AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THE FAILURE OF BIBLICAL PROMISES IN MODERN ARABIC LITERATURE: THE UNDOING OF THE APOCALYPSE IN ʾURASHALĪM AL-JADĪDA AND FRANKENSTEIN FĪ BAGHDĀD

by
RALPH JOSEPH IBRAHIM

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
to the Department of English
of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
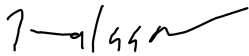at the American University of Beirut

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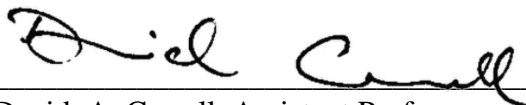Rana H. Issa, Assistant Professor   Advisor
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ABSTRACT
OF THE THESIS OF

Ralph Joseph Ibrahim   for   Master of Arts
                                             Major: English Literature

Title: The Failure of Biblical Promises in Modern Arabic Literature: the Undoing of the Apocalypse in *ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda* and *Frankenstein fī Baghdad*

This thesis examines the representation of the failure of biblical promises, specifically the failure of the actualization of the apocalypse, in *ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda* (Farah Antun, 1904) and *Frankenstein fī Baghdad* (Ahmad Saadawi, 2013). These two novels posit through their narratives a rationale that suggests that the biblical apocalypse will never actualize, grounding their narratives in apocalyptically tense environments. Their undoing of the apocalypse is realized through their deconstruction and reversal of the function of time and space as this function is understood in the biblical apocalypse.

To this end, I first examine how time and space are presented in the Bible and to what functional end. In addition, I present a small analysis of the theoretical function of time and space, and if and how it differs from its biblical counterpart. This research will then allow me to explore the discrepancies existent between the biblical text and *ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda* and *Frankenstein fī Baghdad*, and how they reverse and invert the time-space functions woven into their narratives.

ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda formulates an understanding of history that suggest that history occurs in ever repetitive cycles. This suggestion counters the biblical assessment that the apocalypse will achieve the end of time, effectively ending history as a result. If *ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda* confirms that history is repetitive, there is an advancement thus that the end of history will never be about; the apocalypse will not actualize.

Frankenstein fī Baghdad sets its story in 2005, during the invasion of Iraq. The novel situates the Iraqi capital amidst a storm of armed conflicts, while the city is getting destroyed. These circumstances place the city in a state of labor that will eventually come to an end and peace will be restored. This is how the Bible in Revelation prescribes the end of suffering. But Baghdad, the capital under siege, doesn't seem to be getting its joyous end anytime soon. The city and its space, are destined to be under everlasting labor. If no joyous end is in sight, then neither is the apocalypse. Baghdad is doomed to be under eternal pain.

The reversal of the apocalypse occurs then as a result of a refusal of traditional mythical structures, as well as a result of newer understating of the function of time and space. This reversal also takes place in a newer wider tradition of a rebuttal towards religious absolutisms.

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For Dr. Bilal Orfali, without whom none of this would have been possible.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The project of the Nahda was one of the most impactful movements that changed the nature and the history of Arabic Literature. Taking place at the break of the 19th century, the Nahda project sought to revolutionize and modernize Arabic language. The Nahda ushered in addition new means of Arabic literary and cultural productions that broke free from the traditional molds of previous centuries and brought Arabic Literature into the modern age.

The Arabic literary project for modernity, starting in the middle of the 19th century, Al-Nahda (translated as rising, rebirth, or even renaissance), sought to break away from traditional modules that have so far ruled Arabic literary tradition. For the majority of their shared history, Arabic literature and language were thought of and conceptualized in accordance with the Qur'an, alongside Islamic cultural tradition. Any literature that predated the advent of Islam belongs to the of age jāhilīyah (age of ignorance), and literature that presented Islamic themes became more valued.

Even if it weren't carrying Islamic themes, Arabic literature before the Nahda was under the rules of the Arabic language, a Qur'anic language, as Arabic failed to possess an identity outside of being the language of the Qur'an. Nahda thinkers revolutionized Arabic by granting it an identity of its own and exploring literary productions outside the realm of Qur'anic and Islamic tropes. Nahda thinkers put in place a set of rules regulating the proper use of Arabic grammar which were missing beforehand. They also wrote dictionaries that

set clear definitions for Arabic words, which granted the Arabic language a secular identity independent of its Qur'anic influence.

One of the Nahda's most impactful endeavors was the translation of the Bible into Arabic. The Nahda scholars viewed the importance of this task as a project of secularization of Arabic language. If the Bible existed in the same language as the Qur'an, Arabic then becomes a national language, and not solely an Islamic one. Working with Cornelius Van Dyke, Butrus al-Bustani, a prominent Nahda figure brought the first Arabic translation of the Bible to life in 1857. The project of the Arabic translation on the Bible means that both the Bible and the Qur'an can be secularized, for they are written in a secular language.

It is during this literary climate that Farah Antun emerges. At the peak of the Nahda, Antun publishes in 1904 *ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda*. The novel's title is a direct allusion to one of the most famous Bible passages found in chapter 22 of the Book of Revelation. The passage is a description of the new world after the second coming of Jesus Christ, where a new city will emerge, the New Jerusalem, that will become the dwelling place of God and all his faithful followers. Antun however inverts this image of the heavenly city. The novel is set in the year 636 AD, the year of the Islamic invasion of Jerusalem. The city is one of chaos, brimming with religious conflicts and political tension. The "new" in Jerusalem, as the novel suggests, is not the renewal into the heavenly, but rather the change from one religious ruler to the other.

Since Revelation is an apocalyptic book, the narrative of the novel is then suggesting that the apocalypse will not occur. If the apocalypse is actualized in Revelation

in a heavenly city, the renewal of the city on earth, and in history, will not occur. The renewal then that Jerusalem undergoes will be one of political power transition, but not a heavenly one.

Antun hits two birds with one stone in the project for modernity. He introduces biblical themes to Arabic literary tradition, and subsequently inverts these themes, placing his religious philosophy well into modernity. What I aim to discover is the reason behind Antun's reversal of the apocalypse. What is the intention behind alluding that the Jerusalem of the Book of Revelation will not occur?

In my research for these answers, I discover that Antun is not alone in his doubts regarding the actualization of the biblical apocalypse. Ahmad Saadawi makes a similar assessment in *Frankenstein fī Baghdad* (2013). Set during the American invasion of Iraq, *Frankenstein fī Baghdad* explores the Iraqi capital through its people. From inside the capital then emerges a Frankenstein like monster, a creature composed of different body parts found at various bombing sites throughout the capital.

Revelation promises that salvation will occur after the pain of labor. Yet Baghdad undergoes its labor without any foreseen salvation in sight. The monster is an inversion of the feats of resurrection. If Christ's resurrection brings life, the monster in Baghdad is out for revenge. He goes on a killing spree avenging the killers of the many parts that constitute his body. Saadawi's novel reveals that Antun's question has not been answered. *Frankenstein fī Baghdad* also reveals that there is still a hope for the apocalypse, a hope that has been disappointed.

The conversation that takes place between the Bible and literature is not an innovation that was pioneered by Nahda thinkers. The Bible and literature have been in conversation for centuries. From its very inception, the Bible replicated literary traditions existent and in practice through different genres and across many a culture. The Bible's own elongated conception, formation, and development throughout many centuries, allowed the inclusion and imitation of many literary traditions considerably in the varied books that form the integrality of the Bible. The protracted process of the composition of the Bible spans for over a millennium. Bible scholars estimate that the first book of the Bible, Genesis, to have been written sometime around 900 BCE.[1] The Book of Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, was recorded near the end of the first century.[2] This prolonged timeline arranged a multitude of literary influences in the many books of the Bible during the process of its conception.

The influence of literature upon the texts of the Bible is apparent and traceable from its very beginning. Genesis, the Bible's own story of creation echoes a number of details present in other stories of creation found in different parts of the Ancient World. For instance, in one account of the creation of Man, Genesis describes, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."[3] The creation of man from an earthy material is not an interpretation exclusive to the Bible. Tony L. Shetter notices that many tales of creation

[1] Amy Tikkanen, "Genesis Old Testament," *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed January 19, 2021, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Genesis-Old-Testament.
[2] L. Michael White, "Understating the Book of Revelation," *Frontline* (Public Broadcasting Service), accessed January 19, 2021. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/revelation/white.html.
[3] Genesis 2:7 (King James Version).

from Ancient Egypt recite a similar story, such as that of the god Khnum who fashions people out of clay.[4]

The influence of literature foreign to the text of Genesis is not limited to texts from Ancient Egypt. Costi Bendaly observes the prominent influence of Mesopotamia upon the composition of Genesis. Bendaly argues that the biblical story of creation was written in a mold of mythology, in a frame akin to mythical structures of Mesopotamia, namely the Epic of Gilgamesh. The author henceforth identifies key elements that are existing in both the epic and the biblical text: a tree providing eternal life and a snake that causes the protagonist to lose that tree.[5] Having been written between the years 3200-2500 BCE,[6] the Epic of Gilgamesh predates the text of Genesis. The antecedent historicity of the Mesopotamian epic fortifies the notion of its influence upon the biblical text.

Genesis is not the only book existing in the Bible that borrows elements from contemporary literature and cultural productions. The scope of the influence of literary and cultural traditions upon different books of the Bible varies between a book and another. This variation is in accordance with the characteristics particular to each biblical book. Discrepancies in writing style and literary traditions can even be detected in a singular book. Genesis, for instance, is written in a manner typical of the mythological narratives on the Ancient World from its first to its eleventh chapter. The remaining chapters recite a

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[4] Tony L. Shetter, "Genesis 1-2 In Light of Ancient Egyptian Creation Myths." Bible.org, accessed January 19, 2021. https://bible.org/article/genesis-1-2-light-ancient-egyptian-creation-myths.
[5] Costi Bendaly, *Kaifa nafham al-yawm qiṣṣat ādam wa ḥāwāʾ?*, Al-ʾinjīl ʿalā durūb al-ʿaṣr (Beirut: Al-Noor Coop, 1990), 10, Acrobat Reader DC.
[6] Ibid, 11.

story unfound anywhere else in the cultural heritage of the Ancient World; that of God and the establishment of a nation of faithful believers.

Nevertheless, this observation cannot be applied to the books of the New Testament. The weight of literary and cultural traditions has almost no value in the conception of the New Testament. The books of the New Testament bear a more independent conception, and the advancement and eventual takeover of Christianity over social and political life resulted in a reversal of the relationship between the Bible and literature. The dominance of Christianity motivated literary production that replicated biblical themes. This influence was predominant during an elongated period of the history of Western literature. The Bible also impacted literature not just in its thematic dimension, but also structure and form.

One cannot possibly underestimate the tremendous influence the Bible has had on the history of Western literary tradition. Norman W. Jones argues that "the Bible has influenced Western literary traditions so extensively that many aspects of those traditions have biblical origins."[7] The novel, for example, was compared to the Gospels in its structure and narrative style, a comparison that fortified the stance of the novel as a proper literary genre. It was this influence that motivated modernist and postmodernist writers, with their anti-religious stance, to produce a literature that is not in favor of the Bible.

Growing frustration with the Bible and religious organizing witness a refusal of biblical themes in cultural and literary production. Modernist writers who presented themes

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[7] Norman W. Jones, *The Bible and Literature: The Basics* (London: Routledge), 2015, 13. https://doi-org.ezproxy.aub.edu.lb/10.4324/9781315727134.

unfavorable to the Bible tended to do so in two manners. They either displayed the irrelevance of the Bible in modern times or its inability to solve modern problems. Virginia Woolf and James Joyce voice their dismissal of religion in their novels that rebel against all forms of established and organized religion. Another manner of dismissing the biblical authority occurs in reverting common biblical tropes. Toni Morrison's *Beloved*'s protagonist is a figure resurrected from the dead, but delivers no biblical might that comes from resurrection. The Bible presents Christ resurrected from the dead who as a result will bring life and salvation for those who follow him. Morrison's Beloved is a figure of death, who if left unchecked, will be the cause of death to her family.

One can infer that the reevaluation of the value of biblical referencing and thematic quality would occur in English literature, the literary tradition most influenced by biblical themes. While this statement is true, the reevaluation did not take place exclusively within the modernist trend of English literature; it was simultaneously taking place within the modernization of Arabic literature as well. This frustration towards the Bible occurs during the Nahda. This frustration happens over two processes: the introduction of biblical themes into the Arabic literary tradition, and the subsequent reversal of these themes as this process occurs during Arab Modernity. This stance places Arabic Literature in conversation with other national literatures through the advancement of the Nahda project. As Tareq El-Ariss notes, the Nahda offered a "transnational mind-set linking Arabs to Western Europe."[8]

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[8] Tarer El-Ariss, "Introduction," in *The Arab Renaissance: A Bilingual Anthology of the Nahda: A Bilingual Anthology of the Nahda (Texts and Translations)*, ed. Tareq El-Ariss (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2018), xxi.

Arabic literature is thus in conversation with Western literature from which it seeks influence.

ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda and *Frankenstein fī Baghdad* belong thus to the trend in Nahda that refuted biblical tropes and inverted them. *ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda* declares then that the apocalypse will not occur through a timely lens. If Jerusalem is doomed to cyclical shifts of ever failing political powers, then the history of the city is ever repetitive. *Frankenstein fī Baghdad* carries the disappointment through space. The space of the city is one that is deteriorated and destroyed, a space in ever constant labor. The novel ends with the city still in shackles, with no hope of its reconstruction. No city will come down from the sky. Baghdad is doomed to misery.

All these points of examination that I mentioned will allow to understand how these two narratives portray the failure of the biblical apocalypse. Before understanding the disappointment towards the actualization of the apocalypse, I must first understand how its pillars, time and space, function in the Bible. The first chapter of this thesis will examine them thoroughly, offering a sketch of their function in the Bible.

The second chapter will establish the theoretical framework for the literary works at hand. I will examine theories on the function of time and space in literary theory and the meaning behind some of their aspects. I will include theoretical frameworks on the repetition of time and cyclical history, the argument for the failure of the apocalypse in *ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda*. I will further examine theories regarding the integrity of space and its demise, as *Frankenstein fī Baghdad* focuses on the regression of space in the Iraqi capital.

The third chapter will explore the repetitive cycles that are present in the history of *ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda*'s Jerusalem. The inspection of these cycles will offer an understanding behind Antun's theorizing of their existence, as well as a comprehensive argument towards why the apocalypse will not occur.

The fourth chapter will investigate the space of Baghdad, the only spatial entity present in Saadawi's *Frankenstein fī Baghdad*. The novel is concerned with the everyday spaces of the capital: iconic streets and historical neighborhoods. The focus the novel lends towards the demise of space highlights the importance of the spatial structure of a city, as its never ending annihilation loops the city in eternal labor.

I will offer commentary alongside this analysis on how the novels portray the apocalyptic failure, and how their time-space functions subvert the biblical expectation. These strategies combined will provide a clear picture of the novels' portrayal of the failure of the apocalypse's occurrence, and what this means in terms of biblical authority.

CHAPTER II

TIME AND SPACE IN THE BIBLE: A SCHEMATIC SKETCH

A. Time

Truly I tell you, an hour is coming, and is now here

\- (John 5:25 Christian Standard Bible)

Time in the Bible is confusing. This property of time applies both to the Old and New Testament.[9] From people living hundreds upon hundreds of years,[10] to varying means by which events take place, the Bible does not offer a unified, consistent manner by which time unfolds.

This is due in part to the fact that the books of the Bible have each been written at different historical times,[11] with each book adopting the historicity or the understanding of historical time in accordance with each era's scientific and philosophical conception of time and history. This confusion is likewise due to the genre of each biblical book and the purpose it aims to serve. Genesis is the book of creation and employs several literary and oral traditions, including stories of creation from the ancient world, notably those from

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[9] Since the analysis of this study examines of the Bible from a Christian perspective, the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Bible are referred to as the Old and New Testament, as per Christian tradition.

[10] Adam, for example, lives 930 years; Seth 912 years, and Enosh 905 years. These entries are according to Genesis 5.

[11] Genesis, for example, is estimated to have been written between 1445-1405 B.C., Daniel between 536-530 B.C., and Mark, the earliest book of the New Testament, between 50-60 A.D. These dates are according to GraceToYou.org (https://bit.ly/30m1glR).

Mesopotamia.[12] The book of Kings relates the historical aspect of the kingdom of Israel, while the books of prophets concern themselves with past and present events, delivering the word of God in timely manner, and providing visions of what is to come. The function of each book differs and hence the absence of a standard, constant measure against which time is calculated.

The Bible remains nevertheless essentially concerned with time. The Bible begins with the book of Genesis, before the existence of time and creation, and the book of Revelation ends the Bible in a postapocalyptic world united with God, in a world where time no longer exists, and life on Earth has become eternal; time is thus fundamental in the proceedings of the Bible.

If the Bible posits the ending of all temporal structures as the realization of history, as the culmination of time and its demise, time becomes paradoxically imperative to the actualization of the endpoint of the Bible's message. Rudolph Bultmann argues that eschatology posits "really the end of the world and its history".[13] If time is considered the most potent of all the conditions that rule human life, God then is presented as even more absolute than time itself: For God himself is both the creator and controller of all temporal structures with their potencies and functions.

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[12] The book of Genesis has "borrowed from creation-flood stories attested in Mesopotamian literature of the second and early first millennia" (Genesis — Introduction from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: http://www.usccb.org/bible/genesis/0).

[13] Rudolph Bultmann, *History and Eschatology* (Edinburgh: The Edinburgh University Press, 1957), 30.

The first occurrence of a recorded time in the Bible begins after Adam and Eve are chased out by God from the garden of Eden.[14] The fourth chapter of Genesis marks: "[A]nd in process of time it came to pass"[15], as this verse denotes the first mention of time passing after the seven days of creation. In another sense, "history begins with the fall of Adam who claimed to be independent of God".[16] The text of Genesis does not mention any passing of time in the lives of Adam and Eve while they were still in the garden of Eden. While the first chapter of Genesis counts the seven days of creation and mentions the consummation of each day, there is no indication to the effects of the consummation of time: God, the creator, is not affected by time, and Adam and Eve, while in the garden, are not influenced by any temporal structures before being chased away from the garden.

Time hereafter gradually gains more and more importance in Godly matters, occupying a vital role in many of the events described in the Bible. Biblical incidents become increasingly timely, from the events of the flood with Noah, to Exodus with Moses, and onwards. The prominence of timing culminates with the birth of Jesus. According to Paul the Apostle, Jesus was born "when the fulness of the time was come".[17] The life of Jesus is remarkably temporal, from the events of his birth, to the age by which he starts his Gospel, to his death and resurrection after three days (a matter heavily referred to in the

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[14] Genesis 3.
[15] Genesis 4:3 (King James Version). Any reason why you are changing versions? They might ask you this in the defense.
[16] Bultmann, *History and Eschatology*, 60-61.
[17] Galatians 4:4 (KJV).

Bible), and his ascension forty days after his resurrection. Time's authority affects even God[18] when God becomes incarnated in the world.

Even though time affects God incarnate, the Bible posits a promise that the people of God, created in his image and his likeness,[19] will become timeless. This quality of timelessness is mentioned in Chapter 22 of the Book of Revelation, where in describing the New Heaven and the New Earth (The New Jerusalem), the people of God "shall reign for ever and ever".[20] The promise of an eternity spent in the kingdom of God is a trope commonly found throughout the many books of the New Testament. The four Gospels and the Epistles of Paul often mention the kingdom of Heaven as the ultimate dwelling place for those who believe is Christ as their savior.[21] The quality of Godliness that the people of the biblical God inherit is the ability to become timeless, to transcend time. "The promise of a future of salvation" only occurs "if the people is [sic] now willing to obey the will of God".[22]

The ability to rule over time, as God's potency, is not exclusive to the Bible. The Qur'an's view of time is akin to the Bible's, offering an understating of time that is under the control of God or Allah. "The authority of time, in the Qur'an, is stripped away so time becomes, with all its parts and timings, in the hand of Allah, who controls all times as he

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[18] John 10:30: "I and my Father are one"; John 14:9: "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (King James Version).

[19] Genesis 1:26 (KJV).

[20] Revelation 22:5 (KJV).

[21] The mention of kingdom of Heaven assumes directly that this kingdom is eternal and everlasting, for Jesus, Paul, and John the Baptist describe it so.

[22] Bultmann, *History and Eschatology*, 20.

desires".[23] While the Bible does not mention control over time as an ability that can be

gained by humans, the resistance to the passage of time is alone a feat that is of itself grand

and wonderful. Time's crushing power "will be shattered on the day of the resurrection".[24]

The question that arises then is the timing of this promise. The Bible does not offer

any indication in real historical time regarding the timing of the events of the end of the

world, and the concluding actualization of paradise. When Jesus describes the events of the

apocalypse in the Bible in Matthew 24 and Mark 13, Jesus candidly replies that no one, not

even him, knows the hour of the occurrence of these events, no one except for The Father.[25]

The repetition of the phrase: "an hour is coming, and has already come" is mentioned

repeatedly throughout the book of John.[26] This declaration is followed by confusion arising

in many an instance from the Gospel of John, especially from the Farewell Discourse.[9] "In

the Farewell Discourses (13-17)," writes Ruben Zimmerman, "[the Gospel] elaborately

twists the perspectives of time in the narrative".[27] Jesus in the Gospel of John mentions that

the happenings of the end of days are happening in the now. The merging of present and

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[23] Georges Tamer, "Allah Wa al-zamān Fi al-Qur'ān al-Karīm," in *Explorer Le Temps Au Liban et Au Proche-Orient,* ed. Sylvia Chiffoleau et al. (Beirut: IFPO; Université de Balamand, 2017), 204.
This quote is my translation.
[24] Ibid., 204.
The day of the Resurrection is a naming for the day of eschatology. This quote is my translation. "The Farewell Discourse as Paraklesis (John 13–17)." In *John and Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. https://www-oxfordscholarship-com.ezproxy.aub.edu.lb/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198792505.001.0001/acprof-9780198792505-chapter-12 (p. 359).
[25] As mentioned in the following verses: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matthew 24:36 [KJV]), "but of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32 [KJV]). The complete passages for these two entries are Matthew 24:36-51 and Mark 13:32-37.
[26] John 4:23; John 5:25; John 16:32 (KJV).
[27] Ruben Zimmerman, "Eschatology and Time in the Gospel of John," in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*, ed. Judith M. Lieu and Martinus C. de Boer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 293, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198739982.013.17.

future creates confusion over the time frame of Christ's promises, or when they will be fulfilled, and Jesus offers no explanation for merging time in such a way.

Theologians and Bible scholars offer various commentaries regarding the merging of times present and future in the Gospel of John. Troels Engberg-Pedersen explains that "John may from time to time speak of eschatological events in the future, he also entertains the idea that everything is settled in the present, whether 'eternal life' for true believers or 'judgement' for non-believers".[28]

The eschatological time that Engberg-Pedersen refers to is a state of an eschatology happening now. C.H. Dodd clarifies that in eternity, only the present exists: "In eternity nothing is past or future, but only present".[29] Dodd further explains that eternal time is "neither past nor future, but is lived in God's eternal To-day".[30] The concept of a realized eschatology in the present is one of the main theories employed to explain and justify Jesus's fusion of times present and future.

The eternal present, or eschatological present, is not the same present that exists in Genesis in the garden of Eden. The time frame of Eden is that occuring before the existence of time while the eternal present is consumed in real historical time. The book of Genesis makes no mention if the garden of Eden presents any consummation of night and day. Even

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[28] Troels Engberg-Pedersen, "The Farewell Discourse as Paraklesis (John 13–17)," Chap. 9 in *John and Philosophy: A New Reading of the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 358, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198792505.003.0009.

[29] C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 150, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511520334.

[30] Ibid., 150.

so, if this temporal entity were present, it is of no effect upon the lives of Adam and Eve, for the passage of time does not affect them.

There is a sense of time that escalates in the quotidian activities of Adam and Eve. The sense of a time passing is assumed in Genesis 3, where Adam and Eve transgress God, and God walks in the garden to find them hidden from Him. The text presents a hidden layer of a consumption of temporality. This layer is hidden for it is of no effect upon the citizens of the garden. Adam and Eve start feeling the curse of time once their transgression of God's word put them out of his paradise.

If time in Eden is ahistorical and atemporal, the eternal present is not. The eternal present presents a temporal existence that conjoins two layers of different temporal properties: the real historical time and the eschatological time, the time of the apocalypse. The eternal present grounds eschatological time in real time, creating thereby a present that is eschatologically tense. This tension makes the happenings of the eternity take place in the now, in a present where time is experienced as a hybrid of everyday and eternity.

The emergence of this theory of an eternal present occurred after disappointment with the nonfulfillment of eschatology grew among faithful Christian communities. As Christopher Rowland observes, "the problem for groups with such imminent expectations is that when fervent hopes become disappointed by events, the group which holds such beliefs has to come to terms with that disappointment".[31] Early Christians were anticipating the end of days to take place in the near future, as alluded to in the letters of Paul and

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[31] Christopher Rowland, *Christian Origins* (London: SPCK Publishing, 2002), 85-90. https://books.google.com.lb/books?id=N_UPAQAAIAAJ.

Peter.[32] Although the letter of Peter does not propose exact dates, the writer of Peter's letter hints that, effectively, the end of days is near.[33]

The imminence of eschatology is a belief that was widely common among the early Christians, as this belief was adopted and spread by the disciples of Jesus as part of the newly established Church's doctrine. Early Christians assumed that the Second Coming of Jesus, like his ministry and subsequent resurrection, would happen quickly enough. Early Christians assumed that they were living in the final age of history, [34] and they anticipated that the end of time was to occur soon.[35] St. Paul's address in his Epistle to the Thessalonians assumes that Paul should be alive by the occurrence of the Second Coming.[36] Without drawing clear historical markers, Paul assumes the end of days to occur at a time near enough in which he can safely assume his livelihood. This assumption of Paul turned out to be inaccurate.

The assumption that the early Christians held about the readiness of the Second Coming, which has been deemed inaccurate, is not entirely groundless. The first Christians based their rationale on the same reasons that would lead to the frustration with and dismissal of the imminent eschatology. I here turn to the early Christians and the reasons behind their belief in the imminent Second Coming. The early Church maintained this

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[32] Irving F. Wood, "Paul's Eschatology." *The Biblical World* 38, no. 2 (1911): 79–91. www.jstor.org/stable/3141525.
[33] David G. Horrell & Wei Hsien Wan, "Christology, Eschatology and the Politics of Time in 1 Peter." Journal for the Study of the New Testament 38, no. 3 (March 2016): 267. doi:10.1177/0142064X16628768.
[34] Brian Daley, "Eschatology in the Early Church Fathers." In *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, edited by Jerry L. Walls, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 91. doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195170498.013.6.
[35] Ibid., 95.
[36] "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (KVJ)

belief in the imminence of the Second Coming, for in addition to scripture, the state of the early Church markedly matched the conditions described by Jesus that preceded the day of eschatology.

The anticipation of doomsday was a preceding persistent in the daily lives of early Christians. Graham N. Stanton declares that the early Christians were using the term 'Gospel' by 37 AD on a regular basis, and its meaning had become beknown to the Christian community despite the fact that this word was newly coined and had not seen usage outside the community.[37] The Gospel that was well-known among early Christians, and carried orally and preserved in manuscripts, offered a description of eschatology that was akin to how they were conducting their lives. The Roman Empire, an empire which was constantly at war,[38] was actively persecuting Christians[39] and these conditions accurately matched with the events of eschatology that Jesus describes in the books of the Gospels (Matthew 24 and Mark 13). The lives of the early Christians, which matched Gospel descriptions of persecution and martyrdom, coupled with the sense of urgency that the Gospels conveyed, led these people to believe in an impending Second Coming.

The progression of years, decades, and eventually centuries lessened the enthusiasm in the belief of the nearness of the last day. Still, there arose a belief every now and then in the certain approach of the doomsday, each gathering a cult following until proven to be

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[37] Graham N. Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 23. doi: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511616976.
[38] For further information about the state of wars in the Roman Empire, check: Taylor, Don. *Roman Empire at War: A Compendium of Roman Battles from 31 B.C. to A.D. 565.* South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Books, 2016. Accessed February 13, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.
[39] Wood, "Paul's Eschatology", 88.

faulty, the most recent of which occurred in 2012 based on a prediction in the Mayan calendar.[40] The continuous disappointment with eschatological unfulfillment has slowly led to a growing doubt, and in some cases to a disbelief in the possibility of any eschatological development.

For Bible scholars and theologians alike, turning to the eternal present justifies the seeming unreachable ending that eschatology brings. The eternal present is not affected by the passing of time. The eschatological present can unfold in real time and is not affected by time's consummation. Eschatological present is the time of the Bible, the time after Jesus's resurrection, and the time when the faithful cultivate their good deeds in the anticipation of the Second Coming. It is the time in which the faithful await, until the day that time is - through God's victory - no longer existing.

B. Space

For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

- (Hebrews 11:10 Christian Standard Bible)

The apocalypse is not an exclusively temporal happening. Despite the major focus directed towards the temporal absolution that the apocalypse shall bring about, the Bible accords equal prominence to both the temporal and spatial aspects when relating the end times. Ironically enough, the Gospel passages in which Jesus discloses the details of the

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[40] For more: Rachel Cole, "10 Failed Doomsday Predictions," *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed February 17, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/list/10-failed-doomsday-predictions.

apocalypse (Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21) are more event- and space-oriented than temporal.

The apocalyptic Bible passages mentioned earlier detail far more events than they disclose temporal prophecies, describing the fall of the temple and the persecution that the followers of Christ will be facing as the apocalypse approaches. The only temporal indicator that these texts offer is by its nature spatial, regarding the city of Jerusalem: when soldiers surround the gates of the city, Jesus warns that the end then will be near.

The fixation on the timely nature of eschatology and the pivotal role that it plays in the abolition of time and history is by no means inaccurate or exaggerated. The unfolding of eschatology would be an event with consequences unforeseen beforehand in the experience of history. The apocalypse would for the first time and only time in history cause an interruption of the continuous, linear structure of time and create new means of existence outside of time and its unbroken flow.

There has been a historical focus on the temporality of eschatology. As I previously argued, this focus was mainly due to a belief held by the early Christians that the end times were to happen not long after the resurrection of Jesus. Consequently, the early Christians concentrated at the temporal aspect of eschatology while failing to grant any noticeable attention to the spatial one. As time progressed and disbelief grew around the eventual manifestation of the apocalypse, there occurred a shift in focus towards other aspects of eschatology, mainly directed at the spatial facet of that phenomenon.

The shift in focus happened fairly recently in eschatological studies. The exhaustive body of research regarding the timely nature of the apocalypse and the impending consequences sparked an interest in other characteristics of doomsday. Katherine Rousseau, , observes that "in the study of apocalypses, time has passed and space is taking its place; at least, space is taking place alongside time."[41] The prominence that space has attained in apocalyptic studies does not originate as a mere response to the now exhausted and repetitive literature of the temporal studies of eschatology. Rousseau's argument indicates the underwhelming attention that space has been granted, a history of overlooking the spatial aspects of the apocalypse when such an aspect is equally important, if not more substantial than its temporal counterpart.

The argument for the spatial prominence of doomsday is not a postmodern attempt to involve apocalyptic studies in the emerging trend of spatial analysis. Turning once again to the three Gospel passages of eschatology (mentioned above), one can infer the abundance of spatial structures and the pivotal role they occupy in the realization and actualization of the apocalypse. Noting further beyond these three excerpts, the Bible, from its very beginning, accords an immense significance to places. Places and spatial elements become essential in the establishment of faith and the assertion of God as a superior being, as a Lord to his loyal followers. The establishment of God's superiority begins with space.

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[41] Katherine Rousseau, "Mapping Our Last Places: Apocalyptic Space and Imagery at Chartres Cathedral—A Social and Visual Analysis of Imagined Space," in *Religious Representation in Place: Exploring Meaningful Spaces at the Intersection of the Humanities and Sciences*, ed. by Mark K. George and Daria Pezzoli-Olgiati, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US. 2014),89. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137342683_8.

The first instance of a covenant between God and man starts with Abram, whom

God names Abraham as a marker of his new identity as God's faithful servant. Abraham's

most significant commitment is not his newly chosen name but a change that Abraham

enacts regarding his living circumstances: he moves to a place where God orders him to be.

Abraham's relationship with God is made formal when Abraham, as God's obedient

subject, executes a spatial change in his living conditions. "Now the Lord had said unto

Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house,

unto a land that I will shew thee"[42] is the command that God directs to Abraham as a an

indication of the latter's commitment to becoming God's faithful servant.

If Abraham is to become a father to many a great nation, it is through a spatial

providence. Jon D. Levenson illustrates the implications of such an order, regarding "the

'great nation' that will emerge from him [Abraham]: namely that in this and other biblical

texts, its existence is due to the special providence of God rather than the natural processes

of human production".[43] Levenson attributes the spatial dimension existent in God's order

to Abraham as an essential value in the realization of the promise that Abraham receives

from God. If Abraham is set to become a father to many great nations, it is through a

providence that is of a spatial nature. Levenson further observes the blessings that Abraham

will inherit from the land where God orders him to inhabit as a reversal of the curse

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[42] Genesis 12:1 (KJV).

[43] Jon D. Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 21, http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.aub.edu.lb/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=478990&site=ehost-live.

inflicted upon Adam.[44] The reversal of the curse brings the disrupted relationship with God into a full circle, restoring it to its initial state before the fall of Adam and Eve.

The spatial dimension that God initiates with Abraham can be viewed as foreshadowing the fulfillment of promises that God will grant not only one faithful follower, but a whole nation of obedient and abiding people: the nation of Israel. Both directives, the one addressed to Abraham and the other addressed to Moses, land in the same path and bear the same mission: the formulation of a new life in a land gifted by God, whose coordinates are also revealed through God's offering. The greater plan that I am hence referring to is but the directing of the nation of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land.

The journey to the Promised Land is an odious, protracted journey that spawns across four decades and many books of the Old Testament.[45] Once again, the salvation that God offers is one that is achieved through a spatial gift and a journey of moving from one place that is devoid of riches to one that is abundant with them. The place where the people can thrive is a present brought forth to the people by God.

The Promised Land and the laborious expedition that the people of Israel embark on remarkedly illustrate the crucial standing of the spatial dimension. The salvation of an enslaved nation takes place after a journey through the desert, a journey full of obstacles and difficulty. The subsequent settlement in the Promised Land creates a relationship of theological nature between the nation of Israel and their newly acquired land.

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[44] Ibid., 19.
[45] Four books to be exact: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

The spatial sphere of existence no longer operates as a mere dimension for the guarantee of human survival but further gains gravity obtained through its association with the divine. "The theme of Israel's relationship to its land is clearly pivotal", observes David Frankel, "holding a central place within the overall structure of the narrative of the Hebrew Bible".[46] The Bible references the land as being "the ultimate gracious gift that the Lord bestows upon the people of Israel,"[47] and it is the relationship to this land that formulates the central motif of the Old Testament.

The central motif of the land is not as pressing and essential in the New Testament. The Gospel of Jesus focuses more heavily on messages of love, forgiveness, healing, and repentance. Jesus makes no explicit spatial references when delivering his Gospel, and some of his declarations can even be seen as hostile from a spatial viewpoint. Jesus candidly declares to the Israelites: "Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up."[48] Even though the text later (John 2:21) clarifies that the temple the Jesus is referring to is the temple of his body (thus prophesying his resurrection on the third day), the Israelites fail to understand this metaphor. Instead, they take Jesus's word for its literal meaning. Gregory Stevenson argues that the Temple of Jerusalem was crucial in the construction of a national and cultural Jewish identity.[49] "In some sense, God inhabited the Temple"[50] observes Stevenson, which made the Temple a "site where the nation responded

[46] David Frankel, *Land of Canaan and the Destiny of Israel: Theologies of Territory in the Hebrew Bible* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011),1, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.aub.edu.lb/lib/aub-ebooks/reader.action?docID=3155623&ppg=12.
[4747] Ibid., 4.
[48] John 2:19 (KJV).
[49] Gregory Stevenson, *Power and Place: Temple and Identity in the Book of Revelation* (Berlin: De Gruyter, Inc., 2001), 116, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.aub.edu.lb/lib/aub-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3044189.
[50] Ibid., 123.

to God's gracious presence."[51] Accordingly, Jesus's announcement is understood as a threat against the nation and against God's spatial existence in the world, an accusation directed at him in his persecution before the cross.[52]

A more detailed examination, however, offers clues towards a more thorough understanding of Jesus's spatial dogma. While the fact remains true that Jesus accords much less importance to places and detaches them from spatial value, he never fully denies or dismantles that dimension. Among the many teachings that Jesus preaches on the Sermon on the Mount,[53] he announces: "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King."[54] This verse showcases that Jesus does grant a value to spatial dimensions, for he argues against swearing in either heaven or earth and considers both as places of dwelling for God. Additionally, Jesus once affirms that the following: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."[55] Accordingly, Jesus cannot completely denounce the spatial prominence that is central to the ethos of the Old Testament. At most, Jesus shies away from that dimension, but never denies it.

The Bible comes full circle near its end, in the final chapters of the Book of Revelation. Having related the events of the eventual apocalypse, the book discloses in its

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[51] Ibid., 136.
[52] As reported in Matthew 26:61, Marc 14:58.
[53] The Sermon on the Mount is the title given to the chapter 5 to 7 in the Gospel of Matthew. The sermon is a collection of teachings that Jesus delivers while preaching on the mount, covering many topics such as divorce and revenge among others. For a more detailed description, check: Sermon on the Mount by Encyclopedia Britannica (https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sermon-on-the-Mount).
[54] Matthew 5: 34-35 (KJV).
[55] Matthew 5:17 (KJV).

final chapters the unveiling of the new world after the victory that God accomplishes against the forces of evil. This unfolding culminates in the founding of the New Heaven and the New Earth, and a city for God to inhabit with all His faithful and loyal subjects: New Jerusalem.

The description that chapter 22 of the Book of Revelation includes several details regarding the dimensions of the city of New Jerusalem. The description is tremendously spatial, enumerating various dimensional features that determine the spatial existence of the city:

"[…]and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it

are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel."[56]

The chapter does not offer any direct coordinates that could locate the city on a world map or atlas, but the speaker in the text mentions that he witnesses the city descending from the sky, from the heavens. The passage ends by maintaining that the inhabitants of the city will be the people who are most faithful to God, the chosen ones, selected from all the Earth's nations, to live alongside God in this heavenly abode.

New Jerusalem recalls the Garden of Eden but posits a renewed understanding of both the space of heaven and the space of the city. New Jerusalem cancels all forms of separation between God and man. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve live alone while God resides in the Heavens. In New Jerusalem, God lives directly with His people without any present means of distinction or separation. Adam and Eve reside in the Garden before having stood temptation, and their failure in retaining God's grace occurs from their inability to resist it. The people of New Jerusalem have not only withstood temptation, but a number of them died as martyrs for God and their faith in Him.[57]

In many ways, New Jerusalem can be postulated as being a perfected recalling of the Garden of Eden. The temporal conditions of each place solidify New Jerusalem as being a remodeled, perfected Garden of Eden. The Garden of Eden stands before the beginning of time, and from its inhabitants comes the fall of humanity from grace and its

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[56] Revelation 21: 10-17 (KJV).
[57] Revelation 14: The chapter describes the people of New Jerusalem having the name of His (Jesus's) father on their foreheads, being the sole ones able to learn the song of the Lord and were found blameless and without a lie in their mouth. Revelation 6:9 describes them as having been "slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained."

subsequent doom. The New Jerusalem, comes about after the end of time and after humanity has gone through many dooms and sufferings, having proven itself as faithful to God and His commandments. The New Jerusalem is actualized after humanity has suffered ordeals, proven its worth to God, and has risen to earn the blessing of dwelling with Him. The New Jerusalem presents an actively functional spatial dimension that raises prayers and worship.

A biblical theology of space examines the dynamics that constitute a certain space and determines how these dynamics can function in the service of God. The covenant that God institutes between Him and the people of Israel is an example of a biblical theology that governs the expectations of their relationship. "And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people"[58] is the main clause of the covenant. The covenant then sets details that dictate the inner working of the Godly accord, details such as the prohibition of consuming certain foods and the proper means to raise prayers and offerings, among other things. A spatial theology would similarly impose the conditions upon which a place exists and operates within its relationship to God.

Arnold O. Benz argues that "a theology of space interprets space as a gift of creation, establishing a relation between Creators and creatures."[59] This interpretation of space highlights the essentiality of a place, presented from God as a gift, a place that marks the beginning of a relation between Creator and creatures. Nevertheless, Benz grants spatial

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[58] Book of Leviticus 26:12 (KJV).
[59] Arnold O. Benz "Meaningless Space?: Astrophysics and Theology," in *Religious Representation in Place: Exploring Meaningful Spaces at the Intersection of the Humanities and Sciences*, ed. by Mark K. George and Daria Pezzoli-Olgiati, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US. 2014), 23, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137342683_3.

structures a crucial importance in the creation of meaning, not only in relation to God, but at the level of human existence. "If most of space were without meaning", asserts Benz, "the meaning of the whole cosmos and even of humanity would be questionable."[60]

Human existence can only achieve meaning once settled and engaging in a spatial realm. Going beyond simple human survival, Benz notices that "the meaning of space must be seen in a relation to a superior entity or to the whole of the universe".[61] The Bible allocates God as the creator of human sovereignty; subsequently, the biblical duty of humanity is to praise God.[62] That praise comes best from the people's allocated spatial spheres.

Thus, a specific kind of specific kind of space can be allocated its theological meaning in terms of its spatial organization. The theological functions of any given area would be, taking its spatial structuring into account, to offer praise to God. The city, as a specific type of spatial formation, constitutes a concentration of people that should ideally offer a unified prayer together. Spatial elements of the capital account into the theological functionality that such space occupies.

But perhaps the agent with the most formidable effect upon a given space is the human. From a biblical perspective, God puts man above the rest of the creatures, and hence the superiority of man in examining the spatial theology of any given place. Additionally, speaking from a natural perspective, fauna and flora have little to almost no

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[60] Ibid., 24.
[61] Ibid., 29.
[62] Ibid., 29.

control over the organization and structuring of the natural world. Man has, by far, affected the most change in the spatial sphere that he occupies, be it for the benefit of that space or its demise. "The space can be understood by examining the nature and the position of the bodies represented within it," details Katherine Rousseau in her assessment of how individuals affect the space in which they live and interact.

C. The Intersection of Time and Space

The elements of time and space come together in achieving and actualizing the apocalypse as the Bible describes them. Eschatology happens through the merger of the joint forces of time and space exerting the will of God over the people. While people have essentially focused on time in expecting and analyzing doomsday, recent studies in apocalypse have restored the spatial face of eschatology its rightful measure.

The apocalypse occurs then with cooperation of the dynamics of time and place that will realize eschatology. Eschatology also occurs when the people of God themselves embark on its arc and operate under the dynamics of time and space that will realize the end times. Victor Westhelle argues that "time belongs to creation and the abandonment of this conviction is what deviates humankind from the straight path to the city of God, where time will be no more".[63] Weshtelle demonstrates the implication of the people in deviating from their historical spatio-temporal realties into actualizing the apocalypse. The joining of time

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[63] Vítor Westhelle, *Eschatology and Space: The Lost Dimension in Theology Past and Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 3, https://link-springer-com.ezproxy.aub.edu.lb/book/10.1057%2F9781137108272#about.

and space will actualize the apocalypse, and bring the world to a new day, to the age of eternity in the kingdom of God.

CHAPTER III

THE THEORETICAL FUNCTION OF TIME AND SPACE

Human existence, no matter how sophisticated, is always subjugated to the conditions of time and space, under which it functions and operates. Humans history begins with language, and this beginning represents the perfect intersection of time and space in which human existence is not only realized but recorded and accounted for. The act of historicizing humanity grants it the possibility of understanding the complexities of its own existence. This complexity is best understood when the biggest contenders that govern it, time and space, are thoroughly understood and interpreted.

A. Time

For most of history, critics and theorists viewed time as being linear. As such, they also posited an understating of history that was linear and progressive. However, new trends in theory of time and history posed new modules of understating history. History was no longer a linear and progressive unfolding of events across time. Historicizing became an intricate analysis of the unfolding of events, and the interplay of outside factors have resulted in that unfolding.

A new understanding of history then requires a new understating of time. Time is intrinsically woven into the fabric of historicizing. In the new understand of history, time is composed of the tension existing between different points in time. The present, for

example, is the unfolding in the now of the residues of the past and the tension existing in the future, that pulls the present in its direction.

The interweaving of different temporal dimensions generates a dynamic interruption of history. History is both in stasis and in motion, a kind of active defrosting of sorts. Aris Mousoutzanis contemplates on this condition of history, explaining that "there seems to have been a violent rupture in time, where history has been suspended, and the sense that the future has imploded onto the present is accompanied by another sense that the same present is also haunted by an unfinished and violent past."[64] Mousoutzanis describes this rupture of time as being violent.

Mousoutzanis not only views this rupture as being violent but also describes the past as a being of this violent nature as well. I have already established that the past is not a static temporal sphere, only containing what once was, existing as a mere vessel containing and preserving history. The past is an energetic temporal dimension that affects and modifies the historical unfolding of the present. For Teresa Heffernan, "the past can never really be past, that it cannot be escaped or ignored, because it is always already living alongside the present, dismantling the authority of the word, interfering with the linear narrative of history".[65] The past for Herffernan "lives alongside the present, seeking revenge, haunting the living".[66] Not only does the past interrupt the linearity of history,

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[64] Aris Mousoutzanis, "'Soul Delay': Trauma and Globalization in William Gibson's Pattern Recognition (2003)", in Apocalyptic Discourse in Contemporary Culture Post-Millennial Perspectives on the End of the World, ed. Monica Germana and Aris Mousoutzanis (New York: Routledge, 2014), 126.
[65] Teresa Heffernan, *Post-Apocalyptic Culture: Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Twentieth-Century Novel* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 75.
http://web.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.aub.edu.lb/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=1486516b-26fb-47ef-af49-1b09c142168d%40sessionmgr4007&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=468889&db=nlebk.
[66] Ibid., 75.

refusing to relinquish its control of temporality, it alsoexists violently in the present, not allowing anyone to escape its vengeful grip.

The past is vengeful for having failed to accomplish its ambitious intentions. The history of humanity always fails to reach its summit of accomplishment and progress. The industrial age culminated with the world wars, and the promises of capitalism at the end of the cold war exploded in an unprecedented economic crisis near the end of the first decade of the twenty first century. No matter how constructive the past sets itself out to be, it always fails in actualizing that inspiration.

The failures of the past thus discharge into the present, rendering it crippled and uncapable of advancement. The burden of the past's active pressure exudes into the present, the last of which becomes frozen in its own temporality. The past is unable to mend its shortcomings, and the present is unable to advance: the temporalities loop upon themselves and each other, creating a temporal reality where history is stuck in circles. A simple example of this loop is the occurrence of two world wars that took place in the same century. History is understood as being repetitive, occurring in endless loops and circles, where different temporalities unfold and accordingly shape the conditions of all historical happenings.

This theory of history's repetition is thoroughly explored in Reinhart Koselleck's collection of essays, *Sediments of Time: On Possible Histories*. Koselleck discusses numerous aspects of history and time, relating most, if not all, dynamics of power that together shape most aspects of the nature of repetitive history and how time is constructed, simultaneously, in both linear and cyclical structures. Koselleck maintains that "history as a

whole is based upon structures of repetition that are not exhausted in singularity".[67] The

cycles of repetition existent in history are not identically repetitive but recur over time's

cycle with changing elements that make them seem singular and unique.

The repetitive aspect of history occurs over different periods of time, resulting from

the interaction that exist between different temporal dimensions. These interactions vary in

accordance with the circumstances that shape them. Thus, history repeats itself but never in

precise, exact manner. For Koseleck, "historical times consist of multiple layers that refer

to each other in a reciprocal way, though without being wholly dependent upon each

other."[68] It is through this reciprocity that time gets stuck in its loophole, but doesn't mimic

itself absolutely over its ongoing unfolding. Historical repetition unravels in a similar

means, but absolute. This is the case even in the age of modernity, as Gregory Castle argues

that the myths that greatly contributed to the formulation of modernist thought are "myths

that disguise interminable conditions of repetition."[69].

History does not, however, unravel independently, nor do events occur repetitively

through a predetermined cycle. Historical events are primarily shaped by decisions taken by

individuals who in their turn form and interact with how history subsequently develops.

Accordingly, the repetitive aspect of history becomes then, to a great extent, responsible for

by the individuals who contribute to its creation and continuation. Koselleck finds two

reasons behind this matter: that people fail to read history well enough to a degree that

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[67] Reinhart Kosselleck, *Sediments of Time: On Possible Histories*, trans. and ed. Sean Franzel and
Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 5.
[68] Ibid., 4.
[69] Gregory Castle, *The Blackwell Guide to Literary Theory* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 145.

allows them to learn from it, and that they receive the events that they are experiencing in real time from their own perspectives, rather than understating their situation as it takes place in history.[70]

The pressure existent between the two temporalities brings their interaction into a collision of time that defines the multi temporal unfolding of the present. For Kimberly Hutchings, "the distinctiveness of the present turned out to lie in the repetition and future return of the same".[71] The collapse of the future into the present, if all temporal entities are ever repetitive, make the future repeat history that is yet to happen. Simultaneously, the future seeks to bring the present into the ending of all time, into an ahistorical atemporal dimension. Nevertheless, the charging forces of the past prevent it from accomplishing that aim. Not one temporal entity is able to dominate the other, especially when they are both unfolding in time not of their own.

The present then displays a repetition of the past that is grounded into an apocalyptically tense reality. The result of such interplay renders the present into an everyday recurring apocalypse. This rendition is the only able to contain and express the polarity taking place between the conflicting temporalities.

The apocalyptic present presses all these attractions of different temporal dimensions into a unified temporal entity. This entity produces itself in the present, in a temporality that dissolves the apocalypse in the everyday. The future is not necessarily in direct opposition to the past. Teresa Heffernan observes that the collapse of the future into

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[70] Reinhart Kosselck, *Sediments of Time*, 39, 169-170.
[71] Kimberly Hutchings, *Time and World* Politics (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 131.

the present is a "future to come that reconciles itself to the past."[72] The tension arises from the inability of these two temporal dimensions that are unable to reconcile their differences. Each dimension drags time into its own accord. Their reconciliation happens in the present; their interaction making the present a perpetual apocalypse.

The categorical deconstruction of the day of judgment occurs thus. The more time progresses, the less enthusiasm there is for the expectation of doomsday. Koselleck notes that "the Last Judgment already realizes itself in history itself: every day is the last".[73] If every day is particularly the last, then no day is uniquely the last. In the modern age, the day of Judgement loses its sovereignty. Cyril O'Regan indicates that the fusing of the apocalypse into the quotidian ensues a "general economy of the event in which event is everywhere and nowhere, at all times and no time."[74] For O'Regan, not only does the apocalypse happen every day, but everywhere. O'Regan brings the spatial dimension of the everyday apocalypse into play, granting space an indispensable function in the realization of the apocalyptic present.

B. Space

Space and spatial structures gain a significance of their own accord and are no longer realized in relation to their interaction with their. It was not before the Modernist age that spatial structures were accorded any meaningful appreciation in terms of their purpose and their objective in the social fabric.

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[72] Heffernan, *Post-Apocalyptic Culture: Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Twentieth-Century Novel*, 76.
[73] Koselleck, *Sediments of Time*, 125.
[74] Cyril O'Regan, "Girard and the Spaces of Apocalyptic," *Modern Theology* 28, no. 1 (January 2012): 124, https://doi-org.ezproxy.aub.edu.lb/10.1111/j.1468-0025.2011.01727.x.

The formation alone of spatial structures allocates them meaning. Just like how the flow of time, its influence exerted over the conditions of humanity and space came to be understood in terms of how its very existence affects humanity. The formation of spaces allocates them meaning, regardless of any function they exert vis a vis any other formal structures of either temporal, capital or social dimensions.

Along the same line of logic, the formation of specific kinds of spaces allocates them specific kinds of meaning. Heretofore, the formation of precise, organized spaces yields spatial meanings specific to these organizations. Organized spatial structures such as cities, historical sites, nature reserves, bear functions in accordance to their specific landscape. Katherine Rousseau, in discussing organized spaces, recognizes that "these tactics [of structures] organized space into an intricate and orderly typography: areas and directions had their own character and as such, meaning could be derived from the particular characteristic of the area or direction."[75] Many factors go into determining the characteristics of a given area. These factors are as varied and diverse as spaces are and include the space's (physical) makeup. These elements are as varied and as diverse as spaces are.

Urban spaces are particularly interesting and complex. They blur the lines between high and low cultures, they organize space into meaningful and significant structures and are home to a wide range of people that come from a multitude of socio-economic classes.

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[75] Rousseau, "Mapping Our Last Places", 93.

The city presents a tense space that is brimming with dualities, dualities that are at tension with each other.

The city is examined through a lens of its population: their socio-economic conditions, their political positions, cultural background and milieu, and their communal roles. The people that occupy urban space impose their own pressure upon it. Respectively, the meaning that a space exerts, especially an urban space, is not void of the bodies that occupy it. Spaces gain their own meaning; this function of spaces is altered by the tension that individuals apply over the. In return, spaces accolade their own meaning upon the bodies that occupy them, in a synergy exchanged between the space and the bodies inhabiting it. Accordingly, "the body both conforms to the space and expresses the nature of the space."[76] The space and the bodies that inhabit it harmonize in a joint effort of mutual influence. The space contributes to shaping the bodies that represent it and vice versa.

Just like temporal structures, spatial structures contain apocalyptic tensions that are woven in the formation of these structures. Vítor Westhelle posits in *Eschatology and Space* a premise of an eschatological space and the tension present in it. Westhelle begins his investigation into apocalyptic spaces by pointing to the necessity of examining "the passive action that spatial materiality exerts"[77]. The action that Westhelle refers to is the

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[76] Ibid., 94.
[77] Vítor Westhelle, *Eschatology and Space: The Lost Dimension in Theology Past and Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 3, https://doi-org.ezproxy.aub.edu.lb/10.1057/97811371082

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apocalyptic potential that is concealed in the underlying layers that formulate any given spatial structure.

Westhelle defines the use of the word space to contain an "awareness of the objective and more or less measurable confinements of geographical, social, psychic and epistemological domains".[78] Spatial materiality thus encompasses many different types of spatial spheres in which individuals exist and interact, in any capacity that motivates at least one of the aforementioned domains.

Westhelle, in addition to confirming the potential power present in every spatial sphere, discusses how these very spheres could yield power that is apocalyptic. Westhelle determines the set of conditions that when combined render a given space eschatological in the passive power that its spatial materiality exerts. Such apocalyptic spaces are not ones that perfectly conform or embody the eschatological conditions that the Bible enlists. For Westhelle, "tangential spaces are apocalyptic".[79] Tangential spaces, as outlined by Westhelle, are spaces that defy the traditional demarcation of centralized spaces and blur the cleared and traditionally defined limits. Intersecting the center of the space with its borders, tangential spaces conceive novel spheres of spatial materiality that have decentralized conventional modules of spatial authority.[80]

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[78] Ibid., 3.
[79] Ibid., 20.
[80]Ibid., 20.

C. Time-Space compression

Nothing drives spaces into the apocalypse as strongly as the time-space compression that takes place in the age of capitalism. Time-space compression is a term coined by David Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Time-space compression ensues in the age of postmodernity as a result of the interaction and exchange existing between time and space. However, understating Harvey's compression properly requires a thorough understanding of his conception of time and space and how they operate.

Harvey postulates a conception of time and space that is directly under the command of the forces of capitalism and neo-liberal strategies for the growth of money and capital. For Harvey, people make use of any temporal and spatial dimensions in order to subjugate them for profit. The command over time and space happens solely in search of acquiring capital gains. Simultaneity, money is employed and invested for the objective of controlling space and time.[81] There is no function of either time or space that is outside the forces of capitalist money production.

Harvey allocates a preeminent power to those who control space. The control of space allows for the control of politics.[82] Since politics is in service of capital, political forces are driven towards spatial dominance, a strategy that ensures the drive of further capital. Nevertheless, regardless of how prevailing the forces of capitalism may get, social structures can still overturn them in service of the will of the people. Ultimately, "time and

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[81] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), 226, Acrobat Reader DC.
[82] Ibid., 234.

space both get defined through the organization of social practices fundamental to commodity production."[83] The assumption of the control of capitalist forces derives from its authority over political and social organization in the twentieth century. Were this control to be nullified through the pressure of social forces, a new understating of time and space could thus be posited.

From this motivation emerges a time-space compression that is particular to the conditions of the capitalistic age. Harvey observes that "this phase of time-space compression […] has had a disorienting and disruptive impact upon political-economic practices, the balance of class power, as well as upon cultural and social life."[84] For better or for worse, time-space compression deposits an incredible power that can greatly affect change. If the time-space compression is subjugated to the wills of capitalist means, then the compression results in an acceleration of the destruction of time. Capitalistic aims tend to dismantle the structures of space to better serve the capital.

Time annihilates the space, because the quickening of the destruction of spaces mines greater resources. Harvey declares that neo-capitalism "witnessed another fierce round in that process of annihilation of space through time that has always lain at the center of capitalism's dynamic."[85] The compression of time-space then dismantles space and exhausts it in order to serve the capitalist machine.

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[83] Ibid., 239.
[84] Ibid., 284.
[85] Ibid., 273, 293.

CHAPTER IV

THE REPITION OF HISTORY IN ʾ*Urashalīm al-Jadīda*

Farah Antun's ʾ*Urashalīm al-Jadīda* (1904) retells the Islamic takeover of the city of Jerusalem, during Christmas of the year 636. The novel opens on Christmas Eve, where ʾistīr (Istir) a young Jewish woman infiltrates the city with her father, at a time where Jews were banned from entering the city. They get caught and the young woman is captured, having refused to draw the sign of the cross. Witnessing these events, ʾīlīyā (Elia), a liberal young man of religious ambitions, is struck by the young woman and her beauty.

Istir is taken to a convent where she is to be converted and baptized. She is however extremely resistant to anyone who approaches her and shows an avid disgust of Christianity altogether. She is overcome by panic attacks in her capture and the nuns at the convent are unable to ease her tension and anxiety.

Meanwhile, religious and political tensions are simmering within the city. The church, the most influential organization in the city has been hit by a strong conflict regarding the nature of Christ, and the patriarch of Jerusalem is facing a strong tide of opposition from monks, priests and the public who disagree with the ruling of the last ecumenical council. All of these tensions are rising as the Islamic army is slowly but surely approaching the city of Jerusalem whose military defense is weak and unable to withstand any attacks.

Elia accompanied by his friend ʾirmīya (Ermia), go up to the convent and rescue Istir from her capture. However, a conflict arises between the two men over their common infatuation with the Jewish girl. Ermia then sets a plot against his friend, a result of which Istir comes to a full rejection, even a hatred of Elia

Outside the fences of Jerusalem, where the Islamic forces are camped, Istir's father is working with the new invading army as a spy. He is hoping to bring his daughter back from capture and gain some momentum for the Jews under the new Islamic rule of the city.

Once liberated through Elia's efforts, Istir is nursed and taken care of in a village outside the city and reunited with her parents. Upon learning that she was saved through Elia's efforts was freed, Istir starts falling for Elia, but it's too little too late. She has caught typhoid, and so have her parents. Elia rushes to her bedside, as her father conceives that seeing her loved one will cure her. Elia visits her to no avail, as Istir dies having infected Elia. Her parents die soon after, and Elia follows suit. Ermia has fled the city, a city now under the rule of Muslims, with the ultimate fate of the city unknown.

ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda sets its setting, the city of Jerusalem, in an eschatologically tense environment that mirrors the conditions described in the Bible. The absence of any real, or even remote eschatological development translates the disappointed stance that the novel is positing. The eschatological environment emerges for the narratives of Antun's text is set in an eternal present.

ʾ*Urashalīm al-Jadīda*'s very title alludes to chapter 21 of the Book of Revelation, to

a passage that bears the same title,[86] "The New Jerusalem". The novel is set around the

years 636-638 AD,[87] sometime before the Islamic siege of the city of Jerusalem, under the

control of the Byzantine Empire. If the Book of Revelation is describing the Jerusalem of

eternity, the utopic city actualized, Farah Antun's novel is then painting the opposite

picture. This apparent opposition is paradoxical for it is contrary in nature to the novel's

very title. The New Jerusalem builds an expectation of utopia, while the city that is

presented in the novel—far from being utopic—is one ruled by corruption, facing potential

occupation and possible destruction. What creates a contradiction in the text is the fact that

while Jerusalem seems to be in agony, Antun places the city in an eternal present. The time

of eternity is associated with the paradise of Eden, but the city is far from that state, and is

resembling hell more than paradise. The establishment of the eternal present in an active

temporal setting creates the tension that is found in the novel's events and their unfolding,

and what the novel is alluding to in terms of the Bible's promise of the utopic city.

I must first establish how the time frame of the novel, while seemingly offering a

progressive unfolding of time, grounds the novel as an entity in the eternal present. The

novel opens at Christmastime, where the people of the city are eager and anticipating the

arrival of the holiday so they can celebrate the birth of their Lord, Jesus Christ. Souad Slim

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[86] Revelation 21: 9-27.

[87] The exact date of the siege of the city by Islamic conquest is not exactly known, with most historians arguing that the event took place between 636 and 638 AD. (Shoshan, Boaz. *Arabic Historical Tradition & the Early Islamic Conquests* (London: Routledge, 2015), 110.) Antun places the story in the year 636 as the title of the first chapter, "Christmas in Bethlehem in the year 636". The determination made by the author indicates that the texts contains historical fallacies and inaccuracies. Antun determines that the novel takes place in 636, but I made this indication for the sake of historical accuracy.

explains that festivities and religious celebrations bring about a sense of both an inversion

and disruption of time and how it unfolds in the world. In the Orthodox Church, during the

holy week, times of prayer are literally inverted, where the vespers (evening prayer) is held

in the morning and the morning prayers are held in the evening.[88] Slim elaborates that "the

transgressive aspect of the holiday is translated at two levels in the conception of time: the

level of the holiday's timing as a rupture from time and the level of the holiday as a

connecter between the past and the present. The rupture with time occurs for the holiday is

experienced as sacred and outside of time".[89]   Hence, the beginning of Antun's text, while

not making this reference explicit, places the time frame of the narrative at a present similar

to that of eternity. The people of the city of Jerusalem, whether to their knowledge or not,

are about to experience the coming holiday in an atemporal frame that posits them, and

their celebrations, outside of time. This quality of timelessness is consistent throughout the

novel despite the fact that time does progress and events occur as time unfolds.

The novel fixes two parallel timelines: one in which time unfolds and another in

which time is unmoving. The progressive timeline is the one through which the narrative is

classically constructed: a series of events that take place one after the other, with each event

affecting the one after it, and their culmination drawing to a conclusion that organically

befalls as the result of all that has taken place. The timeline of the eternal present is not as

direct in its presence and effects. Reinhart Koselleck explains that historical events contain

[88] A.J. Chupungco, *Liturgical Time and Space* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 72.
https://books.google.com.lb/books/about/Liturgical_Time_and_Space.html?id=88A0uYXRqM8C&redir_esc=y.
[89] Souad Slim, "Temporalités traditionnelle et moderne en Orient au XIXe siècle et au début du XXe siècle,"
in *Explorer Le Temps Au Liban et Au Proche-Orient*, ed. Sylvia Chiffoleau, Elie Dannaoui, Souad Slim, and
Anna Madoeuf (Beirut: IFPO & Université de Balamand, 2017), 127. My translation.

both progressive and static points. "Every historical sequence contains linear as well as recurrent elements."[90] *ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda*'s timeline is a manifestation of that observation in a straightforward, pronounced manner.

In addition to the holiday aspect that inaugurates the novel, the eternal present is persistent in *ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda* through several motifs. The farm where Elia lives is reminiscent of the garden Garden of Eden in which Adam and Eve originally resided. The farm is populated by unsophisticated people, as the novel describes them, who are essentially earthy and have little concerns besides farming and maintaining a stable relationship with God. Their way of life parallels that of Adam and Eve who, before the fall, occupied their days by tending the garden Garden of Eden and communicating with God whenever He appeared.

The only notable discrepancy existent between the Garden and the farm is that Adam and Eve needn't the presence of priesthood in order to sustain their relationship with God, while the people of the farm where Elia lives are in need of a priest to help them fulfill their religious duties and preserve the foundation of an inherited and practiced organized religion. Even so, the priest that presides over the farm, Brother Mikhail, is an outcast figure that imitates Christ and John the Baptist in his humility and simple ways of religious practice that is void of culminative tradition, recalling in his person a simpler form of Christianity.

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[90] Koselleck, *Sediments of Time: On Possible Histories*, 3-4.

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The farm and its people establish themselves in a purist community that refuses the corrupt practices of the contemporary religious establishment. In its imitation of the Garden of Eden, the farm becomes an atemporal paradise that anticipates paradise before its actualization. The farm is not foolproof, however, for, in spite of the atemporality which the people of the farm aspire to, the farm still exists under the law of nature. Brother Mikhail's passing is a reminder of the farm's limited potency and of the people's human nature that cannot yet conquer death. But the farm remains a kind of semi-utopia where time is not essential: the people tend the garden and pray and live with inattention to the passage of time. The farm's demise later on in the novel is symbolic of humanity's inability to live outside of time, regardless of their effort, while also serving as reminder and prediction of the impossibility of the actualization of any kind of paradise - of any existence outside of time. Time is much too potent.

On another narrative level, Antun constructs an anticipation to the nearness of eschatology that creates the most forceful tension existent in the novel's time paradigm. This tension is at the heart of the narrative's ultimate prognosis: that despite all of the warning signs, nothing will effectively change. All the warning sings, the presence of corruption and every rule in the book regarding the impeding end of days will but fail to actualize. The news of war, famine, possible disease, invasion and potential oppression are nothing but parts of the current circumstances of the city of Jerusalem as described in Antun's novel. If anything, the novel is telling that all the signs of eschatology are but normal occurrences that take place in any given invasion, whether from the side of the invader or the invaded.

The narrative of the New Jerusalem is not that of the city referred to in the Bible, but the one that will soon come under the Islamic rule. The "New" in Jerusalem then will be just the ruling state. All other factors remain the same, eventually creating another corrupt ruler who repeats the same history. Interestingly, the novel does not report the ultimate fate of the city, nor does Antun take any measure to insert a historical intervention[91] as the author previously does in several instances throughout the novel. In that direction, the text is guiding the reader to look at history as a reference point regarding the state of the city after the expected Islamic takeover and the subsequent establishment of Islamic rule. Examined more closely, the text offers a prediction of the city's fate. Nearing the end of the novel, Istir's father—upon the conversion of an Israelite, Kaab, from Judaism to Islam—declares that "we [the Jews] don't benefit at all if our nation were to get lost in Islam as a water vessel gets lost at sea, and our temple will be moved from the hands of an old enemy to the hands of a new one."[92]

Given history's repetition in ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda, the novel's ethos becomes one where humanity's doom stems from its inability to escape and surpass time and its repetitive historical cycles. This theory of history's repetition is thoroughly explored in Reinhart Koselleck's collection of essays, *Sediments of Time: On Possible Histories*. Koselleck discusses numerous aspects of history and time, relating most, if not all

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[91] These historical interventions are long informative paragraphs that interrupt the narrative flow of the text in order to ground the events that Antun is reporting in a historical reality. These paragraphs are not necessarily accurate, but Antun seems to boast them as pillars by which he justifies the accuracy of his narratives. *ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda* remains a work of historical fiction and as default, even if grounded in reality, the text ultimately falls under a fictitious umbrella.

[92] Farah Antun, *ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda* (Cairo: Hindawi Foundation for Education and Culture, 2013), 168. My translation.

dynamics of power that together shape most aspects of the nature of repetitive history and

how time is constructed, simultaneously, in both linear and cyclical structures. Koselleck

maintains that "history as a whole is based upon structures of repetition that are not

exhausted in singularity."[93] The cycles of repetition existent in history are not identically

repetitive but recur over time's cycle with changing elements that make them seem singular

and unique.

To this example, I cite once again the case of the ruling class in *ʾUrashalīm al-*

Jadīda. While the impending Islamic rule appears to be novel and unexpected, it is only so

in appearance. Running its course, this new rule will prove itself unoriginal, transferring the

same failures and shortcomings of the preceding politico-religious ruling class. Boaz

Shoshan documents the history of early Islam in *The Arabic Historical Tradition and the*

Early Islamic Conquests: Folklore, Tribal lore, Holy War, dedicating a chapter to Umar

and his journey in Jerusalem. This journey fulfills Antun's prediction and falls in line with

Koselleck's view of history and cycles of repetition.

At first, "the Muslims' siege on Jerusalem leaves the local population few chances

and, after capitulating, it reaches a protection agreement, the authentic text of which has

allegedly been preserved."[94] This beginning carries false hope and ends with a corrupt rule

similar to the one before it, in a city that seems doomed to such fate. Shoshan argues that

the Umayyad ruler has an ambition to compete against the Christian religious supremacy in

the city of Jerusalem.[95] Ironically enough, the fearful prediction once made by Istir's father

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[93] Kosselleck, *Sediments of Time*, 5.
[94] Shoshan, *Arabic Historical Tradition & the Early Islamic Conquests*, 110.
[95] Ibid., 111.

comes true in light of this new rule, as Umar later issues a clause banning the Jews from returning to the Holy City.[96] The cycle has already begun. Shoshan's analysis reports several historical sources in which historians contemporary to Umar have drawn comparison between him and Jesus Christ, echoing several instances in both their lives, notably the entrance to the city and the seclusion on the Olive mountain.[97]

This comparison brings to the fore two subsequent conclusions: setting another cycle of repetition, that of the emergence of a powerful leader of newly preached religion, while foreshadowing that the followers of this religious leader will fall short in the future from preserving this leader's newly found teachings. An account that reports an alleged order of crucifixion issued by Umar suggests that the peaceful teachings that Umar sought to establish have already been betrayed by him.[98] The invasion of the Crusaders decades later is another example of the endless cycle of history that keeps occurring in the city of Jerusalem. "All of our histories all the way up to the so-called early modern period, and did so in a quasi-static, that is to say, repetitive, manner".[99] These historical cycles are a ubiquitous phenomenon that befalls any time history is produced and consumed. In another sense, the repetition of cyclical histories is occurring if time is unfolding.

Koselleck points to the anxiety that results from the structures of repetition vis-à-vis eschatology and the end of time. If history is repetitive and cyclical, will it then ever end or is it an endless cycle that becomes an inevitable reasoning? "The longer the Second

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[96] Ibid., 117-118.
[97] Ibid., 113-114.
[98] Ibid., 118.
[99] Kosselleck, *Sediments of Time*, 35.

Coming of Christ is delayed, the more another variant of expectation leads to the question: How much longer?"[100] As I argued, ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda resolves that eschatology in not set to actualize, locking history in loops that do not offer an absolute and ultimate resolution. Antun's novel encapsulates the simultaneous, opposing attitudes that his characters hold towards the anticipation of apocalyptic events. These attitudes resemble historical responses that have dominated the discourse of apocalyptic anticipation, as they are also reported and detailed by Koselleck. On the one hand, as I argued above, the continuous failure actualization of any eschatological event has resulted in disbelief and in disappointment in its potential for occurrence. Koselleck explains further that "one criterion for the extra-historical determination of time of apocalyptic prophesy is its repeatability. An unfulfilled prophesy or apocalyptic expectation can be repeated continually; indeed, the likelihood that what is prophesized and expected will still occur grows with each disappointed expectation."[101]

As observed, a paradoxical apprehension ensues after each failure of any expected doomsday, resulting in an even bigger expectation for future events that seem apocalyptic, despite the numerous failures that history has already experienced. On the other hand, there seems to be a general demeanor of reluctance and skepticism towards any probability of better conditions of existence in the future. This distrust is shared by many of Antun's characters, markedly Istir's father. But many other characters, such as Elia, Ermia, and Istir (to name a few) seem to fluctuate between anticipation and apprehension. The progression

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[100] Kosselleck, *Sediments of Time*, 94.
[101] Ibid., 95.

of time ever diminishes foresight in the materialization of eschatology. "As long as the Christian world moved toward the Last Judgment", Koselleck observes, "it knew itself to be in the last time period or age [Zeitalter] in which there was nothing fundamentally new to anticipate".[102]

The people of Jerusalem in ʾUrashalīm are found guilty as charged in such a situation, for they believe that the Patriarch of the city will achieve victory, despite his declining military and political strength, having been previously defeated by the Persians. People create their own perception of reality upon which they build an imagination of the future that can hardly be achieved given the actual, historical circumstances at hand.[103] Ultimately, one can infer that through the inability to properly evaluate history, and their gullibility to the practice of denial, individuals identify events as they are capable of, as they see them fit. "We might be allowed one conclusion here: however actual events and enduring is experienced, and however it is interpreted ex post, in the unfolding of the events themselves, history only ever occurs in the way that it is perceived and grasped by the agents involved."[104]

The factuality of Koselleck's argument is that this phenomenon is a universal experience vis-à-vis individuals' reception of history and how it unfolds. These circumstances affect not only the people, but the city space, which they define and determine them under the cyclical rule of repetitive history. With regards to how

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[102] Ibid., 109.
[103] Ibid., 184.
[104] Ibid., 202.

individuals perceive events, disregarding their fallacies at reading history, is that people often understand occurrences and tend to perceive the future with hope.

In addition to time, the repetition of history occurs in Jerusalem through the time-space compression. Time-space compression occurs in Jerusalem in the form of power, not money. The advancement of Islam is granted its might not through riches, but through the advancement of its strong military. The city of Jerusalem is itself deteriorating under the current Christian regime. That regime, at the center of religious conflicts and power dynamics, is unable to preserve the city and protect its people. Jerusalem is a place of chaos, and people are fleeing the city that is unable to contain them. The Islamic invasion of the city grants them momentum, the capture of one of the most historic cities in the world. The capital gained is not monetary in nature. It is the constant exhaustion of Jerusalem's capital that traps it in a loop that the city is unable to escape.

The biblical promises of eschatology thus fail to actualize. Whether aware or unaware of this, individuals and characters alike are bound to the reality of such failure. But this failure does not rule out all other biblical observations. Some, given that failure, still ring true. Some others help in adapting to the eternal present upon which the lives of people are occurring. Perhaps, what most rings true is a measurement maintained in the Book of Ecclesiastes: "what has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun."[105] People, with nothing new under the sun, keep on living.

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[105] Ecclesiastes 1:9 (Christian Standard Bible).

CHAPTER V

FRANKENSTEIN FĪ BAGHDĀD AND THE DESTRUCTION OF SPACE

Ahmad Saadawi's *Frankenstein fī Baghdād* (2013) tells the story of the Iraqi capital in the midst of the American invasion of the country. Set during the winter of 2005, the novel is a story about the people of the capital and their hardships of survival. The novel tells different stories that run parallel to each other around the plot of the narrative. Hadi, a junk dealer, Elshiva Tadros, an elderly lady living in the Batawin neighborhood of Baghdad, Mahmoud, a young journalist in pursuit of truth, and a secret military unit that employs sorcerers and psychics on the lookout for potential threats and bombings. All of these characters and stories revolve around the novel's main character, The Whatsitsname. The Whatsitsname, Baghdad's Frankenstein, is the zombie that drives the plot forward. All the characters of the novel exist through and around him.

The narrative in the novel is not linear. The narrator jumps between these interlocking stories through a series of flashbacks and shared destinies that tie the characters together through the protagonist, Whatsitsname. Elshiva Tadros, an old widow whose son has died at war, refuses to acknowledge her son's death. She lives in an old house in the Batawin street of Baghdad, with her cat Nabu. She prays zealously to Saint George that he brings her son back, whom she believes is missing. Meanwhile, Hadi, the neighborhood junk dealer, goes around sites of explosion and collects body parts. He does so as his proper way to mourn those who have been disfigured and torn to pieces. Hadi's

dear friend, Nahem Abdaki, died near a car that has been detonated. Unable to find his friend's body, Hadi collected body parts and sewed them together, so his friend's family is able to properly bury and mourn him. The different explosions and war saga are being analyzed and recorded by Mahmoud, a young journalist working at a magazine.

The fates of these three characters interlock when Hadi's unusual endeavor takes an unexpected turn. Having completed the assemblage of the body, the body suddenly comes to life. The soul that inhabits this Frankenstein-like body is that of Hasib Mohamed Jaafar, a security officer who died in a bombing targeting a hotel in the capital. Hadi feels confused towards what happened, feeling like Frankenstein after the latter created his infamous monster. The monster, whom Hadi names Whatistsname, guided by the soul of Hassib, avenges Hassib's killers and flees, ending up at the house of Elshiva. Elshiva mistakes Whastitsname for her long-lost son, who she believes has now finally returned. She names him Daniel.

With his new identity, Daniel goes on and avenges the killers of the body parts that constitute his pastiche of a body. However, whenever he avenges someone, he loses the body part belonging to the avenged as a result. Daniel then becomes driven by an inner irrevocable need to keep avenging. This desire consumes Whatitsname to the point where he finds himself forced to become a killer. Unable to find another body part due to a lack of explosion – in a short period of peace in the capital – Daniel kills an old man and takes his body parts to replace the ones missing from him.

All the mysterious killings throughout the capital, and Daniel's supernatural strength (he is immune to bullets being a zombified body), tales spread among the citizens

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of Baghdad recounting peculiar encounters with this inexplainable figure. Some believe Daniel to be a demon coming, a sign that predicts the sure nearness of the apocalypse. Through Hadi as proxy, Mahdmoud gets a recording of Whatsitsname telling his story. Unable to arrest him, the police arrests Hadi and frame his as the perpetrator of all the unusual crimes that devastated the city. Elshiva, whose two daughters live in Asutralia, send her grandson her way, whom she mistakes for her son Daniel. Elshiva goes to Australia to be reunited with her daughters. The novel closes with Whatsisname smoking a cigarette, as Hadi is questioned and tried for the crimes of his creature.

Although set in a war zone, Saadawi does not present grand stories of conflicts and battles. There is no rising war hero who saves the day and becomes a national figure. The novel relates the story from the perspective of the victims of a conflict fought in violence. The intertwining narrative present in the novel is that of the everyday citizens of Baghdad who are losing everything they have: their homes, their country, their loved ones. Even the protagonist of the novel is an anti-hero, a grotesque creature that is set out to avenge and kill all those the city has lost.

Through its representation of the unrepresented, the story's focus is directed towards everyday characters going through extraordinary events. The focus that the narrative accords to the space of the capital highlights the importance of the spatial dimension on the lives of the characters. The Batawin neighborhood, the old houses of the city, the capital's destructed and deteriorated state. The story of *Frankenstein fī Baghdād* becomes about the people of Baghdad, and their hardship of living in a city at war. The novel is about the Iraqi capital and its everyday people.

The novel's events place the city in a state of eschatological anxiety. The breakout of war and the destruction of the capital are signs of the eminence of doomsday. The Book of Revelation points that the faithful, in these time if hardship, will be praising God and seeking mercy. Baghdad, however, almost perfectly fails any chances to offer praise. The novel, throughout the narrative, makes no mentions of any character raising prayer to God as an act of asking for mercy. While Old Lady Elshiva devotes her existence to raising worship to God and Saint Georges, she does so in hopes that her beloved saint shall bring her back her long-lost son. Her theological duty comes off more of an obligation than a sincere offering of praise.

The capital also falls short of fulfilling any theological function in its form of organization. No building or landmark bear any theological significance that can carry a responsive theological duty. If the Temple in the Bible signified the presence of God among His people, no construction of any kind delivers a similar function in the novel. *Frankenstein fī Baghdād*, while utilizing various locations, makes no mention any architectural structure that functions similarly to the Temple. While not totally absent from the novel, the houses of worship present are mentioned marginally or are close to sites of bombing, if not the direct target of bombings. Combined with its theologically inactive citizens, the capital does not meet any biblical expectation in regards to its theological obligation.

Baghdad shapes its residents as much as they shape their city. As a city at war, Baghdad is under the constant threat of bombings, domestic and civil unrest, and terrorist attacks. The city is unstable, uncertain and knows no rest. Its residents, as a result, live

through the consequences of such troubling conditions. Yet, many factors go into determining the characteristics of a given area. These factors are as varied and diverse as spaces are and include the space's (physical) makeup, the result of which maintains the city throughout the many ordeals it faces. Baghdad stays alive and together in spite of everything, for its people are surviving either by chance or by determination.

The first spatial entity that the reader is presented with is the iconic Baghdadi neighborhood of Al-Batawin. This entry alone is manifold in its spatial spheres, containing three dimensions through which the materiality of space is realized. The neighborhood itself can be read as a metaphor standing for the city itself, being one of Baghdad's oldest and most famous neighborhoods. Historically, Al-Batawin is known to have housed some of the city's poorest farmers and other low-wage workers who migrated from the mountains to live in the capital. The space is in a sense an economically poor space, a materiality of that exerts its passive action on the residents of this neighborhood.

Inside the neighborhood, the author offers a closer look by detailing the inner life of Old Lady Elshiva, one of the street's oldest residents. Old Lady Elshiva has been living in her current home for over thirty years. The novel offers little information about her economic history but does not mention that she currently holds any job. She has a missing son (presumed dead at war) and two daughters living in Australia. And here one can determine the first instance presented of passive spatial materiality. The daughters of Elshiva, the crooked landlord Farj Al-Dalal (who is seeking to acquire her house so he can rent it out for profit), and a multitude of explosions around the city and the neighborhood should be enough to convince the Old Lady to move away. Her daughters have offered her

a stay in Australia with them a multitude of times, an option most logical for survival when your life is constantly in threat due to bombings and armed conflicts. But the Old Lady radically refuses. Her persistence to remain in her old home stems from an illogical conviction that her stay despite all opposing conditions will eventually bring back her long-lost son, Daniel.

Perhaps a most striking example of the passive action of spatial materiality comes from inside Lady Elshiva's home, the third dimension of a spatial sphere of the neighborhood, in the form of the pseudo shrine that she devotes for Saint Georges. The shrine consists of a great icon of the saint, an item which the Old Lady spends quite a portion of her active time maintaining and polishing. She burns incense for the icon of the saint, as she awaits the impossible: that through her zealous prayer, her son will be home once again by the grace of the saint. Elshiva embodies her hope in what is unachievable, depositing this hope onto an icon and revolving her life around it. The materiality of the shrine is a striking example of the power exerted by spaces over bodies. The Old Lady's insistence on staying where she is in pursuit of an unachievable wish. The authority exerted by the space confines Elshiva to a single place.

Saadawi further demonstrates the potency of spatial spheres through the inclusion of several explosions that take place throughout different times in the novel. Saadawi's text opens by reporting an explosion that took place not long ago (chapter 1), and the novel's narrative centers itself around the explosion that a Sudanese suicide bomber causes at the hotel (chapter 3). These sites of explosion are violent spatial spheres, through which a

modified or hijacked spatial materiality exerts an active power over the people that inhabit this space.

It is after the explosion of the truck in chapter 3 that the soul of Hasib Mohamad Jaafar, the security officer at the hotel, roams until it later inhabits the Frankenstein-like creature that Hadi Al-Attaq creates and names Shisma. Arguably, Hadi Al-Attaq's endeavor is only successful through the continuous bombings that target different parts of the city. If it were not for the many bombings that even the novel fails to report, Hadi would not have had enough body parts to gather, let alone sew together into a human-monster-zombie hybrid. The violent conditions of these sites become powerful enough to modify the bodies that were occupying it, spawning a new species that will hence forever change the city. The spatial organization exerted by these sites, once violent, no longer remains passive.

Saadawi's Baghdad perfectly bolsters these traits. The text does not anchor a clear center for the city, spreading its action over multiple locations that are in service of the narrative. The novel's central location is Al-Batawin neighborhood, an old, aged and crumbling space, devoid of any political centers or official governmental organizations. Having such neighborhood as the central location of a novel set in the 2003 Iraq invasion strips away any political power that a government agency would normally occupy in such circumstances. The novel centers the Baghdadi conflict in this unassuming neighborhood.

The character with the most power over ongoing events in the capital is none other than the Shisma, and consequently, the people of the Al-Batawin neighborhood that are connected to this figure. Old Lady Elshiva who legitimizes the existence of the Shisma,

taking him into her abode/home and naming him Daniel; Hadi Al-Attaq who creates him;

the soul of Hasib Mouhamad Jaafar that inhabits the zombified body, all become key

players in an invasion that is by far greater than any power they could ever acquire. The

centralization of this otherwise banal space not only fortifies the power that it exerts, but

also grants the bodies inhabiting it potential beyond their normal capacities.

The tangent nature of the Iraqi capital is not enough for it to reach its apocalyptic

potential. To be apocalyptic is to ultimately be, or become, utopic. The New Jerusalem of

the Book of Revelation does not actualize until the war between God and the Devil has

been fought and won, and the people who believe in Christ have been saved. Biblical utopia

is only achieved after a great deal of suffering, which Baghdad has already had its fair share

of and that should mean granting the city a well-deserved utopic relief.

Saadawi's Baghad checks every box of eschatological labor that the Bible enlists in

its prediction of doomsday occurrences: a false messiah,[106] an ongoing war, targeted

persecution of individuals, among other tragedies until the second coming of Jesus and the

abolition of all suffering. But Baghdad's relief is far from near. The novel provides neither

hints nor evidence regarding a potential occurrence of the Second Coming after the

conclusion of its narrative. Instead, the reader is left with the image of the Shisma petting

the cat that Old Lady Elshiva has left behind in her Baghdadi home, while Hadi Al-Attaq

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[106] The Shisma could be read as a false Messianic figure. The Shisma is technically a resurrected body that comes to life after death. But his resurrection is flawed and incomplete, for he sports a ruined zombified body, and is in constant need of rejuvenation in order to preserve himself. Additionally, while the resurrection of Christ brings salvation to humankind, the Shisma's resurrection causes fear, death and terror, serving a resurrected purpose that categorically opposes that of Christ's.

has been captured and framed for Shisma's crimes. This conclusion offers no utopic hope for the suffering capital.

Taking once again Katherine Rousseau's observation into account, I turn to the most prominent body that inhabits the city, that of zombified Daniel, the Baghdadi Frankenstein monster. The prominence of this figure is greatly eminent for the story of the novel, to the extent that it figures in the novel's very title. If the title is indicating anything, it is that this story is about Baghdad and a Frankenstein-like monster that emerges within it.

The body of the monster then is a representative of the space of the city. That body stands as an indicator of the city's conditions, as these conditions progress and alter throughout the unfolding of events simultaneously surrounding the city and its monster. Read superficially, the city is decaying, crumbling, made up of unsynchronized parts, and is in a constant cycle of murder and revenge. Dominic Davies, commenting on the bodies that represent the city, particularly that of the Shisma notes that "like the city and the human bodies that it represents, it almost decomposes, unravelling as its frayed edges into a complex network of conflicting and unfalsifiable fictions".[107] The monster parallels the city in all its failing endeavors, loss of self-identity and inability to compose the self into a coherent, put together mass.

The monster becomes a series of conflicting narratives, each pertaining to the soul of the one of the many traumatized body parts that collectively form the body of Daniel.

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[107] Dominic Davies, "Concrete Stories, Decomposing Fictions: Body Parts and Politics in Ahmad Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad,*" *Interventions* (September 2020): 7, https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2020.1816851.

Similarly, the city, after the American invasion that takes over the country, becomes lost and confused in a multitude of narratives and discourses that are together out of tune. What was the narrative of an invasion, becomes the discourse of the choir of players who are playing without a conductor. The novel consciously embeds this issue in the layers of its story. The prologue to the novel is a top-secret military document from a yet undisclosed special unit, while the first chapter opens with an explosion that takes place near the church where Old Lady Elshiva is praying. The narrative then carries the story from an abundance of perspectives, offering the viewpoint of the American military and government, the Iraqi government, the Iraqi press, the everyday people of the Al Batawin neighborhood in addition to a cast of secondary characters such as the deacon and the daughters of Elshiva.

"Baghdad's infrastructure is shown in a state of decomposition" notes Davies,[108] a declaration that showcases that the crumbling of the city is by no means at the surface level. The damage is almost irreparable. This is due to the cycle of violence under which both the city and the monster find themselves. The history of the city therefore becomes a history of violence, woven into the city's fabric. This history takes control over the dynamics of both the city and the monster's motives, and drives intentions into unprecedented directions.

Fred Botting notes that after a period of its existence, the monster's survival depends on its possession of new flesh and new body parts.[109] The monster loses the sense of its original purpose and becomes fueled by violence and anger. Motivated by survival

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[108] Ibid., 11.
[109] Fred Botting, "Infinite Monstrosity: Justice, Terror, and Trauma in Frankenstein in Baghdad," *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* Vol. 30 No. 1 (Winter 2019): 20, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.aub.edu.lb/docview/2305785334?accountid=8555.

and self-preservation, the monster begins seeking out innocent victims, murders them and uses their body parts to sustain his own existence. Once a vengeful killer of the perpetrators of the bombings across the city, the monster loses his own purpose, and falls victim to actions he once avenged and despised. The mission of Daniel shifts from "restitutions of (impossible) justice and (irreparable) mourning to obeying a logic of (perpetual) war and infinite terror".[110]

The observation that Botting lays out is telling of the state of both the monster and the city. Being a body in the city, the monster, mutually shaped by the city as it by him, becomes like his surroundings, stuck in a cycle of perpetual violence. The outcome of this cycle, through the stages that the monster undergoes, is telling of the city's ultimate fate. If Jerusalem is bound in cycle of repetitive history, Baghdad is bound to those of repetitive violence. The body of the monster embodies most candidly this cycle. In order to survive, the monster is now forced to kill to replace his decomposing body parts. And consequently, once having killed and avenged, Daniel loses some body parts, which prompts him to murder new victims in this repetitive game. The city is likewise constrained by this endless quest for vengeance and unattainable search for justice. Utopia only takes place after the pain of labor has been consumed. But if the labor is ongoing, utopia fails to actualize. The city and its bodies thus have no choice. They are suffering from an unending labor.

Another dimension worth noting that brings an eschatological tension in the text of Saadawi is the comparison of the monster of Baghdad to a zombie. Technically speaking, the Shisma is a zombie in the sense that it is an undead body. Generally speaking, in

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[110] Ibid., 21.

narratives of zombies, zombies are formed after a certain devastating outbreak shifts the

mass of humanity from a human to a zombified state. The Shisma does not undergo that

drastic transformation, for it starts its life as a zombie without having ever been human.

Besides this minor detail, the Shisma is a zombie almost perfectly in manner and existence.

The presence of zombies, in the nature of their existence and the harm that they

encompass, recall the threat of the apocalypse that is too great to ignore. David

Cunningham and Alexandra Warwick argue that "there is a presentness in the figure of the

zombie and the image of the apocalypse."[111] Zombies figure in popular imagination,

although they are never mentioned in the Bible as an inevitable part of the imminent

apocalypse, in which a great fight takes place with humans standing united against the

zombie invasion. This is an image recurring in a number of popular films that imagine this

invasion and fictionize the human response towards such a threat.

However, the zombie of *Frankenstein fī Baghdād* is nothing like the popular

imagination of film productions. The Shisma is the only zombie present in the narrative, he

is not contagious and remains the only zombie figure existent throughout the remainder of

the novel. And in many ways, the Shisma dismantles many popular tropes of the zombie

apocalypse. Cunningham and Warwick argue that the threat of the zombie monster is

erased once that figure becomes humanized.[112] And the Shisma is greatly humanized in

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[111] David Cunningham and Alexandra Warwick, "The Ambassadors of Nil: Notes on the Zombie Apocalypse," in *Apocalyptic Discourse in Contemporary Culture Post-Millennial Perspectives on the End of the World,* ed. Monica Germana and Aris Mousoutzanis, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 175, https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.aub.edu.lb/chapters/ambassadors-nil-notes-zombie-apocalypse-david-cunningham-alexandra-warwick/e/10.4324/9781315883861-22?context=ubx&refId=e5d594fb-f016-444f-813e-200ffcfbf189.

[112] Ibid., 176.

Saadawi's text. He is given a name, an adoptive mother, emotions, identity crisis and human-like motives of revenge and survival. At one point, the text even suggests that Daniel has a sense of morality, where he questions his own motives and what has driven him into becoming what he is.

Daniel then exists as a zombie to further fortify the undoing and the unattainable occurrence of the apocalypse that will bring utopia about. Zombies exist in a "stasis of an endless present as a repetition of the ever-same".[113] This description recalls the eternal present that I discussed in Chapter I and postulates the state of stasis that zombies impose. Subsequently, "the end of the world is not so much a punctual event, as it is that which occurs repeatedly – in fact is always 'happening' in a continuous and seemingly endless present."[114]

If the bodies of the city are representative of the city itself, the body of the zombie then places the city in the eternal present. The city of Baghdad, suffering the stasis imposed on it by the Shisma, is enrolled in an unending cycle of war violence. But this cycle is woven directly into the spatial fabric of the city, and only exists as a result of the zombified body that roams the city and terrorizes it.

An observation worth noting before I conclude is the importance that the everyday occupies in the narrative of the novel. Alfie Brown argues that there developed with emergence of city narratives "a fascination with and even a fetishization of 'the

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[113] Ibid., 179.
[114] Ibid., 179.

everyday'".[115] Brown defines the everyday as the unconsciousness of the city, elusive and impossible to reach, under whose influence we live.[116] The everyday is banal and mediocre at best. The everyday is not concerned with grandiose spectacles and grand happenings of great magnitude. And the everyday is sufficiently present in city narratives, including the narrative of the city of Baghdad.

Taking into account all the destruction that the city has suffered, one can easily infer that the Iraqi capital experiences an acute time-space compression. That compression happens to be this sharp given the strong capital motives that have circulated throughout the unfolding of the American invasion of Iraq.[117] Thus, the time-space compression of the Iraqi capital in *Frankenstein fī Baghdad* becomes more traditionally capitalist in its motives and means. The deterioration of the space is positively apparent, and the monetary gains are obvious. The invasion allowed the gain of a colossal amount of money through weaponry production, the collection of artifacts, and of politico-military powers. Baghdad was destroyed as result, its inhabitants left homeless, their loved ones dead. Iraq became a falling nation and its invaders profited and thrived. If anything, the invasion of Iraq is a perfect example of the immense scale of harm that can be caused through time-space compression.

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[115] Alfie Brown, "'How Did the Everyday Manage to Become So Interesting?'," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Literature and the City*, ed. Jeremy Tambling, (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 75, https://doi-org.ezproxy.aub.edu.lb/10.1057/978-1-137-54911-2.

[116] Ibid., 75.

[117] For more on this issue, and the cost behind the Iraq invasion: Anthony H. Cordesman, "The Cost of the Iraq War" (https://www.csis.org/analysis/cost-iraq-war), Courtney Coelho, "Iraq War: 190,000 Lives, $2.2 Trillion" (https://news.brown.edu/articles/2013/03/warcosts), Linda J. Bilmes, "The Financial Legacy of Iraq and Afghanistan: How Wartime Spending Decisions Will Constrain Future National Security Budgets" (https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/lbilmes/files/the_financial_legacy_of_afghanistan.pdf).

Even if apocalyptic, spaces are always affected by the locality of the bodies that occupy it. "Apocalyptic space, with its carefully ordered cosmology, derived additional meaning from local spatial practices at the site of display".[118] Even apocalyptic spatial spheres then are not dominantly potent in the power that they exert. They derive meaning from local bodies. Spatial practices are none other than a power that individuals exercise over the spatial dimension that they maintain. Even if formidable, the apocalypse is not absolute. If the bodies that occupy its spatial sphere are potent enough, it will then fall under their influence, an influence so mighty that the apocalypse is halted and the grand schemes are abandoned. The bodies burden themselves with the everyday. Even the apocalypse falls under such influence. The everyday becomes the new, banal, ever repetitive apocalypse, the apocalypse of every single day.

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[118] Rousseau, "Mapping Our Last Places", 99.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

If these novels are telling of anything, is that there exists a frustration towards the happening of the apocalypse. People have done with end times. There is a growing disappointment towards the anticipation of the occurrence of doomsday, accompanied by an anxiety that results from the act of waiting to no avail. Sophie Fuggle notes that philosophers and thinkers of the 21st "have focused on how acceptance of imminent disasters provides the opportunity to turn a potentially devastating event into a 'nonevent'".[119] The dismantling of the crushing prowess of the apocalypse has rendered it something not to be anticipated.

Further, the advancement of the apocalypse has been exploited to preserve the status quo. The social and political regimes present today have theorized that their stability is the most secure ground by which humanity can face its impending demise. As Fuggle explains, "imminent catastrophe is used to maintain existing forms of social exclusion, division, and oppression."[120] The refusal of the apocalypse can be read thus as a political act of revolution, a refusal of the systemic organization of social and political life through which oppression is legitimized. Perhaps, an alternative means of anticipating the apocalypse can

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[119] Sophie Fuggle, "To Have Done with the End-Times: Turning the Apocalypse into a Nonevent" in *Apocalyptic Discourse in Contemporary Culture Post-Millennial Perspectives on the End of the World*, ed. Monica Germana, and Aris Mousoutzanis (New York: Routledge, 2014), 33.
[120] Ibid., 42.

be thought of. The dismissal of the apocalypse is a refusal of what that anticipation represents and preserves.

Moving away from thematic analysis, away from the apocalypse and the representation of its failure, the texts at hands are contributing to an ever-growing trend in Modern Arabic Literature. Reflecting back on the Nahda project, I can assess that both novels at hand, ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda and *Frankenstein fī Baghdad*, are both manifestations of the aspirations of the Nahda project.

This statement is not surprising in relation to Antun's text. After all, Antun writes his text at the break of the Nahda, and is among the first novelist who introduced biblical themes to Arabic literature. It seems less obvious that Saadawi would venture into the project of the Nahda for he is writing almost a century after the Nahda's inception. But Saadawi steps into a practice that Antun pioneered, grounding Modern Arabic Literature into biblical themes. The text of Saadawi is situated in a tradition that Antun started.

In addition to their thematic dimension, both ʾUrashalīm al-Jadīda and *Frankenstein fī Baghdad* contribute to the project of the Nahda through their understanding of time and space. As Nahda scholar Tareq El-Ariss argues, the Nahda "usher[ed] a revolution in the understating of space and time."[121] As I have previously argued, both novels present a rather drastic and revolutionary means by which time and space are understood.

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[121] Tarer El-Ariss, "Introduction," in *The Arab Renaissance: A Bilingual Anthology of the Nahda: A Bilingual Anthology of the Nahda (Texts and Translations)*, ed. Tareq El-Ariss (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2018), xvi.

The project of the Nahda is still ongoing in the tradition of Arabic Literature. For the Nahda "continues to haunt the Arab world and shape the interpretive models" at a place where Arab intellectuals are "always becoming Nahda."[122] Saadawi is a fine example of this continuity, for he, along with other Modern Arabic novelists,[123] keep bringing the Arabic literary traditions into new grounds. The Nahda thus keep on going, an ever-lasting literary revolution.

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[122] Ibid., xvii.

[123] Elias Khoury, a Modern Lebanese novelist, is another writer that grounds Arabic Literature in the Bible. Many of his novels bear a number of Biblical allusions that both subvert and honor Biblical literary tropes.

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