

Futurities and the Urban Space in Naguib Mahfouz's *Cairo Modern* and Toni Kan's *The Carnivorous City*

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Abstract

*Urbanization is the bifurcation of space into rurality and urbanity usually brought about by pressure of population from diverse backgrounds such that kinship ceases to be the primary form of interrelationships. This paper examines how characters impact environment in Naguib Mahfouz's **Cairo Modern** (1945) and Toni Kan's **The Carnivorous City** (2016). The paper interrogates the physical environment, the bureaucracy, and the professions, with a view to finding out if the selected novels can provide a template for understanding how current cities anticipate the future. Specifically, the paper aims to discover the commonalities between Cairo and Lagos in terms of how they are advancing into the future. The concerns centre on the Postcolonial moments in history: The problems of nation building showing how postcolonial subjects in Egypt and Nigeria are turning Cairo and Lagos into cities of a peculiar stamp in keeping with European models. Because of the rudimentary state of Africa's political culture, there is a basis for comparing Cairo of 1945 and Lagos of 2016. The social structure of Cairo is based on the motive of corruption while Lagos is predisposed toward violence and corruption. Future cities as conceived by postcolonial consciousness are far removed from future cities as conceived by western imagination; hence, events in the selected novels anticipate higher levels of corruption and violence in future Cairo and Lagos. The attempt to build EKO Atlantic City suggests that it is imaginable that a city can be well built. However, there is need for coercive instrument of state policing and sufficient number of modern gadgets such as CCTV cameras to make it easier to track offenders.*

Keywords: Futurities, Urbanization, Lagos, Cairo, Postcolonial.

Introduction

The urban space is an important phenomenon in literature because of its implication for the environment and sustainability in terms of the productive forces in society, the informal sector, the organised groups in civil society, and indeed everyone involved in the processes of making the world a living place. Literature deals with humans in their environment; it studies humans and their environment in order to illuminate their needs, problems, achievements and failings. Hence, this paper is interested in the relationship between Cairo's

sprawling metropolis and its inhabitants as depicted by Naguib Mahfouz in *Cairo Modern*. It pays attention to the city's heartless bureaucrats and how Egypt manages or mismanages its crisis of modernity especially in the 1930s when the country's traditional mores were being increasingly undermined by European influences. The paper juxtaposes the scenario in Cairo with the fictional account of Lagos in the twenty-first century through the lens of a younger writer, Toni Kan against the backdrop of the Eko Atlantic City project especially as it is being conceived as Lagos of the future.

In *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) Harold Bloom establishes a strong connection between precursors and new writers and submits that the young, late comer writer is not distinctive in relation to his predecessors since he simply bases what he writes on precursors. Similarly, in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), T. S. Eliot posits that "tradition is as inevitable as breathing." Emphasising how contemporary writers are inevitably influenced and shaped by writers that came before them, Eliot contends that "no poet, no artist of any art has his complete meaning alone" (37). Naguib Mafouz is an older writer who vividly describes the social life of Cairo and shows how Egyptians who were raised in traditional households struggled to cope with modernity in the city. Also, many writers of Nigerian descent before the arrival of Toni Kan have portrayed experiences of living in Lagos. In *The Beatification of Area Boys*, for instance, Wole Soyinka practically itemises all the crimes that city dwellers commit including money doubling, disappearance of genitalia, commodification and commercialization of everything, cultural dislocation, filth, overfilled gutters, wealth and lack moving together, transferred aggression, commuters hanging and falling off and dying from over-filled buses, tuft battles, fighting over territories, gang war between and among youth groups, area boyism, and the unfortunate situation where the area boy himself is a university dropout who ends up becoming a vagrant in the city. Soyinka presents the play as a Lagos kaleidoscope.

Other writers like Odi Ofeimun, and Cyprian Ekwensi have also written about Lagos. Ofeimun's anthology of the poems of the city in *Lagos of the Poets*, Ekwensi's *People of the City*, *Jagua Nana*, and *Jagua Nana's Daughter* attest to an enduring trend. In all, there has always been an overriding motif of Lagos as cannibalistic and nihilistic. Writers tend to view Lagos as a maw that eats up its inhabitants and this has culminated into a tradition of negative engagement with the Lagos phenomenon. Perhaps, one of the questions to ponder include: To what

extent does a new writer such as Toni Kan's engagement with Lagos conform or depart from the tradition of precursor writers?

Behaviour Patterns and the City

The future is a term that embodies human aspiration, human yearning, that which drives man's sense of enterprise and innovativeness. To that extent, the term future acquires a few characteristics that include elements of hope, innovation, enterprise, surprise, and change. There is something of an Eldorado or Utopian about it. To deal with the city is to dive into Utopian spaces; hence the literature must be approached cautiously because it is a two-edged sword in the sense that the future indicates both the positive and the negative. It has the capacity to fill us with anxiety but could offer a means to conquer it. As it happens, something we have not conquered has a way of making us anxious and nervous. The unwary could be eaten up by the future he seeks rather than conquer it. A city is a place of people of diverse backgrounds more or less without bonds or kinship but with a shared presence toward the future, not the past. The future is a core motivation of urbanity especially in the present machine age. The concept of futurity also designates events that are yet to occur. Futurities matter, therefore, in the contemplation of the city because much of the relationships we have in the city are no longer based on the past. It is for this reason that all cities in the world are more forward-looking than the rural areas. In the rural areas where everybody knows everybody, the past can become the motivation for which people do things. But where we do not have a common past, which is what happens in cities, the city itself becomes the generator of a new way of looking at ourselves and the world. Thus, it is the future that becomes the place of attraction; it is the future that attracts what we do.

In the same way that we talk about the anxiety of influence in relation to literary works, we find that theories of the city have also sometimes dealt with how existing cities influence the building of new cities. In other words, the way it happens in literature is also the way it happens in city building. Consequently, the idea that a work of arts is something we have created, an artifice, is also applicable to the city as something made. If this is true, it follows that the kind of behaviour that obtains in the city constitutes the very process of creating the city. What we are confronted by is how the diverse and peculiar ways people operate in the city becomes the myth of turning the city into what it becomes. The novels that deal with the city are works of arts. The city itself is a work of arts; it is created. The behaviour of people who live in the city which then constitutes the basis for what the city becomes must be looked at almost in the same way that we

look at works of arts. The different things we do in the city conform to a pattern. It is that pattern we are trying to discover in the process of analysing the various works. We are trying to define the pattern that emanates from the different and variable activities in the environment. It is not as if there is already a plan. In looking into the future, we are trying to see how the various ways and the modalities in which people act influence what the city becomes.

Is There A Postcolonial City?

Mary Klages (2006) explains that “the field of postcolonial theory examines the effect that colonialism has had on the development of literature and literary studies [...] within the context of the history and politics of regions under the geographical boundaries of England and Britain” (155). Hans Bertens (2008) holds that “postcolonial theory and criticism emphasizes the tension between the metropolis and the (former) colonies, between what within the colonial framework were the metropolitan imperial centre and its colonial satellites” (159). According to Vince Brewton (2002), “postcolonial criticism pursues not merely the inclusion of the marginalized literature of colonial peoples into the dominant canon and discourses, postcolonial criticism offers a fundamental critique of the ideology of colonial domination and at the same time seeks to undo the ‘imaginative geography’ of Orientalist thought that produced conceptual as well as economic divides between West and East, civilized and uncivilized, First and Third worlds” (8).

To contemplate the idea of a postcolonial city is to foreground the existence of a non-postcolonial city. The question then arises as to what a non-postcolonial city is like. In this regard, we may describe a non-postcolonial city as a ‘normal’ society in which people obey the law and bureaucratic norms are observed. In this society, if an individual is not qualified, they do not get a job, if people who are employed do not perform well, they do not get promotion. Also, private concerns do not dominate public issues. This is the formality we derived from colonial impact. The idea of a postcolonial city arises where the local material has not quite lived up to the pattern of the West. It is not as if the western world itself has always lived up to the theory. Indeed, the bureaucracy that is defined is not so much the western bureaucracy but a theoretical position about how society should be run. Most cities in the world have common problems with African cities such as problems of refuse clearance as well as city dwellers who do not obey the law. These problems do not therefore, necessarily constitute a postcolonial condition. In dealing with the western city, we do not need to assume that the city is necessarily perfect and the African city is not. Indeed, there are non-western cities

that have been adjudged as fantastic cities. Among the cities in the world that are counted as being very well run include Caracas and Cape Town which are not strictly western cities.

However, because we are trying to measure up to a theoretical position that is supposed to be western, the idea of a postcolonial city has to come in from the standpoint of the deviation from what is supposed to be the norm. When we apply this to the selected texts, we will be looking at the level of breakdown to expect from Cairo and Lagos. There is a way of behaving in the city which allows for stable relationships. The postcolonial subjects or citizens who are resident in Cairo and Lagos respectively are supposed to function in terms of bureaucratic order, rule of law, and such expectations of modern public life. The question is: Do they function as expected? What are the implications for current patterns and future possibilities? This becomes a task that must be accomplished.

Modern African societies, in dealing with the postcolonial situation, do not always match the patterns of the western city. Inadequate bureaucratic arrangement and deviations from law-governed behaviour are rife. Caught in the birth throes of postcoloniality, many African countries, including Nigeria, have attempted to emerge from a life of colonial subjugation but are yet to find their own identity. This is obvious in the formalities and the informalities of the African city. At best, Nigeria is a hybrid nation, partly western, partly African. Common features in Lagos include taps that do not run, electricity grid that do not work, roads cloaked by refuse, police stations that function like criminal dumps, beggars on the streets, majority of citizens do not pay taxes, people who are not good drivers obtain licences, and many other disruptive elements. These are the features that make one want to make a distinction. Again, it is important to emphasize that some of these features are available in the best cities in the world. There are beggars in London, for instance, but the preponderance of these features in an African environment makes it a peculiar case. The breakdown of facilities and services are regular features of most postcolonial cities. We just have images of a disrupted state. The questions are: What behaviour patterns yield such disruptions? And how do these disruptions affect behaviour?

One of the reasons it is important to study *Cairo Modern* and *The Carnivorous City* is because, coming from different parts of Africa where colonialism had taken place and where observed behaviour is supposed to be based on a western pattern of bureaucratic organization as well as the general pattern of political life, we are judging the local material, so to say, against the forms that exist elsewhere

which ought to go by the rule of competence and performance and ensuring the sustainability of behaviour patterns. Bureaucracy is very central to *Cairo Modern*. The novel deals with how the deviations of behaviour from the pattern of western cities yield all the problems – the question of bureaucracy and sustainable behaviour in public life. *The Carnivorous City* is about rule of law and whether law is obeyed or not obeyed.

To answer the question: Is there a postcolonial city? We will need to examine the extent to which city dwellers are deviating from the need to follow a bureaucratic pattern of behaviour. There is a pattern to which the novels ought to align, that pattern is based on bureaucracy and the rule of law. In both novels, it is the deviation that makes the news. Do events and characters in these novels give us a template for future cities in Africa? *The Carnivorous City* provides an insight into the kind of future city Lagos promises to transform into. It is the kind of city former President Olusegun Obasanjo, cited by Odia Ofeimun in his introduction to *Lagos of the Poets* describes as an urban jungle. What are the implications of the word jungle? It suggests lawlessness, brutishness, bestiality, violence, corruption, beastliness and man's inhumanity to man.

Cairo Modern and The Carnivorous City

Set in the 1930s when Egypt was still under British influence and ruled by the corrupt King Farouk, *Cairo Modern* opens with Naguib Mahfouz's presentation of four university undergraduate male students all aged about twenty-four. The emphasis is on a new era in Egypt; it is the period when females are being admitted into universities. The boys are not only hostel mates, they are friends; and they regularly congregate to watch the presence of women at the university which was "a novelty that evoked interest and curiosity" (1). They also hold discussions about the emerging educated women and what the new trend portends for Egypt's civilization and modernity. Although the four boys are all age mates, and final year students, they are however different in significant ways. Ma'mun Radwan is an Islamist and is deeply committed to the principles of the Islamic religion which guide his utterances, philosophy and disposition to life. His contribution is understandably anchored on his principles of "God in the heavens and Islam on the earth" (8). Ali Taha is a socialist who believes "in society, in the living human hive" (8). He believes "in science not a spirit world, in society not paradise, in socialism not competition" (8). Ahmad Badir is both a student and journalist. As a journalist he "never wearies of discussion" (5); but he insists that "a journalist should listen and not speak" (6). Then, there is the "dear devil" (6)

Mahgub Abd al-Da'im who encapsulates his life's principles as "Tuzz" because "it is the ultimate principle" (8). His only belief is the satisfaction of his own soul.

After the first few chapters, the novel almost exclusively concentrates on the "dear devil," Mahgub who has previously shown interest in a girl but was rebuffed apparently because he is not as good looking as his friend, Ali Taha who later becomes the girl's lover. In the meantime, the four friends have just about three months before their final examination. Suddenly, Mahgub's father, who is poor and lives in the province, suffers a devastating stroke and sends for his son to inform him that the young man would be pulled out of school because the old man would no longer be able to work. And since he has just a little money which was barely enough to feed him and his wife, his son should find a job not only to survive but also to help his parents. Mahgub pleads with his father to allow him complete his education and the old man agrees eventually. The implication, however, is that his usual allowance, was barely enough, will be slashed to one-third. He agrees to manage. Eventually, he completes his education and he is in search of employment.

Unfortunately for him, this is the period in Cairo when young job seekers are presented with a number of difficult choices. One is to pay a certain amount in exchange for a job; another is for an individual who has no money to agree to begin to forfeit a percentage of his salary to the job facilitator. This is the way Cairo is being run at this time; it is a city of corruption. Mahgub, the devil, is just about to make a choice when he gets a message to report at a ministry where he had previously gone to job-hunt but was told there was no vacancy. On arrival, the official informs him that there is an opportunity but he must answer a question first. The question is: Would he agree to marry as a condition for getting a job? Since he did not have money to offer in exchange for one, if he would agree to marry in which case the marriage would be contracted that same day, then, he would be given his appointment letter the same day and would assume duties the next. There would also be a fully furnished apartment to the bargain.

Without knowledge of his soon to be bride, he is directed to report at a location at 4pm from where he would be taken to the bride's family where the marriage ceremony would be performed. He agrees to go along with the arrangement because his sole interest has always been his own survival. At 4pm, he makes himself available to the senior ministry official who takes him to the bride's family only for him to discover that his bride is the same beautiful girl he had always wanted to date but who prefers his friend. The marriage is contracted, and

he gets his appointment letter as promised. It is at this point that he is informed about the little price he has to pay for his good fortune. There is a 'big man' in the ministry who, although married, is enamoured of the young beautiful woman who has now become his wife. He is to share her with the man. Eighteen year-old Ihsan Shihata has also agreed to combine her role as mistress to the 'big man' with her wifely duties to "the devil." Ihsan has carefully weighed her options vis-à-vis her needs and current reality. She is the only daughter of her parents with seven siblings. Her parents are very poor; so, refusing to cooperate with the 'big man' means refusing to save her parents from poverty. Earlier in her life, and the very first time she had a boyfriend who was a lawyer, she had discovered that her father was trying to negotiate with the lawyer in the manner people haggle over commodities. She promptly broke off with the lawyer then and embraced her liberty. Now, she appears to have outgrown such naivety; hence, her consent to the present arrangement. Her family is overjoyed.

Mahgub is given a roaster: Every Saturday at 7pm, he is to leave home to allow his boss come in to make love to his wife. Mahgub accepts the arrangement viewing it as a huge opportunity to get into society. He yearns to become a 'big man' soon. He wants him and his wife to make the most of the opportunity at their disposal. His disposition can be summed up thus: You take care of your family, I take care of mine, we go out, we socialize, we connect with the *crème de la crème* of society, and we attend parties. The 'big man' picks all the bills.

He decides to tell neither his bedridden father nor his mother who thinks the world of him about his job yet. First, he wants to luxuriate in his new found comfort. He strategizes on how to consolidate his position as a 'big man' in the ministry; how to get promotion. But he finds time to take his wife on a social visit to show off to a relative who lives in the city and had refused to help him in the past. Then, there is a sudden change in government; the 'big man' gets even a bigger position. He is now a minister. Without wasting time, Mahgub persuades his wife to convince her boyfriend to give her husband a higher position in the ministry. Interestingly, this is the position being occupied by the same official who facilitated Mahgub's marriage and job. The official pays Mahgub a visit to warn him of the grave implication of his insensitivity but Mahgub is too desperate and ambitious to heed the warning. In the end, the middleman leaks Mahgub's best kept secret to his parents and perhaps to the minister's wife as events in the novel suggest.

Mahgub's plan was to go home in October, three months after his appointment and marriage but the bubble bursts shortly before his planned visit. The stage is

set for a climax on a Saturday as he prepares to leave home before 7pm to give a chance for the minister's weekly pleasure. His father arrives at 6pm from the village; and while he labours to explain to his father what has been happening, his wife's concubine arrives, heading straight for the bedroom without bothering about the strange presence of an old man. Then, the wife of the minister shows up to enact the kind of drama that gives Mahgub's father a total picture of his son's life. The old man makes a hurried departure. As the entire events snowball into a public scandal, the minister loses his job as his wife files for a divorce. Mahgub also impliedly loses his job and delusive marriage.

The Carnivorous City tells the story of Abel Chiedu Dike who, at the time the novel opens, lives in Asaba, Delta state. He has a younger brother, Sunny, who lives in Lagos. The story begins with a text message: "Sunny is missing" (9) sent through the mobile phone of Sunny's wife, Ada. Abel heads for Lagos to help find his younger brother; but he is quick to remark that the unhappy message was something he had always anticipated because Sunny lives on a fast lane in Lagos, making money through crooked and criminal methods. Yet, he became a multi billionaire with more than enough money to buy his older brother a car, not to mention shoes and clothes. Upon his arrival in Lagos, what seems to be the immediate problem Abel needs to solve turns out to be how to access money from Sunny's bank accounts because Sunny had made his elder brother, not his wife, his next of kin. Eventually, Sunny's assistant, Ikechukwu, who is now known as Santos, "came up with a bit of peculiar Lagos wisdom that helped them make headway" (25). The 'wisdom' consists in making illegal deals with a bank manager who permits a fraudulent withdrawal from Sunny's account having been promised a percentage. Not much effort is invested into searching for Sunny afterwards as life appears to be going on fairly smoothly.

Gradually, Abel and Ada become very close, she cooks for him, permits him unfettered access to Sunny's personal belongings such as shoes and clothes, he stays in his bedroom, drives his cars and generally enjoys every comfort available. On a particular day, Abel goes to Mushin to speak to a local thug, Rain, who was said to have had an appointment with Sunny on the day of his disappearance. Rain however maintains his innocence but while Abel is with Rain, violence breaks out and both Abel and Santos escape death by the whiskers. As days roll into weeks, the circumstances surrounding Sunny's disappearance become increasingly unclear just as the possibility of finding him become more remote. At a point, Abel meets with the DPO in charge of the case and he takes the case file from Ofio, reassigns it to another police officer, DSP Umannah, ostensibly because

Ofio was unable to make headway. Finally, at the end of the novel, Umannah invites Abel to brief him about his findings and to inform him that he had merged the two reports into one because he had found that Ofio “did a good job” (232). He has this to say to Abel:

This is not the kind of report we give to family members, but your brother was good to me and you have been good to me. [...] I am sure you know the kind of business your brother was into, right? [...] It was high yield, high risk. There was a lot of money involved. Someone got greedy, others got pissed off and your brother disappeared. We will keep looking but I can almost tell you with certainty that he will never be found. [...] These kinds of people don't bury bodies or make ransom demands. They simply disappear you to teach others a lesson (233).

Significantly, however, DSP Umannah gives Abel the address of a civilian, Walata, whom police investigations revealed had a strong link to Sunny's disappearance. But rather than arrest him for questioning, Umannah directs Abel to pay the individual a visit to get a clearer picture of the nature of Sunny's disappearance. He tells Abel with confidence: “Call him and say you are from me. He is expecting you. [...] He lives in Ikoyi” (233-4). Sunny is known in the criminal world as Sabato Rabato. Walata tells Abel that although he is a criminal and has “done many, many bad things” in his life, he did not kill Sunny, but he “did not stop them...” (236). According to him, Sunny “was foolish and stubborn.” Sunny is impliedly dead.

The novel is also preoccupied with sexual tension between Abel and his brother's wife. Although they do not sleep together until the day Abel receives the final report from the police, Sunny's wife is portrayed as a temptress, one who is unable to control her sexual urges. She practically throws herself at her brother-in-law, ceaselessly seduces him, and goes as far as trying to commit him into promising that he would inherit her in the event that Sunny fails to return. Even when Abel has a chance encounter with an old girlfriend and rekindles his romantic affair with her, Ada does not give up just as she waits patiently when her own friend indicates interest in Abel. While encouraging Abel to have a go at her friend, she remains hopeful that he would return to her eventually. The women in this Lagos novel are shameless, calculating, self-deprecating and lack self-control. There seems to be no single honest person in Kan's Lagos. The only exception,

perhaps, is Nnamdi who was an old friend and university mate of Abel. Nnamdi is wealthy, like Sunny, and used to deal in illegal businesses but the disapproval of his parents who rejected his ill-gotten money made him retrace his steps. He then began to invest his ill-gotten money in clean businesses. It is possible that Nnamdi's decision to leave fraud in pursuit of clean business is made in the village and not in Lagos because the people in the village made it clear that they do not want to share in the unclean money he brings from Lagos. So we can argue that it is the conscientization he received in the village that he brought back to Lagos.

What comes out in *Cairo Modern* is that the soul of Cairo is based on the motive of corruption. Everything that happens in the city – the government, the minister, the structure and the students – so that the social structure of the city of Cairo is described in the context of the story. The reader gets to know the students, their problems, the bureaucracy that runs the city and if Mahgub Abd al-Da'im and Ihsan Shihata who are made to get married are linked to their families, the reader gets a complete picture of a poor family that has decided to sell their daughter in order to survive; and the other family that is completely bereft because their own son disappears. If their son had not disappeared, they would just have been repeating what the other family was doing – taking money from corruption to take care of their needs.

The story of Cairo is therefore the story of how a complete social structure works – a minister turns a young woman into a prostitute. At some point the girl has done investment which can protect her when things break down. She will be in a stronger position to survive later. The husband who never invested because he was filtering it away in the city is in a different ballgame altogether. The minister is the centre of corruption in the system. What the writer has done is to show that the whole society cannot run well because at every level, it is the corruption in the system that determines what happens. Here is a young man looking well-fed with a beautiful wife but the wife is not really his. Then, there is another man saluting his boss but all he does is to run rackets for the boss. A system like that is indicative of how the boss himself got to his position. Even the minister's wife who decided to divorce him, who could tell how she became his wife? An attempt to describe Cairo inevitably leads to the conclusion that whatever is made obvious is not actually what it is. It is important to interrogate the city first in terms of its social structure because the structure presented is deceptive.

Looking at the city at the level of practical everyday efficiency, how can a city such as this run well? It is instructive that a government changes and a man suddenly gets catapulted to ministerial position. Again, his subordinates who have to rise do not rise because they are competent; they are rising because of a pre-arrangement that is thoroughly hollow in terms of any resemblance of statutory order. It is a completely immoral relationship. Even if the government did not change, the divorce did not take place, and Ihsan remained Mahgub's wife, she would just have been a woman who knows about another family that is not a family but with whom she had to share her life. This is the kind of society William Shakespeare describes as "stratagems and spoils" in *Merchant of Venice*. Nothing good can come out of such a society. To assess such a society, therefore, it is important to look at Cairo in terms of not the life that is being lived, the life that we see, but the life that we do not know because none of what the society shows is actually the life that is being lived. The reader meets a wife who is not a wife, a worker who did not get his appointment by bureaucratic means. Perhaps, there is no work in the ministry; it is like a ministry in Nigeria. That the author does not show the work his characters do in the ministry is instructive. It is possible to argue that nothing happens in that society so that everything is just chance occurrence through either a coup or the kind of divorce that ends the minister's marriage.

The Carnivorous City represents Lagos in a manner not too dissimilar. First, we may take the individual characters like Walata, the rich thug in Ikoyi who eventually unravels the whole story. He is a very common character in Lagos in the sense that people who have never done any legitimate job own magnificent properties in Lagos. Perhaps, part of what makes such characters possible is the absence of a strong, central authority, a central law system that is effective. The result is that everybody plays pranks on the central law system and as long as they can get around it, even if by breaking through it that is what everybody does. The concern of this paper is the constitution of that central law system in African society and particularly in our cities. In *The Carnivorous City*, although the authority is described in tangential forms and from the fringes, the novel tells a story about a whole society and how morally incontinent it has become with the possibility that only individuals who can fish in troubled waters get what belongs to them. The Mushin episode, for instance, is simply the way it works in political situations in which the moment politicians know their enemy is close by they get their people around to create chaos and mayhem. This happens nearly on a daily basis in Lagos. The chaos that is therefore created becomes the real character of

the city. A close examination of why many things do not work as they should in Lagos merely requires a summing up of the individual lives in Lagos.

One of the questions to ask, perhaps, is what are the routes the Nnamdis living in Lagos navigate in order to remain legal, and in order for their businesses to remain legitimate? Undoubtedly, it is easier for Nnamdi to choose the legitimate route because he has already made the money and anytime things in the legitimate route do not go on well, he can always and easily go by the other route because he knows the illegitimate route. Is it possible to have a mass pulling of forces by those on the legitimate route? It never does happen because people are always acting on individual basis and in this novel, there is no associational move of any kind in any direction. The reader never meets people coming together for anything; there is no movement apart from the church. It is the only place where people come together but churches are also organized as business enterprises. The inability, refusal or failure to confront Walata, the big thug in Ikoyi is symptomatic of the absence of central authority because the police can discover the people who are doing wrong things but cannot bring them to justice. The city becomes carnivorous because people are doing wrong things in this city and those who are supposed to arrest them do nothing except tell a civilian to go there alone. The helplessness of the law enforcement agents is actually what is most critical. The law enforcement agents are so thoroughly helpless that they actually go to the victim to say that is the man, but we can do nothing to him.

Is Lagos a carnivorous city? From the description of the various characters, it is so in the sense that there is nowhere in the novel where forces are being pulled for collective action in any way. Everybody is just striking out, wanting to get the best of the system. And what is that system? The system itself has become almost a no system because nobody represents it. Even the Nnamdis are merely doing it out of a remembered sense of the past. If he must stick by filial duties, he would have to continue to live the legitimate way. Otherwise, what would be the sense in the money he is making if he had no home to go back to? What makes Lagos carnivorous is not so much the waywardness of the individual characters, but simply the absence of law. The fact that nowhere in this novel do we have where residents could run if they were in trouble. In *No Longer at Ease*, Obi Okonkwo could go to the Imuofia Progressive Union. This kind of opportunity does not exist in *The Carnivorous City*. The only thing that exists is the church and the church never attempts to solve any problem. It is not an exaggeration to conclude, therefore, that this city will devour its residents because there is no restraining factor strong enough to hold individuals from personal proclivities. Once an

individual's mind goes in a particular direction, wrong as it might be, they can go on pushing because there is nothing to hold them back.

The City of Corruption in Egypt and the City of Violence in Nigeria

Is there a difference between the city of corruption in Cairo and the carnivorous city in Nigeria? Mahgub Abd al-Da'im of Cairo is as terrible as Abel Dike in Lagos because both of them are already corrupt; it was just a matter of getting the opportunity. Hence, their disposition is quite similar; they both want to enjoy whatever is available. Abel may not be as expressive but the reader could see where he is going. Having come to Lagos and seen an opportunity, he can no longer go back to Asaba, he has become a Lagosian. There is a sense in which we can put the two characters together. The only difference between them, perhaps, is that while Mahgub stumbles on an opportunity and forgets his own family, Abel comes from an already dysfunctional family. Once Abel leaves home, there is no longer any connection between him and his family. The two wives are not different as well because corruption rules. What is the difference between Ihsan in Cairo who agrees to marry a man she knows will not be her husband, a man who holds no attraction for her, a man she does not wish to be intimate with and Ada in Lagos who is living it up, whose criminal husband has all the money in the world and who connives with her brother-in-law to use all sorts of illegal methods to reach the money in order to spend it? The two stories look different but everything about them is the same and so is their respective city. There is no difference between Cairo of 1945 and Lagos of 2016. In Cairo, bureaucracies do not function as bureaucracies but by personal arrangement. In Lagos, a man who lives by the code of the underworld has already broken away from the norm of normal society and families that operate as if the proceeds from the underworld can come to them without altering the morality of their own families are living outside the way any normal society should be. Corruption is the same everywhere – survival of the most crooked. On both sides, the society can never run well. It is a society that will be predisposed toward violence, corruption, withdrawal from honest endeavours, and the pursuit of goals that are determined by fraud. Nothing good can come out of that kind of society. This unfortunate situation probably accounts for why after 1945, only a coup could take care of Cairo and when the coup came, it was Mahfouz that told the story of how corruption took over.

Conclusion

Neera Chandoke (1991) observes that “postcolonial urbanization has been a deviation from, almost an aberration of, the classical European experience” (2868). Evidently, *Cairo Modern* and *The Carnivorous City* show that the implied

nexus between the postcolonial city and the western model is misplaced. Events and characters in the two novels suggest that the kind of future cities we aspire to in Africa appear foredoomed because of our low level of modernization. There are basic, minimum requirements in a modern city – constant supply of electricity, perfect road network, and modern social amenities. In Lagos, the state of our international airport, the roads, electricity and water supply do not conform to the patterns expected in a modern city; lending credence to the assertion that “third world cities are [...] ‘cities of peasants’” (2868). Apart from infrastructure, the people in Nigeria and Egypt as exemplified by the characters in the two novels who have been given instruments of modernity like bureaucracy, the civil service, do not apply the formalities of a modern bureaucracy; hence, it is difficult to relate cities of corruption and violence to future cities.

However, the attempt to build EKO Atlantic City and even looking back at Abuja suggest that it is imaginable that a city can be well built. The question is the behaviour that takes place. It is not about physical development, it is about character; and character, they say, is destiny. The future city we desire, therefore, is still very far away because physical development does not necessarily imply development in character. Happily, however, as a desire to catch up with the rest of the world, the Lagos State Government has declared a particular part of Lagos as the EKO Atlantic City. It is reasonable to hope that living and working in the new environment will change the behaviour patterns internalized in the years of corruption and violence.

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