

السياق الحدائي في رواية "الأجانب" لكارييل فيليبس و"الحارس" لإيان رانكين

Modernist Setting in Caryl Phillips's *Foreigners* and Ian Rankin's *Watchman*

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the modernist representation of fictional settings in Caryl Phillips's *Foreigners* and Ian Rankin's *Watchman*. The main focus of the study is the literary experimentation with these novels' settings to fictionalize the drastic changes that took place in the world in modernism. These novels depict new social, political, cultural, and economic changes during the initial phases of modernism. The study will accentuate the fictional settings as a medium of expression of these changes used by Phillips and Rankin. Such expression symbolizes modernism and its impact on world nations. They experiment with the settings of their novels as an exemplification of the

complex world relations in modernism, whereby multicultural interactions; whereby multicultural interactions became prominent That is, the world's multi-ethnicities emerged and interacted with each other in modernism, providing global relations. As such, new globalism opened the door for new mutual perspectives among world nations.

Key Words: Dialogism, Experimentation, Otherness, Modernism, Setting

ملخص

تركز هذه المقالة على التمثيل الحداثي لأماكن أدبية، مثل رواية "العار" لسلمان رشدي، ورواية "الأجانب" لكاريل فيليبس، ورواية "الحارس" لإيان رانكين. وينصبّ التركيز الرئيسي للدراسة على التجريب الأدبي في أماكن هذه الروايات لتصوير التغيرات الجذرية التي شهدتها العالم في ظل الحداثة. تصور هذه الروايات تغيرات اجتماعية وسياسية وثقافية واقتصادية جديدة خلال المراحل الأولى للحداثة. وستبرز الدراسة الأماكن الأدبية كوسيلة للتعبير عن هذه التغيرات التي استخدمها رشدي وفيليبس ورانكين. يرمز هذا التعبير إلى الحداثة وتأثيرها على دول العالم. يجربون أماكن رواياتهم كمثال على العلاقات العالمية المعقدة في الحداثة، حيث برزت التفاعلات متعددة الثقافات. أي أن تعدد الأعراق في العالم ظهر وتفاعل مع بعضها البعض في الحداثة؛ وقد وُفّر هذا التفاعل علاقات عالمية غير مسبوقة. وهكذا، فتحت العولمة الجديدة الباب أمام رؤى متبادلة جديدة بين دول العالم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحوارية، التجريب، الآخريّة، الحداثة، الإعداد.

1. Introduction

Literary modernism encompasses diverse thematic attributes ranging from the social peculiarities to the political nuances prevailing the entire text. The study of modernism relies on the way readers could grasp the genuine aspects of the literary texts. Modernism represents the transitional change between pre-modern life and the contemporary state of affairs depicted by the authentic narrative accounts about life and people of the time. Being so, modernism represents the way by which authors perceive reality within the broadest context of fiction as a whole (Kellner, 1989, p. 84)

. In this sense, the thematic features of modernism incarnate the primary concern with perceiving reality as it is in fictional worlds. Modern literature comprises the thematic appropriation of technology and its influence upon fictional writings which deal with the drastic changes which had affected the primary social notions concerning the life of man (Kellner, 1989, p. 84). In this respect, modern literary writings include the integral literary attributes of authorial presence in the fictional texts.

Modern writings represent the core conceptual meaning of presenting reality within the demarcations of literary texts; whereby authors could project their view of life in the narrative fabric. Kellner (1989) tends to describe this view as a “simulacra” which refers to the representation of reality in the fictional work. In this way, modern literature has a profound degree of literary realism conveyed by literary “codes signs and simulacra” (Kellner, 1989, p. 83). Hence, modernism’s perception of reality depends on the experimental faculty of authors that use revolutionary literary novelty, or newness, to give the literary work special innovative writing vigor. As such, Kellner (1989) ascribes literary experimentation to modernism’s employment of experimental themes and techniques because modernism concentrates on creating literary devices to get along with the contemporary socio-cultural changes (Kellner, 1989, p. 5). Consequently, literary modernism is distinguished by its avant-garde writing techniques sustained by distinctive contemporary themes to portray a “relative vision of truth” (Grenz, 1996, p. 5). The employment of spatial setting is an integral part of modernism’s literary experimentation in narrative techniques. Therefore, this study focuses on the modern spatial setting in Caryl Phillips’s *Foreigners* and Ian Rankin’s *Watchman* to express the changes that took place in the world.

2. Analysis and Discussion

Phillips' *Foreigners: Three English Lives* reflects the core notion of literary modernism. In the first place, the novel hinges on modern thematic nuances. This is because modernism presents "a variety of conflicting ideological positions are given a voice and set in play both between and within individual speaking subjects, without being placed and judged by an authoritative authorial voice" (Lodge, 1990, p. 86). Phillips' *Foreigners: Three English Lives* looks into this thematic aspect via the oppressed characters that exemplify the poor condition of contemporary people who are depicted as individuals considered as "others whose opinions" are discrepant regarding different social groups (Lodge, 1990, p. 6). By the use of literary experimentation, authors employ the "most penetrating" narrative devices needed for enhancing the genuine and implied meaning of the literary work (Bal, 1985, p. 116).

Phillips' *Foreigners: Three English Lives* perceives similar thematic insights related to modernism's literary avant-gardism reflected in Francis' personality; he could develop and reinforce his personality "with improved ease" for the sake of elevating "his learning" (Bal, 1985, p. 31). Here, Phillips inserts his view of the theme of oppression in the plot; and he reinforces it with modern spatial attributes because Francis could survive oppression in England and be in good accord with new social changes. As a rule of thumb, the spatial element of modern literary works serves as "influential proxy" employed by authors to comment on the reality of contemporary people or the social state of affairs (Abu Jweid, 2016, p. 531).

with each other through the brothers Jackie and Turpin who move to different and discrepant places as In Phillips' *Foreigners: Three English Lives*, the temporal elements of the novel's spatial setting intersect as they try to "set up training camp" in the regions of "Wales" (Phillips, 2007, p. 70). In this way, the novel focuses on three African persons who come to England at different periods. As such, the novel's

spatial and temporal peculiarities are concomitant and they convey the author's dialogic voice embedded in the course of the novel's narrative structure; or as Michael Holquist (1990) argues, Jackie and Turpin connote that the essence of "the temporal novel is dialogic" (Holquist, 1990, p. 242) .

Rankin's *Watchman* is about a surveillance officer named Miles Flint. He experiences many tragic events when he is sent to Belfast to accomplish military missions. He enjoys working in surveillance, but he finally discovers that his job is at risk. Flint decides to escape when the killings of many people take place. He escapes with an Irishman, Will Collins. Both of them are harmed by a conspiracy which seems to have been plotted by the British Government. This is an intrusive instance of literary modernism and its depiction of "the surrounding society" (Sharma, 2011, p. 190).

In Rankin's *Watchman*, one of the conspicuous cultural aspects of otherness is the "smile" of Arabs who interact with British people who do not have "no time to waste" because of the modern lifestyle portrayed through the act of smiling (Rankin, 2007, p. 17). Smile, here, reflects the Arabs' spontaneous behavior when they meet British people. In addition, the Arabs are benign and good with other people who seem "to sum up the situation" (Rankin, 2007, p. 21). This behavior reflects modernism's fusion of different cultures within one society in new living conditions. In this sense, the novel is dialogic because the novel involves the existence of the author's narrative voice "in the plot" (Abu Jweid, 2023, p. 21).

The Arabs' smile embodies Rankin's ideological knowledge of the Arabs as a different nation. In the dialogic novel, the issue of otherness might be aroused.

Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) discusses the authorial ideology in his conceptualization of the dialogic novel. Bakhtin's theoretical works are considered representatives in discourse theory. He wrote many critical books; among them are: *Problems of Dostoyevskv's Poetics*, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, and *Rabelais and His World*. *The Dialogic Imagination* consists of an explanation of the concept of "polyphony" which is originally proffered in *Problems of Dostoyevskv's Poetics*. Essentially, these books represent the ultimate theoretical outline regarding Bakhtin's theory of dialogic discourse.

Although *Rabelais and His World* does not indicate any acknowledgement of the dialogic concepts coined by Bakhtin, it includes a number of critical insights about polyphony (dialogism) and the theory of fictional discourse. In these books, Bakhtin claims that the text represents the author's ideology; Bakhtin (1984) argues that "the consciousness" of the reader could be appropriated in the literary text (Bakhtin, 1984, pp. 106-7).

In *Watchman*, Rankin projects his ideology in the text. The Arabs' smile is, for example, an indication of the cultural encounter between the British and Arabs "by smiles and bows" as well as "handshakes" creating a cultural equilibrium between them (Rankin, 2007, p. 22). Furthermore, there is contact between the British and the Arabs as being modern nations within one society sustained by "cultured thoughts" (Rankin, 2007, p. 22). Here, cultured thoughts are exemplifications of an unprecedented social custom brought to Britain through the cultural and social encounters between the Arabs and their British counterparts. They also indicate the social traditions representing "the opportunity of pleasuring" both ethnic entities within the British spatial demarcations (Rankin, 2007, p. 22). Being so, the novel approaches realistic events occurring in "the surrounding environmental milieus" (Sasa, 2022, p. 326).

In line with this, Bakhtin (1984) claims that the concept of dialogism incarnates the authorial perspective upon contemporary issues. These issues are generally employed to exemplify the “several complications” occurring “in everyday life” (Sasa, 2022, p. 953). Similarly, dialogism is evident in *Watchman*. It is incarnated in the meetings of Miles and Will who are “assigned to surveillance” for many social factors (Rankin, 2007, p. 29). It is the ideology of the British which is influenced by the Arabs, and Rankin exposes this notion in the novel. This is another indication of otherness created by the continual cultural interlocations between Miles and Will on the grounds of modern lifestyle because “the allegorical” allusions made by literary authors pertain to the core essence of modernism literary setting (Kaur, 2018, p. 7).

In the same way, Lodge (1990) contends that the dialogic peculiarities of the selected novel refer to the “speaking subjects” holding the author’s indirect voice in the literary text (Lodge, 1990, p. 86). As such, the dialogic novel conveys the author’s implicit voice; and Bakhtin (1981) maintains that this voice is a kind of “single consciousness” representing the author’s attitudes concerning life and people (Bakhtin M. M., 1981, p. 18).

The intersection of the author (Rankin) and the fictional characters is merely dialogic. It is the Arabs’ characterization which affected the British people’s traditions; whereby the social “edges were fading away” to unite different social groups within one spatial place (Rankin, 2007, p. 34). Moreover, the Arabs brought new cultural behaviors, such as smiles that are taken by the British that interact with the Arabs “on a coded series” of mutual existence via the act of smiling (Rankin, 2007, p. 34). In essence, this smile represents the Arabs’ cultural welcoming of others as well as their cordial perception of other cultures in the same spatial background.

Similarly, Bakhtin (1993) suggests a decisive parallelism between a “polyphonic” fiction “through and through” (Lodge, 1990, p. 40). Rankin’s *Watchman*

incarnates Bakhtin's (1993) dialogic insights. Miles's new behavior with the animals is an indication of his changing personality as a social "camouflage" (Bakhtin M. M., 1993, p. 37). The Arabic culture plays a crucial role in such ideology. This is because it is the "otherness" culture that could unite many ethnicities (Bakhtin M. M., 1993, p. 37). Miles, for example, is influenced by this "new" culture; and he does not have any previous idea about it (Bakhtin M. M., 1993, p. 37). Thus, the interaction between two cultures or more is an indication of a modern spatial setting created by the authorial narrative dexterity.

Rankin represents the Arabs as being influential upon the British culture. They contribute a great deal to British social life. This influence is exemplified in the behaviors of Collins who wants to know everything regarding people and life in London (Rankin, 2007, p. 184). For example, the Arabic character is prevalent. This is because they are the new comers to Britain where they could easily find intimate social interactions with their foreign culture (Rankin, 2007, p. 17). The Arabs also represent the new "otherness" culture dissolving in the wide British society. In this sense, the Arabs are the dialogic subject of the implicit dialogic meaning intended by Rankin. They are the subject of Rankin's portrayal of the modern literary setting which exemplifies many changes in the contemporary world.

Furthermore, the French, in Rankin's *Watchman*, represent the political dimension of otherness. They compromise new relations with the British during war times: "So Harry Sizewell was born French and educated outside Windsor, and though he had never, so to speak, had a French thought in his life, it was hard—devilish hard—to throw off the tag" (Rankin, 2007, p. 49). They are also components of British society since they live with them based of cultural symbiosis. Moreover, they participate in shaping the ideological conceptualization of otherness and they exemplify the "splendor" of social and cultural distinctiveness of modernism (Rankin,

2007, p. 241). They could perfectly cope with the overwhelming cultural diversity occurring in the world, especially in Britain. Hence, the selected works depict some regions as the true spatial places of modern life through the selected works' literary settings.

3. Conclusion

This study discussed the modernist spatial setting depicted in Phillips's *Foreigners* and Rankin's *Watchman*. The fictional setting plays a vital role in discovering the temporal and spatial setting of the literary works. In modernism, the significance of the setting lies in its viability to represent reality as it is. Furthermore, it could lead to the accurate changes which happened at the time. In modernism, there had been drastic changes in the world. The majority of these changes were political since they witnessed the outbreak of the second Great War.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to concentrate on the setting prevalent in Phillips's *Foreigners* and Rankin's *Watchman*. These novels have temporal and spatial settings. The temporal setting has been discussed concerning periods and changes which happened during modernism. In this regard, the novels' temporal setting is examined through the periods depicted in the novel.

The purpose of this temporality is to critique the contemporary political changes in the world. The spatial setting is discussed in Phillips's *Foreigners* in the light of different characters who go to England. In this sense, England is the spatial setting preferred by the characters to spend their lives. In Rankin's *Watchman*, the spatial setting is analyzed in terms of British society. The British society has many people from different parts of the world. They come and interact in the British society. Thus, the British society is the spatial setting including the social changes in England.

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