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An Analytical Exploration of the Story of Prophet Adam (AS) in Surah Al-A'raf in Light of Gérard Genette's Narrative Theory

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Abstract

Gérard Genette, a French structuralist theorist, investigates the structure of narrative discourse from various perspectives. The Holy Qur'an contains numerous stories intended to guide humankind, and these narratives can be more deeply analyzed through the lens of Genette's narrative theory. Among them, the Qur'anic narrative of Prophet Adam (AS) stands as one of the most prominent. The significance of the narrative techniques employed in the story of Prophet Adam (AS) in Surah Al-A'raf lies in their ability to enhance both the structural depth and the theological impact of the text. Gérard Genette's narrative theory provides a valuable lens through which these techniques—such as anachrony, narrative voice, speed, and frequency—can be systematically examined. Overall, these narrative strategies are not merely aesthetic choices but serve a deeper didactic purpose, aligning the structure of the story with its spiritual and moral messages. The present study examines this narrative discourse in Surah Al-A'raf using both descriptive-analytical and statistical methods within Genette's theoretical framework. The findings revealed that the story is narrated indirectly through the voice of God Almighty, functioning as the omniscient narrator external to the narrative world. In terms of narrative time (anachrony), most of the verses reflect homodiegetic prolepses and analepses, while some verses exhibit no anachrony at all. Regarding narrative frequency, singulative narration appears in the opening and closing verses, whereas iterative narration is observed in the middle sections. The overall pace of the narrative is accelerated, contributing to its rhetorical and thematic impact.

Keywords: Holy Quran, Prophet Adam (AS) Story, Gerard Genette, Narratology, Narrative Speed.

1. Introduction

1. In Qur'anic narratives, events, narrative techniques, and structural elements unfold in a carefully calibrated harmony and artistic design. Although some critics regard literary appreciation as a matter of personal taste, purely subjective judgment cannot fully reveal a

work's aesthetic architecture; systematic evaluation grounded in rigorously defined criteria is preferable (Salehi & Moradzadeh, 2017, p. 44). A narratological framework supplies precisely such tools for analyzing the principal components of narrative discourse.



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2. Gérard Genette's model—devised for the study of narrative temporality—employs several parameters, including mood, voice, and frequency, each with subsidiary categories that facilitate fine-grained textual analysis. In Genette's narrative theory, voice refers to the relationship between the act of narrating and the story being told. It addresses the position and identity of the narrator about the narrative events—whether the narrator is external (extradiegetic), internal (intradiegetic), or part of the story (homodiegetic or heterodiegetic). It also involves the temporal relation between the act of narration and the events (e.g., retrospective or simultaneous narration). “Voice concerns the question: who is the narrator, and what is his or her position relative to the story?” (Genette, 1980, p. 212).

3. Mood in Genette's framework refers to the narrative perspective or focalization, i.e., the way information is presented and filtered in the narrative. It addresses the degree and scope of access the narrator has to characters' thoughts, feelings, and events. “Mood concerns the regulation of narrative information, particularly through focalization: who sees?” (Genette, 1980, p. 186). Narrative speed refers to the relationship between the duration of events in the story (story time) and the length of their narration (narrative time or discourse time). “Speed is defined by the relationship between the duration of the story and the length of the narrative text” (Genette, 1980, p. 94). Focalization is Genette's term for what is commonly called “point of view.” It refers to the perspective through which the story is perceived and presented. It is a central component of mood, regulating access to narrative information. “Focalization designates the relation between the vision of the story and its narration—who sees?” (Genette, 1980, p. 189).

4. In the Qur'ān, divine intention governs narrative distribution: some stories are presented piecemeal across multiple verses or sūrah, whereas others appear in full within a single sūrah. Each narrative also adopts a distinctive stylistic treatment. Temporal fragmentation is frequent, allowing the discourse to flash back or foreshadow; the pace may accelerate or decelerate; and deliberate omissions, rearrangements of order, and variations in duration function as additional devices. Whether such techniques are employed

or withheld decisively shapes the configuration and uniqueness of every story.

5. Among the core components of Gérard Genette's narrative theory—voice, mood, and time—the concept of voice arguably holds the greatest significance, particularly in the context of Qur'anic studies. Voice, which pertains to the identity, position, and authority of the narrator, directly shapes the interpretive framework through which the narrative is received. In the Qur'an, the narrative voice is uniquely embodied by God Almighty, who functions as an extradiegetic and omniscient narrator, thereby asserting absolute theological authority and framing the narrative as divine revelation. This ontological status of the narrator profoundly influences the nature of the narrative, its purpose, and its reception by the audience. Genette's narrative framework thus serves as a vital tool for advancing nuanced, interdisciplinary scholarship on the Qur'an.

6. A dual, mutually reinforcing design is adopted. The descriptive-analytical strand conducts a close, verse-by-verse reading, tagging each clause for analepsis, prolepsis, scene, summary, focalisation shifts, and narrative voice. Parallel to that, the statistical strand converts the Arabic text (with English gloss by Abdel Haleem (2004)) into a searchable corpus, counting lexical tokens, measuring verse-length ratios, and plotting the frequency of direct speech, temporal modulations, and focalisation types. Qualitative insights are then integrated with quantitative patterns. The study therefore aims to evaluate the compatibility of Genette's narrative theory with the Qur'anic account of Prophet Adam (AS). By doing so, it seeks to clarify the structural sophistication of the pericope, demonstrate the heuristic power of Genette's model outside the Western canon, and offer an integrated methodology that unites close reading with quantitative textual evidence. To achieve this purpose, we address the following central question:

7. To what extent is Gérard Genette's narratological framework compatible with the story of Prophet Adam (AS) as narrated in Surah Al-A'rāf (11-27)?

8. There are subsidiary research questions:

9. How are Genette's analepsis and prolepsis deployed in these verses, and what

theological or rhetorical functions do they fulfil?

10. Which stretches of the story are narrated as scenes, summary, ellipsis, pause, or stretch, and how does that tempo shape reader response?

11. In what ways do singulative, iterative, and repetitive frequencies operate within the passage itself and across parallel Adamic narratives elsewhere in the Qur'ān?

12. How often does the discourse shift among zero, internal, and external focalisation, and do those shifts align with changes from storytelling to exhortation?

13. How does the alternation between extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narration and intradiegetic-homodiegetic speech (God, Satan, Adam) interact with Genette's concept of narrative level and metalepsis?

2. Literature Review

This review includes a critical summary of relevant studies, identifies the research gaps, and highlights the novelty and distinctiveness of the Story of Prophet Adam (AS) in Surah Al-A'raf in Light of Gérard Genette's Narrative Theory.

The story of Prophet Adam (AS) has received considerable attention in Quranic studies, theological discourse, and comparative religious narratives. Scholars have examined the Adamic narrative in various contexts—moral, philosophical, historical, and theological (Nasr, 2006; Izutsu, 2002). However, comparatively fewer studies have approached the narrative from a formalist or structuralist perspective, particularly within the framework of literary narratology as developed by Gérard Genette.

Several foundational works have explored Quranic storytelling. For instance, Neuwirth (2010) emphasizes the Quran's complex textual architecture and the performative aspects of its narrative structure. Her analysis, however, leans more toward rhetorical and thematic layers, rather than technical narrative elements like order, duration, or focalization. Similarly, Mir (1986) discusses narrative strategies in the Quran, such as repetition and variation, yet without employing a systematic narratological model. While these works highlight the literary

richness of the Quran, they stop short of applying a structured narrative theory like that of Genette.

In the field of narratology, Genette's theory (1980) remains a cornerstone for analyzing narrative structure. His five key categories—order, duration, frequency, mood, and voice—provide a comprehensive framework for dissecting the mechanics of storytelling. Although Genette's model has been widely applied in the analysis of Western literary texts, including Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, its application to sacred texts—especially the Quran—has been minimal. A few scholars, such as Abdul-Raof (2010) have begun to explore narratological approaches in the Quran, often focusing on coherence and discourse structure, but these analyses do not engage deeply with Genette's technical terminology or categories.

Furthermore, prior studies that address the story of Prophet Adam (AS) tend to approach it either comparatively, contrasting the Quranic and Biblical versions (Wansbrough, 1977; Reynolds, 2010), or thematically, focusing on sin, repentance, and divine justice (Esack, 1997). While valuable, these interpretations remain anchored in content rather than form. They analyze what the story means rather than how it is told.

A notable gap in the literature lies in the lack of formal, text-driven analysis of Quranic narratives using established Western narrative theories. There is a pressing need for structural narratological studies that do not merely extract moral or theological insights, but rather investigate the Quran's narrative mechanisms: how events are sequenced, how time is manipulated, and how the narrator's voice is shaped. This gap becomes especially evident in the case of Surah Al-A'raf, which contains one of the most detailed and layered versions of the Adamic story in the Quran.

To date, no comprehensive study has applied Genette's full narrative framework to analyze the story of Prophet Adam (AS) in Surah Al-A'raf. While the story has been discussed in thematic, theological, and even semiotic contexts, its narrative form—in terms of temporal order, focalization, narrative frequency, and narratorial voice—has not been

rigorously examined using Genette's structural tools. This absence is significant, considering that Surah Al-A'raf presents a particularly complex narrative with embedded dialogues, divine commentary, and moral layering, which are ideally suited for such a narratological approach.

This study seeks to fill the aforementioned gap by applying Gérard Genette's narrative theory to the Quranic account of Adam (AS) in Surah Al-A'raf (11–25). It will provide a structural analysis of the narrative, focusing on Genette's five key dimensions. Unlike prior studies that focus on content or theology, this research emphasizes form, offering a new perspective on Quranic storytelling as both divine revelation and complex narrative art. By doing so, it bridges the disciplines of Quranic studies and Western literary theory, offering a cross-cultural lens that enhances our understanding of the Quran's narrative sophistication.

3. Theoretical Framework

Gerard Genette (1930), a prominent French literary theorist affiliated with the structuralist movement alongside figures such as Roland Barthes and Claude Lévi-Strauss, incorporates into his theoretical framework the notion of bricolage—a concept originally introduced by Lévi-Strauss (1962) in his anthropological work "The Savage Mind". Bricolage refers to the process of creating or constructing meaning using whatever materials are readily available, often by recontextualizing pre-existing elements in innovative ways. In a structuralist context, it implies that intellectual and cultural products are often assembled from existing signs and structures rather than being invented *ex nihilo*. Genette adopts this idea to highlight the intertextual and composite nature of narrative construction, wherein authors function as bricoleurs who draw upon a range of narrative forms, voices, and temporalities to produce layered textual meaning (Lévi-Strauss, 1962).

In Gérard Genette's narratological framework, the concept of *kontribuse* (from the French *contribuer*) refers to the degree of the narrator's intervention or participation in the

narrative discourse. It is closely tied to his broader analysis of narrative mood, which encompasses focalization and the narrator's presence. Within the context of bricolage, *kontribuse* becomes a critical axis through which the narrator, functioning as a bricoleur, assembles narrative elements—events, voices, temporal shifts—from a pre-existing cultural and textual repository. As Genette (1980) suggests, the narrator's degree of visibility or explicit commentary is not neutral; it actively contributes to shaping the interpretive experience of the reader. This selective construction echoes Lévi-Strauss's notion of bricolage, wherein creation arises not from inventing *ex nihilo*, but from repurposing and reconfiguring available narrative functions (Lévi-Strauss, 1962). Hence, *kontribuse* is not merely a technical feature; it is a site of ideological and aesthetic negotiation, through which meaning is mediated and literary authority is constructed (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002). The narrator's intervention, whether minimal or overt, significantly contributes to the narrative's epistemological stance, positioning *kontribuse* as an essential element in understanding narrative form and function.

Gérard Genette (1988, p. 43) categorizes narrative into three aspects: discourse (narrative), story, and narrating. Narrative discourse refers to the text of a novel or the narrative itself, while the story is what the narrative discourse conveys or reports.

Therefore, it contains chronologically organized events. Narrating means the production of a narrative by a narrator (s) and narratee (s). Genette describes the elements of narrative in a long and important article on Marcel Proust's novel "In Search of Lost Time". The five elements that have been mentioned in Genette's narrative are order, duration, frequency, mood, and voice (Toolan, 1988, p. 55). These elements are listed in Table 1.

In sum, Genette's theory foregrounds the fundamental role of narrative voice in shaping the Qur'an's unique narrative identity while offering tools to decode its complex narrative mechanics, enriching both literary and religious studies.

Table 1. Elements of narrative

Element	Extended Definition (Genette, 1980)	Key Sub-Categories	Illustrative Example
Order	The relation between the chronological order of story events and the discursive order in which they are presented. Order is manipulated through temporal displacements, producing rhetorical effects such as suspense or foreknowledge.	Analepsis (flash-back); Prolepsis (flash-forward); in medias res; Iterative synopsis	Homer's <i>*Odyssey*</i> opens with Odysseus on Calypso's Island (event 18 of 24), then backtracks to Troy—an analeptic structure that withholds causes until later.
Duration	The ratio of textual space (or reading time) allotted to an event and the real or fictional time the event occupies. By modulating duration, a narrative can linger on critical moments or race through years.	Scene; Summary; Ellipsis; Pause; Stretch	Tolstoy devotes dozens of pages to Natasha's two-minute waltz in <i>*War and Peace*</i> (stretch), yet leaps over months of campaign in a single sentence (summary).
Frequency	How many times events occur in the story versus how many times they are told in the discourse. Frequency shapes emphasis, pattern, and reader memory.	Singulative; Repetitive; Iterative	Faulkner's Quentin recalls a single incident of Caddy's fall several times (repetitive); in Surah Al-A'rāf verse 17, Satan vows once to tempt humanity perpetually (iterative).
Mood	The regulation of narrative information, chiefly through focalisation (who sees?) and distance (degree of mediation). Mood controls what the reader knows and how intimately.	Zero/omniscient; Internal (fixed, variable, multiple); External/camera-eye	Flaubert's <i>*Madame Bovary*</i> uses internal focalisation through Emma; Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" is external, revealing only dialogue and surface gesture.
Voice	The position and status of the narrating instance relative to the story world—its narrative level and degree of participation.	Extradiegetic vs. Intradiegetic; Heterodiegetic vs. Homodiegetic; Metalepsis	Mr Lockwood is extradiegetic-heterodiegetic in <i>*Wuthering Heights*</i> , while Nelly Dean is intradiegetic-homodiegetic; in the Qur'an, God narrates extradiegetically but includes intradiegetic speeches from Adam and Satan.

4. Analysis of the Surah Al-A'raf Verses 11 to 27

Surah al-A'rāf is a Meccan chapter of the Qur'an, consisting of 206 verses according to the Kufic script and 205 verses in visual count. On average, each verse contains between 12 and 32 words. The story of Adam (AS) is recounted in part of this chapter. Although the story of Prophet Adam (AS) is mentioned in various parts of the Holy Qur'an, the Surah al-A'rāf is the only chapter that narrates the account in a coherent and comprehensive sequence, specifically in verses 11 to 27.

*وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ لَمْ يَكُنْ مِنَ السَّاجِدِينَ (١١).

Surely, we created you, then shaped you, then said to the angels, "Prostrate before Adam," so they all did—but not Iblīs, who refused to prostrate with the others (11).

*قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ (١٢).

Allah asked (him), "What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you?" He

replied, "I am better than he is: You created me from fire and him from clay" (12).

*قَالَ فَاهْبِطْ مِنْهَا فَمَا يَكُونُ لَكَ أَنْ تَتَكَبَّرَ فِيهَا فَاخْرُجْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الصَّاغِرِينَ (١٣).

Allah said, "Then get down from Paradise! It is not for you to be arrogant here. So, get out! You are truly one of the disgraced" (13).

*قَالَ أَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ (١٤).

He appealed, "Then delay my end until the Day of their resurrection" (14).

*قَالَ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنظَرِينَ (١٥).

Allah said, "You are delayed until the appointed Day" (15).

*قَالَ فَبِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ (١٦).

He said, "For leaving me to stray I will lie in ambush for them on Your Straight Path (16).

*ثُمَّ لَا يَنبَغُهُمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَ مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ (١٧).

I will approach them from their front, their back, their right, their left, and then You will find most of them ungrateful" (17).

*قَالَ اخْرُجْ مِنْهَا مَذْهُورًا لِمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (١٨).

Allah said, “Get out of Paradise! You are disgraced and rejected! I will certainly fill up Hell with you and your followers all together” (18).

*وَاذْكُرْ يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ فَكُلَا مِنْ حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٩).

Allah said: “O Adam! Live with your wife in Paradise and eat from wherever you please, but do not approach this tree, or else you will be wrongdoers” (19).

*فَوَسْوَسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وُورِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِنْ سَوْآتِهِمَا وَقَالَ مَا نَهَاكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَا مَلَكَتَيْنِ أَوْ تَكُونَا مِنَ الْخَالِدِينَ (٢٠).

Satan then enticed them intending to reveal to them what had previously been concealed of their nakedness. He claimed, “Your Lord has only forbidden this tree to keep you from becoming angels or attaining immortality” (20).

*وَ قَاسَمَهُمَا إِنِّي لَكُمَا لَمِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ (٢١).

And he swore to them, “I am truly your sincere advisor” (21).

*فَدَلَاهُمَا بِغُرُورٍ فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْآتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ وَنَادَاهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا أَلَمْ أَنْهَكُمَا عَنْ تِلْكَ الشَّجَرَةِ وَأَقُلْتُ لَكُمَا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمَا عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ (٢٢).

So he brought about their fall through deception. And when they tasted of the tree, their nakedness was exposed to them, prompting them to cover themselves with leaves from Paradise. Then their Lord called out to them, “Did I not forbid you from that tree? Did I not tell you that Satan is your declared enemy?” (22).

*قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٢٣).

They replied, “Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will certainly be losers” (23).

*قَالَ اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَى حِينٍ (٢٤).

Allah said, “Descend as enemies to each other. You will find in the earth a residence and provision for your appointed stay” (24).

*قَالَ فِيهَا تَحْيَوْنَ وَ فِيهَا تَمُوتُونَ وَ مِنْهَا تُخْرَجُونَ (٢٥).

He added, “There you will live, there you will die, and from there you will be resurrected” (25).

*يَا بَنِي آدَمَ قَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُم لِبَاسًا يُورِي سَوْآتِكُمْ وَ رِيشًا وَ لِبَاسِ النُّفُوسِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ ذَلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٢٦).

O children of Adam! We have provided for you clothing to cover your nakedness and as an adornment. However, the best clothing is righteousness. This is one of Allah’s bounties, so perhaps you will be mindful (26).

*يَا بَنِي آدَمَ لَا يَفْتِنَنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ كَمَا أَخْرَجَ أَبَوَيْكُم مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ يَنْزِعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسَهُمَا لِيُرِيَهُمَا سَوْآتِهِمَا إِنَّهُ يَرَاكُمْ هُوَ وَ قَبِيلُهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٢٧).

O children of Adam! Do not let Satan deceive you as he tempted your parents out of Paradise and caused their cover to be removed to expose their nakedness. Surely he and his soldiers watch you from where you cannot see them. We have made the devils allies of those who disbelieve (27).

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1. Analysis of Gerard Genette’s narrative theory in the story of Prophet Adam (AS)

The story begins with the creation of Adam (AS) and in the same verse, Satan's hostility with him is mentioned. The following verses show the temptation of Satan, who, as a result of enmity with the Prophet Adam (AS), tempted him and his wife Eve and they ate the forbidden fruit. Prophet Adam (AS) and his wife became aware of their transgression and turned to God in repentance, seeking His forgiveness. Subsequently, God decreed their departure from Paradise, [Figure 1](#).

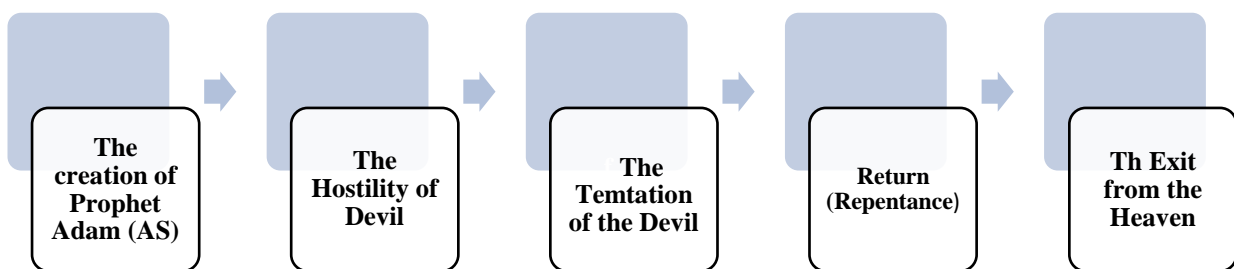


Figure 1. Sequence of the story Prophet Adam (AS)

5.1.1. Order

G rard Genette posits that the causal sequence of events significantly enhances the appeal of a narrative text. He conceptualizes a story as a chain of events communicated to the reader by a narrator, with the narrative itself representing a structured recounting of the story within spoken or written discourse. Genette differentiates between the chronological time of the story and the temporal structure of the narrative, arguing that the narrative does not always reflect the actual temporal order of events. He formalizes this distinction through the three key temporal categories of order, duration, and frequency (Genette, 1980, p. 48).

In particular, Genette introduces the concept of anachrony to describe the discrepancy between the chronological sequence of events in the story and their presentation in the narrative, Table 2. Anachrony refers to the displacement of an event’s narration either forward (anticipation) or backward (retrospection) relative to the main narrative timeline. Genette categorizes anachrony into two principal types: external (heterodiegetic) and internal (homodiegetic). Each of these types is further divided into analepsis (flashback) and prolepsis (flashforward), based on whether the reference is to past or future events within or outside the primary story time (Genette, 1980, p. 48).

Table 2. Anachronies

Anachronies	
Analeps	The time of the story goes back and explains the moments and events that the story has left behind and, in this way, it depicts the movement of the story from the past to the present (Flashback).
Proleps	The story goes on through dreams, aspirations, or mental imaginations and it passes from the present moment.
Heterodiegetic (External)	The reference is to a time outside the time frame of the story.
Homodiegetic (Internal)	The reference is to a time within the time frame of the story.

The narrative of the creation of Prophet Adam (AS) in Surah Al-A‘raf begins with verse 11, which not only introduces Adam’s creation but also implicitly signals Satan’s animosity towards him. This verse serves as an example of homodiegetic prolepsis, an internal anachrony wherein the narrator anticipates future narrative

developments within the same diegetic level.

Verses 12 to 18 further elaborate on Satan’s enemy. In these verses, Satan articulates his belief in his superiority over Adam, based on the nature of their respective creations. In verse 13, as a consequence of his arrogance and defiance, Satan is expelled from divine presence. This event exemplifies another instance of homodiegetic prolepsis, as it projects a development that unfolds later within the story world. Verses 14 and 15 depict Satan’s request for a reprieve, and God’s granting of this request; since these references transcend the immediate timeline of the story and project toward a broader eschatological context, they are classified as heterodiegetic prolepses. Similarly, verses 16 and 17, which reiterate Satan’s vow to mislead humanity, are also internal anticipations—homodiegetic prolepses. In verse 18, God again commands Satan to depart from Paradise and warns that all those who follow him will share his fate in Hell. This verse represents a heterodiegetic prolepsis, as it alludes to a time beyond the temporal frame of the central narrative. Collectively, verses 12 to 18 contain significant anachronic structures, primarily prolepses, spanning seven verses and encompassing approximately 78 words.

Verses 19 to 21, in contrast, exhibit no anachrony. These verses describe the divine instruction to Adam and his wife and their initial experience in Paradise. Verse 22, which recounts Satan’s successful deception, involves a homodiegetic analepsis, as it retrospectively recounts events that occurred earlier but were not previously narrated. Similarly, verse 23, which captures the moment of Adam and Eve’s realization of their mistake and their subsequent repentance, also reflects a homodiegetic analepsis.

In verses 24 and 25, God expels Adam and Eve from Paradise along with Satan, following their disobedience. He informs them of their new life on earth and the continued enmity between them and Satan. These verses anticipate future human history and therefore exemplify heterodiegetic prolepsis.

Finally, verses 26 and 27 reflect on the exposure of Adam and Eve’s nakedness after consuming the forbidden fruit and their attempt to cover themselves with leaves. These events are presented as a cautionary message for Adam’s descendants. The retrospective narrative perspective used in these verses

categorizes them as homodiegetic analepses, as they revisit a prior episode for didactic purposes, [Chart 1](#). Thus, the narrative of Prophet Adam (AS) in Surah Al-A'raf is structured through various types of anachronies—both proleptic and analeptic—demonstrating the Qur’anic text’s sophisticated narrative architecture in alignment with Gérard Genette’s theoretical framework, [Table 3](#).

Table 3. Anachronies in the Qur’anic narrative of Prophet Adam (AS)

Verses	Type of anachronies
11	Homodiegetic proleps
12	Homodiegetic analeps
13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18	Homodiegetic proleps
19, 20, 21	No anachronies
22, 23	Homodiegetic analeps
24, 25	Heterodiegetic proleps
26, 27	Homodiegetic analeps

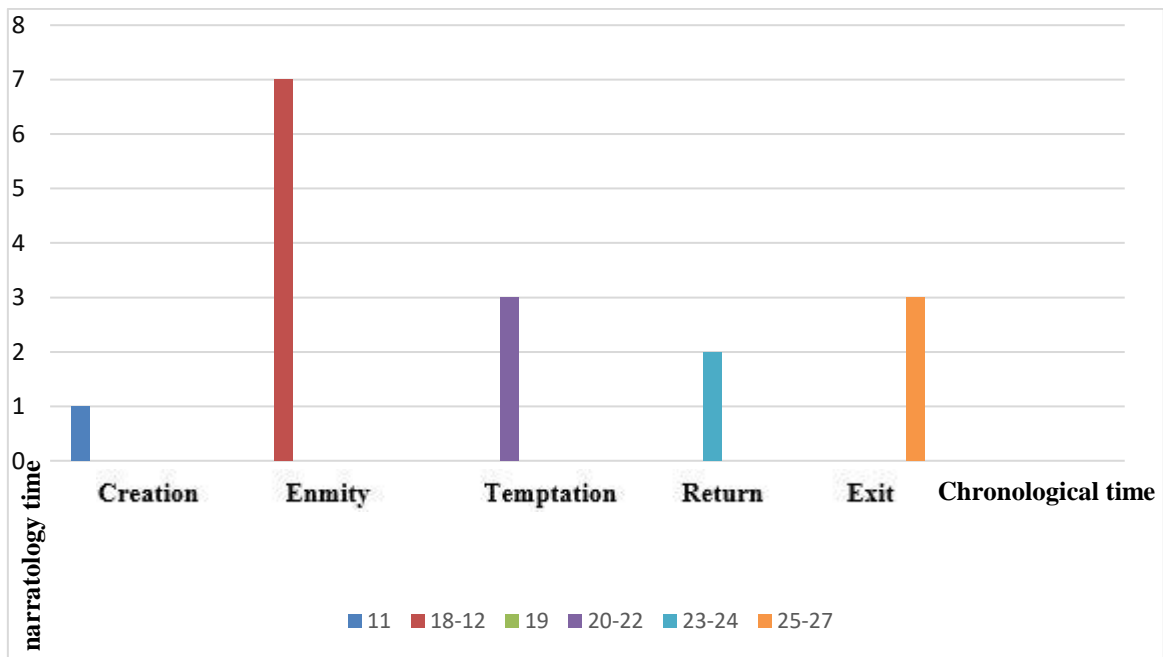


Chart 1. Anachronies chart

5.1.2. Duration

Another element of Gerard Genette’s theory of narrative is duration. The hypothetical relationship between the story time (the amount of time the events would take to occur in "real" life) and the narrative time (the amount of time the events take for the reader to read) is known as duration. In other words, the time of narrative means the amount of time spent on average reading, depending on the number of pages, lines, and words. Also, it varies based on the reader and the text ([Genette, 1980, p. 94](#)). All types of duration are listed in [Table 4](#).

The relationship between narrative and event manifests in one the forms of isochrony, acceleration, and deceleration. [Table 5](#) shows the duration of the story of Prophet Adam (AS) and chart 2 shows the number of words.

Table 4. All types of duration

Duration	
Pause	When the story time stops, then the narrator begins to speak.
Scene	The equality of time between narrative and story; The narrative proceeds at the same speed as the story.
Summary	Part of the story is summarized in the narrative.
Ellipsis	Some sections of the story are omitted from the narrative

Table 5. Duration in the story of Prophet Adam (AS)

Sequence	Duration	Word count	Plot speed
Creation	Summary	18	Acceleration
Enmity	Scene	78	Acceleration
Temptation	Scene	64	Acceleration
Return	Scene	14	Acceleration
Exit	Summary	77	Acceleration

Since in Gerard Genette’s narrative model, a page is used for the narrative acceleration (plot speed) in each process, the story of Prophet Adam (AS) in Surah Al-A'raf has about two pages. The Sequences of the process of creation and exit from Heaven are mentioned in the summary form, but in other sequences of the story, i.e. the hostility of Satan with Adam (AS), tempting and deceiving Adam (AS) and Eve

and repenting them, the sequence is narrated in the form of a scene.

"The narrative may adopt a microscopic or telescopic focus—either unfolding events slowly and in rich detail, or rapidly summarizing the course of events," says Jonathan Culler (2003, p. 120). Generally speaking, the plot speed of this story (Prophet Adam (AS)) is acceleration, Chart 2.

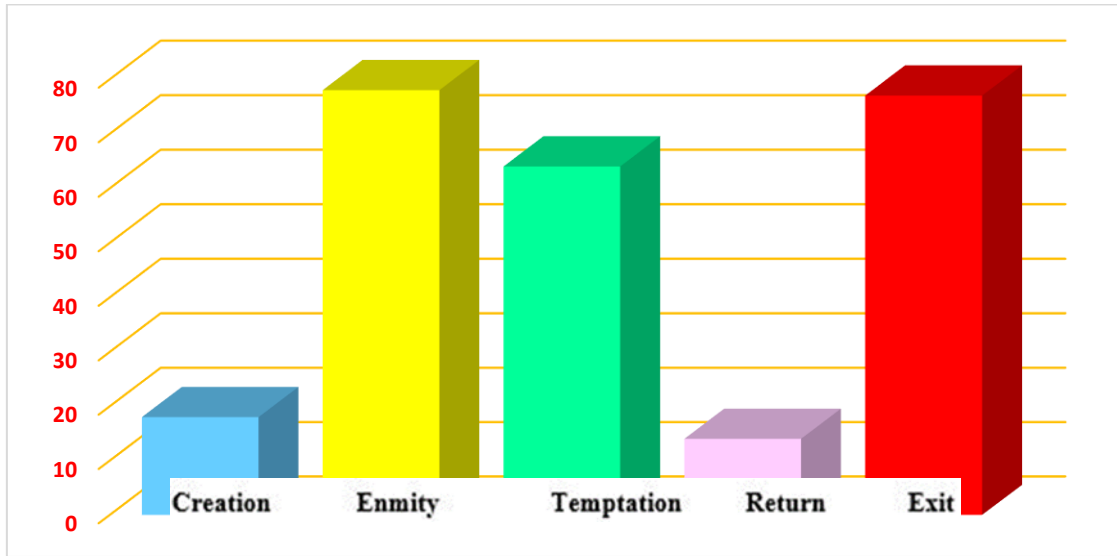


Chart 2. Word count of the story of Prophet Adam (AS)

5.1.3. Frequency

Frequency is defined as the connection between the number of times an event happens and the number of times the event is quoted. For Genette, “frequency is the relationship between the repetitive capacities of the event in the story and the number of times it is narrated in the text”. Frequency is therefore related to repetition, which is an important concept in narrative (Lothe, 2000, p. 80). According to Genette (1980), narrative frequency includes iterative, singulative, and repetitive forms. When an event is symmetrically excluded from the narrative discourse, the omission is termed an ellipsis, Table 6.

Singulative frequency appears in the initial verses of the story of Prophet Adam (AS)—namely verses 11, 13, 14, 15, and 23 to 26—while repetitive frequency is found in verses 12, 16, 17, and 22.

5.1.4. Mood

Mood is one of the subtle components of Gérard Genette’s narrative model. It refers to the atmosphere or emotional coloring of the narrative, which is shaped through the narrative techniques of “distance” and “perspective” (or “point of view”). Distance is created when the narrator is one of the characters in the narrative (Genette, 1980, p. 41). The function of "distance 'and "perspective," in the story of Prophet Adam (AS) will be presented in the following:

5.1.4.1. Distance

According to Genette (1980, pp. 171–172), the more prominent the narrator’s presence in the story, the greater the narrative distance; conversely, the more unobtrusive or absent the narrator, the shorter the distance becomes.

Table 6. Types of frequencies

Frequency	Deletion of some events symmetrically. (Ellipsis)
	Once the narration of an event that has occurred several times. (Iterative)
	When the same event in the story is quoted a number of times. (repetitive)
	Once the narration of an event that happened once. (singulative)

Considering the notion of narrative distance, Genette lists five functions of the narrator such as the narrative function, the directing function, the communication function, the testimonial function, and the ideological function (Genette, 1980, pp. 255-256). All of these functions are described in Table 7.

Table 7. Types of functions

Distance	
Narrative function	Whenever we have a narrative, This role is supposed by the narrator, whether present in the text or not.
Directing function	When the narrator interrupts the story to give a comment on the organization of the text.
Communication function	The narrator addresses the text's potential reader directly to make contact with him or her.
Testimonial function	The narrator proves the truth of his/her story, the degree of accuracy in his/her narration, his/her assurance regarding the events, his/her sources of information, and so on.
Ideological function	The narrator interrupts the story to give moral comments or general wisdom regarding the narrative.

Although the function of the narrator in all verses of the story of Prophet Adam (AS) is the narrative function, verses 26 and 27 have the ideological function, in which God, in addition to narrating the story has stated moral and instructive issues.

5.1.4.2. Perspective

Narrative perspective is the “point of view” adopted by the narrator which Genette termed focalization which means the narrator's interpretations of events, characters, and places according to their own experiences. “Zero focalization” occurs when the narrator knows more than the characters, traditionally it is called "omniscient narrator". Under “internal focalization”, the narrator’s knowledge is limited to that of the focal character.

In “external focalization: The narrator knows less than the characters. He/she like a camera lens follows the actions of protagonists from outside and cannot guess their intentions (Genette, 1988, p. 74). In Genette's theory, whenever the narrator really gives rise to the point of view of one of the characters - even if the narrator himself describes this point of view to the audience- the narrative proceeds by focalization (Bertens, 2005, p. 91), Table 8.

Table 8. Types of discourse (Genette, 1980, pp. 171-172)

Types of discourse	
Direct style (Reported speech)	The character's words are cited in literatim by the narrator without any interference.
Indirect style (Transposed speech)	The character's speeches or actions are reported by the narrator, who expresses them with his interpretation.
Narratized speech	The character's speeches and actions are integrated into the narration, and are behaved like any other event.

The narrator is God Almighty, who recounts the story indirectly. However, in verses 12 to 18, God’s dialogue with Satan is presented directly, and in verse 23, the words of Adam (AS) are also directly narrated.

According to Genette (1988, p. 74), narrative types fall into three main categories, each of which is further divided into two subtypes: the third-person narrator, associated with heterodiegetic narration, and the first-person narrator, associated with homodiegetic narration. Table 9 below illustrates the types of narrative focalization.”

Table 9. Types narratives focalizations

Types narratives focalizations	
Zero focalization (non-focalization)	The narrator is omniscient and impartially reports everything he/she sees and knows about the characters.
Internal focalization	The narrator is either one of the characters in the story or everything is seen and understood from his/her point of view.
External focalization	The narrator is aware less than the characters. He/she acts like a camera lens, following the protagonists' actions from the outside; he/she is unable to guess their intentions.

At the beginning of the story, God is presented as both the narrator and the primary focalizer. Since Prophet Adam (AS) was created by God, the depiction of Satan’s hostility toward humankind, his act of temptation, the expulsion of Adam (AS) and Eve from Paradise, and their subsequent repentance—all reflect internal focalization within the narrative.

5.1.5. Voice

Voice refers to who narrates, and from where. Following Genette (1980, pp. 244-245) the narrator is always in a special temporal position

regarding the story he/she is telling. He distinguishes four kinds of narration: *Subsequent narration* (The narrator expresses what occurred in some past time); *Prior narration* (The narrator expresses what will occur at some future time); *Simultaneous narration*: (The narrator says his/her story at the very moment it happens); and *interpolated narration*: (This complex type of narration merges next and simultaneous narration). The narrator may acquire a particular status in the story. The first type is “homodiegetic” in which the narrator is a character in the story (if the homodiegetic narrator is the hero of the story, he/she is known as the *autodiegetic*) and in “heterodiegetic”, the narrator is absent from the story. [Table 10](#) lists the narrative levels.

Table 10. Narrative levels

Narrative Levels	Intra-diegetic	First person	-----	
		Second person	-----	
	Extra-diegetic	Third person (Omniscient)	Third-person omniscient	
			Third-person limited (limited omniscient)	
			Third-person objective	

The presence of the narrator, God Almighty, is obvious outside the story of Prophet Adam (AS), so the narrative level is extra-diegetic. The third-person perspective is divided into three subcategories: the third-person omniscient, the third-person limited, and the objective third person. [Table 11](#) lists the types of third-persons (omniscient). In this story, God is the narrator of the story who is present in the third-person omniscient and third-person limited roles.

Table 11. Types of the third-person point of view

Third-person point of view	
Third-person omniscient	The author acts as the narrator, who is all-seeing and all-knowing.
Third-person limited omniscient	The narrator sticks closely to one character’s perspective but remains in the third person.
Third-person objective	The narrator impartially reports the events that take place without describing any character’s thoughts, opinions, or feelings.

This study’s application of Gérard Genette’s narrative theory to the story of Prophet Adam (AS) in Surah Al-A’raf demonstrates that Genette’s categories—order, duration, frequency, mood, and voice—are largely effective in analyzing the narrative structure of the Qur’ānic text. These findings resonate with and extend prior research on narratology in religious texts.

Firstly, Baroni (2016) applied Genette’s narratological distinctions, —particularly dramatized and undramatized analepsis and prolepsis— affirming that sacred stories, despite their theological density, employ narrative techniques such as anachronies (prolepses and analepses) to enrich moral and didactic functions rather than merely to reorder chronology (Baroni, 2016, p.315). Similarly, this study confirms that the Qur’ānic Adam narrative uses such anachronies to reinforce its theological message, underscoring the cross-cultural applicability of Genette’s model.

Secondly, the role of the narrator in sacred texts markedly differs from that in secular literature. Mutter (2023) emphasized the unique presence of an omniscient divine narrator in the Qur’ān, blending extradiegetic narration with intradiegetic dialogues. This study’s finding that God Almighty functions as the primary narrator with occasional direct speech (e.g., verses 12–18, 23) aligns with Connect’s observations and highlights a distinctive narrative voice pattern absent in typical literary texts studied by Genette (1980).

Thirdly, Farsi (2021) identified the frequent use of homodiegetic prolepses and analepses in prophetic Qur’ānic stories, particularly in Sūrat al-Shu‘arā’, highlighting their rhetorical power in emphasizing divine lessons (Farsi, 2021, p. 98). This research goes further by statistically quantifying these occurrences and linking them to narrative pacing and focalization shifts, offering a more data-driven validation.

However, consistent with Prince’s (2003) critique, this study recognizes the limitations of Genette’s framework in fully encompassing the ideological and metaphysical layers inherent in sacred narratives. For instance, verses 26 and 27 in Surah Al-A’raf, identified here as exhibiting an ideological function beyond simple narration, exemplify aspects that traditional narratology may not fully capture (Prince, 2003, p. 95).

In terms of contribution, unlike earlier works

which largely relied on qualitative analysis or focused on broader Qur'ānic themes, this study's detailed verse-by-verse descriptive and statistical analysis of the Adam narrative is novel. It enriches narratology with empirical insights from the Qur'ān, advancing interdisciplinary dialogue between literary theory and Islamic studies.

6. Conclusion

According to the findings of the study, Gérard Genette's narrative theory is fully applicable to the story of Prophet Adam (AS) as presented in Surah Al-A'raf. In terms of anachrony, the majority of the verses exhibit homodiegetic prolepses or homodiegetic analepses, while some verses contain no temporal displacements. The narrative demonstrates an accelerated pace. Singulative frequency is observed in the opening and closing verses, whereas iterative frequency is predominant in the middle part of the story. The narrative function of the narrator is evident throughout the entire passage; however, verses 26 and 27 additionally perform an ideological function.

In most verses, the story is narrated indirectly by a third-person omniscient or limited omniscient narrator, who is identified as God Almighty. Notably, in verses 12 to 18, God's direct dialogue with Satan is presented, and in verse 23, the direct speech of Prophet Adam (AS) is conveyed. Given that the narrator is God Almighty and is introduced as the primary focalizer at the beginning of the narrative, the story is characterized by internal focalization and unfolds at the extra-diegetic narrative level.

The present study demonstrates that Gérard Genette's narrative theory is not only applicable but highly effective in analyzing the story of Prophet Adam (AS) in Surah Al-A'raf (verses 11–27). Through a detailed structural-narrative reading, the story reveals itself to be complex and layered, both theologically and narratologically.

From the standpoint of anachrony, the narrative structure reflects a predominance of homodiegetic prolepses and analepses—moments in which events are projected forward or recalled by characters within the story world. For instance, the mention of Adam's fall and Satan's future punishment anticipates events that unfold beyond the immediate narrative moment. At the same time, some verses lack

any temporal shift, remaining fixed in the present narrative moment, which reflects the Quran's rhetorical strategy of grounding eternal truths in specific narrative events.

Regarding duration, the story exhibits an accelerated narrative tempo. Key existential transformations—such as Adam's creation, fall, and expulsion—are narrated with marked brevity, consistent with Genette's category of narrative summary. This compression of events creates a heightened narrative intensity, drawing the reader's attention to divine justice and human fallibility.

In terms of frequency, the analysis shows a significant frequency at the beginning and end of the story—verses that signal unique, non-repeated events such as God's proclamation of Adam's creation and his subsequent command to descend. Conversely, iterative frequency characterizes the middle section of the narrative, where Satan's defiance and Adam's testing are presented as actions reflective of broader, repeated moral patterns in human history. This suggests a didactic function, underscoring the Quran's aim to universalize the lesson of Adam's story.

The narrative function is predominant throughout the passage, as the narrator (God Almighty) recounts events with clarity and authority. However, verses 26 and 27 perform an additional ideological function, where the discourse shifts from narration to direct moral instruction: "O children of Adam, We have bestowed upon you clothing...". These verses serve to extend the narrative into the present, transforming the ancient episode into a living guide for contemporary readers.

As for voice, the story is primarily told by an extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator—God Almighty—who speaks from outside the story world but possesses complete omniscience, including access to inner thoughts and future outcomes. The narrative also briefly shifts into quoted speech through dialogic passages, such as the conversation between God and Satan (verses 12–18), and Adam and Eve's confession (verse 23), demonstrating direct speech narration embedded within an overarching divine monologue.

Furthermore, the narrative exhibits internal focalization in several segments, especially at the story's opening, where God functions as the primary focalizer, offering access to divine knowledge and judgments. This narrative

strategy enhances the didactic authority and theological weight of the story. The overall narrative level is extradiegetic, as the narrator exists outside the story world, guiding and commenting on events with omnipotent insight.

This study not only validates the applicability of Genette's theory to sacred texts but also opens a new path for formalist Quranic exegesis. By foregrounding narrative mechanics—rather than solely thematic or theological content—the research highlights the sophisticated narrative strategies of the Quran. It demonstrates that Quranic storytelling is not merely a vessel for divine instruction, but a deliberately structured literary form with complex temporal, focal, and rhetorical dynamics. The findings invite further research into other prophetic narratives in the Quran using narratological frameworks. Such structural readings can deepen our understanding of how divine discourse employs narrative devices to convey universal moral, existential, and theological truths.

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