

# The Central Identity in the Narrative Achievement of Mohsen Al-Ramli

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## Abstract

This research studies the central identity in the narrative achievement of the Iraqi novelist and storyteller (Mohsen al-Ramli) and how he employed his narrative works to reveal the central identity represented by (dictatorship authority) and its repressive methods that it practices to maintain its centrality by excluding, excluding and marginalizing the other. how to combat cultural identities; Because it is afraid of losing its authority and dominance, and thus allowing the identity of the least authority and influence to be able to rise, and perhaps cancel its centralization.

**Keywords:**Central identity and Mohsen Al-Ramli.

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## Introduction

The study of the central identity issue is a study of great importance. Because it is sensitive, as it is linked to a certain group with authority and the ability to impose its dominance and control over other groups that are less able and authority. The central identity is based on the exclusion, marginalization and absence of other identities that are less in authority and influence, by adopting a certain ideology, and following the worst methods of oppression, oppression and repression.

And (Mohsen al-Ramli) is one of the writers who employed the central identity issue in their narrative works, during the dictatorship period. The identity of the authority was the central identity that worked to make the identity of the other an introverted, closed, hidden, alienated from the world and not subject to the development and progress taking place in it.

In light of the methods of repression, repression, isolation and the absence of freedom, it is difficult or even impossible to preserve identity; Therefore, the loss of identity seems very clear under the dictatorial rule and the methods of its repressive authority that make the people its followers through its power, brutality and humiliation. Because she sees that if she imposed herself, she would have been able to destabilize her centrality.

## Central identity

Identities, in all their forms and types, have always maintained their characteristics and components through which they can prove themselves. Each identity tries to be distinguished and unique from other identities and seeks to be dominant and dominant over the other identities <sup>1</sup>.

The individual always tends to belong to the group, to achieve and strengthen and prove his identity, to protect it from the danger and domination of other, more powerful and stable identities; Because "belonging to a specific group implies the existence of other groups, meaning that certain group identity cannot exist without the presence of other identities. This fact confirms the importance of the boundaries between groups, especially those that are formed on the same basis (national, ethnic, religious, racial. ...etc.), the individual defines himself in a way that places him within the boundaries of a particular group. That is, the individual achieves and enhances himself and his own identity by belonging to a certain group whose opinions and ideas are consistent with the opinions and ideas of that group.

Proving and strengthening identity is only done at the expense of marginalizing and excluding other identities that have less power and influence. So, the central identity is the identity that imposes its control, hegemony, influence and authority, whether political, social, cultural or economic, by adopting a certain ideology, and this domination is imposed through mechanisms of exclusion, marginalization and absence against institutions, bodies or individuals who reject its authority. Thus, it has imposed its control over other identities, which in its view are hybrid. And since the centralities: "intellectual, ethnic and religious foci, engulfed and charged with tension, are formed by a pattern of narratives about the self and the other that is held around a specific plot" .<sup>2</sup>

The central identity works to make the identity of the other introverted and closed, and not subject to the development and progress taking place in the world. The other is absent or non-existent, from the point of view of central identities and in other Islam it is a basic element in the formation of the human, cultural and civilized self. There is no existence of the self except with the existence of the other. Identity, as seen by Abdul-Hussein Shaaban, is "not ready-made and finally given, but rather it carries elements, some of which are mobile and transformative at the individual and public level, which must be completed and completed always in an open framework with acceptance of the other"<sup>3</sup>.

That is, identity is formed in the presence of unstable elements based on openness and acceptance of the other. Under the methods of repression, isolation and repression, it is very difficult to preserve identity. We find the loss of identity evident in light of the previous regime's methods of repression, marginalization and fighting freedoms, and the authority at that time made the people its followers through its power, brutality and dominance, and the absence of any person or (identity) trying to break out of its regime or opposition, and as a result of these repressive methods a marginalized identity is generated. It lives on fragmentation, division, and the absence of a sense of belonging to a group. We find novels and stories (Mohsen al-Ramli) in which the central identity of the authoritarian ruler who imposed his dominance and oppression on the subjects emerges. This identity is characterized by the absence, exclusion, marginalization, and restriction of the other. Because it sees itself worthy of existence and survival.

The novel (The President's Gardens) addresses the problem of central identity under the rule of the former regime and focuses on the control and domination imposed by the ruler over the

people and how to get rid of eliminating everyone who tries to express an opinion contrary to the regime or everyone who tries to talk about freedom and democracy

The novelist depicts the injustice and persecution that Iraqi society suffered during the dictatorship period, as well as the corruption, brutality and arrogance of the ruler at that time. The central identity in the novel (*The President's Gardens*) is represented by the character of (Saddam Hussein), the head of the dictatorial regime in Iraq, who was imposing his power, control and hegemony on the people, while the musician Nabil represented the marginalized or absent (destitute) identity. "The chief began pulling the hook with joy. He caught a big fish that the soldiers had thrown a little while ago. He brought it closer to him until it was in front of his face. He looked at it, smiled in front of her eyes and turned around, so a general from his protection rushed to him, took it off the hook and threw it back into the water. He repeated that. Several times over some time Ibrahim did not know, then the chief turned and gestured with a movement of his head, and after a minute, a civilian, seventy or eighty-year-old carrying a lute, was brought to him, and they sat him in the back seat and began to play tremblingly.

Through the text, the central identity represented by the president who imposed his power and authority on the people becomes clear, as we find that as soon as he turns around, a general from his protection rushes to him to implement what he wants without speaking or asking him to do so. He imposes his dominance and dominance on everything, even animals, to frighten everyone around him and even those who hear him. With a nod from his head, they bring him the music, make him sit on the back chair, and start to play trembling, indicating that he has marginalized other identities and made his identity in the foreground, not being preceded by any other identity. This identity is a kind of power dogma, which represents "the ability and power over something, and the authority that a person has over others... and the combination of power, the authorities, which are the social bodies that exercise power, such as the political, educational, judicial, and other authorities" .<sup>4</sup>

The musician's trembling behind him indicates that he was able to impose his identity on the identity of the musician, and he was able to humiliate and degrade the cultural identity that he thought, if it imposed itself, would have been able to exclude his central identity; Therefore, he fought art and culture, as they call for freedom of thought, which if matured in society, would reject the methods practised by the dictatorship against them. "He is the famous musician Nabil, everyone knows him because they saw him playing behind all generations of singers on television since the royal era. They call him the professor and he is said to be the teacher of musicians. He looks older than he appears on television" .<sup>5</sup>

The above text is an indication of the musician's fame and the extent of his cultural identity, which the central identity sought to marginalize and disappear. Through the effectiveness of the authority represented by the authoritarian ruler and his dialectical behaviour, whose actions often fit the sadistic epithet or description that relishes the pain of others. "The musician was sweating because he was wearing a formal suit and tie. He shivered and yet he plays quiet melodies, mostly from folklore, but he quickly cuts off his

piece in the middle of it as soon as he sees the president's finger in front of him pointing in a circle in the air he means (others)..and so on." .<sup>6</sup>

Here the musician tried to preserve his identity by wearing the formal suit and tie and playing calm melodies, but here the shift in identity occurred by imposing his identity on the musician's identity, so the latter's identity turned into a marginalized identity and this explains it (sweating). He put his foot on the musician's knee while the lute was on the other knee, and signalled him to continue playing, then he would wipe the bottom of his shoe with the musician's white shirt, rubbing softly on his stomach, and after a while, he kicked the lute with his foot and it fell, the chief pulled the tie towards him until the musician bent.

Here it becomes clear how the president deals with the methods of humiliation and humiliation with the intellectual; Because culture "is the container that absorbs and embodies identity, and it expresses the feeling of belonging, as it is a combination of overlapping values and interacting with others as well, especially humanely, and with traditions and customs, which reflect the behaviour and lives of people".<sup>7</sup> The identity of a man of power is clear through his tightening of control over decision-making and his ability to marginalize the educated and confiscate his efforts. The authoritarian identity tries to humiliate other identities, whatever their form, to achieve its ambition to enhance the permanence of its existence. We deduce from what was reported that the arrogant regime wants to eliminate national belonging and the harmony between values and does not want the other to have an identity parallel to his own.

### **The music muttered:**

Everything is fine and well, sir, thanks to your generous patronage. May God protect you. May God protect you.

No, no, you seem unsatisfied. I heard that you talk about freedom and democracy when you get drunk in your private sessions.

- No, no: Never, sir, you are freedom, you are democracy, and you... He interrupted him, offering him the other cup with the other hand, and at the same time more forcefully pulling his tie and rubbing his sole on the musician's chest.

Here the musician relinquishes his identity, acquiesces to the central identity, and acknowledges—albeit not convinced—thanks to the patronage of authority.

The musician's cultural identity turned into alienation; The same musician was divided against itself and shifted from the internal call for freedom to submission to external conditions. After the musician was affected by frustration, disappointment, weakness of will and feeling of inferiority, the identity was just a metaphysical assumption <sup>8</sup>.

He stopped and pointed with his hand, and two people came and lifted the musician from his armpits because he could no longer stand by himself. They stopped him in front of the president on the edge of the stage with his back to the lake, so I fell on his knees, weeping and begging for words that did not form sentences. And the chief said to him:

Are you talking about freedom and democracy, Nabil?! And you are the one who gave you what you never dreamed of...

The musician tried to get up, but his strength was weak, so the two soldiers helped him and withdrew.

The musician started losing his ability to move due to the intensity of fear and terror that the president had planted in him, or perhaps losing his identity, which led to the loss of his ability to move and get up.<sup>9</sup>

**The president said to him:**

**Sing, duck, duck.**

The old musician began to sing the well-known children's song... The president asked him for other childish songs... The musician sings, spilling his tears, sweat, snot and terror, in a hoarse, stifled voice and the president laughing loudly.

Then he turns and they shoot him a pigeon behind the musician's head, and the president shoots it and then another and another, and he shoots and shoots, and the bullets pass by the ear of the musician who startles and the president laughs, ordering him to repeat the song Yabit.. and so on until he turned, so they re-launched the flocks of pigeons and the president sprays them with bullets, with Tova igniting the space Then he lowered the barrel of the gun from the top of the musician's head to him, and the rain of pouring bullets fell on him, which, due to his proximity, pushed his body back and dropped it into the water.

The novelist depicts the euphoria and comforts the dictator experiences by torturing the musician, seeing his tears and fear, and hearing his hoarse voice. The president practised all methods of intimidation and humiliation before he killed the musician, and this is all to prove his identity and its centrality, as he does not see the existence of identities other than his own.

The novelist depicts the struggle against the ruling authority of culture and art, and how it consecrates them to its interests and is under its authority and domination, and how it restricts freedoms and exercises dictatorship against everyone who tries to talk about freedom and democracy even if he is unconscious.

It also describes the methods of mockery, humiliation, and oppression exercised by the authority on those who oppose or criticize its regime.

It is an unjust authority that sees only its interests, fights humanity, kills people and corrupts the earth without regard for religious, moral or human values. The methods of coercion, marginalization, and exclusion are closely related to cognitive as well as cultural systems. These methods were evident in their presence in the Ramli texts, which constituted hegemony and a product of awareness by working on the dialectical dualism between the intellectual and the authority and working to demolish the centrality of the intellectual.

In the novel (*The Scattered Fetus*), the central identity is the identity of the ruling authority and the marginalized identity was represented by the character (Qasim bin Haj Ajil), who was executed in the village square where he lived. He fled the army because he did not believe in the ideas, methods and system of the ruling authority at the time.

"The police forces came chasing the fugitives, so Saadi quickly hid before they stormed the oak gate... While the arrested Qassem when they raided his house and found him in the drawing-room, preoccupied with his colours, and Hassiba called out with the force of her voice for help, which the whole village and the farmers of the nearby fields heard"<sup>10</sup>.

The novelist describes the fate of every person who opposes the ruling regime and its repressive methods. When (Qasim) fled from the army and refused to join it, he exercised his freedom under a regime that restricts and restricts freedoms and even eliminates them.

"They stopped Qassem in the middle of the square and expanded the circle of the crowd around him, murmurs of regret, or pain, or whispered a protest that could not be heard, or there is no power or strength except with God, or begging that all collide with a word that comes from the mouth of a policeman (a government decision).

They tied his feet standing, his hands behind his back with iron. His clothes are stained with colours... red... green... white and memories in the heads that surround him alive...

The officer director indicated to those with him to blindfold him, and the police platoon lined up in front of him according to the command to them with a blasphemous word, and with another, they bent their knees on the ground, and with another, they aimed the barrels of their guns at him ... The officer shouted (throw) ... So the bullets went out, and Qasim fell on the ground in the rain Majnun sifted his body with red holes that looked like anemones from a distance.

It is clear from this narrative passage that the course of this text revolves in the direction of a sign organized in the focus of the central identity that revolves around the issue of marginalization and exclusion, and the text indicates the power and oppression of the ruling authority and its overwhelming desire to humiliate and humiliate the human being to demonstrate its dominance and centrality.

It also indicates the absence of freedom of expression, even of regret or protests against the acts and mechanisms of torture practised by the authority against the people.

The novelist once again portrays the ugliness, injustice, and oppression of power against anyone who expresses a different opinion or rejects its oppressive and brutal methods against other identities.

In the novel (*Tamr Al Asaba*) the central identity is also represented by the identity of the authority, while the marginalized identity is represented by the (Al-Mutlaq) tribe whose surname was changed to (Al-Qashmar) due to the beating of one of its sons (Noah) to the nephew of the vice president's secretary.

"Before they threw one of us on the ground, they approached him to the captain to pull out of the pocket the new card. They had issued him... changing all of our nicknames from (Al-Mutlaq) to (Al-Qashmar) in the Iraqi vernacular that suggests belittling, disrespect and insult and characterizes whoever you call negligence or stupidity." <sup>11</sup>

In addition to the physical torture practised by the dictatorship, it practised moral torture by changing the tribe's surname and issuing an identity that bears the new nickname, which carries in its meaning insult and disdain for other identities that are trying to achieve themselves with a central identity that does not see the existence of others.

The most painful and bitter truth is that the ruling authority's function is to protect the homeland and preserve the dignity and security of its people. However, the reality here is completely different. The authority is the one that threatens the security of the citizen, degrades his dignity, kills his children and loots his resources in the name of patriotism <sup>12</sup>.

We extract from the previous texts the control of one group, which is (the authority) over other groups (the people), control over their actions and behaviours, and the robbery of their freedom, their will, and even their lives.

Iraq, as Adonis describes it: "Iraq is the sin of the father. The father who is embodied in the official. The father no longer sees anything but himself. He has appointed himself as an absolute father. And because of what he loves his alleged sons, he no longer sees them, a torn evil has torn them apart" <sup>13</sup>.

We deduce from the foregoing that the central identity in the novels of (Mohsen al-Ramli) exists in abundance, and it is the dominant identity that imposes its ideology on the people; Because of its repressive tendency, its denial and non-recognition of the other, its exclusion and marginalization, to achieve its centrality, domination and tyranny.

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