

# Invisible Conflicts: Subtextual Tensions in Contemporary English Narratives

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## Abstract

Contemporary English fictions are full of hidden emotional, psychological, cultural, ideological conflicts and tussles. These conflicts are not visible on the surface of the text but underlie the narrative. From this perspective, the paper will attempt an analysis of the phenomenon of subtextual conflict, subtextual tension, and invisible conflict in selected contemporary English narratives. Modern English Literature traverses these issues, but takes the powerful other step i.e. they do not merely focus on these direct conflicts quietly, but rather focus on more complex fears, multiply dislocated identities, interpersonal silences, social estrangement, inflamed emotions that affect relationships between individuals and self-consciousness. Whenever a character goes through some conflict but does not display that on the outside, it is subtextual conflict. Any violent confrontation that does not get made explicit is included in this category.

The paper will study the representation, in contemporary texts, of tensions around class-gender-race-migration-technology-consumerism-family life-existential uncertainty in the backdrop of changes within the socio-cultural landscape. Conflicts and tensions which lie beneath the surface are generated through narration. Narration is how the story is conveyed to the audience. The study will provide a summary of the different manners in which the narrator achieves this function: Symbolism, Irony, Stream of Consciousness and Un.

It uses a qualitative and interpretive research method. The study will take place through the monetary text research by using analytic critical theories, I.e. psychoanalytic criticism, postmodernism, feminist and cultural studies. Moreover, the study will assess how invisible conflict can enhance narrative complexity, realism and reader engagement. The article will also examine how much illumination will writing like the Ming shed on the complex behaviour of humans which are not always conscious and not fully accessible to the actors or the observer. Through this paper the contemporary literary aesthetics is explored where subtextual tensions become an indispensable and enriching aspect of the literary work.

**Keywords:** Invisible Conflicts, Subtextual Tensions, Contemporary English Narratives, Psychological Conflict, Narrative Techniques, Contemporary Literature

## Introduction

In today's worlds, the modern English literature has undergone a lot of changes in regard to the theme, story, characterization, style etc. The erstwhile English narrative most usually dramatizes explicit, overt, or manifest emotion, foregrounded psychological complexity and overt moral conflict or opposition whereas the modern English Personae or narrative can be said to dramatize subtle punctuations of an internal emotional sabotage, subliminal psychological complexities or covert anxieties or unspoken tensions which perhaps exist at the back or background of ordinary life. Covert wars mediated not only in the background of a narrative but sometimes even wholly by unnamed and unmentioned narrators is a major feature of the understanding of modern literature. In contemporary literature, the strongest foes are often those that are not tangible, not audible, not corporeal and not clearly visible. Authors have been able to portray a fractured world with hidden tensions of the present day, one

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in which there is a constant battle with the angst of identity and belongingness, alienation, trauma, gender, class, social injustice, technological isolation, emotional disconnection, and so on.

Subtextual tension is the word, action, pause and plot meanings that are unspoken but have a meaning beyond this. The level of meaning not said but still there and very impactful on the meaning of the text. Today, the writers like Shakespeare and Milton did say what they desired and they didn't shy to come out to say it outrightly. However, the writer has taken the lights and more has been seen but rectified to use this and put this responsibility on the reader. This is done by means of fragmentation, variation, symbolisation, pause, ambiguity, gaps and so on. The style is the response of man to the development of communication. The contemporary man does not openly show their feelings and emotions. The social façade, complex insecurities and cultural pressures create an 'other' response. The outcome is a category of literature that needs both the text's active subscribers and the brains and hearts' involvement, making contemporary tales complex consequently.

A huge range of experienceable narratives is available to audiences today – stage plays, movies, video games, theme park rides, dance and music performances, websites, books and many more. The reason you may not consider some things to have stories is that you are most likely not in them. The principal characters in their narratives have no your point of view, your particular world. If you don't have a similar viewpoint with a reliable narrator, they might be dull to you. It's too bad, because most contemporary narratives, whether the authors want to or not, usually try to represent the position of the 'other'. Yet they don't attempt to masquerade as neutral or objective. They would rather invoke that viewpoint for effect: sympathy, irony, criticism, ridicule or any number of others. An excellent illustration of this is the credible narrator. The reliable narrator can be an unreliable point of view character competing with or conflicted with other perspective characters.

Modern English writers have adopted a number of narrative devices to bring out these subtextual tensions. Modern day writers in English have been able to depict these tensions through various narrative techniques. The psychological depth of characters and the uncertainty of perception/truth are revealed through the use of internal monologue, unreliable narrator, fragmented chronology, metafiction, symbolism, minimal dialogue, and so on. The messages we send, most often, do not need words but may just require silence. The subtle undertones also play a role in modern relationships. The unspoken wishes, hidden feelings and power imbalance in a relationship leads to creation of tension. Tensions that exist but are unseen is a complicated thing, just like the complex characters of literature who can speak to the many truths of human life.

Now that you have become acquainted with sub-text and hidden social significations in works of fiction, let us turn to the device of subtext in a little more detail. Subtext is a term used to refer to the significant social, cultural and ideological issues which are implied and suggested and are inserted in a literary narrative but are not essentially mentioned or made manifest. The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy refers to subtext as the language that is implied, suggested rather than explicitly stated or articulated. Essentially, the subtext makes the themes of a literary piece that when uncovered gives a great impact on the audience and the readers. Thus, a theme in a composition or performance often acts as the subtext of a related narrative story.

Study of invisible conflicts in modern narratives of English contemporary life is vital as it reveals the complexities of life which are not stated at all. These narratives enable readers to explore the intricate emotional and psychological dimensions of human beings concerning one another and thus enable the readers to witness the question of identity, power, isolation and social change very critically. The subtextual tension studied in the literary texts that brings out the way contemporary writers represent the uncertainties and contradictions of modernity. To sum up, the paper will analyze the function, need and artistic depiction of invisible conflicts in the contemporary English language narratives. It will show how subtext can be used as a powerful literary weapon to reveal the hidden aspects of human experience.

### Literature review

The idea of subtextual strain and unseen struggle in texts has received a wide range of academic interest in various literary, folkloric and literary theoretical spheres. Literary interpretation and the experience of the reader and watcher have been examined through the lens of the secret meaning, suggested emotion, ideological silence and coded narrative. Studies of these traces show how present texts employ indirect utterance and multivocality to express the psychological, cultural and social ambiguities.

In "Memories in Translation: A Life Between the Lines of Arabic Literature," Denys Johnson-Davies (2006) insists on the need to bring across subtexts and elements of a composition in extra-literary terms. According to his study, meaning lies "between the lines" often, literature has emotional and ideological tensions that are not quite overt. To comprehend invisible conflicts, the above perspective is crucial in terms of intercultural and cross-language.

David E. Kirkland (2011) in the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* examines reader engagement and identity. His work shows literary texts there. That is to say, these texts and their authors speak into the margins in ways that the majority of readers miss largely. Research indicates that texts embody repressed experiences as well as conflicts invisible in society, especially of minorities.

In her 1997 article on censorship and appropriateness in schools, Vicki Greenbaum claims that readings made and meanings given in schools are often coloured by unseen ideological struggles. There are covert and contentious messages about politics, morality, gender, and identity that can't always be identified, although they are recognisable by the reader.

L. Villette and Rebecca. N. Swift (2006).’s work discusses lesbian undertones. The study found that a suppressed identity and repressed emotional need can find indirect expression through characterization, symbolism and narrative ambiguity. The work is quite instrumental by Swift for comprehending invisible emotional and gender tensions in literary texts.

Laurent Pernot presents us a thorough analysis of subtext as a means of communication in *The Subtle Subtext: Hidden Meanings in Literature and Life* (2021), both in literature and in life. According to the author, the techniques by which writers signal tension and emotional complexity through silence, suggestion, irony and ambivalence are practically sine qua non’s of the writer.

J. engages in analysis of queer subtext in children’s literature. According to Kander (2011), narratives tend to reference the identities of non-heteronormative characters very often indirectly. His research indicates that concealed significances function as both resistant and protective devices in a repressive social environment.

Jan-Louis Kruger and Francois Steyn (2014) explore subtitles and reading performance. The subtitles are considered a medium which has a higher value than what is offered in the text. They further studied the pattern for visual and textual reading. The audience plays an active part within the text and gets to mean the implicit narrative elements and the multiple levels.

The examination of how migration, displacement, and globalization contribute to fragmented identities and hidden tensions in contemporary literature emerges from the work of Rebecca L. Walkowitz (2006). The increasing importance of invisible cultural and psychic conflicts in world literature in English is signified by her work.

Kristine Helmer (2016) states that the classroom is a space for the literature of gays and lesbians. As this literature was introduced, the author discusses how these texts can create opposition to heteronormativity through narrative resistance and coded emotions. As per this paper, a conflict of identity and social acceptance penetrates undercover freely and packed in the literary discourse.

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According to Abe Mark Nornes (1999), subtitling may betray the movie's hidden meaning. According to him, abusive subtitling creates a difference between translation and adaptation. It also creates or hides implicature, thus giving the viewer a different perception about the multilayered cultural tensions and ideological struggles.

Politics Between the Lines (2008), Katerina F. Parthé argued that censorship in Russia leads to acts of indirect political communication. The writer illustrates how concealed political commentary and allusions turn into a vehicle of criticism in a socially and politically condition.

In Translation and Coded Reading in Digital Media Narratives, Jessica Pressman (2007) argues that in the technologically mediated text "conventional" reading functions as cultural interpretation, thus confirming the importance of interpretation for reading practices of the present.

Thierry de Duve, in his 2010 study, focuses on the interpretation of a text and what readers do. The name of the paper is Clement Greenberg Between the Lines. The excessive practice of reading in-between-the-lines of the text has come under gloves and scrutiny. The implication or deeper meaning is as important as the actual or stated meaning.

Together these literatures indicate that subtextual tensions and invisible conflicts are an essential part of contemporary literary studies. Many scholars have noted the importance of silence, implication, ambiguity and code in contemporary narratives. This includes those working in the fields of Translation Studies, Queer Theory, Cultural Studies, Literary Criticism and Media Studies. As contemporary discourses revolve around invisible conflicts, much literature is not produced on this subject which is evident from the examination of many texts from the contemporary English narrative. In this research paper, the researcher tries to fill in this gap and studies how contemporary English writers use subtextual tension to imply inner conflicts and threads of complex modern life.

### **Research Methodology**

The contemporary English narratives have conflicts and tensions that are largely invisible and subtextual. To study such conflicts, this study is interpretative and qualitative in nature. According to the author, because they allow for an associated meaning that can be referenced around the story and not necessarily correlated because it provides a more feeling like account, a qualitative approach is most suitable to the research. The researchers of the study made use of secondary sources of data which includes contemporary English novels, short stories, literary essays, scholarly articles, journals, books, dissertations and critical reviews on the concepts of subtext, narrative theory, psychological conflict and contemporary literary criticism. The research refers to the literary text of Modern English Literature for undertaking the analysis of literary text and is further supported by various studies, theories and literary interpretations.

### **The psychological challenges, suggested feelings and underlying ideologies**

Several features playing a significant role in contemporary English novels are psychological depth, tacit emotions and suppressed ideologies. In most stories, the plot is unremarkable hiding the conflicts behind; however, there is no obvious conflict in the story and it is noticeably very faded in modern literature. Every plot in every text unfolds due to the interpretation of the moral problem faced by the character and his or her repressed feelings resulting from traumatic social-cultural conditioning, the reaction and behaviour of the character and the internal punishment and suffering. When writers today represent characters in their texts, they do not represent straightforward or unitary/sustainable people; they represent the psychological splintering of personalities which may be prompted by memory or trauma and may be engendered by anxiety, anguish, identity bother, internal contradiction and much more.

They also introduce the material consequences of dealing with trauma or treatment. These psychological issues may manifest in various muted ways such as inner monologue, stream of consciousness, fragmented narration,

symbols, silence, ambiguity, etc. As opposed to being uncovered, emotions and/or motives are repressed by various characters for masking their fears, insecurities, and desires in everyday speech and action. It follows that readers are compelled to make choices for meanings that lie behind the spoken and written word; as.

The psychological complexity reflects the intricate nature of today's society. People are likely to experience feelings of emotional imbalance, social alienation and meaninglessness. Due to technological advancement, urbanization and globalization, the human life is feeling discordant due to a family pattern and culture. The contemporary stories depict such experiences through the characters who suffer silently from depression, emotional deadness, loss of identity and inter-personal conflict. In contrast to being shown through heavy-handed dramatization, mental health difficulties will mainly take the form of hesitance, pull-back, silence and subtler emotional gestures. Though there are physical confrontations in the play, the strongest conflicts are certainly of an internal and psychological nature. The internal drama of the characters is far more prominent than the external drama. Complexity of human consciousness of today and the difficulty of really wondering in today's society gets manifested in literature.

This adds complexity to any story. Moreover, it also makes the story more real. The emotional impact of modern writings is distinct from that of traditional literature and was hardly conceived before. Traditional literature shows a better display of raw emotion. The intricacies of life cannot be conveyed directly. Characters may find it difficult to express their emotions like pain, guilty, grievance or resentment in an honest way. Feelings, however, are revealed by pauses in speech, symbolic gestures, disconnected memories, repeating images or contradictory behavior.

When discussing emotions, authors and speakers often use implication and indirect expression. Contemporary literature often expresses a tone of emotional restraint which can be mixed with irony or unresolved. The quietness means something, it speaks volumes. For instance, a silence in a shot can imply more emotional tension than the shot is able to capture in words.

Through indirect representation of emotion that literature can depict the direct conditions of nature. In our dealings with others, how often is your genuine feeling covered over by fear, social expectations or one's own sensitivity and psychological underpinning? people constantly hide what they feel as a result, literature has more powerful feeling in the indirect.

The ideological levels also influence the expression of psychological and emotional conflict contemporary texts. Literature refers not to an outside society but is a product of society and speaks towards it as to a dominant system of power. Literature is not a thing apart. It is only a reflection of society. Furthermore, it is also a critique of the dominant system of power. It also critiques belief and cultural expectation.

The fabric of a narrative is saturated with ideologies such as gender, class, race, nationalism, religion, sexuality, consumerism, globalisation that affect the identities, relations and lives of the characters. Modern writers frequently reveal the connection between societal institutions and individual experiences and conflicts. It could mean social notion of masculinity and femininity that inhibits the characters from expressing their feelings or behaving in ways that hitherto crossed the limits of acceptable behaviour, or the capitalist consumer culture that leaves the characters feeling alienated, insecure, and emotionally deprived. Parallely, the issues of migration, racial discrimination and cultural dislocation give rise to unseen psychological conflicts, needs and contraries related to belonging, identification and exclusion.

The ideological considerations of a text need not overtly be political opinion. They can also be manifest at the level of characterization, story-form, symbols and ways people relate. The expression of general social pressure and ideological conditioning can be marked via silence and hesitation, an emotional distance of a character. Thus, we could see in modern texts which show how external powers become internalized in a mind. The nation confronted

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a crisis as individual psychology and social ideology began taking a front-row seat in the comprehension of invisible conflicts in contemporary narrative. The unconscious fears, desires, and repressions at play within the text will be brought within understanding by applying psychoanalytical and feminist, postcolonial and cultural criticism. The ideological systems influence emotional and psychological experience.

The psychological complexities and emotional implications and ideological structures of contemporary English stories play a significant role in their enrichment and other sophistication. Thus, they add value to the English story. They assist the writers in revealing the reality of modern times using unobtrusive and realistic means. Numerous recent documentations have unravelled the inner forces, emotional conflicts, and silences which lie beneath the surface. Consequently, the reader is compelled to transcend the obvious meaning of the text. Also, we see the complex human consciousness and social life artwork. In this way, we can say that through invisible conflict which is a very effective vehicle and the perfect way to communicate the present ambiguity, uncertainty and emotions.

It is worth remembering, above all, that a modern English short story may contain more than one invisible conflict. A narrative can contain two or even more such conflicts working simultaneously or one after the other in a subtle way without any of them being clear enough to the reader. It is the responsibility of the reader to comprehend them. The author does not try to expose them very clearly. Most stories contain latent conflicts that can be sufficient to produce suspense where their resolution is uncertain.

One of the results of this analysis of invisible conflict is a better understanding of the psychological depth of modern English story-telling. Individuals are more aware of emotional understatement and communication via subtext. This will keep readers always receiving and applying psycho-linguistic training to navigate efficiently through complexities of subtext and implied meaning common in modern-day fiction.

### **Conclusion**

Research findings showcase that the literary device of subtext enables the author to present unspoken yet powerful meanings in their writing of the story. The contemporary writers make use of silence, ambiguity, symbol, disjointed narration, pause in speech, irony and psychological introspection to fashion their stories and spur an active reading and emotional participation of the hearer/reader. In literature, conflict can be achieved more effectively and realistically through such means of expression instead of the dramatisation expression. The study also emphasizes the use of inconspicuous nuances quite strongly to emotionally and psychologically state the precarious and sometimes conflicting facets of human relationship in the modern day, in the stories.

The study also shows that invisible conflicts are neither personal nor emotional: they are firmly grounded in social and cultural ideologies. Social categories such as gender, class, race, migration, sexuality, consumerism and globalization shape the inner self of characters and inner tensions in narratives. Contemporary research reveals how social expectations, institutional pressures, and cultural codes get internalized, producing emotional repression, fragmentation of self, and passive opposition. The work's subtextual tension serves as a vital means of conveying experiences that are not always available for public consumption in society.

According to psychologist and sociologist, man has a conscious mind and an unconscious mind. The Psychoanalytical theory depicts both of this and the power of trauma as well. The trauma mentioned refers to psychological trauma that affects people. One might not pay enough attention to the traumatic events and benefit from psychoanalytic literary criticism. The theory helps to see all the trauma done by violence and incapacity to connect and its impact on the patient.

Overall, the study suggests that the unsayable is a crucial element of contemporary English narrative and adds to their textual sophistication, emotional realism and depth of interpretation. Through a virtual evocation of the

'unsayable', contemporary writers successfully harness a discourse that captures the fragmented, uncertain and intensely emotive quality of human life. Consequently, the paper contributes to contemporary literary criticism, particularly the significance of subtext as an aesthetic and critical perspective on late twentieth-century narratives and their subtext of the human condition.

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