

## **Despotism In Some Samples of The Modern Arab Novel**

**By**

**Hajir Mahmoud Ali <sup>1</sup>**

**Presidency of Baghdad university/Human Resources Department**

[hajar.ali@dcec.uobaghdad.edu.iq](mailto:hajar.ali@dcec.uobaghdad.edu.iq)

### **Abstract:**

Despotism has existed since the dawn of humanity, and it has been linked to different mechanisms of suppression for the purpose of imposing the despot's administration by force, not through dialogue and argument. Cain's killing of his brother Abel was nothing but despotism of opinion, imposing it by force or canceling the other. In this research, we dealt with authoritarian and social tyranny, and how to describe despotism and despot in the Arabic novel, and we used the analytical approach of the characters, and the impact of temporal and spatial despotism on the hearts of the narrative characters. We concluded the research with a conclusion with the most important results we reached and a list of the sources we relied on.

**Keywords**— *Despotism, Social, Time, Place*

### **Introduction**

Despotism is a lethal disease for societies, and today it has become a problem in our Arab society, and the linguistic meanings of the word "Despotism" in Arabic dictionaries indicate to the monopoly of opinion, giving orders without the approval of others, and not accepting advice in affairs (Ibn Mandhour, 1081). The term "Despotism" has gone through many stages, the word (despot) in the English language is derived from the Greek word (despot), which is called the head of the family or the master (Al-Hindawi, Dr. Hussein, 2016) Plato is the first to talk about despotism and despot (Al-Hasani, 2007), while Aristotle used the term despotism to indicate to the worst types of government, because it destroys humanity (Al-Hasani, 2007), In modern Western thought, Montesquieu is the first to use the word despotism indicating to the despotic ruler in his opinion (Al-Hindawi, Dr. Hussein, 2016) while (Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi) is the first Arab thinker in the modern age who wrote on the subject of despotism and its general connotations, which brought him out of political despotism only (Al-Kawakibi, 2013).

The word "despotism" has been mixed with other concepts, such as tyranny and suppression, because it is any act or speech that is harmful to others (Ali Kamal 1989). Psychology and sociology look to despotism as a behavior that is based on force and physical and psychological violence, in order to control the others and enslave them, to achieve power and social status<sup>(8)</sup>. This behavior may form in the individual due to socialization, frustration, and imitation of others<sup>(9)</sup>, and because literature and art are the tongue of the oppressed and the deprived of will ones, a lot has been written about despotism and the suppression of freedoms. Perhaps the most important of these novels in world literature are the novel (1984) by the writer (George Orwell)<sup>(10)</sup>, the novel (The Goat's Party) by (Mario Bagos Yosa)<sup>(11)</sup>, and the novel (Autumn of the Patriarch) by the writer (Gabriel Garcia Marquez)<sup>(12)</sup>. As for the Arabic novel, it tried to touch the world of the despot, the mechanisms of despotism and its

appearances, and their political and social personality, then to temporal and spatial despotism.

## Authoritarian Despotism

This type approaches with political despotism, and whoever sees for himself the priority in managing the affairs of society(13), but authoritarian despotism is present in any social institution, or in different areas of life(14). As in the novel (*Al-Washm*), which deals with the experience of (*Kareem Al-Nasiri*), the political prisoner, who tried to express the problems of his society, and that his connection to life to be renewed(15), but the authority sees that everyone who cares about people's issues is an accused one, and his voice must be suppressed by means of despotism, which most notably, physical violence (my body is lying on the ground in this lonely prison, numbness takes over my body and insists on it with quick successive pricks like dozens of needles, but the faces of men that preparing for a mysterious feast block the path in front of me)(16).

The authoritarian despot pursues to cancel and eliminate the other, and physical exclusion is the most prominent sign(17), because the body is the place on which signs of suppression and punishment appear(18), and for this reason, authoritarian despotism practices different types of despotism mechanisms, especially physical violence, in order to hide others regardless of their position(19). Therefore, (*Kareem Al-Nasiri*) was obliged under torture to sign confessions against his fellows in the party, to save the remnants of his shattered self(20), and that confession is like a tattoo that he cannot get rid of. Rajab Ismail in the novel (*East of the Mediterranean*) was also obliged to sign all the confessions against his fellows, in order to escape with his damaged self(21). It is as if the Arab novels indicate that the repressive thought is the same in all Arab countries, no matter if the time and place are different. The desire for prestige, wealth and power pushes (*Tariq Fadhil*) and his friends (*Osama*) and (*Issa*) in the novel (*Throwing with Sparks*) to the path of subordinate despotism (22), so they escape from their poor neighborhood (the pit / fire / hell) to the master's palace (Paradise). They thought that life comes out of this palace(23), but whoever enters the palace turns into a slave to satisfy the pleasures and desires of the master of the palace, and working with him as if you are making a deal with Satan(24). This deal reminds us of the case of Faust's contract with Satan(25), the master of the palace has turned everyone who works with him into slaves and human puppets(26), and invents a very cruel and meanness method when he employs (*Tariq Fadhil*) to rape his opponents to destroy their pride and crush their humanity with the machine of authoritarian and psychological despotism (I carry out my task without compromising to any aspect of the plan, which the master has prepared, while being careful not to reduce the ecstasy of his soul)(27). This gloat pushes the palace master to depict discipline operations as he calls them(28), and to implant surveillance devices on everyone who knows the master of the palace(29), as if it is a regime of (*Oceania*) in the novel of (1984)(30), and because the master of the palace, whenever he passes the pleasure, he searches for another, so he finds a way to discipline his opponents by stripping them of their money(31).

This despotism and the extraordinary power of the master of the palace, who does not know his name, and where he came from, he was called the master only(32), makes the master of the palace any character in a country where these tragedies and despotism exist, and reminds us of the General (*Marquez*) in the novel (*Autumn of the Patriarch*), who gave birth to more than five thousand children due to the many mistresses(33). The master of the palace also enjoyed the abundance of concubines after he established a network to seduce women to come to the palace, and then to the lap of the master of the palace(34), who has the ability to reach anyone(35), and his stripping of human values. That is why (*Tariq Fadhil*) orders to

discipline a friend of his life (Issa) (Today I finished the most difficult process of torture that I did during my work inside the palace)(36), (Tariq Fadhil) denied to a friend of his life and fell to the bottom of crime, fear or identification with the personality of the despot(37), by crushing others and practicing despotism, in order to remain a master(38), and the master of the palace remains holding on to all the reasons of despotism and exclusion of the other, as if it is the fate that does not want to be spent in the destruction of personalities. The character of (Al-Sawadi) in the novel (Death Passes from Here) is similar to the character of the master of the palace, who was not punished and the damage that afflicted everyone. For (Al-Sawadi) who tyrannized the village of (Al-Sawda), was not known by lineage or country, and he was never a child(39). All this prodigious presence concealed a prominent feature on (Al-Sawadi) who has hundreds of lives(40), and that despotism becomes renewed, so whenever (Sawadi) dies, another rises to spread despotism, and death is a sign of nothingness and annihilation, so (Al-Sawadi) killed the old woman (Nawar), who through her tales, tried to expose the injustice and despotism of (Al-Sawadi)(41), who wants to devour everyone(42) and take everything with an absolute will that dominates everyone, so (Al-Sawadi kills Abdullah Al-Shaqi), he brought false papers showing that (Abdullah Al-Shaqi) had given up his land to (Sawadi) (43), to remind us of the despotism and injustice that befell the people of the village in the novel (Funtmara), because of the false papers(44), so that the despotism of (Al-Sawadi) remains dominating on the necks of the villagers and supported by religious despotism in perpetuating the authority of the despot(45) represented by the personality of (Sheikh Musa) who dedicated his speeches to the interest of Al-Sawadi and his despotism(46). Therefore, it was said that the despot surrounds himself with the attribute of holiness, and that authoritarian despotism is generated from religious despotism(47), and (Faza) in the novel (Al-Rawuk) does not move away from the character of (Al-Sawadi) in tyrannizing the village of (Al-Hashima), which leads him to kill his cousin Sheikh (Asi)(48) to own village lands and maintain power(49).

### *Social Despotism*

It refers to the entrenchment of customs and traditions in a society, and the individual's fear of breaking them, so as not to be punished by society(50). In the novel (The Far Return), the writer mixed authoritarian and social despotism, as the narrator tried to shed light on this type of despotism within the relationships of the main characters, who suffer from anxiety of existence, due to the closing of the freedom windows, and social despotism that was more despotic within the teacher's story (Meeza). The teacher who knocked on the door of her relative (Midhat) (51) in Baghdad while she and her mother were a refugee to him, so that the narrator describes (Meeza) as a feature as (in black clothes that thicken the eyeliner that surrounding her yellow eyes, and on her beautiful face the depression of her intelligence, then I saw anxiety in her eyes)(52). Black clothes, depression and anxiety indicate that the character suffers from something. It became clear as the events progressed that (Munira) had been raped by her nephew (Adnan) and she was unable to tell anyone about the rape case, because she was afraid of the traditions of a society that believes the value of a female lies in her virginity, not in her human being(53). The narrator gave anticipatory signals to this event, when (Munira) listened to Midhat's talks about the open world and leaving old customs and traditions that affect the human soul, Munira was sitting silently looking at the ground with her hands intertwined in her lap(54). The critic (Abdullah Najm) believes that (The Far Return) was affected by the novel (The Noise and Violence) by (William Faulkner) (55), so the character of (Conitin), who wanted to kill his sister (Cadi), because she smudged the honor of family by losing her virginity(56). Medhat who committed a moral killing of (Munira) after he escaped from the marital home and left (Munira) facing everyone, when he discovered on the wedding night that she had lost her virginity(57), and maybe (Munira) was a symbol of the revolution (14 July 1958), which was raped by the closest people. She was

betrayed by **Midhat**, the intellectual and the author of the theory of (Organized Selfishness)(58), and a representative of the frightened bourgeoisie. So he left (**Munira**) to fall apart and suffer alone, and also (**Kareem Al-Nasiri**) abandoned (**Maryam Abdullah**), the woman crushed by social despotism that pushed her to marry under compulsion to an old man, and he did not provide a helping hand to her, to represent society with its despotism and injustice, and trying to punish her with something that was obliged upon it by force(59). The life of (**Tahani**) who remained obsessed with the conscience of (**Tariq Fadhil**), her lover who dissipated her honor, was lost, so he escaped and let her to pay with her life at the hands of her father who killed her in his village out of shame, according the customs and traditions of his society rule, and her tomb in the village is known as the tomb of the cursed(60), so she did not get her right in life and after death, so (**Tahani**) represented innocence and the past of (**Tariq Fadhil**) before he enters the master's palace because **Tahani** is the life from which she jumped into the fire(61), to be the first victim of (**Tariq Fadhil**) and a symbol for all the women who faced social despotism, and whom (**Tariq**) met them in the world of the downfall(62). Although (**Sabra**) was a victim of the despotism of (**Al-Sawadi**) who killed her husband, and she stood in the face of his despotism, and the attempts of (**Al-Sawadi**) to get close to her, because she inhabits his heart (like the fairy, the more you burn your body in search of her, it penetrates to your bones and leaves ineffaceable traces on your skin(63). She decides to flee at night from the village for being afraid of the despotism of (**Al-Sawadi**) and his oppression of her sons and the society of the village that crushed by the injustice and despotism of (**Al-Sawadi**), as well as the despotism of customs, traditions and unawareness that captivate the people of the village, which is the worst type of despotism(64).

### *Despotism of Time*

Time is the engine of the human self, and the novelists have given time great attention to the impact it leaves on the souls of the characters(65). In the novel (*The Tattoo*), the despotism and cruelty of time appears on (**Kareem Al-Nasiri**), as the three times were mixed, as if they were one static and immobile time to confirm the vision of (**Karim Al-Nasiri**) with the eyes of helplessness, failure and sadness. In spite of (**Karim Al-Nasiri's**) attempt to make writing and woman as an alternative to political work(66), and his friend (**Hassoun Al-Salman**) sought refuge in religion as a refuge for his inner anxiety(67), but despotism and suppression push (**Kareem Al-Nasiri**) to sign a confession on his colleagues (Hassoun, I am convinced I feel that I have no role and will remain to be chased. I have seen them fall in humiliation in front of my eyes. I am **Kareem Al-Nasiri**, I declare my innocence from ..., and I will be loyal for ...)(68). This despotism that deprives humans of their rights, and imposes conditions that turn them into slaves, and this makes them feel alienated(69), so (**Kareem Al-Nasiri**) found leaving is the medicine for the wounds of the past, and leaving here is one of the narratives of defeat in the novel(70).

The despotism of time appears in the novel (*Throwing with Sparks*) with the characters from slipping into crime and falling to the bottom of despotism and slavery at an extreme speed and the feeling of not being able to get rid of the despotism of the palace master and his nets after the characters were stuck in them. Therefore, the story collapses from the consciousness of (**Tariq Fadhil**), who wasted thirty-three years under the windows of the master of the palace(71) to confirm the centrality of the master in the lives of the characters, and the life of (**Tariq Fadhil**) becomes mixed times in the memory(72), and his life was surrounded by despotism, slavery, and material and moral pollution(73). Fear of the master of the palace, who turned (**Tariq Fadhil**) into a monster or a mean to humiliate his opponents, and the same mean by which the master of the palace takes revenge on (**Issa**) a friend of

(Tariq Fadhil) after he stripped him of his money, because of Issa's love for the sister of the master of the palace(74). The feeling of guilt, despotism, and betrayal of friendship (I never thought that he and I would meet in that room, our eyes exchanged refraction and the fever of the soul neglected and withered... the evening call to prayer was long this night, and with the darkness of the soul the torture process became more severe)(75). The occurrence of the torture process at the time of the evening prayer leads (Tariq Fadhil) to the idea of change, purification and revenge against the master of the palace, and (Tariq Fadhil) dreamed of killing this snake(76), and also the feeling of the long time of the evening prayer was only a psychological feeling, because the victim is his friend (Issa) who saved him from an attempt to assault in his childhood, and saved the master of the palace from drowning one day, to manipulate with lives of the characters(77). In the novel (The Far Return), the despotism of time and its cruelty to (Munira) after the rape incident to find that years of the past must be erased, and the cycle of despair makes (Munira) live among the damaged souls instead of being stuck between death or adultery, as the case of any girl in her society(78). The despotism of time, its cruelty, and its mockery of (Munira), where (Adnan) provides her with the official confirmation of the death of her husband (Medhat) (79), so (Munira) tried to live normally, but this is far from her, as the title of the novel indicates, which is intertwined with the noble verse (If we died and we are dust, that far return). The retrieval is a kind of voluntary fraud over time to restore memories and past of the character to clearly vision and explain the behavior of the characters(81). In the novel (The Tattoo), it begins with a narration of events from the moment (Kareem Al-Nasiri) was released from prison, then returns to recall the past of (Kareem Al-Nasiri) and his life in prison and return to the present, to clarify the objective vision of his failure to resist, due to the weight of time with its defeats, the dispersal of the self and its loss, so that the alienation of the individual is part of the alienation of society. The narration of the events in the novel (Throwing with Sparks) begins from the end of the events, then the narration returns in a circular motion to the starting point as a symbolic sign that despotism is still surrounding the necks of the characters, while the narration of events in the novel (The Far Return) and (Death Passes from Here) begins from the middle of events and return to the past, then the present, and anticipating the future comes by a time signal that announces events that will occur in the narration(82). In the novel (The Far Return), Midhat's vision of a dog in the middle of the street after being hit over by a car (the bright eyes appeared to him first, was lying in the middle of the street on black tar, a colorless, old dog, and its eyes were beating with a strange ray. The body was smashed and its blood was not dried up, but the eyes kept blinking and defending its last breath, pitying it in pain(83). The incident of the dog's death continues to haunt (Medhat), when he wanted to get out of the sieged neighborhood due to a coup (February 8, 1963), and (Medhat) was killed by the warring elements(84). The critic (Dr. Shujaa al-Ani) sees this anticipation as similar to the one found in the novel (The Abla)(85). The writer may could employ a tale or a group of tales within the framework of the mother tale, which indicates what will happen to the events or the fates of the characters(86). In the novel (Death Passes from Here), the tale of (Marhama) who is killed unjustly, despite her chastity, kindness and innocence(87), is the tale that (the old woman Nawar) repeated in her tales board (You know Abdullah, Marhama will descend on the village one day)(88). This story will reflect the fate of the people of the village or (Abdullah Al-Shafi), who was killed by the men of (Al-Sawadi), and we note that

the tales included in the novel (*Death Passes from Here*) begin with death or forgetting, as an equivalent to death(89), which closed the ports of hope, the atmospheres of fear, sadness and despotism, and the story of (*Houria*) is a mirror of the tale (*Munira*) in the novel (*The Far Return*)(90).

### *Despotism of Place*

The place has obtained great attention, as it is the space in which the trace of time appears, as it is an influential element in the characters and their actions(91). In the novel (*The Tattoo*), the narrator does not tell us anything about the place in which the events take place, and he recalls them remembrance, especially the detainee, he described it as lonely and one day was a stable for police horses, when *Nasiriyah* was in the beginning of its emergence(92). The lack of detail in describing the place, because of what (*Kareem Al-Nasiri*) carries from the memories of despotism, the mechanism of torture, and the cancellation of human existence, and when (*Kareem Al-Nasiri*) leaves his city heading to *Baghdad*, the narrator summarizes the description of the place in it (*Kareem Al-Nasiri's* room in the company is located at the end of a long corridor, which has one large window overlooks a back street in which there is a small shop and three houses whose doors are rarely opened(93). The description of the room came as a general description, because the description of the place is a description of the human being(94), so (*Kareem Al-Nasiri*) failed to describe the place, due to the loss of the sense of belonging to it and the feeling of despotism and expropriation of freedom that pushed him to leave, which means moral death, to uproot the person from his roots and loss of his identity(95). As (*Kareem Al-Nasiri*) passed away, so did (*Munira*) from the city of (*Baqubah*), because of the incident of her rape, being afraid of the despotism of customs and traditions that condemn woman(96), so she tries to find safety in the house of her relative (*Medhat*), but (*Munira*) is afraid of (the corridor) that connects the outer door of the house and the inner door, or what is called (*Bakhtin*) the place of the threshold(97), therefore, (*Munira*) says (the darkness of the corridor always frightens me)(98).

What *Munira* refers to, is the fear of the outside world and the inner world, and there are spatial supplies that evoke feelings of despotism and dark vision in the character. As in the black crack that (*Midhat*) saw on the wall of the house, it turns into an earthquake and a presage of death (The black crack that penetrates it from top to bottom appeared even deeper, like a steppe hit by an earthquake. A crazy giant holds his scythe and runs to cut the necks of children and destroy every trace of life)(99). The crack affected in *Midhat's* soul the feeling of death at the hands of this giant, and the crack became deeper and blacker each time to remind us of the corpse of (*Unisco*), which kept increasing in an engineering sequence threatening to expel the couple from their home(100). In the novel (*Al-Rawuq*), we find that the narrator was more interested in mentioning the names of places than he was interested in describing them, and gave them an aesthetic role or interpretation, so the narrator failed to show the despotism of place and its effect on the souls of the characters(101). The novel (*Throwing with Sparks*) is based on opposing spatial binaries, starting with the naming of the narrator's lane (*Tariq Fadhil*) in the (the pit / fire / hell) neighborhood, and on the other hand, the palace of the master, which is described as paradise, but this paradise is tyrannized by other places and the sea space is absent from the people of (the pit / fire), and the livelihoods of the fishermen are cut off(102), and from whichever direction you come to the city, the palace will appear to you, which rose in a deliberate turn, giving its back and arching it, as if they were embracing the city, and set at the sea that their waves refrained from visiting the shore)(103). But describing the palace as paradise contradicts reality, as the palace is surrounded by eyes and surveillance devices to observe everything for the master of the

palace(104), and if the house is the human being and a place of amiability and safety(105), then (Tariq Fadhil) feels hostility , despotism and suffocation when entering the house, and the tales of time tell the tales of the old time, and it spreads like a locust mirage, it feeds on my nerves and reduces the areas of patience that I am provided with, to extend in my chest the green spaces(106). The house is a place of warmth, dreams and childhood memories(107), but the house of (Tariq Fadhil) is a continuation of the master's despotism, his palace and the slavery that he finds in all directions(108), and what begins at the beginning of the narration of events is a spatial contradiction (fire/paradise) that appears at the end of the revelation as one inescapable fire for those inside the palace and the people of the pit neighborhood. The palace casts the fire of its despotism and marginalization of poor people, and the novel (Death Passes from Here) did not get away from spatial contradictions. Spatial despotism comes from the threshold of describing the village as "a dry land on which a crow stood, and a crow's nest was on their heads, when it got tired, it ate them one by one and flew(109). This land is the village of (Al-Sawdaa), and the crow is (Al-Sawadi) that carries despotism and death. The name of the village is derived from the black color, the color of mourning and sadness, and then death that surrounds the village, and all places are biased with al-Sawadi and his despotism, as the trees tyrannized the village and its people, and the cemetery expelled the dead of the village and hid its interior from the bodies of the villagers(110). The apparent contradictory spatial binaries lead to the path of despotism. The dome of the case's keeper is the shelter that the villagers resort to, which apparently contradicts with the castle of (Al-Sawadi), but the paradox is that the case's keeper participates in the castle in supporting the despotism of (Al-Sawadi) and his injustice(111). The castle is a monster devours whoever raises his voice against the despotism of (Al-Sawadi)(112), the people of the village will become captives of (Al-Sawadi) and captives of their misguided customs and beliefs, because despotism and injustice are inside souls, that saturated with unawareness and fear. The despotism of unawareness is the strongest type of despotism, so the name of the place and its connotations are disappeared, so that the mythical and prodigious heritage became part of the village that reminds us of the village of (Macondo) in the novel (One Hundred Years of Solitude) by Marquez(113).

### *Epilogue*

We find that the study novels, with the exception of the novel (Al-Rawuk), tended to narrate with an objective vision, and the appearance of the voice of characters that express their crisis, as a sign of breaking the collar of despotism in all its forms. The study novels attempted to show the image of despotism and its manifestations, its effect on the characters, and the resistance of these characters to despotism and its mechanisms. Intellectual, religious and cultural despotism can be studied in samples from the Arab novel. We hint the mythical and prodigious aspect in the novel (Death Passes from Here), which opens the way to study this aspect in the novel.

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