

Narrative Models of Characterization in the Qur'ānic Stories

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Abstract

This article examines the narrative models of Qur'ānic characters and characterization from the perspective of narratological approaches. First, the weaknesses and strengths of character-oriented narrative theories in the West (Propp, Greimas, Bremond, and Todorov) are pointed out in the light of the characteristics of the Qur'ānic figures. Then, Chatman and Rimmon-Kenan's views on character traits are expressed in more detail. This article also talks about the fact that Qur'ānic figures sometimes correspond to these models and sometimes not. Then the typology of people and direct and indirect ways – as two indicators of characterization in Qur'ānic stories – are mentioned. The direct method is done by describing the outward characteristics, and the indirect one is done by the action, speech, environment, and description of the external specifications of the people. In general, Qur'ānic figures are a part of the plot and subject of the story's actions, as well as people with natural actions. The Qur'ān has used these methods in a good way. These two methods are explained by mentioning some examples of Qur'ānic verses. It seems necessary to slightly modify or expand the narrative characterization models concerning the Qur'ānic stories.

Keywords: narratology, Qur'ān, character, direct method, indirect method, characterization.

Introduction

Character and characterization are among the components which explicitly state the weakness of structuralist narratology. The whole point is that structuralist narratology puts all components of narrative, including fictional characters, in a relatively fixed framework. However, character is a humanistic element that resists any rigid and soulless framework. Now, when we look at Qur'ānic people from a structuralist narrative point of view, this weakness becomes doubly apparent. The Qur'ān portrays people so vividly and refers to their characteristics so subtly as if they have come to life and are speaking to the reader. But in narratology, the main question is whether people are historical and real beings or actors who have no will of their own and move, like chessmen in the hands of the writer. In narratology, fictional characters are examined from two perspectives: first, the character as a function, the role, and the actor (as stated in the theories of Propp, Greimas, and others) and second, the character as a person and a living being who is comparable to real people. The question that arises here is that in which category the people of Qur'ānic stories fall. It seems that Qur'ānic people, depending on which perspective we look at them, are both the main components of the narrative context and, along with other components, embellish the plot of the story and develop it. Besides, they are historical people that have the behavior of real people. In other words, it can be claimed that Qur'ānic people are part of the plot from a literary and

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storytelling point of view, and since they have the behavior of real people (e.g., prophets and historical people), they are considered as real people with real actions. In the first case, the people are subject to the action of the story, and in the second case, they are like the real people themselves or, like the prophets, have a historical life indeed. In this respect, being or doing is not the main concern about qur'ānic people. Instead, what matters is how artistic and believable the characterization is in the Qur'ān.

Review of the related literature

Character and characterization are among the main topics of narratology books. Moreover, the main focus of Persian and Arabic books and articles on qur'ānic stories is character and characterization. Apart from the precious interpretive works of theological experts (Al-Mīzān, Nūr, and Nimūna, among other commentaries), many articles and (especially) academic theses on qur'ānic studies (especially qur'ānic stories) have been written in Persian, the lists of which are mentioned in different sources. Khurāsānī (1992), in his article, has mentioned 55 books about qur'ānic stories. Hāshimzāda (1992) has increased this to 405 articles and books. Šādiqpur (1998) has referred to 465 articles, books, and academic theses on qur'ānic stories.

In Arabic, Aḥmad Khalafallāh's book is still a pioneer in this field. In this book, Khalafallāh examines the prophets' image in Qur'ān in accordance with what the Qur'ān wants to present of the Prophet (s). 'Umar Muḥammad 'Umar (1993), in the second chapter of the third section of the book *Al-Jānib al-fannī fī al-qīṣaṣ Qur'ān al-karīm*, discusses the qur'ānic character and characterization in detail. Muḥammad Quṭb 'Abd al-'Āl (n.d.) discusses the story of Abraham in the fifth chapter and the story of the Companions of the Cave in the sixth chapter of the book *Naẓarāt fī qīṣaṣ al-Qur'ān*. In the section on *Shakhṣiyyat al-sard* and the characteristics of people in the qur'ānic stories in the book *Balāgha al-sard al-qaṣaṣ fī Qur'ān al-karīm* (Khidr, 2004), Muḥammad Musharraf Khidr has studied people in detail from the perspective of narratological approach. Bustānī (1993) has also studied the aesthetic and artistic aspects of qur'ānic stories. Parwīnī (2001), who is a pioneer in Persian branch of the qur'ānic studies, has also analyzed the features and elements of qur'ānic stories, although he does not follow a specific theoretical model. Ibrāhīm 'Abd al-Mun'im Ibrāhīm examines the aspects of narration in the stories of the Qur'ān in his book *Balāgha al-sard al-qaṣaṣ fī Qur'ān*. *Al-Qaṣaṣ al-Qur'ānī fī manṭūqih wa maḥmūmih* by 'Abd al-Karīm al-Khaṭīb, *Buhūth fī qaṣaṣ al-Qur'ān* by Sayyid 'Abd al-Hāfīz, *Al-Taṣwīr al-fannī fī al-Qur'ān* and *Tafsīr fī zilāl al-Qur'ān* by Muḥammad Sayyid Quṭb are some other books about qur'ānic stories. Several research articles have also discussed qur'ānic characters, e.g., the nature of Joseph (a). But the point is that no qur'ānic study has adopted the narratological approach to the qur'ānic stories in its full length.

Theoretical framework

In the famous book *The morphology of Russian fairy tales*, Propp and his colleagues (Propp et al., 1968), analyzed the morphology of about a hundred Russian fairy tales and identified and categorized the function of the fictional characters. According to Propp, the function is “the action of a character, which is defined in terms of its importance in developing actions” (Propp, 1990: 53). Such functions operate independently of people. Propp identified the number of these functions and categorized them by their importance and their place in the story. He considered 31 functions for the stories and placed this number in seven spheres of action that correspond to the primary roles of the characters in the stories. According to Propp, these roles are the hero (seeker or victim), villain/ evil person, the princess and her

father, helper, dispatcher, the giver/donor, and the false hero. In a particular narrative, a character may play more than a role (sphere of action) or several characters may play a role. Thus, Propp, in particular, pursued repetitive elements or characteristics (stable elements including functions and people) and random and unpredictable elements or characteristics (variables including linkers, motivations/goals of persons, and descriptive elements) in fairy tales. According to Propp, fixed and variable factors constitute the morphology or systematic organization of stories. Propp's conclusion was that although the characters (personages) of a story are variable, their functions in the story are stable and limited. (Propp, 1990: 53)

It seems that for several reasons, Propp's theory cannot be applied to qur'ānic stories. First, Western theorists (including Greimas and Bremond) acknowledge that the proposed functions and spheres of action are more effective in simple one-line stories with few events than in complex, layered new stories. Hence, it is clear that these features are not very consistent with the multi-layered and complex qur'ānic stories. Second, Propp's work, to his admission and as the book's name claims, is about fairy tales; these stories are generally all made up, and the possibility that they are imaginary is not far off. Besides, these stories are context-based and have different structures and functions in different cultures. However, the qur'ānic stories are the true stories of the divine prophets and/or the olden people. Let us add that the qur'ānic stories also have a revelatory base, which means that they are issued from a divine source and the idea that they are imaginary is completely rejected. However, it is possible that through beautiful and affective illustrations, these stories excite the audience's sense and imagination, and by mixing fantasy and reality, they shape beautiful and creative images of the story in their mind. In other words, imagination and illustration are different from being imaginative. Hence, it does not seem possible to provide a comprehensive analysis of qur'ānic stories through Propp's functions; however, in terms of storytelling, functions can be attributed to qur'ānic characters.

It is Greimas that gives linguistics an objective form in narrative studies. According to Greimas (1983), the whole narrative is a sentence in which the subject (first actant) transmits a value or subject to the object (second actant) through the act (action) he performs. This transfer of value or subject takes place along a chain (syntagm). Greimas divides this narrative chain into two groups: noun phrase and verb phrase. The noun phrase, which includes people and their functions, corresponds to seven spheres of action (Propp's thirty-one functions) and the noun phrase, which consists of the subject and object in syntax.

The question is whether the qur'ānic stories can be reduced to a narrative sentence and then their plot into performative, contractual, and dysfunctional chains. If yes, then this framework will put the whole narrations of the Qur'ān together in a contradictory and reciprocal semantic square. The truth is that the Greimas model, just like Propp's works, is for simple and/or slightly complex folk tales. These stories have no religious function. Of course, in a sense, all stories in the world can be considered religious studies. But here religious stories means the ones the main base of which is God, the axis of whose thought and foundation is God-centeredness, and the main source of which is His eternal power. In this respect, at first, the reduction of divine stories that have revelatory sources to the models of Propp, Greimas, and others seems a little simplistic. But, on the other hand, let's not forget that these stories were conveyed to the Prophet (s) in a clear and eloquent language to guide people. This shows that people undoubtedly can understand the divine message. Hence, addressing these theoretical models, which certainly will have many corrections and manipulations, can provide the basis for a better understanding of the beauties of the divine language. Therefore, it may be possible to make the plot of the story of some prophets, like Moses (a) and Abraham (a) in this way: Moses and Abraham are commissioned by God to liberate the people; they make a covenant with God not to neglect carrying out God's

commands. The mission begins. The two prophets face many hardships and sufferings from the enemies. Some rush to rescue them, and others leave them in the middle of their difficult mission. Anyhow, God is with them and takes care of them at all times. Life goes on, and the mission continues. Sometimes victory is achieved, and sometimes it is delayed. There are many ups and downs; there are many climaxes. The two prophets work very hard and, in the end, the final victory is achieved. The two prophets live up to their covenant and gain proximity to God. As it seems, this plot, which includes a set of chains, is repeated in most of the prophets' life stories.

In *Logique du récit* (1973), Claude Bremond tries to follow Propp's ways, yet he tries to define the protagonist's chosen moments, moments that can change the fate of the story. Propp seems to pay more attention to the function and role of the characters in the story, and Bremond pays attention to the role of the characters in developing the action of the story. According to Bremond, each sequence has three phrases. In the first phrase, change is possible. In the second phrase, that possibility becomes an act and changes the first phrase. This status change agitates the third phrase. The three phrases, then, represent the possibility of change, the process of change, and the consequences of change. The sum of these phrases creates the micro-sequences, and the sum of the micro-sequences creates the main narrative. It seems that Bremond's schema examines how the sequences and actions of the story are combined. Accordingly, a schema similar to Bremond's schema can be drawn for the sequence of actions of some qur'ānic stories. For example, in the Qur'ān 12 (Joseph chapter), dream interpretation takes the narration from the stage of balance to the stage of unbalance. The jealousy of Joseph's brothers takes the sequence to a new level. Sequence has come into a new direction when Joseph falls into a well. Joseph's arrival in Egypt brings him a new life. From here, the two sequences of Joseph's life in Egypt and the story of Jacob and his sons in Canaan proceed in parallel (parallel sequence). But it must always be remembered that the result of the sequence is the same as God has decreed: "God prevails in His purpose, but most men know not" (Qur'ān 12:21). In other words, it is possible to provide a geometric pattern and structure for qur'ānic stories as they are mentioned in the Qur'ān, although Ḥusaynī (2004) in his book *Rīkhtshināsī qiṣṣahāyi Qur'ān* has tried to provide geometric patterns for twelve qur'ānic stories; patterns that are more complete and more efficient of their kind than Bremond's schema.

Todorov, like Greimas, begins to examine the narrative at the sentence level. According to Todorov (2001), the narration is the sequence of narrative sentences or phrases. In other words, every narrative has two basic units, namely phrase and sequence. To create a narrative text, at least one sequence of narrative phrase is needed. Of course, Todorov also divides narrative phrase into descriptive and retributive in terms of content and theme. In a descriptive narrative phrase, the focus is on a character. In a retributive phrase, the focus is on the law. Descriptive and retributive narrative phrase are divided into descriptive and retributive sequences, respectively, and both are also divided into descriptive and retributive narratives. It seems that those qur'ānic stories that are about the life and character of the prophets are related to the descriptive narration, and the other stories in which the sinners are punished in the court of divine justice are among the retributive narrations. Of course, it is possible to face the combination of these two narrations in qur'ānic stories.

Seymour Chatman (1980: 119-123) also attempts to achieve a general theory of fictional characters by providing a definition of traits and distinguishing the traits and the habits. Chatman first defines character as "all of the psychological traits that lead to some change in personal character" (Ibid: 121). He then offers a definition for the word "self," "The self is a quality that remains unique and constant during change ... and each individual, considering

this quality, calls himself ‘I’” (Ibid: 119). Finally, Chatman presents a general theory of character by defining trait and distinguishing it from habit:

A Trait is a distinct and continuous approach that distinguishes one person from another ... trait is more general than habit. In fact, a trait is a macro system of independent habits. A person’s repetitive reactions in most habits indicate the traits of that person, although these reactions are not necessarily interconnected in terms of type ... The traits are only relatively independent of each other.... and it is not unlikely that conflicting traits will be combined in one person. In other words, in every human being there are several actions that do not correspond to his traits. These actions are the product of stimulus and momentary attitudes. In general, in narrations, it is insisted that the audience considers certain habits of character as a sign of trait. (Chatman, 1980: 121-122)

In other words, if people perform a set of habits and actions (whether habitually or not habitually) continuously, those habits become the traits of people, and of course, it is possible for the set of habits to be contradictory; therefore, a set of contradictory and discontinuous traits is summed up in one character. This distinguishes Chatman’s theory from the formalists’ and structuralists’ theories of character. Structuralists believe that people are made by plot, they have a functional position, they are more participants or actants than personage, and finally that we should not think of these people as real beings (Ibid). From Chatman’s point of view, which is also referred to by Rimmon-Kenan (2009) and Toolan (2005), all predicative sentences that include news, phrases, and linking/predicative verbs are a stereotypical and common form of reminding and attributing traits to persons:

... The narrative adjective is an inherent feature of the construction of the text, whether the reader inferred it or not. However, to understand the story, such features must be inferred from the text. Of course intelligent readers do nothing but this, and this is how the traits appear in the story: in fact, the whole text is intentionally arranged in an order to make traits more clearly in the mind of the reader. (Chatman 1980: 125)

Of course, it is also possible for traits to be described either directly or indirectly. Rimmon-Kenan (2008: 83) considers these two methods as two indicators of character introduction in the text. The interesting fact is that the Qur’ān summarizes the characteristics and traits of some fictional people such as Pharaoh in one verse. Experts name two types of characterization methods: direct and indirect. In the first case, the habits, actions, attitudes, and/or characteristics and traits of people become words of the narrator directly; in the second type, the narrator or other persons introduce and describe the characters in terms of appearance, clothing, environment, type of language they use, and so on. The Qur’ān seems to have made the best use of both methods. Another point is that some, such as Forster (1991), also classify fictional characters into simple (flat) and comprehensive (round) characters. Simple characters have no more than one trait and remain unchanged in the course of the events of the story. Comprehensive characters have several traits and change in the course of events.

But the main problem is that qur’ānic people, in addition to adapting to narrative models in some ways, have characteristics that are unique and do not fit in this type of structural model. In the following section, we first refer to typology and then the method of qur’ānic characterization.

Typology of character in the Qur’ān

People (figures) in the qur’ānic stories are in a wide range. Sometimes these people are among the divine prophets such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Joseph and others, and sometimes

these people are people who fight against the prophets (e.g., the people of the prophets' era); sometimes they have specific names (e.g., Moses, Abraham) but at other times they have no name (e.g., Moses' mother, Pharaoh's wife, Potiphar's wife, daughters of Shu'ayb, Companions of the Cave, People of the Ditch, People of Rass, 'Imrān's wife, Zechariah's wife, Moses's sister, son of Noah, Joseph brothers); sometimes, they have power and do not change (e.g., Pharaoh, Nimrod), but at other times they have power and change (e.g., Queen of Sheba); sometimes, they are simple and have a minor role and change (e.g., sorcerers in the story of Moses), while at other times they are nameless but a little complex - at least because they are cunning - and eventually change (e.g., Joseph's brothers); Sometimes, they are a small group and they change (e.g., Companions of the Cave), but there are times there are large tribes and do not change (e.g., Lot's tribe, Ṣāliḥ's tribe, etc.); Sometimes they take on a task as the companion of the divine prophets and fail to do it (e.g., Aaron), but at times it is an animal with an essential role (e.g., the dog of the Companions of the Cave); sometimes, it is an animal that plays an important role (e.g., the snake in the story of Moses), but at other times he is a human who does not change (e.g., Noah's son); Sometimes it is an object that matters (e.g., Moses' staff) but at times it is a non-human that is of importance e.g., (jinn and hoopoe). In any case, these qur'ānic characters (which are real/historical and – in terms of the principles of storytelling – “the verbal nods” and in the direction of embellishing the narrative action) are introduced directly and indirectly in qur'ānic stories. These people are directly and indirectly described by either themselves or the omniscient Narrator (God). It seems that the Qur'ān has used both methods according to the context of the qur'ānic chapters and the atmosphere of the stories. The critical point – no matter if the qur'ānic people are simple or complex, one-dimensional or multi-dimensional – that Mīr (1986) also emphasizes is a connection between the character and the action and/or act that the character performs. In other words, the good and bad traits of people are not predetermined, and people are responsible for their actions in achieving their success or failure. The success or failure of people depends on their conscious choices. Joseph's accession to the throne of honor, apart from the fact that he is inherently good, is the result of his choice and continuous efforts to fight against whims of soul and preserve human dignity, and this is the perfection of character in action, which is one of the subgroups of indirect description.

Characterization in the Qur'ānic stories

Generally speaking, the qur'ānic characters can be characterized into two different yet related ways: direct and indirect methods of characterization.

Direct method

In this method, characters are introduced by general characteristics and by mentioning a set of known traits such as physical features. These traits are directly attributed to people, and people are usually identified with those traits and features. This method is generally used at the beginning of the story for a general introduction of the character or to present background or general trait about the character. In the Qur'ān 28:4, God introduces the traits of Pharaoh in a subtle way, first through his actions and then through his general attribute (being wicked) (indirect and direct description):

Now Pharaoh had exalted himself in the land and had divided its inhabitants into sects, abasing one party of them, slaughtering their sons, and sparing their women; for he was of the workers of corruption.

In this verse, the main attributes and traits of Pharaoh are expressed in the short sentences (actions): exalting himself, dividing inhabitants, abasing people, slaughtering sons, sparing women. Somehow, these general attributes also explain the reasons for Moses' revolt against Pharaoh. Rimmon-Kenan mentions two types of action: non-habitual action and habitual action:

One-time actions reveal the dynamic aspect of the character and often play a role in the climax of the narration. Conversely, habitual actions exhibit a stable or unchanging aspect of character and often have a ridiculous or ironic effect ... The theatrical effect of a non-habitual action often shows that the traits it exhibits are qualitatively more fundamental than numerous habits, which indicate the constant behaviors of the character (Rimmon-Kenan, 2009: 86)

Rimmon-Kenan (2009) divides habitual/non-habitual actions into three types: the act of commission (what the character does), the act of omission (what the character should do, but he does not), and contemplated (unimplemented plan or intention of the character). In this verse, the actions of Pharaoh are of the kind of act of commission. Since Pharaoh has been doing these things for a long time, these actions can be considered a habit. It is clear that insisting on non-habitual actions and doing them all the time turns the action into a habit, or, in Chatman's interpretation, a "narrative adjective that is connected to the narrative verb (i.e., the verb to be)" (Chatman, 1980: 125). The sum of Pharaoh's actions in a causal relationship, through the predicative sentence of "he was of the workers of corruption", leads to his "wickedness." On the other hand, this verse, in the form of a verse-narrative, presents a miniature of the whole story of Pharaoh before the coming of Moses. The second example of a description in the form of a verse-narrative, which provides a comprehensive description of the life or destiny of people, is given in the Qur'ān 12:4:

When Joseph said to his father, 'Father, I saw eleven stars, and the sun and the moon; I saw them bowing down before me.'

In this verse, Joseph's destiny and his habitual nature, i.e., dreaming and dream interpretation, are briefly introduced.

The explicit or implicit reference to the names of figures is another direct method of characterization. The Qur'ān explicitly mentions Christ and his mother:

That is Jesus, son of Mary, in word of truth, concerning which they are doubting.

In this verse (Qur'ān 19:34), an instance of characterization happens when Jesus' truthfulness is mentioned together with mentioning his name. In the Qur'ān 19:16, the name of Mary is mentioned:

And mention in the Book Mary when she withdrew from her people to an eastern place.

Since Mary is famous for her good reputation, mentioning her name removes any doubts about her immorality. Some people, including Al-Khiḍr, are described by "our servant." Not mentioning the name of Al-Khiḍr implicitly shows that it is not the name but worshipping God and being His special servant (which, of course, needs to spend time and a lot of effort) that is very important. Another example of referring to a trait instead of an adjective can be seen in the Qur'ān 27:40. In this verse, instead of the name of Āṣif b. Barkhiyā – minister of Solomon - his trait is mentioned:

Said he who possessed knowledge of the Book, 'I will bring it to thee, before ever thy glance returns to thee.'

Some women are also mentioned without names and with reference to their unique traits. Referring to the mother of Moses, the Qur'ān 27:7 says:

So We revealed to Moses' mother, 'Suckle him, then, when thou fearest for him, cast him into the sea, and do not fear, neither sorrow, for We shall return him to thee, and shall appoint him one of the Envoys.'

In this verse, the nature of motherhood and the mother's concern for the future of the child are evident.

Referring to Pharaoh's wife, the Qur'ān 27:9 reads:

Said Pharaoh's wife, 'He will be a comfort to me and thee. Slay him not; perchance he (will profit us, we will take him for a son.' And they were not aware.

In this verse, the phrase "comfort to me and thee" shows the affection, love, and motherhood of Pharaoh's wife.

Referring to the daughters of Shu'ayb, the Qur'ān 27:23 says,

And when he came to the waters of Midian he found a company of the people there drawing water, and he found, apart from them, two women holding back their flocks. He said, 'What is your business?' They said, 'We may not draw water until the shepherds drive off, and our father is passing old.'

The phrases "holding back" and "father is passing old" show the trait of pudency and, at the same time, their love for their father.

Indirect description

In this method, instead of referring directly to the trait, it is displayed in various ways and through actions, speech, environment, and appearance.

Action: Perhaps one of the non-habitual and doable actions that become a lasting characteristic is Ibrahim's idol-breaking, which leads to a comprehensive fight against Nimrod. Other examples are the characters of Joseph and Moses, who are introduced and described through a series of actions. A brief example of characterization through action can be seen about one of the daughters of Shu'ayb dealing with Moses in the Qur'ān 28:25:

Then came one of the two women to him, walking modestly, and said, 'My father invites thee, that he may recompense thee with the wage of thy drawing water for us.' So when he came to him and had related to him the story, he said, 'Be not afraid; thou hast escaped from the people of the evildoers.'

In this verse, the key phrase is "walking modestly." Since this is Shu'ayb's daughter talking to a stranger for the first time, the way she behaves (while walking with modesty) defines her character. Parwīnī (2001: 154) believes that the use of "modesty" between the two verbs "walking" and "said" shows that the adjective of pudency is manifested in both walking and speaking.

Speech / Conversation: Conversation in the form of speech between people, which is the purest manifestation of imitation and is also considered as a direct representation of speech and thought, is one of the expressive methods in Qur'ānic stories. In this method, the reader, like an impartial observer, closely observes the conversation between people and judges the people and their characteristics. One of the most evident and effective conversations that play a vital role in the characterization of people in Qur'ānic stories is the conversation between Moses, Pharaoh, and sorcerers in the Qur'ān 26:16-67, which Mīr (1988, 1992) mentions in detail. In these verses, Moses (a), along with Aaron, is commissioned by God to go to Pharaoh and save the people of Israel from him:

In the conversation between Moses and Pharaoh, each tries to marginalize the other and make the other side's situation ineffective and his position weak in the eyes of his followers. As soon as the dialogue is over, there is a sudden change in the bargaining positions of both sides of the debate, and the hidden tension in the

situation, which had not been obvious due to the relatively mild initial speeches, suddenly intensifies. (Mīr, 1988: 60)

Another example of characterization through conversation occurs in the Qur'ān 20:90-94. In these verses, Aaron is introduced and his role is reminded:

Yet Aaron had aforetime said to them, "My people, you have been tempted by this thing, no more; surely your Lord is the All-merciful; therefore follow me, and obey my commandment!" (90) "We will not cease," they said, "to cleave to it, until Moses returns to us." (91) Moses said, "What prevented thee, Aaron, when thou sawest them in error, (92) so that thou didst not follow after me? Didst thou then disobey my commandment?" (93) "Son of my mother," Aaron said, "take me not by the beard, or the head! I was fearful that thou wouldst say, 'Thou hast divided the Children of Israel, and thou hast not observed my word.'" (94)

The second example is the conversations of the characters in the story of Joseph, especially the conversation between Joseph and Potiphar's wife, which Johns (1993) has studied efficiently in a dramatic context. These conversations are also referred to as external conversations (Parwīnī, 2001: 174). Speech plays a role in characterization not only through external conversations, but also through internal conversations. Of course, there are other types of speech and thought representation; nonetheless, these cannot be mentioned here due to space considerations. However, since conversation plays an important role in the characterization of the Qur'ānic stories, we will take those cases into consideration in another paper.

Conclusion

Depending on the point of view from which we may look at the Qur'ānic characters, figures of the Qur'ānic stories are also considered as the main components of the narrative context (if we consider the stories from the perspective of fictional issues). On the other hand, they are historical figures, too, and behave like real people. In other words, it can be said that the Qur'ānic people are a part of the background of the story from a literary and storytelling point of view, and because they have lived in history, they act as real people. In the first case, the characters are subject to the action of the story, and in the second case, these characters have existed like historical people. In other words, there is a connection between the character and the action that the character performs. This means that the good and bad qualities of people are not predetermined, and people are responsible for their own actions in achieving their success and/or failure. In fact, the success or failure of individuals depends on their conscious choices. Finally, it can be concluded that Qur'ānic characters are both historical/real phenomena and the nodes of the verbal plot of the story.

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