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Urban Metamorphoses in the Contemporary Arab Novel: Ibrahim Nasrallah's 'The Second War of the Dog'»

تحولات المدينة في الرواية العربية المعاصرة رواية «حرب الكلب الثانية» لإبراهيم نصرالله
نموذجاً

Métamorphoses urbaines dans le roman arabe contemporain: La Seconde Guerre du Chien d'Ibrahim Nasrallah

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Introduction

The narrative in the contemporary novel sets the stage for profound contemplation and interpretation of the ontological position of humankind, exploring how individuals construct their sense of place and their temporal preferences within specific historical contexts.

Within the contemporary novel, the city emerges as a prominent and distinguished setting, characterized by its unique attributes. It serves as the primary witness to the evolution of human intellect and as the catalyst for the origin, growth, and prosperity of the narrative. Above all else, it assumes the role of urbanization's emblem and serves as the epicenter for shaping history. As Kidyn Sjo Burke says, "It is the history of cities." (Rahim, 2006)

Although Roland Barthes refers to the discourse of the city and the speech of its citizens, he emphasizes the importance of urban architecture. He says that the city "is a discourse and that this discourse is in fact a language." Cities communicate with their residents, and we communicate with our cities (Barthes, 1970). The novel under study presents a reflective exploration through imaginative metaphors, highlighting the city as a central element in the narrative. This is particularly evident in the text's sub-thresholds that inspired the novel's title : " ... did it occur to you that we are just mirrors of the mirrors we stare at?" This line reinforces the city's significance in the discourse and propels it to a level almost surpassing the original title within the narrative trajectory.

The following questions arise when approaching Ibrahim Nasrallah's novel "The Second War of the Dog" :

1. How does urbanization influence the development of individual personalities, and conversely, how do these personalities impact the

urbanization of the setting, allowing for the emergence of a distinct “personality of the place” and its internalization ?

2. How does the narrative capture the essence of the city as a way of life that brings people together, fostering an aesthetic and intellectual existence within it ? How does the imagination come into play in exploring the complexities of city life, around which society revolves ?
3. If we consider “the city in the beginning as civilization” and civilization as the history of societal development, do all narratives adhere to this logic, or do some narratives diverge, refusing to conform to reality and instead foreseeing a future governed by the smart city and totalitarian rule ? Do these narratives aim to expose the imminent danger that threatens the values of civilization through the pathologies arising from dictatorship, industrialization, and digitization that are neither monitored nor regulated ?

1. The City and the Valuation Failure of The Second War of the Dog

The Second War of the Dog is the novel that won the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF) in 2018 in Abu Dhabi, and its author, the Palestinian writer Ibrahim Nasrallah, born in Oman, received a financial reward accompanying the award, amounting to 50 thousand US dollars. In this novel, Nasrallah places significant emphasis on the concept of place and the implications of urbanization, imbuing the narrative with a distinct poetic sensitivity and creative direction.

The author's deliberate focus on transforming the city into artistic and literary material reflects a purposeful choice laden with meaningful connotations. Through successive descriptions, the novel portrays the identity of the city, exposing the inherent flaws that have marred human life within it. As depicted in the novel, the city embodies a deficiency in values, marked by the collapse of honor, chivalry, justice, and freedom, giving way to the dominance of greed, materialism, and unchecked desires. Consequently, the city loses its human, moral, and cultural dimensions, resulting in the erosion of its historical continuity and unique identities. Instead, it transforms into a disturbing amalgamation of sensory waste, leaving a profound impact on the reader.

This artistic work delves into the realm of virtualism, exploring concepts such as Utopia, artificial intelligence, and the knowledge economy, all emblematic of an age characterized by artificiality. The narrative keenly observes the era of civilization, a period marked by turbulence and unease,

as it grapples with the values espoused by thinkers like Durant in his book on civilization. Therefore, the elements of its construction will undergo great demolition, starting with humanity, from place to time.

1.1. Humanity and the Fragmentation of Values

The characters in the narrative epitomize the postmodern individual, navigating the intricacies of new social and economic dynamics engendered by the digital age and scientific advancements reaching unprecedented levels. As a result, there emerges a shift in the interactions between individuals, their perception of time and space, and even their relationship with animals, all governed by established norms.

The city itself undergoes a transformation, descending into a state of squalor, distortion, and moral ambiguity, lacking order and the presence of law. This state of affairs aligns with what Ian Watt coined as “urban neuroticism,” characterized by feelings of alienation, anxiety, tension, and loneliness within the urban environment (Larry, 1983). This intense narrative of “The Second War of the Dog” evokes a profound sense of tension, stimulating the nerves to an extreme level, as the conflict unfolds tragically, resulting in the loss of over a quarter of a million citizens, as conveyed by the narrator.

“The war did not stop despite all the deterrent measures taken by the castle. Those who looked through the windows of their homes, and those in the cars, could see people falling dead from coughing fits as they flopped like sacrificial birds, without anyone daring to come down to save them, because that would be a sufficient reason for the machine guns to turn towards them and shower them with their bullets.” (Nasrallah, 2016, p. 225)

1.2. Subordination of the Human Sphere to Capital Investment Law

In this context, the human element has been commodified, subjected to the laws of capitalist investment, and treated as part of the system of recyclable materials upon which the marketing economy is built. Two projects, “Amal Hospital” and “Project Amal 2 Prison,” are examples of attempts to legitimize human speculation. The first project involves tracking patients at airports and other locations, bringing them to the hospital, and then negotiating with their families over exorbitant prices for fictional surgeries, even for patients who may have already passed away before reaching the hospital. Numerous air bridges have been established between

multiple countries, all designated for those who have become prisoners of hope. The hospital has expanded so extensively that it no longer accepts any stray patients brought in by commission-seeking drivers, as planes themselves have become the carriers. In this scenario, some individuals manage to survive, while others perish. (Nasrallah, 2016 : 45-46) According to this line of reasoning, hospital brokers engaged in speculative practices, capitalizing on patients' suffering and pain for their gain. Moving on, the second project involves the establishment of a prison where individuals involved in street altercations are detained and subjected to severe torture until their families provide financial compensation, regardless of the amount, to secure their release. This market-driven economy is under the control of a group of politicians who hold sway over the city.

Through its narrative fragmentation, the novel exposes the hidden malevolence lurking within certain individuals. As Thomas Dukonanak asserts,

“When the market is left to its own devices, it becomes indifferent to everything but material possessions. It disregards people, the principles of brotherhood and righteousness, as well as any consideration for human relationships.”

The law of the market quickly distorts the protagonist's thinking and personality, and it is through this character that we unveil the central setback around which the narrative is constructed.

1.3. Glasses and Dual Thinking Crisis

The narrative imagination in the novel portrays characters who undergo actions and experiences of force and coercion. The protagonist, Rashid, initially exhibits qualities of integrity and steadfastness. However, as the story unfolds, he transforms, leading to a disturbance of his core beliefs, replaced by what appears to be deeply rooted and unwavering satanic beliefs, impervious to any new events or emergencies.

Throughout the novel, Rashid's character evolves significantly, initially being committed to human issues.

“Even though he had dedicated his life to helping people, the world's many changes and the general human consensus to erase the past and its dark memories, coupled with what this meant for the first time in his beliefs—a cosmic revolution—made him persuade himself to find a place for her in this new world. After being guaranteed that he would say

goodbye to his past without experiencing any shame associated with changing his values, the first thing he did ! For help, he asked ! The most powerful person in the nation, she who rules over everything great and small, was the sister of an ambitious officer working in the castle who was torturing and questioning him.” (Nasrallah, 2016 : 20-21)

As a result, the narrator introduces the hero and continues to describe the characters who make unilateral, dictatorial, despotic decisions, particularly the hero and those in charge of the castle, in order to make clear the principles that guide them :

“The nation’s most staunchly fundamentalist iron man is Rashid. Without telling them anything, he went into the castle’s cellars completely naked and emerged much more so. She frequently discusses the composition of men’s bodies in terms of metal. Of course, none of this stopped them from using their precarious position as an excuse to engage in abusive behavior, including interrogation, torture, and whistleblowing.” (Nasrallah, 2016 : 21-22)

If these characteristics are common property among all of them, then other, more subtle characteristics must be unique to the mastermind, who was sometimes the “Big Brother” in George Orwell’s masterpiece “1984,” and the pig “Napoleon” in his second masterpiece “Animal Farm,” or “Little Bros” in the novel “2084 :

“The Tale of the Last Arab” by Wasini Al-Araj, and the list goes on. In this novel, the hero is Rashid. It is his ability to persuade. With him, you cannot help but be convinced of any issue he talks to you about, whether it is peace, war, or a truce, or no war, or no peace, or the necessity of openness to the world, or the necessity of closure ! He can talk at length about the virtues of defeat so that the soul will pardon any victory that it can achieve. He can also talk about victory as the only solution to get out of the current situation as an indispensable measure. Thus, he used to fluctuate between Gandhi and Hitler, so you do not know if he was a reformer or a tamer, an atheist or a monotheist, a thief or an honest person, a leader or a follower.” (Nasrallah, 2016 : 45)

Presumably, it is the “double thinking” that George Orwell alludes to in his book “1984,” where one can believe in one thing and its opposite without

this posing any cognitive or ethical challenges for them under totalitarian dictatorships :

“war is peace, freedom is slavery, and ignorance is strength. The party controls the present because it is the one who created everything and because it owns all the media and information. Additionally, it holds both the past and the future due to its pretending capacity.” (Khairi, 2016)

If the human behavior between the phytosphorus and the absence of conscientious syndrome suggests the greatness and magnitude of the evil that has affected this city at the Kenonic level, the price of identity is wise. So tomorrow's “the city's blackness and visibility.” (Khairi, 2016)

In the contemporary novel, a noteworthy observation is made concerning human behavior, particularly among nationalists. This observation highlights the manifestation of extremism and its paradoxical nature. The nationalists,

“in their fervent commitment to their cause, may veer towards embracing fascistic ideologies. However, those who resist such radicalization unintentionally find themselves contradicting the principles they passionately defend. For instance, staunch advocates of democracy, when excessively defending its ideals, may inadvertently become authoritarian and neglect the essence of democracy. Similarly, those advocating for equality and mercy may, paradoxically, resort to violent means, even sacrificing themselves, to achieve their vision of equality and mercy.” (Nasrallah, 2016 : 24)

As the narrator frequently assumes the role of the reader's interlocutor, he or she makes the following observation :

“This is neither irony nor a joke, nor an attempt to expose that kind of sincere people who are desperate to defend their beliefs as the only salvation for humanity, and many of whom, by chance, can easily turn into thugs or fascists.” (Nasrallah, 2016 : 27)

Thus, as individuals are transformed into glass-like beings, they undergo a gradual erosion of their principles and sense of dignity, resulting in a loss of their humanity. This transformation may lead to the emergence of brutal tendencies, expanding like a malignant disease, or to a decline and fading of their essence, culminating in deplorable servility. Anthropologists, with Robert Edgerton at the forefront, have elucidated this dichotomy of human behavior in various societies, be it in urban settings or among ordinary individuals. On one hand,

“humans demonstrate empathy, kindness, and even love, and are remarkably capable of adapting to the challenges posed by their environments. However, on the other hand, they maintain beliefs, values, and social institutions that can lead to ruthless cruelty, unnecessary suffering, and unwarranted obsessions, both in their relations with themselves and with other societies, as well as their interaction with the natural environment in which they reside.” (Harrison, 2009 : 38).

Regarding the literary devices the author used in his book, in order to give the reader enough time to formulate some reasonable expectations, he would either silence the narrator so that he would serve as the reader’s interlocutor in more than one setting or speak in the narrator’s voice. As “the author commits himself to concluding a contract with the reader about imaginary incidents, asking him to ratify them,” (Eco, 2005, : 152) Umberto Eco put it, the author commits to integrating the narrative in such a way that it becomes meaningful. The author’s commitment to the narrative shows a desire to share the act of appeasement and to announce himself in a non-Sudarian formula, to establish some kind of offshore bed.

1.4 The breakdown of family and social relations

Muhammad Ibrahim Abu Sunna in “Ice Fingers”:

“If they know, my city, (law yaalamun ya madinati)
 The warmth is not buried. (aldif’ lays midfa’atan)
 The warmth isn’t in the lid. (aldif’ lays fi alghita’)
 The warmth of the encounter. (aldif’ fi mawadat alliq’a)
 Warm in our hearts. If she smashes her ice, (aldif’ fi qulubna.
 law hatamat jalidaha)
 If the mute emotions start, (law tabda aleawatif alkharasa’)
 its talk. (hadithuha). (Ghali, 1995 : 21)

In this city, emotions are destined to be forever silenced, as family relationships are marred by betrayal, treachery, deception, and deceit, exemplified by the protagonist, Rashid, and his wife, Salam.

Moreover, in the realm of communication, where the electronic revolution has taken center stage, a new dynamic has emerged between machines and humans. Unfortunately, this has given rise to foolishness and social ignorance, seeping into automated interactions.

“Rashid laments that his young daughter, from her first year, has found entertainment in the walls, leading her to develop a penchant for asking questions, which, while showing curiosity,

has inadvertently led to what can be described as social idiocy, even surpassing her siblings in this regard.” (Nasrallah, 2016 : 84-85).

Regarding social or class disparities and social discrimination, they have stifled all forms of communication, reaching their peak with the eruption of the dilemma of similarity, affecting all societal segments, including the glass creatures. This situation has transformed into a malevolent urge to obliterate anything resembling its likeness, igniting a spark of conflict that escalated from verbal altercations to fatal violence for trivial reasons. As told by the narrator :

“One of the interlocutors in a television program killed the other interlocutor, on live air, due to a difference of opinion, or in short, because he was not a copy of him.. The murderous interlocutor grabbed the head of his colleague, and kept hitting him with the edge of the metal table, until the blood came out of the screen, and stained everything in the house, or so he felt.” (Nasrallah, 2016 : 34)

Also, regarding “a deputy using a tank to bomb the National Assembly while it was in session, after a dispute with a colleague.” (Nasrallah, 2016 : 14)

“The accumulation of scenes of violence in the human mind remains a perplexing phenomenon, leading to the generation of lethal sparks capable of igniting conflicts. Such incidents occur unexpectedly, triggered by seemingly trivial matters, such as disputes over traffic priority, unsatisfactory academic grades, or even romantic entanglements among students. Other scenarios involve quarrels escalating into murders between close friends over mundane matters, like settling a bill after a shared dinner. Additionally, scarcity of resources may drive individuals to commit desperate acts, like attempting to steal water from neighbors’ tanks. Astonishingly, even exchanges of unintentional glances may lead to violent confrontations, as individuals react negatively to perceived slights. These incidents, however minor, may escalate into significant hostilities, with unpredictable outcomes, giving rise to unsettling situations that defy logical explanation.” (Nasrallah, 2016 : 13-14)

Even the relationship with animals has been severely damaged, as the narration shows in one of its chapters the cause of the wealthy and powerful people’s unwillingness to live in extravagant mansions outside of the city, which gives them the appearance of social distinction. He claims :

“But he took refuge in the depths of the city ... for fear of chaos and animals, in particular, the ferocity of dogs, whose intelligence may have realized how terrible human deeds are, so they felt how stupid their ancestors were when they spent their lives loyal to humans.”(Nasrallah, 2016 : 46)

The second dog war was caused by a dog’s disavowal of its owner after he sold it and his attack on him and killed him, and the family of the slain killed the dog’s new owner; then the spread of the phenomenon of taking collective revenge as a result of this incident.

1.5. The Crisis of Cloning and Impersonation

The novelist’s imagination has reached its limit in turning to the idea of cloning and then resemblance, declaring questioning the sanctity of science and reason, after foreseeing a catastrophic war that will eradicate the human race. Although the idea of similarity was palatable before,

“One of them wanted all people to be like him, just like him, or as it was said : like him, they think as he thinks, and do what he does, and now, go ahead and see what is happening, they have become like him, so what did he do, did he embrace them ? No, he killed them”. (Nasrallah, 2016 : 196)

After “nature turned into a giant copying machine” (Nasrallah, 2016 : 209), chaos and disaster followed.

“People were running in all directions, and the voices of children, the elderly, and youth, and even security men were shouting the same cry : A criminal, a criminal, they caught him, with her... And it was only moments until the likenesses began to fly in the courtyards and corridors of the huge building like sparks” (Nasrallah, 2016 : 189).

Moreover, the narrative imaginary on which she rises and expresses the idea of cloning that Rashid made to the secretary to become a picture of the beauty of his wife, Salam—and his desire, starting with obtaining her sister or obtaining dozens of similar ones, because he was obsessed with her beauty—declares the pervasive desires of human possession that always asks, “Is there more ?”

The imaginary creature that comes to mind is reminiscent of the fantasy expressed by the film “The Matrix” ; a forward-looking work whose events take place in the year 2199 AD, and which is based on a kind of science-fiction dystopia fiction and artificial intelligence, which depicts a virtual world made in order to hybridize and subjugate humans through matrices and devices that are implanted in bodies, so that humans live in a virtual reality within the

computer program that controls the whole world, and makes people live in a state of hibernation in the virtual Matrix world created by machines to use humans as a means from which they derive energy. It is a kind of anticipation of a war between machines and humans.

The novel seeks to envision the emergence of utopias on the horizon, influenced by the continuous stream of scientific breakthroughs promising a smart, refined, and virtuous urban landscape. However, alongside these futuristic visions, it also contemplates the potential repercussions arising from an unchecked reliance on these advancing indicators. These potential consequences include looming scientific, industrial, and environmental disasters, the potential rise of authoritarian regimes, and the proliferation of violence and conflicts, ultimately jeopardizing global security, refinement, and aesthetic beauty. As a result, the once promising prospects for an idealized city may wane, leading to a diminishing sense of hope and optimism, and casting a shadow of doubt upon the attainment of this virtuous urban dream.

Instead, it threatens the emergence of a dystopian society, where buildings pulsate with grief, faces, eyes, balconies, and streets as a result of surveillance and suppression of freedoms, control of thoughts, the spread of pessimism and melancholy, and the predominance of despair and nihilism. It is the same society that we find in dystopian literature with the novel "Brave New World" by Aldous Huxley (1932), the novel "Fahrenheit 451" by Ray Bradbury (1953), the novel "The Running Man" by Stephen King (1982), and George Orwell's "1984" (1949).

The latter scenario foresees a world marred by repressive totalitarianism, abject misery, and constant peril. In this dystopian vision, a single omnipotent party exercises unwavering control over all aspects of life, regulating food, drink, labor, thoughts, emotions, reading materials, and even love, with any deviation from the prescribed norms punishable as criminal acts. This genre of literature serves as a prophetic tool, shedding light on the political machinations of totalitarian societies and their insidious methods of domestication. It exposes the subjugation of individuals' bodies, minds, emotions, and aspirations, while also delving into the intricacies of class division, cloning, eugenics, methods of indoctrination, and the manipulation of the masses. The once promising prospects of science and technological advancement turn into a nightmarish dystopia. The writer, when portraying such a world, derives their vision from their own perspective and stands firmly upon the bedrock of their values and beliefs concerning the world and its potential trajectories.

2. Location : Urban Identity

The urban environment holds a significant place within human accomplishments, serving as both a practical necessity and an aesthetic aspiration that embodies the boundaries of human inclinations from a pragmatic perspective. Additionally, it serves as a realm where intellectual prowess is harnessed to create elements of beauty, coherence, and harmony. This urban landscape functions as a reflection of intellectual, psychological, cultural, and civilized intricacies, thus serving as a tangible and perceptible expression of these multifaceted dimensions. The urban identity, in another way, reflects the philosophy of existence and the human being and his vision of the values of beauty. Abdel-Rahman Munif says :

“The place, in many cases, is not only a geographical space, it is also human beings, and human beings at a certain time... The place acquires its features through the human beings who lived in it. And human beings are a summary of the time that was, and in a specific place, and therefore people acquired features and characteristics that they would not have acquired without these conditions. When they acquired these characteristics, they affected space and time, as they were affected by them, which is reflected, in the result, in giving places and times their features.” (Munif, 1994 : 5).

Within the context of the novel, the fault in human existence has had profound ramifications on the urban landscape, resulting in its fragmentation and a plethora of collapses encompassing architectural, urban, and human aspects. Social mobility has given rise to a featureless populace, where masks replace true identities, and individuals exist in a state of gathering rather than forming genuine communities or cohesive groups. The absence of familial or social bonds steeped in warmth has led to an emotional disconnect among individuals, fostering an atmosphere characterized by collision, suspicion, mutual fear, and mistrust. Consequently, the communication field becomes charged, violent, and poised to explode, rendering the ground fertile for conflict and leaving warfare imminent, awaiting only the spark that can swiftly ignite and precipitate disaster.

Economic mobility and excessive urbanization have ushered in a notable acceleration in scientific achievements and advancements in information and communication technology. This has given rise to innovative developments such as

“traffic control devices that hover over cars and communicate with drivers, driverless taxis, and a concerning phenomenon of physical atrophy caused by increased reliance on automated driving systems. Furthermore, individuals, including children, are being implanted with electronic chips linked to public cameras, which are equipped with machine guns capable of precise targeting wherever the camera lenses are directed. These measures, endorsed by the leaders of the castle instead of traditional law enforcement agencies like the gendarmerie, aim to ensure swift decision-making during emergencies, to minimize the potential influence of human emotions on critical judgments.” (Nasrallah, 2016 : 256).

Indeed, scientific advancements have reached a stage where human cloning has become a reality. Concurrently, the industrial system, under the influence of the capitalist machine, has expanded and exerted overwhelming pressure, leading to the marginalization of human presence. Consequently, the essence of human dignity is burdened by the insensitivity of scientific progress and the dominance of those in possession of wealth, projects, and agendas that aim to exploit and suppress individuals, ultimately relegating them to the confines of institutions like “Amal 1” hospital and “Amal 2” prison.

Even the hero “has become aware of all his activities, which reach a high degree of human trafficking” (Nasrallah, 2016, p. 116). “What’s surprising is that monster that we’ve had, and he’s never noticed his presence.” (Nasrallah, 2016 : 295)

It is a city in which nobility was scarce, noble and benevolent emotions were exalted, and it was burdened by the diseases of politics, economics, and investment, so it became empty without an identity, like the cities of salt portrayed by Abdel-Rahman Munif, Elliot’s places in “The Waste Land” and “The Hollow Men,” and the American South portrayed by Toni Morrison in “Beloved” and “Paradise” and Harriet Beecher Stowe in “Uncle Tom’s Cabin.”

Nevertheless, a conspicuous observation within the novel is that it does not meticulously delineate the architectural infrastructure, including buildings, designs, streets, alleys, houses, and urban arrangements. There is a noticeable absence of descriptions that would reveal the distinctive identity of the locale, which should reference its historical context and expansion over time.

And the visual and environmental pollution that got the city due to the disruption of the seasons, and the vengeance of nature protesting against the methods of investing savage capital. This reminds us of the saying of Abd al-Wahhab al-Bayati in the poem “Al-Madina” from the collection of “The Eyes of Dead Dogs” :

“And when the city was exposed (waeindama taearat
almadina)
I could see her sad eyes (ra’ayt fi euyuniha alhazina)
Disgraceful politicians, thieves and pawns (mubadhil alsaasat
wallusus wallbayadiq)
In her eyes I saw the gallows (ra’ayt fi euyuniha almashaniq)
Prisons and crematoriums are erected... I saw blood and
crime” (tanasab walsujun walmahariqu.. ra’ayt aldamm
waljarimata). (Ghali, 1995 : 90)

Regarding the identity, the city suffers from an identity crisis due to the entry of the Western achievement with its paradoxical peculiarities, which made it located outside its original cultural, urban, and civilizational context. Lawrence E. Harrison states that “every culture determines its own goals and morals.” (Harrison, 2009 : 38) To reflect a deterioration in thought, planning, purpose, and morals with a person who does not belong or has a global character. The writer worked on the concept of “architectural metaphor” focused on the collapse of the original Arab architectural scene, as he took from the apparent border a visual interface indicating the inner border, to speak of the scattered communicative relations, and absent feelings, the absence of religious monuments and places of worship that include councils with a spiritual dimension, value evaluation, and social cohesion. It monitors a collapse in the thought of the new human model of the global citizen who “has forgotten where he was born,” as Milan Kundera says. (Kundera, 2013 : 21)

Furthermore, these metaphors are also technically leaning on the Latvian strategy for the name of the city, as well as the names of the characters. Only the names of the hero (Rashid) and his wife (Amal) are present among the names, and the connotations of the two names are not hidden : “righteousness” with the first, which is absent from greed, “peace,” which is sought by many aspects to be reproduced with one hand, while the second hand works to make it disappear by various means. As for the rest of the characters, they are blinded by the ignorance of the names, as they are human furnishings that are repeated in different aspects every now and then. The landmarks

are of an Arab city, but its name or geographical area has been omitted to indicate the withdrawal of this description to all Arab cities that will be lost in the absence of excessive urbanization, the promised utopia of science and technology, and the acquisition of material on people in the absence of institutions that protect values. It is the cities that gradually give up their identity and belonging, and their culture that fragments little by little, and it is no secret that “the fragmentation of culture is the worst fragmentation that can exist, as Eliot declared, it is ‘the most radical fragmentation that a society can complain about ... and the most serious and most difficult to reform’” (Dukonk, 2004 : 51). The castle is its only identification card. “The name of the castle was given by the general public to that mysterious building, so the castle’s officers and employees, old and young, liked the name, so they began to repeat it, and they realized what a terrifying impact the name had on people’s hearts, and as soon as the era of darkness came, the strength and mystery of the name doubled” (Nasrallah, 2016 : 21). And the castle here is “the strongest authority in the country, a country in the third world, above worlds, as well as underneath, in a time when the castle is controlling every big and small world” (Nasrallah, 2016, p. 40). With this comment, the author explains the strategy of the non-nomination or ignorance of the name of the city.

In this manner, the city became fragile, nameless, unidentified, to decide “We live in fragile countries, no matter how hard we try to write on the sky otherwise.” (Nasrallah, 2016 : 93)

The attempt to assess the capacity that the novel can produce in the city’s identity first refers to some sort of new consciousness, or to open the other eye for a more comprehensive vision, as Mukhtar Ali Abu Gali says. (Ghali, 1995 : 67) It is the vision that allowed the writer to question the paradise of the promised science, which foreshadows disasters, and anticipate the civilized disintegration of a corrupt and frightening society, ruled by absolute evil, so I gave up narrating any aesthetic related to the urban visual, audible, tangible, smelly, or tangible, so that photography becomes a dark nightmare that monitors the features of a city that has been distorted and demolished at all levels, and in all fields, to pronounce the ugliness that imagination focuses on describing it as degrees of human indulgence in their desires.

Thus, the features of the city drew similarities between it and the inner life of the characters in its dark side, the programmer, the ruler, the inventor, and the ruler, so it was the harvest and fruits of this side. It is “the tip of the spear of globalization,” the fundamental and decisive phenomenon of

our time. (Dukonk, 2004 : 53) The flag spear's connection Thomas Kwon asked : "Is the science march random ? Or can a man control the science march planning and directing to ensure that science is repaid and properly developed ?" (Kwon, 1992 : 9) He spearheaded dictatorship and human evil.

3. Time Rhythm in the City

The city aligns itself with the dynamic cadence of time, synchronizing with its continuous motion, a tempo characterized by an incessant whirlwind of innovations and calamities. Time seems to accelerate relentlessly, providing little room for reflection or reverie. The day's duration has been drastically reduced to a mere five hours, during which the sun remains hidden from the populace. As a result, the city's colossal screens enchant and provide warmth by displaying the sun's image and presenting colors that nature has forsaken due to its waning innocence and order. The walls, deprived of nature's hues, offer only a single color for wandering eyes to behold :

"Oum Rashid forgot the stench as she contemplated the blue color covering the walls in its various shades, a color that reminded people of the sea and the sky." (Nasserullah, 2016 : 31)

Water sources are scarce, necessitating the invasion of space to import fresh water from Mars and other new, virgin planets. Even animals have undergone strange changes ; they have abandoned their meekness and begun to mimic humans in their selfishness. Time derived its order and signature from the movement of those living within it, appearing as an extension of the darkness that pervades the human soul, extending into an indefinite eternity. (Nasserullah, 2016 : 89)

The price of human sin was paid by every animal :

"Some birds began to adapt to the darkness, adjusting their biological clocks and instincts to set new times for their singing and mating. However, other birds could not adapt, so their singing was heard at all times. This also affected cats, as the entire year became a long February consisting of twelve months, while owls and other creatures with the ability to see became the happiest beings." (Nasserullah, 2016 : 90)

Moreover, birds such as hawks, crows, starlings, larks, blackbirds, and gulls began to die off frequently, their features and colors blending, and what remained was on the way to becoming a single species.

Significant imbalances announced changes in weather conditions, with overlapping seasons that nearly merged into one season in a single day. The food products became as strange as the people, distorting their morals, attitudes, and characters. "You can no longer differentiate between cucumbers and zucchinis, nor between tomatoes and apples, nor between potatoes and guavas." (Nasserullah, 2016 : 167)

Initially, discernment proved elusive, making it difficult to distinguish between the reformer and the tamer, the atheist and the monotheist, the thief and the honest, the leader and the pimp within the protagonist's multifaceted persona.

Conclusion

Hence, the novel anticipates an impending future where the foundational pillars of civilization crumble within the realms of humanity, time, and space. In this vision, human desires have permeated while machines and inventions have taken control in the smart city governed by totalitarian rule. The portrayal underscores the imminent peril threatening civilizational values, succumbing to the dangers of a civilization marked by dictatorial dominance, unregulated industrialization, and uncontrolled digitization, revealing the true face of the double-edged spear of globalization and science, deviating from the path of righteousness.

This dark and foreboding future places the novel firmly within the realm of dystopian literature. Just as the city plays a pivotal role in shaping the narrative, this novel, which addresses its inhabitants – indeed, we address it – strives to reciprocate by safeguarding us and the city from the looming threat of erasure and annihilation.

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Abstract

In contemporary literature, the city transcends its conventional role as merely a geographical space with its architecture, inhabitants, and civilizational aspects, representing a specific time period. Instead, it emerges as a constructive narrative element, shaped by the author's vision as well as the values and behaviors of its inhabitants. In Ibrahim Nasrallah's novel, *The Second War of the Dog*, the city evolves into a parallel narrative, providing new possibilities for exploration and insight. Within its confines, it hosts a range of characters, from devoted mothers to cunning thieves, exemplary leaders to immoral pimps. Our study aims to illuminate the strategies contemporary novels use to deploy the element of place (the city) as a narrative canvas, diverging from traditional literary conventions.

Keywords

Urban discourse, sense of place, dystopia, industrialization and digitization, *The Second War of the Dog*

مستخلص

في الأدب المعاصر، لا تعد المدينة مجرد حيز جغرافي يشمل عمارتها وسكانها وتفاصيل حضارتها، ممثلة فترة زمنية معينة، بل تتحول إلى عنصر سردي بناءً، يكتسب ملامحه من حدود الرؤية التي تشكل العمل، ومن قيم وسلوكيات سكانها. في رواية حرب الكلب الثانية لإبراهيم نصر الله، تصبح المدينة نصاً موازياً، تقدم إمكانات جديدة للاستكشاف والاكتشاف. ضمن حدودها، تستضيف مجموعة من الشخصيات، من الأمهات المخلصات إلى اللصوص الماكربن، ومن القادة المميزين إلى القوادين غير الأخلاقيين. تهدف دراستنا إلى تسليط الضوء على الاستراتيجيات التي تستخدمها الروايات المعاصرة لتوظيف عنصر المكان (المدينة) كلوحة سردية، مبتعدة عن التقاليد الأدبية التقليدية.

Résumé

Dans la littérature contemporaine, la ville dépasse son rôle conventionnel d'espace géographique, avec son architecture, ses habitants et les aspects de civilisation qui lui sont propres, représentant une période spécifique. Elle devient plutôt un élément narratif constructif, façonné par la vision de l'auteur ainsi que par les valeurs et les comportements de ses habitants. Dans le roman *La Seconde Guerre du Chien* d'Ibrahim Nasrallah, la ville se transforme en un texte parallèle, offrant de nouvelles possibilités d'exploration et de découverte. À l'intérieur de ses limites, elle accueille une gamme de personnages, allant des mères dévouées aux voleurs rusés, des leaders exemplaires aux proxénètes immoraux. Notre étude vise à éclairer les stratégies que les romans contemporains utilisent pour déployer l'élément de lieu (la ville) comme une toile narrative, en se détachant des conventions littéraires traditionnelles.

Mots-clés

Discours urbain, personnalité du lieu, dystopie, industrialisation et numérisation, *La Seconde Guerre du Chien*

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