



ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVE JUSTICE STRUCTURE IN NETFLIX SERIES "WHISPERS" THROUGH TODOROV'S THEORY

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article history:</p> <p>Received 02/20, 2025 Revised 06/29, 2025 Accepted 08/22, 2025</p>	<p>The series <i>Whispers</i> (2020), produced by Netflix, is the first Saudi psychological thriller that explores mystery and family conflict following the death of a successful businessman. This research aims to reveal the value of justice within the narrative structure, using Tzvetan Todorov's structuralist theory, which includes five stages: equilibrium, disruption, recognition, repair, and new equilibrium. The mimesis approach is employed to examine how the plot and characters represent Saudi social reality. The findings show that the narrative in <i>Whispers</i> explicitly reflects the moral value of justice through the characters' journey in uncovering the truth, leading to a new justice-based equilibrium. The study concludes that justice is not merely a plot element but a central message of the story.</p>
<p>Keywords:</p> <p><i>Narrative Structure</i> <i>Justice</i> <i>Tzvetan Todorov</i> <i>Netflix</i> <i>Whispers Series</i></p>	<p>تجريد</p> <p>مسلسل <i>Whispers</i> (2020)، الذي أنتجته نتفليكس، يُعدّ أول إثارة نفسية سعودية تستكشف الغموض والصراع العائلي عقب وفاة رجل أعمال ناجح. يهدف هذا البحث إلى الكشف عن قيمة العدالة في البنية السردية من خلال استخدام نظرية تزفيتان تودوروف البنائية، التي تتضمن خمس مراحل: التوازن، الاضطراب، الاعتراف، الإصلاح، والتوازن الجديد. وتُستخدم مقارنة المحاكاة (الميميسيس) لدراسة كيفية تمثيل الحبكة والشخصيات للواقع الاجتماعي السعودي. وتُظهر النتائج أن السرد في <i>Whispers</i> يعكس بشكل صريح القيمة الأخلاقية للعدالة من خلال رحلة الشخصيات في كشف الحقيقة، مما يؤدي في النهاية إلى نشوء توازن جديد قائم على العدالة. ويخلص البحث إلى أن العدالة ليست مجرد عنصر في الحبكة، بل هي الرسالة المحورية في القصة.</p>
<p>الكلمات المفتاحية :</p> <p>البنية السردية العدالة تزفيتان تودوروف نتفليكس مسلسل وساوس</p>	<p>Abstrak</p> <p>Serial <i>Whispers</i> (2020), yang diproduksi oleh Netflix, merupakan thriller psikologis Saudi pertama yang mengeksplorasi misteri dan konflik keluarga setelah kematian seorang pengusaha sukses. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap nilai keadilan dalam struktur naratif dengan menggunakan teori strukturalis Tzvetan Todorov, yang mencakup lima tahapan: keseimbangan, gangguan, pengenalan, perbaikan, dan keseimbangan baru. Pendekatan mimesis digunakan untuk menelaah bagaimana alur cerita dan tokoh-tokohnya merepresentasikan realitas sosial Saudi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa narasi dalam <i>Whispers</i> secara eksplisit mencerminkan nilai moral keadilan melalui perjalanan para tokoh dalam mengungkap kebenaran, yang pada akhirnya mengarah pada terciptanya keseimbangan baru berbasis keadilan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa keadilan bukan hanya elemen alur cerita, tetapi merupakan pesan utama dari kisah tersebut.</p>

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A. Introduction

Literary works are the products of human imagination that reflect feelings, thoughts, and creativity. They function as a medium to express experiences, ideas, emotions, and beliefs, both orally and in writing (Teeuw, 1983). As a reflection of human life, literary works often represent social, cultural, and psychological phenomena that surround individuals (Sumardjo, J. & Saini, 1997).

As a form of creativity, literature carries aesthetic value that makes it not only a source of entertainment but also an educational medium that conveys moral and social lessons (Al-Ma'ruf, 2009). Many literary works represent the realities of life by transforming personal experiences with elements of imagination, thereby producing a profound emotional impact on their readers (Wellek & Austin, 1989). In this way, literary works not only present engaging stories but also transmit values such as justice, morality, and social responsibility (Ratna, 2007)(Damono, 2002).

Justice is one of the most fundamental moral and social values in human life, influencing relationships between individuals, groups, and systems of governance (Rawls, 2009). Generally, justice can be understood as the principle of granting rights and obligations fairly to every individual, without discrimination or abuse of power (Mawardi, 2015). However, justice is a complex concept that varies according to social, cultural, and philosophical contexts. Different traditions offer diverse interpretations of justice, ranging from theoretical frameworks and legal practices to its application in everyday life.

In Arab society, justice has been regarded as a central principle from pre-Islamic times to the modern era (Al-Farabi, 2006). Traditionally, it has been seen not only as a moral value but also as a social obligation closely tied to *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and *dham* (honor). With the advent of Islam, the concept of justice gained deeper religious significance, shaping both social norms and governance structures (Muhammad, 2010). In modern Arab countries, the struggle for justice remains vital, particularly in addressing issues such as inequality, abuse of power, and demands for transparency. Movements such as the Arab Spring (2010–2011) reflect the people's persistent call for justice in governance and society (Zaid, 2013).

Justice as a literary theme is broad and complex, appearing in classical, modern, and contemporary works. Literature provides a lens for readers to reflect on how justice operates both in reality and in the world of imagination, often portraying the pursuit of justice as a journey filled with challenges and uncertainties (Al-Sayyid, 2010).

Justice has long been a central theme in literature, from ancient tragedies to modern television series. In both classical and contemporary works, justice often appears as a moral struggle that challenges social, legal, and personal values (Aminuddin, 2018). This study explores how the value of justice is narrated in the Netflix Arabic-language psychological thriller series *Whispers* (وساوس), created by Hana Al Omair and released in 2020. The series presents a multi-perspective narrative, where each character is entangled in a web of secrets, guilt, and suspicion following the mysterious death of a tech businessman named Hassan.

Through the lens of Tzvetan Todorov's narrative theory, this research focuses on how justice is revealed through the five-part structure of equilibrium, disruption, recognition, attempt of repair, and new equilibrium. Unlike classical works where justice is often delivered by divine or legal forces, *Whispers* offers a modern take where justice is fragmented, subjective, and closely tied to personal truth and emotional resolution.

The choice of Todorov's theory is based on its strength in analyzing the transformation of narrative states. Each character undergoes a narrative arc that begins with an apparent normalcy and ends in a morally altered reality. By combining textual evidence with interpretation, this paper demonstrates how justice in *Whispers* is less about punishment or reward, and more about internal realization and relational shifts.

The Netflix series *Whispers* (وساوس) can therefore be viewed as a unique form of literary narrative. It tells the story of a protagonist who struggles with past trauma and psychological disorders that disrupt his seemingly perfect life. A sequence of events reveals hidden truths and compels him to confront fear, anxiety, and strained relationships with those around him. In his search for healing and truth, the protagonist begins to question reality itself and whom he can trust.

Analyzing the series through Todorov's narrative structure provides valuable insight into how justice is represented. The story begins with a state of balance (equilibrium), followed by disruption in the form of social problems and injustice. This leads to recognition, where the characters become aware of the challenges they must face, and then to attempts at repair to restore balance. Finally, the series achieves a new equilibrium that conveys a moral message: justice can be restored through righteous struggle and collective action. This highlights justice not only as a narrative element but also as the central moral value of the story.

B. Research Methods

This research applies the mimesis approach as the main method, which focuses on the reflection of social construction through the representation of justice values (Abrams, 1999). Justice in the real world is reflected in the narrative structure, characters, and events in the story. Using a descriptive qualitative method, this study aims to uncover and

describe phenomena in literary works in depth and systematically, focusing on the analysis of important elements such as themes, characters, plots, and values contained in the work.

This study employs a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical approach, aiming to analyze the narrative structure of justice values in the Netflix series *Whispers* (وساوس) through Tzvetan Todorov’s narrative theory. This approach is chosen because it enables the researcher to explore hidden meanings behind the storyline and characters through an in-depth interpretation of visual and verbal texts (Sugiyono, 2017).

The data source of this research is the Netflix series *Whispers* (original title: وساوس), which consists of 8 episodes. The data analyzed includes selected scenes, dialogues, and plotlines that reflect the dynamics of justice experienced by the characters, especially Amal, Hassan, Sawsan, and Lama (Ratna, 2007).

Data collection is conducted using the documentation technique, by attentively watching the series, taking notes, and classifying relevant scenes and dialogues. Each data point is supported by concrete evidence such as dialogue excerpts, episode number, timestamps, and contextual information. The analysis is carried out by applying Tzvetan Todorov’s five narrative stages, which include equilibrium, disruption, recognition, attainment of repair, and new equilibrium.

Todorov’s theory is chosen because it offers a systematic framework to analyze narrative transformation from conflict to resolution. Compared to other theories such as Levi-Strauss’s structuralism or Propp’s character functions, Todorov’s theory is more suitable as it emphasizes plot structure and progression, which aligns with the research focus on justice values within narrative development (Todorov, n.d.).

Furthermore, quotations used in the analysis are selected carefully to illustrate how conflict, decision-making, and consequences within the story represent or neglect justice value. Irrelevant or redundant quotes are omitted to maintain the clarity and focus of the analysis.

C. Result and Discussion

1. Equilibrium

In the Netflix series *وساوس* (Whispers), justice in the initial equilibrium is reflected in the lives of the characters before the central event, namely the mysterious death of Hassan. This initial equilibrium refers to the seemingly stable and orderly conditions of life prior to the emergence of the main conflict. Yet, beneath this apparent balance lie hidden inequalities and injustices that remain unspoken. The visible stability is merely an illusion, concealing long-standing tensions and unresolved issues in the characters’ lives.

At the beginning of the story, this equilibrium creates the impression of a "fair" or stable order, where all characters appear to live according to prevailing norms. However, as the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that injustice, oppression, and concealed secrets undermine the very foundation of this balance. Characters who occupy positions of privilege seem to live in fairness, while weaker or marginalized characters gradually recognize the injustices they endure.

This fragile equilibrium begins to collapse with Hassan's death, which serves as a turning point that triggers a series of revelations and a pursuit of truth. His death lifts the veil that has long hidden injustice, disrupting the existing order and forcing the characters to confront the realities they have been avoiding. The newly uncovered facts reveal that the supposed balance was in fact built on lies, manipulation, and closely guarded secrets.

Tahapan	Waktu	Dialog/Peristiwa	Narasi
Equilibrium	00:30:57	Amal: "Respecting the deceased means burying him properly. Come and show your condolences."	Amal appears calm and responsible as the late Hassan's wife. She tries to maintain the family's dignity.
Disruption	00:28:18	Amal: "Earlier, I heard a sound... like a chair being moved." - (Incoming call from Hassan on the cellphone)	When she hears a strange sound and gets a call from Hassan's number, Amal begins to suspect that there is something odd about her husband's death.
Recognition	00:13:32	Amal (looking at the photo): "I don't know who did it, but this isn't a joke."	Amal realizes that the strange events that have occurred are no coincidence – someone is disturbing her family on purpose.

Attempt of Repair	00:12:44	Amal (via phone): "Track that phone. Catch whoever is playing us."	Amal tries to seek justice and contacts the authorities to investigate the strangeness that is happening.
New Equilibrium	00:01:52	Amal: "I am sure Hassan's death was not an accident. Someone among you is responsible."	Amal becomes more alert and is convinced that there is a perpetrator among Hassan's closest people.

The notion of justice in وساوس is portrayed as relative and complex. Some characters perceive justice as the preservation of the existing structure, while others see true justice as inseparable from exposing the truth—even if doing so destroys the established order. The series thus demonstrates that justice is not merely about enforcing rules or maintaining stability, but also about unveiling hidden realities and creating space for truth to emerge, regardless of its disruptive consequences.

Overall, وساوس invites viewers to reflect on the workings of justice in a world permeated by tension, manipulation, and secrecy. It illustrates how justice can be both complex and subjective, and how the search for truth can destabilize what once appeared to be a stable equilibrium. Ultimately, the series conveys that genuine balance can only be achieved when truth is revealed and injustice is confronted.

2. Dissolution

In the Netflix series وساوس (Whispers), the disruption of justice becomes evident through the unfolding dynamics of the story, as various events expose inequality, manipulation, and hidden injustices within the characters' lives. At first, their lives appear stable and orderly, creating the impression that social balance and justice have been achieved. However, with the mysterious death of Hassan, the supposed equilibrium is revealed as an illusion. What seemed like stability is in fact built upon inequality and domination, producing a profound disturbance to the very values of justice that should prevail.

This disruption is reflected in the experiences of marginalized characters who feel treated unfairly, while others benefit from the control of information and hidden power. As the investigation into Hassan's death unfolds, it becomes clear that multiple parties contributed to creating this inequality. The justice that once seemed present is revealed to be nothing more than a façade—an image carefully constructed from lies and manipulation.

The quest for justice that follows Hassan's death emerges as a central theme of the series. Yet the path toward achieving it is fraught with conflict, fear, and struggles among characters, each driven by their own agendas. The disruption of justice becomes increasingly apparent when those seeking the truth are met with threats from those intent on keeping their secrets hidden, allowing systemic injustices to persist through the unequal distribution of power.

Ultimately, *وساوس* demonstrates that the value of justice in a seemingly stable society can be shattered when disparities of power and access to information are allowed to dominate. True justice, the series suggests, can only be realized when those who suffer injustice uncover hidden truths and resist an unjust system—even if doing so requires a long, uncertain, and perilous struggle.

3. Recognition

In the Netflix series *وساوس* (Whispers), the recognition of justice develops gradually through stages that involve both individual and collective awareness, as well as the struggle to uncover truth and challenge unjust systems.

The narrative illustrates how characters who were initially trapped within hidden injustices eventually find the courage to resist and fight for justice. This process demonstrates that awareness of justice is not instantaneous, but rather a long journey shaped by the disclosure of truth, resistance to oppression, and sacrifice aimed at achieving positive change in society and interpersonal relationships.

The recognition of justice in *وساوس* evolves from a personal consciousness into a collective one. Characters who once believed they were living in a fair system come to realize that their lives were in fact governed by manipulation, oppression, and tightly concealed family secrets. As truths are revealed, this awareness transforms into a shared struggle to uphold justice.

Ultimately, the series conveys that justice can only be achieved when all parties acknowledge and accept that the existing system is permeated by injustice. This recognition becomes a turning point in the story, leading to genuine action to address wrongs, despite the heavy sacrifices and challenges involved. Characters who may have previously felt powerless or fearful now feel compelled to fight for truth and justice.

Those who once felt alienated or oppressed begin to unite, recognizing that they are not alone in their struggle. They share stories, form alliances, and develop strategies to demand change. Through this awakening, a collective force emerges – one that drives the demand for justice, even as powerful actors attempt to preserve the status quo.

However, this recognition is not without challenges. Once injustice is exposed, the characters face significant obstacles and sacrifices. Some lose their positions in the family or society, while others encounter threats to their personal safety. Despite these hardships, such sacrifices are portrayed as essential to dismantling a broken system and laying the foundation for a more transparent and equitable form of justice.

4. Attamp of repair

The effort to restore the balance of justice values in the وسائس series involves several crucial steps, ranging from the disclosure of truth to broader social reforms. This revelation becomes a decisive turning point, because only by uncovering the truth can the characters fully understand the extent to which they have been trapped in unrevealed injustices. Many of them are forced to confront harsh realities and the fear of consequences that may emerge from the exposure of dark secrets.

The next step is to encourage accountability for wrongdoing. Characters who contribute to maintaining injustice or concealing the truth must begin to face the consequences of their actions – not only for themselves but also for the impact they have inflicted on others. In وسائس, this process is not merely about identifying perpetrators to be punished, but rather about moral introspection and the acknowledgment of how their actions have damaged the lives of others. Accountability also encompasses remorse and social responsibility, as many characters feel compelled to make amends for their mistakes, whether through apologies, penances, or other concrete steps that signify their willingness to assume responsibility.

Once accountability is acknowledged, the next stage is the reconstruction of broken relationships. Many characters in the series have been affected by injustice in various

forms, such as emotional oppression, deception, or prolonged conflict. In the pursuit of restoring balance, they must strive to rebuild their relationships with one another—whether among family members, friends, or the wider community. This reconstruction requires honest and open communication, a willingness to forgive, and efforts to correct past wrongs. Characters must learn to listen to one another and recognize how the injustices they committed or experienced have shaped the emotions and lives of others. Although demanding significant time and effort, this process is essential for laying the groundwork of a more equitable social order.

Moreover, the restoration of justice in وساوس does not stop at the individual or interpersonal level. A significant dimension of the series is its emphasis on reforming a system that has long been entrenched in injustice and corruption. Characters who once felt marginalized or trapped in an unjust system gradually realize that true change must begin with structural transformation. Reforming such systems presents formidable challenges, as deep-rooted inequalities are rarely easy to dismantle. Nonetheless, وساوس portrays that without systemic reform, the balance of justice will remain elusive. The struggle thus extends to creating a more just, transparent, and egalitarian structure where every individual has the right to be respected and treated fairly.

This collective effort to restore justice is not without sacrifice. The characters in وساوس are compelled to endure significant challenges, including the potential loss of social status, reputation, or even personal safety. Their journey toward justice requires taking risky steps, confronting external pressures, and resisting a system that has long favored those in power. Despite these hardships, their struggle demonstrates that the restoration of justice values can only be achieved when all parties involved have the courage to face reality and resist injustice. It is a prolonged and arduous journey that demands perseverance, bravery, and a willingness to sacrifice for the greater good.

5. New Equilibrium

The new balance of justice in the وساوس series emerges from a long struggle that involves uncovering the truth, taking accountability for wrongdoing, rebuilding broken relationships, and transforming the broader social system. In this context, justice is not merely about enforcing laws or imposing punishments, but about reconstructing a world that is more just, transparent, and inclusive. Through a collective process, this restoration

establishes a new equilibrium that prioritizes honesty, responsibility, and social transformation, ultimately creating a fairer and more equitable system for all parties involved.

D. Conclusion

The Whispers (وساوس) series depicts a complex journey toward justice through the stages of initial balance, disruption, awareness, recovery efforts, and finally the attainment of a new balance. At first, the lives of the characters seem stable, but beneath this illusion lie many injustices and manipulations that have yet to be revealed. The death of Hassan becomes the main trigger that shatters this equilibrium, forcing the characters to confront harsh realities and begin their search for the truth.

The disruption of justice values becomes more evident when conflicts and self-interest hinder the pursuit of truth, showing how imbalanced power and hidden information can generate social inequality. However, through the process of recognition, characters who were previously trapped in an unjust system start to develop awareness of the need for change and the courage to resist injustice.

Efforts to restore justice focus not only on uncovering the truth but also on demanding moral accountability, rebuilding fractured relationships, and reforming systems long plagued by manipulation. Although this process is fraught with challenges and sacrifices, it is a vital step toward establishing a more just and transparent social order.

Furthermore, the analysis of the narrative structure in Whispers (وساوس) through Tzvetan Todorov's theory reveals that each character undergoes a personal transformation across the five narrative phases: equilibrium, disruption, recognition, attempt of repair, and new equilibrium. The disruption in the series is not merely external but also deeply psychological, rooted in past traumas, secrets, and unresolved guilt. This indicates that the series does not follow a single linear storyline but instead unfolds through multiple parallel arcs, each shaped by the inner turmoil of the characters.

Importantly, the attempt to repair balance does not always lead to traditional resolutions. Rather, it often results in a new, darker equilibrium in which the characters must confront irreversible truths. This supports Todorov's concept that closure in a narrative does not necessarily restore the original state but instead establishes a transformed reality shaped by what has been revealed.

In the end, the series emphasizes that a new equilibrium can only be achieved if honesty, accountability, and transparency become the guiding principles of social life. Whispers (وساوس) thus demonstrates that justice is not simply about punishment or legal enforcement, but also about the courage to face reality, correct past mistakes, and embrace change for the greater good. By applying Todorov's model in a fragmented, multi-

perspective narrative, the series reflects the complexities of modern storytelling, where justice, identity, and truth emerge differently for each character.

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