

Alienation in Ottoman Lousif's poetry

الاغتراب في شعر عثمان لوصيف

Hafida Zine

*Mohamed Boudiaf University, M'sila,
(Algeria)*

Hafida.zine@univ-msila.dz

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Abstract:

Ottoman Lousif's poetic experience is distinct. It's neither a thought nor a trend. It's rather a human attitude refusing all what it violates his humanity. It's an escaping experience from earth attractions to sky light landmarks. It contains implicit systems, which make the poet tired. So, he escapes from presence to absence; he becomes alienated, pained and tortured. He has spiritually migrated from body to spirit ray for the sake of mitigating his suffering through his poetry, language and words. The poet has temporally, spatially, socially and culturally found himself alienated.

Therefore, the researchers have focused on studying Ottoman Lousif's poetic experience. So, we look on alienation phenomenon through this distinct poetic experience, and we notice how the poet has expressed his alienation and exile. The descriptive analytical method has been used in following this phenomenon.

Keywords: alienation, poetry, mystical, poetic, Ottoman Lousif

الملخص:

تعتبر التجربة الشعرية لعثمان لوصيف تجربة متميزة، فلا هي معتقد ولا توجه إنها موقف انساني رافض ومتمرد على ما ينتهك إنسانيته، إنها تجربة هاربة من جواذب الأرض لتتصرف إلى العوالم النورانية السماوية إنها تجربة تحمل في أعماقها أنساقا غائبة أتعبت الشاعر وآلمته، ليفر من حضور إلى غياب، مغتربا متألما معذبا، هاجر روحيا من طين الجسد إلى إشعاع الروح عله يجد مواساته في شعره ولغته وكلماته، لقد وجد الشاعر نفسه مغتربا مكانيا وزمانيا واجتماعيا وثقافيا. لهذا عكف الباحثون على دراسة تجربة الشعرية. لهذا سوف نبحت في ظاهرة الاغتراب في هذه التجربة الشعرية المميزة، ونرى كيف عبر الشاعر عن اغترابه ومنفاه. وقد انتهجنا المنهج التحليلي الوصفي، لتتبع الظاهرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاغتراب، الشعر، الصوفي، الشعرية، عثمان لوصيف

Introduction:

Alienation is a topic of many literary genres, including poetry and prose, since it's a human phenomenon. Poets express their spatial, temporal and intellectual suffering and their dispersion between a painful cruel reality and an ego. They look forward to idealism through subjective experiences varied according to the poet. These experiences are subjected to subjective, psychological and social reasons, which may sometimes intertwine so that it becomes difficult to detach and classify them.

Poets, including mystical ones, have used the poetic writing to express their cognitive experiences, tastes and psychological suffering. So, they have expressed their alienation and suffering within their societies, friends and homelands.

A great part of our classical and melodic literary heritage belongs to the mystical literature throughout various ages. This literary mystical achievement has a considerable share within the critics and scholars' diligent activity in academic and unacademic studies focusing on artistic and ideological dimensions, significances and implications. These studies have dealt with symbol, style, imagined, and situations. However, these mystical texts are still fertile field for study and analysis. Whenever we read these poems, we find that they're full of absent psychological, social and ideological explicit and implicit significances, which have gained the poets' interest so that they've been obliged to think and write about mysticism for the sake of a missing comfort and unachieved expectations.

So, we'll look on the poet's alienation within his poems, and how it manifests through a set of elements, which are included in this topic. The descriptive method has been applied to describe alienation phenomenon. We've also relied on the analytical artistic method in analyzing some of Ottoman Lousif's poems in which alienation, with its various kinds, is figured out. All this has been ordered as follows:

The theoretical part contains introduction, definition of alienation phenomenon and mystical poetry. Whereas, the applied part comprises a reading of some poems in which we demonstrate the poet's alienation, suffering, pain and resentment towards his environment.

1. The concept of alienation:

In language, this word is a term used to describe distancing and stepping down, which means isolation.¹

¹ Mohammed Radhi Djaafar. (2013). Alienation in Arab contemporary poetry. Ed.1, Almotaz Publishing and Distributing House, Jordan, p.13

In terminology: Alienation, in its simplest sense, is a term encompassing the fracture and break-up of one's own self, due to its incompatibility with environment.²

It is the psycho-social situation that controls the individual completely making him strange and out of his social reality.³ Therefore, the poet interprets this situation through withdrawing from reality into the fringe of life. He feels that he is not in conjunction with people. So, he is remote from certain social aspects of his reality.

The poet's alienation is linked to subjective and objective factors. Subjectivity related to his psychological condition in terms of contraction and extroversion, his interaction with the conditions and events that constantly arise within the nation and the country. Objectivity refers to the social, political, cultural and economic circumstances he witnesses. "Alienation is a composite overview of a number of objective and subjective attitudes that emerge in social and artistic situations, accompanied by the deprivation of the group's knowledge and freedom to the extent that it loses the ability to achieve objectives, to predict decision-making and to make society and individuals alienated".⁴

2. Who is Ottoman Lousif:

Ottoman Lousif is an Algerian poet born in 1951 in Toulga, Biskara province. He received his primary school education, and memorized the Holy Quran in the katatib (Quranic centres). He enrolled in the Islamic Institute of Biskra, and he left it after four years. Then, he continued his studies by his own. After obtaining his baccalaureate certificate, he joined the Institute of Literature and Arabic at the university of Batna, and he graduated in 1984. Since a young age, he had been involved in education during the three levels.

Since childhood, he loved music and painting, and he began versification at a young age. He read ancient and modern Arab and international literature. In 1999, He was awarded the first national prize in poetry. He has many poetic books: *Writing with Fire* (1982), *Jasmine's Lust* (1986), *Salt Weddings* (1988), *Stupidity pretender* (1999). He died on June 27th 2018 at the age of 67, after suffering from disease.

3. Mysticism and poetic sufism:

Scholars disagreed about the period of the emergence of mysticism as a word, a concept and its spread. It was narrated about Sufyan Al-thawri that he talked about it, and some of them mentioned this about Al-hassan Albasri.⁵ Others argued that the first signs of mysticism were after Islam emergence.

Ahmed Alush says: "Many people may wonder why there is no mysticism and widespread call for it during Islam, and this advocacy came to light only after the reign

² Ahlem Ezzaim. (1981). *Abu Nawas between mess, alienation and rebelliousness*. Ed.1, Awda Publishing House, Beirut, Lebanon, p.67

³ Dincle Michel. (1980). *Dictionary in Sociology*. Tr. Ihsan Mohammed Alhasan. Errashid Publishing House, Baghdad, p.20

⁴ Ali Shata Essayed. (1993). *Alienation theory*. University Youth Establishment, Alixandria, p.323

⁵ Ihsan Alhi Eddahir. (1986). *Mysticism: emergence and sources*. Ed.1, Sunnah translation management, Lahor, Pakistan, p.38

of companions and followers. The answer to this question is that it was not needed in the first era, because people at that age, were inherently pious and devout, and by virtue of their close contact with the prophet Mohammed, God's prayer and peace be upon him. So, they were competing to emulate him and consider him as a model."⁶

The word mysticism has several significations, indicating purity, because the mystical person's concern is to recommend to purify oneself from impurities of matter and sense. It may also refer to people of the Suffah (Companions of the Benche) who lived in the Suffah of the prophet's mosque (the place in the back portion of the prophet's mosque). They lived on subsistence, austerity and asceticism.⁷ Al-Biruni argued that mysticism was derived from the Greek word *Sofia*, which means wisdom.⁸ However, it's pointed out to the closest meaning in Arabic, which is "wool", and it is said: a man becomes sufi means that he wears wool. Wearing woolen clothes was a symbol for worshippers and ascetics, and many of mystical people themselves adopt the same idea, like Al Sarraj, Ibn Khaldoun and others.⁹

Terminology: it is the abstraction of the heart to the Almighty God and the contempt of all but God and its output returns to the work of the heart.¹⁰

"It is also the spiritual and emotional experience of the passenger traveler in order to meet the Lord's Kingdom in peace and love. It can also be defined as *Al-takhliyah*, (removal Of Misconduct), *Al-tahliya* (adoption Of Good Conduct) and manifestation. Mysticism can also refers to love the God." To carry on worshipping, devotion to the Almighty God, the ignorance of life beauty and its decorating, asceticism in term of pleasure, money and prestige, and to be isolated from creatures in seclusion and worshipping".¹¹

In addition to that, mystical literature expresses the spirit of Islam, it derives from it and returns to it. There is a huge literary heritage in mystical literature including poetry and prose characterized by the richness of imagination and symbolism, besides the diversity of themes like depiction of experience in the mystical path and the expression of divine love, most notably *Rabia Al Adawiyya*, *Sahl Al Tustari*, *Al Hallaj*, *Al Nasili* and *Abu Yazid El Bistami*.¹²

Mystical poetry appeared thanks to "*Al-Hasan Al-Basri*" and his students subsequently.¹³ The main topic of mysticism poetry is the divine love along to the

⁶ Sidi Eshikh Abd Alqader Issa. (2000). Facts about mysticism. Ed.11, Alirfan Publishing House, Aleppo, Syria, p.11

⁷ Abou Alwafa Alghanimi Ettaftazani. (n.d.). An introduction to Islamic mysticism. Ed.3, Faculty of Letters, University of Cairo, Culture House, Cairo, Egypt, p.20

⁸ Mohammed Abd Almonim Khaffadji. (n.d.). Literature in mystical heritage. Stranger library, Cairo, Egypt, p.23

⁹ Abou Alwafa Alghanimi Ettaftazani, opsit, p.21

¹⁰ Zaki Mubarak. (n.d.). Islamic mysticism in education and ethics. The Egyptian Library Printing and Publishing House, Saida, Lebanon, p.44

¹¹ Omar Farroukh. (1974). Mysticism in Islam. Ed.1, Monaimana Library, Beirut, Lebanon, p.77

¹² Ibrahim Mohammed Mansour. (n.d.). Poetry and mysticism " the mystical impact in the Arab contemporary poetry". N.ed., Faculty of letters, University of Tanta, Egypt, p.27

¹³ Ali Alkhatib. (n.d.). The mystical literature trends between Alhaladje and Ibn Alarabi. P.27

diversity of mystical experiences and their perception of it. "The mystical poet takes of poetry a mean to lofty and transcendence from a rejected tiring world, he tire to seek another life in which transcendence replaces vulgarity.¹⁴

4. Alienation manifestations in Ottoman Lousif's poems:

It is hardly hidden to any reader of Ottoman Lousif's poems that his poetry is full of sadness and burdened with pain and psychological wounds that made it a fertile field for the theme of alienation in poetry.

4.1. Intellectual artistic alienation:

This alienation is exemplified by the poet's suffering from exclusionary cultural discrimination. The poet witnessed discrimination among writers in 1980s between the capital's poets of the north and the bedouin poets of the south, which created urban central literature and marginal suburban or southern literature. When the poet found himself marginalized and distanced from official events, recognitions and invitations, in contrast to other poets close to the ruling circle only because they are from the northern cities or live there, taking advantage of their connections to be at the forefront of the country's cultural facade, Because he found himself marginalized, desperate to be appreciated as an outstanding poet for his cultural role, "he only had to rest alone and to escape reality by isolating himself from society".¹⁵ All this made the poet Ottoman Lousif feel ostracized from the sick cultural reality although he is the big poet son of the big south, he found in his isolation, his writings and poems the best companion and good comfort. In the poem "Exile", he says:

Broken here... You are broken / Hawk jumps/But isn't flying/ Ah, pains' alley/ Ah, miracle of creativity/ Can the poet be exiled from his hometown ?/ Is the fire of the letters multiplying his misfortune?/¹⁶

The poet moved away from an extreme reality, carrying his pain and disappointment in search of stability away in absence, but he was not satisfied non tranquille. He says in the poem "Manifestation":

And I'm the sufi lover/ I hugged all the orbits/ all the flash lightening/ all the mirrors/ looking for my utmost boundary/ looking for my lote- tree/ neither my heart was supplied nor my soule was satisfied/

.....

Chosen prophets are crucified /poets' tongues are cut?/ And why thrones can only be built on poor's skulls.

We find him again reflecting a painful margin in his poem "Innocence":¹⁷

He is the dead among the living/the living among the dead.

¹⁴ Omar Ahmed Bouqaroura. (2004). A studies in the Algerian contemporary poetry. Alhuda Publishing House, Algeria, p.38

¹⁵ Mohammed Radhi Djaafar, opsit, p.45

¹⁶ Ottoman Lousif. (n.d.). Freckles and Cooing. Homa Publishing House, Algeria, p.50

¹⁷ Ottoman Lousif. (1999). Innocence. Homa Publishing House, Algeria, p.18

So, it seems that the poet (Ottoman Lousif) lived a reality which was like a painful alienation, it led him to seek another world, different than this terrestrial one, he fled in his poetry to the heavenly world the best and the purest.

His poetry was immersed in language floods and metaphors, it was the belonging to the spiritual world and the experience of the sufi one, it was alienation. The poet was unable to live in hard conditions in which he lost himself because of the institutional marginalization and exclusion by the cultural environment prevailing in his society. Despite, he didn't directly mention it, only a reader can discover it through hidden language and connotations. The critic Abdul Fattah Ahmed Yusuf expresses: "Tracking the transition of meaning from culture with its elements, which are compound of thoughts and practices, to the creative mind (Author), who succeeds in transforming elements from cultural to literary expressions and reduces them into aesthetic literary speech waiting for a conscious reader, who can decode the composite culture and reveal the significations of their transformation from culture to literary, in order to produce a critical speech about the text.¹⁸

The practices of oppression and exclusion from the cultural institutions pushed the poet to exclude himself from the world. Although his poetry made conquests in the Algerian poetry, he did not participate in any official event inside or abroad. He was excluded from success and appearing and marginalized even though he was the capable poet. Professor Hamida Sabahi says: "This is how Ottoman Lousif's alienation appears based on his feeling of loneliness and loss in his country, where everyone dreams of rising and succeeding." The poet Suleiman Jawadi also supports this, when he says: "If Ottoman Lousif lived in another country rather than Algeria, he would become more famous in the Arab world. He would get a high position in the Arab poetry."

Moreover, all this led Ottoman Lousif to take an isolationist stance to face a chaotic age of savagery, falsehood and bias towards physical desires and life appearances, turning to worlds in which he asks for an absent justice and abundant rights in a racist society governed by mediocrity not by quality and nourished by racism. He expresses the bitterness of his reality in his poem harbingers (Irhasat)

Burnt... a horizon shrouded by echo/and in my eyes are boiled spectrum and suldge.¹⁹
The marginalization of the poet from his society and its trustee institutions was confirmed according to what the writer and journalist Rochdi Redouane said: "We were overwhelmed with his hospitality then he hid to not be caught on camera. His poet son walked in to tell us his father's will: "Because I respect all those who knew me and those who did not, I refuse to transmit to them this frustrating picture while I am under insomnia and illness. I want the image of my poetic and sensory fitness to

¹⁸ Abd Alfattah Ahmed Youcef. (2009). Text reading, culture question and the reader's awareness of the meaning transformation. Modern World of Books, Jordan, p.16

¹⁹ Ottoman Lousif. (n.d.). Signs. Homa Printing, Publishing and Distributing House, Algeria, p.25

remain present. Sorry, I don't want to give a desperate image about the intellectual Algerians).²⁰

4.2. Social alienation:

Social alienation is the feeling of lack of optimism between oneself and other selves, lack of affection and familiarity with them, lack of compassion and participation, and weakness of social bonds of love with others. Because man can achieve his identity only in a social environment where optimism is achieved between oneself and others' selves. This was felt by Ottoman Lousif when he saw the loss in society's values and the marginalization of the teacher. The poet had a strong experience in education and teaching in particular ", he taught at different levels of education from primary to university. He lived and witnessed many challenges, which didn't only make him a "universal" poet but also made him a poet with an existential attitude towards the chaotic age of a society, in which he saw the loss of values in youth and oldness, a society that is stripped of many qualities and morals, which he was raised on. He chose the exile and to move away from the crowd of his society, writing only with the fire of his feelings and his heartbreak, and ignoring those behaviors that have become a bad culture in society and among its people. He moved away watching a lot of his students and those who taught them and was the forum for their path running away from him and ignoring him to become the alienated in his country, the only in his society. He only found his poetry to try to reveal another life than the present one with its vulgar appearances.²¹ He says in his poem Stupidity Pretender, expressing his sorrow²² :

Your words are gone this evening/ My praise is gone/ and the apple of this ink/ I would sing your white feasts yesterday / until came the darkness/ and I was overwhelmed in the mourning sea/ Until my hair coloured with this blackness.

He also described his exile and loneliness in his society and among his family members. He says:

You're exiled... Sand surrounds you/and ants crowd your place/in this town's sabkha .../ where death... We have no stories, no buttons/ Ah fire of the wound/ starvation of the flute/..... Miracle of creativity! Can the poet be exiled in his hometown? / Is the fire of letter multiplying his misfortune?²³

Despite the poet's attempts to resist, he failed and searched for an alternative that would help him get rid of his bitter reality, to fly in his spirituality and sophistication to heavens, purity and transcendence, and to impersonate the character of the Prophet Mohammed, God's prayer and peace be upon him, in the incident of Al-Isra and Al-

²⁰ Fadhila Mairash. Ottoman Lousif: a discourse that's full of complete answers.

<https://www.djazairress.com/author>, retrieved on: 26/02/2023

²¹ Hifro Mohammed Ali Diriki. (2009). Mystical symbol aesthetics. Ed.1, Formation for Authorship, Translation and Publication, Damascus, Syria, p.60

²² Ottoman Lousif. (1999). Stupidity pretender. Homa Printing House, Algeria, p.22

²³ Ottoman Lousif, opsit, p.51

Ma'raj (the Night Journey and the Ascension into Heavens), saying in the poem of freckles and cooing:

Your heavens are opening their doors/ Divine lightning is carrying me/ In his flapping wingspan and then flies/ Peace be upon the prophets/ I see the lote-tree of the utmost boundary sparkling with sempiternal green...

Through these two pieces, a dilapidated sick society is hiding behind this language. All what surrounds the poet is painful, due to this cruel and fragmented society, which has become lacking in solidarity, respect and fulfilment of the teacher. The poet stayed alone in his last days, suffering lonely from the disease. These phenomena are supposed to be strange to our Muslim society, which is based on high human values and on the principle of respect, solidarity and brotherhood, away from the ugliness of this dominant pattern that has become a dominant culture practiced daily in a professional way. However, the poet did not declare or render such resentment towards his social environment and what has happened in our societies. He rather decided to move away and retire from this mediocrity, writing his pain and heartache screaming poems with their language and connotations, hiding behind them a social vibration and great value imbalance. They invite us to take time and try to treat our society's wounds and this fall and collapse in our values.

Conclusion:

The mystical discourse was able to be distinguished by its linguistic and aesthetic connotations. However, the subject of alienation held an important place in which the poet is considered to find in his mystical peace and tolerance for his soul, in order to look for inerrancy of sins and rise above a material reality by moving away from it by seeking salvation for his soul from pain and suffering.

- The theme of alienation is distinct among Ottoman Lousif's poems, since it's harsher and painful: it is self-alienation and self-expatriation, so he was alienated, in the society he was born in and in the country he belonged to, from a painful social and cultural reality and from exclusionary societal practices that made him expatriate in his country and family.

- In spite of his suffering in his society, Ottoman Lousif was able to realize his wishes and paint his exemplary world by alienating himself and building a beautiful and transcendental world; a world he painted through his poetry by a rebellious transcendental language with its significations, symbols, images and connotations.

- Researchers can not only study artistic and aesthetic critical studies, but also the mystical discourse, in general, and the mystical poetry of Ottoman Lousif, in particular, which remains a great area of research and reading as an intense discourse in terms of motivation and connotations, especially new critical methods such as cultural studies, which can reach these hidden and implicit systems.

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