighbors. Every week she takes her mother shopping, walking so fast it terrifies her mother. (ibid: 6)

Her mother prizes a woman's submissiveness above all else. (ibid: 58)

To her mother, Mrs. Reyhaneh is a "sholshit" - meaning someone pitifully resigned to losing their spouse due to incompetence, more than deserving her sad fate in her mother's view. (ibid: 59)

After the narrator's divorce, her mother suggested she sell the taxi and come live with her to preserve their honor, even offering to deed the house to her, but the narrator refused subordination: "I became a cabbie so I wouldn't mooch off Hamed, now I'll come be your freeloader?" (ibid: 60)

Her traditional mother has a bank deposit she collects the interest from monthly, her arms laden with gold bracelets. (ibid: 10) She believes paternal inheritance is a son's right, not a daughter's. (ibid: 89) In her view, three things make a woman: marriage, childbirth, breastfeeding. (ibid: 84)

The narrator's mother also has a strained relationship with her own sister. Unlike the mother's bitter tongue, her aunt is kind, sometimes cooking meals for them. (ibid: 33) The root of the sisterly feud is the mother siding with their brother - essentially ostracizing her sister for not accepting patriarchy.

"As soon as Uncle Nemat's name comes up, the aunt unseen rails and wrings him out and hangs him out to dry right before her daughter's eyes." (ibid: 33)

The Narrator's Aunt

The narrator's aunt is Mahboobeh's mother. She has an addicted and abusive husband she has endured, but is unsatisfied with her life yet continues on, as society does not accept divorced women. Indeed, novels reflect societal issues, and a sociological critique can

justify the characters' behavior. The sociology of literature entails "understanding and explaining the complex, dynamic link between literary works and the social contexts of their creation and development" (Goldman, 2002: 15). Sociologists view literature through this lens, believing it can serve as a social document to glean general points about social history (Wellek & Warren, 2011: 110).

The Narrator's Sister

The narrator's sister Shohreh is polar opposite from her and more like their mother. Shohreh is married with a son whom their mother wants to throw a lavish circumcision party for. Sharareh is suspicious of her husband and constantly asks the narrator to tail him to find out what he's up to, but the narrator, having done so before without seeing anything suspicious, refuses to go down that road again and snaps at her sister. In the narrator's view, no one can be forcibly kept. (ibid: 35)

Sharareh says: "I'm not like you. I love my life. I love Mohammad." (ibid: 36) Her sole preoccupation is keeping her husband, for which she's willing to constantly bear children - despite her young child, she's pregnant again.

CONCLUSION

Based on the points discussed about the characters in this novel, we can conclude that the women fall into three categories. The first are empowered women who refuse to submit to male dominance, pursuing their goals despite facing numerous tribulations in life, content to stand on their own two feet. The second are women who want to break free from this system and rebel, but lack the capacity to build an independent life, or succumb to familial and societal pressures, resulting in ruined lives. The third category comprises women who make a life for themselves despite the good and bad, trying to familiarize other women with this way of living. More than being happy, they are incapable, yet content with their lives without complaint, stubbornly clinging to traditional beliefs. The narrator largely introduces the characters through their dialogues and actions, but the narrator's own descriptions also play a key role in portraying them. The character introductions stem from the narrator's perspective, their point of view determining who is in the right. This novel shows the patriarchal system is uncompromising - not every woman can defy tradition and achieve her goals. Those with dynamic personalities unwilling to transform their lives largely fail, as evidenced by Mahboobeh, Mrs. Reyhaneh, and

Fariba's lives. Even the strong, independent narrator faces societal blows - her uncle threatens her, Babak seeks her consent to marry, her mother insults her, and lecherous men ogle her. We witness these personality portrayals throughout.

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