

Neocolonialism and Patriarchy: The Double Burden of Women in Betool Khedairi's *Absent*

Prof. Dr. Shokhan Mohammed Fatah

Charmo University, Iraq

Abstract

Focusing on how the connection of neocolonialism and patriarchy generates a "double burden" for women in postcolonial nations, this paper investigates Betool Khedairi's *Absent* from a feminist postcolonial perspective. The text shows Dalal's battles with ingrained local patriarchal systems as well as with the repressive powers of both Western sanctions and the Gulf War. Dalal's identity and agency are shaped by this double persecution, which positions her body as both a site of state control and cultural opposition. Using close textual analysis, the qualitative approach of the study explores Dalal's experiences in respect to feminist postcolonial theory, especially with an eye on how gendered and colonial power dynamics are portrayed in the text. Inspired by the writings of intellectuals such as Gayatri Spivak and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, the study explores how women could be agents of resistance as well as targets of persecution in postcolonial settings. While *Absent* presents women's resistance as a means of regaining both individual and community autonomy, the predicted ending reveals that *Absent* questions the compounding impact of patriarchal and neocolonial forces on women's life. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to postcolonial feminist literature, shedding light on the unique intersectional struggles faced by women in the Middle East and expanding the discourse on gender, neocolonialism, and resistance in postcolonial literature.

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