

The Aesthetic Configuration of Foresight in Arab Science-Fiction Literature: A Thematic Reading of Selected Novels

التشكّل الجمالي للاستشراف في أدب الخيال العلمي العربي :
قراءة موضوعاتية في روايات مختارة

La configuration esthétique de l'anticipation dans la littérature arabe
de science-fiction : lecture thématique de romans choisis

SALIMA AIFAOUÏ

Mohamed El Bachir El Ibrahimi University of Bordj Bou Arreridj, Algeria

El Anasser Ex Galbois, Bordj Bou Arreridj 34000, Algérie

salima.aifaoui@univ-bba.dz

<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-3388-3714>

Date de réception	Publication numérique	Archivage ASJP
13/05/2025	25/04/2026	05/05/2026

Référence électronique

Salima Aifaoui, « The Aesthetic Configuration of Foresight in Arab Science-Fiction Literature: A Thematic Reading of Selected Novels », Aleph [En ligne], Vol 13 (2) | 2026, mis en ligne le 20 avril 2026. URL : <https://aleph.edinum.org/17380>

Référence papier (archivage Asjp)

Salima Aifaoui, « The Aesthetic Configuration of Foresight in Arab Science-Fiction Literature: A Thematic Reading of Selected Novels », Aleph, Vol 13 (2) | 2026, 477-496.

© Auteur(s), 2026. Les auteurs conservent leurs droits.

Article diffusé en accès ouvert sous licence Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International
— CC BY 4.0, sauf mention contraire portée sur la page de publication.

Abstract

This article examines the aesthetic configuration of foresight in Arab science fiction literature through a thematic and hermeneutic reading of three narrative works: Mustafa Mahmoud's *Al-Ankabūt (The Spider)*, Taleb Omran's *Al-Azmān al-Muẓlima (The Dark Ages)*, and Habib Mounsi's *Jalālat al-Ab al-Aẓam (His Majesty the Supreme Father)*. It starts from the premise that science fiction is not a decorative display of scientific marvels, but a literary mode through which the possible, the probable, and the ethically risky are made thinkable. By following the recurrence, transformation, and narrative circulation of major themes—biological experimentation, altered temporality, reincarnation, the elixir of life, nightmarish politics, technological dependence, and the extinction of inner human life—the article shows how foresight functions as a dense thematic nucleus. The selected novels do not merely predict future events; they construct imaginative laboratories in which Arab narrative prose interrogates the fate of the human being when science, power, and desire detach themselves from ethical responsibility. The article argues that Arab science fiction, despite its uneven institutional recognition, offers a rigorous literary space for philosophical speculation, cultural criticism, and prospective imagination.

Keywords

Arab science-fiction, foresight, thematic criticism, prospective imagination, dystopia, posthuman anxiety, narrative ethics

الملخص

يروم هذا البحث دراسة التشكل الجمالي لتيمة الاستشراف في أدب الخيال العلمي العربي، من خلال قراءة موضوعاتية وتأويلية لثلاث روايات هي: العنكبوت لمصطفى محمود، والأزمان المظلمة لطالب عمران، وجلالة الأب الأعظم لحبيب مونسي. ينطلق البحث من فرضية مفادها أن الخيال العلمي لا يقتصر على عرض غرائبي للعلم أو على تخييل عوالم افتراضية، بل ينهض بوظيفة معرفية وجمالية تتمثل في مساءلة الممكن والمحتمل والخطر الأخلاقي. ومن خلال تتبع تكرار التيمات وتحولها داخل النسيج السردى، مثل التجريب البيولوجي، واضطراب الزمن، وتناسخ الأرواح، وإكسير الحياة، والكابوس السياسي، وهيمنة الآلة، وتآكل الداخل الإنساني، يبين المقال أن الاستشراف يعمل بوصفه نواة موضوعاتية كبرى تتجمع حولها الصور والدلالات. وتكشف الروايات المدروسة أن الخيال العلمي العربي يملك قدرة معتبرة على تحويل القلق العلمي والسياسي والوجودي إلى بناء سردي وفكري قادر على مساءلة مصير الإنسان في عالم متسارع التحول.

الكلمات المفتاحية

الخيال العلمي العربي، الاستشراف، النقد الموضوعاتي، المتخيل المستقبلي، الديستوبيا، القلق ما بعد الإنساني، أخلاقيات السرد

Résumé

Cette recherche étudie la configuration esthétique de l'anticipation dans la littérature arabe de science-fiction à partir d'une lecture thématique et herméneutique de trois romans: *Al— 'Ankabūt (L'Araignée)* de Mustafa Mahmoud, *Al-Azmān al-Muẓlima (Les Temps obscurs)* de Taleb Omran et *Jalālat al-Ab al-A'ẓam (Sa Majesté le Père suprême)* de Habib Mounsi. L'étude part de l'idée que la science-fiction ne se réduit pas à la mise en scène ornementale des merveilles scientifiques; elle constitue une forme de pensée du possible, du probable et du danger éthique. En suivant la récurrence, la transformation et la circulation narrative de plusieurs thèmes majeurs — expérimentation biologique, temporalité altérée, métempsychose, élixir de vie, cauchemar politique, dépendance technologique, extinction de la vie intérieure —, l'article montre que l'anticipation constitue un noyau thématique dense. Les romans retenus ne prédisent pas seulement des événements à venir; ils élaborent des laboratoires imaginaires à travers lesquels le roman arabe interroge le devenir de l'humain lorsque la science, le pouvoir et le désir se dissocient de la responsabilité éthique.

Mots-clés

science-fiction arabe, anticipation, critique thématique, imagination anticipatrice, dystopie, angoisse posthumaine, éthique narrative

Introduction

Because theme organizes narrative matter and guides interpretation, this study explores the aesthetic configuration of foresight in Arab science fiction literature. It adopts a thematic approach, supported by hermeneutic interpretation, in order to examine both the narrative structure of the selected texts and their symbolic, philosophical, and ideological orientations. Science fiction, in this regard, cannot be reduced to the imaginative representation of hypothetical worlds or to the theatricalization of scientific knowledge. At its most accomplished, it becomes a serious mode of envisioning the future: a literary form rooted in reflection on humanity's fate and the transformations by which the world continually redefines itself.

The epistemological shifts produced by the digital and technological revolutions have made it increasingly necessary to interrogate literature as a medium through which the possible and the probable may be thought. Science fiction has not stood apart from these challenges. On the contrary, it has emerged as one of the most daring literary responses to them, precisely because it translates scientific change into narrative situations, existential dilemmas, and symbolic conflicts. The presence of foresight within this genre is therefore inseparable from contemporary anxieties: the acceleration of scientific discovery, the weakening of inherited certainties, the reconfiguration of the human body, and the emergence of cultural imaginaries in which the future is both desired and feared.

Within this framework, the article's central question may be formulated as follows: through which aesthetic and thematic mechanisms does Arab science fiction transform foresight into a narrative principle rather than a merely predictive motif? The answer requires more than merely identifying futuristic elements. It calls for an examination of the ways in which scientific speculation, temporal experimentation, political critique, metaphysical questioning, and ethical anxiety converge to produce a coherent prospective vision.

The analysis focuses on three Arabic novels: Mustafa Mahmoud's *Al-Ankabūt* (*The Spider*), Taleb Omran's *Al-Azmān al-Muẓlima* (*The Dark Ages*), and Habib Mounsi's *Jalālat al-Ab al-A'zam* (*His Majesty the Supreme Father*). These works are not approached as simple repositories of future-oriented images, but as narrative configurations in which foresight operates as a central thematic axis. It shapes plot development, organizes subordinate motifs, and gives the fictional universe its conceptual coherence. The selected corpus also allows the study to observe several modes of prospective imagination: the biological and metaphysical mode in Mahmoud, the nightmare-political mode in Omran, and the technological and posthuman mode in Mounsi.

Methodologically, the article relies on thematic criticism, understood here not as a simple inventory of recurrent motifs, but as an interpretive procedure that reconstructs the logic by which motifs become meaningful within a text. A theme is treated as a dynamic structure: it is repeated, displaced, intensified, and connected to other textual elements. Foresight is thus read as a dense thematic nucleus around which images, situations, symbolic oppositions, and narrative tensions are organized. Such an approach makes it possible to combine close textual reading with a broader reflection on the philosophical and cultural stakes of Arab science fiction.

1. Foresight: Definition, Scope, and Conceptual Conditions

In its technical sense, foresight consists in considering a phenomenon from a sufficiently elevated and comprehensive perspective to grasp its present logic and possible outcomes. It should not be confused with prediction in the occult sense of the term. As Adwari stresses, foresight “is not a prediction of the unseen, nor is it, as the general public believes, a form of palmistry or tea-leaf reading. Rather, it is a science with its components and foundations” (Adwari, 2018, p. 271). In this sense, foresight is neither divination nor arbitrary imagination; it is a disciplined attempt to construct conditional scenarios from the analysis of observable tendencies.

The example of Ibn Khaldun is frequently invoked in this regard. When he anticipated the decline of Arab rule in Andalusia, he did not act as a fortune-teller. He inferred a possible historical outcome from the deterioration of political cohesion, the weakening of moral bonds, and the appeal to external powers. His famous judgment that “a nation with such traits is destined to vanish” can therefore be understood as a form of historically grounded foresight: the future is not guessed, but deduced from a configuration of causes.

This is why foresight may be defined as an organized intellectual effort aimed at formulating conditional projections concerning a society or a group of societies over a given period. Megahed describes it as a scientific procedure that focuses on variables that can be transformed by decisions or affected by uncertain events (Megahed, 2022, p. 66). Such a definition is particularly important for literary studies because it allows us to distinguish between mere fantasy and genuine prospective imagination. The former multiplies wonders without conceptual discipline; the latter constructs a future that remains narratively free but intellectually motivated.

Foresight, therefore, rests on three fundamental operations. The first is the extrapolation of reality: the writer observes present tensions and pushes them toward their possible consequences. The second is the critical reading of history: the future is not detached from past structures, but emerges from their transformations. The third is the construction of conditional scenarios: the literary

future is never absolute; it unfolds as an “if” that obliges the reader to reflect on the present. In science fiction, these three operations are inseparable from aesthetic construction because the future must be made visible, inhabitable, and narratively compelling.

2. Foresight in Narrative Literature

In narrative literature, foresight denotes a form of thought directed toward eventual outcomes, in which desire, anxiety, and will are confronted with memory. Lalande defines it as a thought directed toward an end, in contrast with recollection (Lalande, 2012, p. 1062). The literary future is consequently never isolated from other temporal dimensions. It must be read through the past that prepares it and the present that makes it plausible. The novel, more than any other genre, can stage this complex temporality because it can articulate memory, expectation, action, and interpretation within a single narrative fabric.

Foresight in the novel carries a bold vision of the future. It expresses intellectual and creative perspectives that leap beyond ordinary expectations. Al-Okaymi describes foresight as “a leap beyond prevailing assumptions, a leap revealed by the writer’s and creator’s vision, which identifies it before it happens” (Al-Okaymi, 2010, p. 17). This formulation is decisive: the writer does not merely imagine what is strange; he or she makes visible what the present conceals. The future becomes a critical mirror in which the contradictions of the present acquire an intensified form.

Kawthar Ayad, drawing on Raymond Aron, recalls that if the present is the product of the past, then the future may be inferred from a rigorous analysis of the present (Ayad, 2013, p. 180). This does not mean that the novel claims certainty. Literary foresight does not assert that its scenarios will necessarily occur. Rather, it constructs plausible configurations that reveal the direction, risk, or latent violence of existing tendencies. The prospective novel thus occupies an intermediary space between prediction and warning, between imagination and diagnosis.

The specific power of narrative foresight lies in its capacity to embody abstract tendencies. A sociologist may describe technological alienation, political domination, or biological manipulation; the novelist, by contrast, can incarnate these processes in characters, bodies, spaces, and events. Foresight becomes an aesthetic experience. The reader not only understands a possible danger; the reader inhabits it, suffers it, and measures its ethical consequences from within the fictional world.

3. Science Fiction Literature: Imagination, Knowledge, and Narrative Speculation

3.1. The Need for Imagination in Both Science and Literature

The need for imagination in literature is not fundamentally different from its necessity in science. Just as mastery of language does not, by itself, make one a writer, strict adherence to methodological rules does not automatically make one a scientist. Fouad Zakaria reminds us that a person may follow the most precise rules of inquiry and yet fail to become a true scientist, because science requires not only learning and intelligence, but also the creative talent that enables one to move beyond established rules when discovery demands it (Zakaria, 1978, p. 29). Imagination is therefore not the enemy of scientific reason; it is one of its conditions.

Both the writer and the scientist rely on imagination as a source of discovery. Taleb Omran's statement is particularly illuminating: "Imagination is the gateway to literary creativity, and scientific imagination is the gateway to scientific innovation. There is no invention, discovery, or scientific breakthrough that was not first imagined" (Omran, 2013, p. 135). Science fiction is born precisely at this point of intersection. It translates scientific imagination into narrative form and literary imagination into conceptual experimentation.

The distinction between scientific and literary imagination remains necessary, however. Scientific imagination ultimately seeks verification, modeling, and empirical utility, whereas literary imagination seeks symbolic density, affective resonance, and aesthetic form. Yet both serve humanity through different means. Science extends human capacities; literature interrogates the meaning of those extensions. Science fiction performs both movements at once: it imagines the extension, and it questions its consequences. This double movement explains why the genre is particularly suited to foresight.

3.2. Defining Science Fiction

Science fiction may be described as a branch of narrative literature that imaginatively explores humanity's response to advances in science and technology, whether in the near or distant future. It also meditates on the possibility of life beyond Earth, on alternative worlds, and on the transformation of the human condition under scientific pressure. The value of science fiction lies not only in its ability to transmit scientific truths but in its capacity to place these truths within stories that reveal their social, ethical, and existential implications.

Samir Dioub defines the science fiction novel as "a narrative discourse grounded in knowledge and built upon imagination, creating a fictional reality that draws some of its elements from lived experience. Yet this discourse is not purely literary—it is scientific in the sense that it engages with a scientific truth,

represented within a fictional framework based on imagination” (Dioub, 2016, p. 58). This definition highlights the hybrid nature of the genre. The science fiction novel is neither a scientific treatise nor pure fantasy; it is a narrative construction in which knowledge and imagination enter into productive tension.

Taleb Omran similarly characterizes science fiction as a form that adopts the broad structure of the novel, with characters and future events framed within a scientific context. It explores the anxieties and anticipations of future worlds, narrating imagined realms shaped by scientific advancement or projected into future times (Ayad, 2013, p. 135). The range of issues addressed by this genre is consequently vast: political domination, social organization, ecological collapse, artificial intelligence, biological experimentation, cosmic travel, and the transformation of the body. What unifies these issues is the speculative question: what will become of humanity if the present continues, deviates, or accelerates?

4. The Formation of Foresight in Arab Science Fiction Novels

4.1. Methodological Introduction to the Corpus

For science fiction to fulfill its prospective function, the writer must possess more than ordinary narrative skill. According to Nihad Sharif, one of the pioneers of Arab science fiction, the genre demands “an additional talent”: an integrative imagination capable of broadening scientific vision in order to interpret future prophecies, accompanied by patience in research, a commitment to reviewing scientific ideas, and consultation with specialists so that the prophecy of imagination may converge with scientific truth in the laboratory of contemplation and vision (Ayad, 2013, p. 81). This statement establishes a demanding poetics of science fiction: invention must remain in dialogue with knowledge.

Mohamed El-Hadi Ayad adds another condition: the future evoked by the text should remain sufficiently close to the present for the narrative to construct a clear prospective vision. The near future makes extrapolation more visible. It allows the writer to transform contemporary realities into plausible future states without losing the link that binds fiction to diagnosis. This does not mean that distant futures are excluded; rather, it indicates that foresight becomes stronger when the reader recognizes the present inside the imagined future.

The three selected novels each stage a particular form of foresight. Mustafa Mahmoud’s *The Spider* dramatizes the biological and metaphysical temptation to overcome death. Taleb Omran’s *The Dark Ages* transforms political and scientific violence into a nightmare of the near future. Habib Mounsi’s *His Majesty the Supreme Father* imagines a world in which technological progress threatens the emotional and literary foundations of human life. In each case, foresight is not a secondary ornament; it is the very logic that organizes the narrative universe.

The thematic reading proposed here proceeds by identifying the central motifs of each novel and by examining how these motifs interact to construct foresight as an overarching theme. The aim is not to summarize plots for their own sake, but to show how each narrative transforms a scientific or social hypothesis into an aesthetic form. The key question, therefore, is how each novel makes the future narratively perceptible and ethically problematic.

4.2. Foresight in Mustafa Mahmoud's *The Spider*

4.2.1. Framing the Text

Published in 1958, Mustafa Mahmoud's *The Spider* revolves around two principal figures: Dr. Dawood, a neurosurgeon, and Ragheb Demian, a scientist whose strange symptoms lead him to consult the doctor. During the medical examination, Demian suffers a bizarre seizure and then disappears. Dr. Dawood subsequently visits his house and discovers the corpse of Demian's fiancée. The investigation deepens when the scientist vanishes without a trace, leaving behind notebooks filled with cryptic formulas.

The plot then moves from medical mystery to scientific horror. Dr. Dawood, driven by curiosity and professional responsibility, discovers that Demian has been conducting experiments on the pineal gland and the brain in an attempt to penetrate the secret of life itself. The laboratory becomes the symbolic center of the novel: it gathers the instruments of modern science, the remains of violated bodies, and the metaphysical dream of immortality. In this sense, *The Spider* is not merely a suspense narrative. It uses the codes of mystery to open a speculative reflection on life, death, memory, and identity.

The final movement of the narrative intensifies this speculative dimension. Dr. Dawood finds the preserved brain of Demian's fiancée and observes Demian injecting himself with a mysterious blue substance. After Demian's collapse and death, Dawood repeats the experiment. He experiences multiple births, deaths, and identities within a radically condensed temporal span. The scientific experiment becomes a metaphysical passage, but also a fatal transgression. The laboratory burns, the formula disappears, and the notes left by Dawood become the only fragile testimony to an impossible experience.

4.2.2. The Biological Revolution

From the beginning, Mahmoud places the reader in direct confrontation with biological experimentation and its ethical implications. The brain becomes the privileged object of inquiry: not merely an organ, but the material threshold between life and consciousness, matter and memory, body and metaphysics. This is why the laboratory is described as a grotesque theater in which life and death intersect. The text evokes technical objects such as the radium bulb, living

brains, and the pineal body in order to create a scientific atmosphere that is both plausible and disturbing.

“At the heart of the device was a radium bulb containing the lost radium needles... It was clear that this man had reached a point where he could convert matter into radiation and use this in his experiments on living brains” (Mahmoud, 1965, p. 52).

Terms such as “radium bulb,” “living brain,” and “pineal body” are not decorative scientific vocabulary. They establish a new epistemic scene in which the body becomes an experimental archive and the brain a gateway to the unknown. Mahmoud’s foresight lies in his imagining of the ethical crisis of biological manipulation before such questions acquired the contemporary visibility associated with neuroscience, cloning, and biotechnology. The novel, therefore, converts the biological revolution into a philosophical problem: what remains of the human being when the living body becomes an object of unlimited experimentation?

The symbolic force of the brain is essential here. It concentrates on the anxiety of modern knowledge. The scientist seeks to understand life by fragmenting, preserving, and manipulating its material basis. Yet the more he approaches the biological substrate of consciousness, the more he threatens the integrity of the human person. Foresight emerges from this paradox: science promises knowledge, but the pursuit of absolute knowledge can produce desecration rather than enlightenment.

4.2.3. Time Travel and Altered Temporality

Mahmoud reimagines the time-travel trope in a striking way. He does not use a machine, as classical science fiction often does, but a mysterious blue elixir that transforms the body’s perception of time and unlocks buried layers of consciousness. Dr. Dawood lives multiple lifetimes in a few minutes, assuming several identities—Isaac, Ibn Khuza’a, a poet, a merchant, a warrior. The self becomes a multilayered temporal space, reshaped by a chemically induced experience.

“Time in that world was not perceived intuitively... it was a real dimension visible to the eye... One man among the endless crowd looked at me, smiled, and called me by my name—Isaac. Yes, my name is Isaac...” (Mahmoud, 1965, p. 85).

Time in the novel is no longer linear. It bends, contracts, and explodes according to new cognitive and ontological laws. Mahmoud’s imaginative achievement lies in transforming time itself into a narrative sign. Time is not merely the setting of events; it becomes the substance of experience. Through this altered temporality, the novel echoes humanity’s ancient longing for immortality while translating it into a modern scientific idiom.

The aesthetic value of this theme results from the simultaneity of wonder and terror. The experience fascinates Dr. Dawood because it offers an impossible

expansion of life. Yet it also destroys the stable identity that makes life meaningful. To live many lives is also to lose the unity of the self. Time travel, therefore, becomes less a technological adventure than an existential ordeal.

4.2.4. Reincarnation and the Dissolution of Identity

The novel also explores one of the most profound metaphysical questions: whether the human being is a unique and singular entity or a link in an infinite chain of lives. Mahmoud fuses spiritual notions, Eastern philosophies, and futuristic science to imagine the soul's passage through countless rebirths. Memory becomes a reservoir of former selves, and the self a mirror of multiple others.

“In this strange world, no one ends. Everyone is reborn and lives again countless times” (Mahmoud, 1965, p. 87).

“Dozens of times, I discovered myself in dozens of places under dozens of names... In each instance, I emerged with a different personality, as if I were an entirely new person” (Mahmoud, 1965, p. 88).

What was traditionally situated within religious or philosophical belief is here re-examined through a scientific and experimental lens. The metaphysical becomes an object of empirical temptation. This displacement is central to the novel's foresight: it anticipates a modern tendency to submit even the most intimate questions—soul, identity, memory, immortality—to the authority of experimental knowledge.

The narrative consequence is a profound destabilization of identity. Dr Dawood becomes more than an individual; he becomes the vessel of a cosmic memory in which histories overlap, and persons circulate. The theme's aesthetic power lies in this dissolution. The character does not simply discover past lives; he discovers that the boundary of the self is porous. Foresight thus takes the form of an ontological warning: the conquest of memory may lead not to self-knowledge, but to the fragmentation of the self.

4.2.5. The Elixir of Life and the Ambivalence of Immortality

The dream of immortality is one of humanity's oldest desires. Mahmoud gives this dream a rich narrative depth through the “magical elixir,” which does not grant physical eternity but allows the subject to witness the hidden pages of existence. The elixir becomes a symbol of every human attempt to overcome death and to break the limit that defines mortal life.

“Don't you want to live a million years? I have an elixir— whoever takes it lives a million years, reliving the past and turning every page of the book of life” (Mahmoud, 1965, p. 89).

The beauty of this construction lies in its paradox. Dr Dawood believes that he is approaching the secret of life, but he ultimately succumbs to death. The elixir, apparently a source of immortality, becomes a curse. In the absence of

ethical restraint, scientific experimentation becomes a stage for self-destruction. The narrative, therefore, warns against the intoxication of limitless knowledge. Science becomes dangerous not because knowledge is evil, but because the desire for absolute mastery can destroy the very human subject that knowledge claims to serve.

In *The Spider*, the theme of foresight is thus realized through a tragic structure. Biological experimentation, time travel, reincarnation, and the elixir of life converge toward a single ethical conclusion: when science seeks to replace wisdom, it risks becoming a metaphysical violence. Mahmoud's novel excels not by answering the question of immortality, but by exposing the cost of desiring it without limits.

4.3. The Aesthetic Formation of Foresight in Taleb Omran's *The Dark Ages*

The reader of *The Dark Ages* quickly perceives the novel as a restless narrative that plants fear and unease in the psyche. Taleb Omran uses dreams and nightmares as privileged media to anticipate both the political and biological present. The protagonist, Hani, suffers a series of nightly visions in which present and future, wakefulness and dream, political critique and biological horror become inseparable. The novel's foresight is not serene or analytical; it is anxious, fragmented, and hallucinatory.

4.3.1. Wakefulness, Dream, and the Near Future

In this novel, foresight rides upon the axis of dream and wakefulness. Omran does not merely use dreams as aesthetic ornaments. He gives them psychological and anticipatory functions. The dream becomes a zone where the collective unconscious expresses anxieties that explicit reality cannot articulate. The near future, meanwhile, allows the writer to project contemporary disorders into a tomorrow that remains disturbingly recognizable.

Through dreams, the self escapes the surveillance of ordinary reason and enters symbolic realms where visions and nightmares overlap. These dreams reveal subconscious fears: the fear of scientific violence, political domination, biological contamination, and the loss of human dignity. The near future adds a second layer: it transforms private anxiety into historical possibility. The novel thus makes foresight emerge not from rational prediction but from the pressure of nightmare.

Omran's narrative technique may be described as a poetics of anxious anticipation. It does not offer a linear future; it generates fragments, shocks, and symbolic condensations. This fragmentation is not a weakness. It corresponds to the disorder of the world represented. The reader receives the future as a series of symptoms, not as a stable map. Foresight becomes diagnostic: the future is the illness of the present made visible.

4.3.2. The Abduction of Humanity: Existential Anxiety, Technology, and Moral Collapse

The anticipatory dimension of this theme is embodied in the author's use of nightmarish prophecy positioned at the threshold of scientific advancement, but without any celebration of technological progress. The narrative derives its tension from moral turmoil: humanity is transformed from an active subject into an object of scientific violation. Images of detention, implantation, cloning, and poisoning construct a shocking tableau in which the human body becomes a battlefield between knowledge, market forces, and political power.

These violent images derive their aesthetic power from their ability to disrupt utopian conceptions of the future. They trigger a fundamental question: who are we when our bodies become test material? The novel unsettles the moral neutrality of science by placing the Arab body at the center of biological desecration. This produces a bitter beauty close to Kafkaesque aesthetics, where reality becomes an absurd laboratory and the individual is stripped of dignity by systems that no longer recognize the human face.

Foresight here does not consist of predicting one specific technological invention. It consists in foreseeing the moral structure that may accompany scientific power when it is joined to domination. Omran's vision is therefore as political as it is scientific. The future is terrifying because power learns to use science as a technology of capture.

4.3.3. The Fragmentation of Real Time

The aesthetics of this theme emerge through a multilayered temporal structure that refuses linear progression. Past, present, dream, wakefulness, future, and anxiety intersect. The dream framework functions both as an escape from reality and as a mechanism that shatters the tyranny of ordinary time. Instead of chronological continuity, the novel offers recurrence, acceleration, interruption, and dissonance.

This fluidity between moment and dream produces unsettling narrative effects. The future appears both unbelievable and undeniable. It is unbelievable because it comes through the form of a nightmare; it is undeniable because the nightmare intensifies tendencies already present in reality. Foresight is born from the shattering of real time in favor of an internal nightmare-time that recurs, duplicates, and presses upon both protagonist and reader.

Such temporal fragmentation is thematically coherent. A world ruled by violence, surveillance, and biological manipulation cannot be narrated through stable time. The form itself must become anxious. Omran's novel thus makes temporality an aesthetic sign of political and existential collapse.

4.3.4. Breaking the Horizon of Political Expectation

The political dimension of foresight appears clearly in Hani's reflections, especially when the novel transforms puppet rulers into grotesque figures. The superpower is represented as planting subordinate rulers – "Rodent 1," "Rodent 2," "Rodent 3" – who multiply and pledge loyalty to the forces that dominate oppressed peoples (Omran, 2003, p. 285). The term "rodent" is not merely a symbol. It is a grotesque metaphor that reduces political authority to a figure of degradation and parasitism.

This theme rests on the aesthetics of symbolic humiliation. Authority is displaced from the sphere of majesty into the realm of the ridiculous. Political meaning collapses; governance becomes a hidden circus operated by global powers. The novel's satire intensifies its foresight because it does not imagine the future as a form of progress. Instead, it imagines the recycling of domination under new masks.

The power of the image lies in its double movement. It ridicules local complicity while exposing global domination. The "rodent" becomes a political sign, a condensed figure of servitude, corruption, and loss of sovereignty. Through this grotesque condensation, Omran's future speaks directly to the present.

4.3.5. Secret Organizations and the Aesthetic of Hidden Power

Another major theme concerns the rise of secret organizations as ghostly forces that seem to control the world from behind visible institutions. References to Freemasonry, laboratories of the devil, and agents are not presented as documentary facts; they function as narrative constructs that produce conspiratorial horror. The aesthetic here depends on the blurring of the real and the imagined. The novel never reveals everything, yet it never remains silent. It whispers to the reader that what is hidden may be more terrifying than what is visible.

"This is a planned criminal affair, led by agents of the Freemasons, whose crimes include poisoning water by introducing bacteria and the eggs of reptiles" (Omran, 2003, p. 285).

This narrative structure resembles a technique of seeing through cracks. The reader is not given a complete explanation, but is invited to foresee, suspect, and complete the scene. In this sense, the novel reaches one of the peaks of its prospective imagination. Foresight is no longer simply a vision of the future; it becomes a mode of reading hidden causality.

Through these themes, foresight in *The Dark Ages* emerges as a complex symbolic prophecy reflecting existential, political, and cosmic anxiety. The novel is written in the language of symbols and nightmares. It foresees not only what may happen, but also how we may feel when it happens. This affective dimension is one of its most important artistic achievements.

4.4. Futurity and Posthuman Anxiety in Habib Mounsi's *His Majesty the Supreme Father*

Published in 2002, *His Majesty the Supreme Father* is framed by a series of letters written from the future between 2018 and 2026. Through these letters, Mounsi imagines a world beyond the immediate present, conveyed by characters marked by scientific and intellectual authority. The theme of futurity appears throughout the novel, not as a neutral projection but as a warning. The novel does not simply propose the future; it dramatizes the possibility that humanity may lose its essence and become a cog within the vast machine of technological rationality.

4.4.1. The Purpose of Human Existence in the Age of the Robot

From the moment the letters from the future are introduced, the text opens a profound interpretive horizon. We are not facing mere technological fantasy, but a philosophical dialogue about the value of human existence in the posthuman era. In her conversation with the robotic servant Olka, Professor Helen expresses a bitterness that resembles mourning for the ruins of meaning:

“I am nothing but a lifeless machine like her, forming links in a long chain that constitutes the dead society I belong to. Where is the family? Where are the emotions? Where are the feelings? ... I know names I memorize but do not understand their meanings, and I find no trace of them in my heart” (Mounsi, 2002, pp. 22–23).

Here, the terms of modernity—artificial intelligence, machines, technology—turn into signs of emptiness. They announce the weakening of the emotional human being, the being who once knew how to love, err, suffer, remember, and desire. The robot is not terrifying because it is monstrous; it is terrifying because it reveals that the human has begun to resemble it. Foresight thus takes the form of an anthropological question: what remains of humanity when efficiency replaces feeling?

4.4.2. The Death of Literature and the Extinction of the Inner Human

If literature is the truest mirror of the human soul, then its decline becomes a sign of the extinction of inner life. Professor Helen laments that literature, once the refuge in which human beings expressed their deepest feelings, has become dominated by repetitive images of sex, alcohol, drugs, and moral degradation (Mounsi, 2002, p. 24). The passage is not merely a conservative complaint about literary taste. It establishes literature as an index of human depth. When literature loses the capacity to explore the soul, the human world loses one of its most important forms of self-recognition.

The aesthetic force of this theme lies in Mounsi's use of a future scenario to judge a present literary and cultural condition. The future reveals the conse-

quences of a degraded symbolic life. When language becomes flat, when art no longer reaches the interior, when creativity dies in tedious simplicity, the machine has already won, even if it has not yet conquered the world. The death of literature thus becomes a subtler and more devastating sign than the domination of robots.

In this respect, the novel establishes literature—not technology—as the measure of human continuity. A society may possess machines, knowledge, and efficiency; yet if it loses the ability to narrate suffering, desire, memory, and ethical conflict, it becomes spiritually empty. Foresight, therefore, becomes cultural criticism. It warns that the future of humanity depends not only on the control of technology, but on the preservation of symbolic depth.

4.4.3. The Authority of the Machine and the Collapse of Values

A central paradox appears in the confrontation between human beings and the machines they have invented. Helen asks Olka what death is, and the robot answers mechanically: “The cessation of life functions.” When asked whether it would feel fear if that happened, Olka replies that humans would repair what is broken because they cannot live without it (Mounsi, 2002, p. 24). The exchange is simple, but devastating. The machine has no fear because it has no inner life, while the human is increasingly dependent on the machine for the most elementary gestures.

“My dependence on it killed my senses, dulled my mind, and made me seek even the simplest things from it. I fail to solve the simplest calculations... This strangeness revealed my ignorance, my lack of knowledge; even the degree I hold is just a meaningless piece of paper, as it has transferred my knowledge to Olka’s mind...” (Mounsi, 2002, p. 24).

The machine’s authority is therefore not only external. It does not merely command the human from outside; it empties human capacities from within. Memory, calculation, attention, knowledge, and even affective orientation are delegated. The human being becomes dependent on the technical object to the point of losing the skills that once constituted autonomy.

The dialogue culminates in Professor Helen’s decision to commit suicide in order to feel that she is different from Olka and to make the robotic servant experience the loneliness that she herself has endured. The scene intensifies the aesthetic of paradox: the human seeks proof of humanity in the very gesture of self-destruction. The future imagined by Mounsi is technologically dazzling on the surface, but destructive at its core. It progresses without humanity, creates without soul, and diagnoses without compassion.

In this sense, the theme of futurity does not present the future as an inevitable truth. It constructs it as a warning, a literary cry addressed to the conscience of

modern humanity: what you create today may devour you tomorrow if creation is separated from ethical vigilance.

5. Comparative Synthesis: Foresight as a Dense Thematic Nucleus

The three novels differ in narrative form, atmosphere, and speculative emphasis, yet they converge around a shared structure: foresight is not external to the narrative; it organizes the narrative from within. In *The Spider*, foresight is biological and metaphysical. It arises from the desire to penetrate the secret of life and from the tragic consequences of experimental hubris. In *The Dark Ages*, foresight is political and nightmarish. It turns domination, scientific violence, and hidden power into a fragmented vision of the near future. In *His Majesty the Supreme Father*, foresight is technological and posthuman. It questions the survival of emotion, literature, and inner life under the machine's authority.

These differences demonstrate that Arab science fiction is not reducible to imitation of Western models. It absorbs global science fiction motifs—laboratories, machines, altered time, future letters, dystopian worlds—but reorganizes them according to Arab cultural anxieties, historical experiences, and ethical concerns. The result is a literature in which science and politics, metaphysics and society, technology and language become inseparable.

The thematic approach proves effective because it reveals how foresight becomes a network rather than a single motif. Around the central nucleus of anticipation gravitate obsessive images: the violated body, the living brain, the laboratory, the distorted ruler, the poisoned water, the robot servant, the dead society, the degraded book, the fragmented self, and the impossible desire for immortality. Each image participates in a broader meditation on the fate of humanity.

It is also important to note that the selected novels do not uncritically celebrate science. They recognize the imaginative power of scientific discovery, but they resist a form of science that objectifies the human being. Likewise, they do not reject imagination; they reject imagination severed from knowledge and responsibility. The most mature science fiction is therefore situated between two dangers: blind technicism and arbitrary fantasy. Its value lies in transforming scientific possibility into ethical reflection.

Conclusion

Through the examples analyzed here, Arab science fiction demonstrates a distinctive ability to interrogate the present, evoke the past, and anticipate possible futures. The genre deserves serious encouragement, both in writing and in reading, because it stimulates imagination, critical thought, and ethical reflection. Educational and cultural policies in the Arab world would benefit from giving

greater attention to science fiction, not as marginal entertainment, but as a form of intellectual training capable of cultivating creativity and prospective thinking.

The analysis has shown that science fiction reconciles science and imagination while also resisting the excesses of each. It opposes a science that objectifies the human being, just as it resists an imagination that lacks scientific grounding or plausible hypotheses. In the novels studied here, humanity risks losing control over what it creates when scientific desire is detached from ethical limits. This is one of the central messages conveyed by the corpus: the greatest danger of uncontrolled science is not merely destruction, but the loss of humanity itself.

Thematic criticism has proven particularly useful for penetrating the textual universe of science fiction. Foresight emerges as a dense thematic nucleus around which a network of obsessive images is organized: the violated body, the dominance of machines, dystopian temporality, the cloned or fragmented individual, the laboratory, the dead society, and the threatened soul. These images function as thematic signs within a unified structure of anticipation. They allow the novels to transform future scenarios into aesthetic and philosophical experiences.

Ultimately, the value of the selected works lies in their capacity to pose questions rather than to deliver definitive answers. What is the limit of scientific curiosity? Can knowledge preserve humanity if it ignores ethics? What remains of the self when memory, time, and identity are experimentally manipulated? What happens to politics when domination becomes biological and hidden? What becomes of literature when machines preserve information but cannot experience meaning? These questions demonstrate that Arab science fiction is not a minor genre. It is a privileged site for thinking about the future of the human being in a world where the future has already begun to press upon the present.

Bibliography

- Adwari, A.-A. (2018). Foresight thought in Arab culture: Between the imperatives of activation and the causes of inhibition. *Al-Tafahom Journal*, 14(52), 271. <https://tafahom.mara.gov.om/storage/al-tafahom/ar/2016/052/pdf/13.pdf>
- Al-Okaymi, A. (2010). *Foresight in the text* (1st ed.). Arab Diffusion Foundation.
- Ayad, K. (2013). Scientific delirium under the weight of nightmares. *Al-Mawqif Al-Adabi Journal*, 502, 180.
- Dioub, S. (2016). *The metaphor of science: Studies in science fiction literature*. Syrian General Book Organization.
- Lalande, A. (2012). *Philosophical encyclopedia*. Aweydat Publications.
- Mahmoud, M. (1965). *Al- 'Ankabūt [The Spider]*. Misr Library/Dar Al-Ma'ārif.
- Megahed, R. A. A. (2022). Foresight of the literature of transformations in Egyptian society: An analytical study of the novel *Butterfly Wings*. *Journal of the Faculty of Arts*, 22, 66.

- Mounsi, H. (2002). *Jalālat al-Ab al-A ‘ẓam* [*His Majesty the Supreme Father*]. Dar Al-Gharib for Publishing and Distribution.
- Omran, T. (2003). *Al-Azmān al-Muẓlima* [*The Dark Ages*]. Dar Al-Fikr.
- Omran, T. (2013). My experience in science fiction and terminology. *Al-Mawqif Al-Adabi Journal*, 502, 135.
- Zakaria, F. (1978). *Scientific thinking*. Dar Al-Maaref.