

## Intensification of Dramatic Tension in Naguib Mahfouz's Novel: The Thief and the Dogs

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### Abstract

This paper discusses a profound analysis of the levels of dramatic tension intensification in the novel *The Thief and the Dogs*, which envelops the narrative from beginning to end, making it a distinguished work. The author benefitted from modern literary techniques such as stream of consciousness and interior monologue, as well as related devices like flashbacks, foreshadowing, and cinematic montage. He also drew from the expressionist and symbolist schools in his handling of space and time; in addition, existential philosophy which highlights the individual's suffering in society and the crises surrounding him. The author chose these tools to express the protagonist's crisis in facing betrayal and the desire for revenge.

*The Thief and the Dogs* is the first of Naguib Mahfouz's six novels which adopted the expressionist style of writing. This novel holds a special place, having been published in 1961 when the shortcomings of the 1952 revolution became apparent due to the leaders choosing dictatorship over socialism, which had been the aspiration of many people, including the writer. The novel portrays a thief who believes in socialism but is betrayed by everyone around him, leading him to think of nothing but revenge in every word, sentence, and line of the story. Through this, the novel exposes society and its structure from top to bottom.

What makes the study challenging is the vast amount of analyses and interpretations found in articles, books, and theses focusing on the work and its objectives. Accordingly, we began with a social analysis as a

starting point before addressing the philosophical or symbolic dimensions of the novel. In addition, the novel's brevity required the author to concentrate and intensify every aspect of its construction, where every word and action carried meaning or impact. We relied on the analytical method in our research to achieve the desired results.

This paper will explore levels of conflict that contribute to tension, whether with space, time, or characters, as humans are products of their environment. Spatial and temporal environments play a crucial role in shaping dramatic characters, just like other dimensions. However, the author's depiction of them was not traditional, as in realism. Instead, these elements became characters that challenge and conflict with the protagonist. Symbolism served as a tool for the author to intensify this conflict without limitations, utilizing metaphor to express intense disturbance and anxiety.

### **\* Introduction**

The greatest feature of drama is its “characteristic of conflict and contrast in dramatic events... (which have replaced) desire or determination... within the character” (Lukács 135). Drama, if it means conflict, also means contrast and movement. “Movement from one

situation to another, from one emotion or feeling to another, and from one idea to another” (Ismail 279). It also represents “the vision of life forces in the universe in a state of constant motion, where every entity has its will and uniqueness, living—wherever it is on the scale of existence—through this will and individuality” (Anany 13).

Drama is “an external and internal movement that exposes the hidden drives behind human behavior and apparent events. The poet or writer focuses light on the threads of this visible and hidden world, guiding the reader to discover its features” (Dawam 22). Since *The Thief and the Dogs* revolves around a single protagonist with others orbiting around him, the author was compelled to maintain focus in his ideas, precision in expression, and intension in description. Accordingly, we see “a thief playing the leading role, with dogs providing the element of conflict. If the thief is a victim of cruelty, betrayal, and treachery, the dogs represent society's crime, exploitation, and the ugliness of betrayal” (Anany et al., 9).

Compression is a term that “dissolves contradictory, divergent, and similar elements into a single unit or focus, not merely through linguistic economy but through its

effective impact on condensing the subject and its treatment, making each word or sentence irreplaceable” (Salama 8, 9).

If this statement applies to short stories, it also applies to *The Thief and the Dogs*, where the main theme is conflict. However, this conflict is not only with characters but also with space and time. The need for concentration stems from the fact that the protagonist is almost singular, and the events or conflicts do not span vast horizontal or vertical sections but occur within the central character. These occur in contexts of space, time, and other characters that have profound psychological effects on the protagonist. Space plays the role of time and character simultaneously, without a barrier separating them.

Naguib Mahfouz acknowledges this significant transformation in his novel writing. He states, "When ideas and emotions began to occupy me, neither the environment nor the characters nor the events were required for themselves. The character became more symbolic or archetypal. The environment ceased to be depicted in detail but became more like modern décor. Events were selected to crystallize key ideas." Thus, spatial and temporal environments took on

more dynamic and influential roles compared to their traditional function in realist novels. Likewise, characters were no longer meticulously described, as seen in realism. The protagonist's ordeal shattered him to the point where places, times, and other elements played the same role as characters or events.

Since the novel belongs to the expressionist school, its conflict was not only with characters but also with elements like space and time. The author's portrayal of spatial and temporal environments was unconventional, diverging from realism. Dr. Shafei El Sayed in his book states, "The shift in content turned the novel into an idea or issue suggested by reality and drawn from its elements. Its artistic framework moved away from realism, which directly describes events, focuses on details, and develops characters based on logical relationships in the real world. Instead, it adopted an expressionist approach" (271-272).

This paper is focused on analyzing various forms of conflict: conflict against place, conflict against time and conflict against characters as well as literary devices like symbolism and metaphor. It offers a comprehensive look at how these elements work together to enrich the narrative.

### **\* Conflict and Tension with Place**

In this novel, Naguib Mahfouz skillfully utilizes the setting in a dramatic way, making it often synonymous with, or let's say, the other face of the dramatic character. Since Saeed Mahran is in constant conflict with most of the novel's characters, it is to be expected that he is also in conflict with the places where the protagonist and other characters move. After all, the place is "a major element of dramatic construction and an indicator of the social class to which the characters belong... and an important dramatic significance in the development and escalation of events" (Mustafa 75).

After Saeed Mahran's was released from prison, where he spent four years there, he appears overwhelmed by the freedom he has finally obtained, a value he fought and continues to fight for. "Once again, he breathes freedom," (Mahfouz 7) and the streets seem to shock him, appearing "burdened with the sun, crazy cars, passersby, those seated, houses, shops, and lips that never cease to smile" (Mahfouz 8). The streets, weighed down by the heat of the sun and the crazy cars, and the moving passersby, are in stark contrast to what Saeed was accustomed to in prison, as if they have suddenly manifested to

challenge or confront him, suggesting that the future may not be easier than the past or that the world has changed. This movement is contrasted with the static presence of the seated people, houses, shops, and lips that never move, as if, on the other side of the freedom, Saeed has recently gained, or as the objective equivalent of Saeed's imprisonment. During his time in prison, he did not witness such movement, which reveals to him its horrifying aspect-especially at this moment-because it represents the freedom of the aggrieved who has returned to seek revenge after a period of apparent stillness inside prison. The apparent stillness or immobility is completely contradictory to him; it hides a burning fire within him. These are the other elements that confront and challenge him just as vitality and movement do. Hence, when Saeed Mahran arrived in the street or the neighborhood with its scattered houses, these places appeared to him in their ugliest form, as if they were wrestling with him or reminding him of his defeat. The street has become "grim and sorrowful... the alleys are embroiled in conspiracies... even the narrow alley in the street is fixed in its state like a trap... and the clamor of the tram wheels growls like a curse. even the windows of the houses are

tempting for theft, even when empty... as for the walls, they are grim and stripped... and the corner is a painful memory, and the shops have heads sticking out like frightened mice” (Mahfouz 8,9).

The intense internal struggle within Saeed Mahran reaches its peak due to the stillness and movement outside the prison, causing the thief's pains to crowd and emerge in a language that is intense and expressive, almost poetic: “The thief stole, and in the blink of an eye, he folded up; woe to the traitors. In this corner, the siege slithered like a snake to encircle the unwary” (Mahfouz 8). Saeed Mahran's real suffering lies in this street or environment that seems indifferent. It is the trap where the protagonist, conceited and proud of his professionalism, fell. The most painful part is that he fell away from his wife and son. He laments, “How could I have been deceived while I was the red demon? I was the hero, and Abid, the hero's admirer, loved me and flattered me, avoiding my anger and picking up the crumbs of bread from my efforts and skill... How could she lean towards the dog and turn away from the lion” (Mahfouz 82)?!

The house of Alish, with its walls, windows, and the flies that spread around - from Saeed's

perspective - is merely a fortress where the owner with the thick stick has fortified himself. Saeed's riddle after leaving prison was to test it, trying to hide his feelings of hatred and desire for revenge: “I came to assess your fortresses. At the end, neither informants nor walls will be of any use.. When the windows were opened, light and flies rushed in, and the heavenly carpet showed black spots from burns, and Alish stared from a large picture on the wall, leaning with his fists on a thick stick” (Mahfouz 11).

The house, with its light, flies, and black spots on the carpet, along with Alish's picture leaning on his thick stick – not to mention his henchmen – all challenge Saeed and tempt him to rush for revenge. In this house are his ex-wife Nabaweya and his daughter, and the money he stole before entering prison. However, he clings to patience until the moment he hopes for, so we see him struggling to hide his true feelings until he can achieve what he wants or take revenge on the traitors: “So the scoundrel has allies, and soon he will see what lies beyond this reception. Perhaps you are peeking through the shutters, hiding like women, Alish” (Mahfouz 9).

Although Saeed Mahran's memories with Sheikh Al-Junaidi's

house were wonderful – the house where he recited prayers and sang hymns, and which also reminds him of his childhood and his visits to the house of the radiant man with his father – the house and its owner welcome the guest, but the latter does not accept it willingly. Sheikh Al-Junaidi's residence – set along the mountain path as if reaching it required a struggle – tempts Saeed to enter. Its door and everything in it are always open as if it welcomes him in any case. The house is simple, dating back to Adam, with an unsheltered courtyard and a palm tree with a curved trunk—perhaps symbolizing the blending of the place with mysticism, or perhaps challenging Saeed Mahran, who is reluctant to come to this place: “No door is closed in this strange place” (Mahfouz 18). The open doors welcome the visitor, while he shuns both them and the place. Even the walls were unlike the gloomy, grimy walls of the neighborhood or street where Saeed lived: “They disappeared beneath the shelves of volumes” (Mahfouz 18), perhaps to attract Saeed, who loves reading, and to encourage him to stay away from delving into the past. Nevertheless, the sheikh, who reads the thief's inner self with the insight of a mystic, surprises him by saying, in more than one sense, that he has

not come to these walls out of love for them, but rather to find a temporary refuge, hoping to achieve his revenge. The house and its owner tempt Saeed to abandon his troubled past and embrace a peaceful future, but the troubled thief has not left his inner prison. The walls of this larger prison confront and assault him because he has never been, and will never be, in harmony with them. He resents everything, even Al-Junaidi's house, which opens its doors to him yet refuses to accept him under its banner.

“Do not blame me; I have no place in the world except your house...”

“You mean the walls, not the heart...”

“I came out of prison today...”

“You did not come out of prison...”  
(Mahfouz 19, 20).

Saeed is imprisoned by the prison of his soul, craving revenge. He admits that he finds no place for himself on earth, which is natural since every place for Saeed is a prison. Despite the comfort and warmth and the beautiful past in Sheikh Al-Junaidi's house, Saeed did not come to feel this warmth or to enjoy reminiscing about the beautiful past but rather to find a temporary residence. Even though the house and its owner welcome him, he is preoccupied with the past. Had it not been for his need for accommodation,

he would not have come there. He is concerned with more than that:

“I will go and relieve you of my sight...”

“This is your refuge...”

“Yes, but why shouldn't I have another refuge?”

“If it were the last thing you came to me for!”

(Saeed to himself): “Go to the mountain until darkness falls. Do not leave until darkness falls...” (Mahfouz 20).

Saeed goes to “Az-Zuhra” newspaper to meet Raouf Alwan, seeking financial help; nevertheless, he encounters the massive building of the newspaper, “so massive that it is not easy to rob! And this queue of cars surrounding it like the guards of the terrifying walls and the sounds of printing presses behind the basement bars like the dominance of those resting in the wards” (Mahfouz 21). Saeed Mahran turns the newspaper building into an adversary, but since he was not driven by anger towards this building as he was with the neighborhood that deceived him, he sees it almost neutrally, even though he cannot stop thinking about his weaknesses as a thief. He goes to Raouf Alwan’s villa, and before the conflict between them erupts, he views the villa with neutrality. It is natural for him to be a thief of the

rich, and he would not admire such a building except to plan a robbery. However, now he views it with neutrality because the conflict with Raouf has not yet begun. Once inside, “he feels truly alien... He used to not look at a villa like this except when planning to rob it, so how can he hope for affection beyond the villa today” (Mahfouz 28-29). After confirming that Raouf has betrayed him, the house becomes an enemy, with its decorations and mirrors: “Do you drive me to prison while you leap to the palace of lights and mirrors” (Mahfouz 37)? The palace now appears different from the one he had once sought to rob: “The palace appeared with closed eyelids, guarded by trees from all sides like ghosts, and betrayal slept in a beautiful calm it does not deserve at all” (Mahfouz 38), indicating that Raouf Alwan, as Saeed sees it, would never have imagined the blow would come swiftly, on the very night Raouf revealed his betrayal.

“It is curious that he did not notice the identity of the room in which he was caught and that he could hardly see anything of it except its ornate door and waxed floor” (Mahfouz 44). Medhat Al-Gayar in the journal “The Aesthetics of Space in Salah Abdel Sabour's Theater,” indicates that the identity of the room

reflects the identity of its owner. The place is the framework that defines the specificity of the dramatic moment; the event does not occur in a no-place but in a specific place. Here, the place reveals its fundamental function, which is to serve as the dramatic backdrop of the text” (22).

Tarzan’s Café reflects the notion that place “contributes to shaping the image of the dramatic character and its tangible presence” (Zidan 114). For Saeed, it became the beginning of darkness and desert that would shelter him after his first attempt at revenge. “Through the large window and the door, the vast and endless expanse of the wilderness was visible, with dense darkness unrelieved by any glimmer, and an imposing silence. A dry, refreshing breeze flowed between the door and the window, bearing the force and purity of the desert. He then moved toward the window, standing behind it with his posture erect. The air spread the wings of his jacket like a sail, and he gazed at the expanse of dark land, with stars appearing in the sky clear as sand, as if the café were an island in the ocean or a plane in the sky” (Mahfouz 47).

The café represents the beginning of confusion and criminality, followed by escape

again. It is the large window that aligns with a criminal who will peer from it once more into the world of crime. If the house of Al-Junaidi merges with its owner, then Tarzan’s Café merges with Saeed; it is a place of smuggling and illegal activities, just as Saeed wishes his life to be in the upcoming phase. It welcomes him, opening its doors and windows wide. It is the island or the plane that will take him away from his pursuers, where he meets Nour, who helps him acquire the car he believes will enable his revenge. Nour will shelter him in her home and become the only light connecting him to the world. Besides, Tarzan’s generosity provided him with weapons and valuable advice without reproach. However, darkness surrounds it on all sides, challenging and resisting him to the point that he will be forced to return only in disguise and with the warnings of Tarzan” Be very cautious; no inch is free from informers” (Mahfouz 124): It is his place and environment, yet this place and environment expel him and prevent him from coming except in disguise, seeking vengeance or food after Nour disappears. It is the dramatic paradox; even the environment that suits him and where he has lived and received praise from its owner and patrons does not welcome him for his own safety,

which fuels his anger and resentment. It is his refuge and sanctuary, but his attempt to kill Aliash and Raouf makes it a dangerous hotspot that he should not visit or approach.

Saeed only goes to Nour's house out of necessity. He can no longer return to Sheikh Al-Junaidi's house, and Tarzan's Café is no longer a safe place, as it is filled with informers. The café is suspicious, and recognizing Saeed Mehran after his photos were published in the newspapers has become possible. Thus, Saeed turns to Nour after abandoning Al-Junaidi's house and committing his first murder. We learn about Nour's house through her description: it is near the Qarafa (cemetery) and beneath a straw agency, which is a negative sign about this place, as its fragility is akin to death. However, the positive aspect is that its air is maritime, perhaps indicating Nour's welcome or its distance from people. Although Nour welcomes him, her house has become a prison. He lives only amidst darkness, graves, and waiting, which compels him to leave it repeatedly and risk his life. When Saeed goes to Nour, the house does not open its doors quickly; Nour delays him without realizing his arrival, and in the end, she disappears, leaving him surrounded

by darkness, waiting, and hunger, leading to his capture by the police.

Although this house welcomed him, Saeed did not like it; it is amidst graves, darkness, and waiting. Even though Nour provided him with everything, this did not last long as the house's owner wanted to rent it to a new tenant, leaving Saeed's presence in jeopardy. Additionally, Nour disappeared and was no longer around, signaling the complete abandonment of the house, just as Saeed abandoned himself and Nour, whom he did not confess his love for until after her disappearance. The place "is an effective means of presenting events and understanding the nature of relationships that bind characters; indeed, the place itself can justify and motivate many actions" (Zidan 114).

The last place to be discussed is Saber Hospital—a place that rejected him and made him resort to robbing the rich. "It stood like a fortress in a lush garden... The place seemed to command you to stay away, but you were in dire need of medical assistance" (Mahfouz 89). This hospital, which ordered him to stay away, is the same place or situation that led him to adopt the idea of robbing the rich and justifying the plundering of their possessions, as they had expelled his mother and

caused her death, or at least did not provide her with immediate help. The place "has a social identity in which a person is formed, from which they start, and to which they return, whether these places are closed like prisons and rooms or open like alleys and streets" (Abady 15). This identity or those identities were behind the character or the event, making the place an influential dimension added to other dimensions of the character.

Saeed's spatial environment was characterized by a tug-of-war between attraction and rejection. The place is linked to Saeed's freedom; it is generally "closely related to the concept of freedom... Freedom becomes the sum of actions that a person can perform without encountering barriers or obstacles, that is, forces resulting from the external environment that one cannot overcome or bypass" (Lotman 62). This diminished freedom was a driving force behind the dramatic tension within Saeed and the novel. The neighborhood or area where the thief's glory was witnessed rejected him because he rejected it and failed to take revenge on it. The house of Sheikh Al-Junaidi attracted those enchanted by its charm while rejecting him for his insistence on revenge. The café where Saeed found himself, and which provided him

with weapons, protection, and security, soon abandoned him and turned its back on him, as it was a place for the suspicious and filled with informers. Nour's house became his second prison, providing him with food, drink, safety, and love from her side, but he found only darkness, waiting, and death, as well as distaste and revulsion from her. The result was that he abandoned it after suffering hunger and feeling pursued. As for Sabeer Hospital, he felt nothing but alienation there. It made him hate the rich and justify attacking and plundering their possessions.

#### **\* Struggle with Time**

"Space - in the physical sense - is more intimately connected to human life, because a person's experience and perception of space differ from their experience and perception of time. While time is perceived indirectly through its effects on things, space is perceived through direct sensory experience, beginning with a person's experience of their own body, which is a 'space'." (Lotman 59). Despite this, the small size of the novel *The Thief and the Dogs* does not correspond to its literary value due to the dramatic condensation in all its aspects. Just as space chases the protagonist away or draws him back to his essence and purity, time does the same thing.

Saeed emerges from prison having lost four years of his life in which he did nothing, but rather lost much, including his wife, daughter, and possessions. Consequently, after leaving prison, he wastes no time, as if the lost time is pursuing him; he goes to Ali and demands what he can get to make up for what was lost, while he is also testing the house, probing its defenses, and considering how the strike would be. Saeed goes to Sheikh Al-Junaidi carrying the burdens of both the present and the past. He brings with him the past, with its books and resentment over his imprisonment, the loss of his daughter, and his money. He is searching for a refuge to live in the present, but Saeed trusts only in the past and wishes to live only within it. As soon as he sees the Sheikh, he says, "This is the voice of the past! I wonder what his father's voice was like? It's as if he remembers his father's voice with his eyes..." (Mahfouz 19). Saeed continues to draw from the past, insisting that the Sheikh remember him from years ago. However, the Sheikh lives only in the present and neither remembers nor wishes to recall anything from Saeed's past.

"Yes, you haven't seen me for more than ten years, and during that period, strange things have happened.

Perhaps you have heard about them from some of your followers who know me."

"Because I hear so much, I hardly hear anything."

"How beautiful the past days were!"

"Say that, if you can, about the present moment..." (19-20).

Saeed wants to take from the past whatever pleases him according to his emotions and inclinations, while the Sheikh, being a realist, sees that time is bound by human actions. If the past is not as desired, it can be forgotten or disregarded; if it is otherwise, it can be lived in the present through our actions. Saeed tries to impose the present on the Sheikh by telling him he needs a kind word, but the Sheikh accuses him of lying. Saeed lies because he lives in the past, which becomes his sword and spear with which he will attack the present. He did not come to hear a kind word but rather to seek refuge. It was logical for the Sheikh to accuse him of lying. When the Sheikh wanted to resolve the conflict or debate between the past and the present, he asked Saeed to take a Quran and read it to abandon his intentions. However, Saeed retreats into his past filled with pus and infection, refusing to live in the present or reality, continuously

repeating, almost mechanically, what happened to him in the distant or even recent past.

**\* Imane Zouaïmia in her article**

"Techniques and Methods of Constructing Time in the Novel Marwan by Ben Yahya Mohamed Sofiane" asserts: "The writer's manipulation of time in the novel allows for multiple paradoxes between the time of the story and the time of the narrative. These paradoxes may involve recalling past events or anticipating events that have not yet occurred, depending on the artistic and aesthetic development chosen by the creator in building the novel" (28). Paradox above highlights the irony of Saeed Mehran's tense situation, which, in other words, is in turmoil, rejecting all solutions except those circulating in his mind.

The writer continues to observe the paradoxes between what was and what is, or between the past and the present. Saeed goes to the magazine "Az-Zahra," where Raouf Alwan works. The present is represented in what Raouf writes about women's fashion, loudspeakers, responding to wives' complaints, and the massive building of the newspaper. Meanwhile, Raouf, in the past—during the days of the student house and the magazine "Al-

Nazeer" tucked away on Mohamed Ali Street—was a symbol of enthusiastic brilliance, a big heart, and a radiant, honest pen. These and other paradoxes, such as what he saw in Raouf's house—antiques, chandeliers, servants, luxury cars, and a house or palace on the Nile—made Saeed initially doubt, saying, "Have events occurred like those of the merchant's sympathy? Prophetic incidents and Ali and the beloved little girl who denied her father... but how? What's the way? Raouf Alwan, you are a mystery, and the mystery must speak" (Mahfouz 28-29).

In *The Thief and the Dogs*-Study Guide, the writer points out, "Memories can be enduring and motivating, providing context and meaning to a person's present and inspiring their future. Saeed spends a lot of time trapped in his own mind. Instead of making new, positive choices—getting a real job, being worthy of Sana, or finding a new woman—he remains stuck in his past, depriving himself of a future."

The past dominates him, pushing him to constantly think and make comparisons, making everything he sees before him difficult to believe. The wider the gap between the past and the present, the more his heart, filled with pain and resentment, urges him to seek

revenge against those who refused to conform to his world.

In the article in *Al Kateb Magazine*, the writer inserts that since the protagonist of *The Thief and the Dogs*—and all the characters in novels written during that period, such as *The Beggar*, *The Road*, *Autumn Quail*, and others—suffers from a “sense of anxiety, pursuit, psychological alienation, and lack of safety and stability... in *The Thief and the Dogs*, this feeling is linked to the issue of justice in society and the imbalance in its scales” (22). Naguib Mahfouz not only places the past alongside with the present to contrast them, but he also brings the past to replace the present, in what is known as the stream of consciousness. Mahfouz himself sees this technique as most fitting for the character of the fugitive, who will only speak to himself (Shoukry 70).

Robert Humphrey in his novel *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel* pinpoints that stream-of-consciousness stories focus primarily on a level of pre-verbal awareness to reveal the psychological state of the characters (27).

We are thus faced with a flood of free-flowing thoughts, which “depend on the individual’s past experiences and the thoughts that dominate them in the present.” This

technique, as Robert Humphrey elucidated, is further enhanced by the use of techniques from other arts, such as “montage” in cinema, which has great importance. It allows for the presentation of more than one subject or more than one-time period simultaneously. Similar methods like “flashback,” “fade out,” and “slow motion” have proven to be effective tools in aiding both montage and free association” (193).

“Naguib Mahfouz made use of these techniques, or some of them, such as the flashback, which brought the past into the present to depict the crisis the thief lives through,” (Humphrey 38), as we see him return to the past to clearly see the features of betrayal, represented by Raouf and Nabawiyya. Using ‘montage,’ he combined two scenes into one:

This is Raouf Alwan, the naked truth, a decaying corpse that no dirt can cover... You created me and then turned away. You simply changed your mind after your ideas had taken shape within me. It is a vile betrayal; if the Moqattam Hills were flattened over it, I would not be satisfied. I wonder, do you acknowledge your betrayal—even to yourself—or have you deceived yourself as you try to deceive others? Doesn't your conscience awaken, even in the dark? I want to penetrate

your soul as I have penetrated your house of antiques and mirrors—your house—but I will find only betrayal. I will find Nabawiyya in Raouf's clothes, or Raouf in Nabawiyya's clothes, or Alysh Sidra standing in their place. Betrayal will confess to me that it is the ugliest vice on earth. From behind, their eyes exchanged suspicious, anxious, and disturbed glances, like the current of lust it carried. Opportunism drowned out the last traces of shame and hesitation, and Alysh Sidra saeed in a corner of an alley, or perhaps in my own house: 'I will inform the police so we can get rid of him.' And the mother of the girl was silent. The tongue that used to generously say, 'I love you, master of men,' was silent. That's how I found myself trapped in the alley of the moneychanger, and not even a demon could have trapped me. The punches and slaps rained down on me. And you, Raouf ... (Mahfouz 37)

This intense scene combines the stream of consciousness, in which events unfold, with techniques from other arts like the cinema. It flashes back to combine two scenes from the past: the betrayal of Raouf and the betrayal of Nabawiyya and Alysh, using montage to allow movement between these situations. Mahfouz also employs the technique of relative

slowness, where events almost come to a halt as he recalls the loathsome and disgusting past. This creates a form of intensity, highlighting the dramatic tension the character experiences. Through all this, he contrasts the past and the present, what was and what is, as he mocks the betrayers—if not mocking himself for having believed them in the first place.

The thief, in order to muster the courage to act, would recall betrayal or the past and its powerful effect on him, especially at the moment of committing the crime. Just before killing Alysh, he reflects: "Betrayal is truly hideous, Professor Raouf," as he looked at the windows of the house with his hand gripping the gun in his pocket, "Betrayal is hideous, Alysh, and for life to be pure for the living, the criminal filth must be uprooted from its roots" (Mahfouz 60).

This scene was repeated when Saeed decided to kill Raouf Alwan, as he recalled the justifications for murder from the past to rid himself of his betrayers in the present. Raouf had deceived him, then jumped ship, leaving him as a pursued thief.

He said to Raouf Alwan as he rowed forcefully: The time for reckoning has come. If the judge between us were anyone other than

the police, I would have made sure you were disciplined in front of everyone. The people are with me, except for the real thieves, and that is what comforts me amid my eternal loss. I am your soul, which you sacrificed, but I lack the organization, according to your own words. Today, I understand much that I couldn't grasp before from your old words. My real tragedy is that despite the support of millions, I find myself cast into a dark solitude without any ally. It is an unreasonable loss, and even a bullet won't make it more reasonable, but it will be a bloody protest, appropriate in any case, to assure both the living and the dead not to lose the last hope. (Mahfouz 110-111)

All these justifications revealed the extent of the deceit and falseness that Raouf embodied, as he had advised him to steal under a particular pretense. This explains the cinematic scene where Saeed calls out to Raouf, points the gun at him, and says after calling his name 'Take this' (Mahfouz 111) as a form of protest more than revenge. It was a protest against abandoning principle and revenge for the loss of a lifetime, after the loss of the plan or idea.

Using the technique of the stream of consciousness, Naguib Mahfouz may also employ prolepsis

(foreshadowing), which is viewed as a "paradox that moves toward the future from the current moment (deviating from the present to the future), alluding to one or more events that will happen after the current moment (or the moment when the narrative pauses to allow for the prolepsis)" (Branse 186).

Upon his release from prison, Saeed Mahran immediately places us in the midst of the battle he is about to enter, foreshadowing the future: "But I will strike at the right moment, like fate... And let your blow be as strong as your long patience behind the walls" (Mahfouz 8). In the same context and on the same page, he does not forget to distinguish between the future and the past during the present moment, the moment of his release from prison, to intensify the drama of the scene. He recalls how Alysh groveled at his feet like a dog and how it was he who made a man out of a mere cigarette butt collector.

The paradox is at its strongest in one of the most powerful scenes when Saeed goes to Sheikh Ginidi with his heart full of anger and hatred. The Sheikh places the future before him, advising him to perform ablution and read, meaning to cleanse himself of the filth and pains of the past and live in the future. But Saeed

insists on living in the past, filled with betrayal and failure:

She betrayed me with a scoundrel from my own followers, a student who used to stand before me like a dog. She asked for a divorce, using my imprisonment as an excuse, then married him!"

"Perform ablution and read!"

With determination, he replied: "What about my money and jewelry? He took them and used them to become a respected master, and all the scoundrels of the alley became his men!"

"Perform ablution and read!"

Frowning, with the veins on his forehead swelling, he said: "I wasn't caught because of the police's scheming. No, as usual, I was confident of escape. The dog betrayed me, in collusion with her, and betrayed me. Then one misfortune after another followed until even my own daughter denied me! (Mahfouz 24-5)

Mahfouz reassures that "Saeed is consumed by the past, as if he finds a strange pleasure in his suffering, while the Sheikh gently pushes him toward the future, urging him to walk through its ever-open doors. But Saeed refuses and insists on his refusal, even after accidentally killing Shaaban Hussein: 'I will leave and spare you Saeed the sight of me' (70).

After surveying the doors where Raouf Alwan writes for his new newspaper, Saeed does not forget to compare the past with the present or future, sensing the betrayal of his former mentor and idol: "But where is Raouf Alwan? The student house... the blazing enthusiasm... the big-hearted man, the honest, radiant pen. What happened to the world? And were there events as significant as those in the moneychanger's alley? (Mahfouz 27)

"If the need for God is genuine, then wealth in God is genuine."

"My lord, what would you have done if you had been tested with a wife like mine?"(Mahfouz 69)

Saeed rejects the Sheikh's logic by brandishing the weapon of the past against him and then decides to flee to his dark future, bidding the Sheikh farewell. The Sheikh responds: "Say 'until we meet again'." This is the conflict between two worlds and two times: the world of conscience or the transparent, forgiving spirit, and the world of the troubled psyche in its ugliest form, bent on revenge. The former represents a bright future full of tolerance and disregard for the sins of the past, while the latter embodies rigidity, grudges, and a backwardness away from humanity.

Another form of foreshadowing occurs when Saeed tells Nour, when she welcomes him – for a lifetime, as she puts it – at her house next to the cemetery, to place the reader in a state of tension that prompts him to intuit or predict the ending: “Until I move to...”

The peak of tension is when the future affects the past, meaning the future has a presence while Saeed remembers the past. Saeed recalls his memories with Nabawiyya, his marriage to her, and his happiness with his romantic encounters with this beautiful woman, all through a stream of consciousness or a return to the past. Yet, the future emerges from the clutches of the past to highlight the extent of Saeed’s anxiety, tension, and pressure: “I feared that the proverb might apply to you: “Out of sight, out of mind,” so I told her: “Let’s marry according to the tradition of God and His Messenger” (Mahfouz 82). His love for her and admiration of her beauty justified his haste to marry so she wouldn’t forget him. Similarly, Saeed’s anger at Nabawiyya’s betrayal, whom he thought loved him, led him to accuse Nour prematurely, even though the past is not far behind. Yet, he apologizes for his mistrust, saying: “And how I believed in the past that Nabawiyya was his property, while in

reality, she may never have loved him... But despite all that, Nour will not betray him, nor will she turn him over to the police in hopes of a reward... She has come to yearn for a pure human affection. He should regret his mistrust, but when will Nour return” (Mahfouz 123)?

Another foreshadowing technique is "dreams," which keeps the reader in constant tension, anticipating the character's fate or future, and urges the reader to scrutinize the details of events and test their accuracy. When Saeed visits Nour and on the first night, she dreams that Saeed is far away and she waits for him like a madwoman. Saeed interprets the dream to mean that she will be the one to leave, and he will be the one waiting. This interpretation reflects a reading of reality and the future: Nour expects Saeed to abandon his current intentions, while Saeed’s interpretation of the dream reflects a future that has already been realized, where Nour left and Saeed remained waiting until his inevitable end. Saeed also dreams that Aliş surprised him in hiding and shot him repeatedly (Mahfouz 84), revealing how Saeed is obsessed on killing Aliş by searching for him and locating his hideout.

Daydreams also manifest Saeed's suffering; he repeatedly wishes to expose or judge Raouf Alwan, indicating the interweaving of times. The future emerges from the jaws of the past as Saeed wishes that Raouf Alwan would accept him as an editor at his newspaper: "If you accepted me to work as an editor at your newspaper, you villain, I would publish our shared memories and expose your false light" (Mahfouz 91). Another time, he imagines himself at Nour's house judging Raouf Alwan and defending himself, considering himself a victim of both Raouf and society: "I am not like others who have stood in this cage before me. Culture should have a special consideration from you. In reality, there is no difference between me and you except that I am inside the cage and you are outside, which is a negligible and unimportant difference. What is truly ridiculous is that my dangerous teacher is nothing but a treacherous scoundrel" (Mahfouz 119). He anticipates the end because he realizes his fate is approaching faster than expected, and that the siege has tightened around him, leaving him with only darkness, solitude, and waiting. He wants not just to judge Raouf but to judge the society that led him to this situation. The past deceived him and

imprisoned him, and the present deprived him of the future, leading him to delusionally judge everyone. His daydreams are similar to the fortune-telling that predicted for Nour: "Safety and reassurance will come" (Mahfouz 94)! This foreshadowing indicates Nour's longing for a better situation for both her and Saeed, but it remains a distant hope.

A person living between different times within himself imposes a certain slow pace on the dramatic work, as not many events occur. Slowness causes and results from tension, as internal tension requires reviewing the past and comparing it with the present or future, crying over all these times. This is why events grow relatively slowly. Hesitation and the inability to make the right decision or making the wrong decision cause the slowness. After Saeed's release from prison, he becomes a victim of darkness, solitude, and waiting, just as he was at Nour's house, making him live through imaginary trials of his adversaries, seeking revenge through delusions or daydreams, such as his previous trials of Raouf: "And he returned to his hiding place in Nour's house, to solitude, darkness, and waiting, and shouted angrily: 'You, Raouf, are behind all this! All

newspapers have fallen silent—or almost silent—except for Az-Zahra newspaper, which still digs into the past and provokes the police... But what is the meaning of your life if you do not punish your enemies? No force will prevent the punishment of the dogs. Indeed, no force will prevent it,’ and in a loud voice, he wondered: ‘Raouf Alwan, tell me how does time change people in such a hideous manner?!’... And on the day when your talk about theft restored my honor, and on the day you said to me sadly: ‘Individual thefts have no value, they must be organized!’ I did not stop reading and stealing afterward. And you guided me to names worthy of theft, and I found in theft my glory and honor, and you generously gave to people, among whom, unfortunately, was Aliş Sidra...” (Mahfouz 98-99).

The night also had a significant space in the novel. In Saeed Mehran’s quest for revenge, the night plays a vital role as it symbolizes the present time. This night, with its darkness, opposes and battles him to the extent that he fails to undertake any action in the present he lives in, contrary to his claims. The night and its darkness make it impossible for him to see his path or direction. This is exemplified by his visits to Aliş in the evening, to Sheikh Ali Al-Junaidi’s house at

night, his meeting with Raouf Alwan at night, his theft operations at night, his acquaintance with Nour at night, and his arrest at night. The night and fate are also responsible for his accidental killing of three people, which might suggest that he was not a criminal planning murders... “Go to the mountain until the darkness falls, do not leave until the darkness falls, avoid the light and seek refuge in the darkness...” Nour tells him: “Waiting in the darkness is torment” (Abdel Ghany 95-96). The impact of the present or darkness on him is painful, causing him to flounder and fail to see his way. Saeed remains suspended between the past with its betrayals, the present with its darkness, and the future with its loss.

#### **\* The Conflict with the Characters**

Dr. Ibrahim Hamada elucidates in Aristotle's book Poetics that the ‘material’ of the plot is the ‘character,’ and the substance of the character is thought in its general aspects. However, we must remember that the types of characters used by the playwright are defined by the actions they perform throughout the stages of the dramatic work. Therefore, character formation and depiction are governed by the plot (105). The characters in the novel come to life through their actions and thoughts. Saeed, for instance, would

not continue to engage in theft without a complete conviction that robbing the rich is a rightful act that cannot be compromised. He is a man with a theory and logic which he deeply believes in. Therefore, on his behavioral and intellectual journey, he clashes with everyone around him, including thieves and traitors, as they are not like him. When he entered Aliş's house, he left only with his books or his ideas, meaning that after Aliş and Nabawiyya betrayed him to the police and stole his daughter and money, Aliş was not a thinker or theorist who seized people's wealth for a purpose, nor was Nabawiyya. Consequently, their betrayal appeared before his eyes and took shape in his mind both in wakefulness and in dreams, intensifying his drive to act or constantly think about killing both of them. The betrayal, for Saeed, was only a result of his self-importance, his ideas, and his deep belief in his vision. This made the paradox within him inflate, leading to scorn and a desire for revenge against these "vermin": "Did you forget, Aliş, how you used to cling to my leg like a dog? Didn't I teach you to stand on your feet? And who turned a cigarette butt collector into a man?" (Mahfouz 8). Saeed continuously chases betrayal and meanness embodied in their characters, comparing himself

with their actions. We learn about them mainly through a stream of consciousness that allows the free flow of his sweet and bitter memories. Nabawiyya betrayed Saeed only because he neglected her, as he admitted to Nour, even though he still loved her and remembered how he was impressed by her and then married her. Neglect alone was not the reason for the betrayal, but excessive trust—along with her beauty—had reached a point where if Aliş and she were left in the desert where Prophet Moses wandered, they would have remained standing between them. Even neglect and excessive trust were not the sole justifications for the betrayal. Saeed's character, which only sees one side of the things around him, never imagined that a cigarette butt collector, who was content with scraps, would betray him and seize everything he had.

In his desire for revenge, Saeed seemed to be trying to regain his self-confidence and dignity that had been trampled in the mud: "It is time for anger to explode and burn, and for the traitors to despair until death... Use all the cunning you have, and let your strike be strong, like your long patience behind the walls. Here comes someone who dives into water

like a fish and flies in the air like a falcon..." (Mahfouz 8-9).

When he thought about killing Nabawiya, he was troubled by the feeling, "But who will remain for Sanaa" (Mahfouz 59)?! She is the only beautiful thing left in his life, perhaps representing his happy childhood, innocence, and deep purity, or perhaps the extension he wished for. It was natural for the world to brighten and for him to become something akin to a poet when he remembered her: "And Sanaa, if she crosses the mind, dispels the heat, dust, hatred, and distress, and the tenderness in her shines like purity after rain... For four years, she has never been absent from his thoughts, and she grew into a vague image. Will luck allow a good place to exchange love, basking in its joyful shade" (Mahfouz 8). Sanaa's rejection of her father represented a blow to this innocence or that future he still strongly believed in, which was revenge. Saeed confesses to the Sheikh and to himself that his daughter pained him as she "shied away from him as if he were a devil" (Mahfouz 25). This was a fitting response for a man who came to kill her mother, her future, and his future at the same time. Sanaa was the bond or link between the thief's past and future, between his innocence and his

crime. She was the cornerstone that would determine the thief's future, either choosing her with her innocence and purity or choosing his path of crime and turmoil. She was an early indication of Saeed's preference for the dark side of his life.

"Saeed Maheran finds religion a negative refuge that does not restore his rights" (Enani et al 97).

Saeed's conflict with Sheikh Al-Junaidi is essentially a struggle with the spiritual side deeply rooted in him since childhood, when he used to visit the Sheikh in his solitude in the mountains during his father's time. This conflict could represent his struggle with himself or his conscience. The Sheikh might be Saeed's conscience, opening all doors for him to return at any time, but alas, the impact of betrayal is stronger than all that. The Sheikh's role in the novel illuminates the role played by Sanaa in rejecting her father. The child rejected her father because he rejects her, meaning he refuses to engage with the future. The Sheikh's open doors were closed by Saeed himself through his rejection and absence from them. "He who is absent from things, things are absent from him" (Mahfouz 66), as Sheikh Al-Junaidi sees it. He provided theoretical advice to the thief, but Saeed disregarded it until he departed

from him. Every time Saeed's crises intensified, he returned to the Sheikh until his final days, after the world had closed in on him.

While both Sanaa and Sheikh Al-Junaidi represent the brakes trying to restrain Saeed from the criminal path he has chosen, Nour also played a similar role. She took Saeed into her home, providing him with everything: love, food, drink, and shelter. Despite the fact that she knows that he did not love her, she hoped for that love or a secure future. She was indeed true to her name, as Tarzan described her. Nour knew that Saeed had no heart before or after prison. She even forgot about death until time brought them together. She was ready to live with him until he loved her and was willing to flee with him even after he tried to kill Raouf Alwan. Saeed's response was: "You still love your wife, that traitor, but you torment me!" To which Saeed replied painfully Nour, do," not increase my suffering. I am in a state of extreme misery! "She was deeply affected by his pain, which she had never seen before, and then said with deep sadness: "I feel that the dearest thing in my life is dying" (Mahfouz 122)! Saeed's love for her only became apparent after she disappeared—perhaps due to her despair—she had given him so much

and was the link between him and the outside world.

The character of Tarzan sheds light on many aspects of Saeed's personality. Tarzan's café is a hub for smugglers, similar to Saeed, so Saeed sees it as his station and place. However, Tarzan reveals Saeed's reckless side. He provides him with weapons and advises him to be cautious of the police and not stay in one place for more than a night. Despite this, Saeed appears careless and hesitant at the café. "A sudden and irresistible desire took hold of Saeed to leave the house for a nighttime excursion. His resistance collapsed as if a building about to fall in seconds. Within minutes, he was leaving the house cautiously. 'Do not stay in one place for more than a night!' Tarzan suddenly rose, rushed to the window, and looked out, then returned saying with concern: 'I thought I saw a face looking at us! Do you think the noose is a joke? Let's meet away from the café. Be very careful, every inch is watched'" (Mahfouz 124).

Tarzan warns him of falling into the hands of the police but does not warn him about the consequences of his actions. He is cut from the same cloth as Saeed, and the warning is just to alert him of the risk of falling into the hands of security men who might

execute or at least imprison him. This is the practical and noble side of Saeed's character. Tarzan provides him with weapons, ammunition, Nour, and everything he might need, but he constantly warns him to heighten his security awareness or the neglectful side of him that led to his downfall at the hands of Ališ and Nabawiya. Saeed, in the novel, and his visits to Tarzan's café are like the moth circling the lamp in Nour's apartment, indicating how close both Saeed and Nour are to doom. "There was a moth embracing the bare lamp at that hour of the night" (Mahfouz 87). Tarzan tries to push him away, but he falls despite the warnings.

There is no fundamental disagreement between Nour, Sheikh Al-Junaidi, and Tarzan on one side and Saeed on the other. Each of them loves him and wants what's best for him. However, tension arises due to Saeed's differing logic; he either respects them or pities their situation. Yet, he remains preoccupied with himself and his revenge, disregarding their advice.

Justice is another issue that troubles Saeed. He is still resentful of the government's bias towards some people over others. The informant, Hassan, representing the government in the first chapter of the novel, was also a source of Saeed's tension. He

was the dividing line between Ališ and Saeed with his commanding tone, even though he and Ališ were both thieves and friends. However, from Saeed's perspective, the government sides with one group over another. Saeed, a thief who has been captured as evidenced by government records, contrasts with Ališ, who stole his wife, daughter, and money but remains free. Saeed expressed this when Nour asked him about the car of the factory owner's son, responding irritably: "Wisdom dictated that I leave it despite my need for it. They will find it and return it to its owner as a government that favors some thieves over others" (Mahfouz 73-74). This implies that the state supports unofficial thieves like Ališ, Nabawiya, and the factory owner's son while neglecting or even fighting others like Saeed, Tarzan, and Nour.

Raouf Alwan, with his ideas and actions, had a significant influence on Saeed Mahran and his intellectual development. He is an opportunistic journalist despite his revolutionary beginnings. Previously, he was just an editor in an obscure magazine that was a loud voice for freedom. Suddenly, he becomes a wealthy man with a mansion on the Nile, cars, and servants. How and by what means in such a short time? Even thieves do

not dream of that. How does a common man become an aristocrat? He taught Saeed that a gun is more important than bread, then participating in religious circles. The young man only needs a gun to handle the past and a book for the future, and then he should train and read. When Saeed stole for the first time, Raouf's words to him were encouraging to help relieve the oppressed of some of their sins, and that stealing is a legitimate act. Everything taken by theft should be recovered by theft. Through the magic of Raouf's words, masters turned into thieves. His justification for stealing from thieves or the rich was that he was learning away from his family and suffering daily from hardship and hunger. (Mahfouz 90).

Raouf Alwan succeeded in deceiving Saeed with strong logic and miserable reality. Saeed, from his meeting with Raouf until the end of the novel, dwells on the past and how he turned into his camp. How could he abandon it and jump to the other camp? When the journalist becomes wealthy, he denies him and refuses to offer him a job at his newspaper, merely warning him: "Saeed is not the same today as yesterday. You were a thief and a friend of mine at the same time for reasons you know. But today is not like yesterday. If you

return to thievery, you will only be a thief" (Mahfouz 35)! Saeed's tragedy is that Raouf did not betray him materially but ideologically. He is like a man slaughtered in most of his internal monologues, reaching the peak of tension: "You create me and then revoke, simply changing your mind after it has materialized in me, leaving me lost with no origin, value, or hope. A vile betrayal, even if Mokattam were crushed to dust, my soul would not be healed" (Mahfouz 64). This added to the suffering of marital betrayal. Saeed tries to kill him but fails. Before he is unable to kill him, he judges him in a dream, seeing his daughter whipping him (Mahfouz 64), and in his daydreams, he also judges him in Nour's apartment, in most events of the fifteenth chapter.

Saeed Maharan's memories of his father and mother were fraught with tension and conflict. His father was a symbol of integrity, contentment, and satisfaction, while Saeed was entirely the opposite—dissatisfied, discontented, and dishonest. The father tried to instill these values in him by taking him to Sheikh Al-Juneidi, who taught him to hold himself accountable for every action. However, Saeed only adhered to the Sheikh's teachings after he had become a professional thief, as if he

were deceiving himself. The incident with his mother was the spark that ignited his hatred for the rich and the need to seize their wealth. In all of the previous characters, Saeed summons them to intensify the conflict and tension with them through their actions and viewpoints. As a result, the novel is dense and rich in every sense of the word with various aspects of conflict. Saeed was reconciled with no one.

These characters, except for Saeed, are not objectively known to us through their actions as much as through Saeed's stream of consciousness. They are thus part of Saeed's thought, philosophy, and highly personal perspective on life. M. H. Abrams in his book *A Glossary of Literary Terms* identify that expressive literature does not portray characters as they are in reality but rather as they are perceived by others. Instead of "representing the world objectively as realism posits," the writer expresses his inner experience by representing the world as it appears to his mind or the mind of one of his characters, who may be emotional, troubled, or peculiar" (57). Hence, these characters are not as they are in reality but as seen through Saeed's intellectual perspective, anxieties, and various pressures. They, along with the

places and times, are closer to the objective correlate of Saeed's feelings and the turmoil within him.

### **\* Between Symbolism and Metaphor**

One of the reasons for the author's inclination toward dramatic intensity in the novel is that it is based on symbolism and is charged with metaphor. These elements serve as both the cause and the explanation for the immense tension and anxiety within the character. Symbolism in the novel does not distance it from reality; rather, "symbolism is more reality; it is a concentration and focus of reality" (Ghali 244).

In the simplest analysis, Jamil Hemdawy in his article explicates that Saeed Mahran "could not achieve the ideas and principles he believed in, which he learned from Raouf Alwan, because reality was deteriorated, characterized by negativity. This reality that Saeed Mahran tries to explode with his actions is incomplete and unfulfilled, manipulated by the hands of crime, betrayal, and treachery." This may refer to the failures of the 1952 Revolution, which Naguib Mahfouz commented on by saying:

The revolution allowed men like Alish, and especially Raouf, to prosper. They are men whose revolutionary ideals were easily

corrupted by power and privilege. Those who could not exploit their military experience for anything profitable weakened and their service was forgotten. The pervasive presence of police is also a commentary on the post-revolutionary period, which became authoritarian in ways the revolutionaries did not anticipate or hypocritically protested. (*The Thief and the Dogs* – Study Guide).

According to the symbolism, Saeed Mahran is “a thief like the dogs, showing us his ugliness, vanity, and disdain for others. He hates dogs but is himself a dog, or there is a significant resemblance between him and dogs; he is sharp-sensed, quick-moving, and attacks lightly, but his barking and biting are all in vain.” Perhaps this resemblance is what led his companion, Nour, to love him and cling to him to this extent because, as she says, she loves dogs, and her house has never been without them. Naguib Mahfouz confirms this precise similarity vividly by stating: “Despite his hunger and worries, he went to the kitchen and found scraps of bread and bits of meat stuck to bones, and some parsley. He devoured them eagerly and gnawed on the bones like a dog” (Abdel Ghani 100).

A study titled “The Psychology of the Other in Naguib Mahfouz's ‘The Thief and the Dogs’” confirms that the Other, which is “Raouf Alwan,” has shaped the Self, which is “Saeed Mahran”, and that Saeed Mahran rebelled against the Other and remained attached to the values he learned from Raouf Alwan, which are “rebellion and revolution” (Abdel Ghani 84).

Raouf Alwan refers to “this climbing class that achieved quick material gain and a prominent status without effort or hard work, but merely by being a mouthpiece for the authority. They sought to gain many benefits that brought them great wealth for their own interests, disregarding the interests of others, especially the poor. Mohamed El-Hamamsy, in his article, “Was Raouf Alwan the Betrayer of the Press to the Public in *The Thief and the Dogs*?” states: This is the political dimension of the issue.” This explains the intense conflict between Saeed and Raouf Alwan, as Raouf represents the opportunistic side of Saeed, applying his theory, and we see him with Nour, Tarzan, and others as opportunistic to the extreme.

Kristen Osborne Bartucca in her article “The Thief and the Dogs Symbols, Allegory and Motifs” illuminates that for some critics, the

Sheikh's house represents a symbol of peace and security, and Saeed's continued desire, after committing every crime, for purification, reconciliation, peace, and security. It may also be viewed as the impractical or material side that Saeed does not desire to stay in. When the father took him to the Sheikh, the first thing the Sheikh advised him was: "Start by holding yourself accountable, and let every action you perform be for the good of humanity" (Mahfouz 89)! The irony that Saeed acknowledges is that he did not adhere to the Sheikh's teachings until he became a professional thief (Mahfouz 89).

Nour's house, located next to the graves and under a warehouse, offered nothing but tombstones, mourners, and the dead in her absence, indicating proximity to death with the fragility of the building it stands on, perhaps to emphasize "the brevity of life and the shared fate we all have" (Bartucca). Whether it was Nour's house or Sheikh Al-Junaidi's house, both drove him to flee; Saeed did not find solace in staying with the Sheikh, who persistently asked him for purification, or with Nour, who constantly confronted him with death through her windows or tried to persuade him to abandon the idea of revenge.

Kristen Osborne-Bartucca in her article "The Thief and the Dogs Symbols, Allegory and Motifs" elucidates that the symbols in the novel reveal and justify this intense tension within Saeed Mahran, as well as explain it. From the beginning, dogs represent Saeed's fragile society against the thief whose theory is baseless. Ironically, dogs are the ones that actually chase the thief in reality, but in the novel, the thief chases the dogs. The repeated use of animal imagery is an effective means of expressing Saeed's emotions.

Some critics believe that Saeed's release from prison "begins with a moment akin to birth, a moment when the character exits from prison, which often symbolizes the womb, and ends with a moment of death. Between the beginning and the end is the character's journey as they discover fundamental truths about life, both metaphysically and socially" (Abdel Ghani 85). This justifies the intensity of the tension faced by the individual in their life journey.

Kristen Osborne-Bartucca added that the military uniform that Saeed wore to kill Raouf Alwan failed to achieve its goal as "he was quickly recognized by two soldiers he met, and his military uniform reverted to being just a costume

concealing a man not worthy of being seen as a symbol of security and stability.” This may point to the failure of revolutionary or military men in governance. Saeed's desire to return to Nour's home was a catalyst for further tension in the novel, as he went to that house once, imagining that Nour stood at the window, and continued to watch that window from afar, feeling the peak of pursuit and anxiety.

The symbolism in the choice of names also explains the tension pervading the entire novel. Raouf Alwan "has something related to his name, having achieved the required sublimity in Alwan." As for the individual names in the novel, some are connected to their general meanings, like Tarzan, Al-Junaidi, and Sana'a, which refer to youth, Sufism, and innocence, respectively. While other names allow for connections to their connotations: Nour, who accompanied Saeed Mahran throughout the events, remained a bright spot in his life until he closed his eyes in her hands, despite her harsh social status as a girl embraced by the night to find sustenance during the day. Nabawiya, the treacherous wife, might be closer to "Nabawiya" meaning distance and separation. These characters, as vital components of the narrative text,

cannot imply a meaning outside their narrative context because their presence within interconnected relationships, marked by connection and separation, alone provides multiple interpretative readings of their symbolism, in light of the growing internal movement of the text, which remains governed by dualistic tensions of contradiction or integration, between the behaviors of these active forces (Abdel Ghani 92-93).

Imagery was also a means of intensifying dramatic tension. When Saeed first saw Nour at Tarzan's café, her face was completely hidden under thick makeup, and her white dress exuded allure. Her limbs and legs were unashamedly exposed, and the dress was pulled around her body like elastic, leading to a cry of indecency, and her short hair flared in the wind (Mahfouz 49). This image created a barrier between Saeed and Nour, leaving Saeed to pity her and be repulsed by her, not acknowledging his love for her until after her disappearance. It also symbolized her shame over her disgraceful behavior, as she concealed her true face under makeup to hide her reality as she aged, though she appeared disheveled otherwise.

Saeed opens the novel by portraying his attack on his enemies

as an inevitable force and comparing Sana'a to dust and nastiness when she crosses his mind, with tenderness shining after rain. The imagery highlights his anger, and Sana'a remains his point of weakness, who symbolizes purity and innocence. While Saeed compares Alish to a dog, he also compares him to a beetle, a scorpion, and a worm to symbolize his insignificance. He is pained by the fear that grows within him, telling the Sheikh that she withdrew from him as if he were a devil; he compares Raouf to a riddle which he must solve and Raouf's house to a battlefield reflecting his perception of the changes around him.

When he compares Sana'a to a thorn embedded in his chest (Mahfouz 59), he refers to his hesitation in killing her mother and his fear for her future in his absence. He again portrays himself as a devil and is depicted by the Sheikh as a child exposed to the sun's rays, yearning for shade but continuing to walk (Mahfouz 65-66), indicating the overpowering desire for revenge and his continuation in this torment.

Nour sympathizes with him after he tells her of his wife's betrayal, comparing her to a sow, but he does not like her pity, instead likening her through stream of consciousness to a waste of bullets in innocent chests.

When she tried to comfort him by saying he did not deserve her, he responded similarly: "You are right, and no woman is deserving, but you are full of vitality, and you are teetering on the edge. One puff and you will extinguish. All I feel for you is pity" (Mahfouz 75).

The novel is replete with images that reflect the tension, anxiety, and disturbed emotions of Saeed Mahran, and rhetorical methods also serve to highlight these feelings. "But where is Raouf Alwan? The student house and those strange past days, the brilliant enthusiasm represented in the image of a rural student, shabby in appearance, big-hearted, with a sincere, shining pen. What has happened to the world? What lies behind these wonders and mysteries? Were there any events like those at Al-Sirafi Alley? ... I wonder, how are you today, Raouf? Have you changed like Nabawiyya? Will you deny me, just like Sana did? Isn't it strange that 'Alwan' rhymes with 'Mahran'? And that 'Alysh' would possess all the fruits of my labor through the trickery of dogs" (Mahfouz 29-72)?

This expresses the profound shock he feels toward his teacher and role model, who once planted in him the seeds of rebellion against the

corrupt conditions but eventually turned against them.

### **\* Conclusion**

Naguib Mahfouz successfully employed modern techniques to intensify the dramatic tension in his novel, making it resemble detective stories according to some critics. He made both time and place sources of internal conflict within the main character, as they played roles similar to the other characters in the novel, constantly haunting Said Mahran from beginning to end. Mahfouz also used other techniques to increase this tension, such as the stream of consciousness, which involves the overlap of past, present, and future through flashbacks and foreshadowing. Additionally, he employed cinematic techniques like montage to merge different timeframes into a single scene, which contributed to the tension and conflict.

If space held dramatic significance as the environment that shaped the character, time had the same dramatic weight, acting as a catalyst for action or murder.

Symbols and metaphors were not absent from this dynamic. Given that the novel is expressionistic, its characters, times, and places are more symbolic than realistic. This symbolism further fueled the tension

and conflict, as these elements represented positive or negative values that either attracted or repelled each other, creating intense conflict. The novel is rich in metaphor, with diverse rhetorical styles that highlight and amplify the tension and conflict, making these elements both a result of the tension and a driving force for the character to continue until she meets her fate.

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