

Social Oppression and its Consequences on women in Post-2003 in The “Kidnapped” by Warid Al-Salim

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Astract:

The primary objective of this research is to examine social oppression and its consequences on women, and their desire for liberation in “The Kidnapped” by Warid Al Salim, in Iraq after the year 2003 and assess whether Warid's novel accurately portrays the experiences of women in the country. This study will focus on analyzing specific quotations that reflect the challenges faced by the female character Shaima' in this novel. The study aims to shed light on the effect of oppression encountered by Iraqi women, emphasizing the influence of social conditions on their lives. The study concludes that women faces oppression and they suffers difficult conditions. This suffering gives them a motivation to seek liberation.

1.1 Introuction

The primary objective of this research is to examine social oppression and its consequences on women, and their desire for liberation in “The Kidnapped” by Warid Al Salim in Iraq after the year 2003 and assess whether Warid's novel accurately portrays the experiences of women in the country. This analysis will focus on specific quotations that reflect the challenges faced by the female character Shaima' in the novel. The study aims to shed light on the effect of oppression encountered by Iraqi women, emphasizing the influence of social conditions on their lives.

Warid Bader Al-Salim, an Iraqi novelist born in Basra in 1956, will be a central figure in this research. He served as the editor of the "Al Talea" newspaper and has authored several novels, including "The Virgin of Sinjar" (2016), "Sharpen In Sensitive Place" (2019) set in Baghdad, "A Woman For One Point " (2018), and "The Kidnapped" (2020). He has received numerous accolades, including the Dubai First Cultural Award in 2007, the Ibn Battuta Prize in 2008, and the Prize for Novelistic Creativity in Iraq in 2017.

In "The Kidnapped," the story revolves around an Iraqi teacher who becomes the victim of a kidnapping orchestrated by an anonymous gang. The kidnappers demand a ransom of \$100,000 from her family. After the ransom is paid, she undergoes a series of interrogations by a police officer tasked with identifying and apprehending the kidnappers from among those who were eventually arrested. However, despite her freedom, the

protagonist cannot recognize her captors' faces. Instead, she retains their distinctive scents in her memory and constructs her own mental images of them. She deduces their heights based on the shadows she observed while blindfolded during her captivity.

The novel intricately weaves this fictional narrative in a complex detective-style, leaving the reader suspicious of the various characters involved in the story. It explores the intricate interactions between the kidnapped woman and the investigating officer, who is determined to uncover the truth behind the kidnapping. Throughout the narration, a central question haunts him.

1.2 Feminism

Feminism can be defined as "the need to establish unequal incentives to motivate the most talented people to do the most important jobs efficiently in society". While Caine (1997) define feminism as "the common bonds uniting women in facing the dominance of men".

According to Feminist, patriarchy can be defined as "the complete authority of the father or the eldest male member within his family (Badry, 2018)." In "The Creation of Patriarchy," Learner (1989) suggests that Aristotle held similar beliefs, asserting that "males are active, while females are passive. Women are considered inferior, while men are seen as superior. Women are born to be controlled, whereas men are born to exert control." The term "patriarchy" derives from the Greek word "Patria," which signifies the father and his rule. It refers to the male's desire to dominate and govern all sources of power, including economic, political, industrial, financial, religious, and social realms. This power positions men to influence and shape the society they live in based on their beliefs and rules (Heywood, 2017).

In Arab societies, although instances of violence against women outside the family are acknowledged, domestic violence often remains concealed. Many individuals, including victims, law enforcement, healthcare professionals, and legal experts, tend to view spousal mistreatment as a normal and private family matter, often not warranting intervention from social or healthcare services (Haj Yahia, 1998a; Haj Yahia, 2000b; Haj Yahia, 2008). This prevailing attitude, which rationalizes the abuse of women within the household and rejects a legal approach to addressing such abuse as a criminal offense, is widely accepted due to its alignment with the social and cultural norms of Arab society. It is often regarded as a matter pertaining to the family's privacy and reputation.

This perspective can lead to apprehension about exposing the issue of women's abuse, as it may result in legal services encroaching on the family's boundaries. Such

intervention could potentially tarnish the family's reputation and affect the cultural, educational, political, social, and economic standing of all family members. Moreover, it could lead to consequences such as divorce, separation, or imprisonment, ultimately affecting the unity of the family.

In numerous Middle Eastern countries, particularly Arab nations, a significant portion of women find themselves without rights and occupy a marginalized, silent role as the "female other." The cultural and traditional norms prevalent in Arabic societies serve as the guiding principles of these societies and have deeply ingrained assumptions. Both men and women regard these assumptions as integral components of their cultural heritage (Bhandari, 2009).

These assumptions have led to a heightened assertiveness among men who conform to these cultural norms. Conversely, in some societies, women have come to accept and internalize male chauvinism as a part of their cultural traditions. Consequently, they often perceive themselves as inferior to men (Malti-Douglas, 2018).

1.3 Iterature Review

In Iraqi society, women are an important subject of scholarly debates, discussion, and discourse for the social, political and the economic position that they occupy during the second half of the twentieth century. Oppression, sexuality, and liberation of Arab women are the main issues that have been discussed against the conventional background of the patriarchal Arab society. They continue to face and suffer discrimination, patriarchy, and huge barriers to reach their rights.

Iraqi writers, in their novels, try not to reflect the reality of their society artistically only but rather psychologically. In one way or another, they challenge to reform, directly or indirectly, the overlapping critical social, psychological and political situation in post-2003 Iraq. As Abd al-Malik Nuri (an Iraqi writer born in 1921) said, "story writing is no longer a pursuit of mere virtuosity and refinement ... there occurs a radical change in story writing" (Musawi, 2006).

Sinan Antoon effectively depicted in his "Bagdad Eucharist" the hardships faced by Iraqi Christian women post-2003 due to discrimination related to their clothing, hairstyles, and the choice to wear a veil (Hammood, 2023). In Another study, (Alkiriti, 2023) states that double awarance is the main factor of the issues of the female characters in post-20003.

Thus, in this study, I will examine the Social oppression and its consequences on women, and their desire for liberation in post-2003 in the Kidnapped by Warid Al Salim.

1.4 Results and discussions

The text depicts Shimaa's harrowing experience of being kidnapped, and it hints at several layers of oppression and manipulation:

“Those seven days were hard and frightened. I felt as I died many times and come back to life by chance, and the kidnapper who always stayed with me did not speak. I was afraid of this silence that surrounded me and so I asked him to speak”(P. 12)..

The elements of this quotation can be analyzed to show of how the heroine is oppressed by her husband, who kidnapped her for financial gain, and how she is used as a tool to pressure her parents into paying a ransom, with the additional layer of societal shame associated with her abduction as a woman are presented as following:

The text immediately suggests that the heroine is going through an extremely distressing and traumatic experience. "hard" implies physical suffering, while "frightened" indicates intense psychological distress. It is clear that her husband's actions have put her in a situation where she feels physically and emotionally tormented.

The repetitive cycle of feeling like she is dying and then surviving by chance highlights the unpredictability and danger she faces, which is likely a result of her husband's actions and decisions.

Furthermore, The statement "the kidnapper who always stayed with me did not speak" highlights the eerie and oppressive nature of her captivity. The kidnapper's silence adds to the sense of isolation and fear that the heroine is experiencing. His refusal to communicate with her intensifies her vulnerability, making her even more reliant on him for basic needs and information.

This silence can also symbolize the control her husband has over her life. By keeping her in the dark and isolated from the outside world, her husband maintains a position of power and control over her.

Also, the heroine's request for her kidnapper to speak suggests her desperation and desire for some form of human connection or communication. This plea may also be seen as an indirect attempt to understand the motives behind her abduction and perhaps to negotiate or plead for her release.

Her kidnapping appears to be a means for her husband to extort money from her family. This is evident in the mention of the silence "surrounding" her, which may symbolize the lack of communication with her family. By keeping her isolated and presumably communicating with her family through threats or demands, her husband uses her as a tool to pressure her parents into paying a ransom.

Besides, The societal shame associated with her abduction as a woman is implied but

significant. In many societies, the abduction of a woman can bring disgrace and humiliation to her family, as it may be perceived as a failure to protect her.

Guilt often experienced by individuals, particularly women, in contexts of oppression or traumatic events. In an academic analysis, we can explore how this statement reflects the broader theme of woman oppression: "I felt guilty even though I had nothing to do with what had happened"

The heroine's statement underscores how she carries a sense of guilt, even though she is not responsible for the traumatic situation she finds herself in. This phenomenon of internalized guilt is not uncommon in cases of oppression or abuse. Women, in particular, may feel guilty for a variety of reasons, such as not conforming to societal expectations, speaking out against their oppressors, or simply for being the victims of oppressive acts. This internalized guilt can further disempower them and maintain the status quo of their oppression.

The quote also highlights the impact of societal expectations on women. In many societies, women are conditioned to prioritize the well-being and reputation of their families or communities above their own. This conditioning can lead to feelings of guilt when they find themselves in situations beyond their control, as they may believe they have somehow failed to protect their families or uphold their expected roles.

As well, in oppressive situations, women often face blame or are made to feel responsible for the actions of their oppressors. This blame can come from various sources, including society, family members, or even the oppressors themselves. The heroine's sense of guilt could be a response to this victim-blaming, as she may have been made to feel that her actions or decisions somehow contributed to her own victimization.

Moreover, the internalized guilt can also be a result of the power imbalance in oppressive situations. The oppressors often hold significant power and control, making it difficult for the oppressed to challenge or resist their actions. This power imbalance can create feelings of helplessness and guilt, as the oppressed may believe they should have been able to prevent or change their circumstances.

It's essential to recognize that oppressive situations have profound psychological effects on women. Guilt, anxiety, and a sense of powerlessness are common emotional responses to such situations. These emotions can be debilitating and may further entrench the cycle of oppression, as women may hesitate to seek help or assert their rights due to their internalized guilt.

In general, the quote highlights the complex issue of internalized guilt in the context of woman oppression. It underscores how societal expectations, victim-blaming, and power

imbalances contribute to women feeling guilty for circumstances beyond their control. Understanding and addressing these psychological dynamics is crucial for combating woman oppression and supporting the emotional well-being of those affected by it.

Women acquiesce to the wishes of their families, even if it means sacrificing their own happiness or well-being. This pressure to conform can lead to suffering as women may feel forced to prioritize the collective needs of their community over their individual desires: "He is a simple person whom I married under a specific clan affiliation. It had something of leaving the bachelor life that I was imagining and entering into a new life," provides insight into the experience of the female protagonist and can be analyzed to understand themes related to women's oppression and suffering.

The mention of marrying under a specific clan affiliation implies that the marriage is not solely a union between two individuals but is embedded in a broader cultural or societal context. In many traditional societies, especially those with strong clan or family affiliations, women often have limited agency in choosing their partners. This lack of choice can be a form of oppression, as it restricts their autonomy and may lead to marriages that are not based on personal compatibility or mutual consent (Hannam, 2007).

In short, the quote provides a glimpse into the protagonist's experience of marriage within a specific cultural and tribal context. It highlights how traditional expectations, limited ability to choose a partner, and loss of personal autonomy can lead to women suffering in such circumstances. Now Kaf clarifies that women's rights are almost confiscated in order to satisfy the authority that takes care of them and controls them.

Searching for liberation is the endless ambition of woman in a strict society: "I want to inform you in all good conscience and tell you bravely that I am divorcing you... I am divorcing you and releasing myself forever" is a powerful statement that can be analyzed to understand the themes of liberation, autonomy, and empowerment within the context of a divorce.

The speaker's declaration of divorce is a bold assertion of her autonomy and agency. In many cultures and historical contexts, women have been expected to conform to societal norms and often lacked the agency to initiate a divorce. The use of words like "bravely" and "in all good conscience" underscores her determination to exercise her own will and make a decision that is best for her.

Using the phrase "I am divorcing you and releasing myself forever" highlights the speaker's desire for freedom and self-liberation. The act of divorcing is not just about ending a legal or marital contract; it signifies her wish to break free from a situation that

may have been oppressive or limiting. This emphasis on self-release suggests a deep yearning for personal growth and independence.

Besides, In many societies, divorce can carry significant stigma, especially for women. The speaker's willingness to openly declare her intent to divorce, regardless of societal expectations or judgment, reflects her courage in challenging established norms. This act can be seen as a rejection of societal constraints that might have kept her in an unhappy or oppressive marriage.

The act of divorce, in this context, symbolizes liberation from a situation that may have been detrimental to the speaker's emotional or psychological well-being. It represents her willingness to prioritize her own needs and desires over societal expectations or the wishes of her partner.

Finally, this statement reflects the speaker's desire for autonomy, empowerment, and liberation through the act of divorce. It signifies her determination to break free from a situation that may have constrained her and to prioritize her own well-being and personal growth. The language used in the statement emphasizes the courage and principled nature of her decision to assert her agency and seek a new path in life.

1.5 Conclusion

In analyzing the quotes and data presented, a recurring theme emerges: societal oppression and its consequences on women and the struggle for independence, empowerment, and liberation. These excerpts depict individuals grappling with various forms of oppression, whether through societal expectations, oppressive marriages, or internalized guilt. It also demonstrates the desire for freedom and the courage to break free from these restrictions.

The study highlights the internal guilt that the heroine suffers from despite her lack of responsibility for her oppressive circumstances. This internalized guilt is a poignant representation of the psychological burden often placed on women in oppressive situations, reinforcing the need for a deeper understanding of the emotional impact of such experiences.

Moreover, analysis of the text emphasizes the multifaceted nature of women's oppression, including societal expectations, gender roles, and power imbalances. It also highlights the emotional and psychological toll that oppression can take on individuals. However, it is equally important to acknowledge the resilience and courage shown by women in their quest for liberation and empowerment.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the challenges women face in dealing with oppressive conditions and the ways in which they seek liberation from them. It serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle for gender equality and the importance of supporting individuals in their quest for independence and liberation. By understanding and acknowledging these experiences, we can contribute to creating a more equitable and just society for all.

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