

The Political Symbol in the Contemporary Saudi Novel

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Abstract

This research aims to give a brief overview of the political symbol and its use in the contemporary Saudi narrative with its prominence in titles, characters, and novel events through the study and analysis of five novels: “Now here or in the East of the Mediterranean again” by Abdel Rahman Munif, “Pigeons do not fly in Buraidah” by Youssef Al-Muhaimid, "Hind and the military" by Badriya Al-Bishr, "Government in the shadows" by Munther Al-Qabbani, and finally Abdullah Thabet’s novel "The terrorist 20", by means of analyzing some of the symbolic contents shared in these novels according to contemporary critical, theoretical and methodological data. The study concludes that the contemporary Saudi novel appears to be more closely related to society and religion in terms of political issues. It remained as is, discussing Arab political issues in general while addressing the local political aspects represented in the Gulf War at the time in addition to the issue of terrorism and religious extremism. The Saudi novel is always – and still is – linked to society and its internal affairs. Consequently, Saudi novelists tend to use symbolism when talking about political issues for fear of the censorship authority and the consequent ban on their novel publications. Here, it is possible to single out an independent and extensive research study in the future on the political symbol in the Saudi novel, its types and significance, and the issues symbolized by it.

Keywords: Novel, Saudi, contemporary, Arabic, politics, symbol.

1. Introduction

The novel occupies a distinguished position on the literary scene, as it continues to lead the literary venue both globally and in the Arab world especially in light of the decline of other literary genres. This is due to many factors: It has the purchasing power with the turnout of all segments of society as noted in local and international book fairs. It also reflects the reality of society as a whole intellectually, culturally, economically and socially. Each individual finds himself in a specific type of novel, as if the novel expresses his/her joy and sadness thereby saturating the aspects of pleasure,



imagination and knowledge for that individual. Moreover, it gives the novelist the freedom to pass on his/her intellectual, political and philosophical ideas.

The Saudi novel is not immune to this being at the forefront of the cultural scene, as it has lived through different periods: starting with its inception, then its establishment, then launching, and ending with the stage of major transformations (Al-Naimi, 2009; Al-Shanti, 1990), through which the pace of novelistic production accelerated, for it could not have reached the state it is now except by the presence of this temporal accumulation, which in turn resulted in an accumulation in production. For example, the number of novels from 2001 until the end of 2006 reached a total of 206 novels (Al-Yousef, 2007: 338-339). In fact, in 2006, 42 novels were published, including 20 of which that were written by women (Jareedi, 2008: 13). All this successive quantity leads to a collision with the culture of the conservative Saudi society; who believes that it is shameful to criticize society and expose it through sensitive topics, especially those that affect religion, women and politics.

The contemporary Saudi novel embodies an honest history in one way or another, that is more credible and transparent than the historical books and literature themselves, through its ability to depict reality and people's lives in their intersection with various social, economic and political conditions. Not to mention that the Arabic novel, by its general nature, almost represents a journey aimed at rebellion and breaking out of all forms of political oppression and persecution (Abbasi & Zeyoush, 2018: 7). However, the general context with which the contemporary Saudi novel was linked – as it turned out later – did not give it the appropriate margin of availability and freedom to delve into political issues and topics and dismantle them within the framework of the revealing and publicized narrative act. To compensate for this, the Saudi novelist resorted to the use of symbolic mechanisms to deviate from reality, and rebel against its authoritarian bases. Therefore, it was difficult to engage in political issues directly in the Arab countries in general and in Saudi Arabia in particular, as a result of the two natures of religious and societal power which they share. The novelists consequently resorted to symbolism in their creations, whereby “the hidden and silent in the novelistic discourse is among the implicit texts parallel to the written text, which pushes modern criticism to besiege it, break into its reservoirs, and reveal its secrets to search for a strategy for its formation, reproduction and interpretation. This is achieved through the use of symbols that animate the structure of the novel and form its connotations, by entering into the glossaries of the text's elements and analyzing its linguistic symbols with its multiple meanings” (Al-Khelaifi, 2014: 150).

Symbols are not specific meanings that have a global character, but rather they are elements that are employed and understood within the common culture of each society, and according to the meanings and connotations agreed upon among its members (Al-Saada, 2019: 2). It is an appropriate mechanism for describing psychological states, feelings and ambiguous situations (Asghari, 2006: 6), and for expressing what is not intended to be expressed directly, or what is known as the silent, implicit and undeclared. Symbolism is, therefore, often used by writers to avoid clashing with authoritarian forces.

In order to study symbolism and politics in the contemporary Saudi novel, it would be more appropriate to give a brief and condensed definition of the symbol, and its relationship to fictional literature; and to state the most important types and images of symbols to which a novel writer can resort, and the reasons and motives behind the narrative act's resorting to the use of symbols. In addition to the importance of the symbol in condensing the images and messages to be conveyed to the reader, and its reflections on the latent and implicit meanings and connotations beyond the lines, and those behind the lexical meanings, and finally reviewing the symbol's patterns and its significance in relation to the political issue in the contemporary Saudi novel.

2. Aims And Scope

This research aims to give a brief overview of the political symbol and its use in the contemporary Saudi narrative with its prominence in titles, characters, and novel events through the study and analysis of five novels:

3. Methods And Design

The study adopted the descriptive approach using the content analysis method, which is appropriate for the exploratory nature of the article.

4. The Nature Of The Symbol And Its Relation To The Novel

The symbol is one of the artistic techniques that is extensively used in the novel given that it is essentially a technique which resulted from the cross-fertilization of literary arts, especially in terms of the influence of the narrative language in poetry in a way that led to the emergence of what is known in Western literature as “the story of the symbolic event” (Bilal, 2011: 26). The symbol was

also considered a means of embodying and communicating the artistic experience, and accessing meanings, feelings and concerns that are most profound in the human psyche and which direct declarative language is unable to capture and express (Saliha, 1982).

It came in the Arabic Lexicon “Lisan al-Arab” that the symbol is a hidden vote in the tongue, like a whisper, and the movement of the lips is with unintelligible wording without a clear voice, but rather it is a sign of the lips. The symbol is a sign of the eyes, eyebrows, lips and mouth (Ibn Manzur, 2003; Saliba, 1982). That is, the symbol in its linguistic meaning is a whisper and a wink, indicating what is not intended to be announced and declared.

In foreign languages, the word symbol is found in the Greek language “Sumbolein”, which means allegory and guesses, and the word “Symbole”, which has been used for centuries as one of the most important theological conventions in the Christian faith, evolved from it before it carried the indicative sign used in logic, mathematics and semantics; and in all these fields it means “that one thing means another” (Peyre, 1981: 7).

As for the idiomatic aspect, it is the sign that has been traditionally associated with what it symbolizes. Michael Barrett (1989) defined the symbol – when differentiating between fiction, fact and symbol – as the encoding of language with signs aimed at fulfilling desires (Anani, 1996: 155). For others, it is “a tangible thing chosen to denote one of its dominant qualities, such as water, whereby it is a symbol of docileness, softness, transparency and purity. It may also refer to the meaning of communication as something that is divided into two parts: the possession of two different persons, one of whom allows communication and acquaintance” (Al-Khulaifi, 2014: 150). It means suggestion, “that is the indirect expression of the hidden psychological aspects that are not able to support their linguistic tool in its positive connotation. The symbol is the connection between the self and things where feelings are generated through psychological excitement, not through naming and declaring” (Hilal, 1983: 43), and thus it reveals what lies in the psyche of the writer from the accumulation of years and life experiences.

Edwyn Bevan divided the symbol into two types: idiomatic and structural. The first is meant by the agreed upon signs, words as symbols of their connotation. The second is the opposite of the first; it is a type of symbol that has not previously been agreed upon. For instance, the flag is a symbol of one’s homeland or country, the dog is a symbol of loyalty, and the crescent is a symbol of Islam etc. (Abd al-Nour, 1979: 123; Ka’wan, 2009: 20). In defining the symbol, some went to consider it the image of a thing transformed into something else, according to a figurative morphology, so that each of them becomes legitimate to be announced in the space of the text. That is, it is a subject that

refers to another subject, but it has what qualifies it to require attention to it for its own sake, as something presented (Wellek & Warren, 1992: 257).

In the field of psychology, the symbol is an expression of psychological life and repressions that language and speech are unable to express. Its job is “to convey some concepts to the conscience in a special way due to the impossibility of conveying them in the known direct method” (Abd al-Nour, 1979: 123); For various reasons which include societal and political authority, where psychoanalysis revealed the relationship between the coding processes of symbolism and the coding of dreams, and its approach with the association technique as a means to reveal the nature of these symbols. In a way, it contributed to strengthening the role of psychology in studying the conditions of memory and receiving, and then the conditions of speech and receiving (Abassi & Zeyoush, 2018: 18), on which linguistic studies related to symbol were based.

In semiotics – from contemporary linguistics – Ferdinand de Saussure considered that a symbol has an attribute that is not generally arbitrary at all. Also, the symbol is not empty of meaning. Rather, it is possible to find features of a link between the signifier and the signified in the symbolic case, with their direct significance being proven and passed by at the same time, in that it is not intended to be communicated (De Saussure, 1986: 87). At the same time, three types of symbols must be distinguished, as they are not separate from each other: the sign, which focuses on the realistic transcendence between the signifier and the signified such as pointing the finger at something; the icon, which is based on a relative similarity that can be felt by the recipient, such as Jesus Christ, symbolized by the cross. And finally, the symbol which is characterized by the diversity of its significance and its sometimes contradiction with the traditional perception, as there is no convergence between the signifier and the signified in the symbolic relationship. For example, a dove symbolizes peace (Abbasi & Zeyoush, 2018: 20).

In any case, the multiple meanings of the symbol are based on the gesture and the sign, according to which the symbol turns into a speech, whose codes and symbols are decoded by a special reader, that transcends the lexical meaning of the language to the implicit meanings whereby the text is subjected to dissection and deconstruction, and the controversy of the structure is addressed in order to understand the connotations of the symbols and their meanings (Al-Khulaifi, 2014: 150-151). It can be said that the symbol carries in its significance two sides that combine the truth and the various meanings that can be understood about it. However, symbols often give contextual and deliberative keys so that the recipient realizes their latent and implicit meanings.

The symbolic school has emerged in literature similar to the controversy raised by the employment of symbols in literary work: as an artistic and literary movement which gives value to artistic and literary work by mixing feelings, emotions, images and forms according to their own laws. It may have a broad and substantial connotation. It is used to indicate any aspect of expression that refers to something directly, but in an indirect manner. It is not the process of replacing things with other things, but rather the process of using a specific image to express abstract ideas and emotions (Chadwick, 1992: 42; Hamdan, 1981: 57).

In the literary work in general, and the novel in particular, the symbol represents a form of liberation towards more extensive and comprehensive depths, and the search for a more certain meaning. It is presented on an artistic level and in deeper fields as the text tends to become more ambiguous. When the novel deals with the political issue, which is one of the three pillars of the famous taboo (sex, religion, politics), it finds in obscurity, ambiguity, concealment and bypassing censorship, a haven for criticism of politics and the conditions that have led to it (Al-Khulaifi, 2014: 151).

The symbols used in the novel are not the same – at least from the objective point of view – one can address several types of symbols in this respect, the first of which is natural symbols whereby the writer derives his/her symbols from nature to contribute to highlighting the writer's special vision towards reality and society, and further works to enrich it in addition to giving him/her the ability to stand on deep connotations, which gives his/her creativity a kind of privacy and distinction (Al-Khulaifi, 2014: 153). The second of which is mythological symbols, which are derived from miracles and myths. They carry with them the idea of the human person and his personal experience in one of the stages of his comprehension in the universe. The myth possesses the energy to be present permanently, and is constantly renewed through a self-contained narrative style, and because it conveys the suffering of the soul under the same impact in life through a complete and comprehensive picture (Fadila, 2018: 29). Thirdly, historical symbols, which are present in the text through historical figures and events, as actors, with their names and projects. Here, the writer is not satisfied with merely referring to their heroisms and revolutions, but rather formulates them in the form of small narratives that establish the basis for the narrative in the narration itself (Al-Khulaifi, 2014: 154). And fourth, religious symbols. The narrative text often employs many religious symbols, themes and models which leave their original context to be resolved in a new context required by the logic of the narrative (Al-Khulaifi, 2014: 156).

The use of symbols in Western literature has spread in light of the belief that literature can achieve a mission by suggesting and hinting, and not by declaring, a belief that was otherwise connected to

the symbolic school (Hamoudi, 1985: 21). However, in ancient or modern Arabic literature, the matter was and still is related to the narrow margins of freedom, and to work with the prohibitions of standing in the face of authority directly, whether it is a moral social authority, a religious authority, or a political authority. Also, resorting to the symbol in the novel is an expression of the will to rebel on the one hand, and an exercise in the act of rebellion on the other hand, but in a way that allows the passage of the text to the recipients.

5. Brief Definition Of Novels (Study Sample)

3.1 The novel "Now here or in the East of the Mediterranean again" by Abdel Rahman Munif, published in 1991. In it, the writer expressed the frustrated political situation experienced by the peoples of the Arab world, and a group of the nation's youth who are ardent for freedom and who have fallen victim to it. It is considered the second political novel after his novel "East of the Mediterranean" published in 1975. It is as if the writer indicates that despite the difference in time and place between both novels, the situation remains the same with prisons, torture and arrests, and everyone who opposes his government politically has a clear fate: there is no room for freedom. The reason for choosing this novel is that it focuses on the lives of prisoners and their suffering, and it contains many vocabularies that symbolizes politics and what falls under it.

3.2 The novel "Pigeons do not fly in Buraidah" by Youssef Al-Muhaimid, published in 2009. In it, the writer dealt with some of the social and religious features while linking them politically. The author touched on the guardians of virtue - as he called them - that is, the clergy and their constant interference in the affairs of the state which do not concern them. And that liberalism is a deception to delude society in order to control the state with religious extremism. He also touched on some historical incidents and their impact on state policy such as the Jaihaman incident, in which he attacked the Grand Mosque in Mecca. In the novel, the author also discussed the political prison and its effect on prisoners. All this and other factors are a reason for choosing this novel within the study sample.

3.3 The novel "Hind and the Military" by Badriya al-Bishr, which was published in 2006 and addressed the issue of religious extremism within the same family. Hind also lives within a group of soldiers, for her father, brother and husband are in the military. For this reason, a different objective pattern can be documented in relation to what a woman's voice can be in an Arab society that is strict in its conservatism and in its oppressive and arbitrary values to the extent that this is

considered part of its identity. The political factor, as an existing authoritarian practice, is essentially a mirror reflecting the values of society, especially in its dealings with the weakest link in society, which is the woman. The general social theme with which the novel is concerned is essentially a purely political one, and the writer exercised her critical role not just simply recording political comments.

3.4 Munther Al-Qabbani's novel "Government in the Shadows", which was published in 2007, was characterized by a theme based on excitement, mystery and suspense. Through it, Qabbani revealed in a historical style the world of Freemasonry and the aspects of conspiracy theory, and dropped its events on the Arab world. The novel revolves around two time periods: in 1908 at the end of the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, and in the present through a Saudi businessman called Na'im Al-Wazzan, who undergoes a mysterious accident during a business visit outside Saudi Arabia, which sparked controversy about what the author wrote, whether it was fiction or reality. This is a new pattern in the topics of the Saudi novel: drawing inspiration from history for a certain era, and projecting what is going on in it on the reality of the Arabs, moving away from the topics that touch society. This made this genre popular with readers looking for adventure and suspense in the novel narrative.

3.5 The novel "The Terrorist 20" by Abdullah Thabeth, published in 2006. The novel deals with the story of a Saudi young man from his childhood and youth until his intellectual abduction by extremist groups. It was published after the so-called terrorist events of September 11, and is a complete depiction of the environment in which extremist groups can emerge in the Arab world in general, and in Saudi Arabia in particular.

6. Where Is The Political Symbol Employed In The Contemporary Saudi Novel?

Models of symbol use in politics in the contemporary Saudi novel can be studied at several levels and objective axes, in which symbols often have an overwhelming presence. However, the purpose of this research study is not the used symbols in themselves, but rather the political topics which these symbols conveyed. Those aforementioned levels are represented by the title, the characters and the events.

6.1 Symbolism Of The Title

The political significance of the titles of Saudi novels clearly varies in convergence and divergence, with which it is difficult to find a common denominator except in the space of allegorical semantics

inhabited by the used symbols and referred to in the mind of the recipient. The symbol in the title becomes true on two levels: the level of tangible things that are taken as a template for the symbol, and the level of symbolized moral states. The title allows the two levels to merge to form its symbolic significance. However, this association can only be achieved through the existence of some relationship between these two levels. It is a relationship closer to the deep metaphorical similarity that distances itself from its tangible sensory encounter, but it takes on a character of harmony and agreement (Bilal, 2011: 27).

The political connotation of the title of the novel "Now here or in the East of the Mediterranean again" can be sought in multiple and harmonious symbolic levels of the title's same phrases such that a relationship has been formed between them that refers the reader to the temporal and spatial significance of the events of the novel, which is a clear political indication, whereby the reader does not lose sight of the heavy media use of the term "Middle East" with its geographical connotation, as illustrated in the following figure:

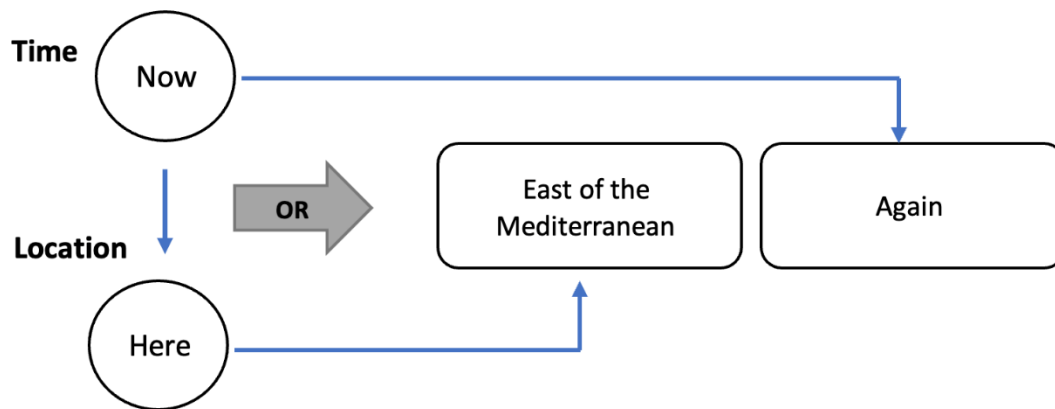


Figure 1. The symbolic significance of the title of the novel "Now here or in the East of the Mediterranean" by Abdel Rahman Munif.

The novel places the reader in front of a heavy torrent of citations and observations that narrate details that the average person would not know except through what he/she reads. However, the novel was able to give accurate details about the painful experiences of imprisonment and detention; As if the narrative work documents an entire stage through its back door or window which overlooks the darker side of the political and social scene in terms of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. So that the experiences reported by the characters of the novel become like a horrific

movie, a reality full of all kinds of tyranny, oppression, and metaphorical and material exile, where nothing is absent from it except for freedom and a beautiful homeland. The tragic events that the writer was able to observe, express and draw their features in a dense language are not difficult for the reader to comprehend, especially when it comes to the prisons that kill bodies and souls, in addition to the feeling of hunger and cold to the point of madness due to the length of one's stay in prison:

“And because I was besieged by hunger, the cell was filled with the smell of food, I only dreamed of the food that my mother used to prepare... The blanket sagged and fell off my shoulders, I said the cold is strong but the blood is stronger... Because someone once told me that a prisoner who speaks to himself in a loud voice is more willing to confess or go insane...” (Munif, 2016: 204-205).

Many vocabularies and structures are repeated in the novel that symbolize the tragic situation of prisoners and detainees in their homelands, as well as their loss of a sense of security and comfort. To exemplify: “I grabbed a stick again... To the basement was the longest and most difficult journey of my life... I almost cried out... Then what do these pains mean...” (Munif, 2016: 247). He also said: “The chains started, but on my leg there was another one, tied to the table... Every strike I felt was like a skewer of fire inside my eyes...” (Munif, 2016: 247). And in another place: “...As for me, I remained like a frightened turtle... The dungeon gate almost closed behind me until I drowned in a wave of crying... As for my soul, it was flying everywhere...” (Munif, 2016: 303).

In this way, the novel comes with all these vocabularies among others: prison, stick, oppressed, crying, fire, skewer, dungeon, difficult, longer, screaming, tied, cold, fear and thereof. It is but an accurate description of what they find, perfectly humiliating man and robbing him of his most precious possession, his human dignity, and depriving him of living even if he is imprisoned in a dignified manner with respect for his requirements and desires. It is also symbolic of the dissatisfaction with the political situation in general in the Middle East with regards to the treatment of the government and those in power to the members of society.

As for “pigeons do not fly in Buraidah”, the authors have previously touched on its political connotation related to a geographic-religious dimension. It refers to the city of Buraidah – one of the cities of the Al Qassim region in Saudi Arabia – which has been considered the center of Salafi Sharia education for many decades; And how this education contributed to restricting the freedom

of mind and awareness, and how it always raised the motives of violent conflict, which ended in the attacks of September 11, 2001, the same year in which the novel was published.

The symbolic significance of this novel bore the pain of exile, imprisonment, yearning for freedom, and the search for one's desired homeland, such as: "In prison, the emptiness was as high as the beacons of the Noble Sanctuary (Al-Haram Al-Sharif), and we only dreamt of books and newspapers, I used to entertain cockroaches... The walls told us about the old times, and we told them about our sorrows and our loneliness, and our fear of the unknown..." (Al-Muhaimid, 2011: 252- 253).

In another place, the symbol was politically employed in the dialogue between the father and his son, recalling his pain, his fear and his desire to be rid of this life:

"...Then he sat him on the couch, and tried to explain to him that he had made a mistake, so they punished him so that he would not do it again.

And when the little boy asked him: "Who are they?" He said, "The government!"

"I mean, what is the government?"

... "Come, see the family's little madman!"

Fahed interrupted his laughter and sarcasm with rage and anger:

"Well, did you break something? when you are young? Then they put you in jail?"

Suddenly, the father's palm froze while on the child's neck, and his eyes were sore, so he got up and left for the bathroom... The father was bitterly crying...

He cried when he recalled his old days in prison, and the sadness in the eyes of his father when he visited him... He wept his own grief when he got out of prison and into the prison of this bleak country..." (Al-Muhaimid, 2011: 107-108).

To clarify that all of the above are meanings that will not be absent from the horizon of the political significance of the symbols in most of the studied works.

While the symbolic significance of the titles of the two novels, "Hind and the Military" and "Government in the Shadows", is clear in terms of the political significance even though the first title has a social and a historical connotation in relation to what was the image of the military in the Arab political culture, which is associated with oppression, persecution and tyranny, and which parallels religion and politics in consolidating its model, indicative of rejection and rebellion through the relationship drawn by the conjugation between Hind and the military. Hind grew up in the vicinity of the military, her father is a soldier, and her husband Mansour – from whom she was later divorced – is a military man. She was trying to get rid of the slavery that she felt with them. To illustrate:

"I never felt that I belonged to the world of women... but I had never been able to scream in Mansour's face... Over time, their lives [women] turn into nightmares, and their souls are forever tormented with fear of abandonment, imprisoned in their wardrobes... Their crying over pillows becomes a nighttime habit that no one cares about. I look every day at his pistol that he attaches to his waist as he returns from work, the inferno of my desires and their overwhelming yearning to escape from this well push me to pull this pistol from his waist and shoot him." (Al-Bishr, 2013: 132-133).

In general, the novel "Hind and the Military" frequently uses such vocabulary or phrases in one political symbolic sign, namely, the men and the societal power they enjoy. This power is represented by the military, who are instruments of a higher power (Al-Bishr, 2013: 145, 182, 191, 192).

As for the title "Government in the Shadow", it carries its political connotation parallel to the conspiracy theory, which states that there is a mysterious secret entity that is dominantly the ruler of the world; in a sense, it complemented the title of Munther Al-Qabbani's second novel, "The Return of the Absent". The forcibly hidden absent, the pursued, the detained, or the disappeared in mysterious circumstances are all indications that refer to purely political meanings. It refers to the hidden tools of those in authority in repression, suppression and concealment, as he says: "...then he accessed his very private email that no one else knows and which he uses to register in the political arenas... There is a group of people who have the truth as an incentive to search, this group does not want superficial explanations or quick answers, but rather wants to delve into the essence of things..." (Al-Qabbani, 2007: 19).

Also, in the title of the novel "The Terrorist 20", the significance of the political symbol appears to be specific in the word "terrorist" as an adjective or an epithet for a person, who carries an extremist ideology that does not see a solution to all the world's problems except through force and violence, and the eradication of the entire existence of the other through the act and practice of terrorism in its mental image, which has become entrenched in the global public awareness. However, the significance of the number "20" does not seem arbitrary. Rather, it is complementary to the political connotation itself in terms of reflecting the organization's behavior in giving numerical descriptions – somewhat similar to the military numbers given to soldiers in official armies – not only that, but the size of the figure itself indicates the size of the group and the organization, which is often small compared to the size of the forces it is fighting against on a global level.

The authority of the symbol in the novelist's title appears clear in its political references and authoritarian connotations that restrain the will of the writer aspiring to freedom and emancipation. The title paints a dense picture by using the symbol for all events of the novel, in a way that makes it the pillar of reception, and a necessary gateway to the world of narration and the space of the narrative in the novel (Abassi & Zeyoush, 2018: 43). Accordingly, the symbolism of the titles in the Saudi novel is mostly looking for political, social or religious provocation (Al-Naimi, 2014: 36).

6.2 Symbolism Of Characters

In the selected novels, it is possible to notice a characteristic that is almost essential in the horizon of the contemporary Saudi novel, with regard to the symbolic significance of the characters in political terms. It is represented in the presence of the religious component as an original party in the world of politics, if it is not the source of the existing policy itself, and the main factor in determining its legitimacy. This is, in fact, a feature that reflects the reality of the situation, and not that it is made up or extraneous to the reality or text.

In the novel "Now Here or the East of the Mediterranean Again", we meet the character of the narrator, Adel Al-Khalidi, a former political prisoner in an Amorite state who meets another political prisoner from the Moran state whose name is Tale' Al-Arifi, in addition to two other characters: Rajab Ismail and Haider Sheikh Ali. These names reveal, in one way or another, the secret of the places to which their owners belong. At least the reader will have the significance of the titles as symbols denoting their social environments; and perhaps the title of "Al-Arifi" is very closely related to the writer's social environment, and even very closely related to the ruling

religious institution – with the legitimate social policy tools – in the Kingdom while the rest of the names give references to Iraq, Egypt and Kurdistan among others. The political environment covered by the events of the novel is the countries of the Middle East, and not the eastern Mediterranean region, as the reader might imagine with a superficial awareness.

There is no doubt that Abdul Rahman Munif’s use of the symbol in building his characters is nothing but a technique through which it is possible to expose the falseness of reality in terms of the discourse of the force majeure in all countries of the Middle East; otherwise, there would not have been all those prisons and detention centers, and those prisoners and detainees that tell the stories of their painful suffering to the extent of pain.

The same applies for the characters and their names in the novel, "Hind and the Military". The political significance of the name “Hind” is derived from historical symbolism for the story of Hind bint Al-Nu’man with Al-Hajjaj bin Yusuf Al-Thaqafi, who can actually be considered one of the soldiers who served the political authority of the Umayyads with all sincerity, at the expense of all religious and human values, all of which he committed to become at the top of the list of the most famous tyrants in the history of the Arabs after Islam. The story of Hind bint Al-Nu’man is famous in the books of Islamic heritage, and Al-Hajjaj had married her against her will, until she said in him in a poem: “And Hind is nothing but an Arab filly ** a descendant of mares taken by a mule” (Kahhala, 1984: 257).

The same concept is in the name of her religiously strict brother "Ibrahim", which symbolizes the Salafi ancestral style presented by the Holy Qur'an to our master Ibrahim, peace be upon him. But in his perverted image that the religious Muslim’s personality has become, which has nothing to do with the Qur’anic example. Hind loved a young man and was afraid of her brother, who did not like it, and he was quarreling with her and beating her for it: “Ibrahim usually opened the book of Minhaj al-Sunnah by Sheikh Ibn Taymiyyah. He would put his head in it and would shake his head in resentment at my father's indulgence with us in tales of love... Ibrahim got up quickly and headed towards me, grabbed me and dragged me by the hair, so I screamed: Father... get me! (Al-Bishr, 2013: 83).

Also, the religious and hard-line brother model within the school's religious establishment we encounter again in the novel, "The Terrorist 20", in the character of Zahi's brother. While the name

“Zahi” carries symbolic connotations that suggest colors, life, joy, music and art, the novel paints a bleak picture of his brother, who wanted with all his might to include his brother in religious education in a way that seemed to be completely devoid of Zahi's deepest inclinations and desires. This is a symbolic paradox that bears indications of the intellectual and political division within the same family, in which religiosity has become the main tool of power, not only for repressing others, but also for repressing the self, making one's self obedient and submissive and consistent in one's thoughts and actions with what is the standard of a righteous citizen in the eyes of religion and the state: “The end of the first year drew near since my presence in this school and my joining this group. The school announced that after the end of the exams, they intended to take a five-day trek, and whoever wanted to join this camp must register his name and come with the approval of his father...” (Thabet, 2011: 75). However, his father did not want him to join the group, and he was aware that he would not obtain his father's approval. But he was imprinted with the nature of this extremist group, so he forged his father's signature and went with these righteous people, as he called them: “I went home and boldly told my father that I will take part in this trip, whether or not he accepted, and I swore to him that if he did not permit me to be with these righteous people, I would flee from the house, and he would not see me for as long as he lived...” (Thabet, 2011: 76).

In this symbolic field, the character becomes more profound in its criticism of reality, and even more inclined to expose it through what it presents about itself, both negatively and positively. Characters are the most important narrative elements, rather they are the active and motivating element of events, and the catalyst for the growth of the narrative text and the exacerbation of its events, and the dissolution of its knob at the end (Abassi & Zeyoush, 2018: 46).

By observing and tracing the symbolism of the characters in the contemporary Saudi novel, it is possible to clarify many deep connotations and meanings, and that the symbol was able to give a broad horizon in the political issue; As the contemporary Saudi novel sought to observe it carefully, without deconstructing it directly, it contented itself with scratching its surfaces at times, and many other times it tried to probe its depths using symbolic techniques that are dense with meanings.

6.3 Symbolism Of Events

The symbolism of events appeared in different ways in the Saudi novel. For example, the importance and significance of political and religious events from recent history emerge in a way that the average observer might not have realized had he not read these novels. Many people do not

know to what extent the events of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979 had affected the Saudi society. However, this event occurs once in the novel, "Pigeons do not fly in Buraidah", which was also exposed to the events of the terrorist bombings that occurred in 2004. The events of Al-Yamamah College in Riyadh, which were on the scale of the September 11, 2011 attacks, and are considered preludes and indications that reflect the deviation in the intellectual discourse and political behavior of religious groups, before extremism became a terrifying phenomenon for the whole world under the name of "terrorism", as expressed by the symbolism of the event – the Grand Mosque event in 1979 – in the novel "The Terrorist 20".

The repercussions of the September 11 events on Saudi society and traditional religious culture were clearly evident in the novel "Terrorist 20", as a violent political event, putting the religious and political system in the Kingdom under the weight of the international accusation of exporting terrorism and spreading extremist religious discourse, in a more in-depth manner. The novel exposed the extent to which the educational system in the Kingdom – as a policy – was an actual reason behind this setback, which made the term "terrorism" synonymous with Islam and Muslims. This novel was a reflection of reality from its social angle that was most closely related to the political factor, which remained complicit in the stereotypical religious discourse and its authority far from the circle of criticism and review, even though the novel did not directly discuss it.

In the general context, the symbolism of the political event in the novel itself depicts everything that can come to the worrisome Arab mind regarding the dreamy future, by drawing reality and its current transformations with honesty and complete transparency. The sequential events in the novel tell the symbolic meaning of the title in a very transparent way and with excessive clarity. It is an indication that draws features of deviation in meanings that will disappoint the reader at the end of the narrative when he discovers that everything does not devolve into what he imagined it would be. At the end of his novel, the author mentioned a group of confessions that reveal what the recipient reader would expect from a religiously strict person to another, a writer in a daily newspaper, who is not religiously strict: "...I will say that what I live now, even if it is not part of a description of what I have produced in the past..." (Thabet, 2011: 228). However, the extension of the narrative movement throughout the time of the novel and the expansion of its successive events, and while it gives an impression about the development of the characters and the growing movement of their psychological and intellectual transitions, it is reinforced by its preoccupation with the larger event "terrorism - the September 11 attacks". It depicts how the fates are predetermined by

fundamental divisions embodied by a conservative, closed-minded, rigid society consistent with past patterns without examining, reviewing or implementing the logic of the right to see things from the standpoint of keeping up; In such a way that society becomes a department over which the religious and political authority has tightened its grip, until it becomes a detention room. In the face of all this political concern that the event of terrorism creates, the authorities do not forget to look at a meeting between a man and a woman in a public place as a crime greater than any terrorism. There is no alienation or imprisonment that exceeds this feeling perched on the spirit of the event, as it reveals an unambiguous and realistic fact. The writer's feelings are conveyed to the reader with great awareness and caution, with anxiety and suspiciousness that any of this might continue and not change.

Returning to the novel, "Hind and the Military", the dream appears as a major event in the novel. The dream is not a symbolic carrier of the realistic dream and the narrative dream, it is the symbolism that bears the repercussions of the female subconscious that rejects all forms of oppression and slavery, where the corresponding image becomes the dream in exchange for the rejected reality: "In the dream, while she was in the market, a hidden bell rang, foretelling of imminent danger, so she ran towards a large basement while watching the women rushing to it... The women looked like black African women who worked as maids in the great houses of Riyadh, and who were all in one big prison; The women went out one after the other after the caller shouted their names... Except for Hind... She did not hear her name. The guard tells her that her name is not in his list of names, she feels terrified and frightened. A tall young man comes and asks the guard for Hind to be released on his responsibility, then she was awakened by her sister, Awatef, who woke her up from the dream" (Al-Bishr, 2013: 108-109).

In a long basement of narrative events, the reader comes upon the same matter that is displayed on the pages of the contemporary Saudi novel, religious thought, religiosity, extremism and terrorism. The dream is not all hopes, but most of it is haunted by the nightmares of memory which monitored reality as a theater of life that could not be escaped, even by dreaming. Hind tells the story of her brother Ibrahim since his childhood, and how his mother made him – with her patriarchal approach – a model with a tremendous ability to turn into everything negative, starting with his story with the neighbor's daughter during his teenage years, who was years older than him, and its effects that crushed his masculine identity, later, heading towards another transformation towards extremist religious thought that turned everything in his family's life into hell especially his sisters, and his

experience in Jihad in Afghanistan and then his return, and in subsequent events, Ibrahim will become a member of an extremist group. He begins to engage in terrorist activities in his country and homeland, until killing becomes his acceptable fate by everyone. The deviation that began as a small one and was depriving of the value of the human being, has ended in a grave and painful manner, degrading of the value of the human being. The death of some, no matter how close they are, may be a relief for all.

7. Conclusion

As far as the reservation shown by the contemporary Saudi novel towards politics may seem, a deep look at most of the works is sufficient to reveal the extent to which the political issue appears to be embedded in all the issues of the Saudi man – and the Arab man in general – so that it is not possible to separate the political from the religious, or from the social, intellectual or economic, and it is not even possible to separate it from sex, the most delicate and sensitive of issues. Nevertheless, it is consistent with its context, and closely related to reality, which makes it possible to say that the contemporary Saudi novel is a symbolic political novel par excellence. It is also a realistic and documentary novel par excellence. There are many works that require that each of them be devoted to a full study on this subject. This will undoubtedly be inspiring for the Saudi novel to transcend its antiquated stumbling block, and to move forward in a constructive and creative criticism of the political reality that contributes to evaluating reality and not to drowning in it with intellectual and political deviations which have so far contributed to the destruction of man. Contemporary Saudi novelist experiences have revealed a high awareness, a solid level of written and narrative performance, and an ambitious language looking forward to more freedom and emancipation with the voice of thought and the pen as the best weapon to confront extremism, and be the best medicine for it. The only thing that curbs violence and terrorism is directing people towards creativity and innovation and adding more beautiful and new things to people's lives. This is only one of many aspects of the great role played by literature in general, and the novel in particular.

8. References

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