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Representation the Themes of Destruction and Longing for Homeland in the Exile Novels

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Abstract

This research investigated the representation of the theme of exile in Arabic novels and how writers deal with reality through their writings. The research is divided into two sections: the first section focuses on exile and the construction of alienation in the narrative text, while the second part examines narration in exile literature and the limits of the literary genre. The research concludes that Iraqi novels provide the most suitable representation of social and political life. The novel operates on two axes: the first axis represents the instinct of "retrieval" fueled by tragic experiences in Iraq while the second axis is based on "remembering alongside practice," meaning that the narrative structure is built on direct events happening now. These two axes form parallel wings, and the narrator moves between them with an absent conscience. This equation shows the semantic and ideological symmetry between time and place.

Keywords: Destruction, exile novels, longing for homeland, representation, themes.

Introduction

Arabic novels have often linked the Arab individual to their identity through narratives of exile and alienation. However, they have not been able to crystallize a clear "methodology" that connects exile and alienation (Ahmed, 2017). The researcher of Arabic and Iraqi novels, in particular, sees that there is an existing overlap between the two concepts, and the concept of self and its relationship to the other in the narrative error. The novel of exile is a narrative genre that deals with exile as a spatial alienation as a main theme, or it makes the theme of *excile* a focal point to dismantle the intersection between exclusion, expulsion, and the circumstances that created them (Abu Nidal, 2006; Naumann, 2022)

Exile and the Theme of Alienation in Narratives

The meaning of exile is expulsion and distancing. It signifies "exclusion" and removal. The exile is "the place" and its plural in Arabic is "manafi." (Ibn Manzur, 2010, P. 247). In English, exile is derived from the Latin origin "Exsilium," which means a person who is forced to leave his town or city (Robinson & Davidson, 2007). Many contemporary writers and theorists have defined exile in the novel as the position between two positions" or "a place located between two places (Robinson & Davidson, 2007; Sernaqué et al., 2023) Some recent exile literature studies have focused more on the importance of consciousness than on historical events, political content, and ideology.

After World War II, a new field of knowledge emerged in the world known as *Exile Studies*. This field studies the lives of human communities that have suffered displacement in the world (Seidel, 1986). At

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the same time, there were calls and studies to take literary representations of exile, especially those representations in which exile or exclusion is exported as a narrative act into consideration (Berg, 2012; Mtani et al., 2023) It can be concluded from this meaning that "exile literature" is a literature written by writers who have been excluded, where their literature is subject to certain determinants, such as "the language used in the literature" and "the main theme of the literature." In this section, we will discuss the most important intellectual transformations that have made exile literature one of the manifestations of human thought.

Exile in the culture of nations

Researchers almost agree that the post-colonial period gave birth to a literature among novelists that had similar characteristics, such as the distinctive use of metaphor, disconnected narratives, satire, the element of irony, and magical realism (Ashcroft et al., 2003).

The dialectical relationship between the theme of exile and the narrative structure

Writing about exile relies on the memory of the exiled narrator in we see the world from his perspective (Jameson, 2014), which allows us to draw the world of exile through the spaces he draws, leading to the formation of a new relationship between plot and memory (Shahat, 2006). The plot is a continuous product of a creative dialectical state with memory. The plot represents the greatest manifestation of its continuity in being "a constant argument between time and memory (Ricoeur, 1980).

It is what Paul Ricoeur calls the dialectic of creativity which gives exile narratives the creative features that began to appear after the colonial era (Fakhry, 1993). The exiled writer began to create spaces in which there is a synchronicity between two images, the first image is that of the *colonizer* and the second is that of the *colonizer*, or the dialectic of the *follower* and the followed. This literature was characterized by a focus on drawing the features of these two images and a pressing sense of place (Bulhan, 2004; Abdul et al., 2023) as. In addition, the events of exile are an effective strategic force in shaping aesthetic consciousness, as exile is a submissive self-aware of form, and exile distinguishes the narrative background with precision (Seidel, 1986).

Jameson describes the history of colonial exiles or refugees as a narrative structure that is repetitive and accumulative of scattered scenes on the one hand, and at the same time it forms what is called the experience of necessity (Jameson, 2005), or what Jameson himself calls the re-narration of history (Jameson, 2013). Based on this vision, both narrative and history converge in directing the compass of the writer in exile, as narrative in its traditional sense is a form or mode of historical discourse (Stone, 1979). This can be observed by breaking down the words, such as History, which is composed of Hi-Story, meaning that the story is also part of history or that history is the story in its highest form (Douglas, 2012). Stories, according to Mapara (2009) are the means used by colonized peoples to affirm their own identity against all forms of imperialism. This is what Edward Said sees, as nations are nothing but narratives and stories that have accumulated and have been preserved by the collective memory of peoples (Said, 2013).

The cultural analysis carried out by Edward Said and others in exploring the connotations of communication and separation in the narratives of peoples is actually an investigation to trace the movements of temporal succession and connections, the breaks in narrative lines and paths and their relationship with the concept of imperialism (McLeod, 2000). Therefore, many exile literature experts see that major concepts such as "identity, nationalism, and nation" that appeared in the memory at the beginning of the twentieth century are nothing but narratives derived from the Arab self-awareness of its contemporary identity (Robbins et al., 1994). Yet, the relationships that connect these concepts to each other are nothing but a state of constant dialectical conflict that never settles (Robbins et al., 1994),

because what confirms them are different narrative and aesthetic methods used (Fraiman, 1995), such as land, language, heritage, and perhaps religion. They protect them from the feeling of exile and exempt them from decades of conflict with subordination, imperialism, and domination to prove their identity (the self-narrative identity of peoples). This is evidenced in the melting of national enthusiasm and the exile of the burning feeling of national identity, (Al-Tamimi et al., 2021; Hossen, 2012), as names are no longer their names, and even original words are pronounced in a way that does not strengthen the immunity of the exile against the distortion of national identity (Stoller & McConatha, 2001).

Human nature is inherently intertwined with the "imagined image" that we create for ourselves. When we express ourselves in front of others, we rely on the narrative images that have been shaped by countless factors in forming our self-image (Cainkar, 1988).

For example, when protests take place in a country and they raise slogans like "Iraq for Iraqis" or "Arab oil for Arabs," it is a form of internal categorization between Iraqi identity and Arab identity, excluding other identities that do not embody the strong identity of the groups advocating for these slogans. Anderson (1991) argues that the concept of the "imagined community" connects different groups when that community raises a specific slogan that distinguishes it from its surroundings.

The intersection between post-colonialism and post-modernism in crystalizing exile literature

Critical approaches intersect between post colonialism and postmodernism (Quayson, 2000). It is evident in the critical approaches which focus on marginalization and ambiguity (Chambers, 2007). The cultural discourse of the post-colonial period is characterized by its approach to the hybrid cultural output in order to liberate from the monolithic perspective and the dominance of one culture over others (Ashcroft, 2013). This hierarchy is rooted in the hybrid culture due to a cumulative historical and cultural background that supersedes the etiquette of marginalized peoples (Conklin,1998; Paravisini-Gebert, 2002). On the one hand, postmodernism seeks to dissolve differences to achieve globalization (Giroux, 1988) while on the other hand, post colonialism aims to read the difference between self and other in a broader cultural-social context that is far from the authority of maps and geography (Tiffin, 1987). Its focus is on literature that supports resistance and reads reality as an analytical deconstruction of its oppressive structure, and the exposure of the imperialist cognitive structures deposited in the cultural and political unconscious of colonized peoples (Jussawalla, 1997).

The term *Post* refers to the post-colonial era of Arab exile literature. It is consistent with the meaning of this term in modern studies (Esty, 1999). According Ashcroft et al. (2003), the term post-colonialism refers to every culture that has been influenced by the imperial process since the colonial moment until our day, and this term is the most appropriate as a term for criticism across the new cultural.

Researchers argue that postmodern discourse has benefited from post-colonial thought in its endeavor to establish the modern European critical theory that challenges European centrism and critiques dominant thought in the post-World War II era as a product of the Third World mind (Smyth & Smyth, 2001). This is because discursive formations are not closed vessels, but rather an expansive field where knowledge strategies intersect and interact incessantly (Al-Tamimi et al., 2021; Bahri, 1995).

Narration in Exile Literature and the Limits of Genre

The aspects of narration in exile literature can be studied through the following:

Firstly, the scattering of the concept of exile in classical literary genres

The narrative style in the works of exiled writers is inseparable from their identity and language. These literary genres are reinforced by theoretical conceptualizations and are not pure in themselves (Shahat, (2006). The text may incorporate all three styles, for example, textuality may fall within the framework

of "types" or "origins," or the text may fall within the framework of "genres" or "branches," such as drama in theater and narration in narrative literary genres (Sabhah, 2009).

Secondly, Exilic narratives within the literary genre limits

The literary text does not differ in its origin whether it is about exile or the life of slavery that drives humans to escape, to the debate of longing desires, and to horizons that possess a space for human existence away from injustice (Abu Saleh, 2013). In the novel "Men in the Sun," the narrator presents a narrative for each character (Marwan, As'ad, Abu Qais, and Abu al-Khayzuran) through various mechanisms regarding each character's search for a time that will not return or a place, which is here Palestine, Jordan, or other places of exile. In addition, these recollections are linked to the theme of exile from place (Ahmed, 2017).

Thirdly: The Hybrid narrative from self to satire

In a captivating title, Emile Habibi weaves his story in "The Strange Events of the Disappearance of Sa'id Abi Al-Nahs Al-Mutasha'il". The content is boldly critical, carrying a verbal paradox in the name Sa'id Abi Al-Nahs, combining the pessimistic attribute, the pessimist and the optimist to form a new dual identity image, being Arab-Israeli in both language Arabic-Hebrew and Western-Eastern culture (Ghanayem, 1987).

The author attempts to immerse the reader in the discourse of exile in an infinite space of eloquence and narrative skill, depicting the torn individual between two Arab-Israeli identities (Ghanayem, 1987).

Emile Habibi portrays the pure Palestine, where he resides. The author has gathered remnants of his youth memories in Palestine to construct a structure filled with jasmine, olive, and fig trees, and fleeting glimpses of the certainty one feels when in their homeland (Kattana, 2003). The authors see the satirical paradox as a means of resistance in times of oppression. Despite the tragedy within the novel, the author captures both the heartbreaking and humorous aspects in "The Pessimist" and "The Strange Events" (Said, 2013).

The researchers believe that Emile Habibi follows the same painful satirical style represented by the main character in the novel "The Pains of Mr. Mu'arrif" by the novelist Ghassan Kanafani, where he cites the poetry of Ibn al-Rumi, the expressions of al-Jahiz, and the Arab heritage of proverbs, messages, and sayings to present to us the nature of contemporary Arab personality, which is a collection of strange intersecting fabrics.

The structure of the novel "The Pessoptimist" is composed of a narrative heritage, a narrative structure, and an intertwined dialogue about narrative ground (Harb, 2010). At the same time, the novel draws from the literature of resistance, picaresque novels or exile novels (Mahrez, 1984), One Thousand and One Nights, adventures, and many other literary genres. In addition to this, Emile Habibi's works were full of discoveries from Voltaire's novel "Candide," François Rabelais's novels saturated with "carnival laughter," and James Joyce's satirical approach. All of this was mixed by Emile Habibi in a hybrid blend that attracts two stimulants, "Satire" and "self".

Fourthly: Crossing the Borders of Drama and Epic in the Novel of Exile

Haider Haider's novel⁽³⁾ "A Feast for the Seaweeds" represents a colorful panorama and a detailed narrative of the world in which Arab exiles live. The author links two worlds that represent the manifestations of what Arab peoples suffer from in terms of the domination of a harsh life and the

³ Haider Haider, born in 1936, is a Syrian writer and novelist. His version of a seaweed feast was banned in several Arab countries, and even prompted a belated angry response from religious scholars from Al-Azhar.

oppression they face, which are the Algerian and Iraqi societies in the 1960s. (Awad, 2001). Haider Haider was influenced by rural atmosphere, and his unconscious loyalty to the values that brought people together in rural communities soon became apparent. Many critics have noticed that the theme of "gender and women" is often paralleled in his writings with "rural and urban worlds," or "homeland and exile," etc. These dualities are evident in the novel's fabric and its unique writing style (Abdel Aziz, 2002).

The novel "The Song of the Failed Arab Revolution" moves in two axes (Al-Alam, 1994). The first axis represents the instinct of "retrieval," fueled by the tragic experience in Iraq, while the other axis is based on "remembering alongside practice" based on events that took place in the city of "Boune" in Algeria (Al-Sabahi, 2021). In other words, the narrative structure is built on direct events that are happening now. These two axes come together to form two wings that the narrator moves between with a "missing conscience." This equation shows the semantic and ideological convergence between space and place (Shahat, 2006).

This free transition between the two axes supports the general significance of the novel and expands the horizons of its contents. It takes a significant portion of the cultural geography between Iraq and Algeria, and generates intellectual overlaps and interweaving between the events and facts, feeding the reader with the charisma of revolutions, uprisings, and the features of simultaneous setbacks, and the collapse of characters after exhausting a crucial factor that drives the events and negates the goal (Ahmed, 2004). This overlap and parallelism dissipates the sense of "binary of place" and "binary of event," making it a decisive factor in exploding the overall vision of the novel (Baheyya, 2007). The researchers find an implicit similarity between Haider Haider's novel and Abdul Rahman Munit's "East of the Mediterranean" and Hanna Mina's "The Snow Comes from the Window," which focused heavily on analyzing the tools of intellectuals and their ability to confront shadows (Madi, 1989).

In Haider's novel "A Feast for the Seaweeds," the author builds a surreal entity by creating alternating currents of consciousness that flow through the novel's characters. In some of their dialogues, it appears as if they belong to a world other than the one the narrator has established for them. However, we soon discover that this is due to mental ramifications that blend the past with tradition, the narrator's wisdom, and the ideal images that the novel's characters find. This is one of the creative techniques that Haider's novel is characterized by.

Fifthly: Exile in the transition of poetic perspective to strangeness

The concept and manifestations of exile appear in various forms in fictional characters. In the novel "The Search for Walid Masoud" by Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, the character of the Palestinian searching for an ideal is represented by the walking unifier on the embers. In Ibrahim Nasrallah's novel "Birds of Caution," exile appears in the direct skepticism of concepts that seem untrue or incomplete. This is also evident in the novels of Salim Barakat. In Nasrallah's novel, the concept of exile is based on the association between the duality of poetry and narrative to create a beautiful narrative text that forms icons of the tortured Palestinian. Nasrallah and Barakat embark on an unprecedented adventure in demolishing the qualitative distance and boundaries between poetry and fiction. Nasrallah's novel "Birds of Caution" and Barakat's novel "Camps of the Eternal" narrate events in a way that makes the novel "a continuation of a poetic text." (Mahmoud, 2007).

The novel does not cease to contain the features of the stolen homeland in the eyes of Ali and Aisha's child (Abu-Matar, 2003). Suddenly, the boy's dreams were shattered all at once by the impact of heavy bullets on a "cub camp", the intensification of the bombing, and the sight of bombs falling. The boy's caution, who was the one who taught birds, was of no use. Throughout the novel, the boy was turning the novel into "a narration of the biography of birds" (Al-Samara'i, 2016). Arabic novel writers have

traditionally used the symbolism of the bird and flight to emancipation and salvation and dismantling the chains of exile, with titles such as "The Bird's Return to the Sea" by Halim Barakat, "The Hovering Bird" by the same writer, and others (Al-Dadisi, 2018). In the novel, the relationship between Soraya's mother and the fetus changes after that to become a boy who is not an ordinary "eccentric". He will love her; this was reinforced by selling her the birds and sparrows that he and his friend Khalil hunted. They both believe that birds carry messages to the other world and do the work of angels (Al-Dadisi, 2018). The boy represents the focus of the novel, with his highly influential connotations and symbolism through his association with the characters of the novel.

The narrator makes the boy's eccentric improvisations a middle distance between realism and imagination, as a dream is life for someone who has no homeland, so imagination turns into "energy" that motivates the search for a higher existence and the search for freedom. In the midst of all this strangeness that appears to the senses of the child who was listening while in his mother's womb, the writer resorts to using the strangeness of the boy's behavior to paint an apparently sarcastic picture, but it is true and realistic. The boy falls in love with their neighbor, Hanoun, who is years older than him, and the boy also spoke to another child in his mother's (Umm Khalil) womb (Nasrallah, 1996). Then the boy gets up to be a source of premature naughtiness and strange maturity for a boy of his age, and his attachment to birds indicates a dialogue that rages with an invisible force in the horizons of his genius (Nasrallah, 1996).

Conclusion

Among the most important findings of the research:

- 1. The research concluded that the Iraqi novel most appropriately represented social and political life. Writing here represents an "alternative" to the "absent homeland" and at the same time "the formation of an imaginery homeland."
- 2.) The Iraqi novel proceeds in two axes. The first axis represents the "retrieval" instinct, which derives its fuel from the tragic experience in Iraq, and the other axis is based on "remembering alongside practice." That is, the narrative structure is built on direct events occurring now. These two axes combine to form two wings, or two parallels between which the narrator moves in the third person. This equation shows the semantic and ideological similarity between time and place.
- 3. This parallel course and free movement between the two axes supports the general significance of the novelistic work, and expands the horizons of its contents and comprehensiveness so that it takes a large share of the cultural geography between Iraq and Algeria.

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