



Analysis of the Environmental Discourse of War in the Novel "Scorched Land" Based on Concept of Power in Foucault's Thought

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Abstract

The novel "Scorched Land" represents a special episteme, i.e., the opposition of geopolitical discourse (territorial development) in Iraq's foreign policy against the value-oriented Islamism discourse in Iran's foreign policy, and produces its own truth-knowledge. With emergence of political economy, which is evident in war between Iraq and Iran over oil, concept of nature has changed and Iraqi government has ignored laws of nature and by applying the power resulting from

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geopolitical discourse, created new events and forms of behavior that, in addition to environmental pollution, have created new forms of behavior not only in human actions, but also in actions that author attributes to nature which shows that power comes from everywhere and that power is everywhere and multiple forms of power relations in Foucault's thought. In general, images presented in novel "Scorched Land" of Ahmad Mahmoud's novel show that not only humans but also nature has been a vehicle for exercising power.

Keywords: *novel "Scorched Land", discourse analysis of war, War and the environment, Ahmad Mahmoud, The concept of power in Foucault's thought.*

1. Introduction

The novel "Scorched Land" is about the first three months of the Iraq-Iran war. In this novel, we clearly see the destruction of the natural, artificial, and human environments due to the war. In fact, these three environments have become objects that are destroyed in the circle of this destructive discourse of war. The novel "Scorched Land" depicts the distortion of human relations and, consequently, the destruction of the environment. Ahmed Mahmoud's novel "Scorched Land" is itself a product of the influence of the discourse of war, which displays a specific episteme, that is, "the body of knowledge and ways of knowing at a specific point in history" (Mills, 2018: 52). In general, the conflict between the two discourses of value-based Islamism in Iranian foreign policy and the geopolitical or territorial expansion discourse in Iraqi foreign policy leads to the outbreak of war, a war whose "imposition of environmental damage through means of war is one of the ongoing concerns of scholars of international law." (Wilcnmentox, 2007: 137) In this article, we address the question of what disruptions the confrontation between the two discourses of geopolitical and value-based Islamism has caused in the natural environment and, consequently, human life, both physically and spiritually. The answer to this question requires an understanding of the discourse of war.

2. Literature Review

The roots of the war over natural resources in the novel "Scorched Land" can be traced to Foucault's thought in the authoritarian discourse of power and its accompanying political economy; because "with the emergence of political economy, the concept of nature will change. For

political economy, nature is not a genuine and protected area that power should not touch for fear of becoming illegitimate. Nature is something that flows within the framework of, through, and within the practices of governance." (Foucault, 2012: 29) In general, this novel does not only deal with the explicit description of reality; but also plays an effective role in how we perceive reality by presenting vivid and dynamic images. Ignoring the laws of nature by governments is one of the prominent aspects of this novel; For example, one of the reasons why there are no more birds in the city is the cannonballs and explosions that occur in the conflict between the two governments, which is rooted in the discursive confrontation that governs the two nations of Iran and Iraq, namely geopolitics (territorial development) and Islamism. Or if we pay attention to the terrible sound of explosions, cannonballs, and MiGs when they break the sound barrier, we realize that it has harmful effects not only for humans but also for the environment; because if we investigate the research that has been done in this field, we see that the roar of jet planes, especially when they break the sound barrier, causes the death of bird chicks; something that French scientists have also proven by studying the roar of airplanes and the temporary loss of sensation in honeybees. (See Karamkhani, 1996: 56) These are the categories that show the inattention of governments during war and the environmental crisis it causes. Of course, from another perspective, if we look at these war tools in this novel, we see that the root of the most acute issues and social problems of humanity is in its excessive development. (See Nasr, 1993: 2) A development that ignores the laws of nature. In general, the presence of nature in Ahmad Mahmoud's novel "Scorched Land" is influenced by the discourse of war that has affected all the structures of society. In this novel, by crushing the revolution and overthrowing the government, we witness a kind of break in the geopolitical discursive propositions (territorial development) in Iraqi foreign policy and value-based Islamism in Iranian foreign policy. The destruction of the natural environment as a result of war is reminiscent of such a rupture; a rupture whose roots can be traced to the lack of attention to the nature and essence of nature in the discourse of war. The discursive propositions of war, in their formulation, determine the destruction of nature, which, if we pay attention to the first page of this novel, we see clearly in the damage done to nature and humans; because at the beginning of the novel, we see nature as a house with sparrows that have made a nest in a cedar tree to the noise and a courtyard with wide branches of paper flowers (7); But when there is war, the yard of the house is littered with solid and sharp pieces of cannonballs (133),

the house is covered in dust, the nightshade and the nightshade have both dried up and their leaves have fallen, and the old cedar tree in the middle of the yard has fallen (306), and the sound of the explosion has so frightened the birds that it is as if there were no birds in the city:

"In the days before the war, at dawn, the excited chatter and noise of a flock of sparrows that had spent the night among the branches and leaves of cedar tree near middle of the yard would wake us up; but now it is as if there were no birds in the city once upon a time. The sound of the cannonballs has even frightened the domestic pigeons, and they have all fled the city." (Mahmoud, 2021: 43)

Ahmad Mahmoud by creating images of the conditions of the human and natural environment affected by the discourse of war, which has caused the objectification of these environments through the exercise of power, he also demonstrates their subjectification; therefore, in completing Foucault's theory, where he "tried to prove that when science and power fall into the institutional circle, they acquire an objective and extra-intrinsic nature and in this regard, humans become objects." (Foucault, 2008: 6) It can be said that when science and power fall into the institutional circle, not only humans but also the environment become objects.

In this novel, with the entry of the episteme of territorial development into the geographical domain that is formed by a formulation of value-based Islamic knowledge, contradictions and anomalies arise, the roots of which can be seen in the rationality that governs these two discourses. In fact, it is the inconsistency of the layers in these two discourses that causes discursive conflict and creates undesirable consequences for the natural, artificial, and human environment. Such discursive conflict prevents humans and nature from evolving. Therefore, they are also prevented from progressing in other aspects of life. By writing this novel, Ahmad Mahmoud is placed in the position of a subject who challenges the discourse of territorial development and also uses cases to weaken the rival discourse. In general, the cases mentioned in the novel "Scorched Land" show that Ahmed Mahmoud is trying to introduce a rival discourse in this novel through "exclusion and negation". The discourse of war, like any other discourse, needs to legitimize its value system; but since it cannot link itself with legitimate and dominant discourses to establish its values and legitimize its principles, in Foucault's view it is in a position of exclusion and marginalization. In general, the discourse of war in this novel "reproduces unnatural relations of power, domination, and exploitation." (Van Dijk, 2008; 9-28) and since it is a destructive

discourse and causes great damage to humans and their surrounding environment, it must be opposed; because “the way to confront destructive discourses is through resistance. “Resistance involves raising awareness that the hidden ideology behind these discourses is only a story, and this story has harmful effects.” (Steebi, 2016: 50) Therefore, the environmental philosophy of the novel "Scorched Land" is an attempt to show the destructive effects of war on humans and their surrounding environment, which can make a significant contribution to raising awareness among humans.

3. Methodology

The research method is qualitative and descriptive-analytical, which provides researchers with an efficient method for analyzing literary texts to better understand the subject. Therefore, first, the novel "Scorched Earth" by Ahmad Mahmoud was studied, and then, with a discourse-oriented approach, library studies were used to examine the background of the research and its theoretical foundations and by researching texts and reading books and articles, relevant materials, records, and samples were extracted and analyzed, and the results obtained were explained.

4. Results

In reading the novel "Scorched Land", we see various propositions that, in new semantic systems, legitimize actions such as avoiding war, which has serious consequences for humans and their environment. In this novel, Ahmed Mahmoud tries to introduce a rival discourse through “rejection and negation”; a discourse that has destructive consequences for the three natural, human, and artificial environments. Therefore, such a discourse is inevitably disqualified and kept on the margins in Foucault’s thought. In general, the environmental philosophy of the novel "Scorched Land" is an attempt to show the destructive effects of war on humans and their surrounding environment, which can make a significant contribution to raising awareness among humans. Therefore, by examining the consequences of war, we can enact laws that, in addition to showing the destructive effects of war, create awareness among individuals and prevent the emergence of such destructive discourse that has overshadowed many governments in the present era; that is, this discourse, in addition to being the basis of power relations, must also be a rule for explaining it.

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