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**Homeland Alienation after the American War  
of 2003 in Iraqi's Selected Novels**

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**Abstract:**

The researcher Abdul Salim Hussam mentioned in his research “Theme Of Alienation In Modern Literature” that alienation can be as the basic form of rootlessness, which forms the subject of defined many psychological, sociological, literary and philosophical studies. It’s a major theme of human condition in the contemporary epoch. It is only natural that a pervasive phenomenon like alienation should leave such an indelible impact upon the contemporary literature. Alienation emerges as natural consequence of existential predicament both in intrinsic and extrinsic terms. The theme of alienation has been variously dealt with persistently and unflinchingly in modern literature. The alienated protagonist is a recurrent figure in much of the twentieth century American and European fiction. Alienation in its various forms has been dealt with in the existentialistic literature. Owing to its historical and socio-cultural reasons, the Indo-English literature also, could not remain unaffected by it. Alienation is the result of loss of identity. The dispossessed personality's search for identity is a common place theme in modern fiction. Man fails to perceive today the very purpose behind life and the relevance of his existence in a hostile world. Edmund Fuller remarks that in our age “man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin, but

from inner problems a conviction of isolation, randomness, meaninglessness in his way of existence ". (Hussam 67).

Present-day writers, who use the term "alienation", differ very much in the ways in which they understand and define it. Some authors think that the concept can be applied both to man and to nonhuman entities, to God, world, and nature. Most writers insist that it is applicable on the other hand, only to humans. Some of those who apply it only to humans insist that it can refer only to individuals and not to society as a whole. According to a number of such authors, the no adjustment of the individual to the society in which he lives is a sign of his alienation. (Encyclopedia 1).

The Writer Sinan Antoon in his Essay *The American* the novel of *The American Granddaughter* ( A Review, said that *Granddaughter* by the Iraqi writer Inaam Kajaji is a clear example of alienation, isolation, and war with the destruction it causes in peoples It is and societies. Hence, its events and characters will be analyzed. classified as one of the most important literary works in the post- This novel was nominated for the Booker .colonial literature in Iraq Prize for Arabic Fiction 2009.( Antoon 1).

American The events of the novel began after the outbreak of the war against Iraq and finished before the war ended, although the war included all the provinces of Iraq, but the events of the novel started from Baghdad Zina is the main character of the novel which all events revolve around. She spent most of her life outside Iraq. She will return to her country with the occupier, so that the events of the novel became complicated.

At the beginning of America's occupation of Iraq, 15 years after leaving Baghdad, Zina Behnam, not an American in the first place, she is an Iraqi who gained American citizenship. She returns to her war-torn homeland as translator for the US Army where she finds She knew that the American herself torn by conflicting allegiances. forces need a translator who accompanies them in Iraq with a good salary, so she decided to join that job as soon as possible.

I repeated after Fox News that I was going on a patriotic mission. I was a soldier stepping forward to help my government, my people, and my army, our American army that would bring down Saddam and liberate a nation from its suffering. (Kachachi 10)

The difficult family circumstances she was living in in America forced her to accept that job, even though she knows the difficulty of .this job

How could a powerless immigrant like me serve the great United States of America? It was impossible to remain

indifferent after witnessing that inferno, impossible to be content with my small hopes and to carry on living with my mother's coughing and my brother's drugged stupor.

(12)

She had left Iraq as a little kid. Although half-Assyrian on her father's side, her Arabic was fluent thanks to his love of the language and the poetry he recited. The father Sabah Bahnam was a famous news broadcaster who escaped with his small family with a forged passport to Jordan first. He waited until he was permitted to travel to the United States, after going through a harsh experience due to a slip of the tongue in which he objected to the long news bulletin. He was arrested and tortured. The prospect of moving out of the miserable Seven Mile area in Detroit, securing a down payment for a bigger house in Southfield, buying a new car, and putting her drug-addicted brother in hospital, are as important motivations for Zina as the Fox News mantras about democracy and liberation she believes, and repeats to herself. She decided to join the US army and work as a translator in Iraq, and then she gained a new experience in her life. Zina started thinking about the seriousness of her going to Iraq, working there after all those years of her life in America. "The girl who grew up following her dreams like balloons at birthdays will go to war, the girl who cried

once or twice because of a failed love will go to work with the US  
)31 (military”

At the beginning, she has to go to Washington to attend the Central Intelligence Agency, where she has several meetings, she has to attend seminars there, she learns about her expected role, maps and films about the country. The seminars at the Central Intelligence Agency have made her skeptical of the job she hoped to do from the beginning. She worries about the nature of her job, whether she will only practice a linguistic activity, or whether she is required differently, she says to herself after that: “I was applying for work as an interpreter, not as a secret agent” (16).

When she arrives in Iraq, she has to learn that there are some restrictions she has to follow, she does not talk to the locals or make contact with them: “unnecessary chatter that could endanger me and my colleagues. Orders demanded I be mute” (7).

Another limitation is the prohibition on exercise imposed upon translators due to mortal danger. Translators should not go into town alone, because interpreters were persecuted and slaughtered like sheep. After a few months in Iraq, Zina is anything but satisfied with her job: “My work is exciting, but it leads to a kind of depressive mood” (152).

She questions her role as a translator in the United State Army: “Did my father teach me the language and trained me in careful

pronunciation so that I could end up an accredited interpreter for the US Army?" (131).

Now in Iraq, she begins to face her family, especially her grandmother, Rahma, who refuses Zina's job with the US Army, and tried to change her ideas towards her motherland, Iraq. Her traditional grandmother, the only family member that Zina believes she has in Iraq, disapproves of her granddaughter's involvement with the occupying forces. To her grandmother, Zina is nothing but a collaborator when she accuses of disloyalty. She returned to her homeland "riding the occupation tanks" (65), wearing the uniform of the occupation army, in contrast to her deceased Iraqi grandfather, whose officer uniform grandma hangs on the national holiday every year. In several passages of the novel, Zina expresses how society values her newly assumed role: "They turned and looked at me like I was the spokesperson for the enemy" (140). She is even worse for the Iraqis than the US soldiers:

The Iraqis thought of my comrades as foot soldiers of the occupation, merely performing their military service and following orders. They had no say in the war. In a way they were like Iraqi soldiers in the Iran-Iraq War and the Kuwait invasion. But they saw me as a traitor (144).

In Baghdad, Zina meets two 'brothers' she knows nothing about them. When she falls deeply in love with Muhaemen, a militant in the Zina begins to Al Mehdi Army, she begins to question all her values. face many problems in her mother land, Iraq, and then begins to face a strange feeling inside her, which is the feeling of alienation inside the homeland, Iraq. Is this the country she always dreamed of, can she stay and live in it, or should she return to her other country, America.

Zina expected that as soon as she arrived in Iraq, the feeling of alienation that had accompanied her throughout her life would disappear. She is now forced to remain in her work with the After few months .occupying forces against her occupied country, Iraq in Iraq, Zina was not satisfied with her new job. She did not feel satisfied among the American forces. She was torn between her work after the death of her grandmother, she and her family in Iraq. So, decided not to renew her contract with the American forces, after the end of her work in Iraq, she returned to America, but she thinks about all the events that she went through there. Within her, there are different feelings of alienation, nostalgia, and memories that remained in her mind.

To Zina, America means “home”. She is proud of her American citizenship and her Iraqi origins. She sees Iraq through her parents’



eyes; a romantic view, strengthened by her father's love for the beauty of classical Arabic language and poetry, and by the Chaldean and Assyrian heritage of her Christian grandmother in Baghdad. However, during her mission as a US-Army translator in Iraq her romantic view suffers from many changes, she faced the reality of war with death and destruction. Here, Zina describes her work as a translator in Iraq, as the result of her Arabic roots: "The price of my precious language, the price of my blood" (10)

She faces her grandmother's respect to the memory of her grandfather. The former colonel in the Iraqi army whose uniform she treasures, and who sees Zina as a kind of a traitor. Zina is set apart, she no longer identifies herself as an Iraqi as she did when she was young, she realizes that she cannot be part of a culture where she does not share the same values, and she never really knew what it meant to be Iraqi. Therefore, that identity can no longer exist for her. She returns to her "home" in American uniform and sees everything old with new eyes. She meets her grandmother, Rahma. Who sticks to her roots and traditions and tries to change Zina's worldview? Through her work between the two fronts, and her love for Muhaemen, her Iraqi milk brother, she finds herself in deep conflict and backs up her own values, identity and role as a translator in Iraq.

Back at the airport I bought a mug printed with 20.01.09, Bush's last day in office. He'd go, all right, but his curse would remain, polluting the waters of the two rivers for generations to come.

They'd call it the curse of Bush, like the curse of the pharaohs. I think Americans will call it that too, and NASA will have to send out 194)( space missions in search of a curse-free galaxy.

The writer wanted to criticize the government and the United State President George W. Bush, who led the war against Iraq. The war, in addition to killing thousands of Iraqis, caused the death of more than :four thousand American soldiers and employees who worked in Iraq

Bush was sad about the four thousand American soldiers who were killed in Iraq. He said that he thought a lot about every single one of them. Our poor president. How could he possibly hold four thousand distinct thoughts in his head? I didn't want to add to his intellectual difficulties by becoming number four thousand and one. No, I hadn't come to my birthplace to die, just to fall in love with a Mission (Impossible man. Well, unrequited love was another kind of death. 193)

Here the message became clear, Kachachi wants to convey the idea that most Iraqis who live abroad feel the same feelings that Zina Bahnam felt. They live the same life, alienation, loneliness, and

difficulties in working and getting money in exile, forced safety and displacement and other problems that make them never feel stability. The same if they return to their homeland, the country is still under occupation, security does not exist, and most Iraqi families have migrated in search of safety, especially those families who are looking for a better future for their children. The Iraqi citizen feels alienated inside his homeland, as he is not allowed to leave his home except for certain roaming times determined by the American occupation forces. anyone who violates these instructions is subject to arrest or death. Most of the Iraqi families have become unable to meet each other for long periods because of these conditions, and to avoid any confrontations or problems with the occupying forces. Iraqi families are now communicating by phone.

The novel ends with the return of Zina to the US after the death of her grandmother, while her identity and beliefs have changed significantly. It ends with the same events as it began, Zina returned to America bearing thoughts, concerns and confusion about everything that happened to her in Iraq. She did not achieve what she was thinking of helping the Iraqi people there. She could not maintain her love for Muhaymen. At the same time, she could not end the feeling of alienation there, so she ended her story with her father's touching words:

Muhaymen stayed behind and I promoted him to my keepers of sorrows. I brought no presents and no keepsakes. I don't need reminders. I just repeat after my father: I'd give my right hand if I should ever forget you, Baghdad. (195)

So, why did Zina go to Iraq? Was it for money only? Or was it curiosity to go to homeland? Was she fooled by American propaganda and the War on Terror slogans? Definitely part of Zina's dilemma in the novel is identity crisis for being a part of a colonial army subjugating her indigenous homeland; the fact that she is the colonial and the colonized at the same time:

Was I a hypocrite, a two faced American?...I collapsed into myself as I watched Baghdad being bombed and the columns of smoke rising after each American attack. It was like watching myself use my mom's cigarette lighter to set my own hair on fire. (13)

Inaam Kachachi also portrays the dual tragedy of her native land: America's failure and the humiliation of Iraq. The American Granddaughter depicts the American occupation of Iraq through the eyes of a young Iraqi-American woman. Through the narrator's conflicting emotions, we see the tragedy of a country which, having battled to emerge from dictatorship, then finds herself under foreign occupation, at the beginning of America's occupation of Iraq.

### **Nostalgia and alienation in the novel**

Zina, focuses on the features of ' The main character in the novel alienation between two countries; her current country, America which she feels that she does not belong to, and her original country. Iraq in which she feels alienated after various changes took place after the She was happy when she was nominated to work in Iraq. She .war went to Iraq, thinking that she had come to liberate her country from the previous regime. Unfortunately, she was surprised by the reaction in the Iraqi street, especially her grandmother. Rahma who was shocked when she saw her granddaughter wearing American military Poor people of Iraq, they will not "clothes, working with the enemy. believe their eyes when they will open to freedom, even the old man of them will return as a little boy drinking milk and taste the taste of (18) "life as I lived it here

At the beginning of the novel, the writer showed a feeling of nostalgia for the past through the character of Zina who remembered her childhood in Iraq, specifically in the city of Mosul, and how she used to spend most of her time in Grandma Rahma's house where all family members gather. This is the feeling that Zina and her family lost after she traveled to America

They took me to Mosul one day when I was little. It was the Easter holidays, early April, and the valleys were ablaze with chamomile

flowers. The sprawling yellow vastness bewitched me, the scent of nature made me dizzy. The wild poppies growing out of the cracks in the rocks were an astonishing sight, as red as the cheeks of my cousins when they walked out of the bathroom with water dripping from their long hair. How could I not love Mosul, when everyone there spoke (13). with my grandmother's accent?

Zina believed that when she arrives in Iraq, all feelings of alienation will disappear and that she will regain all her old memories. In contrast, she is surprised by the presence of the same feeling of alienation within her country. As the US army has controlled most streets in Baghdad, When she left .there is no security and safety in this country now Baghdad with all the tragedy that she experienced there and decided to return to America, she discovered that she was repeating the same feeling of alienation that her parents had always experienced. She I brought no "discovered that it was impossible to forget her homeland. presents and no keepsakes. I don't need reminders. I just repeat after my father: I'd give my right hand if I should ever forget you, .( 176)"Baghdad

Although Zina has lived most of her life outside her country Iraq, the writer intended to show her cultural identity through her memories there, especially the house of the grandmother Rahma; Her childhood memories in this old house and nostalgia for those days, old songs, friends, and family gathering. She finds it hard to understand why her

parents turn so emotional when they talk about Iraq, or to find a justification for her father's words: "my country is dear to me even if it makes me suffer" (118)

In contrast to those memories, there are the opposite in America where there is a lack of social ties and true feelings; This was clear when Zina began to fall in love with Muhaemen. Many critics considered it a love for the homeland and identity. Muhaemen also refused Zina's work with the American forces and gets angry when she tells him that America is her second home. "I only know the motherland. I cannot imagine the homeland as the aunt or the uncle, what makes me laugh the most is the expression my second homeland". (52)

The writer also showed the theme of alienation when Zina's parents remembered Iraq wishing to return to the homeland with all its beautiful memories; home, family, friends, old songs and Iraqi poetry. Inaam Kachachi shows that this is the price you pay for immigrating, living up the new culture and becoming loyal to your new homeland. "Emigration is like captivity: both left you suspended between two lives, with no comfort in moving on or turning back." (130)

Unlike many other authors of the diaspora, Inaam Kachachi did not escape Iraqi violence, but rather chose to live in Paris as the political state in Iraq worsened, because she was born with a wish for freedom

live in Iraq as a free and independent woman. However, her love for Iraq remains as much alive as it is in her diasporic characters. She was writing in many newspapers and had many press articles, but she wanted to express what is happening in her country more clearly. The notion of a 'Real Iraq', living inside her many other diasporic Iraqis, reflect their enchantment with their experienced memories of better times, in opposition to their disenchantment and dissociation with today's Iraq projected with utter. Her long-pursued career as a journalist did not fully accommodate the passion she wanted to express for her country; With the growing local and foreign tensions erupting in Iraq, Kachachi responded to a big shout inside her as a reaction to what was happening in her country, something that couldn't be transmitted by journalism. Hence, her fiction becomes a projection of how she felt towards, its changing image and the diasporic state of Iraqis. In this sense, fiction becomes the only venue fluid enough for her to fully narrate diasporic self-narratives from within and beyond the borders of Iraq, out of duty to tell the new generation.



## **Conclusion**

The novel sheds light on one of the most important problems faced by the Iraqi people after the war in 2003. Among them which is the issue of migration as most Iraqi families were killed, threatened of job loss and lack of work, in addition to the main reason for migration, which is the lack of security and safety in the country. All these reasons led to the emigration of most Iraqi families outside their country in search of a safe homeland, a job and a better future for themselves and their children. In this novel, the protagonist of the novel, Zina, emigrated with her family also in search for safety, which led to the separation of family members and their loss of the most important social ties, so the writer deliberately showed that aspect in the novel. She has migrated to another country and writes from a foreign country. Therefore, most critics said that she was excellent in describing events and characters, as she lived those events closely and lived feelings of alienation and loneliness.

There are many themes gathered in the events of this novel. The most important are the feelings of alienation, nostalgia for the past and old memories, identity, conflict, roots, immigration, resist the occupier and reject his presence, horrors of war, and its consequences for Arab countries, political disintegration during the post-war period, love, and

loyalty to the homeland. The events are based on the background of historical transformations in the Iraq society after the USA invasion and War against Iraq in 2003. Iraq has been suffering in different fields, such as political, economic and has become an oppressive society.

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