
SOCIAL ALIENATION IN GHĀLIB HALSĀ'S NOVEL *SULTĀNA*¹

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ABSTRACT: *The present study examines manifestations of social alienation in the novel Sultāna (1987). A basic premise of the study is that contemporary mankind exists in a state of cultural alienation shock, due to successive waves of tremendous change in many aspects of life and many components of social and cultural existence. To this must be added the political changes experienced by the Arab world after World War II, causing it to become divided into several small countries, followed by these countries' struggles for independence and their defeats against Israel in 1948, the war of the Tripartite Aggression against Egypt in 1956 and the defeat of 1967 against Israel. All of these events caused Arabs to shrink into themselves and wallow in feelings of disappointment, defeat and failure. Ghālib Halsā's novel Sultāna was chosen because of all the novels by this writer, it is the one that is most strongly imbued with the local atmosphere of his homeland, Jordan. In fact, the entire work reflects almost no other environment. In this environment social alienation is ever present. The novel shows how relations based on family solidarity and agricultural and tribal traditions have been transformed into commercial relations, leading to a disintegration of the family. The novel describes Jordan's countryside, its problems, its dilemmas, its clans and its tribes. It also moves to the city, where it focuses on revealing social flaws and behaviors in times in which authentic values have broken down.*

KEYWORDS: social alienation, ghālib halsā, novel, *sultāna*

THE STUDY'S MAIN HYPOTHESIS

The study hypothesizes that Ghālib Halsā's modernist novel *Sultāna* (1987) will be found to contain manifestations of social alienation, and through its protagonists to express the estrangement felt by contemporary humans. It also hypothesizes that the author would use the device of stream-of-consciousness, as a medium for expressing the individual's alienation and his escape into himself.

METHODOLOGY

The study consists of an internal textual analysis of the novel's contents, aimed at finding how social alienation is expressed in it, and how it was affected the stream-of-consciousness movement² and the modernist trend in the novel. The stream-of-consciousness technique was able to express people's sense of alienation in an age filled with political uncertainty and a

¹ The paper is adapted from a chapter in my Ph.D. dissertation, written at Tel-Aviv University under the supervision of Prof. Maḥmūd Ghanāim.

² For more on this movement, see Humphrey, 1975; Ghanayim, 1991; Ghanayim, 1992; Ghanayim, 2005.

loss of standards, concepts and values. It uses words in order to express the individual's inner thoughts, by means of evoking dreams, flashbacks and soliloquy, all typical of both stream-of-consciousness writing and modernist literature. The study's significance lies in its attempt to reveal states of social alienation, the forms it takes, behaviors that reflect it, and the devices that were used to construct the individuals' alienated psyche.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Alienation³

The word is derived from the Latin verb *alienare*, which means "transfer to another", "remove". The verb in turn is derived from the adjective *alienus* "belonging to or associated with another". The ultimate source of the word is the noun and adjective *alius* "other". According to anthropologist Qays al-Nūrī, alienation as a term is also used in the context of isolation, especially when describing the role of intellectuals or thinkers who feel detached from their surroundings and incapable of mental or psychological identification with society's norms. People who live a life of isolation and alienation do not attach much value to aims, standards and concepts which members of their society hold in high regard.⁴

Šāliḥ (2007) argues that an overlap or a gray area exists between the concepts of alienation and exile,⁵ giving rise to similarities between them that can make it difficult to distinguish between someone in exile and someone suffering from alienation.⁶ In this context we may point to the Palestinian experience, which includes numerous events of forced expulsion, violent exile, evacuation and occasionally removal from the homeland.⁷

The new social criticism: Marcuse and Fromm

The idea of alienation was widely discussed in the 1940s and 1950s by a number of contemporary critics and intellectuals, such as Herbert Marcuse⁸ (1898-1979) and Erich Fromm⁹ (1900-1980). In light of the catastrophes which befell humankind after World War II and the spread of mental disease, these critics used the concept of alienation as a means which to reveal the psychological ills which the wars caused to plague humanity.¹⁰

Fromm uses the term "alienation" to describe the relationship between an individual and himself, others, and many other things as well, such as love, thought, hope, work, language and contemporary culture. He argues that a person in the course of his life produces

³ The Arabic words for alienation, *ightirāb* and *ghurba*, denote separation from one's native country.

⁴ Al-Nūrī, 1979, p. 17.

⁵ For more on exile and its causes, see Saied 2000, p. 173; Sa'īd 2004, p. 177; Tabori 1972, p. 278; Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2000, p. 92; Saied 1984, pp. 49-55; Ashcroft, Griffiths & Helen 2000, p. 92.

⁶ Ariel Moreh Sheerit in her paper "Removal of the geographical territorial dimension of belonging: Between the Home and Absence from Home in Mirāl al-Ṭahāwī's novel *Brooklyn Heights* and Salmān Nātūr's novel *The Fall, She and I*". Both novels, *Brooklyn Heights* (2010) by the Egyptian novelist Mirāl al-Ṭahāwī (b. 1968) and *The Fall, She and I* by the Israeli-Palestinian writer Salmān Nātūr (b. 1949) reveal the intuitive problematics of the alternating similarities between the homeland and belonging, on one hand, and exile, dispersion, alienation and banishment on the other (for more on this subject, see Sheerit 2013).

⁷ Šāliḥ 2007, p. 1.

⁸ A German-American philosopher and intellectual, known for his observations on the radical left and New Left movements, as well as his severe criticism of existing regimes.

⁹ A German-American psychologist and humanist philosopher.

¹⁰ Rajab, 1993, pp. 19-21.

numerous human phenomena, such as human communication, love, creative activity and decision making.¹¹ For Fromm, the most important types of alienation are alienation from society and alienation from one's self.¹²

The concept of alienation in modern times

The meaning of alienation today does not differ from its meaning in early times. Al-Shaqīrāt notes that the modern concept of alienation consists of a number of elements.¹³

Alienation in the subjective sense: By this he refers to the individual's view of others as entities that are independent of himself, whatever relations may also connect them. Studies on this type of alienation show that it is a state that is usually accompanied by solitude and isolation, rather than tension and disappointment;

- Powerlessness and lack of control: This aspect appears in Marx's view on the concept of alienation. Indeed, this is the aspect which appears most frequently in studies on alienation;
- Pointlessness: When an individual feels there is no point in pursuing a specific goal;
- Moral decline: By this is meant that a society that has reached this stage lacks the moral standards needed to regulate the behavior of its members;
- Isolation: This term is most often used when discussing the concept of alienation when analyzing the role of intellectuals who are overcome with a feeling of being alone, of not identifying psychologically and intellectually with society's accepted standards;
- Alienation from one's self: In this sense, the individual feels that he is detached from himself. This type of alienation is attributed to people in an urban environment, in which they are instrumentalized by each other.

Social alienation

Social alienation is the feeling by an individual that his self is not interacting with the selves of others, in other words, that his ties to others are weak and that he feels little or no love or social affection towards them. It is the result of the social rejection in whose shadow the individual lives when constantly deprived of emotional warmth.¹⁴ Social alienation afflicts all those who are incapable of living within a society, or who have no need to do so, because they are self-sufficient. According to Fromm, the essence of alienation is that others become foreign to the affected individual and that one cannot relate to others as long as one does not possess a firm sense of self; without the latter, one is without depth or meaning.¹⁵

Social isolation places individuals outside of themselves and exposes them to a series of factors that affect their productivity, block their creativity, make them incapable of freely expressing their being, and prevent them from flourishing and evolving as human beings.¹⁶ Individuals who suffer from social alienation not only place themselves outside the dominant

¹¹ Fromm, no date, p. 150.

¹² Schacht, 1980, pp. 180-186.

¹³ Al-Shaqīrāt discusses alienation in antiquity, for example in Greek thought, as analyzed by Lewis Morgan, the 19th-century anthropologist in his *Ancient Society*, who was subsequently much quoted by Marx (al-Shaqīrāt, 1987, pp. 13-14).

¹⁴ Al-Nūrī, 1979, p. 33.

¹⁵ Ḥammād, 1995, p. 42.

¹⁶ Schacht, 1980, p. 183.

social norms, but defy them and try to overthrow them. This can be viewed in a negative or a positive-revolutionary light, but in either case it aims at changing the laws of society.¹⁷

The evolution of the tools of production in a society necessarily lead to changes in production relations within that society. In the case of our Arab societies, and perhaps throughout the Third World, the influence of the stronger cultural center, coming from outside the social entity, is exceedingly strong: Cultural subordination imposes new, unexpected material conditions, which bring about the formation of an accompanying social-ethical market system before the original values of the former social structure have disappeared, giving rise to sources of social, cultural and political alienation.

Such a tendency is usually manifested in the wake of great national defeats, and the attendant despair which they cause. In the case of Arabs, especially Arab intellectuals and authors, and perhaps also politicians, the defeat made them feel that they were still living in an immature society. Their sense of alienation took the form of blind, submissive deprivation, which left the individual with no choice but to become transformed into an agent of Western products, which come in finished form. The individual's role then becomes to create the proper climate for marketing them, despite having no connection at all to their social means of production; that is social alienation.¹⁸

Fromm argues that both enjoying liberty and being deprived of it can lead to social alienation. Liberty can be the cause of an individual's feeling of alienation, because, while it frees one from traditional and awakens a sense of freedom, it also at the same time makes one feel lonely and isolated, and fills one with doubts and worry, with the ultimate result that one surrenders oneself once again and becomes committed to irrational behavior. Yet a loss of liberty can also arouse alienation in the individual. Mental or rational alienation are the result of one individual's subjugation by another, who completely dominates that person, as described by Hegel.¹⁹

Digest of the novel *Sulṭāna* (1987)

The novel was published in Beirut by Dār al-Ḥaqā'iq lil-Ṭibā'a wal-Nashr wal-Tawzī'. It consists of five-hundred large-format pages in two parts. The first part contains two two-hundred-page sections entitled "al-Qarya" ("The Village") and "Ammān" ("Amman"). The second is called "al-Tadhakkur" ("Remembering"). Its one-hundred pages are divided into the

¹⁷ Al-'Abdullāh, 2995, p. 80.

¹⁸ In an article entitled "al-Ightirāb al-ijtimā'ī wal-ghurba fī arba' qīṣaṣ lil-kātib al-filastīnī 'Alā' Ḥlēhil" ("Social Alienation and Exile in Four Stories by the Palestinian Writer 'Alā' Ḥlēhil", Sheerit discusses three short stories ("Zawjī sā'iq bāṣ" ["My Husband Is a Bus Driver"; 2008]; "Ta'āyush" ["Coexistence"; 2008]; "al-Sajjāda" ["The Prayer Mat"; 2003]) and one novel (*al-Sīrk* [*the Circus*; 2001]) by 'Alā' Ḥlēhil (b. 1974). The texts she examines focus on the collapse of personal relationships and other issues connected to communication failures and misunderstandings among people. These stories deal with the theme of alienation, which has been a distinctive feature of Palestinian literature since the very beginning, describing feelings of isolation and impotence in the face of neglect and solitude (for more on the theme of social alienation, see Sheerit 2015).

¹⁹ Shattā, 1984, p. 44.

following sections: "Ṭu'ma yatadhakkar" ("Ṭu'ma Remembers"), "Jerjes yatakhakkar" ("Jerjes Remembers") and "Sulṭāna tatadhakkar" ("Sulṭāna Remembers").²⁰

The first section of the novel's first part, "The Village", which takes up two-fifths of the entire book, is aptly named: In it, we gaze from Jerjes' house onto the first of the novel's environments, the mountain village on the edge of the desert, the scene which greets Zaydān the smuggler, who flees from the desert after having killed Saḥlūl the Bedouin, marking a failure in communication between the two types of society.²¹

The novel reflects the situation in Jordan until the mid-1950s and mentions the major events that marked the period: The emergence of the Communist Party and the prominence of certain sectors in society, such as grain and hashish merchants. The events are presented through the character of Sulṭāna, a strong woman, whom circumstance gave an opportunity to play a significant political, economic and social role.²²

The novel exposes the nature of the primary production relationship on which the agricultural system was based, consisting of collective labor and mutual aid, given freely to those who need the help of others to carry out certain tasks, and local consumption of agricultural produce, before it becomes a commercial product whose surplus is sold to the city or smuggled out of the country. As for the peasants' social structure, it appears richer and more varied than that of the Bedouin, and less strict and tyrannical.²³

The novel goes on to describe the opening of the economy and the introduction of commerce as a new element that affects production, and its attendant usury. Then came smuggling to and from Palestine. At first, before the war of 1948, wheat, lentils, chickpeas, barley and maize were smuggled into Palestine by way of *al-Sharī'a* (a section of the Jordan River), while olive oil, dried figs and raisins were smuggled on the way back. After 1948 commerce was basically with Israel.²⁴

In the second part of *Sulṭāna*, entitled "Remembering": "Jerjes Remembers", "Ṭu'ma Remembers" and "Sulṭāna Remembers", we read of the collapse of the Party. In the section entitled "Ṭu'ma Remembers" Ṭu'ma's membership in the Party is suspended and he replaces his Party ideology with the democratic idea that one should be open to relations with members of all classes.²⁵

In "Jerjes Remembers" the same wrecking technique continues. The scene moves from Amman to Cairo and the most important development is the destruction of the bridge between the world of sex and the clandestine world of the revolutionary. 'Izza (Jerjes' lover in Cairo) becomes an escalating sexual state in the public revolutionary sphere, just as

²⁰ Muṣliḥ, 1992, pp. 124-125.

²¹ Al-Azra'ī, 1997, p. 134.

²² Al-Qawāsmeh, 2006, p. 37.

²³ Al-Azra'ī, 1997, p. 135.

²⁴ Muṣliḥ, 1992, p. 127.

²⁵ Muṣliḥ, 1992, p. 133.

Sulṭāna became an escalating sexual state in the social space in Amman, with its focus on prestige, wealth and social standing.²⁶

As the novel passes its last station, in "Sulṭāna Remembers", the destruction fills the entire scene. The place on the Aqaba shore is completely destroyed, and replaced by a hut on a raging black sea, under gray skies, surrounded by large, silent trees, its branches heavy with snow, and Sulṭāna all alone.²⁷

Social alienation in the novel²⁸

The accelerated changes giving rise to Capitalism and the global technical revolution in all its forms, had a quite deleterious effect on the individual's relation to society. Individuals were forced to give up considerable components of personal freedom in order to maintain peaceful communication with their surroundings.²⁹ For that reason we find that writers such as Halsā, who originally came from a village, live in cities, which have their own social cultural dimensions, but still carry with them the values of the peaceful countryside or the chivalry of the nomads, and find the cities' social and human stress intolerable. Small wonder, then, that we see the first images of alienation in this Jordanian novel, represented by a hostile attitude towards the city, perceived here as mounting a social-urban attack on their authentic rural values.³⁰

Social alienation thus appears openly in the novel *Sulṭāna*. As Halsā said in an interview: "The novel in its initial form was an emotional protest against the transformation of family ties of solidarity and peasant-tribal traditions into commercial relations. In the second writing it turned into an attempted lesson on the emergence of the Arab *compradors* and the disintegration of family relations. However, in both manuscripts I retained the image I drew of those young people who searched for the meaning of life and for a way to escape small town inanity and restrictions".³¹

The novel describes rural Jordan, with its problems, contradictions, clans and tribes, and then moves to the city, where it focuses on revealing the cracks in society whose genuine values suffer a breakdown.³² In *Sulṭāna* Halsā does not restrict himself to describing the poor and oppressed social classes, although they do form the backbone of the novel. He also provides a picture of the bourgeoisie and depicts the relations between the different social classes. He highlights the role which the bourgeoisie plays in politics and in the country's social and cultural life, as well as the way in which it dilutes the poor classes and makes them socially and morally dissolute. He also sheds light on the role of parasitical elements in robbing the poor sectors in society of their human and moral spirit and in causing them to shed their values, customs and conduct by selling them like cattle.³³

²⁶ Muşliḥ, 1992, p. 133.

²⁷ Muşliḥ, 1992, p. 135.

²⁸ Al-Azra 'ī, 2004, p. 73.

²⁹ Al-Azra 'ī, 2004, p. 73.

³⁰ Al-Azra 'ī, 2004, p. 75.

³¹ Ḍamra, 2011, p. 121.

³² Sha 'bān, 2006, p. 57.

³³ 'Aliyyān, 2003, p. 21.

The narrator also describes the changes that have occurred in Bedouin society, which has been transformed into a society of merchants: "The Bedouin values began to take on new forms, which caused them to become similar to, or even identical with, the values and aspirations of commerce. Thus, instead of raids the way became open for smuggling hashish from Turkey and Lebanon, through Jordan, directly into Egypt, by way of the Bedouin of Sinai, or through Israel; the trade in diamonds smuggled from the Gulf of Aqaba into Israel also flourished".³⁴

In Amman we find that social relations are connected, in one way or another, with the nature of the city and the political, social, cultural, commercial and other changes that it had undergone: "Buying and selling, brokerage, financial institutions, cultural and intellectual clubs, the stories its leaders tell about the state, society, progress, Lenin, the Revolution and Gorki, and the plans of the US to fill the vacuum created by the bankruptcy of colonialist Imperialism in the countries of the Third World after World War II, the alliances, the opposition democratic member of Parliament who urges the Party to benefit from his role and his position, the Muṭrān school in Jabal 'Ammān, the rich in Jabal al-Luwaybida, where Sultāna lives, in addition to all forms of sex, the cheap and the expensive! And gatherings of the comrades of the Party and their talk about social dissolution and the hypocrisy of the villagers whom the city has swallowed and who still claim that living on the village garbage dumps is more honorable than living in the city's palaces".³⁵

In light of all these changes, it is not to be wondered that the novel's characters suffer from social alienation. Some of them collapse, for example Ṭu'ma, others deteriorate into the world of prostitution, for example Sultāna and her daughter, while still others, for example Jeries, fail in their social and emotional lives and sink into seeking pleasure with prostitutes. As part of the female characters' estrangement from their society and their personal surroundings, we see how the various opposing social classes blend and separate. It is vice that connects them: Sex, money, crime, murder, drugs, arms smuggling, intelligence agencies, and conflict among centers of power. Sultāna and her daughter Amīra are living examples of this, as their interests variously coincide and clash. They become rivals and use their feminine wiles to destroy their rivals. They paralyze others with sex, and destroy them physically if necessary.³⁶

The conflicts and thefts take various forms and come to encompass clerics as well. The priest Ṣalībā threatens a member of Parliament and robs him, descending into a world of crime and sex, where he becomes a partner of Sultāna and Amīra. He obeys their commands in the game of death chairs which the parties to the conflict operate with sophistication and a cold heart, for example the Shaykh, Ḥikmat and their lackeys.³⁷

Sultāna represents Jeries' first conception of sex. She was very close to social alienation, at least, with respect to her village and its traditions. During the main time described in the

³⁴ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 122.

³⁵ Al-Azra'ī, 1997, p. 137.

³⁶ 'Aliyyān, 2003, p. 34.

³⁷ 'Aliyyān, 2003, p. 40.

novel, she lived on the margins of life in the city, both geographically and socially.³⁸ In the village Sultāna feels constricted. She mocks its wretchedness, its filth and the villagers' avarice.³⁹ Sultāna was a free person who represented a new type of woman, shaped outside the context of village life and village traditions, a woman who did not experience being repressed by her tribe, dominated by her father or strictly controlled by her mother: A liberated woman whose superego had not yet formed.⁴⁰

"Sultāna took no heed of society's laws. For this reason she was more free and more audacious. She obeyed her inner freedom and no one frightened her".⁴¹ She used her influence to expand her operations of smuggling diamonds and hashish into Israel: "Those who saw her from the outside had no idea that this attractive woman, who on the outside seemed devoid of emotion and desire, possessed great strength and would crush anyone who stood in her way".⁴²

Sultāna obeyed her inner freedom. But this freedom also filled her with doubt and worry, and made her act irrationally.⁴³ Thus she sleeps with Huzayl, has a daughter from him, and later becomes disgusted with her body and with him, and expels him from her home.

Sultāna's alienation was so severe that she broke off contact with her daughter, who worked as a maid in a house in Amman, and became a prostitute. Once when Jeries visited her, he asked her about her daughter Amīra. Sultāna replied that she has not seen her. And when she asked Jeries about her, he told her what he knew, including what had happened with the member of Parliament.⁴⁴ Sultāna then whispered to him: "Whatever happens, she should watch herself. Did she have to shame us and shame herself? The bitch".⁴⁵

The relationship between Sultāna and her daughter was compassion rather than love. Amīra was sexually exploited and became a prostitute: "It was not love that drove her feelings towards her daughter, but compassion. She saw how she was being pushed into early old age, with no one to protect her. He had no idea how to obtain money, but knew how to spend it quickly and foolishly. What would happen to her when she was alone, when the money ran out, when the men would abandon her? Drink and men were all her life. She could marry, balance her pleasure with work. But the men who wanted to marry her shied away when they learned more about her".⁴⁶

The intertwined relationships in the novel are based on the benefits which they bring the characters, who belong to intellectually and culturally disparate social classes. Thus Amīra the adolescent girl, is led into prostitution and perversion by Tu'ma, a member of the Party

³⁸ Haddād, 1995, p. 126.

³⁹ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 156.

⁴⁰ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 184.

⁴¹ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 190.

⁴² Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, pp. 461-462.

⁴³ Shatā, 1984, p. 44.

⁴⁴ Tu'ma brought Amīra to the member of Parliament. He has sex with her, and later discovered that she was a minor and a virgin.

⁴⁵ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 432.

⁴⁶ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 469.

and of its Jerusalem Committee. He taught her how to prostitute herself and presented her to his friend the member of Parliament, who took her virginity. This served as a turning point that changed Amīra's views and attitudes.⁴⁷ Amīra seems to blame her mother for having neglected her and holds her responsible for her having become a prostitute. She avenges herself on her mother Sultāna by seducing the latter's lovers, leaving her mother furious and embittered.

The social alienation between Amīra and her mother is so extreme that it drives her to have sex with her mother's lover Hikmat, in her mother's home, a clear violation of the social norms.⁴⁸ Here is how Sultāna describes the moment when she discovered her daughter with her lover:

"The light in his room was still on. I pushed the door and entered. Both were naked. His eyes were glazed, as if a mouthful was stuck in his throat. Amīra covered him with the sheet and stood naked before me: - I came to him".

- "Cover yourself". Then she addressed Hikmat: - I'm Sultāna, Hikmat. Her daughter replied: - Sultāna, Sultāna. What do you mean Sultāna?

Sultāna slapped her daughter and left the room in rage".⁴⁹

And when Amīra met another of her mother's lovers as he came out of the house, she said to her scornfully:

- Just as I came in I encountered your boyfriend coming out. He wanted to run away from me. Answer me. Are you ashamed? The boy is nice. Why don't you answer me?

Sultāna said: - Answer what?

- I said that Sayf was a nice boy.

- You like him?

Amīra bursts out laughing: - Are you afraid? I have others, ma'am. And if you want...

Sultāna looked at her and said: - You're drunk.

Amīra replied boisterously: - Welcome hadji. Was praying what you and Sayf al-Dīn were doing?"⁵⁰

After some time, mother and daughter hug each other, and Sultāna tells her daughter that she is sorry and that she want to travel and go away from everyone.

The relationship between Sultāna and her daughter as described above may be understood as indicating instability and a weak emotional bond between the two.

Ṭu'ma, too, suffers from social alienation, especially after the Communist Party suspended

him on suspicion that he had connections to the security services. This made people very hostile towards him, so much so that he shied away from any warm human contact:⁵¹ "At first he was pained by people who hid their contempt and hostility but treated him with the kind of cold politeness that leaves no room for a profound human relationship. But these relations shaped him anew, until he himself came to feel profound aversion and physical disgust at any warm relationship. In fact, he could no longer bear the people who treated you with

⁴⁷ 'Aliyyān, 2003, p. 34.

⁴⁸ On social alienation, see Zahrān 2004.

⁴⁹ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 452.

⁵⁰ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 463.

⁵¹ See: al-Nūrī, 1979.

spontaneous warmth and poured out their heart to you. When he would encounter this kind of person, he would feel tense and oppressed, and then he would be overcome with a sense of boredom that made any further conversation impossible. He would fight against his boredom, but to no avail".⁵²

Jeries' social alienation can be discerned in a number of scenes in the novel. Jeries, a young intellectual, is aloof in his encounters with his colleagues. His reticence is due less to his personality than to the political debates and political "actions" he sees around him, although he is himself closer in age to an adolescent, sexually and intellectually. He is helpless in the face of the leftist politician's shameful attack on the underage girl. Here the relative nature of his consciousness is revealed, a premature consciousness that gives rise to personal alienation. One negative aspect of his personality is due to his feeling of intellectual superiority over his comrades. Because of this it is only natural that Jeries expects to be given a leadership role of some kind.⁵³ However, as he says, he has lost the battle in a dishonorable way.⁵⁴ This causes his sense of estrangement to deepen: "Ok, so I'm not in the [Communist] Party. They gave me to understand that I am not, so far, a member of the Party. But they naturally will eventually nominate me. I felt truly insulted: They are members and I'm not!".⁵⁵

Jeries' relationship with Sultāna is evidence for his social alienation. His behavior violated the values and customs of his society, which considered both Sultāna and her daughter as wanton: "What I felt inside me wasn't desire, it was a passion that reshaped me. It was a moment in which the conflict between love and desire disappeared, a moment in which I violated the village's values, which considered Sultāna and her daughter fallen women".⁵⁶

Jeries denies his rural origins, evidence for his social alienation from his environment. He feels that he does not belong, intellectually, culturally and in his view of life. As Hajda, quoted by Schacht (1980), points out, one sign of a person's alienation from his society is the feeling that one has lost one's sense of solidarity with others, derived from the awareness that one shares their opinions, concerns and tastes. He sees alienation as a feeling of "non-belonging or non-participation", reflecting one's isolation from social and cultural intercourse.⁵⁷ Not only does he not share his fellow-villagers' traditions and values, in his mind he mocks their tastes and concerns when riding with them on the bus to Amman: "From the very beginning, from the moment we left the village, I began to feel detached from its people. In fact, even before that, when hugging Sultāna, when walking together to the bus, when we agreed to meet again in Amman, and then when Sultāna promised to marry me in Beirut, all that took place outside the village's conventions. And inside the bus the villagers repeated the same jokes that I heard whenever I traveled with them to Amman: Was the bus fed properly? Did it get enough straw and barley? I felt completely detached from them as we

⁵² Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 393.

⁵³ Ḥaddād, 1995, p. 132.

⁵⁴ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 261.

⁵⁵ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 224.

⁵⁶ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 151.

⁵⁷ Schacht, 1980, p. 217.

passed along the streets of Amman and they made fun of the women who were going about with their shoulders bare".⁵⁸

The new world which Jeries entered in Amman (the world of politics, which he described as "a secret world") is described as strange, as a world filled with excitement, fear and enemies: "Another aspect of this strange world, which grew suddenly. Not only were there thousands of friends who waited to accept me, there were also numerous enemies who were lying in wait for me, whom I did not know, nor did they know me, but between us raged a battle for life or death. We will win, because history is with us. Amman became charged with excitement under its placid exterior. All the people who seemed neutral to me became either allies or enemies".⁵⁹

This strange world caused Jeries to long for the social ties of his village, to counter the fragile relations in the city. In his words: "And suddenly, as I was drinking my coffee, I remembered that tomorrow I would see Sultāna. I felt the intoxication of victory. We the villagers have our own very secret, very beautiful world. We come as raiders, carrying our superiority over the city under our skins. I no longer cared about the two girls. I had my victory over this city, we had our victory. It was an overwhelming victory over me fellow student who ignored me".⁶⁰

Ṣalībā the priest represents an extreme case of social alienation. His mother married him off to her brother's twenty-five-year-old daughter Ṣubḥā when he was eleven years old. At the time Ṣalībā had no idea what marriage was. He would escape from his bed and go to sleep in his mother's lap, until she locked him in the room where he slept with Ṣubḥā: "At the age of thirty Ṣubḥā became emaciated and her back became bent, while the young seventeen-year-old grew to be one of the tallest people in the village. His adolescence was rough. He misinterpreted everything that was said to him and he became violent. He thought that everyone laughed at him because he was so tall, and would not take him seriously as a man. I became involved in fights for no reason, and people began to avoid him, because he would provoke anyone who even looked at him, because he thought they were mocking him".⁶¹

Ṣalībā had many amorous adventures, including an affair with the wife of the shepherd who worked in their farm, and a relationship with Sultāna, in violation of the values and conventions of his society. The strangest of all was the sexual relationship he had with Sultāna when she was still a girl playing with toys. He met with her and deflowered her in the hut next to his house: "On the following day Sultāna did not come. Ṣalībā felt very big and funny in his body. Here he was a man of nearly forty years, with three children, the oldest of whom was a college student, confining himself in a narrow hut, with no light, waiting for a girl who does not come. A girl who plays with him".⁶²

⁵⁸ Halsā, 2003, vil. 3, p. 202.

⁵⁹ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 228.

⁶⁰ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 221.

⁶¹ Halsā, 2003, vol.3, p. 72.

⁶² Halsā, 2003, vil. 3, p. 180.

Through Ṣalībā's relationship with Sulṭāna we learn of just how alienated he is from his own wife, and how weak their mutual affection is:⁶³

- Were it not that my mother, may God have mercy on her, afflicted me with Ṣubḥā, I would marry you. At any rate, she has one foot in the grave...

She stopped kissing and caressing him and said:

- Don't talk like that.

He gave her a surprised look. She said:

- She's the mother of your children.

He tried to silence her with an embrace. Who is this girl that wants to give him a lesson in morals?"⁶⁴

Even stranger is Ṣalībā's declaration that he wants to become a priest: "Ṣālībā entered Khalīl the priest's home. He was in the middle of performing prayer rites. He gave Ṣalībā a grave look and motioned him to remain silent, as he readied himself to resume the rite. But Ṣalībā accosted Khalīl, wrested the censer from his hand and used its metal chain to strike his backside. Khalīl's mother attacked him and tried to pull him away from her son, but he kicked her with his foot, then grabbed Khalīl by the ear and forced him to write a petition in the community's name in which they demand that the archbishop appoint Ṣalībā 'Abd al-Masīḥ as the village priest, after the previous priest had died and left his position unfilled. Khalīl obeyed. Most of the members of the community signed the petition, men and women, and so Father Ṣalībā became the Roman Orthodox priest of the village".⁶⁵

Ṣalībā thus smashed and abandoned all norms and became alienated from his society and its values,⁶⁶ using force to impose himself on the villagers as priest.

Halsā used the technique of stream-of-consciousness to delve into his protagonists' souls, their confusion, their inconsistency and their disappointments. He uses a number of devices for this purpose, including monologues, dreams and flashbacks. The novel is filled with inner monologues by its protagonists, especially Jeries, whose conversations with himself reveal his fears, terrors, questions, perplexities and solitude. His is a shattered soul, fragmented and lonely, as can be seen in the following monologues.

The novel begins with the following monologue by the narrator: "I awakened from my sleep to a world without sound. Only silence, and a dark space. It was a bit frightening, but filled with numerous potentialities. Awakening became for me a jump into the unknown. I asked myself, still numb from sleep: 'Where am I? In Amman or in the village'".⁶⁷

The novel's monologues take on the character of a soliloquy, "as if the narrator, behind his soliloquy, intends to expose what is happening inside the character, or perhaps intends to draw the reader's attention to these issues and to underline their importance".⁶⁸ Soliloquy is

⁶³ On social alienation see: al-Nūrī, 1979.

⁶⁴ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 182.

⁶⁵ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 47.

⁶⁶ Rajab, 1978, p. 46; Shatā, 1984, p. 222.

⁶⁷ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, pp. 13-14.

⁶⁸ Samāḥa, 1999, p. 177.

used in scenes that describe the terror felt by the narrator, Jeries: "Like a steel fist, the image of Sulṭāna's face squeezed my heart. I felt I was choking. I sighed, and fell from the store roof to the courtyard. I made a show in front of my mother, who saw and heard everything even in her sleep, and who sleeps with both eyes open".⁶⁹

In another conversation which Jeries has with himself, the monologue is mixed with a dream: "I was given every opportunity, but lost my ability to act. I entered a state between wakefulness and dream, mixed with visions. I was reading the pages of a book that I did not understand at all. I conversed with someone else inside me. He annoyed me and I wanted to cut him off and get rid of his company. I read while he dreamt of a woman. He said 'I'm dreaming of a woman', then the dream dissipated. It made me lose my sense of truth. Constant supervision from which I extricate myself. .⁷⁰ In this scene we see a monologue mixed with a daydream, a clear sign of the narrator's disturbed mental state: The psyche's escape into dreams and frightful nightmares is clear evidence for that person's alienation. The dream here is a device that fits in with the alienated personality.

In *Sulṭāna* there is also much use of flashbacks, mostly to events in the village and in Amman, although the protagonist, Jeries, is in Cairo. He meets 'Izza and tells her stories. At the same time as the narrator takes care to observe what is happening, he continuously evokes the past, using this modern device, which views time as many-sided, in which the past can appear as flowing together in a disorderly manner with the stream of the present. This is connected with the character's inner life.⁷¹ In the following example Jeries evokes his village, his mother and his childhood: "I would awake to the thumping of the coffee mortar as my father ground the coffee and sang in tune with the blows, and to the voices of the guests as they talked in rough voices".⁷²

In a final evocation of his home and his mother he says: "When I shut my eyes I felt dizzy, as if I had drunk too much. Samīr tossed about next to me and drove sleep away from me. My mother now sleeps by herself on the store roof, hearing in her sleep the weeping of Ghayth's daughters, the short, sharp cries of the sleeping hens. She may awaken from a dog's bark, a rooster's shout, and think of me ..., of my brother, Is he alive or dead?, and of those who died. Then she will pray: 'O Saint Mary, o Mother of God, o compassionate One...'.⁷³

In this last scene, which depicts his mother's daily rites as she awakens, time and place are mixed, together with sentimental feelings. It describes the worry which besets her because her son is far away, and her attempt to escape her fears through prayer.

Place plays an important role in highlighting the extent of the alienation from which the novel's main character (Jeries) suffers. The novel's structure is based on a geographical dialectic: The feeling of estrangement in a place that is not the locus of one's intimate

⁶⁹ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 86.

⁷⁰ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, pp. 86-87.

⁷¹ Wādī, 1989, p. 360.

⁷² Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 34.

⁷³ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 262.

memories in Bachelard's sense⁷⁴ rejects memory, because it nourishes the waking dream of place represented by the allure of Jeries' act or narration, an allure in which place is represented as the locus of pleasure: This is the dialectic of alienation and memory.⁷⁵

From the very beginning, Halsā in *Sulṭāna* gives place a great role in expressing his protagonist's feelings. We can distinguish three spaces in the novel.⁷⁶ The first is that of the village. Here Halsā was able to reveal his feelings of geographical alienation using elements of nature, and to present the psychological, unconscious dimension of the author-hero's personality within the framework of a place.⁷⁷ Jeries (the novel's hero) perceives night in the village as charged with fear. This is part of the heritage of a mountain village, that suffered from raids by the surrounding Bedouins: "The night is populated. The dead rise from their graves when the sun disappears and throng in the village. Their presence is the strongest thing there is in dreams and in the silence".⁷⁸ Thus place, connected with time, mingles with human emotions, turning the village into a place of fear, solitude and boredom.⁷⁹

Jeries' geographical alienation is also evident in the space of the village. The novel describes the Jordan Valley and the Jerusalem Hills, and Jeries' longing for his village: "In the valley the Jordan River flows quickly to the Dead Sea. Then he leaves the Jordan Valley and rises until he reaches the Jerusalem Hills. We sat on the rock and gazed at the scenery. Although I see it every day, it never ceases to bring me joy. I dreamt that one day I would return to settle in the village, that I would build a house-fortress on the edge of the heights. In my imagination the house contains cellars and secret passages; it would be surrounded by a garden with huge trees and a wall".⁸⁰ In this scene we notice the use of the devices of dreams and flashbacks, whose purpose is to express the narrator's sense of alienation in his present place and his longing to return to his village and to fulfill his dream of building his home there.

The second space is Amman, a city that at the end of the 1940s experienced the most furious wave of transformation in its modern history. As it made the transition to urban structures and values, forms of life and activity there became more complex. The daily excursion, which previously just involved the company of Buṭrus, now turned into a daily meeting in a Western-style café. The café was perhaps the place that was most filled with life, a kind of stage, a small place where different worlds met. Sometimes these worlds would interact,

⁷⁴ The "familiar place" according to Bachelard is the place evoked by childhood memories, "the place that we love, towards which we are attracted because it intensifies one's presence within bounds that are characterized as protecting" (Bachelard, 1996, p. 31).

⁷⁵ Al-Ṭuwaysī, 2004, p. 170.

⁷⁶ "Space" here is the geographical realm of a novel, or of a discourse in general. Usually it is called "geographical space" (al-Ḥamīdānī 2000, p. 53). Yaqīn (1997) defines space as something more general than place, not only because it encompasses all the places in a novel, but also because it denotes "what is farther and deeper than geographical delimitation, although that is the basis. It allows us to examine spaces that are not restricted to reality, to embrace the imaginary and the mental, all the images which the word 'space' can encompass" (Yaqīn, 1997, p. 240).

⁷⁷ Sha'bān, 2006, p. 241.

⁷⁸ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 28.

⁷⁹ Ḥaddād, 1995, p. 134.

⁸⁰ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 27.

through the authority wielded by the eyes or ears of others, and at other times each world would remain distinct and independent of the others.⁸¹

Jeries is afraid of the waiters: "I remembered the restaurants that I would enter when I was a youth. I was afraid the waiter would take my money and then not bring me my food, that he would frighten me because my clothes were inappropriate, that he would hit me because I ate without I did not know the rules that I should know".⁸² This the "struggle of places" broke out inside this young man, a struggle between his rural traditions and the realities of the modern city that he had not yet internalized, symbolized by the waiter.⁸³

The third geographical space in *Sultāna* is Cairo. At first Halsā gives it an abstract character, beyond the basic level of time and place. We are transported quite suddenly from the end of the 1940s to the 1970s, by way of merging the faces of Sultāna and 'Izza. In light of the identification woman-dream or Sultāna-'Izza, the abstract nature of this place makes sense. But then this place regains its palpable character in the chapter on remembering, specifically, in the part devoted to Jeries.⁸⁴ This part of the novel sees the collapse of all the conventional barriers between the foundations on which Jeries' life is built. The past (the novel's basic time) intersects with the present (the time of the novel's composition), Sultāna intersects with 'Izza, the maid (Amīra) intersects with 'Izza, the novel intersects with the life actually lived, and intuition intersects with the other senses. All these intersections reach their climax in this, the third, geographical space.⁸⁵

"It was an annoying conversation, which led nowhere. When he silenced him, the decision burst forth. He said: 'It is time that I went back to Jordan... to her'. He tried to observe the words in which he formulated this, to view them objectively, but he saw himself entering the sitting room. Without turning on the lights, he stretched out on the sofa, and immediately fell into a daydream".⁸⁶ Perhaps this constricted geographical space, whose books assail him and leave him barely enough space to write, helped him come to his emotional decision: "It is time that I went back to Jordan, to her". Place here is a geographical equivalent to the possibilities of life as a whole⁸⁷ and may have served as the instigator of his alienation, since his love for his homeland entices him, while he feels constricted in the place where he is, a place that confines his dreams and his feelings.

We may say that *Sultāna* is a novel about the various manifestations of place in Jordan. This is clear from its form, and from the way place is reflected in the novelist's mind at the subjective and objective levels, as a place that compensates for his absence from the homeland. This is why the local atmosphere of Halsā's homeland (Jordan) is present in this

⁸¹ Haddād, 1995, p. 137.

⁸² Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 271.

⁸³ Haddād, 1995, p. 137.

⁸⁴ Haddād, 1995, p. 139.

⁸⁵ Haddād, 1995, pp. 139-140.

⁸⁶ Halsā, 2003, vol. 3, p. 444.

⁸⁷ Haddād, 1995, p. 140.

novel more than any of his other writings; in fact, in the entire work the Jordanian environment is nearly the only one that is present.⁸⁸

CONCLUSION

The study finds manifestations of social alienation in every one of the novel's characters, although to greatly varying degrees, depending on the characters' qualities, their social roles and their ability to face the social, economic and political changes which beset Jordanian society, affected its members' lives and psyches, and contributed to the appearance of manifestations of alienation among them.

In the novel *Sulṭāna* Halsā provides a model description of how an individual becomes lost within his own society. This is not due to happenstance, but is directly attributable to political, social and economic changes that gave rise to a new reality, with which members of society were unable to cope. The alienated personalities lost the social standards needed to regulate their behavior. Some of them, especially intellectuals, suffered from solitude and a feeling that they were psychologically and mentally unable to accept the conventional norms of their society. This drove some characters into moral and ethical decline, so that they failed to express the uniqueness of their identity, and felt lost, due to the huge gap between its ideal form and the way it was in reality. Examples of this can be found in the characters of Sulṭāna, her daughter Amīra, Ṭu'ma, Jeries and Hazīm.

All of these characters suffer from severe social alienation. Some of them, like Ṭu'ma, suffer a collapse, while others, like Sulṭāna and her daughter Amīra, descend into the world of prostitution in order to gain power and money. Still others, like Jeries, experience failure in their social and emotional life and immerse themselves in sexual pleasure with prostitutes.

Clearly the various artistic devices which Halsā used in this novel, such as monologues, dreams, hallucinations and flashbacks, play a major role in highlighting the inner struggles in the minds of the novel's characters and help express their fears, anxieties, worries, their sense of loss and alienation from their society, and their inability to realize their dreams and aspirations.

Lastly, the study showed that the Jordanian-born novelist Ghālib Halsā was one of the modernist novelists who emerged in the 1960s, and who imposed their writings on the literary stage. He stood out as a sharp opponent of the ruling regimes in the Arab world, who expressed his views by means of the themes and the devices which appear prominently in his novels, as a result of which he was forced into exile and constantly had to change his place of residence throughout the Arab world. Halsā benefited greatly from European culture and Western writers, as reflected in his narrative techniques and literary themes, so that in the final analysis he moved far away from the Jordanian environment and its literature in the 1960s.

⁸⁸ Sha'bān, 2006, p. 91.

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