



## The Philosophical Dimensions in the Black Decade Novel

### الأبعاد الفلسفية في رواية العشرينية السوداء

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#### Abstract :

In this paper, we aim to delve into the philosophical undertones that have charged the Black Decade novel, as exemplified in the works: "Archipelago of Flies by Bashir Mufti," "A Faceless Woman by Kamal Burkani," and "Deer's Blood by Mirzaq Biqtash." This exploration involves addressing the following questions: What are the philosophical values embedded in these novels? What artistic and literary dimensions do these philosophical values contribute to the thematic space of the novels? Why do novelists resort to posing such an immense array of inquiries within the narrative?

The philosophical questions raised in the three novels were not seeking answers as much as they aimed to showcase specific values such as patriotism, love, religion, reconciliation, friendship, and sacrifice, imparting aesthetic values to the literary texts under study.

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ستحاول في مداخلتنا هذه الوقوف عند الجمولة الفلسفية التي شحنت بها رواية العشرينية السوداء ممثلة في الروايات: "أرخبيل الذباب لبشير مفتى" و "امرأة بلا ملامح لكمال برkanى" و "دم الغزال لمرزاق بقطاش" و ذلك من خلال الإجابة عن التساؤلات التالية: ما هي القيم الفلسفية التي حملتها هذه الروايات؟ ما هو البعد الجمالي والأدبي التي أضافته هذه القيم الفلسفية على الفضاء المؤثر للروايات؟ لماذا يلجأ الروائي لطرح كل هذا الكم الهائل من التساؤلات في متن الرواية؟

لم تكن الأسئلة الفلسفية المثارة في الروايات الثلاثة تبحث عن جواب بقدر ما كانت الغاية منها اظهار قيم معينة كقيمة الوطن والحب والتصالح والصدقة والتضحية وقد أضاف ذلك بعدها جماليا على النصوص الأدبية محل الدراسة.

## 1. Introduction

If Arabic literature in general, and Algerian literature in particular, initially embarked on its journey by shouldering the responsibility of expressing societal realities, where the novelist articulated his individuality and ideology through the surrounding community, this dynamic evolved significantly. After the defeat of 1967, amidst the transformations in the political and cultural landscape, the novelist found himself turning inward, contemplating his troubled self. He began to unveil his secrets, daring to present his tumultuous journey before the public, transforming his creative text into a condemnation against the external environment that proved fatal to dreams and polluted life. (Nazih Abu Nidal, 2006, p. 13) Moreover, it extended beyond that to a quest for an ideal political reality that could be embodied in fictional characters aligned with their ideological inclinations.

The Algerian novelist's introspection deepened during the civil war that gripped Algeria in the 1990s. It was during this period that literary texts emerged, reflecting the novelist's apprehension in the face of physical threats that targeted politicians, writers, and journalists. "Thus, literary writing might disintegrate into fragments... because the shattered and fragmented self cannot produce literary criteria but rather a fragile structure and forms." (Nazih Abu Nidal, 2006, p. 13) In response, novels with heightened intellectual sensitivity appeared, attempting to shed light on the ongoing intellectual conflict between the intellectual and the surrounding circumstances.

Novels falling under the category of self-imagining emerged, "a term coined by the French novelist Serge Doubrovsky in 1977. Quickly adopted by critics, these novels are classified as autobiographical texts that engage in the self-casting of the author in possible scenarios, living through imaginative experiences and creating a winged narrative outside the bounds of reality." (Khaleel Shukri Hayas, 2010, p. 10) This allows the novelist to convey his thoughts openly behind fictional characters.

Furthermore, without explicit awareness, the crisis-born thought narrates itself, extracting language from its role as a mere artistic tool to consider it a perpetually expressive activity, intimately exploring the self, turning language into a tool for exploring subjective truths. (Jalila Turtur, 2004, p. 673) Consequently, language interrogates thought through multiple external meanings and symbols.

The concept of conflict and endless questioning serves as evidence of the philosophical presence of the narrating self in its imaginative narrative, signifying the author's stance within the text. This is affirmed by Mikhail Bakhtin when he stated, "It is no longer just about the forms of conveying the words of others, but in it also constantly appear seeds of its literary diagnosis. Just slightly shifting the perspective makes the convincing internal speech easily a subject of literary diagnosis. Then the image of the speaker integrates fundamentally and organically with some variations of that convincing speech: ethical speech 'the image of the just,' philosophical speech 'the image of the wise,' socio-political speech 'the image of the leader.'" (Mikhail Bakhtin, 1987, p. 112) This is evident in the novels "Archipelago of Flies" by Bashir Mufti, "A Faceless Woman" by Kamal Burkani, and "Deer's Blood" by MirzaqBiqtash.

The Black Decade novel, represented by the aforementioned works of Bashir Mufti, Kamal Burkani, and MirzaqBiqtash, attempted to interpret Algerian society amidst the tumultuous transformations of this challenging period. Its objective was to unveil the reasons behind the chaos, addressing the themes of terrorism and violence in various forms. Through philosophical inquiries, the novels aimed to reconstruct the ideal human, considering the novel as the literary genre most capable of artistically representing and reimagining reality.

## 2. Philosophical Character in "Archipelago of Flies":

The narrative self in the novel "Archipelago of Flies" displayed finesse in presenting its philosophy towards various issues, including:

- Philosophy of writing: The narrative self views writing as an act of joy, not pain. Writing about sorrow is considered a sinful act, stating, "... I did not think it was the sinful return, and that there was something to be written after the loss of signs and joys." (Bashir Mufti, 2010, p. 15)
- Philosophy of life: The narrative self asserts, "Life is full of coincidences. It inundates us with sorrows, and we must be stronger in facing them." (Bashir Mufti, 2010, p. 19) Additionally, it expresses, "I told him about life, defined by certain turns. Each turn imposes a certain path that we must walk... there may be a beautiful mistake waiting for you, or a bad fate that you must accept regardless of the situation." (Bashir Mufti, 2010, p. 136)
- Philosophy of people's love: The narrative self advises, "Do not let people love you too much, lest they think they have the right to control you." (Bashir Mufti, 2010, p. 97)
- Philosophy of love: The narrative self asserts, "Love is an immoral covenant with blind capability. We collide, love, merge; femininity and masculinity are laid bare in a captivating union. The transient creature reaches completeness alongside the full moon on a night of lunar brilliance, where the soul and body isolate themselves." (Bashir Mufti, 2010, p. 88)
- Philosophy of the world: The narrative self states, "...and if I arrive at that destructive vision, alone in this wretched year, I have no choice but to confront my fate. Grappling with my flaws and completing the deficiencies within myself." (Bashir Mufti, 2010, p. 111)
- Philosophy of Sharia: The narrative self opines, "Sharia is to not lift your head high... bow down to the ground, die like dump in the miserable wasteland." (Bashir Mufti, 2010, p. 90)

## 3. Philosophical Character in "A Faceless Woman"

The philosophical character also emerges in the novel "A Faceless Woman," as the author invokes his philosophical insights directly within the text. Examples of this include:

- Philosophy of revolution: Referring to the socialist revolution that left nothing but hunger and poverty for the Algerian people, the author states:

"The revolution is from the people and for the people.

Damn the revolution that favored its elites, casting its good sons into desolation, forgotten alleys, and cheap brothels...

A man with nobility coursing through his veins said:

"Damned is the revolution that made Ben Messali cry, and crushed Ben Boulaid!"

His neighbor added:

"Damn a homeland that provides me with neither bread nor a woman!" (Kamal Burkani, 2007, p. 14)

- Philosophy of soul connections: The author expresses, "Some people we know before birth, feel them before we meet them. When we do meet them, we love them passionately, believing that we did so because they lived with us for a long time!" (Kamal Burkani, 2007, p. 41)

- Philosophy of the impermanence of days: The narrative self advises, "Understand well that days do not come alike, but only humans can shape their moods to preserve what remains of the appetite for things that only come after death!" (Kamal Burkani, 2007, p. 47)

- Philosophy of living in the city of Batna: The author remarks, "There are neighborhoods for the living and others for the dead. First-class neighborhoods and neighborhoods of the last class." (Kamal Burkani, 2007, p. 70)

- Philosophy of sleep: The narrative self asserts, "Sleep is like death and love... for they share many details with a slight difference in timing. Isn't sleep, in the end, a face of death? Or isn't it also as appetizing as love, both exposed to nightmares and false dreams..." (Kamal Burkani, 2007, p. 80)

- Philosophy of nation-building: The narrative self suggests, "To build a nation, my lady, we must first eradicate all our old habits and reconsider the ways of our love, hatred, anger, and primitive mating rituals." (Kamal Burkani, 2007, p. 104)

- Philosophy that society's advancement is not based on a socialist revolution as much as it is on intellectual advancement. The author states, "What if they forgot the revolution and taught us (Ibn Khaldun)... (Augustine)... (Mohamed Dib) and many others who drowned in the mud of sad seasons. Would we still suffer all this misery?" (Kamal Burkani, 2007, p. 15)

#### 4. Philosophical Character in "Deer's Blood" by MirzaqBiqtash:

This philosophical character also surfaces in the novel "Deer's Blood," reflecting the author's keen insight into perceiving the things around him. Examples include:

- Philosophy of the starting point of death: The author states, "The beginning of death is when people cease to understand you, O you! Isolation is the beginning of death. When a person feels isolated from others by supernatural forces, it means that his existence on the surface of this planet is no longer based on a foundation!" (MirzaqBiqtash, 2007, p. 208)

- Philosophy of pre-life matters: The author expresses, "The beginning is known and likewise the end, but the eternal is mysterious. I do not think that God has revealed to man any authority in this matter. The beginning is a word, and the end is a word, and both are made by man so that he can move in the space of meaning, as some Sufis say." (MirzaqBiqtash, 2007, p. 233)

- Philosophy of writing literature as worship: The author addresses himself, "You write because you believe in God, and you write feeling the responsibility of writing. You know it is a part of a special worship that springs from the fountain of sincerity and dedication within yourself. Do not hesitate, but declare it before everyone. This one writes because he wants to breathe out his soul, and that one writes following the orders of the hardworking class, and another writes because he does not know how to fill his time. As for you, you write because you believe in God, His angels, His messengers, and the Day of Judgment." (MirzaqBiqtash, 2007, p. 259)

#### 5- Monologue and Characters' Confessions with their Philosophy in the Three Novels: Archipelago of Flies, Woman Without Features, Deer's Blood:

The philosophical insights of the three novelists in their aforementioned works flowed through the technique of "internal monologue." It is "the discourse without a listener, unspoken, through which the character expresses their most intimate thoughts, closest to the unconscious," (Pierre Chartier, 2001, p. 200) and internal dialogue plays a significant role in revealing the character's construction. The character, therefore, does not clarify its outlines solely through its actions and others' words about it but through self-narration. In it, the novelist "expresses his relationship with the universe, life, and things around him, discusses his views and philosophy, poses questions, intellectual concerns, presents his sufferings, dreams, hopes, despair, anger, and joy, the formations of his consciousness, his immersion in life, perhaps without knowing its identity," (Mohammed El-Daba, 2002, p. 109) and this is what the self aimed to reveal in these novels.

In the novel "Archipelago of Flies," internal dialogue predominated throughout the narrative. In the first chapter, the monologue is confessed by the narrator, stating, "... suddenly, I was overwhelmed by a sudden paralysis and decided to stop writing to you, and perhaps I realized that everything I write is a dialogue with myself." (Bashir Mufti, 2010, p. 109) In this way, he openly expresses the narrative technique that he considers the most fitting for self-expression.

Faced with the ambiguous issues surrounding him, a war putting down its burdens, and a devastating overwhelming love, the narrator stands questioning his memory, pointing an accusing finger at time: "I will dig again in this distant and desolate memory, and I will surely not reach the secret point. I will open the appetite of my heart to express its condition. As for time, it is my real problem..." (Bashir Mufti, 2010, p. 8)

Using a condensed poetic language, the self directly expressed its internal depths, conveying an image of the psychological conflict and breakdown it is experiencing. It is no longer capable of even looking to its future, stating: "I say madness, knowing that there was a real collapse that happened to me, a collapse or something like that. Then what does it matter to someone like me who does not care at all to know where his life is going and what unknown fate awaits it outside?" (Bashir Mufti, 2010, p. 12)

In the novel "Woman Without Features," the main character 'S' speaks to and about itself with the first-person pronoun, expressing truths that have become clearer. Death, once a painful reality, has now become something familiar: "And I remember, almost every day, when Aziz Safi committed suicide. How I developed a special relationship with the cemetery. How I constantly encounter the dead. How death, this eternal puzzle, became familiar and very painful..." (Bashir Mufti, 2010, p. 82)

The narrator continues its internal dialogue, delving unconsciously into the depths of the self, seeking its essence and a way to escape the clutches of death: "How can I save myself now, when everyone is only thinking about their own salvation from the blind trap that claims the lives of thousands every year? It becomes the whole reality of existence... It is the fate of those miserable people who wake up every morning in the pools of blood and severed heads. Undoubtedly, I will never save myself, no salvation for me today or tomorrow. The mill crushes everything..." (Bashir Mufti, 2010, p. 81-82)

The internal dialogue becomes increasingly dramatic in the chapter titled "Nightmares," intensifying the inherent haziness of the narrator's vision. The narrator states, "Inside the closed room, I see my body floating above blood being carried away to another land. I contemplate my death, the soul filling the eye. I see all my fears during the final farewell. I try to escape from the scene. I wake up, and behold, the nightmare is the same. My head is empty, filled at times with sadness for the world... What is happening to me?" (Bashir Mufti, 2010, p. 85)

Thus, the internal dialogue allowed us to get closer to the depths of the protagonist's soul, revealing a peak in its sense of nothingness. The protagonist expresses, "Consciousness drives me from the presence of mosquitoes to the beauty of contemplating the ruin of our world. I am alone, with a piece of discarded bread swarmed by ants, flies, and even some friendly insects whose names I do not remember." (Bashir Mufti, 2010, p. 89)

In the last chapter titled "Mahmoud Al-Barani," we find the presence of internal dialogue with a style dominated by denial questions. The narrator asks, "What is happening to me? Since Nadia appeared on the stage of my life, I have been disturbed and anxious... How do I fix my mistake? What should I do now? Questions only, and I find no answer to reassure my heart from the horrors of anxiety and the terror of fear." (Bashir Mufti, 2010, p. 135) These are questions that don't seek answers about the self; rather, they attempt to convey a sense of surrender and helplessness in the face of the unchangeable circumstances.

In this chapter, we also find a prevalence of internal dialogue with phrases like "I said / wondering / I realized," indicating a gap between the conveying discourse and the conveyed discourse. The self declares its inner worlds directly, and the narrator has adopted this style to disclose the most intimate thoughts that are closer to the unconscious. The narrator states, "I don't even see Nadia anymore... She did not return to the capital, and it seems she decided to do something else. I was afraid for her, especially after the threat story was repeated with 'S'... and I said to myself, 'Damn them... they never like to see love.' Wondering deep within myself, what can I do for 'S' and Nadia... and I found nothing, then I realized at that moment only that what I dreamed of as a repair for an old story is collapsing... and that we pay the price dearly generation after another." (Bashir Mufti, 2010, p. 141)

Moving on to the novel "Woman Without Features," the noteworthy observation is that the "internal dialogue" also permeates the entire narrative. The self-narrator embraces its feelings, stands on the tragedy of its life, filled with tension, anxiety, fragmentation, and reveals the inner impulses, changes, and contradictions before the crises it undergoes. A country enters the war arena, a loving grandmother departs, and a love for Haifa tosses it. We find this vast amount of "monologue," and examples include:

The narrator states: "The idea occurred to me, perhaps it rescued me from boredom. Why not wander the corridors of the station? Perhaps I would meet some acquaintances. I search all the faces for features I remember but find none. Through the windows adorned with the dew of warm breath, I see the institute building towering with its majesty in the horizons. Nostalgia immersed me in a

whirlwind of exhausting questions. Why do we only sense the depth of things in their absence?" (Kamal Burkani, 2007, p. 24)

And he says: "The village is a very narrow world that starts from our clay house and ends at the foot of the towering mountains. My grandmother has always told me about distant villages hidden behind mountains and in ravines. I deeply wonder if their people are kind and faithful like us. I can't help but imagine otherwise. Surely, they are disbelievers, their beards dragging behind them like tails, and Allah will surely cast them into the fire tomorrow, while we enter paradise with the dust and dirt on our heels and our wretchedness!..." (Kamal Burkani, 2007, p. 32)

He also says: "Tomorrow, distant Umayma, I come to you stripped of memory and wounds. I will dye your hair with the Bedouin Henna you desire, and I will sleep in the deep pools of your profound eyes, questioning: Have you ever realized that there is no shape for my mother in my memory? What does it matter if shapes and colors suddenly fall into the abyss! It is enough for me that she is a woman once burdened by the pain of giving birth to me!" (Kamal Burkani, 2007, p. 35) He further states: "And I said to myself: You are a negative man who is unbearable! What should I do, sir? I pondered the matter all night, turned it over, and calculated it. There was no escape from disclosure, and the results would come as they pleased. I despaired of whether I could do it. At that moment, the heart was beating rapidly! And she, at that moment, came to me in the form of a terrified angel, beautified with prayers." (Kamal Burkani, 2007, p. 68-69)

These are lengthy monologues, mostly presented in the form of a series of questions or interrogations, without pausing to provide answers or specify a particular response. The affirmation formulations vary between: (I wonder deeply / I wonder / I wondered with a sigh of lamentation / I said to myself / I wondered), and they are formulations with a deliberate dialogical connotation.

These monologues are part of the narrative events, and they serve as a complement to the novel's events. They come in the context of narrative storytelling, meaning that the narrator deliberately interrupts the narrative and engages in internal dialogue to allow self-expression.

In a similar fashion, such a connected monologue that appears in the narrative context in the form of an indirect internal dialogue, where the self addresses itself artificially, directing the discourse to a fabricated interlocutor, as seen in examples like: "The truth in this country, O son of my mother... it's Prostitution... Would you accept becoming a captive to homosexuality, the scandalous act?" (Kamal Burkani, 2007, p. 14) And it says, "For thousands of years, sir, we have been plagued by the epidemic of destruction and fires. Our history is filled with forms of murder, colors of blood, and destruction." (Kamal Burkani, 2007, p. 15)

In these examples, the self does not directly address itself but does so behind a mask. The terms "sir" and "son of my mother" are used figuratively to refer to the people of the same country, emphasizing their shared identity.

In the novel "A Woman Without Features," one form of internal dialogue is the technique of self-addressing and the distinction between "monologue" and "self-addressing" in their relationship to the character's dialogue. In this context, the character thinks alone in "monologue" and thinks out loud in "self-addressing". (Robert Humphrey, 1979, p. 56) Examples of self-addressing in this novel include: "Oh, olive branch with green leaves... the tree of water and the pulse of fires... How deceived I am, this life is a candle about to extinguish!" (Kamal Burkani, 2007, p. 19) it also says, "Oh! You, the bright sun in dimness and the cold morning breezes, how the misery of rural children captivates me without meaning!" (Kamal Burkani, 2007, p. 32) And it states, "My grandmother! Oh, the burning fires of distant distance, who will cry my tears... while this wounded heart bleeds a rain of longing, nostalgia, and worship!" (Kamal Burkani, 2007, p. 64)

This dialogical text comes from the narrator's own voice, calling out as if someone is listening, although no one will hear it; it is a mere self-addressing.

In the novel "Deer's Blood," the self is revealed through internal dialogue, where the character engages in extensive dialogue with itself, expressing its thoughts about itself. This is a manifestation of a strong presence of the self in the narrative text, where the dialogue is formulated with expressions such as: "And as I repeated between myself and my inner self / I confess / Here I am laughing to myself again and wondering / And here I am screaming between myself and my

inner self," so the self declares what is happening inside it and reveals its thoughts, and the hidden aspects swirling in its unconsciousness.

Examples include: "Where do I stand, I wonder, among these and those? A person who wants to understand what is happening in this country, and his path is barely visible. A wave propels him, and another drags him like a helpless piece on the sands of dirty politics. Am I in an era that allows me to retire from all people? Can I take refuge in one of the caves or a remote island so as not to have a role in these upheavals witnessed by the country, coercively and humiliatingly?" (MirzaqBiqtash, 2007, p. 188) It continues, "The question I ask myself at this moment, in particular, is whether this crime will lead to a change in the conditions around us. A reasonable question, but the answer remains suspended by imaginary threads..." (MirzaqBiqtash, 2007, p. 189)

So, the self wished to express its grief over the assassination of President Mohamed Boudiaf and the tumultuous events in the country. Confronted with chaos, it continued to pour out its thoughts, questioning itself without finding answers.

One manifestation of internal dialogue in this novel is the self-admission of the narrator's conscience, acknowledging a sense of guilt and an inability to contribute to bringing about change in the face of the tragic situation. The narrator states, "And here I am screaming between myself and my inner self: They did not agree about God, so how can they agree about a homeland, boundaries, governance, and authority? How can I spare them with these questions? All questions are valid, even the naive ones, even the trivial ones, as long as humans rebel against evil." (MirzaqBiqtash, 2007, p. 195)

In this style, the self fractures, feeling a sense of guilt, and deems questioning as the weakest response to the killings. Genette considers "interior monologue" as "a means of ultimate liberation in modern narrative, reaching the verbal mimicry to its extreme and giving the character the first word from the very beginning, placing the reader inside the character's thoughts." (Mohammed Najib Al-Amami, 2001, p. 117-118) This method is used significantly by MirzaqBiqtash in the first and last chapters of "Deer's Blood," where the internal dialogue of the self is elevated prominently, reflecting the spontaneity of the self.

All these philosophical questions scattered throughout the pages of the three novels are a distillation of the novelist who fled to spiritual realms after losing confidence in the bitter reality of the black decade.

#### 4. Conclusion

- The main characters in the three novels under study stand out for their psychological and metaphysical anxiety, creating a whirlwind of questions that necessitate the generation of endless inquiries.

- The protagonist characters in the three novels exhibit a diverse range of behaviors, swinging between sanity and delirium, foolishness and intelligence, acceptance and rejection, and contentment with reality and rebellion against it.

- The authors of the three novels projected their ideologies onto their protagonist characters, making them reject political hypocrisy, terrorism, and the falseness of slogans.

- The three novels are immersed in philosophy about everything: the world, religion, socialist revolution, love for people, love for women, nation-building, sleep, renaissance, death, and the meaning of life.

- The three authors discussed existential philosophy, the absurdity of life, fate and choice, joy and sorrow, truth and falsehood, socialism and capitalism.

- The three authors made love a philosophical value, portraying it realistically at times and mystically as a Sufi state at others. Sometimes, it's the union of two similar souls.

- The protagonist character in both "Archipelago of Flies" and "Deer's Blood" questions the nature of artistic writing. While Bashir Mufti sees it as an act of joy, MirzaqBiqtash sees writing as a kind of worship, a means to convey a message that one is obliged to deliver to others. The writer only writes what he sincerely believes in, and he sees it as contributing to the reform of society.
- The philosophical questions raised in the three novels were not seeking answers as much as they aimed to showcase specific values such as patriotism, love, religion, reconciliation, friendship, and sacrifice, imparting aesthetic values to the literary texts under study.
- Monologue played an effective role in the three novels, compelling the characters to express themselves in a creative and influential manner imbued with philosophy, casting a veil of darkness over certain ideas while illuminating others, making the protagonist characters seem tormented by their thoughts, generating empathy with their struggles and with the idea closest to logic.

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