

# Scrutinising the Moon: Randa Jarrar's "The Lunatic's Eclipse" Under a Postmodern Lens

Majd Mohammad Alkayid<sup>1</sup>, Mais N Al-Shara'h<sup>2</sup>, Murad Mohammad Al Kayed<sup>3</sup>, Malik Alkhawaldeh<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assistant professor, Department of English Language and Translation, Applied Science Private University, Jordan

<sup>2</sup> Assistant professor, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Jordan, Jordan

<sup>3</sup> Assistant professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Al-Balqa Applied University, Jordan

<sup>4</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Translation, Applied Science Private University, Jordan

Correspondence: Majd Mohammad Alkayid, Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Translation, Applied Science Private University, Jordan. E-mail: m\_alkayed@asu.edu.jo

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## Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the short story "The Lunatic's Eclipse" by the Arab-American Randa Jarrar and explain the postmodern techniques represented through the different functions of the moon. The study is qualitative research that employs postmodern strategies of magic realism, metafiction, carnivalesque, and intertextuality as the study's methodology. Through these strategies, the story blurs the boundaries between reality, magic, and fiction and unites them in one entity to highlight themes of freedom, happiness, and self-reliance. Therefore, the study relies on postmodern theorists' ideas and theories on these strategies, including Jean-Francois Lyotard, Linda Hutcheon, Franz Koh, Mikhail Bakhtin, Gerard Genette, and William Gass. The moon is also employed as a structure for the story and a theme that unites all the parts of the story together. The characters are also given names that mean different phases of the moon in Arabic. Jarrar uses the moon to resist stereotyping Arab women as weak and submissive.

**Keywords:** Diaspora; the moon; magic realism; metafiction; carnival

## 1. Introduction

Randa Jarrar is an Arab-American novelist, short story writer and translator. Her father is Palestinian, and her mother is Egyptian, and both had moved to the USA, where Jarrar was born in 1978. Jarrar published her first novel *A Map of Home*, in 2008 and the collection of short stories *Him, Me and Muhammad Ali* in 2016, from which her story "The Lunatic Eclipse" is studied. Also, Her Memoir *Love is An Ex-Country* was Published in February 2021.

Several articles focus on Jarrar's first novel, *A Map of Love*, and mostly highlight issues of identity, home, belonging, discrimination and racial struggle. For example, in "Home in Contemporary Arab American Literature: Randa Jarar's *A Map Of Home*", Esra Öztarhan argues that home for the novel's protagonist is fluid and built as a process rather than a place because the protagonist goes through three phases. Öztarhan states,

The first phase is the quest for home due to the uneasiness of non-belonging. The second one is realizing and accepting her in-betweenness, thus reconciliation with having no home. The third step brings out her celebration of non-belonging to any particular home (Öztarhan, 2015).

In other words, the protagonist does not have a fixed sense of identity. Moreover, in "Folktales and Rites of Passage in Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home*", Hasnul Djohar explains how Jarrar negotiates issues of identity through folktales, naming, and rites of passage. Djohar connects storytelling and folklore with identity and belonging, explaining how Jarrar "emphasises the importance of Islamic cultural traditions through folktales to question American belonging" (Djohar, 2019).

Some research papers have studied Jarrar's short story collection *Him, Me and Muhammad Ali*, like Yousef Abu Amrieh's "From My Dovecote to My Building: Intertextuality in Jarrar's The Story of My Building". Abu Amrieh discusses Jarrar's "The Story of My Building" and highlights its intertextuality with Isaac Babel's "The Story of My Dovecote". Abu Amrieh argues that Jarrar "appropriates events, themes, tropes and motifs employed by Russian writer Isaac Babel" (Abu Amreih, 2022). In other words, Jarrar creates a link with Babel's story to highlight issues of trauma, war, and dislocation.

Jarrar, like many diasporic Arab writers on both sides of the Atlantic (mainly Britain and America), searches for voices to express the diasporic experience. The last few decades witnessed a thriving in diasporic Arab American writers like Mohja Kahf, Susan Abulhawa, Diana Abu-Jaber and Etel Adnan; and Arab British writers like Jamal Mahjoub, Leila Aboulela and Fadia Faqir. Arab American writers published poems, short stories, novels, memoirs and other forms of literature because they "found that they ... could contribute to the rich

mosaic of American society and literary culture, ending a far from self-imposed invisibility, they even found 'home' and acceptance in ethnicity" (Al Maleh, 2009). In other words, Arab American writers found the medium of literature to discuss their diasporic experiences and to explain many political, social and cultural issues they face as diasporic people.

Most diasporic Arab writers are women. In his *Cartographies of Identities: Resistance, Diaspora, and Trans-cultural Dialogue in the Works of Arab British and Arab American Women Writers*, Yousef Awad compares Arab British and Arab American women writers. Awad argues that Arab British writers "share a tendency to foreground and advocate trans-cultural dialogue and cross-ethnic identification strategies" (Awad, 2011). This means that they focus on representing the intercultural relationship of Arabs with their host culture. On the other hand, American writers, Awad continues, "employ literary strategies to resist stereotypes and misconceptions about Arab communities" (Awad, 2011). This means that Arab American writers focus on resisting the misrepresentation of Arab people and try to correct these misconceptions.

Like Awad, Dalal Sarnou argues that literary texts by Arab writers "brought more recognition and visibility to the Arab Woman and defy the orientalist representation that was promoted since the nineteenth century in Western literature, media, and art" (Sarnou, 2014). Accordingly, Arab women writers use strategies that resist the misconceptions and stereotypes of Arabs in general and Arab women in specific. This paper investigates how Jarrar, like other Arab American women writers, resists the misrepresentations of Arab women in her short story "The Lunatic's Eclipse" and how she uses different strategies related to the moon to correct the misconceptions and stereotypes of Arab women. Jarrar employs postmodern strategies like magic realism, metafiction, para-textuality and carnival as a space in which the moon is significant. Therefore, the study employs these postmodern techniques and strategies as the theoretical frame through which the moon is analysed. The study investigates the moon from the perspective of magic realism, depending on Franz Roh and H. Suma's theories. Also, the moon is examined in connection with folklore and culture or what the theorist Mikhail Bakhtin called "carnavalesque". Through Julia Kristeva and Gerard Genette's perspective of intertextuality/ paratextuality, the moon functions as a paratext or an intersection of processes and practices that unite verbal and nonverbal processes like dance and music. Finally, the moon is examined through William Gass and Abida Younas's theories of metafiction. Therefore, the moon becomes where the boundaries between fiction and reality are blurred. In short, the study analyses the functions of the moon in connection with different postmodernist techniques and discusses how Jarrar represents women in "The Lunatic's Eclipse". To understand these theories and the functions of the moon, the study first summarises the story.

### 1.1 Summary of "The Lunatic's Eclipse":

"The Lunatic's Eclipse" is the first story in Jarrar's collection of short stories *Me, Him and Muhammad Ali* (2016), which includes 13 stories. The story starts with the 9-year-old girl, Qamar, sitting on the rooftop of her apartment building for ten days, trying to capture the moon. A 24-year-old man, Metwali, told her he would be her love if she brought him the moon. Afterward, the moon disappeared from the sky, and Metwali married another woman. The disappearance of the moon and the story of Qamar were mentioned in the newspapers. When Qamar was 15, she became a ballerina. On their way to her show, Qamar's parents had a car accident and died. After her parents' death, Qamar was informed that her parents wanted her to marry a family friend, Omar. This news sickened her, and she started working as an acrobat in the circus in an attempt to fall and break her neck. During this challenging time, a man called Hilal started talking to her about his dreams and ambitions of building a rocket and traveling to the moon. They became friends, and they spent most of their time together. On her wedding day to Omar, Hilal came with his rocket, and Qamar jumped to him over clotheslines. She joined him in his journey to space.

## 2. Methodology

The study is an analytical and qualitative research. The primary data is Jarrar's short story "The Lunatic's Eclipse" from the collection of the stories; *Him, Me and Mohammed Ali*, while the secondary data is taken from books, journals, and articles that discuss the novel in particular, and diasporic Arab fiction in general. The study also uses postmodern theories to analyze the story including Magic Realism, Metafiction, Paratextuality, and the Carnavalesque. The study focuses on Postmodernist theory which is a cultural phenomenon that appeared in the 1970s and was employed in different cultural fields, including literature, music, dance, architecture, philosophy, and social sciences. Many seminal works are written about postmodernism, its techniques and characteristics, including Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), Linda Hutcheon's two great books *The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989), and *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988), and Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism, or, The cultural logic of late capitalism* (1991). Lyotard argues that the postmodern is the one that

puts forward the unrepresentable in the presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share the nostalgia for the unattainable collectively; that which searches for new presentations, not to enjoy them but to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable (Lyotard, 1984).

This means that the postmodern attempts to find new ways of presenting the unrepresentable and to shed light on the contradictions and ironical situations. Also, Hutcheon declares that Postmodernism is a term that

takes the form of self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining statement. It is rather like saying something whilst at the same time putting inverted commas around what is being said. The effect is to highlight, or 'highlight,' and to subvert, or 'subvert.' The model is, therefore, a 'knowing' and an ironic – or even 'ironic' – one (Hutcheon, 1989).

Therefore, postmodernist texts highlight or subvert certain statements using specific techniques and procedures to create irony. Postmodernism is also characterised by paradoxes that “work to instruct us in the inadequacies of totalising systems and fixed institutionalised boundaries (epistemological and ontological)” (Hutcheon, 1988). This means that postmodern theory considers the text a process that defies totality and limitedness. The text is in a continual process of change, contradiction, paradox, and irony.

Fragmentation and non-linear narration are significant features of Postmodernism. The deconstruction of the time sequence of events and jumping back and forth in time with events and memories distinguish Jarrar's story as the main character blends her everyday life with memories and flashbacks. She also tries to have a look at the future with her lover. Therefore, time in the story is fluid where the lines of the past, the present and the future are blurred. In fact, the overlap of the past, present and future reflects the character's disorientation and feeling of loss and loneliness. She is confused with her life choices and conditions. However, with love and understanding, she becomes able to make the right decision and be free and happy.

Moreover, in “Common Themes and Techniques of Postmodern Literature of Shakespeare”, Ramen Sharma and Preeti Chaudhary argue that postmodernist literature is characterised by many elements and techniques like playfulness, pastiche, parody, paradox, fragmentation, intertextuality, magic realism and metafiction (Sharma, 2011). Likewise, Arab diasporic writers employ different strategies and devices to discuss their distinctive experience as an ethnic minority. To Dalal Sarnou, Arab British and Arab American writers identify

their ability to manipulate different cultural traits and amalgamate them in one, and for some the linguistic bilingual capacity, have given rise to specific literary writings with special thematic, special characters, special literary techniques, and special doubled perception of a contemporary life ... of immigrants who feel displaced and dislocated in the Diaspora” (Sarnou, 2011).

In other words, Arab diasporic writers are innovative because they use a new form of writing with special techniques, characters and themes. This new form of writing uses postmodern techniques and strategies like metafiction, magic realism, intertextuality and carnivalesque.

### 3. Discussion

This study analyses the moon in Jarrar's "The Lunatic's Eclipse" as a postmodern strategy of magic realism, carnivalesque, metafiction and paratext in the following sections.

#### 3.1 Magic Realism

The first discussed postmodernist technique in this study is Magic realism, a term created for the first time in 1925 by Franz Roh. The term was used to describe post-expressionist painting. Later on, the term was developed by Latin American writers like Garcia Marquez to refer to fictional works that mix magic with reality. After that, the term was applied worldwide to describe reality using magic. Magic realist fiction is serious and tries to illuminate truth by depicting supernatural elements. This writing mode is “characterised by two conflicting perspectives, one based on a rational view of reality and the other on accepting the supernatural as prosaic reality” (Suma, 2018). Therefore, the supernatural blends with the real to comment on life; emphasising its characters' social, political and cultural status. Moreover, magical realism differs from fantasy because “it is set in a normal, modern world with authentic descriptions of humans and society” (Suma, 2018). In short, magic realism is a mode of writing that mixes magic with reality to criticise and discuss the characters' political, social, and cultural life. It also includes combining and blurring the lines between paradoxes and opposites, such as life and death, happiness and sadness, and the real and the supernatural.

In Jarrar's story, the moon supernaturally disappears from the world after Qamar's unsuccessful attempts to catch it. On her 9<sup>th</sup> birthday, Qamar is told jokingly by Metwali, a young man she loves, that he will marry her if she brings him the moon. Qamar takes it seriously and sits on the rooftop for ten days. She wants to catch it with a rope. The people do not understand this event as something supernatural or strange. On the contrary, people are worried about the safety of Qamar and ask the *bawab* (the building guard) to check on her. After ten sleepless nights, Qamar nods for seconds, and afterward, the moon vanishes, but people never agree on how. Some say that Qamar nods off, and the moon shoots back into the vast sky so high that no one can see it anymore. On the other hand, Qamar insists that Zainab, Metwali's lover and later his wife, is the evil girl who “fetched the moon during that short instant” (Jarrar, 2016).

In magic realism, magic is used side by side with reality to comment on social, political and cultural issues. In the story, magic is used to comment on the innocence of children and how some adults harm and manipulate them, sometimes unintentionally. Metwali unintentionally harms Qamar's feelings. This incident significantly affects her because it is the point where her innocence is juxtaposed with reality, resulting in her disappointment. The disappearance of the moon is not considered a supernatural phenomenon by people, but what attracts people is the reason for its disappearance. Newspapers like Al-Ahram, Al-Khabar and Al-Sharq Al-Awsat start to write about the incident. These newspapers discuss how the moon disappeared because of a nine-year-old girl who tried to catch it for ten sleepless nights.

When Qamar is 13, she becomes one of Egypt's top ballerinas and has a show at the theatre. On their way to the show, her parents are killed in a car accident. The car's driver is distracted by the lunar eclipse and accidentally kills Qamar's parents. The lunar eclipse is related to universal superstitions because it is usually considered a bad omen in myths and legends. Narayan Rana thoroughly discusses how “the lunar and solar eclipses have, by and large, been held to bring in wake calamities like epidemics, wars, etc. (Rana, 1995). In other words, the lunar eclipse in some myths and legends is associated with death, destruction, wars and epidemics, and many people from different cultures still believe in these superstitions. Accordingly, the supernatural power of the lunar eclipse blends with reality and

kills Qamar's parents.

After their death, Qamar is told that her parents want her to marry a family friend, Omar. Because she does not love Omar, she endangers her life by dancing and walking on the rope in the circus without a safety net. She wants to kill herself. In one of her shows, a young man, Hilal, watches and falls in love with her. The story's narrator reveals that Qamar and Hilal were mentioned in the same newspaper many years ago. Qamar is mentioned in the newspaper for making the moon disappear. Hilal is mentioned as the distinctive student who was number one in the secondary school final exams and the one who got the president's offer of sending Hilal to London for free medical training. However, Hilal is not interested in medicine and wants to go to the moon. Hilal writes a pleading letter to replace the offer saying, "Sir, I have no interest in hearts or in how to mend them. Can you send me to Houston?" (Jarrar, 2016). Therefore, Hilal is more interested in studying the moon, planets and space. He wants to be an astronaut and dreams of joining NASA and traveling to the moon. However, he knows that achieving his dream is too complicated and that "jumping to the moon would be more realistic than obtaining a visa and traveling to Houston for astronaut training" (Jarrar, 2016).

The magic in the relationship between Qamar and Hilal is when Hilal tries to save Qamar from marrying a man whom she does not love, by making a rocket on her wedding day and bringing it to the neighbourhood. The rocket is carried on the back of a truck. Making a rocket and bringing it on a truck is perceived by people as a regular thing. Qamar reacts with surprise and happiness when she sees the rocket. She jumps to the rocket from her high apartment. She jumps down from one clothesline to the other until she reaches Hilal's rocket saying, "Ah, the man wasn't kidding" (Jarrar, 2016). This incident is also magical because jumping down from a very tall building on clotheslines is related to supernatural powers. Qamar becomes a bird-like creature who can fly on clotheslines.

In short, the moon is employed as a strategy of magic realism to comment on the ambitions and hopes of Qamar and Hilal and how with determination and love, they overcome the obstacles in their lives. Magic and reality mix as an everyday occurrence, and characters join the magical with the real to form their lives. The moon in the story is always changing. This is similar to the characters' lives, and this reflects their unstable identities.

### 3.2 The Carnavalesque

The Carnavalesque is a postmodern technique developed by the Russian philosopher and critic Mikhail Bakhtin. In his *Rabelais and His World* (1984), Bakhtin thoroughly discusses the carnivalesque and its forms related to culture and folklore. Bakhtin argues that the carnivalesque is a style that has many forms like "folk festivities of the carnival type, the comic rites and cults, the clowns and fools, giants, dwarfs, and jugglers, the vast and manifold literature of parody" (Bakhtin, 1984). Therefore, Bakhtin discusses how literary texts employ festivities, humour, feasts and the marketplace to form a "non-official level" of the world (Bakhtin, 1984). Bakhtin argues that when these forms were used, "texts acquired a new meaning, were deepened and rendered more complex, until they became the expression of folk consciousness, of folk culture" (Bakhtin, 1984). Moreover, Bakhtin states that the carnival is also related to time because "during carnival time, life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its freedom" (Bakhtin, 1984). Accordingly, the carnival expresses life, freedom, celebration and folklore. In "Behind the Masks, The Politics of Carnival", Aurélie Godet examines the carnivalesque and declares that

During carnival, individuals were subsumed into a kind of lived collective body which was constantly renewed. On a psychological level, it generated intense feelings of immanence and unity—of being part of a historically uninterrupted process of becoming (Godet, 2020).

In other words, the carnivalesque generates collectivity and unity among the individuals. Moreover, for Bakhtin, the carnival expresses renewal and it "was vividly felt as an escape from the usual official way of life" (Bakhtin, 1984).

Bakhtin's carnival and its forms apply to Jarrar's story because it involves the feast, folk culture, marketplace and festivities. Bakhtin argues that festivities "are usually marked by fairs and open-air amusements, with the participation of giants, dwarfs, monsters and trained animals" (Bakhtin, 1984). Thus, a carnival atmosphere of amusements, giants, dwarfs and trained animals is found in the circus where Qamar works. While working as a ballerina in the circus, Qamar was unhappy because she had to marry a man she did not love. Her family arranged her marriage to Omar, and she had to obey. As a form of resistance, Qamar danced on the ropes in the circus to free her mind from thinking about the marriage. In addition, dancing and walking on the rope without a safety net shows that she does not care about her life, as she is depressed and disappointed. Her situation is described concerning the moon and space. Her clothes in the circus are speckled with stars, and she "wore her tightrope-walking suit: a shiny leotard and a lime-green tutu speckled with tiny silver stars" (Jarrar, 2016). Therefore, Qamar is like the moon surrounded by shiny stars. This carnival atmosphere of the circus and wearing the moon suit offer Qamar a completely different world in which she detaches herself from her reality and social condition and enables her to feel happiness, freedom, and escape from her reality.

For Bakhtin, the carnival atmosphere "offered a completely different, nonofficial, extra ecclesiastical and extra-political aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom" (Jarrar, 2016). In other words, dancing in the circus wearing the moon suit gives Qamar a space to escape to. Freedom which Qamar longs for is found in the carnival atmosphere of the circus because "during carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is the laws of its own freedom" (Bakhtin, 1984).

Another example of a carnivalesque atmosphere related to the moon is the *Moled*, the celebration of Prophet Mohammad's birthday. The

*Moled* is a cultural celebration where all people go out to the colourful streets with shows, dances and entertainment activities. Because Qamar is depressed over the approaching date of her wedding, she goes out to join the festivities of the *Moled*. When Qamar goes out,

All of Alexandria was a circus; there were colourful celebrations on every major street. Sufi dancers in white robes twirled around in red-and-white calligraphy-covered tents-twelve dancers in all, weaving around themselves and in a circle, perfectly synchronised, like the planets (Jarrar, 2016).

The twelve dancers in the significant streets represent the movement of the moon which makes the months of the year. Also, the dancers are like the planets while Qamar is standing there as the moon of that galaxy. By joining these activities, Qamar meets Hilal, whom she falls in love with later. Therefore, the carnival atmosphere becomes a renewal, rebirth and escape from her harsh reality to a new life where she finds love and safety with Hilal. Bakhtin argues that the carnival “expressed this universal renewal and was vividly felt as an escape from the usual official way of life” (Bakhtin, 1984).

Another element of the carnivalesque in the story is the carnival atmosphere of Qamar’s wedding day in Ramadan. According to the Islamic calendar, every month is identified according to the moon’s movement and shape. Each month starts with a very thin moon (the crescent), and it turns to a full moon in the middle of the month, then it becomes a crescent again at the end of the month. Accordingly, Ramadan starts and ends with the crescent. During Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn until sunset. Many Muslims use the crescent as a symbol of Islam, fasting and Ramadan. On her wedding day, Qamar is upset because she will marry a man she does not love. Her uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents and in-laws come to her house in the evening and “they danced and sang and ate, then waited for the ma’zun to come and officially marry her to Omar, the man they had chosen” (Jarrar, 2016). This atmosphere should be full of happiness and enjoyment, but Qamar is sad and feels like a doll and “millions of ants chewing her body from the inside out” (Jarrar, 2016). When she goes to the window for fresh air, she sees Hilal standing outside with his white rocket on the back of a truck. The carnival atmosphere ends with renewal, happiness and escape from the confines of her old lifestyle to a new life with Hilal. Therefore, the carnival represents freedom and happiness to Qamar. Actually, the carnivalesque atmosphere of Ramadan makes Qamar a full human being like the beautiful full shining moon.

Another carnival element related to the story is the feast. For Bakhtin, “the feast, every feast, is an important primary form of human culture... the feast had always an essential, meaningful philosophical content” (Jarrar, 2016). Therefore, the feast is linked to culture, traditions and values. Moreover, Bakhtin argues that “the feast is always essentially related to time, either to the recurrence of an event in the natural (cosmic) cycle, or to the biological or historic timeliness” (Bakhtin, 1984). In other words, the feast is connected to time and culture. As discussed before, Jarrar’s story involves the feast in Ramadan when Qamar’s family and friends meet to celebrate the wedding. Ramadan is related to the cosmic cycle of the moon. Moreover, Bakhtin explains that

throughout all the stages of historic development, feasts were linked to moments of crisis, of breaking points in the cycle of nature or in the life of society and man. Moments of death and revival, of change and renewal always led to a festive perception of the world (Bakhtin, 1984).

In short, the feast includes a moment of difficulty, but it leads to solutions, renewal and change. The crisis for Qamar during the feast disappeared, and her situation changed as she escaped from the marriage and had a new beginning with Hilal. She leaves her house, jumping from one clothesline to another until she reaches the ground. She leaves with Hilal saying, “I want the moon” (Jarrar, 2016). The moon here symbolises freedom, change, happiness and love for Qamar.

### 3.3 Intertextuality/ Paratextuality

The moon is also employed as an intertextual device or a paratext. Intertextuality is a term coined by Julia Kristeva, who argues that the text is a dynamic site with many relational processes and practices. Kristeva explains that “the literary word is an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning, as a dialogue among several writings)” (Kristeva, 1980). Kristeva’s theory is a development of Bakhtin’s theories of heteroglossia, dialogism and polyphony which refer to the relational practices and different voices in the text. Kristeva emphasises that “each word (text) is an intersection of other words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read” (Kristeva, 1980). In other words, Kristeva emphasises that the text has many relational processes and practices of other texts. The theorist Gerard Genette developed Kristeva’s theory to include texts and other forms of culture like art, music, films, etc. Genette argues that the text is connected to other (verbal) practices (texts) and non-verbal practices. He states that “the text rarely appears in its naked state, without the reinforcement and accompaniment of a certain number of productions, themselves verbal or not” (Genette, 1991).

Genette calls the non-verbal relational practices and processes “the paratext”. He explains that the paratext is the general term that includes all kinds of relational verbal and non-verbal practices. Genette defines the paratext as a text that “is empirically composed of an assorted set of practices and discourses of all sorts and all ages ... the ways and means of the paratext are modified unceasingly according to periods, cultures, genres, authors, works, editions” (Genette, 1991). Accordingly, intertextuality (relationships between verbal texts) is a part of the paratext (relationships between verbal and non-verbal texts).

In Jarrar’s story, the moon is a paratext because it relates the story to other practices and processes like music, dancing and media. For example, when Qamar goes with Hilal to a café, she sees Michael Jackson on TV “wearing shiny gloves and doing the moonwalk” (Jarrar, 2016). The singer and dancer Jackson is especially famous for singing and dancing on the Moon song and wearing shiny clothes spotted with stars when he performs it. Jackson resembles the moon while surrounded by stars. The relationship between the story, music,

dancing and singing highlights how much the protagonist always thinks of the moon as a source of happiness, hope, freedom and escape from her reality. Another paratext in the story is the media. The story of Qamar's attempt to catch the moon and the story of Hilal's success in secondary examinations, and his desire to join NASA to go to the moon are discussed in the newspapers. Accordingly, the newspaper is a paratext that becomes another fabric that unites all the threads of the story together. Moreover, the title of the story is a paratext since it suggests a connection between the moon and the mysterious lunacy and eclipses.

Jarrar employs the moon as a structure of the story, as the story begins with the moon and ends with the moon. The story becomes a cycle in which Qamar's life is similar to the moon's phases. With her love for Metwali during her childhood, Qamar was like a full moon, but when she lost her parents and got engaged to a man whom she did not love, she became like the crescent, and finally, she became lively and happy, like a full moon when she finds love and freedom with Hilal.

### 3.4 Metafiction

Metafiction is a term that refers to a postmodern strategy in which the writer blurs the boundary between reality and fiction as it makes the reader aware that what they read is a fictional work. William Gass, the first to use this term, defines metafiction as "fiction with self-consciousness, self-awareness, self-knowledge, ironic self-distance" (Younas, 2018). Abida Younas argues that "metafictional writers consciously direct the reader's attention towards the text's literariness and prompt them to ask questions about constructed reality" (Younas, 2018). In other words, metafictional texts are self-reflexive and make readers realize that what they read is a fictional work. A strategy to alert the reader that the work is fictional is addressing readers, asking them questions and asking them about their opinions. For example, in the story, the narrator addresses the readers, telling them the story of Qamar's attempt to catch the moon by saying, "You might wonder why Qamar's parents let their child sit on the roof for ten nights in a row, and for a boy. You might think Egyptian parents don't let their little girls get away with things like that, and you'd be right" (Jarrar, 2016). So, the narrator uses the pronoun you to address readers, ask them questions, and ask them to think about why Qamar's parents left their child on the rooftop for ten days.

Therefore, the narrator encourages the readers to be a part of the text by asking about their opinions about Qamar's story. The narrator clarifies that readers may ask why Qamar's parents let their child wait for the moon for ten days by addressing readers arguing that Qamar's parents are different from other Egyptians because they are actors. Accordingly, the moon is a metafictional site where the reader criticizes situations and creates meaning in the fictional work.

## 4. Result

Based on the data that have been analyzed in this research, it is found that Jarrar resists the stereotypical representation of Arab women as silent, weak, and submissive. In fact, Jarrar gives the main character; Qamar, the ability to speak and express her perspectives by using different postmodernist techniques that show how she is self-reliant, strong, and creative. Through blurring the line between reality and magic (magic realism), and blurring the line between reality and fiction (metafiction), Jarrar highlights women's struggle to achieve love, strength, and happiness by using the moon. In addition, feasts, festivals, and social occasions are a type of carnivalesque that Jarrar uses to highlight how the moon is related to all aspects of Qamar's life. Paratextuality is also a postmodern technique that unites the moon with different sources that tackle the moon like music, dancing, songs, and newspapers.

## 5. Conclusion

Randa Jarrar employs the moon to resist the stereotypical role of Arab women by using the moon as a postmodern strategy of magic realism, carnivalesque, paratext, and metafiction. The story blends the real with the magical, fiction with the self-reflexivity of the text as a work of art, fiction with the feast, carnival, and celebrations, and the text with other texts and productions like music and dance. All magical events in the story are perceived as normal and real by people like the disappearance of the moon or flying over clotheslines. Paratextuality in the story is related to different texts and discourses like newspapers, music, and dance that make the moon their main theme. Also, the moon becomes a site for carnivalesque activities like the feast, Ramadan, the *Moled*, and the circus. Metafiction is also used to remind the reader that the story that discusses the moon and Qamar's experience is a literary work that they can analyze.

Naming is another tool that unites all the parts of the story together. For instance, the protagonist's name Qamar is an Arabic word that means the moon. Also, Hilal is an Arabic word that means the crescent. In Arabic language, Qamar (the moon) is a female name that Arabs refer to it using "she", while in English language, speakers refer to it as "he". Moreover, the moon shapes the life of Qamar as she sees everything in her life in relation to the moon. For example, when she goes with Hilal to eat ice cream, she sees the ice cream scoop as "the night's full moon" (Jarrar, 2016). For Qamar, the moon represents everything she longs for, like freedom, happiness, dreams and love. Qamar represents strong Arab women who are confident and strive to become free and happy. Qamar struggles to escape from the arranged marriage and succeeds in being independent and free. She achieves her dream of escaping social constraints and having a new life full of happiness and freedom.

The moon is also a structural and fictional frame for the story. The moon is mentioned mainly in all the paragraphs of the story. The moon and its phases also connect the story's events to shape it as a moon, moving from one shape to another. The story begins with the full moon when Qamar feels love towards Metwali. The story moves to the climax, in which the crescent emphasises that she is not whole because she becomes disappointed after her parent's deaths and her family's intention to marry her to another man. At the end of the story, the moon is full, symbolising that she becomes a whole like the moon when she goes with Hilal with promises of love and freedom.

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**Authors contributions**

Majd Alkayid: worked on Magic realism

Mais N Al-Shara'h worked on Metafiction

Murad Mohammad Al Kayed: worked on Carnavalesque

Malik Alkhawaldeh worked on defining postmodernism

All of us worked on the introduction and the conclusion

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