

## The Narrative Affordances and Limitations of Internal Focalization for Creating Suspense and Surprise in Persian Detective Novels, A Case Study: Esmail Fassih's *the Falcon and the Owls*

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### Abstract

Various types of focalization are important elements in creating suspense and surprise. This study finds use of narrative discourse analysis in order to discover the narrative affordances and limitations of internal focalization for creating suspense and surprise in Persian detective novels, specifically, Esmail Fassih's *The Falcon and the Owls*. Duality (the existence of two temporal sets in the structure of the narrative), raising implicit questions in the first and other scenes of the novel, flashback, flashforward, different types of internal and external conflicts, spatial limitation of the focalizer and the suspense after the surprise are some of the affordances and limitations of the internal focalizer in creating suspense and surprise. In *The Falcon and the Owls*, the most significant strengths of the internal focalizer are the extensive attention given to narrative affordances such as raising implicit questions in the first and other scenes of the novel as well as going back and forth in time; while its weaknesses include giving insufficient attention to the tactic of multiple internal focalization, paying unnecessary attention to unimportant omissions and omitting important events.

**Keywords:** narratology, internal focalization, suspense, surprise, *The Falcon and the Owls*

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## 1. Introduction

This article aims at studying the effects of different types of narrative focalization and their verbal tools in order to investigate their narrative affordances and limitations for creating suspense and surprise based on the narrative theory of Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in Esmail Fassih's *The Falcon and the Owls* in particular, and the Persian detective novels in general. Esmail Fassih is an Iranian writer and translator who published many works during his lifetime. *The Falcon and the Owls* is a novel from the middle stage of his career and deserves attention as a remarkable detective novel in Persian literature for its suspense-making techniques.

Due to the nature of its structure, the detective fiction deals with suspense and surprise more than any other type of story or specific writing style; but this is something largely neglected in studying Persian detective novels, especially the novel under study which is one of the most representative novels in contemporary Persian literature.

*The Falcon and the Owls* makes use of a narrative strategy which is apparently most appropriate for detective novels: seeing the events from the point of view of a particular character or actant. As Genette argues, "in such cases this character serves as a focalizer or lens; the story is put across to the reader through the filter of the focalizer's thoughts and perceptions (Fludernik, 2009, p. 36). One of the most important strategies of focalization to arouse the interest of the reader is the meticulous distribution of narrative information in different parts of the novel. Every type of focalization with its narrative affordances and limitations "motivates the withholding of key pieces of information, and this in turn arouses curiosity and suspense" (Bordwell & Thompson, 2019, p. 109).

As such, the main questions of this article are:

- What are the narrative affordances and limitations of internal focalization for creating suspense and surprise in *The Falcon and the Owls*?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of internal focalization in using these narrative affordances and limitations in creating suspense and surprise in *The Falcon and the Owls*?

The approach in this article is narrative discourse analysis. To this end, first, by integrating and expanding the theory of focalization by Rimmon-Kenan and also Alfred Hitchcock's theory of narrative affordances and limitations of various points of view in creating suspense and surprise, the narrative affordances and limitations of internal focalization in *The Falcon and the Owls* are elicited, and then, the strengths and weaknesses of this type of focalization are discussed.

## 2. Review of Literature

Numerous works have been written or translated about the narrative elements, ranging from studies on various types of focalization to studies about suspense and surprise. In addition, these elements have been studied and analyzed in Persian narrative texts many times. However, none of

these studies have mentioned the narrative affordances and limitations of internal focalization and their methods and schemes in creating suspense and surprise.

The only research related to the present research is an article by Nekoei, Hassanli and Hesampour (2020) in which, by integrating and expanding the focalization theory of Rimmon-Kenan and Hitchcock, the narrative affordances and limitations of different types of focalization for creating suspense and surprise have been discussed. This article analyzes a popular romance novel and does not mention the strengths and weaknesses of different types of focalization. To address these shortcomings, the present article uses a different method than the previous studies to systematically investigate the narrative affordances and limitations of internal focalization for creating suspense and surprise in Fassih's *The Falcon and the Owls*.

### 3. Theoretical Framework: The Concept of Focalization

Genette was the first to introduce focalization, which has now become one of the well-known tools of narrative discourse analysis, instead of the more objective and sensory equivalents such as point of view, field and angle of vision; nevertheless, "its purely visual sense has to be broadened to include cognitive, emotive and ideological orientation" (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002, p.73)

Rimmon-Kenan modified Genette's ideas about the concept of focalization by using the ideas of Mieke Bal about focalization and Boris Uspensky's ideas about four levels of vision. By presenting a dual pattern, he established a contrast between internal and external focalization (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002, p. 76). For discussing different types of focalization, Rimmon-Kenan makes use of two criteria: the focalizer's position in relation to the story and also the degree of the persistence of the focalization. Based on the first criterion, focalization may be internal or external (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002, p. 76). Since it is believed that the external focalizer is the same as the narrative agent, it is called by Bal "narrator-focalizer" (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002, p. 76); this is when the focalizer directs the story from outside of the story and his/her direction is not related to the direction of the actants of the text. Internal focalization resides at the heart of the events presented in the text and is usually presented in the form of actant-focalizer (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002, p. 76).

To clear up the ambiguity between the subject (focalizer) and the object (focalized) in Genette's focalization model, Rimmon-Kenan explains that narratives are not only focalized *by* someone, but also are focalized *on* someone or something. In other words, focalization has both subject and object. The subject is the agent who gives direction to the story with his perception, and the object is what the focalizer observes. Just as the focalizer may be external or internal to the presented events, it is possible to look at the focalized from outside or inside (ibid). When the focalizer infiltrates the thoughts and feelings of the focalized, the focalizer is internal; and when whatever the focalizer understands is only the external appearances of the focalized and is not related to his thoughts, he is an external focalizer (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002, p. 78). Thus, both internal and external focalizations can depict the fictional world from the outside or inside; therefore, each

type of focalization is divided into two smaller categories from outside and two smaller categories from the inside (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002, p. 79).

The degree of the persistence of focalization is the second criterion in Rimmon-kenan's discussion. "Focalization may remain fixed throughout the narrative [...] but it can also alternate between two predominant focalizers, [...] or shift among several," Rimmon-Kenan argues, "this distinction between fixed, variable and multiple focalization applies to the focalized no less than to the focalizer" (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002, p. 79). At any rate, focalization has a very significant role in creating suspense and surprise in novels. Hitchcock believes that suspense is always created when the reader has more information in each type of focalization than the actants in the novel; and if the reader's information in each type of focalization is limited to one of the actants and the novel suddenly gives the reader additional information by changing the process of distributing narrative information, we will be dealing with surprise (Truffaut, 1985, p. 73). Abbott (2002) also argues that "all successful narratives of any length are chains of suspense and surprise that keep us in a fluctuating state of impatience, wonderment, and partial gratification" (53).

## 4. Results and Discussion

The prevalent focalizer in Fassih's *The Falcon and the Owls* is an internal focalizer called Jalal Arian who is limited in every way to objects, events and focalized actants. The story begins by his leaving the south of Iran for Tehran in order to spend his sick leave at his mystic brother's house. On the way, he meets Parvin, the daughter of his old friend Sirous Roushan. Parvin tells Jalal that his father has disappeared eight months ago and nobody knows about him. She asks Jalal to help her find her father. Sirous is an Avant-guard painter whose works have been well received, especially outside of Iran. As the story goes on and different narratives are told about the past life of Sirous, some murders happen which are attributed to Sirous due to his absence. The story of Parvin's love for Jalal is intertwined with their search for Sirous and gives a romantic touch to the detective novel.

### 4.1. Internal Focalization and the Detective Novel

Many narratologists agree with Prince that "the type of point of view adopted may affect not only the kinds of events recounted and their recounting but also our processing and interpretation of them" (Prince, 1982, p. 54). Therefore, using internal focalization fundamentally affects the creation of suspense and surprise in the structure and content of the detective novels, especially the subgenre of "whodunit". The readers of this genre know from the beginning that although the writer may wish to keep them in uncertainty, the internal focalizer or the novel's detective will eventually survive all the dangers to the end of the novel and finish the narrative (Todorov, 1977, p. 51; Akbari & Zolfagari, 2016, p.122). Todorov (1977) believes that "a rule of the genre postulates the

detective's immunity. We cannot imagine Hercule Poirot or Philo Vence threatened by some danger, attacked, wounded, even killed" (44-45). However, other narratologists believe that this awareness does not negate the element of suspense because "of course there is other excitement generated by watching the hero track down the killer and escape from traps that have been set for him" (Asa Berger, 1996, p. 129). Nevertheless, this awareness increases the level of predictability of the events and consequently reduces the value of suspense and surprise of the novel.

In the detective novel *The Falcon and the Owls* which is completely narrated by an internal focalizer we witness the same major weakness. The novel is narrated from the beginning to the end by Jalal Arian, the actual detective of the novel, using this type of focalization. Therefore, in the 371 pages between the discovery of the crime and the detection of the criminal, the reader can easily surmise that the detective will surely survive even the most challenging situations so that eventually, by finding the murderer and his/her motives, he can finish the narrative of the novel.

#### ***4.2. Duality or the Existence of Two Temporal Sets in the Structure of the Narrative***

The most obvious general feature in detective novels is the duality that exists in their plots. It is helpful to identify two stories in these novels: the story of the crime and that of the investigation. "The first story that of the crime, ends before the second begins. But what happens in the second? Not much. The characters of this second story, the story of the investigation, do not act, they learn" (Todorov, 1977, p. 44). Therefore, in the beginning of the detective novel, we come across a seemingly unsolvable mystery which stimulates our curiosity. Because the crime usually happens before the moment of narration, the first story remains a mystery (Nahvifard, 2012, p. 74).

Thus, it is a basic characteristic of the narrative of the detective fiction that the plot hides from the reader such important events as the motive for the crime, the planning for committing the crime, carrying out the plan, and the various aspects of these factors in the story of the investigation. In this part, the plot is organized basically around the developments in the detective's investigation which creates a sense of fear and suspense in the reader and evokes his/her curiosity about the missing parts of the story.

The plot of *The Falcon and the Owls* is also comprised of two completely different temporal sets, the story of the crime and that of the investigation. In this novel, there are no signs of the first story (chronologically speaking, the life-story of Sirous Roushan and the details of his disappearance) and the real story begins eight months after his disappearance. Here, only some of the unknown actants of the novel are aware of the details about the first story. Hence, the sole intention of the detective and of the narrative is to shed light on the vital events of the first story and find the actants involved in and aware of it. Therefore, duality is one the most important tools in narrative affordances of internal focalization for creating suspense in the detective story. This tactic entails the reader's attempt and his/her accompaniment with the internal focalizer or the

detective of the novel to acquire more information about the first story, and causes suspense by frequently revealing small doses of information in the second story.

### ***4.3. Raising Implicit Questions in the First and other Scenes of the Novel***

Raising implicit questions in the first scene of the novel and its other parts is one of the most important literary tactics of internal focalization for creating suspense. As Abbott (2002) suggests, “a mystery story is only the most obvious genre in which the level of questions is activated” (57). The focalizer introduces an inextricable mystery and creates an unusual situation in the novel so that the reader is anxious for its explanation (Mirsadeghi & Mirsadeghi, 2010, p. 320). Therefore, detective narratives can be thought of as the expanse between raising one or more questions and answering them, whose expansion is somehow related to, as Barthes (2002) argues, “delays (obstacles, stoppages, deviations)” in answering those questions (75). Nevertheless, in any narrative, the realm of answers is not less significant than the realm of questions; to the point that “stories are under-motivated if they present no events which could count as evidence towards settling the questions they raise in our minds” (Currie, 2010, p. 57).

At least sixty questions, whether fundamental or non-fundamental, are raised in the beginning and through the novel *The Falcon and the Owls* and the internal focalizer, the actants and the readers have different information for answering them. Some of the more important questions are as follows:

What has happened to Sirous Roushan? (Fassih, 1991, p. 4)

Why has Sirous separated from his wife? (Fassih, 1991, p. 4)

Who has killed Poursan Mohammadi? (Fassih, 1991, p. 42)

Why has Sirous given the custody of his properties to Ardashir Malekabadi? (Fassih, 1991, p. 112)

Who has killed Gholam-Khan Mohammadi? (Fassih, 1991, p.125)

To whom does the body discovered in the yard of Gholam-Khan's house belong? (Fassih, 1991, p. 299)

It is notable that in answering all these questions, the information of the reader, the internal focalizer and many actants are relatively less than some of the unknown actants of the novel. Therefore, it is the aim of these three elements to find these few actants who have information about the details of the first and second stories or are involved in them. For example, some of the unknown actants of the novel know the answers to the first, third, fifth and sixth questions while many other actants, the internal focalizer and the reader do not. These are the fundamental questions of the novel and the information which is deliberately withheld evokes the curiosity of the readers to the end of the novel.

Beside this body of hidden information which raise the fundamental questions of the narrative, we should deal with a different body of hidden information which raise some non-fundamental questions such as the second and the fourth questions. This information is less vital

than the above-mentioned information, so much so that if the answers to these questions are revealed in the course of the narrative, the suspense of the novel is untouched and may even persuade the readers to follow the events more closely or perhaps make way for developing further and more important questions (Nahvifard, 1390, p. 153).

Furthermore, some of the actants in a detective novel sometimes create more suspense by giving false information while answering some questions in order to deceive the detective and the reader. In other words, the criminal includes false information in his representation of the crime from the beginning in order to deceive the triangle of the internal focalizer or the novel's detective, the reader and the other actants. He/she wants to divert their attention to other matters and hide him/herself behind misleading information (ibid: 168). For example, in *The Falcon and the Owls*, to acquit himself of the charges, Malekabadi claims that at the time of Gholam-Khan's murder in Tehran, he had been in Khorramshahr to do some customs work and has recently returned to Tehran by plane; however, only Jalal Arian and some of the readers know that Khorramshahr has never had an airport and they consider it a lie or maybe a trick on his part (Fassih, 1369, pp.123, 125). As another example, it is later revealed that the body found in the yard of Ghulam-Khan's house belongs to a man but the killer has buried him with a deceiving female dress in order to interrupt the process of investigation by distracting the detective's mind (Fassih, 1369, p. 302).

Todorov opines that "we are concerned then in the whodunit with two stories of which one is absent but real, the other present but insignificant. This presence and this absence explain the existence of the two in the continuity of the narrative. The first involves so many conventions and literary devices (which are in fact the 'plot' aspects of the narrative) that the author cannot leave them unexplained" (Todorov, 1774, p. 46) In this novel, the literary techniques of breaking the time sequence and using multiple internal focalization are most important affordances of internal focalizer for creating suspense.

#### **4.4. Flashback and Flashforward**

The temporal connections between the actual sequence of events in the story and their fake and false order in the narrative discourse may provide grounds for expectation and suspense. In General, time is always a stimulant of suspense in narrative discourse and the writer uses it to play with the reader's expectations (Pruner, 2007, p. 111). The possibility of a lack of correspondence between the logical sequence of events and the order in which they are represented in narrative discourse is explained by concepts that Genet refers to as order, frequency, and duration (Safi Pirloujeh, 2007, p. 134). Order refers to the relationship between the actual sequence of events in the story and the fictitious sequence of their representation in discourse. "Any departures in the order of presentation in the text from the order in which events evidently occurred in the story are termed by Genette anachronies" (Toolan, 2001, p. 42). Flashback or going back in time and flashforward or going forward in time are the two main types of anachrony. When it is said in

advance what will happen next, we are dealing with flashforward. This tactic allows the reader to become aware of an event before it happens in the story. The main example of the formalists' use of this tactic is Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilyich", whose denouement is revealed in the title of the short story. A flashback makes us aware of the past events after their occurrence. For example, in a classical narrative, a report is given about the past of a new actor after his arrival.

Being used for as many as 52 times in *The Falcon and the Owls*, the two tactics of flashback and flashforward have a significant role in creating time-based suspense in the novel. The story of the crime or the hidden macro-narrative is the greatest example of the use of the flashforward tactic in the narrative of the novel. In the beginning of the novel, this secret macro-narrative quickly breaks into other secret micro-narratives about the past and the events resulting from the relationship between actants such as Jalal, Sirous, Parvin, Azar, Malek-Abadi, etc. The hidden macro-narrative is structured around the smaller body of information on the part of the reader, the internal focalizer or the detective of the novel and many of the actants in relation to the unknown actants of the novel and its main objective is finding out those unknown actants and discovering their level of participation in the secret events.

In contrast to this hidden macro-narrative, several hidden micro-narratives are structured around the smaller body of narrative information on the part of the reader and some of the actants in comparison with the internal focalizer and some other actants in the novel, and are solved solely by some small flashbacks. Obviously, considering the reader's weak informational position and his/her need to be informed about the background of the actants and the past events, each of these instances may be intriguing to him/her. For example, Jalal's story about the details of his acquaintance with Sirous in Masjed Soleyman (Fassih, 1369, pp. 33-40), Gholam-Khan's narration of the story of his sister Pouran and her acquaintance with Sirous (Fassih, 1369, p. 91), Azar's story about how she met and married Sirous (Fassih, 1369, p. 115) and Jalal's story about Sirous's tragic and personal problem (Fassih, 1369, pp. 159-162) are some of the most important small flashbacks. The detective, like a psychoanalyst, analyzes the micro-narratives of the actants, or the analysands, by taking the separated elements into account and making connections between them in order to unravel the mystery of the crime. Therefore, the true story is not the story that every actant tells carefully; it often resides in seemingly accidental details (denials, repetitions, delays, slips, etc.) (Vaqfipour, 2017, p. 41).

Since flashforward usually reveals only some of the main traits of the events of the novel, it can answer parts of the fundamental question, "what will happen?"; in the meantime, with the question "how will it happen?" it can arouse even more anxiety and thrill in the reader by creating suspense (Nikkhou & Jalali Pandari, 2017, p. 42)

*The Falcon and the Owls* begins with Jalal's short dream which vaguely reveals some of the main lines of the events in the future. The honeymoon of Jalal and Parvin in Ahvaz, their sudden return to Tehran to identify the body of an unknown man and the moment Parvin gets shocked by hearing the news of the discovery of his father's body in Gholam-Khan's courtyard (Fassih, 1369, p.



1) are details of the events that the focalizer reveals respectively 251, 275 and 350 pages before they actually happen. Therefore, these events not only bring about anxiety and long-time expectation for the reader, but also direct the readers' attention from what happens to how they happen. In the beginning of another development of the novel which is focalized from the Jalal's perspective we read: "In the last days of the winter of 1966, about 5 or 6 years ago, Sirous Roushan was entangled in a personal tragic problem" (Fassih, 1369, p. 159).

This statement is also pregnant with important future events which are later on developed in six pages by the focalizer. Also, in another development of the novel, the internal focalizer uses the tactic of flashforward to inform the reader that "the morning after the news of the discovery of Sirous Roushan's body in the Choobi Char-Souk Garden went around, Malekabadi escaped by land to Turkey and then to Germany" (Fassih, 1369, p. 356); and then twelve pages later, he comes back to this event and explains it in details.

#### ***4.5. Numerous or Multiple Internal Focalization***

Employing multiple internal focalization is another tactic used by Fassih to create suspense. In this technique, like the method of expressing repetitive frequency, some events of the novel are narrated repeatedly, each time from the perspective of a different internal focalizer. In other words, different internal focalizations tend to understand and interpret the same event while they are basically different in style and method (Bameshki, 2013, p. 295). This tactic is like a puzzle for both the reader and the internal focalizer who have to complete the narrative by putting together all the different micro-narratives about a particular event. Thus, the internal focalizer has to deal with many narrative limitations while having no more narrative information than the reader and other internal focalizers, and he/she must work with the reader to find the lost pieces of the narrative puzzle. Different narratives by Parvin, Bahram Azari and Alireza Rastegar's wife about Sirous are instances of the use of multiple internal focalizer in *The Falcon and the Owls*:

- [Parvin] "He's rumored to be living alone in small cities. Anonymous." (Fassih, 1369, p. 5)
- [Bahram Azari] "He must've been cut off from this world." (Fassih, 1369, p. 21)
- [Alireza Rastegar's wife] "It's been a year that he's hiding in villages and small cities and sending his paintings to France to win awards." (Fassih, 1369, p. 23)

Although the event of the disappearance of Sirous forms the basis of the plot of this novel and should be at the center of the focalization of the actants, the peripherality of the focalizing agents of this event and the absurdity of their statements show that Fassih is inattentive to the importance of this tactic in detective narratives. Perhaps the reason is that the police does not give any authorization to the internal focalizer or the private detective of the novel; nonetheless, this major weakness prevents him from conducting formal investigations and creating suspense through the use of this technique. This weakness is evident in another part of the novel, too: Lieutenant Ahi and his assistants do not have a focalization power and cannot make the internal focalizer and the

reader accompany them; therefore, the informal focalizer has to announce the results of their investigations himself, rather than defer the role of narrative focalization to them, in order to make a surprising effect.

The narratives of Jalal, Gholam-Khan and Ahmad Afshar-Najafi about the details of Sirous and Poursan's relationship is another example of the multiple internal focalization in the novel. Jalal's narrative (Fassih, 1369, 53 and 78) is very similar to Afshar-Najafi's, although the latter has more narrative information than the former. They think Sirous and Poursan have an artistic-emotional relationship of a pure and platonic type. But Gholam-Khan, due to his status and different outlook, presents a completely different and one-sided narrative about this relationship:

“You see, the relation of Pouri and that bastard [Sirous] is a real story. He was spinning that poor girl for like five years. This motherless girl used to take care of that freak like an angel. We got to know what's what finally. Only for him she would leave everything behind [...]. He left her up in the air for five or six years. Then he suddenly disappeared. Not a clue where he was. Until just a few days ago, when they said he's come back and gone to see Pouri again [...].” (Fassih, 1369, 91)

Obviously, Gholam-Khan's narrative is heavily influenced by his sister's murder and the current state of the narrative in which everything is against Sirous. Nonetheless, the multiplicity of narratives, especially Jalal's narrative which is supported by the readers' trust, not only creates suspense by putting together all these different narrative about one event, but also creates a kind of narrative balance which challenges Gholam-Khan's one-sided narrative. Furthermore, this narrative tactic shows that mental perceptions of different actants about a particular event are often remarkably different.

#### 4.6. External Conflict

The events of a novel are formed around a conflict between two antagonistic forces. These forces can be two actants or two dimensions of the same actant (Payandeh, 2014, p. 95 and 363-4). In *The Falcon and the Owls*, there are two kinds of internal and external conflicts. In the most important external conflict of the novel, there is the internal focalizer or the novel's detective on the one side, and an unknown actant as the murderer on the other side. Arguably, the manner in which this conflict is developed forms the backbone of the novel. When the narrative of *The Falcon and the Owls* opens, it is already eight months after Sirous has disappeared. This and the subsequent events such as the murder of Poursan and Gholam-Khan Mohammadi, divide the principal actants of the novel, who are completely black or completely white based on the general subject of the novel, and juxtapose them one by one directly or indirectly (Ojakians, 2001, p. 120). Malekabadi, Azar and Afshar-Najafi are among the actants in the first group and Jalal, Sirous, Parvin and Lieutenant Ahi are actants in the second group. Of course, it is only at the end of the novel that we can decide to which group some of the actants belong.

We are dealing with an internal focalizer or a principal actant, some other actants and a reader who have very little information about some other actants and events in comparison with one or more unknown actants and the principal anti-actant. Also, through the narrative, the attempt of the actants in the white and black categories for hiding their tracks as well as the narrative information on the one hand and finding clues on the other hand, adds significantly to the scope of the conflicts and the subsequent suspense. The writer makes use of this limited narrative method to persuade the internal focalizer, the actants and the reader to follow the results of these conflicts, but all of them are one step behind the principal anti-actant to the end of the novel (Nahvifard, 2012, p. 68-9). These macro-conflicts are solved only at the end of the narrative.

Beside these external macro-conflicts in the novel, there are also some micro-conflicts in *The Falcon and the Owls*, such as the conflict between Gholam-Khan, the bully of the Chahar-Souk Choobi neighborhood, with Jalal and Lieutenant Ahi. The three parties, the internal focalizer, the actants and the reader do not have any information superiority over one another about these micro-narratives which are solely included in order to create suspense and add to the expanse of the macro-narratives of the novel.

Therefore, after creating a short period of suspense, all of them are solved rapidly and within one or some pages after the conflict began. For example, after entering the house of Jalal's brother and getting into a fight with Jalal, Gholam-Khan quickly stabs his brother with a knife and runs away. Also, when Lieutenant Ahi surprises Gholam-Khan in his house and beats him up, he goes out of the room humbly and with the excuse of bringing tea but escapes on the roof and rushes toward death. On the whole, considering the fact that the plot of a detective novel is based on binary oppositions, the low frequency of external conflicts resulting from these oppositions can be considered another weakness in Fassih's novel.

In addition, there are several conflicts in the dialogues of *The Falcon and the Owls*, too. "Although we seldom give much thought to the matter," Asa Berger (1996) argues, "conversations are really a popular art form, and, as such, they have their own rules and conventions" (168). One of these conventions is related to two-sided conversation which should be constantly interrupted by the two sides. This creates a constant conflict throughout the conversation which is framed by the main conflict (the external conflict) and in each moment of it, the reader reaches a new discovery.

By new discovery it is meant that although the outcome of each conflict is predictable, it is not obvious for the reader in different stages of the conflict. With each new event, the balance in the equation is lost and the reader is constantly curious about what happens in the next moment and how a statement from one actant is answered by the actant in front of him/her (Makki, 1988, pp. 140-141; Herman, 2009, p. 47). As an example, there is conversation going on between Azar and Jalal, when Azar says: "If [Parvin] gets on my nerve too much... I'll tell her all about Sirous Roushan so she won't call him "daddy" the rest of her life. I'm dead serious about this." (Fassih, 1991, p. 185).

This is a new discovery by which Azar is trying to surprise Jalal. She deliberately brings about the secret of Sirous's impotence to threaten Jalal: if he does not leave Parvin alone, she would tell

her the secret that Sirous is not her legitimate father. By using this threat, Azar tries to turn the conversation in her own favor. Her threat about revealing an old secret is a suspense-making act because it leads to the question of what Parvin's reaction will be if this threat is acted on. With this secret, the writer of the novel makes the conversation between the actants alive and interesting and keeps the reader thirsty and eager to the end with each word and statement.

#### ***4.7. Internal Conflict***

The other form of conflict in *The Falcon and the Owls* is internal conflict. Jalal, Sirous and Parvin are among the main actants of the novel who see themselves in difficult situations throughout the narrative and have to choose one of the directions: either conformity with the unfavorable realities dictated by the people around them, or realization of lofty human values. For instance, this is where Jalal is talking about Sirous's doubt and internal turmoil because he has to make a hard choice between compromising with Azar and keeping his impotency a secret on the one hand, and divorcing Azar on the other hand, with this hopeful thought that there remains no doubt in the children's minds:

“I saw Sirous the night he came out of the hospital. He was like a ghost after six deaths. He came to the café with me to eat dinner. Before even sitting down, he took the certification out of his pocket and threw it on the table in front of me. I took it and read it. Then I looked at him. There was nothing to say. There was not a damned thing to do. We sat down and we got drunk. He wept.” (Fassih, 1991, p. 161)

Here, the anti-hero or the opposing discourse in the face of one of the novel's main actants is not an external factor; rather, it is a part of his own soul or his emotions and feelings that rebel against his obvious will and make him struggle with various and sometimes conflicting feelings. This kind of conflict is called internal conflict because the main struggle happens inside one of the main actants of the novel as he/she does not know how to choose one of the ways in front of him/her. In this kind of conflict, the writer provides the main actant with acts and statements to keep attracting the interest of the reader to his story to the end of the novel (Makki, 1988, p. 194-196).

The first signs of Sirous's internal conflict and the dynamic aspect of his character is his suspicious silence and his curious staying in Arak, a city near Tehran, and the villages around it. Sirous has found out that the children he has been worshipping like Hindu gods are not his children. Because of this, when he is discharged from the hospital, he takes a certification from his doctor that says he has never been able to have children. He wanted this certificate to present to the court and be able to secretly divorce Azar and then take the children with him to Europe, but he is afraid that Azar might reveal the secret and ruin the children's lives. Therefore, he accepts Azar's request for divorce later and gives all his wealth to the two children. These actions along with the statements above show that Sirous will take a challenging approach and will not comply with the unfavorable and dictated realities. Thanks to the parallel presentation of information by the internal focalizer,

the reader understands, along with the focalizer and other actants, that Sirous's internal struggle will end with the end of this sub-plot, and he will decide to leave conservatism aside and choose a life of dignity. Of course, such a prediction is not very difficult for a reader familiar with the motifs of Iranian-Islamic ancient texts. With the help of his/her stereotyped and automated knowledge and his/her mental repositories of past experiences in dealing with narrative chains, such as the confrontation between living with dignity or with humiliation, the reader will easily guess the victory of the human dignity; and the writer of the novel has not done much to contradict this expectation.

#### ***4.8. Pause and Ellipsis***

The adjustment of the narrative speed by allocating a specific amount of text to the representation of each event is another narrative affordance of the internal focalizer in creating suspense. "The speed of a narrative is equal to the relationship between the duration of the narrated - the (approximate) time the events recounted go on or are thought to go on - and the length of the narrative (in words, lines, or pages, for instance)" (Prince, 1982, p. 55). The narrative speed has an inverse relationship with the share of each event in the discourse. The more the lateness of the discourse to the event, the less the narrative speed; and vice versa. The oscillation range of the narrative speed starts from pause, and then moves on to stretch, representation, summary, and at the highest possible speed, results in the ellipsis of the events from the narrative (Safi-Pirlojeh, 1395, p. 140-141). In *The Falcon and the Owls*, narrative speed of pause and ellipsis are used 37 times in order to create suspense through the slowness or fastness of the representation of events and situations.

If no amount of the narrated time is omitted in one part of the narration, we may call it pause. In this situation, the narrative comes to a complete stop. As such, the focalizer may start to describe an actant or a place at length, and his/her description may have no relevance to the passing of time in the narrative (Prince, 1982, pp. 55-56). With this tactic, the internal focalizer captures the reader's attention with such elements as micro-narratives, description of the settings and the actants, conversations, etc., which may have no relevance to the main events of the narrative, and in this way, perpetuates the suspense of the novel by creating the expectation of the reader to return to the main line of the narrative (Safi-Pirlojeh, 2016, p. 59).

Describing the places and the actants, pretending to have started reading a new book, listening perpetually to radio news at 7 in the morning, conversing lengthily with actants who are unrelated to the main events of the novel's narrative, explaining mystical and philosophical concepts, and giving a summary of the history of painting in Iran are some of the most important affordances of the internal focalizer for creating pauses and decreasing the narrative speed in *The Falcon and the Owls*. The internal focalizer usually employs descriptive statements to describe the places and actants who appear for the first time in the narrative. For example, when Jalal meets

Ardeshir Malekabadi for the first time, he pauses the narrative to introduce him to the reader in this way:

He is a big-bellied tall gentleman, good-looking with a northern complexion, in a navy blue suit and vest, with a checkered red and blue tie, a white goatee, holding a handbag and a tasbih, around forty-five years of age. When he begins to talk, I can see that the tasbih is more relevant to his character than the tie and the goatee. (Fassih, 1991, p. 13)

In another instance, he describes the courtyard of Gholam-Khan's house when he enters it for the first time:

The courtyard is large and empty, three steps below the entrance. The water in the small pool is green and dirty, and there are two flowerbeds on both sides of it. A beaten-down weeping willow, a naked plane tree, a vine-tree with intermingled and boughs which are dried up on the treillage. Some dusty pine trees and a big rotten orange tree. The end of the yard is in ruins which gives the garden an atmosphere of abandonment. The yard is paved with Nezami bricks and the lines between them are empty and hollow. In the direction of Qebleh, there are four old and ruined rooms.... (Fassih, 1991, 88).

Paying attention to details is one of the main elements of the detective novels which helped separate the structure of the latter novels from that of the former ones in this genre. Throughout the narrative, the internal focalizer pretends eight times to be reading a fantasy novel titled "The Man Who Was Shrinking". This novel is supposedly about an exiled American poet called Noumeman whose body is shrinking day by day. Fassih uses this parallel narrative to Sirous's narrative not only to create suspense by its pausing effect, but also to delineate metaphorically the violent situation which destroys artists and poets in every society. At the end of the novel, when the rotten body of Sirous is found in the courtyard of Gholam-Khan's house, we find out that Noumeman's body is also turned into a galactic human atom in the middle of the garden's soil and will not shrink anymore, making the writer hopeful that in the future, both of them will grow from the soil of the garden.

The lengthy lectures of Esmail (Jalal's mystic brother) and Sirous about mystic and philosophical concepts and a summary of the history of painting in Iran from the Achaemenid to Qajar period, respectively, which run for several pages, and the lengthy and repetitive conversations between the internal focalizer and actants who are totally unrelated to the main events of the novel's narrative are some other techniques used by the internal focalizer to create pause and decrease the narrative speed. These techniques, however, can be regarded as weaknesses of the novel, too; because they cannot be used as helpful clues for finding the criminal; rather, they overinflate the novel and decrease its narrative speed non-technically (Mir-Abedini, 1999, pp. 3-4; Payandeh, 2014, p. 97).

In contrast to pause, when the internal focalizer does not mention an event which has taken some time in any part of the narrative, we are dealing with ellipsis. In this situation, “the narrative reaches infinite speed” (Prince, 1982, p. 55). Many narratologists believe that in a novel, what is not said is as important as what is said (Selden et al., 2005, p. 151). By leaving some parts of the novel empty, the writer invites the reader to participate in filling the gaps and completing the events of the novel. The events are created with a collaborative and two-sided act by both the writer and the reader; so, the reader is not merely a passive receiver (Sahba, 2014, p. 17; Mirsadeghi, 2016, p.160). This usually leads to overreading, which means entering characteristics, motives, positions, judgements and even events into the narrative which have no correlative in the narrative discourse (Abbott, 2002, p. 82).

Inviting the reader to help fill the gaps in the text is another tactic used by the internal focalizer to create suspense. But paying attention to unimportant ellipsis and on the other hand, the ellipsis of important events, is Fassih’s critical weakness in using this tactic. In this novel, the internal focalizer uses ellipsis four times, the most important one being the ellipsis of the first story. Two other instances are related to the recounting of events at the time of sudden disappearance of Parvin after hearing the secret of Sirous’s impotence. Jalal says at one point, “The next four days goes on like this.” (Fassih, 1991, p. 215); and then at another point, “In the fifth and sixth days of Parvin Roushan’s absence, I convince myself that she must have gone out of Tehran, only because I didn’t want to let any other incident enter what had remained of my mind” (Fassih, 1991, p.219).

In these statements, with the ellipsis of the events in the past six days, the narrative speed reaches its highest because the internal focalizer has used only two short narrative statements to narrate the passing of two long time periods of four and two days, which add significantly to the anxiety of the reader over the story of Parvin. The ellipsis of these insignificant events is important not because it creates more suspense, but because it makes the narrative more dynamic.

As discussed earlier, employing multiple internal focalizers is one of the most important tactics of the detective novels for creating suspense. And the most important way for creating multiple internal focalizers is interrogating the different actants to recreate one or more events in the narrative. Faced with this technique, the reader knows that he/she must wait for the pieces of the puzzle narrated by the different internal focalizers to sit next to each other and complete the enigma of the novel (Sahba, 2014, p. 94). Therefore, it can be considered as another weakness in the novel that such an important event is omitted in the case of the interrogation of the present actants by Lieutenant Ahi and Mr. Parsa in Afshar-Najafi’s house about the murder of Gholam-Khan and the disappearance of Sirous. This could have been the only interrogation of the novel. Jalal, Afshar-Najafi, Azar and Parvin gathered in Afshar-Najafi’s house, and Lieutenant Ahi and his assistant go there after hearing the news of the discovery of Ghalm-Khan’s body to interrogate them about this event and Sirous’s disappearance. But the interrogation is interrupted suddenly just as it starts: “Lieutenant Ahi says: Come on... All of you. If you’ll allow it, we’ll begin the questioning.” (Fassih, 1991, p. 125)

It seems that if the writer allowed each of these present actants to focalize the events from their own perspective, and used the tactic of ellipsis in another part of the novel –for example, in a conflict between two persons- he would have been able to produce a more dynamic narrative with a more powerful suspense.

#### ***4.9. The Spatial Limitation of the Internal Focalizer***

By choosing the type of the focalizers and their affordances and limitations, the writer determines and limits the framework in which the focalizer and the actants can move. Spatially, the internal focalizer in *The Falcon and the Owls* has a limited observational position; therefore, he follows the limited spatial orientation. In such cases, if the focalizer is imprisoned inside a room with no windows, he/she can only describe the room itself; so, there is a potential for creating suspense because the reader is curious to know what is happening outside in relation to the focalizer. As an example, in one part of the novel, Parvin becomes aware of the secret of Sirous's impotent in a heated argument with her mother; so she goes angrily to Jalal's house to check if it is true, and then goes to an unknown place in a state of rage. Here, when the internal focalizer –and obviously the reader- and many other actants lose their access to Parvin or her whereabouts, their narrative information decreases in relation to some of the unknown actants of the novel who have this information about Parvin. Consequently, the reader's curiosity to find out Parvin's story is highly suspense-making. To find some clues, the internal focalizer or the detective of the novel starts immediately, from the next morning and for nearly a week, to go to several places, such as Azar's house, Malekabadi's office, her aunt's house and the house of one or two former friends of classmates of Parvin to whom he has spatial limitation. After about ten pages of fruitless but suspense-making attempt, Parvin herself goes to Jalal's brother's house and ends this event. At the end, when Jalal calls Azar to inform her about Parvin's return, it is revealed that Azar has had more narrative information than Jalal and the reader; because she says: "I know. She's been in Abadan. The poor girl. Staying with her friend Mina. Mina called yesterday and said she's coming back by jet tonight or tomorrow night." (Fassih, 1991, p. 223)

There are other examples of suspense resulting from the spatial limitation of the internal focalizer of the novel, such as the events that happen in the hiding place of Sirous, the details about the argument between Azar and Parvin in their house, the dangers surrounding Jalal's brother in Darband Hotel, etc.

#### ***4.10. Surprise***

In *The Falcon and the Owls*, we receive the narrative information only through one actant, Jalal. The reader does not see or hear anything more than Jalal sees and hears; therefore, the novel's focalization is limited to what Jalal knows. In such a case, whenever the novel's focalizer



suddenly changes the process of distributing information and gives additional information to the reader or any other actant, we are dealing with surprise (Truffaut, 1985, p. 73).

The news of Sirous's disappearance is the first case of surprise of the internal focalizer and naturally the reader in *The Falcon and the Owls*. On the day Jalal is going back to Tehran from the south, Parvin suddenly makes him aware of his father's disappearance: "I haven't seen my father for a while. No one knows about him in the last eight months." (Fassih, 1991, p. 4) Until now, the attention of the internal focalizer and the reader was directed to other important matters such as Jalal's poor physical condition and his situation in the long sick leave in his brother's house; but this information and Parvin's call for help for finding her father, suddenly changes the course of the events of the novel and not only expands its plot, but also leads it to an unpredictable direction. This surprise stems from the limitations of the internal focalizer because due to his limited perspective, he is deprived of seeing events happening in other places that are related to him. Here, immediately after witnessing this new situation, we face a new instance of suspense because when the narrative still goes on, new expectations and questions come to mind based on the situation which is going to be established soon (Abbott, 2002, p. 55).

In another part of the novel, while the internal focalizer, the reader and the other actants are shocked by the murder of Pouran and they regard his brother to be the first suspect, all of them are once again surprised by the murder of Gholam-Khan. Here, we are dealing with one or several unknown actants who have information superiority over the three groups stated above. In order to stay unknown to the end of the novel, these actants try to employ various tactics of complicating and diverting the reader's attention –such as suspect-making- to delay the unknotting of the main conflict of the narrative. They usually use their information superiority to create suspicion about other actants. Gholam-Khan is one of the actants who is brought into the narrative to strengthen the narrative and also divert the readers' attention. With his mysterious words and acts, he diverts the minds of the internal focalizer, the reader and the other actants about the murder of his sister. But, eventually, considering Gholam-Khan's recent activities and the growing possibility of his acquiring new narrative information about the details of suspicious events, the unknown actant of the novel comes to the conclusion that his staying alive might be more dangerous for him/her than his being under suspicion. Therefore, he/she murders Gholam-Khan to create a major surprise and disrupt the equations of the novel, and also lead the attention toward the other suspect of the novel, Sirous.

Another major surprise happens for the reader and many actants in the novel when it is found out that the buried skeleton in the courtyard of Gholam-Khan's house belongs to Sirous. The unknown actant or the novel's criminal who has so far been successful in deceiving the detective and the actants by presenting false information, once again prevents them from coming to a timely conclusion by burying Sirous's body with a deceiving women's clothing. Nevertheless, in the final parts of the novel, when the information superiority of the unknown actant is wearing out, the internal focalizer gains access to some clues about the details of events; however, for reasons such

as adding to the suspense of the novel and preparing the reader and other actants for the final surprise, he refuses to present these details. As such, the internal focalizer has an information superiority over the reader and many other actants. For example, when Doctor Azari calls the internal focalizer to give him the latest details about the discovered skeleton, he rightfully pretends to have expected this news (Fassih, 1991, p. 340).

The internal focalizer, who has so far been hiding most of his information about the events of the novel from the reader and the other actants, now informs the reader that he has put together nearly all the pieces of the puzzle with this last piece of news. At the end of the novel, the internal focalizer gathers most of the actants such as Doctor Azari, Lieutenant Ahi, Azar and Parvin in his brother's house and tries to surprise them as well as the reader by revealing the details of the main events of the novel. The final surprise, that Sirous was murdered by Malekabadi, is so intense that makes Parvin go to a comma forever and make the internal focalizer think that this revelation in the presence of Parvin has been the worst mistake in his life.

## 5. Conclusion

The Analysis of the novel *The Falcon and the Owls* showed that the dominant focalization of the novel is carried out by an internal focalizer who is limited in every aspect to things, events and focalized actants. Considering the possibilities and limitations he has for distributing the narrative information, this focalizer arranges the clues in such a way as to create suspense and surprise. Therefore, it can be concluded that such elements as the existence of duality or two sets of time in the structure of the narrative, raising implicit questions in the first and later scenes of the novel, flashback and flashforward, multiple internal focalization, various types of internal and external conflicts, various narrative speed such as pause and ellipsis, the spatial limitation of the focalizer and also suspense after the surprise, are the affordances and the limitations of the internal focalizer for creating suspense and surprise.

Making use of such narrative affordances as raising implicit questions in the first and later scenes and also going forward and backward in time is the strength of *The Falcon and the Owls*. However, narrating the novel from the perspective of an internal focalizer, giving insufficient attention to multiple internal focalization, and relying too much on unimportant pauses and omitting important events are among the weaknesses of the novel in employing the narrative affordances and limitations of the internal focalizer for creating suspense and surprise.

The following table shows the frequency of the narrative affordances and limitations of the internal focalizer used in *The Falcon and the Owls* in order to create suspense and surprise. The information in this table summarizes the results of this study.

Narrative Affordances and Limitations	Number
Duality or the existence of two time sets in the structure of the narrative	1
Raising implicit questions in the first and later scenes of the novel	60
Flashback	42
Flashforward	10
Numerous or multiple internal focalizer	3
External conflict	5
Conflict in conversation	3
Internal conflict	4
Pause	33
Ellipsis	4
Spatial limitation of the focalizer	7
Surprise	12
Suspense after surprise	12
The total number of suspense and surprise cases	196



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