

# The Element of Time in Al-Shamsi's Novel *The Fading Bird* in light of Gerard Genette.

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## Abstract

This study is to examine an important topic in contemporary narrative theories, namely narrative time. The importance lies in the care and attention given to it by leading modernists and researchers in the narrative field, especially the interest in it from the ancients since the times of Plato and Aristotle, We see the most important studies presented in these fields are the studies of the formalists and structuralists who developed them to narrative research and enriched them and added important theories to them; then those theories and temporal paradoxes in novels; are paradoxes created by the violation of the times of discourse to the time of the story; represented by transitions from the present time to the past time, which is called retrospection; and the transition from the present time to the future time, which is called anticipation; each of them has its types and branches; as it branches into: Internal, external, unilateral, repetitive, partial, and complete, each of which serves the narrative plot and artistic form and contributes to the overall structural cohesion of the novel and story text.

**Keywords:** Narrative time; the fading bird; discourse in the tale; Gérard Genette; temporal paradox.

## عنصر الزمن في رواية طائر التلاشي للشمسي حسب رؤية

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### المخلص

الهدف في دراستنا صب الاهتمام على مبحث مهم من المباحث في النظريات السردية المعاصرة؛ الا وهو الزمن الروائي؛ وتكمن الأهمية في العناية والحظوة التي حصل عليها لدى كبار المحدثين والباحثين في المجال السردى لاسيما الاهتمام به من القدماء منذ عهود أفلاطون وأرسطو، إذ نرى أهم الدراسات المقدمة في هذه المجالات هي الدراسات لدى الشكلايين والبنويين والذين طوّروها إلى البحوث السردية وأثروها وأضافوا إليها نظريات هامة؛ ثم إن تلك النظريات والمفارقات الزمنية في الروايات؛ هي مفارقات احدثتها مخالفة أزمنة الخطاب لزمنة القصة؛ ممثلة بالانتقالات من الزمن الحاضر إلى الزمن الماضي والتي تسمى بالاسترجاع؛ والانتقال من زمن الحاضر إلى زمن المستقبل وهو ما يسمى بالاستباق؛ ولكل منهما الاسترجاع والاستباق أنواعه وفروعه؛ إذ يتفرع إلى: الداخلي؛ والخارجي؛ والإفرادي؛ والتكراري؛ والجزئي؛ والتام؛ ولكل منهما وظائف تخدم الحبكة السردية والشكل الفني كما تساهم في التماسك البنوي العام للنص الروائي والقصي. الكلمات المفتاحية: الزمن الروائي؛ طائر التلاشي؛ الخطاب في الحكاية؛ جرار جينيت، المفارقة الزمنية.

### Introduction

The contemporary and new novels have the potential to reach an advanced level of creativity that makes them celebrate their survival and continuity at the top. This is due to the system of new generations in criticism and analysis that rely on the theories of the most important philosophers and thinkers, the theories cast a shadow on the perceptions of taste and artistry of the recipient.

It is not a mere attribution of sensory expression, but a serious and painstaking search for quality and uniqueness in fiction writing, and this follow-up to the theories, their understanding and adoption is in turn an important factor in producing texts that are valid for reading, no matter how old they are, in which we observe a departure from monotony and commercialism in circulation, and carry

discourses, rhetorical clues and ideas that overlap between different explanations through an enormous amount of a criticism and analysis.

Here, we find among the narrative phenomena in the contemporary novel, which has become certain that it is based on a valid scientific theory such as the theory of Gerard Genet, the French critic, writer and philosopher, which was not arbitrary in general. There is a reference to an important element of that novel (*The Fading Bird*) to break a bitter and surprising reality through time and its impact and reflections on the course of events in the novel's folds. Al-Shamsi (٢٠١٨) asserts :

Eight years have passed and there is no solution. Crowds of people came out in front of the meeting platform to demand that other solutions be found, because the previous solutions are not working, and many of those crowds demanded the return of Takhakha, as they believe that he is the mastermind behind this issue: It's what he expected and we just have to bring him back. (P ٢٣).

There is also a reference to changing and breaking what is familiar and normal, into worlds that are conflicted and protesting against a certain reality.

All this leads to the surprise and bewilderment of the recipient and makes him eagerly explore the depths of the narrative text. The focus on the adoption of the theory creates a motive that is the primary and main reason for choosing a serious and conscious approach to studying the element of time in the contemporary novel, as Genette's theory is a stimulus for us to go far and deep in achieving the meaning of importance and uniqueness in relying on the theory.

Other reasons include the knowledge of these strange aspects of the novel, and the aesthetic aspects in narrating of the idea and theme of the novel, and the familiarity with the theories of the most important novelists, writers and thinkers who gave these topics different importance, made the study concerned with accessing other unexplored horizons in writing?

The question is, how does the element of time materialize in the contemporary novel, especially *The Fading Bird*?

The theoretical framework around the article is Gerard Genette's vision of the novel or story through the lens of time and the pivot of events in the formations and stages of producing the final formulas to complete the artistic image in the literary work, whether it is a prose text or a dramatic text .

"Monitoring the forms, types and manifestations of time ... in novels, as it is one of the most important elements that contribute to the formation of the general narrative structure of the novel"( Kharroubi, ٢٠١٩, p.٢٩).

We see as we read and analyze the novel that it is one of the modern novels based on realistic and miraculous intellectual aspects in which the element of time plays an important role in the synthesis and coordination of events in the narrative. Since the novel (a complex combination of time values) and according to this meaning we notice clearly that the times in the novel form a backbone in the course of events and their formation according to their entry into all the joints of the novel or storytelling. Because it is unreasonable and cannot be a novel devoid of its most important elements, which is the time or crisis in it or the course of events, the composition of situations and the order of events because time touches all its joints in form, theme and even content, and on this basis researchers and critics built their opinions on in-depth studies and produced sober theories interested in analysing novels, which cannot be dispensed with, and researchers in the field of story and novel and even linguistic study( Mandawal, ١٩٩٧, p. ٧٥). "There is no doubt that fiction analysis has benefited greatly from the linguistic study undertaken by the Structuralists since de Saussure, as well as the formalists, who focused their critical studies on the literary characteristics that make literature as an artistic system" (Yaqtin, ١٩٩٧, p. ٦)

(It can be noted here that most of the narrated fictional events are considered to be past time, if compared to the time of narration because of the prevalence of the verb "was" in most novels, so time has a prominent role in the construction of the fictional text and cannot stand or settle without it, which justifies the great care of time taken by the writers and critics of the novel (Dhaka, Temporal Paradoxes, article, p. ١).

It is said that "the step of definition is the first logical step in determining what is the essence"( Asfour,T,٥, ١٩٩٥,P.١٩).

## **The Conception of Time**

### **A. The Linguistic Meaning of Time**

According to Ibn Manzoor's Arabic tongue: "Time and time is a name for less and more time, and the plural is azman, azman, azmana, and azman. Azman is the name for the season of the year, the state of a man, and the like" (Ibn Manzoor, p. ٣٨٩).

### **Idiomatic Meaning of Time The B.**

#### **Time as a term**

Talking about time is considered to be of an unstable or stable nature, but it indicates movement through different times (astronomical, psychological, philosophical, linguistic). As man lives through different stations, past, present,

future, and the succession of night and day, and this indicates that time is moving. It is a complex concept that scientists have not been able to reach its truth yet, which arises from the rotation of the earth around its axis, and on a certain orbit linked to the sun, meaning that the earth runs at the same time around the sun on a certain orbit in addition to running around its axis. The first results in the four seasons, the second in successive days and nights, and the standard unit of time is the hour (Aydin, ١٩٩٧, p:١١). Time, for Forster, "is the idiomatic expression of the tale" (Khalil, ٢٠١٠, P. ٤١).

### **Genette and Narrative Time**

G rard Genette divided narrative time into three sections:

- a) The story (Histoire) is the narrative meaning or content.
- b) Recitation (Recit) is the signifier, the written, spoken, discourse or narrative text itself.
- c) Narration is the produced narrative act (Yaqtin, ١٩٩٧, p. ٤).

### **Story**

It is a tale or narrative material that contains a set of events, and these events are organized in a sequence governed by a temporal link according to a logical sequence that corresponds to what exists in the real world, and is raw material that has not entered the framework of artistic form (short story, novel, cinema...) (Kharoubi, p. ٣)

### **Discourse**

The discourse is nothing other than the way in which the narrative material is presented in the novel. The narrative material may be the same, but what changes is the discourse in its attempt to write and organize it. The discourse is the way in which the whole tale is constructed and gives it its final artistic form.

**Critics:** Narration is nothing more than the reconfiguration of story elements according to certain formats, systems and qualities that are subject to specific narrative techniques. Based on this division, the critics divided narrative time into two parts: Story Time and Discourse Time (Kharoubi, p. ٣).

This division did not satisfy Said ibn Yaqtin; he had suggested that the division was binary, as (Jarrar's) division can be referred to two sections, due to the deep links between storytelling and narration, as the story and discourse often share the same qualities. As for whether the novel falls within the miraculous titles or within the miraculous narrative, Todorov pointed out the importance of such a narrative or miraculous tales in that they fulfill social and literary functions.

### **Social Function**

Todorov confines the supernatural and the supernatural to the miraculous as a pretext to break the taboos of society and subvert its assumptions and laws that oppress man and paralyse his freedom. We understand this through this statement that Todorov believes that the miraculous is a technique or means used to break the taboos of society, and break all unjust laws that suppress human freedom and make him a prisoner to himself (Todorov, ١٩٩٣, p.١٤٥).

### **Literary Function**

The first function is the effect that the miraculous leaves on the recipient's psyche and how it will affect him in his words (( creates a pure effect on the reader, whether it is fear, terror or just curiosity, which is something that other genres or forms cannot generate, while the second function is the ability of the miraculous to narrate and maintain the tension that it develops throughout the text(Genette, ١٨٩٩-٩٧,p.٩٥).

### **Time in light of Jarrar's vision and monitoring the relationship between the time of the story and the time of the discourse.**

(Genette's attempt to be comprehensive where others have worked in a more incremental manner sometimes leads to the discovery of topics that have not been discussed much but which, upon investigation, appear to be extremely important, as he examines the relationship between story time or plot. He concludes that it can be categorized in terms of order (events occur in one order and are narrated in another), speed or duration (the story devotes space to a brief experience and then jumps over a number of years or summarizes them quickly ) ( Genette, ١٨٩٩,p.٢٥)

### **Arrangement**

What is a tale?

The tale is cut twice... there is the time of the thing narrated and the time of the tale (the time of the signifier and the time of the signified). This duality not only makes all the temporal twists - which come as a cliché in tales - possible. (Three years of the protagonist's life summarized in two sentences of a novel, or in a few shots of a cinematic composite, etc.) but more importantly, it invites us to note that one of the functions of the tale is to merge one time into another (Metz, ١٩٧٤, p. ١٨).

### **Details Temporal**

(The study of the chronological order of a story means comparing the order of events or time segments in the narrative discourse with the order of these same events or time segments in the story, because this story order is explicitly

indicated in the story or can be inferred from this or that indirect clue)  
(Genette, ١٨٩٩-٩٧, p. ٤٨) .

If we return to the research on the possibility of studying time in the novel *The Fading Bird* by the novelist (Al-Shamsi) and analyze and criticize it according to Genette's vision of the formations of narrative time or narrative discourse in the novel according to an academic vision through which we can give something fairly accurate about the technical aspects of the novel as a literary work with dimensions, purposes and connotations . The narrator went to and intend is to present prose texts that would give addition and pleasure to the reader or recipient and even the connoisseur of these literary works.

### **Extent and Capacity**

I have said that the novel's sequel (*In Search of Lost Time*) adopts in its major articulations a strict chronological organization; but this general tribal position does not deny the existence of a large number of detailed temporal anomalies, namely retrievals and quotations, but also other more complex or subtle forms, perhaps more characteristic of the prosthetic tale, and in any case more removed from both chronological (((realistic))) chronology and classical narrative temporality at the same time )(Ibid, p: ٥٩).

### **Flashback**

Genette says: Each flashback, in relation to the tale into which it is inserted, constitutes a second tale chronologically, subordinate to the first, in the kind of narrative structure we have encountered since the analysis, which we have already tried, of a very short excerpt from Jean Santoy's book, which we shall henceforth call ((the first tale)) On the temporal level of the tale against which a paradox is identified as such, and of course the combinations could not be more complex - as we have already ascertained. Thus a paradox can appear as a first tale in relation to another paradox that bears it(Ibid,p. ٦١) .

### **Anticipation**

Prospect, or temporal anticipation, is clearly less frequent than the antithetical enhancer, at least in the Western narrative tradition; yet the three great ancient epics (*The Iliad*, *The Oise*, *The Iliad*) all begin with a kind of prospect outline that to some extent supports the rule that Tzvetan Todorov applies to Homeric narrative: the 'plot of destiny' (Ibid, p. ٧٧ )

As Genette argues in *The Discourse of the Tale*, he aspires to derive the general from the particular and to build a theory based on a rigorous typological analysis of the novel( *In Search of Lost Time*) (Genette, ١٨٩٩/٩٧, ١٩٩٧, p. ١٧). Al-Shamsi

argues" Now death is real and meaningful. .... We used to protect ourselves from it by any means, even sacrificing our most precious things so that it would not pass us by, and we used to call it by the ugliest names"(P. ٤٤).

Analysis does not mean going from the general to the specific, but from the specific to the general, that is, from the unique object that is the novel (In Search of Lost Time) to its more familiar elements, such as commonly used and commonly circulated improvers and methods. and then I have to admit that if I look for the specific, I find the universal, and if I want to make theory in the service of criticism, I make criticism in the service of theory, in an attempt to unravel the growing confusion of the terminology of the narrative tale and how to distinguish it from the content of the story by making the discourse of the story. And the narrative discourse of the novel, Genette aims to reach the actions of the tales and identify their themes and the nature of the relationship to production in modernist contents, in order to illuminate these relationships as Genette added about his arrangement in his arguments: Time (order, duration, frequency), Form and Voice (Ibid, p. ١٨).

We can clearly see that Genette is pushing all the possibilities beyond the existing in narratives, as it is quite natural that he can build his theory and at the same time study the novel, make suggestions and analyze it according to certain programs.

### **Anachronisms**

The first set of microanalyses, examples of complex temporal anachronisms, second-order anticipations in a passage from (Sodom and Gomorrah) anticipations and retrievals on anticipations and vice versa anticipations on retrievals and such second- or third-order effects are frequent in the novel(Ibid,p.٨٧).

Another consequence of the double structure is that a first anachronism can - and necessarily does - overturn the second anachronism and the order of events in the text, so the retrospective mode leads to the conclusion that anticipation in the story's time can refer to a precedent that the tale has already covered: When the narrator compares the deprived anxiety with the anxiety he himself will feel(Ibid,p.٩).

### **Duration**

#### **Synchronisms**

Duration is where these difficulties are most acutely felt because the facts of order, or frequency, can be transferred harmlessly from the temporal plane of the story to the spatial plane of the text: To say that event (A) comes after event (B) in the compositional organization of a narrative text, or that an event (C) is narrated

twice, is a statement of two cases with a clear meaning. They are clearly comparable to other assertions, such as that event (A) precedes event (B) in the time of the story or that event (C) occurs only once, so the contrast here between the two levels is legitimate and appropriate. On the other hand, comparing the duration of a tale to the duration of the story it tells is a more difficult exercise (Ibid: ١٠٢).

(Takhakha shouted at them!!!)

I am afraid for you! You will fade away like this bird, stop eating it, go to fish, wild animals and other birds, this bird has made each one of you numb, unable to do anything, or any work that involves effort, you have become lazy, you are content to rely on something ready-made ..... It was once said: If someone wants to poison his enemy, he puts it in a food that his enemy likes. ....) (Alshamsi, ٢٠١٨, p. ١١)

The author tries to transfer us to some obstacles that human being may encounter during their life. He reminds of the hard work that man should do to have some kind of continuity in the decent life "Don't sweat it... We want food to enter our stomachs effortlessly, maybe one day we won't be able to raise our hands and feed ourselves"(Alshamsi, ٢٠١٨, p. ٦٥).

The people of the village in which he lived (Takhakha) warned about it and referred to it, this anticipation that Genette referred to in his theory, the narrator can make it into a temporal context through which he directs the recipient to follow and wait for the results of what he was warned about. In this case, the case before us was diagnosed in Genette's vision to fill the gaps that may occur in the narrative text or rather, the situations and events of the entire novel are based on what is to come', so the origin of the novel is an anticipation or temporal anticipation of what is coming from the danger of the fading of the village where the alarm bells sounded (Takhakha).

### **Temporal Paradoxes in *The Fading Bird***

(( So we decided: Takhakha will be exiled to the island of (Khanawatu), but his wife and son will remain on our island and under our protection)).

((We have already made agreements with the ruler of that island to exile anyone who violates our laws))(Ibid,p. ٣٨).

### **Flashbacks in - *The Fading Bird***

(He remembers! He said something that has not been written and included in communication archives, he was looking for his memory, at one of the temples founded by a wounded god, who was not helped by his family and was not

worshipped, his memory was written on a plank of wood and thrown into the sea, the sand hid the truth, the sea was not spared from the charge, the eyes of the people closed on it and the ears are deaf, or do not want to hear).

(Alshamsi, p.٨٩)

Complementary flashbacks, the writer must use techniques and tricks in writing that help him break the monologue, and one of the first techniques of writing a melodramatic text is the flashback mechanism by employing the three pronouns. The first person pronoun is the dominant pronoun in monodrama because it is through it that the character reveals his or her inner secrets. And the second person pronoun is the one that controls the event or narrative, the second person pronoun is used by the writer when employing the summoning character because it is a hypothetical character. While the third person pronoun is used by the writer to provide an overhead area to look at the past with events and characters when the character talks about people in the past and the diversity in dialogue levels. Between monologue, soliloquy and aside, it achieves a departure from the traditional framework of the narrative.

(( The first judge said: How do you prove it, give us proof or evidence!?

Takakha answered:

"The evidence is the bird itself, for if you observe its life stage, you will see it clearly, but you just eat and don't think and don't follow it either.

The first judge looked at Takakha and said:

"You know, and everyone here knows, that this bird, through which our ancestors discovered this island on which we now live, as they continued its migration from one island to another, until it settled on this island, and our ancestors settled with it, was non-domestic" (Ibid, p.٣٤).

We see the diversity of the temporal rhythm of the narrative in the novel - *The Fading Bird* - and the dramatic scenes to prevent the occurrence of a dramatic gap, and to achieve excitement in the narrative text, Al-Shamsi resorted to a lot of dialogues that break the character of monotony and boredom for the reader, so we see many dialogues in the novel that call the attention of the recipient and make him tight to complete the reading, The reciprocal movement of time between the present and the past and the varied use of pronouns between the past, present and future make the narrative text have a high spirit and mastery that takes into account these temporal paradoxes on its shoulders, and these paradoxes may include second or third degree anticipations according to the mechanism and type of narrative text that the writer calls for.

Another temporal retrospective with temporal anticipation (We are today on our island of Tougaloo, in the trial of a person who has brought shame to us and to our precious island and its sacred name, which came from the name of that dear bird, by accusing our bird that we feed on and make medicines and remedies from its feathers and head bones.

He then asked the accused :

Why do you accuse our bird? ..... Answer!

Takhakha raised his rope-bound hands and replied:

I do not accuse him, I warn you about him, the bird is fading little by little, and he may pass it on to us )) (Alshamsi, ٢٠١٨, p. ٣٣)

### Frequency

#### Uniqueness / Recurrence

Narrative frequency, the relations of repetition between tale and story, has been little studied so far, yet it is a fundamental manifestation of narrative temporality, ... An event is not only capable of occurring, it can also occur again, or be repeated: The sun rises every day. Of course, the coincidence of these multiple occurrences is questionable

The sun that rises every morning is not the same from day to day, nor is the quarter to nine train from Geneva to Paris.....

Here we will call {identical events} or {single event repetition} to a series of several similar events perceived in terms of their similarity alone (Genette, ١٨٩٩/٩٧, p. ١٣٠).

In the next section of the novel, AlShamsi narrates "They fade away little by little, as the years go by, but by a beautiful coincidence: They will fade together, maybe they are of equal age and height, so they will fade together"(P. ١١٥) . Al-Shamsi again elaborates the situation by " The ruler and the first and second judge began to fade, their clothes looked loose on them, and people looked at them longingly as they walked together in the squares and markets"(p. ٣١). He points out to the ups and downs of life. There is nothing constant. Everything is subjected to the change.

"The ruler placed a strict guard on his house and the houses of the judges, and guards walked behind them when they travelled in the squares, markets, temples and other places"( AL-Shamsi, ٢٠١٨, p. ٤٣ ).

"They are fading little by little, as the years go by, but by a beautiful coincidence: They will fade together, maybe they are of equal age and height, so they fade together"( AL-Shamsi, ٢٠١٨, p. ٥٣ ).

We clearly see the overlap of two times with each other and in the spirit of the writer, we discover the time embedded in the internal flashback in the origin of fading, which is a time or age that is customary among the members of the village to reach a certain age as they watch their bodies getting smaller and smaller. Here we see with a certain focus that the origin of fading is temporal and not literally defined, but it expresses a period of time for a person to be atrophied and small, so that they are atrophied and small.

### **Conclusion**

We notice that the narrative content has nothing to do with the author. As he is telling the story of a past situation in all its forms, and he - the author - has not made a place for himself, unlike previous traditions of telling tales in a single form and content. We find in modern novels a set of digressions, paradoxes and anticipations that can restore some descriptive obstacles in time foci attracting some types of news or complementary circumstances. Provided that the novel is devoid of the element of suspense and filling gaps that give the text a set of considerations that have their meaning on the reality, with relative weights that resonate between the folds of the narrative text.

We also note that the novel is able to include the traditional narrative movements with all their titles, with a deep and effective rhythmic pattern. It gives a special narrative time and a tone with a distinctive rhythm, which we can find in the narrative text or a particular passage in which many temporal techniques appear simultaneously, such as temporal repetition, temporal anticipation, time duration and flashbacks. So it contains them all in all their forms, the diversity in the levels of dialogue. Between monologue, side dialogues, it achieves a departure from the traditional framework of the narrative, as the ambiguity and excitement in the narrative text and the absence of some events from the recipient allows him to create the mechanism of his imagination to complete the lack and to straighten the narrative path in his mind, and to prevent this from happening. The narrator must diversify the narrative mechanism, avoiding prolongation to break the state of monotony. He employs pronouns and varies them between the past, present and future, conciseness by time transition and activating the technique of time. As the narrator must use techniques and tricks in writing that help him break the monophonic voice, when the character speaks about people in the past in the external voice.

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