



Cross-Cultural Narrative Structures in *Aḥbabtuka Aktsar Mimma Yanbaghī* and *Antara Oxford dan Munjid*: A Comparative Narratological Analysis

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Abstract

Keywords:
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This study aims to describe and explain the comparison of novel structures contained in two different novels: *Aḥbabtuka Aktsar Mimma Yanbaghī* by Atheer 'Abdullah An-Nasyamī and *Antara Oxford dan Munjid* by Deskananda. The method used in this research is a qualitative descriptive method. The primary data consist of the novels *Aḥbabtuka Aktsar Mimma Yanbaghī* and *Antara Oxford dan Munjid*, while secondary data and other relevant information are collected from books, journals, scholarly works, and websites that discuss the research problems of both works. Data collection techniques include close reading, note-taking, and

document analysis using structuralism theory and a comparative literary approach. The results show several similarities and differences in the narrative structure of both novels. The similarities include: the main theme of the novel, the use of flashback narrative technique, similar epilogues, character development of the protagonists, general settings of time and place, and the use of the first-person point of view. The differences lie in: the supporting themes, the schematic structure of the plot, the selection of main and supporting characters, the specific settings of time and place, and the author's narrative perspective.

Abstrak

Kata Kunci: Sastra, Novel, Struktur, Naratif, Perbandingan

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan dan menjelaskan perbandingan struktur novel yang terkandung dalam dua novel yang berbeda antara novel "Aḥbātuka Aktsar Mimma Yambaghī" karya Atheer 'Abdullah An-Nasymī dan novel "Antara Oxford dan Munjid" karya Deskananda. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode deskriptif kualitatif. Data primer dalam penelitian ini adalah novel "Aḥbātuka Aktsar Mimma Yambaghī" karya Atheer 'Abdullah An-Nasymī dan novel "Antara Oxford dan Munjid" karya Deskananda, sedangkan data dan informasi penting lainnya dikumpulkan dari beberapa buku, jurnal, karya ilmiah dan situs web yang memuat beberapa rumusan permasalahan dari kedua karya. Teknik pengumpulan data adalah dengan pembacaan, pencatatan, serta analisis dokumen dengan menggunakan teori strukturalisme dan pendekatan kajian sastra komparatif. Adapun hasil yang diperoleh yaitu: beberapa persamaan dan perbedaan struktur novel pada kedua novel. Persamaan tersebut adalah: tema utama dalam novel, penggunaan alur kilas-balik (flashback), persamaan epilog cerita, pengembangan karakter pada tokoh utama, penyebutan latar tempat dan waktu secara umum, dan penggunaan sudut pandang orang pertama. Perbedaan antara keduanya adalah: tema pendukung dalam novel, skematik jalannya alur cerita, pemilihan tokoh utama dan tokoh pendukung, latar tempat dan waktu secara spesifik, dan sudut pandang pengarang.

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Introduction

Literature is an expression of human creativity manifested in written or spoken form, using aesthetic and meaningful language. Literature often reflects culture, values, and human experiences. Its forms can include poetry, prose, drama, or essays. Literature is an idea wrapped in the form of art or substance and its presentation. Both of these elements are present in all types of literary works (Zulkhairi, 2013). Literature is a beautiful expression, whether in the form of poetry or prose, that can stir the emotions of readers or listeners and evoke artistic enjoyment, much like the pleasure of hearing a song, the melody of music, or witnessing beauty. It is the aesthetic expression of meaning and the portrayal of life. Literature is the legacy of beautiful poetry or eloquent prose that has an emotional impact (Al-Muntasabi, 2018).

Before discussing the origin and structural elements of the novel, it is important to first clarify its meaning from both linguistic and technical perspectives. Etymologically, the Arabic term *riwāyah* stems from *al-riy*, which originally referred to the act of carrying water from one place to another to irrigate land or satisfy thirst. Over time, this concrete meaning evolved into a more abstract sense, denoting the transmission of speech, stories, or information between individuals. This shift explains its close association with the science of Prophetic hadith, where a narrator (*rāwī*) conveys the sayings of the Prophet ﷺ to others. The term also became connected to the fields of history and literature. As literary usage developed, writers expanded its meaning further, employing *riwāyah* to signify a lengthy narrative, sometimes using it interchangeably with the term "story." (Thahir, 2016).

In its technical sense, the novel refers to an extended prose narrative that may combine elements of imagination and reality or rely predominantly on one of them. Unlike the short story, which typically captures a single moment or limited situation, the novel explores a wider range of human experiences through multiple chapters and a more extended reading process. It centers on the lives and developments of specific characters, reflecting the author's

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perspective and creative vision, while presenting events in a compelling and engaging manner that guides the reader toward a particular thematic goal. As a form of narrative art, the novel is often regarded by critics as the most recent and dynamic genre of prose fiction, characterized by its continuous evolution in both form and content. Its expansive nature allows for a greater variety of events and complexities, enabling it to address contemporary human concerns and depict the individual's interaction with the rapid changes of modern society within the context of ongoing cultural and civilizational advancement (Thahir, 2016).

The term "*riwāyah*" – which is known in Indonesian as *novel* – originally derives from the Italian word *novella*, which corresponds to *Novelle* in German and *novel* in English. This term was later adopted into the Indonesian language in its current form. In its literal sense, *novella* means "something new and small," and its usage later evolved to refer to a short prose narrative (Amalia & Fadhilasari, 2022).

A novel is a form of modern prose that describes part of the life of its main character, in which there are conflicts, both internal and external. These conflicts affect the fate of the character and can lead to romantic or realistic themes (Sugiharti et al., 2024).

Structure is an artistic effect that forms the basis of a literary work. Structure has various meanings, both linguistically and terminologically (Rafiqah, 2019). Structure is governed by laws that emphasize its internal aspects and focus attention on the elements contained within it without involving external components. In general, structure is formed from its constituent parts and has a specific framework according to its field. Thus, the concept of structure can be applied to various forms and can then undergo changes in its nature or character (Maryam & Firyal, 2024). Structure in a novel focuses on the study of structure in a novel as a whole, including: theme, characters, plot, setting, and the author's social perspective. All these elements are inseparable from one another. Through structure, each element has a

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specific function and is closely intertwined with the others (Sugiharti et al., 2024). The structure of a novel is characterized by its constituent elements, such as plot, theme, characters, time, and place, which are complex and detailed (Nurgiyantoro, 2013).

The formulation of the problem in this study is: what are the similarities and differences in the structure between the novel "*Ahbabtuka Aktsar Mimma Yanbaghi*" by Atheer Abdullah An-Nasymi and "*Antara Oxford dan Munjid*" by Deskananda.

To some extent, research on the literary study of the novel *Ahbabtuka Aktsar Mimma Yanbaghi* has been conducted extensively. However, the researcher did not find any studies related to the novel *Antara Oxford dan Munjid*. In this regard, the researcher hopes to be the first to conduct a study on *Antara Oxford dan Munjid* as an opening gateway for future researchers to explore this new literary work.

Iman Ali Suleiman Al-Balawi, 2024, *Alienation and the Other in the Two Novels (Faltaghfari - Ahbabtuka Aktsar Mimma Yanbaghi): An Applied Critical Study*. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Department of Arabic Language, College of Education, University of Tabuk. The study aimed to reveal the nature of alienation in the works of a Saudi female writer and the reasons behind her use of it by answering the following question: How did the author employ the phenomenon of alienation within the narrative text, and what mechanisms did she use? This was done by tracing the phenomenon of alienation in the novels "*Faltaghfari*" and "*Ahbabtuka Aktsar Mimma Yanbaghi*", identifying the types of alienation present in both novels, and clarifying the techniques the author used in employing this phenomenon, whether spontaneously or intentionally. This research examines alienation and the Other in the two novels "*Faltaghfari*" and "*Ahbabtuka Aktsar Mimma Yanbaghi*" by Atheer Abdullah Al-Nashmi through a comparative study (Al-Balawi, 2024).

Cut Ririn Suraya and Aiyub Berdan, 2021, *The Inner Conflict of the Main Character in the Novel Ahbabtuka Aktsar Mimma Yanbaghi by Atheer 'Abdullah An-Nasymi (A Literary Psychology Study)*, Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, Banda Aceh. *Al-Nahdhah Al-'Arabiyah*, Vol. 1, No. 1. The purpose of the research is to analyze the inner conflicts of the main character found in the novel "Aḥbābtuka Aktsar Mimma Yanbaghī" by Atheer Abdullah Al-Nashmi. This study examines the psychological conflict experienced by the main character "Jumana" in the novel "Aḥbābtuka Aktsar Mimma Yanbaghī" by Atheer Abdullah Al-Nashmi through a literary psychological approach (Cut Ririn Soraya & Aiyub Berdan, 2021) .

El-Hamel Neriman and Mansour Chaima, 2021, *The Poetics of Narration in the Two Novels (Ahbabtuka Aktsar Mimma Yanbaghi) and (Forgive Me) by Atheer Abdullah Al-Nashmi*, Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts and Languages, Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. This research, entitled *The Poetics of Narration in the Novels (I Loved You More Than I Should) and (Faltaghfari) by Atheer Abdullah Al-Nashmi*, aims to examine the aesthetics of poeticity through an introduction and two applied chapters: the first discusses poetic language, and the second explores the poetics of narrative elements, demonstrating the interaction between the two genres. This study analyzes the poetic-narrative structure in the novels "Faltaghfari" and "Aḥbābtuka Aktsar Mimma Yanbaghi" by Atheer Abdullah Al-Nashmi through a comparative approach (Neriman & Chaim, 2021).

Furthermore, the researcher uses the reviews of other researchers in comparing the structure of literary works across different languages. Tia Syamsuraini (180502006), 2022, *The Structure Between the Arabic and Gayo Poems (A Comparative Study)*, Student of the Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Adab and Humanities, Ar-Raniry State Islamic University. The results obtained by the researcher are that the two poems show both similarities and differences. The similarities include two aspects: emotion, **756** | Deskananda, Zulkhairi, Ivan Aulia, Aiyub Berdan, Chairunnisa Ahsana Amalan Shalaha; Cross-Cultural Narrative Structures in Ahbabtuka Aktsar Mimma Yanbaghī and Antara Oxford dan Munjid: A Comparative Narratological Analysis

which encompasses longing, helplessness, and sadness, and style, which includes apostrophe and rhyme. The differences lie in the theme, imagination, and emotions, which include fear, hatred, guilt, and anger; as well as in style, which includes interrogatives, commands, antithesis, and finally, tone. This study examines the structure of the Arabic and Gayo poems through a comparative study (Syamsuraini, 2023).

In this study, the researcher used two novels as the subject of comparative analysis. Both novels discussed share the theme of romanticism in terms of similarities. The love stories in both novels take place in the world of education. However, the researcher found many differences between the two novels, including in terms of theme selection, character choice, plot development, the authors' use of perspective in their writing style, differing language styles, and the conclusions at the end of both novels. It is possible that the language styles of the two novels were not analyzed further by the researcher because the novels originate from different settings and cultural backgrounds. As the plot unfolds, the researcher also identified conflicts that arise in both stories, such as arguments, longing, loss, and separation. These occur due to the differing narrative styles of the authors. All of this will be analyzed descriptively and comparatively by the researcher (Wijoto & Yulianeta, 2025).

Therefore, researchers chose this topic for specific reasons. The main reason for choosing to compare Atheer Abdullah's novel entitled "Aḥbātuka Aktsar Mimma Yambaghī" and Deskananda's novel entitled "Antara Oxford dan Munjid" was to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how structure influences the meaning and effectiveness of literary works. This structural-comparative approach allows researchers to place novels in a broader context, both in terms of literary history and the cultural context of the work. This approach also helps researchers identify developments and trends in narrative structure over time. Furthermore, this approach can help researchers evaluate the literary quality of a novel by identifying the strengths and

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weaknesses of its structure, as well as developing more critical and in-depth analytical skills.

Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method. Qualitative research is a method used to collect data naturally in order to explain real situations or facts descriptively through various approaches (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018). This research is descriptive in nature because the data model consists of explanations or descriptions of the research object in the form of words, images, and numbers that are not obtained through statistical processing. The purpose of descriptive research is to provide a systematic, factual, and accurate depiction of the facts, characteristics, and relationships among the events or phenomena being analyzed (Hamdi & Bahruddin, 2014).

Comparative literature study is a study of national literature. The term "*comparative literature*" is historical in nature. It examines the points of intersection between literary works from various languages, as well as the complex relationships that exist in both the past and the present, including aspects of influence and mutual interaction. This influence may take the form of similarities in the general structure of literary genres, literary movements or schools of thought, as well as themes, attitudes, and characters that are adopted or imitated in literary works. It may also concern methods of presentation, specific ideas, or representations of nations reflected in the literature of other countries. These relationships are artistic connections that link nations and countries through diverse expressions of humanity, depending on the imagery and the authors themselves (Hilal, 2008). Comparison is an ontological condition inherent in both individual and group psychology, and it is not limited solely to the field of literature. In addition, comparison also constitutes one of the fundamental elements that shape the hermeneutics of prose (Zulkhairi, 2013).

Comparative literature initially emerged with the aim of studying classical literatures in English, German, French, Italian, and Spanish, within the

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framework of their traditional European roots. It focused on the mutual influences among these literatures and the extent of their impact on other European literary traditions. Over time, this field underwent a significant renewal in the late 1970s with the emergence of the Chinese school, which introduced a new perspective seeking to shift the center of comparative literature away from Europe toward a more balanced outlook. This approach acknowledges diversity and difference, and incorporates the "Other" into a dialogue between East and West on the basis of equality (Nugraha, 2021).

The structural study specifically focuses on analyzing the internal structure of a literary work, particularly a novel. This structure includes various elements such as plot, characters, time, setting, and language. By deconstructing and analyzing the relationships among these elements, we can understand how a novel is constructed and how meaning is identified of fundamental similarities and differences, as well as broader patterns within the narrative structure. This approach also enables the researcher to view the novels from different perspectives, thus revealing deeper meanings and details that might be overlooked if only one novel were analyzed independently.

Result and Discussion

Narrative Structures Element Analysis

In this discussion, the researcher will present an analysis of the similarities and differences in the structural elements between the novel "*Ahbabtuka Aktsar Mimma Yambaghi*" and the novel "*Antara Oxford dan Munjid*." The researcher will first explain the similarities found in both novels.

In general, the main theme presented in both novels is a love relationship. The novel "*Ahbabtuka Aktsar Mimma Yambaghi*" tells the story of the love between Jumana and Aziz, while "*Antara Oxford dan Munjid*" portrays the love between Fatih and Maryam. From the perspective of setting and time, the conflict in these love relationships takes place within an educational institution, with a modern temporal background. Thus, both novels focus on

events related to the issue of modern romantic culture within an academic environment.

The main similarity that can be drawn from both novels lies in their central theme. Both novels focus on a love relationship set within the same environment – the world of education. This love story captivates readers, drawing them into the flow of the characters’ emotional conflicts, such as sadness, longing, anger, deceit, and the sincerity of letting go (Abbas, 2024).

Observe the plot of the novels “*Ahbabtuka Aktsar Mimma Yambaghi*” and “*Antara Oxford dan Munjid*”:

Plot	Novel I	Translation	Novel II
Prologue	<p>تجري الأيام مسرعة.. أسرع مما ينبغي.. ظننت بأننا سنكون في عمرنا هذا معاً وطفلاً الصغير يلعب بيننا...."</p> <p>(An-Nashmi, 2011: 11)</p>	<p>"The days passed so quickly... faster than they should have... I once thought that at this age, we would be together, with our little child playing between us...."</p>	<p>"Belajar merupakan hal yang biasa kulakukan. Setiap waktu kubuka buku dan kubaca lembar per lembar halaman buku. Mungkin, dapat menghabiskan satu jilid buku dalam seminggu...."</p> <p>(Deskananda, 2021: 1)</p>
Epilogue	<p>تجري الأيام مسرعة.. أسرع مما ينبغي.. ظننت بأننا سنكون في عمرنا هذا معاً وطفلاً الصغير</p>	<p>"The days go by so quickly... faster than they should... I once thought that at this age we would be together, with our little child</p>	<p>".....Maaf atas semua kesalahanku. Terima kasih telah mengisi hidupku. Pesan terakhirku padamu. Tolong jaga oxford!"</p>

	<p>يُعب بيننا...."</p> <p>(An-Nashmi, 2011: 326)</p>	<p>playing between us...."</p>	<p>Terima kasih! Asyifa Maryam."</p> <p>(Deskananda, 2021: 137)</p>
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In the prologue and epilogue of the novel *"Aḥbātuka Aktsar Mimma Yambaghī,"* the narrative appears to be written in the same tone and style. This indicates that the story begins with Jumana's monologue, as she recalls her sorrowful memories with her lover, Aziz. The flashbacks of her past are captured in her memory and eventually concluded with a similar narration in the epilogue. Similarly, in the prologue and epilogue of *"Antara Oxford dan Munjid,"* although the narrative structure differs, the prologue introduces Fatih's story during his time with his late mother, which leads the plot into flashbacks revealing Fatih's dark past. The epilogue concludes with Fatih's farewell letter to Maryam, who serves as a reflection of his mother from the past. Both novels employ a flashback narrative structure. A flashback is a narrative technique in which the author presents past events to explain or provide context to events occurring in the present (Budianto, 2023). Both novels begin their prologues with the sorrowful moments of the main characters, which then lead the narrative into a flashback of their past experiences. Consequently, both novels conclude with unhappy epilogues, reflecting the emotional aftermath of the characters' journeys.

Another similarity can be observed in the character development (Cut Ririn Soraya & Aiyub Berdan, 2021). Although the authors use different main characters, the portrayal and disposition of the protagonists in both novels appear quite similar. The following are several shared character traits of the main characters in *"Aḥbātuka Aktsar Mimma Yambaghī"* and *"Antara Oxford dan Munjid."*

Character Traits	Novel I	Translation	Novel II
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<p>Anger</p>	<p>"الله يسعدك يبعدك ركضت نحو سيارتي و انطلق بها... كنت أنظر إليك من خلال مرآة السيارة الغضب يكاد أن يأخذني الى الخلف ... (An-Nashmi, 2011: 54)</p>	<p>"God granted you happiness – and took you away from me. I ran to my car and drove off... through the mirror, I caught a glimpse of you, and <i>rage</i> nearly pulled me back ...</p>	<p>"rasanya aku ingin sekali mengakui kesalahan. Tapi, <i>hati keras</i> ini tidak bisa berkata apa-apa melainkan hanya diam." (Deskananda, 2021: 13)</p>
<p>Anxiety</p>	<p>"أتدري يا عزيزي! يؤلمني كثيرا أنني حاولت و لفترات عديدة أن أثير شفقتك علي، دفعني الخوف من أن أخسرك لأن أحاول أن أثير شفقتك!" (An-Nashmi, 2011: 147)</p>	<p>"Do you know, my dearest Aziz? I've endured so much pain, trying endlessly to stir your heart toward me. Yet all I gained was <i>fear</i> – fear of losing you forever."</p>	<p>"Udara dingin menerpa <i>tubuhku yang kaku.</i> <i>Napasku terengah- engah</i> seperti mobil yang kehabisan besin. Aku berlari kencang sambil menahan <i>air mata</i> yang hampir tumpah. "Kenapa kamu tidak bilang kalau kamu itu sakit?" (Deskananda, 2021: 116)</p>
<p>Sadness</p>	<p>"أغلقت سماعة</p>	<p>"I ended the call, buried my face</p>	<p>"Fatih! Jangan <i>sedih</i> gitu, dong!</p>

	<p>الهاثف في و جهي...ضمت وسادتي و أنا أنتحب."</p> <p>(An-Nashmi, 2011: 43)</p>	<p>into the pillow, and wept."</p>	<p>Senyumlah niscaya awan hitam akan kembali cerah seperti semula," kata Maryam sambil tersenyum." (Deskananda, 2021: 123)</p>
Yearning	<p>"اشتقت إليك كثيرا ياعزيز. اشتقت لرؤية اسمك متصلاً، اشتقت للحديث معك، اشتقت لشجارنا معا."</p> <p>(An-Nashmi, 2011: 196)</p>	<p>"How I miss you, Aziz. I miss the comfort of seeing your name on the screen, the warmth of our conversations, even the bitterness of our quarrels."</p>	<p>"Sekilas aku melihat ke belakang, mereka masih melambaikan tangan. Tapi, terasa sepi bagiku dua orang yang kucintai tak dapat menyaksikanku. Aku berimajinasi bahwa ummi dan Maryam pasti selalu ada di hatiku selamanya." Selamat tinggal!" (Deskananda, 2021: 135)</p>

Another similarity can be seen in the point of view used by the authors in telling their stories. In both novels, the authors employ a first-person perspective, using the pronoun "I" or "أنا". However, despite sharing the same narrative viewpoint, the authors' perspectives on romance differ depending on the gender of the main character, which influences how the romantic narrative is conveyed in each novel (Bashar, 2018).

Narrative Structures Comparison Analysis

In the following section, the researcher will discuss the comparative structural analysis between the novels *"Aḥbātuka Aktsar Mimma Yanbaghi"* and *"Antara Oxford dan Munjid."*

In general, both novels encapsulate the main theme of a romantic relationship. However, a significant difference lies in the supporting themes presented in each novel (Dini, 2022). Several Saudi Arabian novels that explicitly explore the theme of pure love remain relatively rare within the corpus of modern Arabic literature. Although a number of works address the subject of love, the conflicts within them are generally intertwined with more complex social issues. Contrary to this tendency, Atheer 'Abdullah, in her debut novel *"Aḥbātuka Aktsar Mimma Yanbaghi,"* presents a narrative that focuses entirely on the emotional conflict within a romantic relationship (Abbas, 2024). The novel portrays the turbulent dynamics of love between the female protagonist, Jumana—a figure immersed in tenderness and emotional vulnerability—and Aziz, a man who, perhaps unknowingly, embodies the role of a dominant and restrictive lover. As a debut work, Atheer succeeds in constructing a psychologically rich narrative that delves deeply into the complexities of human emotion. Her choice of diction and stylistic expression harmonizes with the story's emotional atmosphere, creating a profound sense of intimacy that strengthens the reader's connection to the characters and their conflicts. Through Jumana's monologues and inner reflections, readers are invited to immerse themselves in a romantic tone that not only stirs emotion but also evokes a deeper understanding of the fragile and turbulent nature of an unbalanced love (An-Nashmi, 2011).

Meanwhile, the novel *"Antara Oxford dan Munjid"* by Deskananda tells the emotional journey of a young man named Fatih, who possesses a deep enthusiasm for learning—particularly in studying the Arabic language. From an early age, Fatih showed a keen interest in the language through his religious education. However, that passion faded after the death of his mother, leaving

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him in despair and isolation from his social environment. His life begins to change when he meets a spirited and cheerful girl named Maryam, a *santriwati* (female religious student), under a Flame tree—known as *Hasan* in the Acehnese language. This encounter becomes a turning point in Fatih's life, rekindling his long-lost hope and determination. Through his inner journey and the friendship that blossoms between them, Fatih gradually learns the true meaning of struggle, loss, tears, and sincerity. The novel offers a touching narrative about the revival of spirit, the essence of love, and the search for self-identity, blending emotional depth with cultural and spiritual nuances (Deskananda, 2021).

From the perspective of supporting themes, the novel "*Ahbabtuka Aktsar Mimma Yambaghi*" explores issues such as toxic relationships, separation, university life, mature love, violence against women, and inner emotional conflict experienced by women. In contrast, the supporting themes in "*Antara Oxford dan Munjid*" include healthy relationships, friendship, adolescent love, intellectual debate, the pursuit of dreams, loss, the search for meaning and identity, as well as physical and mental well-being.

From the perspective of plot development, the major point of comparison between the two novels lies in the progression of their storylines. When readers delve deeply into both narratives, they will encounter central conflicts that are profoundly emotional and capable of touching or even breaking the readers' hearts (Inayah, 2024). In the novel "*Ahbabtuka Aktsar Mimma Yambaghi*," the storyline follows a flashback (retrospective) structure, as the prologue begins with Jumana's decision to leave her lover, Aziz. From there, Jumana continues to recount her past with Aziz, revealing a series of conflicts that emerge early in the narrative. The climactic resolution then unfolds in the epilogue, bringing the story to its emotional closure (Saheb, 2024). Schematically, the plot structure of "*Ahbabtuka Aktsar Mimma Yambaghi*" can be illustrated as follows:

[Present Time] → [Flashback] → [Past Conflict] → [Return to the Present] → [Ending]

In contrast, the novel *“Antara Oxford dan Munjid”* employs a progressive (forward-moving) plot, largely due to the author’s relatively linear and straightforward narrative style. In the prologue, the story introduces Fatih’s childhood, depicting his habit of reading and learning Arabic with his mother. The narrative then moves forward to the present, where Fatih experiences emotional turmoil following his mother’s death. The story continues to advance as Fatih meets Maryam, and the climactic resolution gradually unfolds through their growing romantic and friendly relationship. In the middle of the story, the author includes several brief flashbacks that reveal Fatih and Maryam’s shared memories. Finally, in the epilogue, the novel concludes with Fatih’s farewell to Maryam, evoking a deep sense of melancholy in readers. Schematically, the plot structure of *“Antara Oxford dan Munjid”* can be illustrated as follows:

[Introduction] → [Rising Conflict] → [Climax] → [Falling Action] → [Ending]

In terms of characters, it is clearly evident how both authors carefully select their main characters along with several supporting ones to serve as the driving forces of their narratives. In the novel *“Aḥbābtuka Aktsar Mimma Yanbaghi,”* the author chooses a female protagonist. Jumana is a Saudi woman pursuing her studies in Canada, where she unexpectedly meets Aziz, a fellow Saudi student in the same program. Within their relationship, Jumana is portrayed as a mature and emotionally composed woman, in contrast to Aziz, who appears immature and childish in dealing with love and emotional commitment (Khaliq, 2015). Meanwhile, in *“Antara Oxford dan Munjid,”* the author selects a male protagonist. Fatih is a high school-level Islamic boarding student (*santri aliyah*) who is devoted to his studies at a pesantren. He accidentally meets Maryam, a cheerful and energetic *santriwati* of the same age. In their relationship, Fatih is depicted as a reserved and introverted young man, while Maryam stands as his opposite – a lively, optimistic, and spirited girl.

Next, the most significant difference that can be seen more prominently lies in the setting of the two novels, a significant and clear difference emerges between the two narratives in terms of spatial and temporal elements (Fariztina, Ainusyamsi, & Rohanda, 2025). The setting is generally divided into place and time (Rizqy & Billihya, 2020). In the novel *"Aḥbābtuka Aktsar Mimma Yambaghī"*, the place setting is mainly centered in Saudi Arabia, although several other locations also appear in the story, such as Canada. Other mentioned places include residences, boarding houses, apartments, university buildings, cafés, cities, and airports. The time setting is not explicitly stated in the narrative; however, it is clear that the novel portrays a romantic story set in the modern era. Thus, the social issue that can be identified is the romance of the Middle East undergoing cultural acculturation, reflecting the fusion between Middle Eastern romantic values and Western romantic culture in a modern context.

The place setting in the novel *"Antara Oxford dan Munjid"* is primarily focused on Bireuen City and Takengon City, although several other locations are also mentioned, such as Islamic boarding schools, schools, fields, residences, libraries, hotels, cities, and airports. The time setting in the novel is not explicitly stated in the story; however, it can be inferred that the events take place in the modern era. Therefore, the social issue reflected in this novel is a portrayal of contemporary Indonesian youth romance and culture.

In the world of literature, the author's point of view plays a crucial role in shaping the narrative and influencing readers' perceptions of the central themes being explored. One of the themes often treated with complexity is the notion of love. In the novel *"Aḥbābtuka Aktsar Mimma Yambaghī"*, Atheer Abdullah An-Nasymi portrays love not merely as something sentimental or romantic, but as an emotional experience that is paradoxical, fragile, and at times, painful. Readers respond to Atheer's treatment of the theme of love with a wide range of emotional reactions, reflecting their deep engagement with the story. Some express that they have fallen in love with the male protagonist, Aziz, attempting to justify his actions just as the female character, Jumana, does.

However, when the conflict of marriage arises and Aziz chooses to distance himself from lawful commitment out of fear of being “bound,” readers begin to feel disgusted by love itself, even describing it as a “disease.” This illustrates that through his narrative and characterization, Atheer invites readers to reconsider the meaning of love – not as an eternal source of happiness, but as a struggle between desire, fear, and social values. Moreover, the female character’s decision to love a man like Aziz blurs her rationality, raising doubts about the intellectual capacity of a woman governed by emotion. This leads to the understanding that, in Atheer’s perspective, love is a “force that diminishes logic – even dignity –” suggesting that relationships between characters are not always built upon mutual equality. Furthermore, the novel possesses a transformative quality, evident in how readers become deeply immersed in the story. They are drawn into “intense emotional experiences – laughing, raging, even cursing the characters –” to the point that Atheer seems almost otherworldly, an author whose realm can only be reached through the power of his narrative.

It can be concluded that Atheer Abdullah An-Nasymi positions love as a complex phenomenon that embodies a fundamental contradiction: love as both a source of strength and weakness. His perspective rejects the depiction of love as something purely romantic and linear, choosing instead to portray it as a space of pain, denial, and an endless search for meaning. This is what makes his works so evocative and deeply resonant, leaving a lasting impression on the hearts of readers (*Reader Responses*, n.d.).

In the novel *Antara Oxford dan Munjid*, Deskananda presents a love story that at first seems smooth and effortless. Yet, as time passes, the story ends in bitterness – broken by fate, already written and impossible to change. The sorrow feels genuine, as if it stems from the author’s own personal experience, honestly poured into the narrative. This is evident in the limited direct interaction between the two main characters, the lack of stirring conflict, and the almost complete absence of any real struggle to find one another. The plot

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flows calmly and evenly, without the emotional turbulence that often accompanies passionate love stories. Even so, for a debut work, *Antara Oxford dan Munjid* remains worthy of appreciation. Deskananda succeeds in conveying complex emotions through a simple narrative. It is precisely in this blend of simplicity and complexity that readers can sense Deskananda's perspective on love: that not every story must end happily, and not every love can be fought for. Sometimes, love comes only briefly – leaving traces, then departing, never to return (Deskananda, 2025).

Conclusion

This study concludes that *Aḥḅabtuka Aktsar Mimma Yambaghi* by Atheer Abdullah An-Nasymi and *Antara Oxford dan Munjid* by Deskananda exhibit both significant similarities and notable differences in their narrative structures. The two novels share several structural elements, including a common central theme, the use of flashback techniques, similar epilogues, the progressive development of the main protagonists, general representations of time and place, and the employment of a first-person narrative perspective. At the same time, they differ in their supporting themes, plot organization, characterization patterns, specific spatial and temporal settings, and the authors' narrative viewpoints. These findings demonstrate that literary works from different cultural backgrounds may employ comparable narrative frameworks while maintaining distinctive storytelling characteristics.

One of the most interesting findings of this study is the strong structural resemblance between the two novels despite their different linguistic, cultural, and national contexts. The shared use of flashback narration, first-person perspective, and similar character development patterns suggests that contemporary Arabic and Indonesian novels may reflect comparable narrative tendencies in portraying emotional experiences and personal growth. This convergence indicates that certain narrative strategies can transcend cultural boundaries and function as universal literary devices for engaging readers and conveying complex human experiences.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. The analysis focuses only on two novels and is limited to the comparison of intrinsic narrative structures. As a result, broader aspects such as cultural representation, ideological dimensions, reader reception, and socio-historical influences were not examined in depth. Future studies may expand the corpus by including a larger number of Arabic and Indonesian novels and employing interdisciplinary approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural literary relationships and narrative development.

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Author Contributions Statement

Deskananda contributed to conceptualization, methodology, data collection, formal analysis, investigation, and original draft preparation. Zulkhairi contributed to supervision, methodology validation, and manuscript review. Ivan Aulia contributed to formal analysis, data interpretation, validation, and manuscript review. Aiyub Berdan contributed to theoretical framework development, supervision, and manuscript review. Chairunnisa Ahsana Amalan Shaliha contributed to validation, language editing, and final manuscript review. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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