

CONVENTION AND REALITY IN MODERN ARABIC PROSE

Baian Rayhanova

Sofia University

With the coming of the new century and change in millennia, time seems to be moving quickly. There is an increased awareness of the specific and defining features of every period, which, no matter how long or short, differs from all the others by its own historical and cultural profile.

Kilpatrick has noticed: "Even twenty years ago the Arabic Novel was regarded as practically synonymous with the Egyptian novel. Since then the novel has acquired an established place in the literary production of most, if not all, Arab countries" (Kilpatrick 1992:223). In fact, at the present stage, the literary situation is different. The prose genres such as the short story, novella and novel have now appeared and developed in practically all Arabic countries. It is significant that the state of modern Arabic prose literature is characterized not only by its expansion in geographical space but also by the fact that the genre of the novel has now reached its peak, which is the criterion of the maturity of any literary system.

As an effective means for the artistic investigation of the world, the Arabic novel has shown its ability for dynamic development and continual enrichment and renewal, because writers are making the best use of the opportunities which the novel has in its nature.

Among these opportunities are the flexibility and mobility of the novel, about which Bakhtin wrote: "the generic bones of the novel have not hardened yet ... because of its flexibility" (Bakhtin 1975:447-476). He connects this feature of the genre with its orientation towards something that is "incomplete", "open" and "fluctuating", that has not ossified yet. It requires immediate aesthetic and ethical human appraisal, and quite often provokes the utilization of unexpected, even unliterary devices. In this way an artistic gate is opened for the penetration of "non-novel" material into the novel.

As the main signs that "distinguish the novel from the other genres", Bakhtin lists: "1) the stylistic three-dimensionality of the novel that connects to the multilingual consciousness realized in it 2) the fundamental change of the temporal coordinates of the literary image in the novel 3) the new zone of the creation of the literary image in the novel, to be precise, the zone of maximum contact with the present (contemporaneity) in its incompleteness" (Bakhtin 1975:454-455).

In spite of the flexibility and mobility of the novel as a genre, it is important to take into account the dialectic of certain active and stable elements in the novel structure. The permanent generic function of the novel always exists, but it does not

depend on concrete changes in the scope of its contents because "a specificity of the genre", valid in art as a whole, functions in it.

In the modern Arabic novel one may observe a complicated system of concatenations and inner correlations which embody the artistic integrity of the narration. The nature of this "labyrinth of concatenations" (Tolstoy) is determined by the degree of artistic conception. This nature is richer than logic, and becomes manifest as a special integrity that is most open to life itself. At the same time, the novel structure has its semantic dominant: the coupling of the categories, which are both universal and trivial, shared and private. This directs the novel towards a focus on specific problems: a human being and history, a person and time and so on.

Within their exploration of the artistic possibilities capable of expressing this complicated unity and its multitude of inner collisions, Arab writers resort to the devices of literary convention and use them both in novels and short stories. Side by side with the forms representing the dynamic of the life in its external guise, fantastical forms based on the grotesque, on hyperbole and on symbols are used in literary works, as we all know.

The wide use of these devices has extended the figurative resources of Arabic literature and has meant a new approach to the investigation of the most important contemporary problems. Experiments in the genre express the writers' intention to exceed the limits of a naturalistic description of life, that are sometimes understood too narrowly. Using a capacious and concentrated form, they aim at reacting to the cardinal events of the past and present and at displaying the relation between ordinary life and individual destinies not through simply widening the external circle of depicted phenomena but, instead, through its artistic compression.

It is significant that the interest in fantastical devices and the elements of play has appeared simultaneously with an obvious aspiration to present a detailed reflection of reality based on documents, feature stories and memoirs. There is no contradiction in this, because tendencies which at first might seem incompatible have in fact appeared as a unity. These tendencies demonstrate the diversity and differentiation of contemporary literature's ability to satisfy different spiritual claims of a competent readership, and in addition, the common striving for deeper penetration into life and a more intense comprehension of life's regularities.

While remaining faithful to the national model of the psychological novel with its pronounced sociological determinant, Arab writers have responded profoundly to contemporary artistic ideas. New concepts of time and of human psychology have extended the problems of the novel, deepened the psychological analyses, and finally enriched the narration by modern technique.

The use of metaphorical, allegorical and other conventional devices has widened the literary horizon. However, these devices raise the question of how much they benefit authors in the depiction of reality and its complex of causal relationships. It is well known that these technical tricks, organically unconnected with the plot and

not founded upon its inner necessity, may lead to a deliberate complexity which becomes an end in itself.

It is important that in Arabic criticism there should be fruitful and relevant discussions concerning not only the thematic variety of modern prose but also the diversity of the artistic expression, including the conventions. The critics' growing interest in works using these techniques and their desire to deepen their analysis of them need no emphasis.

Among them is an Egyptian critic Ġālī Šukrī, who has often stressed the barrenness of artificial and affected literary constructions. In one of these he has examined the renewal of the novel and the creation of artistic forms reflecting a contemporary world-view as seen in works by ʿAbdalḥakīm Qāsim, Šunʿallāh Ibrāhīm, Ġamāl al-Ġīṭānī, Bahā' Ṭāhir, ʿAlā' ad-Dīb, Ibrāhīm ʿAbdalmaġīd and others (Šukrī 1990: 42-43). In the opinion of the Syrian writer, Nabīl Sulaymān, the achievements of the Arabic novel during the last two decades and its appearance on the scene of world literature can be credited to Rašīd Bū Ġadra, Hānī ar-Rāhib, Ḥaydar Ḥaydar, ʿAbdarrāḥmān Munīf and Šunʿallāh Ibrāhīm (Sulaymān 1988:54). All these writers started their literary activity in different ways and at different times, but most of them represent the generation of the sixties.

The full variety of the artistic arsenal characterizes their works, although the renewal of the Arabic novel does not mean a mere change the forms and the narrative devices. The features of modern artistic experience in the novel are revealed first in its tendency towards a philosophical comprehension of reality, or, in other words, in the process of broadening and deepening the common philosophical layer that always exists in the novel. Its scope usually depends on the writer's own artistic philosophy, which itself is a reflection of shared public consciousness and the philosophical ideas of the concrete historical period in one way or another.

Since the *nabda* announced the concept of the "educated person", Arabic literature as a whole has traced the rupture between the individual and society, between the single person and the world. It has also portrayed the destruction of the usual norms of traditional consciousness and the hallowed system of spiritual values.

The history of the 20th century stirred all humanity, and increased the necessity for its artistic interpretation. The tendency has now become clear, and has taken the form of bringing literature closer to philosophy, and even to set them against each other in the creation of a complete picture of the world and of human life. A new synthetic type of novel has appeared where the two main layers (philosophical and psychological) interlace and determine each other.

The process of deepening the psychological analysis in the Arabic novel is connected not only with the development of new ideas in human psychology but also with the change in the concept of the person. Earlier, a person was a victim of cir-

cumstances, like Taymūr's heroes who were examined in detail by de Moor¹, but in recent decades, by contrast, the literary hero creates these circumstances by himself and does what he chooses. In this connection many questions have arisen. What is the writer/hero's philosophy? What choices does he have and to what principle does he hold in choosing? How does it reflect on his destiny? In other words, the investigation of the complicated spiritual existence of a person and his inner world have now become topical.

Arab writers once thought of an individual and his moral existence only in terms of "dislodged" values. The new philosophical tendency has now penetrated their novels through psychoanalysis, and is also visible in their concern for moral issues. It seems therefore that the philosophical trends of modern literature have come to include both ethical and philosophical tendencies at the same time.

The writers' aspiration to portray the actual spiritual conflicts of our time has caused them to use all kinds of metaphorical, parabolical, grotesque and fantastical elements in the narration. In connection with this, novels written not only by young writers but previous generations should not be overlooked, for example the works of Mīḥā'il Nu'ayma (1889-1988). This "patriarch" of Lebanese literature published many "heavily philosophical tales in both English and Arabic" in the forties. In Allen's opinion, "these works have been characterized as 'really sermons based on the doctrine of metempsychosis and of the ultimate union of the human soul with its divine origin'" (Allen 1992:189).

These complicated problems are merely intensified by Nu'ayma's use of various conventional devices. In his fictional works the artistic conflict is based mainly on friction generated by moral principles and the requirements of the moral ideal.

It is well known that the character and essence of general tendencies in creative works depend on a writer's views and his ideas of the world and of the individual. In Nu'ayma's case, the vitally important factor was his Christian education, acquired in his homeland (in Baskinta and Nazareth) and in Poltava (the Ukraine)².

Many scholars have noticed the influence of Russian classical literature in Nu'ayma's works³. In a letter addressed to the Russian academician and orientalist Krachkovsky, the writer himself mentioned that he was growing up and being "educated by the delicate art of Pushkin, Lermontov and Turgenev, by the 'smiling through tears' of Gogol, by the fascinating realism of Tolstoy, by the literary ideals of Belin-

¹ De Moor's papers analyzing Muḥammad Taymūr's works were presented at the 14th and 17th Congresses of the UEAL.

² Nu'ayma studied in the Orthodox Seminary from 1906 until 1911 in the Ukraine. In 1911 he went to the America and became a member of the "Pen Association" established in 1920 in New York. At the beginning of the thirties the writer returned to the Lebanon.

³ See for example Ostle 1992:98-99.

sky and, at last, by the high humanity of the most powerful, deepest, widest and most heartfelt writer among all Russian writers – Dostoevsky” (Krachkovsky 1956: 224-225).

Nu‘ayma’s broad outlook and familiarity with the concepts of both East and West determined the main trend of his literary life, namely his artistic and philosophical comprehension of human life and the “ideas of time and forms of time”, together with the search for spiritual values. This trend penetrated into all his creative works and became deeper from one work of fiction to another, each based on the above philosophy.

Nu‘ayma’s religiousness becomes apparent in his creative works, though his attitude to religion is complex and multifaceted. He is far from the orthodoxy of the church, and is critical in his judgments of the activities of religious institutions⁴. At the same time, his comprehension of morality is based on Christian ethics and high moral ideals. As he sees it, God is not a transcendent creature but a synonym of morality. Therefore he pays special attention to the themes of “death” and of “belief and unbelief”, and looks deeply into the religious and nihilistic disposition of his contemporaries and their moral principles in the world of “dislodged values”.

Nu‘ayma’s position is close to the familiar theology of hope, according to which it is possible to overcome social and political conflicts, interpersonal and intrapersonal contradictions, and to solve them by reviving universal tolerance.

In many works of Nu‘ayma, the heroes’ spiritual life is in conflict. The loss of the wholeness of the world view, the inner discord and loneliness, and the intensive intellectual life combine to create the special psychological atmosphere of the narration. The essence of the heroes’ inner life represents a constant and painful search for the harmony and purpose of human existence, which is at the same time their only means of self-determination and self-consciousness.

In Nu‘ayma’s poetics, self-consciousness is the structural basis of the image and a method for the most complete portrayal of the person, his character and thinking, the logic of his life and his destiny. The author gives it a philosophical quality and is thereby able to convey his understanding of an individual who cannot exist without a clearly expressed and fixed aim. The process of self-consciousness is therefore depicted by Nu‘ayma as one of searching for “some unified principle” which gives shape to a life, as searching for “a comprehensive idea”. Irrespective of their individual features and the peculiarity of their inner world and frame of mind, all his heroes carry out this search. Their similarity in fact starts from this.

A hero in the novella *Mudakkirāt al-Arqaš* (Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul)⁵ carries out the exploration of this principle. The author is not interested in the dynamic of

⁴ These ideas are evident in his memoirs *Sab‘ūn*, translated into many languages.

⁵ This novella was written in 1917 and published in 1949.

external events or their chronological sequence. At the center of his attention are the hero's pains and the sufferings of self-determination which lead him to search for the meaning of existence, to perceive the world in an intuitive way, through the prism of his own "I".

The course of the narrative is interrupted by fantastical episodes, mysterious situations and enigmatic visions; for example, the dialogue between the hero and death, the sudden appearance of the ghost of the killed girl, and others. The skilful use of conventional artistic devices provides an additional level of reflection, allowing the author to emphasize the moral and philosophical problems. In an interview Nu'ayma observed that he always aimed "at displaying the complexity of the real processes" in the works and "at showing a reader that side of the reality which is unknown to him and that reality which is closed to people because of its manysided essence" (al-Yafī 1982:215).

In 1963 Nu'ayma published the novel *al-Yawm al-ahīr* (The last day), which reminds us of his previous novella, because the intensification of the conflict also unfolds in the framework of an individual consciousness. The form of the novel is therefore allegorical: time and the scene of the action are not denoted clearly, and 24 chapters of the work represent 24 hours of "the last day", which Mūsā al-Askarī spends in remembering all his life. In contrast to young Arqaš, the hero of this novel is 57 years old, a professor of philosophy and an author of an unpublished book on Sufism. Nevertheless, like the former, Mūsā al-Askarī follows the painful path of self-determination and self-consciousness.

The opening lines of the novel: "Get up and say goodbye to the last day", which appear several times subsequently, set the mood of the narrative and define the development of its plot as it develops in the artistic sphere of temporary interchange. In a burst of confession during the first hours of "the last day", the hero begins to understand time as the simultaneous co-existence of past, present and future. He asks himself: "What is an hour, a minute, a second ... It is time, connected with everything that was, is and will be. It is impossible to separate time from something that was before and will be after. It is "I" yesterday, now, tomorrow. I am the time and the time is "I". It will not destroy me and I will not destroy it" (Nu'ayma 1996:25-26).

Personal life and eternity, "the universal formulae of existence" and everyday cares, philosophical polysemy and a portrait of reality are what this novel offers, in a picture created of the inner connectedness of the different chronological layers.

The mode of designing the narration becomes the poetics of the mythology that the author uses in the light of his own artistic conception. As E. Meletinsky has noticed, mythology is "a distinctive phenomenon of literature in the 20th century both as an artistic device and as an attitude behind it" (Meletinsky 1976:295).

In Nu'ayma's work mythology is simultaneously a literary device and an object of parody, because one may interpret this novel as an intellectual parody of certain

values in modern individualistic consciousness. It displays amongst other things a mythology of thinking or, in other words, a mythological manner of interpreting reality.

As an object of specific parody, mythology becomes the characteristic feature of the individualistic consciousness of the hero who regards himself as an intellectual and attempts to grasp the eternal questions of human life. This makes him look like a very complex person, whose mind is turned inwards: "I have no relatives or friends here ... I am a completely closed individual ... I have no desire to share my secret or my money with anybody. I consort with people but I do not mix with them" (Nu'ayma 1996:19-20).

Mūsā al-^ḥAskarī judges himself critically and confesses that "his intellect is considerably higher than average". It helps him to become a professor at a prestigious university in the city. However the profound study of philosophy causes him to lose the wholeness of his worldview and certain stable fundamentals on which "it is possible to build life". His son's illness and complicated relations with a wife who left her family and went with a student of his to Switzerland aggravate his state of mind.

The adverse existential and psychological situation which the hero finds hard and sums up as his "last day" is not a symbol of the outsider but of the search for the criteria of morality and the highest essence of human existence. The author is interested in the type of consciousness above all, so he investigates and evaluates it through the image of his hero, and tries to establish the nature of the causal relationship behind the logic of his hero's circumstances. For that purpose Nu'ayma raises his hero to "the throne" of narrator. The author's position is revealed with the help of the different functions of mythological reminiscence on various levels of the "speech act".

In "direct speech" the professor makes a comparison between himself and extraordinary persons. In Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Ḥaṣāyri's opinion, the choice of the hero and his name is not accidental. He draws a parallel between the hero Mūsā al-^ḥAskarī and the Prophet Mūsā (al-Ḥaṣāyri 1989:88)⁶. In "indirect speech" this image is parodied by putting the hero in an alien context of humble, everyday circumstances. It seems that by doing so the author wishes to use his hero's phraseology as an indirect literary device to convey his own (the author's) judgment, by contrasting discourses in the first and third person: thus the two parallel narratives create their own irony.

Nu'ayma aims to show the other aspect of this artistic device in his representation of the narrator's purely intellectual and secular use of myth. The image of the old man al-Lā Musammā (Nameless) who appears in dreams and in reality to the professor's son Hišām, "becomes surrounded" by his own "mythology". Usually the old man comes suddenly, "dressed in a blue cloak whose colour was like the sky in

⁶ He also notices that the choice of Holy Saturday as the hero's last day is not gratuitous.

the spring, and who had a white long moustache, on his head a turban with the same colour as his cloak. His large eyes radiated serenity and warmth" (Nu'ayma 1996:140-141). Observed only by the Teacher, Hišām passes through all the stages of intuitive cognition. Al-Lā Musammā also helps his father to maintain proper pride, to perceive marvels with the heart, not with the mind, to approach the comprehension of God as the moral absolute and the synonym of conscience. In this way the figure of the Teacher is organically absorbed into the system of mythological images.

Dignity as a complex ethical category signifying a combination of high moral principles becomes significant in the writer's conception. It is "a universal idea" inducing heroes to search and to think. Having dignity, not only knowledge, a person finds "the single principle that gives shape to life" and common sense. This is a most important aspect of the many-sided spiritual life of Nu'ayma's heroes which resolves their self-contradictions and the contradictions of their philosophy of morality.

In Bilik's opinion, Tolstoy's doctrine of morality is the core which unites all Nu'ayma's works. The writer "develops Tolstoy's ideas such as 'the evil inside us' ('The book of Mirdad', 'The last day'), 'the person's victory over his "I"', 'the law of divine love' ('The book of Mirdad'), 'the path of the elimination of all evils' and 'the limitation of a person's needs' ('The book of Mirdad', 'The last day')" (Bilik 1987:21-22).

In this connection it should be noted that Nu'ayma constructively assimilates not only Tolstoy's doctrine. Nu'ayma's concept of the individual is very close to that of Dostoevsky's, whose influence Nu'ayma specifically acknowledged.

About a century lies between Dostoevsky's "A person's double" (1846) and "The gambler" (1866) and Nu'ayma's *Mudakkirāt al-Arqaš* and his novel *al-Yawm al-ahīr*, in which Nu'ayma shows his indebtedness to Dostoevsky, who proclaimed conscience as the most important criterion of morality: "if a person has it he will survive".

It is no accident that the final chapter of Nu'ayma's novel sounds optimistic. The main hero stood the painful test of his conscience during the 24 hours of "the last day", and regenerates completely. He finds himself in a boat with his son and the Teacher who row against the flood of "the great river" to join the current of Eternity.

Nu'ayma is one of the first Lebanese writers who used this convention as an artistic device to investigate the intellectual sphere of human life, and in this way he enriched the national literature both with new themes and modern narrative technique. Many young writers have developed his tradition. Among them there is Ġāda as-Sammān (b. 1942)⁷, the author of a number of collected stories, articles, poems and two novels "Beirut 75" (1975) and *Kawābīs Bayrūt* (The nightmares of Beirut, 1976).

⁷ Some critics regard as-Sammān as a Syrian writer because she was born in Damascus, where she graduated from the Philological Department of the University in 1962.

Like Nu'ayma, Ġāda as-Sammān represents the relative model of reality in her novels. However in comparison with Nu'ayma's works, where the action rises above everyday life and is transformed into the sphere of universal human values and the global existence of the individual, the main temporal frames of as-Sammān's books are limited, and based on concrete facts and situations. She investigates the variety of national life in the period when the social and political crisis in the country was intensifying under the conditions of civil war and the destabilization of the confessional system.

Ġāda as-Sammān aspires to achieve an attractive narrative style and to offer a precise description of the heroes in extreme situations where they are required to solve the question: "to be or not to be". This is not a question of material or commercial happiness but of full spiritual and physical self-realization, which one of the characters in the novel "Beirut 75" sets as his general aim. He asks himself: "Faraḥ or Faust?" and remembers a story about a bargain between a man and a devil which fulfilled a man's wish at the price of his life (as-Sammān 1979:44-45).

The dynamic plot and many-sided structure of the novels allow the writer to put and solve the general problem seriously. For this purpose she saturates the narrative with parable, story, legend, and myth. Sometimes they are mingled with nightmares. In this way the author does not represent the world as largely absurd by nature, but tries to emphasize the concrete historical background of the narrative, to clarify the social and national cause of the conflicts in a country divided into dozens of parties, communities and clans, all with specific laws and principles which their members ideally should strictly observe.

The clan tradition defines Ṭa'ān's destiny in the novel "Beirut 75". On graduating from university, dreaming of opening a pharmacy, the hero returns to his homeland, only to face a cool reception because of a vendetta. His father reminds him of the sheer necessity for the tribe to pursue the vendetta: "The educated killer takes vengeance on his enemy from the other tribe properly" (as-Sammān 1979: 60). However, when in desperation Ṭa'ān does aim a gun at his "enemy", he misses and hits a passer-by instead. Later it emerges that unfortunately it was a foreigner who fell victim to his mistake.

Many characters come to a tragic end in this novel. One of them is Yāsmīna, who leaves Damascus and her job as a teacher at school and goes to her friend living in Beirut. In the heroine's opinion love is not abstract, and the inert pangs of love and its agonizing suspense lead her to feel that she may lose the opportunity for happiness and fulfilment in life. The heroine understands this and hurries to enjoy life to the full and to "seize" her moment even at the price of life, but her ignorant and fanatical brother kills Yāsmīna because his obligation is to defend the family's honor.

Like Yāsmīna's brother, Nimr is a typical representative of his class. His moral principles and selfishness become apparent when he rejects Yāsmīna's love and pre-

fers to marry for money. Nimr chooses the daughter of an influential politician Fāḍil as-Salmūnī. His friend Nīšān is just as pragmatic and, for selfish ends, he uses his young relative Farah. Playing a part of a patron, Nīšān demands implicit obedience from Farah: "You want fame and wealth ... Do you know the price of fame? ... Are you ready to pay it?" (as-Sammān 1979:44). The hero is not able to pay this price, namely to submit himself to a new community and its rules. He finds himself in a madhouse. His insanity is presented as a spiritual protest against cynicism, and against clan laws and social order as a whole.

In "Beirut 75" the different human fates interlace dramatically, the opposite views and interests, the individual inclinations and infatuations clash blindly. The writer usually represents her heroes in their crucial moments or so-called "boundary situations". Through grotesque and satire, she describes some disturbing misgivings of approaching civil war.

Her next work of fiction *Kawābīs Bayrūt* shows how "the nightmares" of these events were deeply felt and keenly perceived by a young journalist. Here she is both the heroine and the narrator who looks at Beirut as "a theatre of the absurd". The war takes many people's lives, destroys destinies and separates families. The heroine's friend passes away, her brother is thrown into prison and the relatives flee from military operations. Like many inhabitants of her district, the heroine finds herself closed in between the four walls of her flat. The situation reminds her of a pet-shop where she likes to spend her spare time.

In this novel there is no gradual development of the plot or any of the usual psychological motivation; only the most significant episodes are recounted. The writer portrays the varied life of the characters and the country where the atmosphere of the chaotic and absurd has been dominant since the war. The narrative twists and turns are inexplicable by ordinary logic and reality is intertwined with fantasy. Here it is not continuity of the action that is felt to be important but mood, intellectual ferment and spiritual impulse. The heroes expose their feelings and attitudes towards the world emotionally and argue amongst themselves and with those around them. Some situations grow into symbols and the frame of concrete time is washed away.

If "Beirut 75" is a traditional narrative where the author's presence is evident and the emotionality of spontaneous analysis is retained, *Kawābīs Bayrūt* by contrast is "a novel-confession", "a novel-reflection". Here the functions of the author and the narrator are closely similar to Nu'ayma's work *al-Yawm al-ahīr*.

The orientation of the narrative towards the characters' self-expression is intended to reinforce the feeling of maximum objectivity, free from the author's "tyranny". In this way the raw material of real life can be arranged with apparent spontaneity. However, the narrator's voice is not equivalent to, nor can it be identical with the organizing authority or influence of the author.

How does this influence become apparent? First it should be emphasized that there is a big difference between the two densely significant terms "the author" and "the narrator". The narrator is simultaneously the *subject* of the narrative and the *object* of the author's creative "will" and "power", and these are far broader than the resulting literary synthesis offered by the author. The author, on the other hand, cannot find an equivalent mouthpiece within a work, and cannot in fact be exhausted in any "domain" of the artistic world, including through the medium of the narrator's activity and objectivity, because it is the author who designs this world by drawing on the multiplicity of standpoints and relationships between the writer and the narrator and characters.

The absence of the obvious signs of the author's "power" does not mean that it is limited in its capacity for organizing the narrative. If the author steps out and explicitly enters the narrative, his function as "a holder of the intensive and active unity" remains. In Bakhtin's opinion, for a concrete definition of the essential difference between the author and the narrator, it is important that "an author knows and sees more than a hero not only in the direction that a hero looks in, but also in the opposite direction which is inaccessible to the hero in principle" (Bakhtin 1979:14,15).

This direction inaccessible to the hero is represented in *Kawābīs Bayrūt*. It betrays the author's presence, although the chosen method does not allow a direct and open revelation. It should be noted that for the realization of her artistic ideas, Ġāda as-Sammān makes expert use of several figurative opportunities of narration and skilfully creates the rhythm of the stream of consciousness corresponding most closely to the narrator's outlook.

The simulation model of reality, the detailed and circumstantial descriptions and accompanying literary devices are not the sole property of the Arabic novel or novela. Similar tendencies are represented in short stories written by authors of the sixties generation, for example. In Hafez's opinion, they "paid great attention to techniques and explored the limits and potential of the genre in an unprecedented manner, so that they could create, through their narrative, a new reality which was neither identical to external reality not completely alien to it" (Hafez 1992:326).

Among them are Muḥammad Ḥāfiẓ Raġab, Ibrāhīm Aṣṣlān, Yaḥyā at-Ṭāhir ʿAbdallāh, Ġamāl al-Ġīṭānī whom Kirpichenko named "the angry young men, who subverted the essential principles of the previous aesthetics". She has analyzed some of their works in the framework of "the new wave" in Egyptian literature (Kirpichenko 1986:131). In addition to these Egyptian writers, others can be mentioned, such as the collected stories of Zakariyyā Tāmir from Syria, Adīb Qāsim from Yemen, Walīd ar-Ruġayb from Kuwait and many others. In their works the search for new aesthetic expression has aimed at the representation of reality not in all its panoramic integrity but through the multiform unity of the philosophical and moral problems which define human life as a whole.

The writers' concern to exploit conventional literary devices reflects the tendency to deviate from primitive empiricism towards a deeper comprehension of the nature of the artistic word and world. It also reveals how different the literary situation can be in every Arab country, and the great variation among creative individuals in manners and styles. Finally, it also brings to light the effectiveness of modern Arabic prose in the artistic investigation and recreation of reality.

REFERENCES

- Allen, Roger. 1992. "The beginnings of the Arabic novel." *Badawi* 1992:193-222.
- Bakhtin, Mikhael. 1975. *Voprosy literatury i estetiki* (Questions of literature and aesthetics). Moscow.
- . 1979. *Estetika slovesnogo tvorcestva* (The aesthetics of the creation of words). Moscow.
- Bilik, Irina. 1987. "K voprosu ob otrajenii kulturnih traditsy v tvorcestve Mikhaila Nuame". *Problemy arabskoy kultury* (Problems of Arabic culture). *Nauka* 1987.20-29. Moscow.
- Badawi, M. M. ed., 1992. *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature. Modern Arabic Literature*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Ġālī, Šukrī. 1990. "Yasāriyyat ar-riwāya al-mišriyya". *an-Nāqid*. 19.42-44. London.
- Hafez, Sabry. 1992. "The modern Arabic short story". *Badawi* 1992:270-328.
- al-Ḥašāyri, Muḥammad Ibrāhīm. 1989. "at-Tağriba al-wuğūdiyya wa-ab'āduhā fi l-yawm al-abīr li-Mihā'il Nu'ayma". *al-Ḥayāt at-taqāfiyya*. 51.83-100. Tunis.
- Kilpatrick, Hilary. 1992. "The Egyptian novel from Zaynab to 1980". *Badawi* 1992:223-269.
- Kirpichenko, Valeria. 1986. *Sovremennaya egipetskaya proza. 60-70-e gody* (Modern Egyptian prose in the 60-70s). Moscow.
- Krachkovsky, Ignaty. 1965. *Izbrannie sochinenia* (Selected works). Vol. 3. Moscow & Leningrad.
- Meletinsky, El. 1976. *Poetika mifa* (The poetics of myth). Moscow.
- Nu'ayma, Mihā'il. 1996. *al-Yawm al-abīr*. Beirut.
- Ostle, R. C. 1992. "The Romantic poets". *Badawi* 1992:82-131.
- as-Sammān, Ġāda. 1979. *Bayrūt 75*. Beirut.
- Sulaymān, Nabil. 1988. "Min 'alāmāt al-ḥitāb ar-riwā'i li-š-širā' al-'arabi - al-isrā'ilī". *al-Ḥurriyya*. 18-24.53-56. Damascus.
- al-Yafī, Na'im. 1982. *at-Tatawwur al-fanni li-šakel al-qisṣa al-qaṣira fi l-adab aš-šāmī al-ḥadīṡ*. Damascus.