

Retelling History and Overcoming Constraints in the Iraqi Novel: An Analytical Study in Anticipating the Future

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Abstract

The present study aims to study retelling history in the Iraqi novel on the one hand. That is due to the capabilities that history itself provides to the novelist in terms of the process of moving from the area of “historical/documentary” description to the area of anticipating future revival in the narrative that is intended to anticipate the future. On the other hand, it aims at overcoming the constraints represented in the practices of subjugation, self or external control, or the practices of liberation, independence, and creativity for utilitarian experimental purposes, looking forward to anticipating the future and exploring its prospects.

Keywords: History, Narration, Overcoming Constraints, Novel, Anticipating the Future.

Introduction

The retelling of history in the Iraqi novel occupied a large area in the present study due to the ability of history itself to move from the area of historical documentary description to the area of narrative forward-looking revival. In the application procedure, it relied on the following novels, *The Pain of That Al-Hussein* by Kamal Al-Sayyid, *Al-Masalak wa Al-Mahalak* by Hameed Al-Mukhtar, and *The King in His Pajamas* by Khudhair Falih Al-Rikabi. On the other hand, overcoming constraints in the Iraqi novel was also not limited to self-control, but it expanded to external control, and various forms of prevention and repression. The present study seeks to discover this aspect in the contents of the textual representation of the following novels, *Tablets* by Shakir Al-Anbari, *Al-Jadeela* and *the River Dance* by Wafaa Abdulrazzaq, and *I Loved a Donkey* by Raghad Al-Suhail.

Perhaps, one of the most important sources benefited from in the present study is *The Narrative that Holds History in Contemporary In The*

History Novel and an Examination of Arab and Foreign Narrative Models
by Prof. Dr. Nadia Hannawi.

History Retelling; Forward-Looking History

The novelist and the novel cannot do without history, either directly or indirectly. History is a rich reference that allows the novelist to choose from it in order to help love the creative artistic narrative And because the significance of invocation is to give the facts a civilized or modern dimension that makes them revived again to pulsate with new energies ().

The critic Linda Hutcheon believes that returning to the past is a way to represent history and turn it into a history that is represented through an imaginary narration that mobilizes the imagination to narratively or anecdotally rebuild history in order to say something ().

Perhaps, this meaning is not far from the term historical imagination proposed by the critic Abdullah Ibrahim, which means the historical material formed by means of narration. It has also been cut off from its documentary and descriptive function. It performs an aesthetic and symbolic function, so the historical imagination does not refer to the facts of the past, nor does it determine them. It does not promote them, but it draws inspiration from it as an explanatory pillar for its events. It is one of the results of the interactive relationship between the narration reinforced by imagination and history supported by facts, but it is a third composition that is different from them (Al-Suhail.2015).

This structure elicited from the imagined narration and the factual history leads to the non-restriction of the re-narration of history to the mere past, but to openness to possible clairvoyant expectations and broad future horizons. Thus, it moves readers from the region of historical documentary description to the region of forward-looking narrative revival.

Hence, the so-called “reconnaissance history” appeared in today’s language, which in turn forces the historian to anticipate the present, look forward to the future, and try to discover its horizons (Al-Sayyid, 2009). Introducing the idea of Gaston Berger, exploring the future in history, the proactive stance towards it, putting forward the idea of returning the past to the future and taking a position on the past that does not deny either the present or the future, which, on the contrary, helps in anticipating it and preparing for it.

That is why Ricoeur believes that the historical intentionality becomes an influence that it practices by integrating the sources of narrative formulation emanating from the narrative form of the imagination in its intended subject. The intentionality of the stories does not produce its effects in investigation, transformative action, and suffering except by adopting the sources of historical formulation that attempts to recreate

the actual past in a symmetrical manner. Thus, the intimate exchanges between giving the historical character to the storytelling, and giving the fictional character to the historical narrative, the so-called the human time, which is nothing but the narrated time is generated.

The Ricorian term is not only limited to historical intentionality and story intentionality, but it also expands to other intentions that are morally related to it, such as imaginative intentionality and memory intentionality. The possible and the utopian, and the other, which is the intentionality of memory, tends towards the previous reality. The precedence constitutes the temporal characteristic of excellence of the remembered thing of the remembering as such (Al-Anbari, 1995).

It is concluded that intentionality is a permanent systematic phenomenon in Ricoeur's narrative vision, especially in the employment of history. It usually remains the closest to the occurrence, or it is the closest possibility and probabilities to what will actually happen in the future as it is based on history and its facts .

The center of this outlook is evident through reading history and understanding its methods. But, the factor of suspicion in it remains hostage to this understanding, and to the ability to synthesize on the part of the novelist, on the grounds that history is a process of understanding and interpretation that does not stop at a final meaning (Abdel-Razzaq2015).

Because history in the end is a form of narration, Hayden White argues that the historical text approaches a lot of literary texts as a mediator through which events are reached and narration in particular, in that all historical writings depend on an order that is undeniable and is the form of the narrative itself, that is, the regularity of events in a narrative plot. Then, the employment of history and harnessing it falls within the artistic reformulation of history, and then exposing the silence. Harnessing falls within the anticipation of the future by reading the past (Al-Mukhtar 2012).

Based on the foregoing, the two researchers named the topic of the present study Retelling History: Forward-looking History, by which they mean the novelist's employment of history and its precursors in narration, for the purpose of anticipating the future. In the perception of the two researchers, this type of narrative writing represents a writing necessity that fits the awareness of contemporary man and stands in the ranks of the era and is in line with its requirements (Al-Rikabi 2018) .

The Iraqi novelist is not far from experimenting with raw historical material, and retelling it with imaginative and conscious intention. Through this, he/she aims to explore the horizon of humanity leaning on its objective past (Saeed 2014). In this direction, the novel "The Pain of That Al-Hussein" dealt with the biography of Imam Al-Hussein (Peace be upon him), and the historicalness of Al-Taf incident in a dramatic and

expressive manner. From that, it evoked the humanization of history and its characterization by using the technique of dialogue between the history, personified on the one hand, and the personality of the historical hero, "Imam Al-Hussein" on the other. Then, the narrator said, "History runs dazzlingly... clinging to the stirrups of Al-Hussein... and Al-Hussein precedes history... it dives into distant worlds... and history keeps turning its palms bewildered in the sand... and Al-Hussein conquers death... destroys the walls of time. It transcends the centuries

The hero, "Hussein," dazzled history with the glory he attained through the gate of death, killing, martyrdom. This is a violation of the usual natural laws. At the same time, it is a creation of the hero's personality. It demonstrates an unparalleled awareness of the ability of human thinking to create a new understanding of the meaning of life, and to generate innovative meanings for the monotony of concepts in human reality. This is what allows us to express breaking the logic of familiarity of the meanings of concepts.

It is not surprising that we discern this content from the dynamic intensity broadcasted by the novelist through the employment of the present tense verbs "run, cling, precede, dive, remain, overturn, conquer, destroy, transcend", which semantically refers to change, renewal and continuing to look forward to a future that transcends Time turns century after century.

Likewise, the novelist employed the eloquence of the mechanical metaphor () in this narrative passage. History keeps turning its hands confused in the middle of the sand. As he likened history to the man in lamentation and yearning for loss and victory from not achieving glory and loftiness. He also proved for the history that is personified in the imperative of confusion turning palms bewildered in the middle of the sand in order to achieve the exaggeration in the analogy. The purpose of this employment may be to add an aesthetic benefit to the text, and to draw the attention of the recipient to the depth of the theme in order to gain insight into its hidden contents.

In the novel *Al-Masalik wa Al-Mahalik*, the inspiration of the historical record and its retelling is evident in light of the theme of the Savior that has an ideological dimension to reveal the forward-looking purposes, and the shyness of utilitarian matters.

The dialogue technique provided the narrative structure between the character of the sheikh, who presented a piece of writing with different contents to the character of Muhammad Al-Dalil, asking him to read it carefully and insightfully because it concerns him, saying; Get ready for the matter. (Bahrawy 2009) will come with his massive army in search for the heirs. Get supplied with food for piety and nourished with sciences as the thirsty one of the righteous servants is fed with fresh water.

From this, it is inferred that the character of Muhammad Al-Dalil is a future imagined figure employed by the novelist in order to be ready to confront the historical real life of Al-Sufyani character, according to the frequency of news evidence. Based on that, it is concluded that the character of Muhammad Al-Dalil is one of the characters that paved the way for the movement of the emergence of the Savior, the expected Imam Mahdi (May Almighty Allah hasten his appearance).

It is worth pointing out that the presence of the word Al-Wakeel at the bottom of the previous written piece, which, of course, lures the recipient into linking to the issue of agency representation in the era of minor disappearance. Perhaps, the novelist intended behind this to link the method of historical documentation with an imagined history in order to increase the credibility of the narration for the reader and the imminent achievement of appearance. Since time is related to the historicity of the conflict within the text in a way that is almost inseparable and cannot be overlooked, because any movement means the existence of time, any time means the existence of history, and any history means the existence of a period of time (Munif 1980). Hence, the novelist presented the plot elaborately, aiming at reaching the dramatic climax by anticipating the collision of the two poles of the future, the character of Al-Sufyani on the one hand, and hinting at the character of the Savior on the other hand, as stated by the novelist; Al-Sufyani will work in killing and plundering, and only one man will stand before him. He will return to his mare () in search of the lost legacy of his grandfather, the first founder of Medina, Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and his household, and he is the last cluster of majesty and sanctity as the last imam in the chain of the twelve imams, of whom the first is Imam Ali bin Abi Talib, peace be upon him. He will be the conqueror of the fortresses of darkness and the closed hearts of people ().

As a continuation of the last scene in this novel, it is evident through the dialogue of the narrator with the character of the journalist Lina Tahan (Shahid 2017)

on the appearance of our master, Al-Masih the Savior at the end of the world, who will hand over his leadership to the master of the world, the expected Imam Mahdi, May Almighty Allah hasten his appearance,

Oh, snake, didn't you revolt a little while ago when I was talking about the master of the world who will appear during this time?

- When this master of the world comes, what will Christ do then?

- Christ will hand over his leadership to this master and will pray behind him, believing in his leadership that will destroy the tyranny of the West and the East ().

The expression Master of the world contains a comprehensive and holistic concept of the “savior” theme in reference for a specific person rather than others. It is also the neutralization of all interrogative interpretations and possibilities. This is a creative exploration proposed by the novelist for ideological and aesthetic purposes together.

As for the novel *The King in His Pajamas*, its narrative path is to adopt the technique of description journalism" of the BBC correspondent in employing the historical moment of the terrifying and cruel scenes of violence that prompted the coup in 1958. The consequence of this great historical event is the change of the regime from monarchy to republican system. The journalist said;

On the first day of changing their regime, Baghdadi people lived in a state of tyrannical collective coma. In cafes, they began to hear anecdotes of scenes of lynching and burning. They danced over pools of blood that were spilled from the bodies of the royal family. In this regard, intellectuals and opinion-makers mention that it is a remarkable day that will be repeated throughout History of the new Iraq ().

The description is divided between optimism for a new system of government that may bring growth, prosperity and stability to people who have suffered from poverty, tribulations, and dangers, and pessimism and frustration by invoking the dramatic scene with its catastrophe in terms of cutting the bodies of the royal family into pieces under the pretext of eliminating a previous regime.

This content made the novelist capture the traumatic event to anticipate a bloody future coming parallel to the contemporary Iraqi political history. This anticipation is based on the data of elite awareness. It is also based on a careful psychological reading of the character of the Iraqi individual.

Overcoming Constraints

The imposition of coercion on man is there since the dawn of history until the present day. This has taken a variety of styles and different means. In this regard, two prominent trends of coercion can be deduced, namely:

First; The Positive Attitude; It is the coercion that a person chooses with complete freedom and conviction, despite the harm and suffering that results from this choice; But the desired material or moral benefit is a sufficient justification for embarking on this direction. Perhaps, among the most important examples of it is the so-called compulsion of belief, especially paganism, compulsion of creativity, compulsion of pregnancy and childbirth, and others.

Second; The Negative Trend; It is the coercion that is imposed on a person by an external will, and by a crude usurpation of his freedom. It is also the absence of conviction, mood, and others.

Going deeper into the history of writing with a little awareness, it is realized that the essence of this history ((is the history of constraints and how to overcome these constraints, which is what makes the oral text different from the manuscript, and the paper differs from the digital text (Ibrahim 2011).

The relationship between the human self and coercion does not deviate from the tyranny of the two previous trends. It is formed either through practices of subjugation, domination, control, and monitoring, or through practices of liberation, independence, and creativity (). Any practices are restrictions and requirements that cast a shadow on the human psyche. However, in order for the story or the novel to advance, the writer must restrict him/herself to constraints that are essential in every work of art (Kazem, 2004). So, the presence of constraints in the novel may be a basic necessity in the mobilization process to produce both the aesthetic and the semantic dimension. The novelist may transcend some forms of compulsions for experiential purposes. In this sense, one of the researchers indicates that the creative writer should write away from the constraints of self-control, which is the product of a system of multiple socio-cultural and political values and norms. It represents the biggest stumbling block to free creativity (). In addition, overcoming constraints may not only be limited to self-control. It may also expand to external control, various forms of prevention, and repression.

Imprisonment is one of the direct and prominent phenomena. It indicates the existence of oppression. It also indicates the imbalance of the relationship between the outside world of freedom and the inside world (). Concerning repression, Michel Foucault defines it as not just prevention, but exclusion, silencing, and execution of what should be repressed as soon as it tries to appear. It works according to a triple mechanism of prohibition, absence, and silence, so that it is against the subject that repression strikes; Nothing can be said, seen, or known. Prison is a world that is different from the world of freedom. It is also a facet of the authoritarian repression practiced by totalitarian and tyrannical regimes on the people, which constituted fertile material for novelists in the analysis and issuance of impressions that benefit in understanding the semantic function that the prison performs as a fictional space for establishing characters (Paul 2006).

Based on overcoming constraints of prison in light of the future vision and the weight of its psychological impact on the humanity of the individual, the novel *The Tablets* represented this theme through the dream technique and with the dialogue between the narrator on the one hand, and the prisoners on the other;

Why are you here? Can I find out the answer?

We don't know either. We woke up one morning and found ourselves behind bars. In the beginning, they told us you will not stay for more than one day, it is a routine matter.

The narrator goes on to narrate by saying;

In the cells, there is nothing left but emptiness, fleas, putrid smells, and what restless fingers left on mortar and steel. The crowd () grew larger as we advanced ahead. Some chanting songs of freedom, some smiled and nodded as if at a funeral, While others suppressed their emotions, walking silently only. They were dragging their steps towards the light, towards a new dawn rising from the east, from behind the horizons and mountains, among the folds of orchards and the edges of rivers (Paul 2014).

From this textual representation, it is concluded that anticipating the future lies in the narrative section; They were dragging their feet towards the light, towards a new dawn rising from the east, from the creation of horizons and mountains... It is an intentional anticipation to overcome the psychological repressions and the human repercussions that he was exposed to. Prisoners are the result of physical repression, cruelty, torture and lack of space, which in itself is one of the limits of oppression and coercion.

What reinforces this traceability is what is suggested by the word dragged, which indicates the severity of the physical impact on the prisoners until it made them unable to practice the normal movement of walking.

In the novel *The Dance of the Braid and the River*, which tells about the invasion of Iraq by ISIS and what it did of violence, rape, displacement, and killing, and a violation of all human taboos in a form of longing for home, the hope of returning to it again, and the paradox of a life of displacement and alienation, the novelist looks forward to overcoming the constraints of forced displacement by spreading hope for the elimination of the ISIS entity, the eradication of its cancerous tumors, and optimism for a better future. This is revealed by the dialogue between the two characters, Samira, who is one of the displaced Christian characters who is drawn to the top of the mountain, and her weeping mother, mourning her luck for what their situation has turned into, so Samira addresses her mother by saying;

Don't cry, mother, I feel that there is hope coming that changes everything, and rearranges it...

Raise your hands high so that they become the song of mountains and foothills... Raise them high so that the mountain can read between the curves of your hands the missing word. We will be all days, day and night...

This is how our new biography will begin, telling what has not been told, and believing what has not been believed.

I don't know where or when, but soon they will write our names on school boards))(Hanawi 2018).

This anticipation has become a tangible reality after the liberation of the land from the clutches of ISIS, and the achievement of decisive victory over it in 2017 with the courageous determination of the men of our heroic armed forces, and with the help of the zealous men of the fatwa of the competent jihad.

In sympathy with the killing of young men in the so-called the crime of the era, Speicher, in another part of the novel, there is a transgression of the constraints of murder, brutality, and darkness through the expectation of a bright tomorrow represented by the renaissance of Iraq again, which will be a fulfillment of the pure blood of the martyrs, a balm for the wounds of the bereaved mothers, and a return to the voice of the absent honor of Yazidi women, which was stated by one of the characters in the novel *Rehana* by saying;

The homeland will march in the direction of the voice of honor, the sky has heralded a miracle, and Iraq will rise from its long sleep.

Speicher and its youth will shed the missing word, which will no longer make eyes captive to tears.

The woman entered through the window of feminist literature in general, and the novelist in particular, violating the masculine book reality that dominated the literary scene over successive eras and successive times. This breach was a role in the centralization of the woman's being with the intent of opposing disability and gender with antagonism to everything that is colonial and virile that transcends her, and denies her role in change (Paul 2009).

It seems that this new creative and transformative reality imposed by feminist writing/fiction did not come out of nowhere, but rather came as a culmination of conscious and long-term feminist activity in resisting the logic of masculinity and liberating from its heavy restrictions. Therefore, the presence of women as a writer, and not just as a narrator or character, was an expression of (Paul 2006) an implicit desire to dominate the text, in exchange for the man's domination of reality. Writing in itself is a liberating act that makes the woman/writer another being on paper other than the one who is in reality.

Hence, some Iraqi women writers worked to undermine the patriarchal authority of men and reduce their virile dominance at the expense of themselves and their femininity. At the same time, she revealed her thoughts about future aspirations that she hopes to achieve for the reality of women. This is done through the employment of intense symbolic images that carry cultural and value meanings (Paul 2014).

The novel *I Loved a Donkey* was a vivid example of the narrative representation of this postmodern experimental line. In showing the narrative frame, the plot made by the narrator in her search for a fictional world is alternative to the world of distorted reality that manifested itself in a symbolic idea represented by the heroine's love for the white donkey, which was lost after its owner, Zaki, the vegetable seller, was killed in one of the terrorist explosions in Baghdad. As a result of this love, the heroine was accused of madness and losing her mind. Therefore, she was referred to the mental illness hospital at Al-Shamaia to ensure the integrity of her mental powers. While she was undergoing these tests and responding to the provocations of the lady frog character, the heroine said;

My donkey has countless benefits. I will turn it into an itinerant school to educate orphans in the streets. As soon as I find it, I will do many real patriotic projects.

The first forward-looking dimension discovered here is a transgression of the constraints of ignorance and loss that permeated a large segment of Iraqi children due to the loss of their parents and the failure of state institutions to protect, care and educate them. As for the second forward-looking dimension, it is an intended condemnation of overcoming the failures of the ruling political system in Iraq after 2003, especially the two cases of lack of credibility in true loyalty to the homeland, and the severe failure to provide the required services to the Iraqi citizen at all levels.

In another place, the novelist employs "a daydream" to reveal the heroine's future aspirations to find her donkey, describing how feelings are exchanged between them, but she fears that women will spoil the emotional relationship between them, once they know the rare advantages of her donkey; but they will submit to my logic, they will say to each other;

She's the right in this love.

Overnight, the women of Iraq will give up the love of men, every sweetheart will give up her lover, and every wife will give up her husband. It will be a general strike for their love, and every woman will search for her own donkey. I will help them in the search process. Stop this madness.

From this preemptive expectation in the narration, it is concluded that it is a transgression of the feminine constraints of the lost woman. It is also an ambition to regain her alienated self after being subjected to various types of violence, marginalization, exclusion, and oppression.

This is supported by what Dr. Amal, the narrator said in addressing men;

O decision makers, if you are asking us to continue to love you and be loyal to you, then you must prolong your ears, we are tired of you, many

years have passed and you did not find a cure for what the ghouls did to your ears... You must adjust all conditions, and you must implement what we want, we The majority, and you the minority, if you do this, perhaps we will return to your love (Hanawi 2018)).

This means that the intellectual image of the man has become personalized by himself, based on the general image of reality. It is a critique of men's thinking, awareness, and culture, especially in issues of listening to women's needs and aspirations to achieve themselves and their freedom. Thus, the novel has expressed the female privacy of the Iraqi woman, and her vision stemming from the reality of pain and suffering (Al-Ayadi, 1994). So, it is another image added to the woman's photo album - like the oppressed, the raped, and others represented by the Iraqi novel in its narrative structure and moral contents.

The Results

1. History is mixed with narration through the regularity of events in forming the narrative plot.
2. The retelling of history in light of looking forward to the future is commensurate with the awareness of the immersed person and aspirations to achieve what is better than present reality.
3. Employing overcoming some forms of constraints in the Iraqi novel, such as oppression, prevention, ignorance, loss, and others, was associated with achieving utilitarian experimental goals.

Conclusions

From the foregoing, it is concluded that history constituted a rich reference that allows the novelist to choose from it what helps him/her in loving the creative artistic narration. The process of retelling history was limited to moving from the area of historical documentary description to the area of narrative prospective revival. The intention of the novelist to employ history and its precursors in the narration for the purpose of anticipating the future is the final outcome of the present study.

Compulsions created a theme with wide implications in the novel. Restrictions and requirements are imposed on the human soul, whether by choice or obligation. Hence, the Iraqi novelist sought to bypass some images of internal and external constraints in light of the future vision for experiential purposes.

The contents of the narration of history were divided into employing the ancient religious history once, and using the dialogue technique in a predominant way, and once again, it explored Iraq's contemporary

political history in particular, through the description technique. In addition to working on the rhetoric of mechanical metaphor as in the novel *The Pain of That Al-Hussein*, With the aim of adding aesthetic benefit to the text, and drawing the recipient's attention to the truth of the theme of the historical religious hero, Imam Al-Hussein, peace be upon him, in person and to explore its hidden potentials.

As for "overcoming constraints", it came through many different themes, including prison as a closed place. Therefore, the novel sought, according to the vision of anticipating the future, to overcome the psychological repressions and the harsh human suffering that prisoners are exposed to. This also includes "displacement and violence", which met in the novel *The Dance of Jadeela and the River*. The novelist emerged from their constraints by spreading hope and optimism for a better future for Iraq and its stability. As for the "femininity of the lost woman," it was distinguished from previous narrative representations with a deep awareness of women's issues and their future aspirations for self-realization and freedom. It is worth noting that the Iraqi novelist has benefited from the dialogue technique in parallel with the character technique.

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