

NARRATIVE STRUCTURES IN THE NOVEL FRANKENSTEIN IN BAGHDAD

Dr. Hamid Issa Karif

Osol Aldeen University College. Department of Arabic Language -
hamidissa@ouc.edu.iq

Abstract

This study dealt with the narrative structure of the novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad* by the Iraqi storyteller Ahmed Saadawi by examining the narrative structures from which this novel was formed. This study gave an analytical and descriptive approach to its main elements of time and place, and it examined how the two elements were employed in an artistic way as a container for

the course of events. Events deviating from the sequence time Baghdad (spatially) known for its civilizational, cultural, and security representation, was a field of crime obsession and unfamiliar violence, represented by the fragmentation of corpses, the expectation of explosions in any part of it, and the dominance of the permanent and pervasive fear, as if Baghdad had turned into a large minefield governed by the law of the jungle. The narrator did not forget to distinguish the open place (the street) from the closed place (the house). The perspective of the knowledgeable narrator prevailed in the construction of the novel, with the eye of the camera sometimes permeating to convey the scene completely with a portion of fertile imagination of the mythical character, and then the narrator diversified in the narration methods to move away from the monotonous line and thus create an attractive, moving suspense. The writer embodied the characters through the contrasting dialogue that tightens the narrative fabric, so he had the active role in the development of the characters, and then the expression of the events with merit within the framework of the negative personality, as if it refers to a name without a name befitting the description (non-character) (what is his name)

Abstract

This study fixed and organized the narrative structure of the novel "*Frankenstein in Baghdad*" by the Iraqi writer Ahmed Saadawi by examining the narrative structures from which this novel was formed. And this study took the shape of descriptive analysis for its main elements in time and place, and it has examined how to employ the two elements in an artistic way as a vessel for the course of events. Events deviate from the sequence time.

Baghdad (spatially), known for its civilized, cultural and security representation, was a field of crime obsession and unfamiliar violence, represented by the fragmentation of corpses, the expectation of explosions in any part of them, and the predominance of the constant and pervasive fear of fear, as if Baghdad had turned into a large minefield governed by the law of the absence. The narrator did not forget to distinguish the open place (the street) from the closed place (the house).

The perspective of the knowledgeable narrator prevailed in the construction of the novel, with the camera eye sometimes permeating to convey the scene completely, with a portion of the fertile imagination of the legendary character.

The writer embodied the characters by way of intense antagonistic dialogue from the narrative fabric, so he played an active role in the development of the characters, and then expressing the events with merit in a framework of the negative personality, as if it refers to a name without a name that befits the description (no character) (Shasma) .

The Iraqi novel, after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, witnessed clear and exciting transformations, both in its abundant productions and in its themes, of which quite a few tended to portray the bitter Iraqi reality and describe its tragedies of terrorism, bombings and bloody events that almost ravaged Iraqi society in its various aspects

And since literature is a reflection of the reality of life, the world of the Iraqi novel rushed to express that reality through many fictional works that bore titles such as the novel (Baghdad Morgue) by Burhan Shawi, the novel (Copenhagen - Triangle of Death) by Hussein al-Sakaf and the novel (The Americans in My Home). Nizar Abdel Sattar, and the novel (Peels the Size of the Homeland) by Maytham Salman, among others

In the same context, and the womb of that tragedy, we read the novel (Frankenstein in Baghdad), by the Iraqi storyteller Ahmed Saadawi, this novel that won the Arabic Booker Prize in 2014, the Italian Translation Prize in 2016, the French Grand Creative Fiction Prize in 2017, and the Golden Tinicle Prize in 2019, as well as she won third place when she was nominated for the Man Booker International Prize in 2018, and she is the first Iraqi novelist to be nominated for this award

Before going into the details of the narrative structure of this controversial novel, it must be pointed out that this novel identifies with the movie (Frankenstein), which is basically a novel by the English writer (Merry Shelley) under the same title (Frankenstein) as well

However, the Iraqi storyteller Ahmed Saadawi employed the novel, according to his confession from the movie scenes, and changed some of the events, characters, and environment (time and place) according to the bitter Iraqi reality. He also gave the new text a different walk and a new style ⁽¹⁾

Perhaps the character of (Chasma) is considered as Frankenstein's character in the original story or the movie, but Saadawi called it the deformed person formed from the remains of corpses scattered from the explosions in an attempt to encode the name that is established from the remains of human corpses as an indication of the nameless And impersonality, and the confusion that afflicts a person in his definition of something, so he says in the colloquial (Iraqi) dialect the (shasmah), which indicates impersonality, denial, and metamorphosis. In this study, we will ... look at the details of the narrative structure of this novel according to its main elements

First: time

The events of the novel take place in the present time and what Iraq is witnessing in terms of violence and bloody and criminal events that make the novel a scene close to reality - if not realistic - in reality and a witness to the scene of events that the country goes through daily ⁽²⁾

The novel begins in the spring of 2005 and concludes in the winter of 2006 when the security command in Baghdad announces the arrest of the criminal on page (346), which is the page on which the author concludes his novel. However, the first of the temporal paradoxes that the author intentionally puts in our hands is his deduction of the last paper from the novel, page (347) and its proof in the first pages of the novel, which is a symbolic reference to the narrative structure of the novel

As the narrator manipulates the techniques of time, one time he invests (anticipation) in narrating the events of the novel, and another time he benefits from (retrieval) to tell what has gone by, but the time pauses were very few to describe the scenes of the events taking place

.throughout the novel as a whole

The novel is based on one temporal element that almost overshadows the rest of the other temporal mechanisms, which is (retrieval), that is, retrieving (the moment of the explosion) narrated by the protagonist (Hadi Al-Atak), who will become the focus of the development and growth of events

It seems that the logical, linear arrangement is the basis on which the writer built his novel. That is, the adoption of the time of the story in reality, the building of the story or the story within the narrative body to transform the times, that is, the natural time is almost similar to the reality in which the story takes place except for some temporal jumps that occur here and there in the folds of the novel, and we hint at this in the following anticipation

There are those who expected this end a long time ago. Abu Zaydun will not die quietly in his bed. Divine justice refuses that. His children were carrying him while he was sitting on a white plastic chair from the house to the barber shop...Later, the medical report said: The father He died of a heart attack, perhaps the criminal killed a man who was already dead, and the old man will first be convinced of this explanation because they do not have the energy to pursue a revenge" p.: 93

This temporal direction sometimes turns into a formula that dominates the entire events of the novel. Expectation or prediction of the fate of characters or events becomes a clear phenomenon in the novel due to the death of one of them, or the explosion of a car somewhere, or the sound of the explosion of an explosive device, and other such events that the country went through and is going through. now

It can be said that the novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad* is a novel in which the tint of anticipation is very tyrannical, not only on the natural level of the characters, but we find this in the personality of the astrologer who is used by the chief investigator and those responsible for the Follow-up and Investigation Committee, Brigadier General (Sorour), who tried to mobilize all energies in arresting a character Al-Musakh (Al-Shasmah), and among those who sought help was one of the astrologers who read the horoscope and have knowledge of the future and the unknown. The character of the astrologer gave a preemptive impulse and formula to the events of the novel by predicting and knowing the movements of the characters, especially the character (Al-Shasma) in the cities of Baghdad and catching criminals

Anticipation also comes in (Al-Shasma)'s conversation with itself in the form of an internal dialogue or an internal monologue that gives the novel a touch of the stream of consciousness touches that recently prevailed in modern narrative techniques. For example, (Al-Shasma) says Within the next three hours the thumb of my right hand and three fingers of my left hand had fallen off, my nose had melted, and large holes had formed inside my body because of the withering of the flesh. I felt a weakness and a deep desire for sleep. My six assistants were sitting in the hall furnished with furniture taken from the abandoned houses around. They were talking seriously and anxiously, probably discussing my condition

According to the schedule I have, my mission ends tonight. I will arrest the mercenary Azouli officer in a hotel in the Karrada neighborhood..... My mission will end there, I will kill that leader in Al Qaeda, then I will vanish, and I will leave this terrible world of yours" p: 165

Second: the place

Perhaps the place in this novel constitutes a clear axis by knowing the title (Frankenstein in Baghdad), as the main spatial focus in which the events of Saadawi's novel take place is (Baghdad), so what are the dimensions that this place (Baghdad) draws for the other and (the .?(ego

It may come to mind the sociological, cultural and social dimensions that occurred and transformed in the structure of the place after the fall of the regime, and how Baghdad became a haven for terrorism, tension, killing, displacement, and so on. It may also be said that Baghdad has become a hostile and unfriendly place according to these developments, and the name itself (Frankenstein in Baghdad) may increase the hostility of the place, as it is a sentence that doubles .the connotation of terror and death at the same time

,And if we go back to the traditional division of the place into safe, hostile, friendly, non-friendly ,closed and open, realistic and imaginary, then these types of places are present in the novel except that the two types of safe and hostile places are what represent the basic structure in this novel based on the opposition of the safe place and the hostile place (5¹). We are trying to explain .that

The street represents an unsafe place in this novel and even in reality, so whoever wants security should not leave his house. This is the case of the Iraqi reality, and we see this in more than one :place in the novel, for example

The explosion occurred two minutes after leaving the Kia bus in which the old man, Elshua" Umm Daniel, rode. Everyone quickly turned around inside the bus, and watched from behind the crowd, with eyes of terror, the majestic mass of smoke as it rose dark black to the top in the . parking lot near Al-Tayaran Square in central Baghdad." (3)

As the outside place for the character represents an expected and possible danger. The place in which cars drive, which is the street, carries all kinds of danger represented by booby-trapped cars and explosive devices that paralyze the movement of the lane, disrupt work, and terrorize :people. One of the characters says

He sat on the sidewalk for a long time while smoking. They assumed that there was a booby-" trapped device or an explosive device that could explode at any moment and in any place, and . that his chance of death would be greater if he sat on the sidewalk..." (4¹)

This unseen way of living within this spatial system that denotes fear and terror is a spatial paradox in itself. Salvation does not lie in moving away from places of danger, but rather in confronting the danger itself and searching for it in an attempt to get rid of the repeated death of ,fear and terror. Safe places, such as homes and places far from the street and crowded places .may turn into unsafe places in this novel

The suicide bomber was sitting in the white Opel car, and he was trapped inside the alley. This" is what Abu Salim saw from his window on the wooden balcony of his house overlooking the alley. The scary car was completely below his balcony and adjacent to the wall of Um Daniel's . house. It is dangerous to stay here.. (5¹)

The danger of terrorism extends to the corners of rooms and safe houses, which have turned into .a less dangerous spot from the outside due to their closure

Third: perspective

The narrations of the events of the novel are distributed over a group of visions, and the pattern of the all-knowing or omniscient narrator plays a major role in the course of the events of the .novel and the wisdom of the characters in it

Daniel looked at her, and saw her standing in the gap left behind from the collapsed room on)) the second floor, with white hair flies flitting in the air, coming out from under her black headband tied loosely on her tiny head, and she was wrapped in a tight dark-colored woolen jacket with torn scars, and below her the dusty cat plucked Poetry looks at him with widened and ((terrified eyes, meows intermittently with his low and short voices, as if he is talking to himself .⁽⁶⁾

It seems that the narrator presents even the normal ideas of the characters in a traditional pattern in describing the events, that is in the knowledge of the narrator of the thinking of the character :(Nader Shmouni) when he says

Nader Shmouni the deacon reached Umm Daniel's house with difficulty. The Americans had" blocked the road in front of Al-Tayaran Square from the entrance to Al-Saadoun Street.... There was great commotion, and people were running for unknown reasons, perhaps to escape from a possible explosion that no one knows where it will fall, or Curiosity leads them to know what is going on, people who are difficult to control, do not understand clear speech and believe in lies and myths at the same time, this is how Shamsuni was thinking as he saw the entry of the Revolutionary Guard units" (7) as how was it possible for the narrator to enter the mind of the character and read her private thoughts while she was ^{thinking}, This method, which we called based on the propositions of narrative criticism or the concepts of narration science, is called the term . the All-Knowing Narrator" ⁽⁸⁾“

This is repeated in many places, for example in Brigadier General Sorour's interview with :himself

Brigadier General Sorour issued orders immediately to prepare the cars, dressed in haste, and it was not necessary for him to accompany the arrest squad that he had prepared, and he could rely on his pink officers, but he felt the importance of appearing in one image in the media with the dangerous criminal who tired the whole country. All the security services have given up on arresting him." pp. 300-301

The narrator here is not satisfied with reading the thoughts of the character, but rather he knows even her wishes that have not been fulfilled at the present time, but rather what can be achieved .in the near future

There is another type of narrative perspective represented by the (camera) eye that documents :each scene as documented by the camera lens, and this is clear to us in the following passage After half an hour full of fear, Sultan's car passed next to Mahmoud, then stopped at a distance“ of several steps from him, and after When Mahmoud rode next to him, he discovered that Sultan was also drunk, and he felt embarrassed because he called him at that time. He showered him with words of apology and regret and kept babbling without controlling his feelings. It was as if Mahmoud was comfortable in the presence of Sultan, who had frowning features, in a way he had never imagined before. A Hummer passed by. An American woman in the street sounded her strange alarm.Sultan waited for a few moments for her to move away before turning around . in the street and running away ⁽⁹⁾

If we transfer this scene from reality to the text, or from the writer's imagination to the paper as

,a deliberately taken image in order to see through it the narrative scene in all its minute details we imagine the scene in this text as if it was a shot from a movie or a photo from an album. It .draws the attention of the recipient, and he returns to continue reading the novel until the end However, this matter does not last long in this novel with these two styles, that is, the style of the knowing narrator and the eye of the camera. As the narrator finally admits that he does not know the features and speculations of the character he made, and waits for her unknown movement, and we feel this through the following passage: "Even me, with my long involvement with this story, I feel fear. The unknown features of the dangerous criminal, and in search of a .single logical reason that justifies my death at his hands" pp. 335-336

This departure from the line of the single style in the narrative novel throughout the novel suggests strangeness and astonishment, as no one expects to leave this character (Al-Shisma) or predict its actions even from the one who created it from his imagination and creativity, and he is the real narrator or writer of the novel, as it is assumed that "the stylistic multiplicity of the novel requires The stylistics is different from the stylistics of poetry, so the novel's stylistics . should have a different nature that is consistent with the specificity of this literary genre" ⁽¹⁰⁾

Fourth: the characters and their dialogues

There are many and varied characters in the novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, but what we can monitor from the main characters who were the mainstay of the novel and the focus of its events :and dialogues are four names or personalities

- 1- .Hadi Al-Atak
- 2- .Brigadier General Sorour
- 3- .shsma
- 4- .Old astrologer

As we find that these four characters are the ones who controlled the events of the novel and the course of most of its dialogues and movements, as we find that Hadi Al-Atak, who made Al-Shisma, are the basis, and Brigadier General Sorour was the one who was chasing Al-Shisma which Al-Atak made throughout the pages of the novel, which confirms one issue, which is that the movement falls within The characters and how they contributed to making the knot that gave ,the novel an artistic dimension, leading to the work that satisfied everyone who read this novel which employed the dramatic dimension to describe the events through the accelerated .movement of the characters, and the role of the old astrologer was primarily suspenseful

:We read this dialogue between Hadi and Al-Shisma

- .You have to do a press interview in which you state your case"
- Press Meeting? I'm telling you I don't want to draw attention to me and you're telling me .a press interview
- He drew attention and finished. You have to stand up for yourself. So you will gain .friends who will help you in your mission. Now you are everyone's enemy
- With whom did the press interview take place? Do I go to the TV with my feet, for ?example? What is this dirty talk
- .I am conducting the press interview." Pg. 149

This dialogue showed the extent of the complexity of matters that reached with the maturation of events and their arrival to the stage of nodes, as the dialogue here highlighted

the importance of getting out of the impasse in which the two main characters fell into this novel, and thinking about finding a solution to this problem that threatens their fate together. This is because observation and experience, which claim knowledge of science, make people mostly greedy rather than being kind and according to their instinct⁽¹¹⁾

:You can also read this dialogue between Brigadier General Sorour and the old astrologer

- ?What are you doing sir? Do you want to die
- .I must catch this criminal myself
- .You will die, sir.. Please come back.. Come. Let me see in the papers

Brigadier General Sorour returned. And watch the chief astrologer fall to the ground and then sit down. p. 307

This dialogue shows the metaphysical dimension of the idea of the novel, which is based on the Western character of "Al-Shisma", which is made from the limbs of explosive human bodies, and another dimension in pursuing her in a strange way as well, which is the help of an astrologer who monitors her movements and what may happen as a result of this pursuit of future risks that the astrologer sees in his papers. magical

Results

- 1- .The novel portrayed the bitter reality after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003
- 2- ...The novel found a space for itself in the fictional production to reflect the bitter reality with all its negatives
- 3- .The novel surpassed its contemporaries and won many Arab and international awards
- 4- The novel set its focus on Mary Shelley's novel of the same name, but its setting is different. It fits our reality in most of its narrative elements, and the evidence for that is the manipulation of the title theme (Frankenstein in Baghdad)
- 5- From the remains of the corpses, the writer gathered his main character (Shesma) to symbolize the scattering, fragmentation, and suddenness in people's conditions, material and thought
- 6- The narrative structure is disorderly and, in our opinion, more artistic than the narrative sequence
- 7- You are faced with a shocking and perhaps rare paradox, as it makes you dazzled by putting the last page in the foreground, but that does not prevent you from pursuing the details of the novel for its vitality and breaking of expectation
- 8- The novel puts you on constant alert to receive what is happening, and every time there is something new
- 9- The intense, conflicting dialogue contributed to drawing the cautious characters who, in turn, depicted and suited the reality turned on its heels
- 10- The novel can be described as one of the open-ended novels on the one hand, that the mine monitors, but you are the only one who follows the events. With the eye of the conscious of the unknown, not the inattentive

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