

Postmodern Manifestations Of Alienation Patterns In Iraqi Women's Novel Religious Alienation As A Model

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Abstract

The research addresses the phenomenon of religious alienation in the Iraqi women's narrative and the postmodernist manifestations of such alienation, as alienation is a common phenomenon in contemporary literature because the phenomenon of alienation has prevailed in individuals and communities and has spread rapidly. Thus, this is reflected in the literary works of women's fiction, and religious alienation is evident in the fiction texts and is represented for several reasons; Religious alienation, for example, was the result of separation and displacement from the land, which caused the loss of faith in Allah's self as well as religious alienation, which was represented in the moral decay of the fictional characters resulting from doubting religion and ideological matters. The research also examined the overlap and integration of alienation types within the novel's texts, such as emotional alienation, which sometimes leads to religious alienation, as well as social alienation, which in turn may lead to religious alienation.

Keywords: Religious alienation- Alienation and postmodernism- Postmodern manifestations in alienation patterns- Religious alienation in the Iraqi women's novel.

Introduction

The concept of postmodernism is one of the thorny and complex modern concepts that preoccupied critics and scholars. Postmodernism has been manifested in literary and fiction works, including women's novels because women's writing has adopted visions and ideas that are similar to postmodernist ideas and orientations, the merger between the feminist movement and postmodernism is evident, thus, this leads us to study and track the post-modern pillars of the alienation of characters in female fiction writing and to monitor their manifestations, the appearance of which was evident in certain types of alienation, such as the religious alienation addressed in the research, which included the study of thirteen narrative novels tracking religious alienation and revealing its effects and disadvantages embodied in the characters, and monitoring its various manifestations that emerged in the narrative texts.

Religious alienation

Religious alienation is evident in many literary texts, especially in women's texts, "Religious alienation has been mentioned in all religions as separation or estrangement from God"¹ Human beings are ideologically alienated, and dysfunctional and their thoughts and principles regarding God and religion of any kind fall apart, and we find that religious alienation is divided into two types of alienation²:

First: A tendency to alienate from religion, in the sense of rejecting the coercive religious institution, and deviating from it, especially in its attempt to resist change. Such a trend is reflected in some intellectuals in the modern era.

¹ Studies in the Psychology of Alienation, Dr. Abdul Latif Muhammad Khalifa, Gharib House for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, Cairo, 2003, 101.

² Alienation in Arab Culture: Human Labyrinths between Dream and Reality, Halim Barakat, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, 1, 125, 2006.

Second: Alienation in religion, meaning that a believer who is strict in his faith attributes his intrinsic forces to external forces and surrenders his destiny to them.

The religious expatriate suffers from separation from the divine self, and separation from society, which may be religiously strict, or on the contrary, may be tainted by dissolution, chaos, and ideological collapse. All of this is a post-modern milestone and its foundations, which can be found and reflected in novelistic texts and women's fiction texts in particular. Alienation is a religious alienation in which post-modernist milestones are evident and highlighted, and we have observed it in many novelists' writings who have held the banner of expression and personification of these monuments, which fit and correspond to their tendencies and ideas. Among several novels, we find religious alienation prominent, in the novel (*Blind Birds*), which talks about the suffering of the Armenians and their forced displacement, the texts of the novel, we find the saying of one of its characters from the Armenian women: ((If our husbands and men were not cowards, they would defend themselves and us, our husbands, our children and our God, all of them are unable to save us)¹). God is unable to rid them of a suggestive reference to his impaired ability: any alienation of religion and belief is even more so; Alienation was the inevitable result of a sense of oppression, ascendancy, and forced submission to the authorities, which results in a sense of humiliation and the absence of divine conscience, and even doubts about the fact that this God exists. We find that one of the objections to such texts and the like is the audacity to speak about the Divine Essence and the profanity of the word, even if we take into account the viewpoint that says that this is an embodiment of the reality of the situation and an expression of what may befall the human soul in a state of oppression and oppression. The expression of all of this can come politely in addressing God and expressing the loss of His sufficiency in other ways.

Also, by moving to other texts of alienation in which the foundations of postmodernity are

evident, the novel (*The World of Lonely Women*) emerges, as the heroine Mona speaks: (The next evening he came home completely drunk, and when my grandmother was preparing supper, he came to my room, caught me and whispered in a trembling voice, Come on... I looked at the garden in confusion and saw the darkness of the Sidr tree).

-to where?

-To me...Come...I'm almost mad...Who can resist this beauty?

I pushed him away from me and he grabbed me tightly and drew his face close to me, the smell of wine coming from his mouth. I shouted, "Let me... get away from me."

He said: I let you go and I caught you?...you are crazy, stupid or cunning...don't you understand?

))². Here comes the disclosure of the suspicious and the hidden and the exposure of the facts. The text embodies the alienation that Mona experienced as she describes the blatant scene of her uncle's harassment. What feeling can leave the wound and scar of alienation more than incest? This is on the one hand, on the other hand, we find the lack of religious values and commitment to the commands and prohibitions of God Almighty. We find that the animal soul transcends all limits, a soul that prefers its lusts, and gasps behind it, striking any religious, moral, or social consideration off the wall. When the desires of the soul exist, I and after me the flood! This blatant act embodied religious alienation in its harshest and most horrific form. We can also glimpse the meaning of alienation in the words of (Mona): (I saw the darkness of the Sidr tree), this blessed tree in which the people of Paradise seek shade, whose remembrance and vision will be light and rejoicing, its vision has turned into darkness and nothing else. Perhaps with this expression and the reversal of the meaning, it refers to the connotation of alienation that transforms the feeling towards the uncle from being a shadow, safety, and support, to being represented by darkness, shock, and disgust. If the female is not safe from her uncle, then it is also possible that she will not be safe from her brother, and not

¹ *Blind Birds* Novel, Laila Kasrani, Mediterranean Publications, Italy, 1, 2016, 76.

² *The World of Lonely Women* Novel, Latifa Al-Dulaimi, Dar Al-Mada for Culture and Publishing, Beirut, 1, 2013, 21.

from her father, so is every male molested until proven otherwise?!

As for the novel (*The Garden of Life*), the religious alienation in its texts came from another kind. In one of its texts, Suzanne, one of the novel's characters, says:

((- I want to turn into a man ...

-what?

- I want... to... turn... into a man... Is that clear?

- I feel like a man ... I mean I tend to women ... as it happens to men¹). The religious alienation becomes clear in the personality of (Susan) during her conversation with a doctor from her acquaintance and expresses her desire to convert to the opposite sex. The fact that her tendency is contrary to human instinct, in this text, which is distinguished by the alienation of religious values and principles, is a text that embodies a time when talking about changing sex became as easy as talking about changing clothes! Here, the alienation of time, with its prevalent extraneous thoughts and actions contrary to human nature, is mixed with the alienation of religion, which has become a marginal thing in the lives of some people. We notice in the text a repetition of the sentence (I want to turn into a man) as if it were an increase in the significance of the depth of alienation and the extent of its impact on the personality.

This religious alienation suffered by Susan was the result of her feeling of emotional alienation and her desire to find a suitable person for her who would rescue her from the darkness of loneliness that she was suffering from. When she was unable to reach her goal, she fabricated the idea of inclination toward girls of her gender and turned her into a man as a way to get rid of her loneliness, this ease in dealing with matters in forbidden ways, shows it as a natural act that is not tainted by anything but a little rejection that may come from closed-minded people coming from the clutches of the first ignorance! As alienation in religion has become a matter that is marketed as a requirement of progress, culture, and openness of thought to other cultures, there is no harm in it.

The novel (*Sahdutha*) shows us another scene of religious alienation, and (the heroine) narrates

the talk of the midwife. ((The midwife reassured one of the students after she finished her abortion, "Don't be afraid, most of my clients are from Al-Qaqa'a school. Today the girl comes for an abortion and the next day she goes back to school. The girl gets pregnant, miscarries, then sews, and thus marries a virgin. You girls are all virgins)². Religious alienation is rampant throughout the text by talking about the abortion of single female students in schools, and the narration comes suggestively, as if it is almost normal, and one of the suggestive phrases that increase the intensity of the presence of religious alienation is the saying of the midwife: (Most of my clients are from Al-Qaqa'a School). Describing pregnant female students as clients as if they go to the midwife as easily as they go to the beauty salon or clothing store, increases the sense of religious alienation in the text, and what increases the alienation signification also is her saying: (Today the girl comes for an abortion and the next day she goes back to school). Pregnancy of female students without marriage is easy to get rid of; Abortion is the best solution, and then work the next day as if it were a daily routine, putting religion and its teachings and prohibitions on the sidelines.

In a second text, the heroine talks about her grandmother: "She did not like my colleague Faten, the girl who became pregnant before she got married. She would come to visit me sometimes and my grandmother would ask me about her. Of course, I did not tell her that she had conceived from a blind young man who had been handicapped in the war, and she did not want to abort the fetus because her boyfriend said that abortion is forbidden.³" The texts continue to reveal the religious alienation of the characters of the novel, so the text comes with a kind of religious alienation similar to the previous one, as the heroine talks about the pregnancy of her friend out of wedlock, this pregnancy that her boyfriend refused to abort; because it is forbidden! What religious alienation is this that we see?! We note here what the novelist wants to convey from ideas related to the duality of beliefs, analysis, and

¹ Garden of Life Novel, Latifa Al Dulaimi, Arab Writers Union Publications, Damascus, 2003, 75-76.

² Sahdoha Novel, Laila Kasrani, Al-Ghawon Publications, Beirut, Edition 1, 2011, 8.

³ Sahdutha novel, 40.

prohibition according to mood and whims. Relationships without marriage are something that is neither harmful nor forbidden, as for abortion, it is forbidden, God forbid! It is taken from these texts to convey the bad and obscene image of women, as schools have become a place for abortion, and religion is falling out of mind. Is this the image we want to represent women, especially since these texts are written in the pens of women who bear the banner of defending women's rights?

Talking about another novel, we find the novel (Daaboul) and on the lips of (Ali) one of its characters, religious alienation becomes clear, as he talks about what happened to his son ((They want us to be hard stones that do not perceive, feel or think?! Today they beat the young Yusuf severely in Al-Kadhim because they thought he was a Christian because of his blonde hair and the whiteness of his skin and the short pants that this five-year-old wears))¹. The text shows rebellion and revolution against the ossified thought that does not accept other ideas, religions, or sects. This rebellion that emerged and dominated in postmodern philosophy, the rebellion in the text represented the religious alienation of the group that harmed Ali and his son, a group alienated from true religion in its sublime meanings, we have many estranged people from religion in our time, a religion in which there is no compulsion, a religion that does not accept for its adherents the beating of a Christian child because he is a Christian, nor a Jew because he is a Jew, a religion that is innocent of this alienation. One of the laughable and wailing ironies is that the text deals with the phenomenon of harassment and beating of a child, due to the difference in religion in a period of time, but in later times, it has replaced the nuisance and beating, killing and bloodshed, so the brother kills his brother because of his religion and belief, he was killed according to religion, identity and affiliation. One of the drawbacks to this text is the regional specification of that incident, which is of no use except to provoke feelings, and move the crowds towards each other. If such incidents had

occurred, then they were in many regions, to the north and south, east and west, and were not exclusive to one region without another. Thus, the treatment of a phenomenon and its presentation to the public should not be with this direct identification that affects one group without another, and one society without another.

Also, in another text from the same narration, Daaboul says: ((I did not move from my place, and I remained silent. My seat and refusal to move and participate in Ali's funeral was a protest against death and a rejection of it. I will not allow him to dominate me, no, I will not see Ali washing and burying the earth according to a law he never believed in, I will not participate in his burial according to a belief that he had rejected)². The narration describes the state of (Daaboul) after the death of his owner and the shock that befell him, a shock marred by religious alienation for him and his owner. There is no belief in religion, sect, beliefs, and rituals, and the extravagance of alienation was present. Even in the face of death and what the soul suffers from facing this reality that brings the human soul closer to its Creator, rebellion and disregard for religion continue.

This is often reflected in novelistic texts so that the underestimation of religion and tolerance is present, and if this was a reality we want to address, the novelist in the text must denounce these acts as well, in one way or another, not to present to the readers that they are natural details as part of the parts of the narrative text that have no problem.

As for (Razaqi), the religious alienation in the novel was evident in the narrator's description (of Abu Zahid), saying: ((He returned his old title and the origins of which he had been acquitted for many years, and changed the color of his turban according to the current fashion)³. We see the expatriate meanings of the text, which describes Abu Zahid's status as a figure who represents several models of society that traded religion, colored in different colors depending on the fashion of the times and what it requires, is a turban and a globe? Or a T-shirt

¹ Daaboul's novel, Amal Porter, Dar Fadaat for Publishing, Distribution and Printing, Amman, Edition 1, 2009, 79.

² Daaboul, 119-120.

³ Razeki's novel, Shamm Bayram, Al-Mada for Media, Culture and Arts, Baghdad, 2016, 117.

and pants? If it is a turban, it is also by fondness, it may be black or white, suited to the public and private interest.

In the novel (*Al-Tashhi*) we find religious alienation in its ugliest form in describing the character of (Mohanned) and his actions on the lips of his colleague (Youssef) (It stuck to the wall of the public bathroom that we used to go to a few times a month and Muhannad was stalking us, oh, I'm not the only one who was doing such and such to him, every time I saw him I would say that he had a concept of pleasure that was not linked to pleasure or physical attraction. Everything he does in the dark, he doesn't scream and doesn't say a word to me.).¹

The narration reveals the secrets of Muhannad's bisexual personality, and what his colleagues were suffering from his immorality, his religious alienation reached the infringement of the instinct with which God Almighty created man, so he violated with his actions the limits of religion and its requirements and prohibitions, and alienated from its sublime meanings, so falling into the ban, and the meanness of the soul was above every religious, moral, or even social consideration.

In the novel (*The Silence When It Plays*), we find the character (Najwa) appearing in a dialogue with the soul in an internal monologue ((If God loves us, she said to herself... If God, in His vast wisdom, saved us from war... and did not let my father escape from his tank, no one knows where? If God wanted mercy for us, he would not have decreed all this misery for us, and what would the war have ignited? And when hunger harvested the green and the dry?)²). The hadith of the soul explains the alienation of (Najwa) the girl of the night who sold herself, and here she is justifying for herself what she did. If God Almighty loved her, she would not have suffered what she suffered, and misery would not have been written on her, this religious alienation that came because of suffering and pain. So the negative reaction came with rebellion and objection to the will of

the Creator, even though even a believing soul who is not in disobedience can address these questions in moments of weakness and self-destruction in the self-talk of the soul, and wonder about the absence of the divine presence. What is the wisdom of these evils that exist? If we were far from these thoughts and mistakes, we would not be human and we would be the angels of the Most Merciful on earth.

We go to the novel (*Ryam and Kafa*) to discern the presence of alienation, so we monitor a text on the tongue of the heroine (Ryam) ((What is this polluted world? Have we reached a time when standards have been lost to this extent between what is permissible and what is forbidden? The uncle molests his niece and the sister's husband lusts after his wife's sister?)³). The text refers to forbidden relationships, as the heroine lived through the suffering of her sister, who was molested by her uncle, and her suffering from the harassment of her sister's husband, which she describes as ((He scanned my body with voracious eyes as if he were stripping me. He did not delay in revealing his sordid insides. He said: Why do you imprison yourself so far from the pleasures of life, don't you think of a man? I was confused for a moment, then my eyes sank into his eyes to see the reality of the male whose forbidden scent I began to smell, and I said: What do you mean, my sister's husband? I always remind him that he is my sister's husband, and he whispered: "I think of you a lot, how you are spending the night"⁴?) We notice the meanings of religious alienation throughout the text, which describes the harassment of the sister's husband, this heinous act that violates the prohibitions of God Almighty! Where does one go when one loses confidence in the closest? What is this animalistic feeling that brings the uncle closer to his niece and the brother-in-law to his sister-in-law? As the text shows us, alienation emerges and becomes clear, as the soul begged to infringe on the values and teachings of religion, and to infringe on honor that must be preserved!

¹ The Novel of Desire, Alia Mamdouh, Dar Al-Adab, Beirut, Edition 1, 2007, 139

² Silence While Playing, Khawla Al-Roumi, 2003, 68.

³ Riam and Kafa's novel, Hadiya Hussein, The Arab Institute for Studies and Publishing, Beirut, Edition 1, 2014, 110.

⁴ Riam and Kafa, 111

Everything may be diminished and canceled because of the meanness of the soul.

Religious alienation is also evident in the novel (Mina) in a dialogue between (Jabbar) and (Jeddah):

((I remember once when I asked my grandfather, and I accompanied him to the mosque to perform the prayer, and he was a good man...))

-goodbye

- What's up?

- What do we do, grandfather, if there is no God, no heaven, no fire???

- You are bad manners.

His stick had rested on my head, with a stroke after which I learned not to ask, nor inquire, nor think.¹) The features of postmodernism emerge from the absurdity of existence and skepticism, and the religious alienation manifested in it, expressed by (Jabbar), who received no answer to his question except beatings and reprimands, so his religion became inherited, not from conviction, inquiry, and questions. This made his feeling of religious alienation intensify as if religion imposed on him not thinking and questioning, but blind submission, the text addresses the lack of religious culture and the culture of dialogue and persuasion among the parents, and this results from their receiving this religion through heredity as well, so they perform duties of obedience without understanding, knowledge or conviction.

Consequently, when a question arises from such religious existential questions, they confront it with rebuke, which leads their children to live in a state of religious alienation. From what we notice in the text, these ideas were inserted by the writer, so how can a small child question the hypothesis of the absence of heaven and hell?

This goes beyond the limits of childish or even post-childish thinking. The most that Jabbar could ask: Who is God? Where is God? They are thoughts like trying to poison with honey that expresses the thoughts of the writer herself or thoughts of others that she wanted to spread, but they are certainly not (Jabbar) thoughts.

Jabbar talks again about his religious alienation through his mother and says:

((Perhaps that instinctive intuition present in the mother's soul, told her that her son was just as devouring religion, he is vomiting it²) Jabbar senses his mother's thoughts and condition after the religious alienation he is experiencing and the coup that shook his entity and his beliefs, which he expressed in "is an indication of the alienation and separation he lives in. A religion that is saturated with its teachings and principles does not have the right to question or contemplate this religion that it embraces, which has fallen into disrepair in one painful experience or another.

We have to stand here and meditate and ask: What is causing our children and youth to vomit their religion and shun it with their bodies and thoughts? Is it the defect in the religious system that portrayed religion and represented it with strictness, docility, and a lack of thinking and forethought? Or is the defect in the family system that imposes religion on its children, and prohibits them from questions and discussions that may increase their awareness and deepen their sense of religious ideological affiliation, and increase their stability and strength of faith instead of living in a state of loss and alienation? Or is it the entire societal system and structure that deepened and rooted this religious alienation as it employed religion to the detriment of customs and traditions? Tradition and obsolete societal customs are outmoded and religion is used to establish its rules through halal and haram. So society takes what is permissible or forbidden according to whims and customs, and thus they have become one of the biggest causes that contributed to distorting religion and alienating it, and from its original, sublime principles that are far from customs, traditions, and obsolete societal rituals that forbid what God has permitted.

Religious alienation is embodied in the novel (The Brothers of Muhammad) in the talk of (Sheikh Muhammad) with (the heroine) about the incident of the kidnapping of the two children (Abbas) and (Sufyan): (They slept in a dark and damp place, blindfolded..They ate nothing but dirty, unwashed lettuce..The water was murky in color..and they were polluted with mud when they moved from their place.)

¹ Mina's novel, Zainab Saleh Al-Rikabi, Dar Al-Hikma, London, Edition 1, 2017, 94.

² Mina's novel, 146.

- -How did this happen? What did this gang ask for?
- He is supposed to kill Abbas if the kidnapper is Sunni, and Sufyan if the kidnapper is Shiite.”¹

The text shows the state of religious alienation that the Iraqi people suffered during the years of occupation, and the sedition and sectarian tension that it caused in society. Muslims are no longer Muslims, but rather Shiites and Sunnis! Any religious alienation that causes a person to kill his fellow human being, because of a name he considers affiliated with this or that party, or because of a sect belonging to the same religion. However, this difference now allows killing and bloodshed, and victory for the sect and religion, and God and the Messenger! This is in addition to killing because of religious differences as if it has become a foregone conclusion, and the problem lies in the fighting of sects only! With this, the Iraqi society got lost in a whirlpool of religious alienation that came as a result of the disintegration of society and the dissolution of the bonds of brotherhood and human love that were prevalent.

The novel (Zainab, Mary, and Yasmine) reveals the winds of religious alienation through the dialogue between the two friends (Tabarak) and (Yasmine): (Tabarak was joking with me and said that veiled women after a thousand years will evolve according to the theory of evolution and become veiled by creation, meaning by birth. Like deer with horns that look like trees, or like green locusts with skins that look like branches and this is what will happen, believe me, Jasmine)²).

The religious alienation and the tone of irony and mockery hint at an important and basic corner of the pillars that God Almighty recommended to Muslim women, the devaluation and value of the veil, and the description of those who wear it as primitive and reactionary, it is a religious alienation that makes one mock God's commands and

teachings, we also find in this regard the interference of the writer's thought and opinions. The description and hadith referred to in the narration do not fit the ages of two teenage girls in high school. This derogation and the veiled attack on the veil appeared, and the ideas were glued to the personality of (Tabarak). This strange thought calls for the freedom of women by removing the veil, but the thought detracts from the veil when choosing it, and stands against this alleged freedom, a thought that analyzes freedom for itself and deprives it of others with unprecedented contradictions. Due to the fierce struggle against the idea of the veil, as if the heads of veiled women were above his head! So he burdened him and took upon himself the banner of calling for the liberation of women from the veil!

In the novel (Hilda's Rock), the religious alienation described by the novel's heroine (Nurhan) is evident by saying: ((A country in which a woman erred, they inflict punishment on her, and it is dependent on the edges of swords and daggers, shiny and polished swords and daggers, we are not ashamed to raise slogans on our flags and beacons under which the crowds walk unconscious, claiming that they alone have permission to enter heaven)³). The text reveals the features of religious alienation that pervaded the Iraqi community structure and the humiliation, injustice, and control over the fate of women, citing religious reasons, and making religion a snare to this domination and ruling on entering heaven and hell as if the keys of heaven were in their hands!

Conclusion

At the end of the research, we include the most important findings:

- Religious alienation emerged clearly in the Iraqi women's novel, and in this alienation were the pillars of postmodernity of rebellion, rejection, absurdity, and skepticism.
- The rebellion against religion and the divine being, and the objection and

¹ Brothers of Muhammad, Maysaloon Hadi, Al-Thakira for Publishing and Distribution, Baghdad, 2018, 190.

² The Novel of Zainab, Mary and Yasmine, Maysaloon Hadi, The Arab Institute for Studies and Publishing, Beirut, Edition 1, 2012, 59.

³ Hilda's Rock Novel, Hadiya Hussein, The Arab Institute for Studies and Publishing, Beirut, Edition 1, 2013, 43.

questioning of predestination were present among the characters within the narrative texts.

- The state of religious alienation coincided with the suffering of the expatriate individuals in their societies from pressures and crises; As a result of the conflicts and turmoil within their societies, which led to their loss of faith, and a lack of feeling with the Divine Self.
- The narrative texts embodied the penetration of religious alienation into the societal structure, as ideas and principles related to God and religion collapsed.

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