

Justify Event "A Comparative Study between Adham Adel's 'Black Imagination' and Dostoevsky's Messages from Underground"

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Abstract: The experimental novel represents a new literary model that is open to various literary genres, both in form and content. This new style has revolutionized classical novel patterns by introducing contrasting concepts to old narrative elements and techniques. Its focus revolves around the self, delving into its concerns, fears, and new perspectives within the dialectical context between self and other, or between subjective and objective realms. This new style has paved the way for several comparative studies between diverse experimental novel styles, diverging in their presentation of the concept of the new experimental novel. This research aims to present a comparative study between Adham Adel's "Black Imagination" and Fyodor Dostoevsky's "Notes from Underground" to explore one of the key foundations of the experimental novella "the meta-narrative or event justification. The objective is to comprehend the thematic significance and aesthetic components inherent in this style through its utilization of the meta-narrative mechanism in the narrative text.

Keywords: Justify event, Black Imagination, Notes from Underground.

Introduction

The novel remains an art constantly in pursuit and evolution, seldom settling into a fixed state, owing to the nature of literature that does not adhere to codification or conventionality. If literature is an open creative structure accommodating novelty in form and content, it is more appropriate for the novel to embody the nature of open and novel transformations. As a prominent and prevalent literary genre, novelists strive within this creative arena to break conventional norms and present that which is contrary and new.

The openness and transformation inherent in the art of the novel stem from various reasons and factors. Some relate to the taste of the audience in accordance with the nature of the evolving and changing era. Others pertain to the self-creativity of the novelist, persistently endeavoring to transcend the norms to showcase their distinctive and unique literary personality. This pursuit in venturing into the adventure of seeking innovation is what is known as novelistic experimentation, or rather the concept of novel experimentation, the so-called non-novel novel or meta-narrative novel, as perceived by critics, constitutes one of the fundamental facets in the issue of novelistic innovation.

The experimental novel, in general, emerges from a philosophical and existential backdrop concerned with the self, its life, and its destiny. Thus, experimentation in the novel blends with the narrative self, intertwining narrative elements with the writerly self. This amalgamation occurs because the experimentalists' vision of the self, society, and the world hinges on the significance of the self's role in effecting change. This doesn't necessarily confine itself to the sought-after positive change as desired by reformers, philosophers, and writers. In the context of the new novel, it doesn't adhere to the conventional ideological revolutionary concept. Instead, this change may manifest as a retaliatory revolution against both the self and society alike, based on the

confrontational relationship upon which it is founded. In the experimental novel, we encounter divergent paths or myriad conflicting trajectories. We glimpse the contradictions within the self and its relationship with society simultaneously. This leads us to scrutinize the intricacies of psychological dimensions, delving into them within the context of the dialectical structure that unites the self with the individual or collective 'other.' This characteristic grants the experimental novel the capacity to transcend conventional and profound forms, experimenting with new tools and creating vibrant forms⁽¹⁾

"Experimentation, at its core, is grounded in the meanings associated with choice, knowledge, inquiry, and awareness⁽²⁾ , "Ultimately, leading either to knowledge and truth or to the artistic aesthetic value that varies from one creator to another. The term 'experimentation' stands as a companion to innovation, and perhaps Émile Zola was the first to link the term 'experimentation' with the novel in his renowned book 'The Experimental Novel.' Zola aimed, through this description, to portray the novel as a product of an experiment built upon the gathering of observations, facts, and data before shaping them into a narrative structure that confers upon it authenticity akin to the truthfulness found in scientific experiments⁽³⁾ . "This suggests that every novelist has the right to express their own experience through their unique style, by portraying their observations about the behavior of characters that carry within them their realistic or natural references, thus endowing them with an element of credibility, that is, artistic authenticity.

A definition of the concept of experimentation in the novel states it as 'a literary strategy aiming to subvert patterns and models, aspiring to keep writing within the genre always open, imploring the continuous quest for a new form and a renewed vision⁽⁴⁾ . "In essence, experimentation is a means to break away from the prevalent and the familiar, a rebellion against conventional classical molds, thereby making writing a form of various literary genres.

Salah Fadl defines experimentation by stating: 'Experimentation is the companion of creativity as it involves innovating new methods and techniques within various artistic expressions. It embodies the essence and truth of creativity when it transcends the familiar and ventures into the heart of the future⁽⁵⁾ .

If this implies that creators or writers have the freedom to experiment and venture into creating new narrative forms, it necessarily demands comprehensive awareness and a profound understanding of narrative components. These components serve as the grounds for renewal, creativity, and distinction by diverging from the familiar patterns in classical storytelling. In general, the experimental novel is regarded as the 'novel of freedom.' It establishes its own laws, respects the authority of imagination, and embraces the continuous law of transcendence. Therefore, it rejects any authority outside the text, undermining any experiment outside the pure self-experimentation. For each unique event, there exist various forms of diverse storytelling, and every new novel seeks to establish its operational laws while simultaneously allowing for their deconstruction⁽⁶⁾ .

¹) Boushusha Ben Jemaa, *Al-Tajrib wa Artahalat Al-Sard Al-Ruwa'i Al-Maghribi* (Experimentation and Narratological Wanderings in Maghrebi Fiction), Al-Maghrebia Publishing and Distribution, Tunisia, 1st edition, 2003, p. 103.

²) Ibn Manzur. "Lisan al-Arab." Dar Sader, Beirut, 1997. Vol. 1, p. 262.

³) Mohammed Bradah. "Al-Riwaya Al-Arabiyya wa Rihan al-Tajdid." Dar Al-Sada Lil Tab'a Wal Nashr, 1st edition, Dubai, 2011. p. 48.

⁴) Mohamed Al-Bardi. "Fi Nazariyyat Al-Riwaya." Sarass Publishing, Tunisia, 1996. p. 173.

⁵) Salah Fadl. "Lazat Al-Tajrib Al-Ruwayi." Atlas Publishing and Media Production, Cairo, 1st edition, 2005. p. 3.

⁶) Mohammed Al-Bardi. "Inshi'iyyat Al-Khitab fi Al-Riwaya Al-Arabiyya Al-Haditha." University Publishing Center, Tunis, 2004. p. 291.

In this context, there's a strong connection between the concept of experimentation in the novel and the concept of modernity, which implies breaking away from the conventional and shattering ready-made rules, aiming toward forging a new creative horizon in writing.

The justification for innovation in the experimental novel lies in being one of the manifestations of the new literary form that blends narration and meta-narration within the context of equality in exploring the details of the dominant narrative voice, amidst a dialectical relationship with other voices, regardless of their forms and semantic coding.

Firstly: Experimental Narration in Arab and Western Novels.

The aspects of innovation in Western novels emerged prominently after the two World Wars in Europe and America. This led to a shift in philosophical and critical thinking, consequently influencing the narrative structure. This leap forward was strongly linked to societal and historical development, particularly through the contributions of French writers like Alain Robbe-Grillet, Claude Simon, Michel Butor, and others. These novelists, among others, advocated for a renewal in novelistic writing, emphasizing that "the novelist's power lies in their ability to create freely and without a model." This experimental movement aimed at liberating from imposed and obsolete norms, seeking what is free, authentic, and vital⁽⁷⁾.

Space is not space, time is not time, language is not language, nor anything that was customary in traditional narrative.⁸ This is elucidated by Michel Butor in his concept of renewal, which involves breaking away from prevailing patterns and disrupting old habits. A novelist who rejects this action, who does not upend customs or challenge the reader's effort, nor compel a return to self-reflection regarding long-established conditions, certainly achieves easy success. However, they position themselves as a partner to this deep concern and to this dark night in which one fumbles.⁹ In this context, Butor justifies the purpose of renewal by observing that "the world we live in is rapidly changing, and traditional narrative techniques are no longer adequate to encompass all the new relationships arising from this new situation." Consequently, this constant unease emerges, making it difficult for us to organize within our consciousness all the information assaulting it because "we lack the necessary tools."¹⁰ In her book "عهد الريبة" (The Era of Doubt), Natalie Sarout undertook an analysis of the works of Dostoevsky, Kafka, and Tolstoy. She identified elements of renewal and departure from the conventional in their works, affirming that her era was characterized by doubt and uncertainty within prevailing artistic styles. She advocated for a reconsideration of all the components of traditional novels, encompassing their structural framework, social and political implications, and their societal function.¹¹ Generally, Western experimental novels are founded upon the principle of freedom as a fundamental element in the creative process. They have allowed innovative novelists to transcend classical rules, break them, and produce new narrative techniques.

In contrast, an examination of experimentation in Arab novels reveals a certain lag compared to its Western counterpart. Although the motivations leading to innovation in this literary genre are similar regarding the social, political, and economic upheavals affecting these societies, there's a clear disparity. The emergence and proliferation of experimentation in Arab novels during the last

⁷) Al-Bardi, Mohammed. "Inshi'yyat Al-Khitab fi Al-Riwaya Al-Arabiyya Al-Haditha." Publisher: M.S, p. 291.

⁸ Abdel-Malik Murtadah. "Title of the Book: A Study on Narrative Techniques." Al-Kuwait: Al-'Alam Al-Ma'rifah Publishing, 1998, p. 48.

⁹ Michel Butor. "Research on the New Novel." Translated by Farid Antonius. Beirut, Paris: Aouidat Publications, 2nd edition, 1982, p. 8.

¹⁰ M.N. (Year). Title of the Book. Publisher, p. 7.

¹¹ Mohammed Al-Bardi. "The Arab Novel and Modernity." Damascus: Dar Al-Hiwar for Publishing and Distribution, 2nd edition, 2002, p. 70.

quarter of the 20th century were rooted in literary, cultural, civilizational, and local foundations. This evolution also derived from external influences and openness to ancient storytelling heritage, alongside pivotal historical events like the 1967 defeat, shaking the national and historical constants.¹²

The past decade has witnessed severe fractures within Arab societies due to popular uprisings, internal conflicts, and increased external interference in various aspects of social life. These circumstances have propelled writers and intellectuals to rebel against traditional norms and structures. Consequently, a new kind of fiction emerged—the new novel or experimental novel.

The observer might notice broad similarities among the experiments of novelists regarding the new or experimental novel. However, each experiment must stand out distinctly in terms of its artistic and aesthetic dimension. It's unique in its questions, structural details, literary and linguistic concepts, foundations, and aesthetic philosophy.¹³

This impetus led them to engage strongly with the developments in local and global literary thought. They sought new structural relationships diverging from the traditional novel. The practice of experimentation liberated Arab novelists from rigid adherence to the formal craftsmanship seen throughout the history of world literature. It also encouraged them to incorporate elements linked to the social, cultural, and heritage context.¹⁴ This paved the way for a free transition from realistic life and its details to an imaginative, non-realistic life that possessed its own aesthetic uniqueness. This shift was marked by breaking the linearity of narrative, expressing the self and its unconscious implications, liberating the body, shattering the chains of time, and expanding reality to encompass dreams, poetry, and waking dreams.¹⁵ The enigmatic and divided nature of Arab society, leading to a sense of ambiguity and confusion, has caused the foundations of logic and rationality to be obscured. This has made experimental narrative forms strongly prevalent, embodying a new objective reality in a style that parallels reality in terms of confusion, lack of discipline, and irrationality. While this trait might be considered negative concerning Arab societal objectivity, it assumes a positive aspect in the realm of experimental art. It allows for a profound exploration of the societal reality, revealing its symbols, transformations, and the psychological manifestations of its characters. This approach presents what could be termed as logic within illogic or centrality within transformation or the familiar within the unfamiliar. It aligns with the era's nature, unconstrained by sequential storytelling, causal relationships, or conventional character depictions, temporal and spatial dimensions, deviating from the typical narrative techniques seen in classical literature.

Often, the reader is intrigued by the issue of the new language employed in experimental novels, as it often closely resembles the style of documentation that relies on a direct approach. It completely lacks any narrative tendency that could associate it with storytelling in general, despite this style having aesthetic and visual elements. Perhaps James Joyce's quote, "I am a part of this genre, this country, this life, and I will express myself as I am," explains the reason behind this.¹⁶ It means that the writer is free to express themselves in a linguistic style they find suitable and aligned with the nature of their mental ideas and intense emotions. The writer submits themselves to these thoughts and turbulent feelings, playing the role of a recorder or documenter of the stream of consciousness,

¹² Shukri Aziz Al-Madi, *Patterns of the New Arabic Novel*, Al-Ma'arifa Publishing, Kuwait, 2008, p. 17.

¹³ M.N., p. 17

¹⁴ Mohammed Bradah, *The Arabic Novel and the Challenge of Renewal*, M.S., p. 49.

¹⁵ Abdel Majeed Al-Hussaib, *The New Arabic Novel and the Language Problem*, Modern Books World for Publishing and Distribution, Irbid, 1st edition, 2014, p. 29."

¹⁶ Shaban Abdul Hakim Mohammed, "The New Arabic Novel: A Study in Narrative Mechanics and Textual Readings," Al-Waraq Publishers and Distributors, Amman, 1st edition, 2014, p. 25.

continuously progressing without pause or consideration for the artistic aspects upon which novels typically rely. How, then, can we term this narrative style as experimental? Moreover, the new aesthetic aspect observed in this experimental pattern is rooted in breaking the horizon of expectation, where the human experience becomes elusive, events' trajectories challenging to predict. This manifests in formal developments that construct a narrative skeptical of presenting the world in a clear, coherent, or cohesive manner.¹⁷ This requires the reader to be more conscious and attentive in their interaction with this new style of unconventional and unfamiliar writing. While discussing experimental fiction might tempt us to delve into all that is novel in terms of form and content, within the confines of this research, we will focus on the most prominent aspect of this type of novel, specifically the mechanism used to justify the narrative event. This concept sheds light on several distinctive aspects of this narrative style, such as textual companions, metanarrative elements, meaning that these elements enable scholars to discern the writer or novelist's approach in justifying the narrative event.

The similarity in how several Arab and Western writers justify narrative events in the new experimental novel prompted us to conduct a comparative study within this framework, comparing the novels "Black Imagination" by the Iraqi writer Adham Adel and "Letters from the Underworld" by the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky.

Secondly, the justification of events between the novels "Black Imagination" and "Notes from Underground."

The novels "Black Imagination" and "Notes from Underground" fall under the category of experimental fiction. Despite intersections and points of similarity, each novel carries its own aesthetic characteristics and distinctive creative essence.

We can identify the key similarities between the two novels as follows:

1. Both novels are introspective, revolving around a central character who is essentially the author themselves. Despite the multiplicity of voices within the novel, there's a discernible concept of dialogue, as expressed through dualities.
2. Both novels employ a narrative approach that combines storytelling with metanarrative elements. After each narrative segment, the author provides observations and commentary, addressing the presumed questions circulating in the mind of the implicit reader. These aspects are part of justifying the narrative event.

The two authors diverged in their approach to employing metanarrative structure. Adham Adel alternated between narrative and metanarrative events in "Black Imagination" in a regular and sequential manner. Conversely, Dostoevsky divided his literary work into two parts. "Notes from Underground" comprised the primary metanarrative event, while "The Fresh Snow" consisted of the narrative with the author's observations.

Regarding the distinct aesthetic characteristics of each novel, Adham Adel in "Black Imagination" blended reality and imagination, hinting at a state of conflict or a dialectical relationship between reality and possibility, freedom and slavery, humanity and injustice. The idea of the enslaved individual subject to objective conditions, juxtaposed with the notion of the free human, creating a new, liberated from historical constraints. This blend embodies a fusion of the familiar and unfamiliar, truth and illusion, reality and imagination, presenting both the human as a reality and the human as a possibility.

¹⁷ Fakhri Saleh, "In the New Arabic Novel," Arab Scientific Publishers, Al-Ikhtilaf Publications, Algeria, 1st edition, 2009, p. 14.

The novel "Notes from Underground" by Dostoevsky diverges by delving into realistic details, where the author meticulously explores the intricacies of human psychology or the individual self-caught between reality and aspiration. Within a dialectical framework, a strong conflict emerges between slavery and freedom—the slavery imposed by objective and social reality and the freedom emanating from the depths of human self as the ultimate human essence.

Both novelists portray a synthesis of these ideas within various scenes derived from reality, within a dialectical relationship with the imagined or the desired. While Adham Adel leaned into multiple imaginative scenes in his novel, they essentially represent realistic thoughts through their various characters and implications. These thoughts nearly equate to an objective reflection of reality in its true essence. In other words, Adham Adel integrated imagination into reality, blurring the lines between reality and imagination—they became two sides of the same coin.

However, Dostoevsky maintained absolute realism in the course of his novel, impacting the commitment to the realism of the overall scenes presented without diminishing the poetic narrative quality of his storytelling. This fundamental difference can be attributed to two main factors: one subjective, the other objective. The subjective factor lies in the unique perspective of each novelist in handling the array of realistic and psychological events portrayed in their novels and the artistic style they preferred in presenting the creative form of narration. The objective factor returns to the differing nature of society and the circumstances of the era that led each author to present and comment on events in a manner they deemed suitable and coherent with the conditions of contemporary civilization.

A-The Textual Thresholds:

The textual thresholds refer to the collection of discourse openings that accompany a text or a book, including the book's title, cover, publisher's note, and beyond.¹⁸

"The naming of textual thresholds varies based on translation, with terms such as 'manas,' 'accompanying text,' 'parallel publishing,' and so on.

Textual thresholds represent a semiotic phenomenon, bearing parallel or complementary significance to the narrative text. They have been notably utilized in modern times, drawing attention due to their semantic or semiotic importance, whether as closed or open linguistic structures.

This discussion focuses on aspects serving the research by uncovering the sites of narrative justification identified by the thresholds of 'dedication' and 'preface' in the novel 'Black Imagination' and the 'preface' in 'Notes from Underground.'

Genette distinguishes between two dedications: a personal dedication directed by the author to close acquaintances, characterized by realism and materiality, and a general dedication addressing moral figures such as institutions, entities, organizations, and symbols like freedom, peace, and justice.¹⁹ (Adel) dedicates the following: "To those whom the world has wronged..²⁰ The structure of this dedication entails a justificatory dimension for a series of events forming an absent text prior to delving into the narrative content. The reader perceives, through an awareness of the connotative structure of the dedication, that the entirety of the narrative event is essentially a justification for the concept of injustice that humans face in worldly life. The implication of the

¹⁸ Abdelhak Belabed, "Thresholds of Gérard Genette from Text to Threshold," Publications of Diversity, Arab House of Scientific Publishers, Algeria, 1st edition, 2008, p. 44.

¹⁹ M.N,P 93

²⁰ Adham Adel, "Black Fantasy (Welcome to My Mind)," Sutoor Publishing and Distribution House, 5th edition, Baghdad, 2021, p. 7.

dedication converges with what the author also expresses within his novel through accompanying textual elements, such as quotations or sayings. These construct a justificatory framework closely linked to the dialectics of justice and injustice. Among them, a verse from a poem by the Syrian poet Riad Al-Saleh Al-Hussein is cited:²¹

Justice is running with my beloved
 Through the world's narrow streets,
 Without guards asking for my phone number
 Or my lost identity.
 Justice is casting myself into the vast sea
 Confident no one will grip my ear
 And lead me back to the grave
 Claiming suicide isn't sanctioned by laws or creeds.
 Justice is quietly eating my bread,
 Strolling into cinemas with tranquility,
 Singing in serenity,
 Kissing my beloved quietly, dying without a fuss.

The poem, as poetry, introduces a new functional field – that of the novel – as it forms an integral part of the narrative text. It stands as a significant signifier of the nature of the narrative justification established by the author from the outset. The structured poem places us within the discourse indicated by the dialectics of justice and injustice. The discussion of justice serves as justification for the reality of injustice portrayed by the author through events and facts within the narrative. Without the constraints on personal freedoms (my phone number or my lost identity) under the pretext of security, and the denial of free will in choice (claiming suicide is not sanctioned by laws and creeds), and without the noise, anxiety, and fear that enveloped all aspects of life (quietly eating my bread, going... singing... kissing my beloved...), without all that, the dream of justice wouldn't fill the soul and mind. This reveals the tragic reality of a divided self, torn between its objective reality and the haunting pursuit of liberation and justice, serving as justification for the muted voice of the self-suppressed by the oppressive force of the dark reality it lives in.

Furthermore, the statement by Australian lecturer Nicholas Fogesik adds another layer of justification for the trajectory of events revealed by the narrative structure.²²

Here's an academic English version of the provided excerpt:

This structure reveals the concept of humanity as an existential necessity justified by the state of brutality and inhumanity inherent in humans. Additionally, reconciliation with oneself also serves as a justification for those wronged by the world and robbed of their complete existence. The physically healthy are also deprived, spiritually and mentally, from a perspective different from that of the body.

The choice of attributes by the author for both the Syrian poet and the Australian lecturer is noteworthy. Riyadh Al-Hussein is characterized by "loss of speech in his childhood," while

²¹ M.N,P5

²² M.N,P6

Fogesik is defined by his "limb deficiency syndrome." Both attributes play an important role in justifying the narrative event, shaping the image of the protagonist (Awadhi) as an objective equivalent to the author's own identity. It serves as an objective justification for his adoption of this character specifically. Dostoevsky, in his novel "Notes from Underground" or "The Man from the Underground," emphasizes this point: "The author of these memoirs, and the memoirs themselves, are fictitious. However, I do not mean by this that such a person cannot exist in society; I mean that he really does exist. Readers can confirm this by examining the circumstances under which our society is emerging. I have attempted to portray one of the individuals from the recent past of public opinion, in a more accurate and distinct description than the common one, as he represents a generation that is still alive. This individual presents himself and his opinions in the first part, as if trying to clarify the reasons for his emergence in our society. As for the second part, it contains real observations related to his persona and specific incidents from his life."²³

This introduction serves as a significant textual sign in justifying the narrative event. Dostoevsky justifies his focus on the model of the character central to the novel as a symbolic carrier that can be measured against a broad segment of the oppressed class in society. This character, or the discussion about it, acts as a pre-justification for the events associated with this figure within the context of the observations presented in the narrative text.

We deduce from the absent text, directed by the mentioned textual accompaniment, a premeditated justification where the author deliberately hints at or alludes to it. The reason for his insistence on this fictional character, despite its significant potential to assert itself forcefully as plausible and realistic, can be attributed to the nature of the social reality and its inhumane conditions that actively and directly impacted the creation of a marginalized, oppressed "self" with acquired traits contradicting its authentic human essence.

Hence, the specific textual thresholds in this context appear to be valid justifications, serving as a preconceived structure the author presents beforehand for the sequence of facts and events in the novelistic text. This invokes the concept of a result presented before the cause or what could be termed as a foreshadowing technique in narrating the story. From the outset of the novel, we are drawn into a modern conclusion in a pre-justificatory manner, followed by the presentation of events that infuse the narrative work with a sense of modernity and innovation, solidifying the experimental tendency in dealing with its accompanying details.

B-Metanarrative

The discussion about metanarrative revolves around the narrative's discussion of itself and has many names such as "beyond narration," "metafiction," "metanarrative," "narrative self-awareness," and so forth. It embodies a self-awareness in writing, where the author addresses the concerns and practices of writing, the position of writers, and their condition. Generally, the concept of metanarrative is defined as those writings that examine narrative systems and their innovation, along with the employed style to shape and refine reality through narrative assumptions and conventions.²⁴ What concerns us here is the self-referential aspect linked to justifying the narrative event. Writing in the novel reverts to itself, where the author speaks within the narrative about that very narrative, its concept, the circumstances and context in which it was created, the way character names and actions are chosen. Thus, the reader's attention is directed towards the narrative process rather than the narrative's subject.

²³ Fyodor Dostoevsky, "Notes from Underground," translated by Anis Zaki Hassan, Al-Ahliyya for Publishing and Distribution, Jordan, 2nd edition, 2017, pp. 11/12.

²⁴ Ahmed Khreis, "Al-Awalim Al-Metaqsiya fi Al-Riwayah Al-Arabiyya," Dar Azmanah for Publishing and Distribution, Qatar, 1st edition, 2001, p. 14.

The events of the novel "Black Fantasy" unfold in the form of a speaker, an unidentified young man, who creates a deformed, deaf, and mute child through narration. It appears through the narration that this young man is the author himself, indicated by the pronoun used by the speaker, and in line with the nature of metanarrative where the author explicitly refers to himself. For instance, when describing events related to the young man, the author says: "It all started when I took sad cypress trees to make legs and arms, green leaves for hands and feet, then I took a big yellow apple for a face, grapes for eyes, a small carrot for a nose, a big banana for a mouth, but before placing it, I said to myself: 'It will talk too much,' so I replaced it with half an orange, threw it on the pavement, and looked at the sky, saying: 'Mercy, oh blue heavens,' and it rained on this heap, shaping a deformed human. Before it could speak, I said to myself: 'What good is a speaking or hearing weeper? What have speakers and listeners benefited us? This world has only increased misery and suffering because of the sane ones.' So, I made it disabled, neither hearing nor speaking."²⁵ The events of the novel unfold as the speaker begins to distort the features of the child, depriving them entirely of speech, rendering them an orphan, melancholic, and miserable. The speaker justifies this by saying: "Perhaps you have chosen a little or a lot in this disturbing narrative. This is not my story, not my reality, not my life and world. This is my imagination, my sick black imagination, my delusions that know no bounds, my hallucinations, my dreams, my illnesses, and my senility. I am imagining, imagining only..."²⁶

It's a troubled imagination that led the speaker to create a disfigured character, whom they'll call "Awadhi" not to serve as an equivalent to their own disfigured or impaired reality, but rather as a means to combat reality with something of its own kind. It serves as compensation, countering their defeat in the face of the cruelty of this dark reality and their collapse under its weight. The character "Awadhi" serves as both a technical and thematic counterpart to the speaker and reality simultaneously. Despite appearing in a context that seems imaginative and illogical, artistically, this character is acceptable due to the intense realistic possibility it embodies, portraying the nature of the self – the speaker – and its relationship with the subject, reality, or the other.

This concept, presented by Adel in an artistic manner, finds resonance in Dostoevsky's works albeit through a more direct approach. Dostoevsky articulates this within a logical argumentation enriched with a philosophical dimension stemming from vivid realistic observations and profound contemplations about the essence of human nature in his era. It's the idea of deformation itself, human deformation as a form for Adel and as substance for Dostoevsky. Dostoevsky states: "Yes, the individual in the 19th century must not be a creature but a characterless being. As for the human who possesses character, the active human, they are a limited creature. That is what I have learned during these forty years."²⁷ In this, the author presents a justification for what the personality of the 19th century ought to be, suggesting that it cannot fit into a limited set of characteristics, either unilaterally positive or negative. Rather, it's a blend of this and that, or rather: a lost personality unsure of its own nature. The author expresses: "It wasn't just that I couldn't be vindictive; I didn't know how to be anything! I couldn't be vindictive or kind-hearted, neither a villain nor trustworthy, not a hero nor an insect."²⁸

The character of Dostoevsky appears to symbolically represent the overall personality of the 19th century. In his voice, we hear the echoes of society, and within his features, we perceive the characteristics and nature of the community. Even if not meticulously detailed, he strives resolutely

²⁵ Adham Adel, "Black Fantasy," /M.S , pp. 11/12.

²⁶ M.N,P15

²⁷ Fyodor Dostoevsky's work "Notes from Underground" M.N,P19

²⁸ M.N,P19

to become a copy of his society and its traits, not for anything but to be capable of paralleling and persisting within it. This idea parallels the concept of creating "Awadhi" that Adham Adel preferred. In other words, we can read strong traits of Dostoevsky's personality within "Awadhi," and vice versa.

Adham Adel renders his own character, or the character of the narrator within the novel, as a liminal persona with a dual nature shared by reality and imagination, truth and illusion, existence and non-existence simultaneously. This character speaks but isn't heard, sees but isn't seen, gazes but isn't gazed upon, signifying an enigmatic persona. The author comprehends and presents this enigma in the form of a question posed through the internalized or imagined recipient, articulated by "Bakhit" in dialogues: "How do you speak with the old woman and whisper in front of her, hang on and get angry near her, mock and scream beside and behind her? Without even a hair of hers trembling... Doesn't she hear you, see you, feel you, doubt your existence? Doesn't even a shadow hint at you?!..."²⁹ The author justifies their stance by asserting their freedom within their imagination. Everything within the realm of imagination is permissible and possible. However, their imagination encompasses objective reality, not just whimsy or delirium. It's a justified imagination. Consequently, we see the author staunchly defending their inclination towards imagination in shaping the narrative trajectory: "I don't understand the insistence in my comprehension?! Why insist on making everything real and tangible? Hasn't reality provided enough misery? Hasn't reality been sufficient in its failure, frustration, and breakdown? Aren't the graves, martyrs, diseases, mourners, graves, orphans, and widows all but reality? Aren't tears, sorrow, pain, illness, fear, loss, and torment all but reality?"³⁰ Indeed, even though we face a fantastical, illogical imagination, it's not frivolous but rather an imagination imbued with strong elements of reality and truth. Especially since the author's ultimate goal justifies their artistic purpose in what they have reached: "Now I can turn the mute child into a winged horse and escape with the old woman to paradise, but I won't do that. I won't do it because I am too despicable to make endings happy! My black imagination, like a swamp, possesses enough evil to be human!"³¹ Adham Adel seems to emanate from a thoughtful consideration of evil as the essence of human life, almost as an inherent inclination ingrained within humanity. Therefore, he presents his earlier conception as a logical justification for what he has reached, a perspective aligning with the viewpoint expressed by Dostoevsky: "You cannot be a different human. Even if you have some faith and plenty of time to become another person, you don't want that. And even if you desired it, you wouldn't do anything about it because perhaps the reality doesn't offer the form you wish to become."³² The author denies the existence of a fundamentally good individual or a good society, presenting a stark justification for this belief: "The most horrifying aspect of it all unveils in the fact that everything aligns with the fundamental laws of nature, particularly intense cognition, including self-limitation, self-perpetuation, which is a direct consequence of the former. Hence, you're not capable of changing just yourself; you're utterly unable to do anything about it at all. Consequently, a person isn't to blame if they become despicable due to this intense cognition, offering solace to the despicable who acknowledges their despicability."³³

This reflects a unique awareness that evil is the essence of creation and the inherent nature of humans. Any attempt to change this is bound to fail catastrophically because those who attempt or even contemplate change are fighting against the laws of nature. Thus, their attempt is deemed futile and meaningless. While this justification might take on a different form, fundamentally, it

²⁹ Adham Adel, "Notes from Underground," /M.S,p19

³⁰ M.N,P18

³¹ M.N,P18/19

³² Fyodor Dostoevsky's work "Notes from Underground" M.N,P23

³³ M.N,P23

returns to the same essence. The author places responsibility on society for driving individuals to acquire and perpetuate the quality of evil. The intensity of acquiring this quality has made it an intrinsic trait, evident in the context of the author's relationships with friends in the novel and with Lisa, the woman who stirred a blend of love and resentment or goodness and evil within him: "They... they don't call for me... and I can't... I can't be good"³⁴ Certainly, Dostoevsky justifies in his narrative its cruelty and evilness, as society never allowed for the possibility of being a virtuous human or nurturing a balanced upbringing based on goodness and humanity. This justification is starkly evident in one of Adel's metanarrative moments: "On a cold morning, I left the house to go to school, and on the way, I found three men surrounding a child in an empty lot. Then they fired two hot shots into his head, causing his brain to settle on the ground, shattered, sticky, contaminated, and ruthless... and they fled... Since that night, the flowers and women have abandoned me, and I've started dreaming and imagining and thinking of blood, fear, murder, corpses, and men gnawing on children's bones with their teeth. My childhood has deserted me, gentlemen, and this dark, cruel, and bleak imagination has settled within me."³⁵

The dialectic struggle between good and evil, or justice and injustice, or humanity and savagery, is artistically embodied in what could be termed as the "necessity of choice." Humans are neither free nor autonomous but rather molded and conditioned by society's nature, behavior, and consequences. Both authors justified this necessity in their own ways. Adel justified it by saying: "In this world, there's no place for goodness, love, mercy, or truth. This world is a den for beasts, a nest for eagles, a cave for bears, a home for toxic black spiders, and this life is a train station. Either you travel or get crushed under the wheels like a mouse. The seats are reserved in advance for souls devoid of conscience, humanity, affection, kindness, love, and tolerance. Do you think we're humans?"³⁶ Therefore, it's either death or succumbing to the will of society, conforming to its norms and following its brutal and savage behavior, with no room for confrontation or attempt at change. Dostoevsky, in his approach to the subject, although aligning with Adel in justification at its core, stated: "Either I become a hero or become the very filth itself, there is no middle ground. However, this led to my destruction, for while I was drowning in filth, I comforted myself by thinking that I was a hero at other times. Thus, the hero covered up the filth, as if the ordinary mortal was ashamed to drown in it, but the hero was too noble to drown in it. Therefore, I immersed myself in that filth with a tranquil conscience."³⁷

This is an acknowledgment of what is inevitable, an admission of the futility of change. The society has settled into a state resembling a taboo that is impossible to breach or alter, and there is no means to ensure continuity except by surrendering to reality, even if it resembles fantasy, and to truth, even if it is closer to illusion: "All I mean is that it's better not to do anything! The best is to remain in a recognized state of continuity! So, welcome the depths of the earth. Although I said that I envy the natural man to the last drop of the bile he secretes from hatred, I do not care and do not wish to be in his place in the state he is in now."³⁸ So while Dostoevsky presented his justification for this reality directly and without evasion, Adel presented it to us in an artistic manner, making dreams an objective equivalent of reality, a mirrored image of it, and portraying his inability to change dreams as his inability to alter reality: "If I could control dreams, I wouldn't have left orphans at stations waiting for fathers who would never return from wars. I would have made them dream of their fathers while making paper airplanes in the fields. If I could control dreams, I would have dreamt of myself as a young child lying on soft grass under a big willow tree,

³⁴ M.N,P189

³⁵ Adham Adel, "Black Fantasy," /M.S , pp. 22/23.

³⁶ S.L,P47

³⁷ Fyodor Dostoevsky's work "Notes from Underground" S.L,P90

³⁸ S.L,P65

its leaves were my mother's laughter, and its branches were my father's eyes. A little bird chirping in my armpit while I kicked my feet in laughter and joy... I would have entered that dream and never left it.³⁹

Faced with this inevitability that holds sway over one's reality and imagination simultaneously, the idea of freedom, strongly apparent in both novels, seems to carry a contrasting connotation, implying that the freedom of actions exhibited by both characters in the novels is, in fact, an absolute compulsion beyond human control: "I imagined that I created a mute child... since the children created by the sick imagination of writers cannot be kept like dolls, I decided to send him to this old woman to raise him, but I will keep watching him, contemplating him, watching him grow and bloom, rejoice and sorrow. I will give him life, kill him, torment him, make him happy, make him sad. It's my right, he's mine, my creation, my imagination, my only child I brought out into the world."⁴⁰

Adel implies freedom in creating his child, Awadhi, within his imagination, suggesting himself as possessing an unrestrained imagination. Yet, he is, in reality, a captive to the pressures of actuality to the extent that his imagination succumbs completely to the overwhelming force of reality. His dream becomes a symbolic equivalent of reality in all its manifestations. We observe in the trajectory of his dream, at the narrative level, the features of reality and truth alone. If he had the liberty of his imagination, he would have depicted a contrary image of his child, Awadhi, in terms of its creation, and in the narrative course of events, illustrating a conscious literary attempt to escape from or evade reality towards the usual beauty, splendor, and tranquility that dreams are associated with. However, in his imagination - submitted to reality and its dominion over the self - he chooses to confront cruelty with cruelty, vengeance with vengeance, aiming to achieve a degree of psychological balance. This narrative path is novel, distant from the idyllic romantic tint that dreams offer, usually seen as a refuge disconnected from reality, an escape from its misery, torment, and pains.

Similarly, Dostoevsky takes a realistically similar approach, albeit in a direct style imbued with a philosophical hint within the context of justifying freedom of choice, even if it is foolish or against human interest: "In any place and at any time, a person prefers to act by their choice, not as dictated by their mind or interest. One might choose something against their own interests... We often misunderstand our benefits and consider them choices. At times, we opt for empty rhetoric because we perceive that empty rhetoric, in our foolishness, as the simplest means to achieve a presumed benefit... Nature won't ask us for permission, but we must accept it as it is without shaping it to our liking, even if we aspire to rules and laws or even if we aspire to chemical distillation, otherwise, it will be accepted whether we desire it or not..."⁴¹

The text explores the limitation of human choice within the confines of natural laws, debunking the illusion of free will. It asserts that one's choices are futile and arbitrary, bound by immutable natural laws beyond anyone's power to alter or reject. This painful reality, though distressing, necessitates acknowledgment and acceptance by the rational mind.

Furthermore, within the dialectics of self-relationship and its complexities between the self and the other, a manifestation of entrenched hatred and animosity within the self-unveils a dual significance based on confrontation, contradiction, or opposition. The positive connotation associated with this hatred is attributed to the profound human inclination that intermittently shines

³⁹ Adham Adel, "Black Fantasy," /M.S , pp. 230

⁴⁰ S.L,P15

⁴¹ Fyodor Dostoevsky's work "Notes from Underground" S.L,P47/50

through despite the self's attempts to suppress, truncate, or obliterate it. It's not surprising that this self-hatred or animosity harbored by the self towards itself or others serves as a potent justification for the deeply rooted human inclination, a result of fallacies, paradoxes, and harsh necessities imposed upon it. This sentiment echoes in various instances within the works of Dostoevsky, defending the freedom of choice that an individual feels exists within their humanity: "What is a human being without desires, without the freedom of their will, and without their choices? Is it not merely an argan and nothing more?"⁴² This serves as a justification for perceiving a bright life amid the darkness of grim reality. It signifies an appreciation for its radiance, splendor, and warmth: "Life is bitter even in adversity, yet it's preferable for a person to remain alive, no matter how harsh it may be. And what do you have now? Nothing but evil... Away with it or spit on it!"⁴³

In justifying his positive hatred, Adel associates it with the profound love he holds for his departed loved ones, whether they departed through separation or death, as portrayed in a hypothetical dialogue between him and the recipient:

"Ugh! Let the tears lie dormant beneath their cover and do not awaken them."

"To this extent!?"

"My beloved departed from me in succession, one after the other, in rows..."⁴⁴

These are moments of reversion and a return to the true self in its noble human elevation:

"Your discourse no longer carries that strength and cruelty. Why this sudden delicate vulnerability!?"

"It seems I am tired..."⁴⁵

The justification for negative animosity towards oneself and society arises from the imposition of social constructs onto one's identity that are fundamentally incongruent with their essence. Particularly when one perceives those asserting dominance over them as inferior in knowledge, understanding, and perception, the resentment towards them intensifies:

"And thus I despised them all, distanced myself, and retreated into my excessive wounded pride. Their coarseness intimidated me, and my face mocked them, as did my short stature. Yet, their faces were marked by dullness... They did not comprehend even the most basic necessities, and their interest lay solely in the mundane. They were unimpressed by depth of thought, which led me to consider them inferior to my level."⁴⁶

While Dostoevsky's animosity halted at the boundaries of the self without transforming into vengeance, Adel consciously justifies his vengeful thoughts within his imagination:

"Here I am suffering from neglect, solitude, fear, abandonment, and betrayal. Hence, I will depart from all of you in my upcoming imagination. In my fantasies, stories, mirages, illusions, and the characters I will create later on. I will depart from you with ferocity, determination, daring, and courage... I will turn you into nails for coffins, transform you into dying flies' wings, let terror occupy your chests, eyes, souls, and hearts. Bats will chase you under the sun, crows will pursue you in streets, forests, and alleys. Earthly creatures will emerge from their burrows to turn your years and days into dark pits... When subjected to injustice, oppression, deprivation, and

⁴² S.L,P49

⁴³ S.L,P143

³ Adham Adel, "Black Fantasy," /M.S , p293

⁴⁵ S.L,P240

⁴⁶ Fyodor Dostoevsky's work "Notes from Underground" S.L,P104

humiliation in your life, your retaliation against people comes in two forms: either in reality or in imagination. I belong to the second type.⁴⁷

All that has been mentioned might serve as a justification for the ultimate outcome shared by the two main personalities: the withdrawal and retreat from the cacophony of the bleak reality. The youthful self-became a refuge for the speaker's persona:

"They taunted me, labeled me as insane, described me with derision and early senility, nicknamed me as crazy. Whispering among yourselves as I passed by, saying to each other with laughter, 'Look at that one speaking to himself while walking the streets.' Therefore, I converse with myself. I searched for a single being in this universe to speak to and be heard by, yet I found none. Not an insect, a plant, a spring, a rock, a tree, nor a grain of sand. And when my face reflected for the first time atop a rippling surface of a swamp... from that moment on, I knew that no one hears me in this universe except myself.⁴⁸ The cellar where Dostoevsky spent his life represented his ultimate refuge, harboring all his divisions and torn ideologies despite his deep affection for Lisa, who could have potentially been the solace sought by the audience:

"I wished for everything to disappear, sought peace, and desired to remain alone in my meager corner. The harshness of the real life I was unaccustomed to had crushed me to the point where breathing seemed nearly impossible.⁴⁹

Results:

1. Experimental fiction presented a literary model open to various narrative techniques diverging significantly from the classical novel and its techniques. It predominantly adopted the first-person narrative or the narrator's conscience as the primary perspective in structuring the narrative path and storyline. This approach reveals the intricate and problematic nature of the relationship between the self and the other, whether human or thematic, and between the self and itself, in terms of the dialectical relationship with the subject.
2. Meta-narrative or narrative justification constituted a fundamental cornerstone in experimental fiction, serving as a parallel narrative or event. It entails formal and substantive functions. Formally, it disrupts the sequence of events, establishing a narrative pause where the narrator or writer emerges as a critic, justifier, and commentator on the course of the narrative events within a dialogic relationship between them and the implied or presumed recipient. Substantively, it provides insights, justifications, explanations, and revisions, offering the recipient an entrance into the realms of the subconscious self, understanding its emotions, thoughts, and anxieties, while aligning or adjusting the vision according to the narrator's creative perspective and their unique consciousness.
3. The novels "Black Fantasy" by Adham Adel and "Notes from Underground" by Dostoevsky stand as earnest examples of experimental fiction. They embody aesthetic characteristics at the formal level, represented by the use of meta-narrative or event justification mechanisms, and intellectual depth in thematic content. This content is epitomized by themes of nihilism, isolation, withdrawal from reality, and seeking refuge in the self as the final and sole shelter from the harshness of social reality and the dominance of the prevailing historical context of the new era. This portrayal illuminates the distinctive creative and intellectual features of both novelists.

⁴⁷ Adham Adel, "Black Fantasy," /M.S , p30/31

⁴⁸ S.L,P181/182

⁴⁹ Fyodor Dostoevsky's work "Notes from Underground"S.L,P194

4. Adham Adel's style, employing the technique of meta-narrative or event justification, is distinguished by its imaginative trajectory, characterized by extension, unfamiliarity, strangeness, and illogicality. However, the adopted imaginative space was not arbitrary but strategically employed as an artistic counterpart to objective reality, carrying its characteristics, features, and possibilities. It reveals the nature of the troubled and frustrated self within the framework of its relationship with social reality.
5. Dostoevsky, in his utilization of the meta-narrative or event justification technique, relied on a direct and clear approach or a straightforward linguistic style, opting to move away from the suggestive portrayal of ideas. This departure didn't compromise its artistic or stylistic significance.

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