

Tempo-Spatial Characterization in John Updike's The City: Literary Narrative Dynamics

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Abstract

John Updike's *The City* (1987) embodies a striking intersection of the triangle of the intrinsic interactive elements of plot, place, time, and narration, which characterize Carson being trapped by voyages and technologies in a modern city. This paper explores all these elements and reflects on the viewpoints and attitudes towards the city as manifested in this dramatic story. The paper also studies the story's narrative authority, dynamics and organic structure in the light of formalistic criticism to better understand its dominant themes and points of view. Formalistic approach concentrates on the concepts of structure, setting of place and time, tension, and point of view. Specifically, the paper focuses on the settings of time and place that exclusively construct the story and aid readers to understand its major character, ideas and tensions. *The City* offers accessible meanings and interpretations through Carson's overwhelming disease, restlessness, and anxieties. It also acquires its metaphorical structure through again tempo-spatial settings.

Keywords: John Updike, Setting, Characterization, Narrative Dynamics, Structure.

التوصيف الزمان-مكاني في قصة جون أديك "المدينة": دينامية السرد الأدبي

ملخص

تجسد قصة جون أديك "المدينة" (1987) تقاطعاً لافتاً للنظر لعناصر المثلث الجوهرية والتفاعلية التي تتضمن الحبكة، والمكان والزمان، والسرد التي ترسم ملامح الشخصية لكارسون، الشخصية المحاصرة بين أحداث الرحلات والتكنولوجيا في المدينة المعاصرة. تتناول الورقة هذه العناصر وتطرح وجهات النظر والمواقف المختلفة تجاه المدينة كما تتجلى في هذه القصة الدرامية. كما تبحث الورقة سلطة القصة السردية، ودينامياتها، وبنيتها العضوية في ضوء النقد الشكلي من أجل فهم أفضل للموضوعات ووجهات النظر السائدة. يركز المنهج النقدي الشكلي على مفاهيم البنية، والمكان والزمان، وحالة التوتر، والموقف السردية. وتسلط الورقة الضوء، بشكل أساسي، على عنصري الزمان والمكان الذين يساهمان وبشكل حصري في بناء القصة و تساعد القراء على فهم الشخصية الرئيسية وأفكارها والتوترات التي تحاصرها. تقدم "المدينة" معانٍ وتفسيرات يمكن فهمها من خلال شخصية كارسون في مرضها و أرقها وهمومها المحيرة، كما تكتسب القصة بنيتها المجازية من خلال عنصري المكان والزمان.

الكلمات المفتاحية: جون أديك، عنصري الزمان والمكان، التشخيص، ديناميات السرد، البنية.

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Introduction:

Structure, point of view and style are tools for understanding the content of any story; its meaning and value. As a theoretical paradigm, formalistic approach concentrates on the concepts of structure, setting, tension, image, and point of view. The researcher Sami Breem (2006:1) suggests that this approach touches "a cognitive poetics/stylistics perspective" then, "the analysis emphasizes an integration of language and literature." These concepts characterize *The City*, in which organic unity is significant to understand its major ideas and aesthetics. The current paper focuses specifically on the setting of time and place that construct the story and aid readers to understand its major themes and tensions. One of the basic significant factors that constitute a core interest of formalistic preview is exploring the narrative's concepts of narration, plot, place, and characters. In this sense, both literary editors and critics James Phelan and Peter Rabinowitz (2012:xi) argue that formalist critics should simultaneously treat both characters and space and explore the "experimental, anti-mimetic narratives." In this respect, writers and critics should "recognize the anti-mimetic as such, and resist impulses to deny its protean essence and unexpected effects" (Richardson, 2011: 33). This means the study of the basic traditional terms of plot, character, and setting in a postmodern sense, away from realism.

In addition, *The City* offers accessible meanings and themes through Carson's overwhelming disease, restlessness, and anxieties. It also acquires its metaphorical structure through tempo-spatial settings, in which Carson aspires to survive after various downfalls and tensions. Based on the nameless city, it becomes clear that Carson could stand for modern human man who passes through mysterious places and confusing events. He suffers offensive unnatural light in a weird world. Carson's undergoing episodic life in the hospital and its eccentric settings make the story a stunning mural of modern human anxieties and sufferings. Technically, *The City* embodies a vivid description of the landscape and characters delivered by an omniscient narrator. The story offers a unique narrative amplitude that appeals to the formalistic critical analysis through "its respective involvement with three visual media: painting, photography and cinema" (Li, 2014:20). The story also exposes the hidden face of modern man; of cities and technologies, of desolateness and alienation, whether in air over the city and its skyscrapers, noise, pains and agonies or on the ground among people and places. Carson suffers existential dilemma physically and psychologically; he faces sophisticated life in the city falls trapped with memories of the past and present away from his wife and children.

Plot-Character and Tempo-Spatial Dynamics:

In its narrative technique, the narrator in *The City* moves freely from a place to another and from a character to another, a thing that suggests his reliable objectivity. Carson says, "there was an individual accent, a style of local girl and a unique little historic district, an odd-shaped skyscraper or a museum ... that you could not see in any other place" (Updike, 1987: 26). Here, the events and the places are presented consequently and consciously with an objective point of view. Thus, the story plays consciously with the visual aesthetics that the narrator objectifies; it visualizes and conveys realities and facts as they are without commenting or judging them. This artistic viscosity of place enriches the plot of the story and adds reliability to the process of characterization and its themes, actions and episodes. In this sense, the English critic and theorist Kangqin Li (2014:45) argues that the story suggests an "epistemological uncertainty in the act of seeing" which manifests human vision and knowledge of modern communities and cities.

Moreover, the narrator in *The City* is overt since he addresses the readers from outside the story that Carson:

must look sick: he was attracting the glances of his fellow-visitors to the city. The two young men whose shoulders had squeezed him for three hours had melted into the many similar others with their attaché cases and tasseled shoes. (Updike, 1987: 27)

Clearly, the narrator's attitude towards the setting of place in the city seems strikingly unfriendly. On its publication, the American novelist Marilynne Robinson (1987) argues that the city in which Carson dwells is a "plain sprawl of urban life ...made potent in an equivocal monument" (para. 3). Meanwhile, the teller watches the characters, places and events through Carson's perspective, so his thoughts and opinions on such things are all the objects of his narrative center. From the narrator's viewpoint, Carson attends the events and imagines every single place in the city. For instance, Carson shakes and laces his shoes with difficulty, "smiling to find himself the hero of a drama without an audience ... A row of taxis waited beneath the corrosive yellow glare of a sodium-vapor streetlight" (Updike, 1987: 28). All these observations and remarks on characters and places imply that Carson is a dynamic quasi-narrator character who focalizes the story. Carson mediates on detailed events and realities of senses, smells, places like hospitals, of animals like birds, and human passions.

Cities bear in their components and architecture a new look towards universe, life, society and human. All of which are displayed in a modernized structure of relationships among these four elements, especially the relationship between human and society. When the city emerged, there came into existence of village and city binary, and a dialectical relationship started to rise between human thinker and the city; this affinity is marked by a feeling of binary oppositions desire and repulsion, love and hatred, reunion and abandonment. Moreover, when the feeling of city haunts the human thinker, creative human dreams for another place respond to his perceptions and aspirations: a mythical city, or a utopian city, or an enchanted city; yet, the city remains a city.

It is common in literary and artistic traditions to glorify the village and enjoy its breathtaking nature, while such traditions undermine the city and vilify its dirty industrial neighborhoods. Both Phelan and Rabinowitz (2012:27) confirm that the story creates its own artistic ways of "describing whatever is described ... characterizing narrative texts as blueprints for building story worlds." Thus, it is classically prevalent in most of the works of poetry and prose that the countryside represents the origin of human life close to nature and its picaresque scenes and intimate human relations. This countryside is the origin of wisdom, the home of innocence, and the donor of health, beauty and pleasure. In contrast, the bulk of poems and other arts sheds light on the disadvantages of the city represented mainly in its polluted air, harmful noise, transportation congestion, and civilization-based abnormalities that result from industrial revolutions. All of which link the human to machines and technologies and try to rid humans of their feelings and senses to make them similar to machines in performance, accuracy and speed. Hence, materialism overwhelmed the city, and human values got decayed. Writers' love and passion towards the village and their hatred of the city are reflected in their poetic language and artistic discourses. In this respect, the British photographer and critic, Brian Duffy (2012) points out that *The City* uses "pellucid language, or the startling metaphors and analogies" in which Carson reveals an existential experience in a nameless city allegorically evoked in a mysterious way (para. 8).

Seemingly, the virtues of the city lie in its breadth, magnitude, power, diversity of locations, and the immense number of its human and material resources. These qualities result in a sense of human freedom embodied in both multiple choices and ridding of the social restrictions imposed by the village because of its narrowness, interwoven human relations, and adherence to conventional norms and traditions. Yet, this freedom, being a virtue of the city, is the basic source of its sin embodied in the feeling of isolation, loneliness, and alienation. Critics argue that *The City* fuses the ideal, the real, the imaginary, and the realistic in an aesthetic way. For instance, Carson experiences "existential weariness and solitude" which reduce his whole life to "instinctive gestures and automated motions." (Duffy, 2012, para.

9). In addition, the qualities of the city of breadth, magnitude, severity, drought and quick pace of life weaken the human relations and make everyone isolated and self-busy. To convey these qualities, the story experiments in its techniques to better describe its characters, and develop the events skillfully. In this respect, Li (2014:8) describes the story's style as an experimental style of "tender exploration" of perceiving things and episodes in a descriptive realistic way that bestows reliability on the story and its plot.

Evidently, *The City* revolves around a salesperson, Carson, working at a factory specialized in microcomputer and information processing systems. Carson is middle-aged and divorced with a son living in Mexico and a daughter, who officially renounced his paternity. Significantly, Carson is the representative of modern man in an absurd and disrupted world. Carson travels by plane to one of the cities to market his sales. In the plane, there are two young businesspersons sitting next to him on right and left; each one has a sharp moustache above his pale mouth. When Carson wants to exchange a few words with them, he hears mysterious voices as if they come from a tinfoil box like a very cheap television set. On arrival, Carson was in the taxi station and could not see the two young men as if they melted in the crowd with many of the young men of their age in the city. So, the story realistically and omnisciently "creates the action of freedom and return" and allows the characters' dynamicity to vividly "explore the upward sweep of the inner world" (Tippisetti, 2013: 31). As such, the story is vivid and dynamic in its detailed description of both the setting of place and characters resulting in its reliability.

Viewing Carson as an inspirational character to the narrator, Li (2014: 185) argues that the story employs characters who are "keen observers and have a special obsession with seeing." Thus, it is the character of Carson who launches the plot when he feels hardly-tolerated abdominal cramps. In the hotel, the pain gets worse, and in the absence of any person to bring him medicine, Carson alone goes down to the pharmacy to fetch it. However, the pain worsens at night, and the receptionist at the hotel advises him to go to the emergency clinic in the city hospital. There, he should go through a long procedure and fill many forms to prove his financial capacity to repay the expenses of the hospital. At this moment, he imagines that a human may die in the hospital during these slow procedures. Finally, a young doctor examined him, but he was not sure of the diagnosis. Afterward, the consecutive episodes make the narrator trace every single activity that Carson undergoes. For example, in the hospital, the staff drew blood samples from Carson to get additional laboratory tests. Meanwhile, Carson had to wait in bed in a room occupied by two other patients, who were squealing and singing songs with no melody. After conducting several examinations on Carson, a specialized doctor was summoned from a private party. The doctor decided to operate on Carson to remove the appendix, which moved from its position. During the surgery, Carson, being under anesthesia, dreams that he is trapped in a nightmarish tunnel. Then, he finds himself in a regular room at the hospital with a short man lying in a bed beside him, smoking and staring at the TV. On recovery, Carson is transferred alone to another private room; he feels happy in this exclusive wing at the hospital, which is devoid of people as if no one sees or knows him.

Tracing the lively actions that Carson experiences, the objective narrator maintains telling us the successive episodes to make his dynamic plot dynamic, realistic and natural. *The City* is a representative of "a realistic tradition," which presents real narrator, characters, events, and settings in their daily experiences (Phelan and Rabinowitz, 2012: 20). To exemplify, Carson is discharged from the hospital and takes a taxi to the airport directly; he sees nothing in the city except its landmarks. Thus, the narrator keeps cognitively talking about places in the modern unnamed city which appears to Carson, while in the plane, as a map then overwhelmingly disappears. All these places constitute structural units that the narrator evokes to better convey his basic themes and concerns. However, when he thinks of the farmers' voices, the distant skyscrapers, the night visits by nurses and doctors, and the stained houses that do not arouse any attention, he thinks that he eventually comes to know the city very closely. The city is like a

woman that he met out in a bar, during one of his other trips and whom he paid to submit her body to without any preliminary talk. Regarding this point, Duffy (2012) argues that the story is rife with "recurring vocabulary and imagery of solitude and, at times, despondency" which dominate the stories of absurdity, alienation and panic (para. 23)..

In this fascinating story, the author keeps telling us about Carson, the city, and the events in the third person. This technique allows the narrator to comment on the actions from his own knowledge and experiences. He introduces us with major landmarks of modern American city that distinguish it from the places of village. The narrator keeps describing the city in which Carson is trapped as one of the cities that have:

their reviving old downtowns and grassy industrial belts, their rusting railroad spurs and new glass buildings, their orange-carpeted hotels and bars imitating the interiors of English cottages. But always there was an individual accent, a style of local girl and a unique little historic district, an odd-shaped skyscraper or a museum holding a Cezanne, say, or a Winslow Homer that you could not see in any other place. (Updike, 1987:25)

In this quotation, the sentences and phrases spontaneously run in an interwoven sequence of significant images correlated with each other. This narration offers the reader an extra impression, related to two qualities of the city: the congested buildings, transportation and people, and the rapid pace of events and episodes. This suggestive description appears on two levels: spatial and temporal. The spatial setting of the city is exhausting and overwhelming to Carson; it "could be any one of scores of cities in the American interior. It has a calm, distinctive, rural accent, an unselfconscious diversity of population, a renewed center, a few skyscrapers" (Robinson, 1987, para.6). The over-crowdedness in the city implies the crowdedness in which people melt as if their personalities melt and vanish in the city because of its magnitude and congestion. This description also suggests the dominance of the materialistic values and the inferiority of the spiritual qualities of modern communities. For instance, his psychomotor pains force him to lose trust in the governmental and spiritual authorities; he retreats to his hotel room a lot of times to experience alienation and estrangement.

Moreover, we can note that this comprehensive description focuses primarily on the ruins of external landmarks and, deliberately, oversteps the city's internal characteristics of the social relationships among people at homes, factories, bars, hotels, railway stations, suggesting the absence or weakness of such human ties among the residents of the city. In the light of the setting of place in *The City*, Tippiasetti (2013:30) asserts that the liveliness of the story's style arises from its portrayal of nature, in which the images of streets, hotels, hospitals, and glass buildings among others make the plot exciting and "transform even the artificial world." Thus, the feelings of isolation, loneliness and loss dominate, and the story centers on themes of communication, seclusion, city life versus village life and human pains in modern societies. In this light, the story presents "an existential and creative problem" on the issue of man's rescue and salvation from despair of living in a compressed story (Duffy, 2012, para. 24).

In addition, *The City's* setting of time ranges in day and night, in summer and winter, youth and ageing, health and sickness, marriage and divorce. Thus, time plays a remarkable role in shaping Carson's character; after five days of his recovery, "he often wondered why he was so happy" (Updike, 1978: 32). Here, Carson transforms into a liberated character who attains self-realization. Furthermore, it is a nighttime when Carson suffers a lot of alienation and dismay "when despair visits men" (Ibid: 33). Together, night and city constitute a dilemma to Carson for "the heart of the city ... seemed often to be in sunlight, while clouds shadowed the hospital grounds" (Ibid:34). More importantly, time shifts from the simple lifestyle of old cities and villages to modern cities of sophisticated architectures, technologies and industries to create moments of suspense or moods of confusion, fragmentation, and absurdity.

Based on its multilayered descriptions, *The City* evokes vivid sights, sounds, smells, and other tempo-spatial sensations in the seasonal time of winter and summer, manifested in "A row of taxis waited beneath the corrosive yellow glare of a sodium-vapor streetlight. Neon advertisements and stacked cubes of fluorescent offices and red and green traffic lights flickered by-glimpses of the city" (Ibid: 28). Such descriptive imagery influences the character of Carson; he becomes more fragmented and alienated; he is trapped in both his physical and psychological internal conflict and socio-cultural external conflict. Accordingly, during various ranges of time and places, Carson gains an intimate knowledge of the city. Moreover, the story holds features of existential time of human being manifested in the character of Carson; he transforms physically and intellectually during his stay in the nameless city and the hospital. He is chased by fears and agonies that separate him from both family and original community. The story is also well constructed and plotted in terms of its characters, settings, and techniques by which it fuses the ideal with the realistic and the imaginary with the factual. Therefore, time is an important narrative component of the story that benefits from the modern technique of stream of consciousness. Thus, the structural use of time bestows narrative organic unity on the story. This technique also manifests itself in the use of flashback. It is when the narrator says that Carson "In his fifties, after decades of driving the same suburban streets from home to school and back again, he had become a connoisseur of the cities" (Ibid: 25). Here, Carson is tired and controlled by the psychological time embodied in his career, familial relations and his own internal monologue. Carson lives the fantasy of the city "into which he was now descending, and perhaps a nervous apprehension of the new contacts he must weld and the persuasions he must deliver formed the seed of the pain that had taken root in the center of his stomach" (Ibid: 25).

There is also a further point to be considered in exploring this story: it is its language. If language is a tool for communication and understanding among native speakers, it weaves social relationships among people and promotes the bonds of sympathy and solidarity. One final significant point, the word choice is thoroughly helpful and implies that the writer has the experience to choose relevant diction that enable us to digest the story's main ideas. In the core of the story, the narrator's diction becomes more advanced. Words such as "stomach," "airplane," "teacher," "sales," "microcomputers," "insomniacs," and "silhouette," among others show the gradual evocation of advanced diction relevant to the plot of the story. So, such variation of words allows the reader to realize what the narrator intends to tell him in terms of Carson's expectations and assumptions and the realities he encounters in the city and the hospital in various periods of time.

Narratively, the language in the *City* is overwhelming on the linked levels of form and content. First, the form is structured by the narrative techniques of description, narration and reporting, in which the writer does not use an immense dialogue. For example, once the narrator tells the story, as in the case of the doctor who informs Carson about the results of his tests, the words appear premature and never exceed two or three words, in a form of news or orders, which do not entail give-and-take maneuver. Second, the content portrays characters who are silent and do not know how to speak or communicate. For instance, Carson's neighbors in the plane seem abnormal, "Both of these specimens wore silk handkerchiefs... When Carson exchanges a few words with them, he hears mysterious voices that knew nothing, that were tinny like the cheapest of television sets" (Ibid: 26). Therefore, this failure of communication is another distressing dilemma for Carson mainly in times he aspires to express his feelings to someone whom he trusts. Moreover, his neighbor in the lobby of the hospital, on watching TV, does not exchange words with him, and the doctor who examines him speaks in a foreign accent that he cannot understand. Thus, human relations are severed and referred to in the text through this lack of communication. Furthermore, the intimate relation between form and meaning in a story is impartially

explored in literary stylistics, based on the fact that language is a dynamic parameter which relies on both time and place in their cultural and informative context.

Obviously, the feelings of isolation and loneliness are dominant among the city's inhabitants; modern man is surrounded by a desert barren of emotions. In this respect, the story symbolizes this isolation by the room in which Carson spends his recovery period alone. However, Carson feels the purest happiness because he used to live in solitude, yet now the presence of the people around annoys him. In this light, the story presents a real Carson's world, that consists of parameters of time, space, and character as "key parameters for narrative world-building" (Phelan and Rabinowitz, 2012: 17). Thus, the story's narrator highlights his descriptions in two ways. First, he employs many materialistic facts in the city while omitting any suggestions to the values, ideals, and beliefs. Spatially, the world of the story is rich in planes at airports, many cars in the streets and intersections, bicycles, skyscrapers, devices, equipment and machinery, along with other industrial products. Yet, the city is void of schools or chapels, as there is no evidence of any prayers or supplications recited by patients at the hospitals. This setting intensifies Carson's estrangement, confusion, and agonies. By the same token, the author mentions two patients who were treated for addiction to alcohol and drugs; they were humming words with no meaning. So, the language here is composed of sounds but vicious of meanings that represent the city's spirit.

Second, the dominance of materialism is reflected on the city's residents in their desire to get money in any legal or illegal ways. For instance, the prostitutes in the bars seek money by marketing their bodies; they were "encountered in a bar and paid at the end" (Updike, 1987: 38). Similarly, doctors in the city hospitals seek to get money by telling lies and forgery; they repeat unnecessary visits to Carson during the period of recovery. These visits are not based on humanity or sympathy, but on the intention to include them in the patient's record and get money for them. In this sense, the writer indicates that doctors "paid their calls so casually and pleasantly ... each visit listed by date and hour on the sheets of hospital services billed to him in extensive dot-matrix printout" (Ibid: 32). Thus, in both cases, Carson is intimidated and stunned by such materialistic people who ironically lack the very essential values of human morality.

Furthermore, the narrative description of the phone call, which takes place between Carson and his son, represents a state of disruption of human communication that happens in the city and the predominance of the materialistic spirit at the same time. In this regard, the narrator suggests that Carson's son's call from Mexico is "sounding ominously close at hand and spacy, as long awkward silences between father and son ate up the dollars" (Ibid: 36). Seemingly, the predominance of the materialist spirit in the modern city and the disruption of human relations, with the lack of communication, are all epitomized by the magnificent concluding sentence, which says that the city "was like, on other of his trips, a woman who, encountered in a bar and paid at the end, turns ceremony inside out, and bestows herself without small talk" (Ibid: 38). This is another version of the conflict between human values and modern materialistic values that Carson suffers from during his stay in the city.

Experiencing a world of human moral and value decay and the dominance of materialism, Carson suffers the process and pressures of "ageing, growing intimations of mortality, and the dissolution of ties" in modern cities and communities (Duffy, 2012, para. 4). To deliver such an experience, the story employs an objective narrator to narrate the plot from an objective point of view. Obviously, the story presents a limited-omniscient narrator who mainly focuses on what a single character experiences. In this sense, Robinson (1987) describes the character of Carson as a tired wanderer who "falls into the net of generalized, grand-scale solicitude" (para. 6). For example, the narrator initially characterizes Carson as one of the "victims of middle-aged restlessness" who gets stunned by the luxurious life of the city pregnant with modern technological and industrial places and machines that spoil its purity, nature and

life style (Updike, 1987: 25). In this case, most events are told from the narrator's perspective; he takes us into the psyches and hearts of the characters, events and places.

Technically, *The City* follows a dramatic objective point of view in drawing the traffic map of the setting of place and its significance to the story; its structure and symbolic meaning. It drives its omniscient narrator to act as a cinematographer to trace the events and incidents that Carson witnesses and experiences. This reliance on an omniscient narrator, who evokes metaphors from nature, offers the story an aesthetic flavor to "transcend the limits of realism and unite the keenly observed realistic details with the symbolic" (Tippisetti, 2013: 29). Thus, the story is impartially narrated through a visible dramatic description in a photographic way. The writer shows interest in visualizing places and portraying the details of the places, scenes and characters that overwhelm Carson. So, by objectively describing what the narrator beholds, the story offers "a visual world with which the reader is able to communicate [and] the reader can relate what is posed right in front of the storyteller's to his/her own knowledge of the extra-textual world" (Li, 2014: 5). Therefore, the narrator significantly departs himself from the characters; he conveys their authentic feelings and tones. The author uses his narrator as a cameraman to report the series of events as they take place in reality; he makes no personal inflections, a thing that allows the reader to devise his own conclusions.

As an equally significant aspect of the story, the structure of *The City* cognitively resides in the form of description and objective third-person narration. Therefore, the story manifests its textual dynamicity by moving from one part to another creating an organic unity and arousing "cognitive, affective, ethical, and aesthetic responses of the audience" (Phelan & Rabinowitz, 2012: 6). For instance, after Carson's convalescence, the narrator informs us that "The raw outdoor air had raked through his still-drugged system like a sweeping rough kiss, early-fall air mixing summer and winter, football and baseball, stiff with chill yet damp and not quite purged of growth" (Updike, 1987: 38). This description is crucial to support the significance of the city in the life of both Carson and readers as he travels a lot between old places and modern destinations; the city is one. Moreover, Carson starts acquiring an amiable knowledge of the city which he explores; an experience that resurrects his anxious psyche and tormented spirit. Carson also realizes that the landscape around him is overwhelmingly prodigious simply because he is a newcomer and diseased. Generally, the story consciously invokes a confusing feeling towards the mysterious landscape that is full of "confident allusion to common experience" (Robinson, 1987, para.12).

Furthermore, the hospital, which is a basic spatial setting, becomes itself an agitating city; its inhabitants are almost patients and the medical staff. In this concern, *The City* delivers a unique detailed description of the hospital and its life. Thus, the hospital transforms into a "romanticized" characteristic place that haunts Carson who views the city life as sheer with human compassion. For example, the narrator says,

From the windows of the waiting room, the heart of the city with its clump of brown and blue skyscrapers and ribbonlike swirls of highway seemed often to be in sunlight, while clouds shadowed the hospital grounds and parking lots and the snarl of taxis around the entrance. (Updike, 1987: 34)

Accordingly, *The City* is a descriptive dramatic narrative written in a lively graphic style to bestow much excitement on its plot and enable the reader to visualize the actions and identify with Carson's experience. Therefore, the story uses a refined form of objective viewpoint to communicate its ideas and motifs and show both the internal and external episodes related to both the place and Carson alike. In this sense, Duffy (2012) argues that the story reflects on the common themes of "the anxieties and desolations of late middle-age and beyond ... and the contrasting experiences of and outcomes to the characters' existential woes." (para. 7).

In addition, the story employs powerful idiomatic expressions to communicate its ideas and themes. For instance, the novelist tells us that Carson's contacts and persuasions "formed the seed of the pain" which suggests the tough severe pain that Carson feels (Updike, 1987: 26). Another example of the idiomatic words is when the narrator describes what Carson hears at the hospital from the devices as "white noise" to suggest that Carson should relax and have a nap before his operation (Ibid: 27). In this regard, Li (2014:6) argues that the storyteller is "an all-seeing narrator" in a realistic sense and receives the story as a narrative of "the visual and objective reality." The effect of this narrative technique is to juxtapose a high culture voice, the voice of the city, and a low culture one, the voice of implied village offering a contrast in the human modern life. Moreover, the narrator's language is partially of a medical origin that makes the plot more exciting and realistic in the case of Carson as an ordinary person who suffers appendicitis. In this sense, Tippiseti (2013:29) views an allegorical language which depicts the concrete dynamic experience of Carson who in turn shows signs of "mental, spiritual and the theological" awareness and orientation which stresses the omniscient multi-layered narrative. Moreover, the image of the plane suggests "the metaphorical heights of revived spiritual and physical health" that Carson passes through (Duffy, 2012, para. 8). Here, this allegorical imagery transfers the attention from Carson's bodily sickness and its therapy to the spiritual maladies of modern man and the catharsis from these maladies.

Eventually, the story is well-structured to let the objective narrator tell everything his eyes behold and describe whatever natural setting they can reach through Carson. This narrator proves omniscient, non-character and reliable for he serves the purpose of narrating, describing, reporting and controlling the narrative pace to describe the city and its counter-part the village, the original nativity. Clearly, the narrative plot is aestheticized by the objective overt narration and viewpoint and supported by a reasonable structure of events and characters. This non-character teller, overt and reliable, is offered enough freedom in space to leap from a minor place to another in the geography of the city.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, jumping through time and place, the narrator gets different reactions from his readers, who might show pity and identification with Carson who is viewed as a victim of this modern city and its speedy life and recurrent events. Moreover, taking into account the descriptions of the city and Carson's psyche, readers get various portraits of Carson's fragmented soul and body. In addition, the objective narrator makes the story a narrative masterpiece, for the style, in which the story is narrated, compels us to feel captivated and intrigued about the end. Also, the story, being told in such a characteristic descriptive way, arouses readers' curiosity to know more about what is happening in the city and in the psyche of Carson, as well as about what's potential behind this lonely Carson. This technique enables the writer to construct the plot in an objective way and reflect on the intersection of the triangle of plot, place and character.

Furthermore, *The City* thematically portrays descriptive sketches of both the setting of place and characterization of Carson, its major dynamic character who undergoes a variety of experiences and transformations in the city and its hospital, where he gets confusion, alienation and fragmentation. The story uses the basic elements of the narrative story in an aesthetic and cognitive way. The story's elements of the plot, characterization, theme, and style significantly contribute to the thematic structure and aesthetic quality of the story. In such a way, the narrative techniques create a formal and organic unity that bestows indicative significance and thematization on the story. Thus, *The City* articulates the tensions of the narrative balance; it introduces a common theme of modern man's concerns and solitude in a well-plotted structure in terms of setting of time and place. It also presents characters; Carson is the one, who lack salvation and comfort, offering their conflicting experiences in an absurd way.

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