Arabic narrative and secularism/secularization

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Accepted 4 September, 2013

Secularism and secularization as concepts come to the arena of academic writing very early. This paper explores how secularism/secularization movement in Europe has changed the vision of the man and the masses towards life and religion. However, the focus here is on Arabic narrative and Islamic community and how a host of Arab writers are profoundly influenced with such western ideologies despite discrepancy in circumstances of both blocs: the western and the eastern. The focus here is how secularism has been reflected in Arabic narrative and how Arab writers initiate in addressing such concepts in their literary works, being distanced from religious concepts themselves or propagate secularization in varied facets of life for a better understanding and more liberal style of life as claimed. The influence of secularization in Arab and Muslim literary writings countries are reflected in literary writings whether in defending of such ideologies involved with secularization or rejecting them. Results showed characters mocking the religious and the sacred concepts which are consider in Islam as prohibited; mocking such Islamic basics is a sort of blasphemy or apostasy and would not be admitted by Islam and Islamic community. It was found that most of secular Arabic literary works reflect the secular thought of the writers themselves and in what way they understand secularism and secularization.

Key words: Secularism, secularization, post-secularism, religion, Islam, Arab, Muslim.

INTRODUCTION

The origin of ‘secularism’ comes from Latin ‘saeculum’; it appears in the Bible either to refer to the span of time or to the nature of human circumstances after the fall of man. It was used to show two different groups of clergy-men: secular and religious. Secularization as a term became known after the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 to stress the removal of places and property from church's domination. The word, secularization developed to encompass more liberal sense in 18th century after the era of Enlightenment, where clerical guidance and control over different aspects of life was rejected. Throughout historical shifts, this term became related to eradication of religion under the name of secularism. It passed varied stages: the first one involved Voltaire and David Hume who appeared anti-religious and their writing was a clarion call to separate religion from different styles of life. The second one is represented by classical sociologists such as Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, etc. The third stage is shown by Bryan Wilson, Steve Bruce, Karl Dobbelaere and David Martin who argue the term broadly in their writings.

Sayed Naguib Al-Attas, Muslim philosopher, points out in Islam, Secularism and The Philosophy of Future (1985), "the term secular, from Latin saeculum, conveys a meaning with dual connotation of time and location; time refers to 'now or 'present' and location 'world' or 'worldly' sense of it" (p. 14).

In Islam at a Crossroads (1982), Muhammad Asad states three reasons for secularization and western anti-religious attitude: 1. The heritage of Roman civilization with its utterly materialistic attitude as regards human life and its inherent value; 2. The revolt of human nature against the Christian world-contempt and the suppression of natural urges and legitimate endeavors of man.
followed by the Church’s traditional alliance with the holders of political and economic power and its cold-blooded sanction of every exploitation which the power-holders could devise; 3. The anthropomorphic conception of God.

There is a difference between a writer who portrays secularization in his literary works from negative perspective and another one who exhibits what himself believes in and what he is concerned with to propagate secularity as a positive discourse. Some writers write about secularism from negative perspective while others write about it from their faith perspective to support secularism and attempt to represent religion as a source of backwardness and ignorance to devalue the sacredness of religion. Roy (2009) points out “there is a close link between secularization and religious revivalism; the latter is not a reaction against the former, but a product of it.” Roy argues, “secularization in the strict sense in no way implies a conflict or a brutal separation from religion, as can be seen from example of Northern Europe, the USA, Great Britain and ever Thailand and Japan. The expression ‘post-secularism’ can be attributed to the German philosopher Habermas, who addresses the relationship between the return of religion and the fate of secularism”.

In west, from very early ages, church dominated all aspects of westerners’ lives to drive them to call for separation between state and religion (Christianity). The west attempts to unfetter from the shackles of church domination because Christianity was a restriction to human creativity and any discovery would not match with the Bible and the church’s trends would be forbidden and one who claimed scientific facts not in accordance with the Bible deserved to be punished and tortured. From here, the church opposed scientific discoveries to guarantee its domination and control over the people; otherwise, the church might lack its power and respect as a pioneering center of religious guidance. For instance, Giordano Bruno, a philosopher was burned at the stake in Rome in 1600 for proposing that the earth goes round the sun; the second one who came to confirm such information, Galileo was imprisoned, threatened by torture to deny his beliefs because his words were not in accord with Christian superstitions. Another example was Campanella who was tortured for his efforts in Copernican theory.

The 16th and 17th centuries were a curse for the Church’s traditional alliance with church’s interests as a curse required to get rid of it. They started to find a refuge from church control by calling for secularization; the aspects of diverse life to release the creativity of the mind working for better future for the coming generations. It is found in Denis Diderot (French man letters and philosopher, 1713-1784): "men will be free until the last king is strangled with entrails of the last priest". The misery of the people of got to turn out, and their lives were controlled by church and priests. At early stages, priests represented the divine power that gave forgiveness or punishment.

Charles Taylor (2007) discusses three modes of secularity in A Secular Age: 1- secularized public spaces; 2- declining beliefs and practices. 3- Cultural conditions that make unbelief in God a viable option. Compared to Viet Bader, Bader in Post-secularism or Liberal Democratic Constitutionalism points out

There is no evidence indicating a general decline of religion, or a general revival or return of religion. Religion is not generally subjectivized, privatized, and the state and (organized) religions are not strictly separated. Finally, neither societies nor states are completely secularized (Bader, 2012).

Post-secularism is a fighting term used against aggression or ‘militant secularism’ (Habermas, 2007). Secularism is defined in Merriam Webster Dictionary as indifferent to rejection or exclusion of religion and religious considerations. Scott Appleby (2000), argues Religion is the human response to a reality perceived as sacred...religion, as interpreter the sacred, disclose and cebrates the transcendent source and significance of human existence...religion embraces a creed, a cult, a code of conduct, and a confessional community...thus religion constitutes an integral culture, capable of forming personal and social identity and influencing subsequent experience and behavior in profound ways (p. 8-9).

Rise of Arab Secularism/Secularization

Arabs looks at secularism ‘almaniyah’ as a buzzword and misleading term, in the sense of its connotation of science ‘alm’, while it distances the people away of their religion which is represented in their culture and religious practices. The question here is ‘why do many Arabs and Muslims attempt to secularize the diverse aspects of their lives?’ Religion is a totally a private affair for some Arabs and Muslims; it is an affair between mankind and his God, and religion is fragile and weaker in the arena of life and may be considered as a source of backwardness from secular perspective. What is the relationship between religion and politics? Religion here refers to religion of Islam and secularization of Muslim life means separation between state and Islam, between politics and Islam, between economic and Islam. Islam for some people will be only a ritual practiced in the holy places or on the corners of houses to reach a sort of spiritual satisfaction. Islam, for secular people is occasional ritual practiced by some Muslims who are committed to their religion and God. For liberals and seculars, Islam is a
spiritual journey between Muslim and God. Islam has not vanished entirely in the secular countries; Islam's rituals and ethics are abandoned by Islamic countries to become empty rituals for some people of those countries. Islam has weak voice and its followers are oppressed over the world, even in Europe. Christianity is embraced by some clerical men who exerted their efforts to protect Christianity.

As a reaction to secularism, post-secularism emerged to return back the religion to public arena as a leading ideology. Islamic movement during the second half of twentieth century is a concrete evidence of Islamic awakenings movements. Sahwah islamiyah, liberation revolutions and contemporary Arab Spring Revolutions are a reaction of Arab leaders' secularization of the facets of life and practice oppression and injustice upon their citizens and work on separating Islam from political, social, economic lives of the people. It is very evident that the post-Arab revolutions represent the stage of islamization of diverse aspects of Arab life. It is the post-secularism which leads the Islamic parties in Arab countries to reach the power seat; for instance, rule of Muslim brotherhood in Egypt, Anahdah party in Tunisia, Islamic party, (Muslim brotherhood party in Yemen) have given a golden opportunities for its followers to occupy significant positions in institutions and ministries of Yemen. Bing Bing Wu explores the relationship between secularism and secularization in Secularism and Secularization in Arab World (2007).

Secularism is linked to secularization. The former means thoughts and theories focusing on the separation of religion and politics, which the secularists endeavor to realize intentionally as their goal. Secularization is a process of this separation, as either a result of intentional endeavors, or a mere natural outcome of the interaction among various social factors.

However, Habermas (2011a, b) "has developed two dimensions in his analysis; a focus on post-secular as the site of inter-relationship of religion and democratic politics and a focus on post-secular as the problem of how to include members of various religious faiths within necessarily secular acts of public reasoning". Many Arabs and Muslims see in western model of secularism a real experience that resulted from separating the state and politics, ignoring the different circumstances that estrange the westerners from their religion and their church. However, most Arab countries place Islam as a source of legislature despite the discrepancy in applying Islamic sharia; however, the differences arise in the practicability of adopting shari'a as a source of law; if not the only law, for example, in Saudi Arabia, represents Islamic beacon for Muslims around the world because of its special location as the country of the Holy House of Muslims and as the country of the two holy mosques, Al Haram and Al Nabawi mosques. So Saudi Arabia is the center of Muslim's interests, where they practice Haj in the Holy House. Islamic shari'a is a source of the state's rule and legislature, but you may not find all the segments of the people applying shari'a in their daily lives. Rather, some people in the country would not reflect such Islamic rules in their lives. It is a matter of the state legislature. The second example is Turkey as a big Islamic country forced by its past leaders to embrace secular system. Turkey occupies a very unique place as a crossroad between the East and the West, regardless of its religious and cultural position in the past and contemporary era, particularly after Islamic parties have reached to rule the country and bring light back to this Islamic country after dark age of secularization that attempted to devastate any remark for Islam in the land of last empire of Islam that ruled a lot of countries under Othman control. Turkey has embraced secularism as a source of constitutional law under Kamal Ataturk's rule and the Turkish government adheres to such ideology. The struggle of individuals and Islamic parties for their religious freedom and to bring back the power of Islam to state's constitution come to fruits and what we see today in Turkey, Islamic party rules in Turkey, is an example of the success of such efforts that started very early but its voice could not reach all parts of Turkey. Secularization during and after Kamal Ataturk attempts to silence any Islamic voice and Turkey, as a state, has embraced the secular style of life in its resentful sense of the word, namely, it was a sort of radical fundamental secularization for all aspects of life without considering the demands of a large number of Turkish people who would not admit living without Islamic rules. Those two examples where one of the Arab countries, Saudi Arabia, struggles to apply the Islamic shari'a as a constitution of the state and the other has embraced the secular style of life to proclaim their rapid steps in the course of western civilization. Simultaneously, both countries would not entirely succeed in their allegation of localizing what they have embraced and defend as a constitution for their political lives, whether in Saudi Arabia or other Arab countries or in Turkey as another example opposed to the first one.

Esposito (2011) argued, "the development of the modern states and societies required westernization and secularization. Religion would then become restricted to private life. And if someone spoke of privatization of religion, others predicted the marginalization and ultimate disappearance of traditional beliefs" (Esposito, John. L. Islam and Secularism in the Twenty First Century). From the above words, the situation becomes clearer on how the western policies attempt to force the secularism and the features of embracing such ideology to let the world compete to declare their loyalty to such secularized style of life under the plea of obtaining progress and development that might let such countries cope up with developed western countries. This referring their progress to their secular ideologies which separate the state and politics, despite the political, social, economic and cultural divides between such western countries one of the hand and Arab and Islamic countries, on the other hand. Since
this study will focus on the Arabic narratives from one of the pioneering countries in Arab world if not in the Middle East, the study explores how secularism and secularization initiates to arise in Egypt as the scope of this study is concerned. The reality of the situation will be addressed to recognize how secularism comes to Egypt and who are the leaders of secularization from the early stages to modern and post modern stages of Egypt. Then moving to shed the light on this ideology, the argument of the two narratives is to compare how the novelists reflect secularism in their literary works. Do their literary writings support the path of secularization or their literary writing come to refute secularization and its followers? 

**Egypt and secularization: historical background**

The early beginning of secularism in Egypt refers back to French Campaign by Napoleon in 1798-1801 as discussed by Abdel Rahmann Al Jaberti’s book (1998) (Ajayeb Al Athar fi Al Trajem wa Athar) The Wonders of the Effects in Translations and News. That campaign had adopted anti-religious attitude towards Egypt and its religion, whether Islam or Christianity. Al Jaberti described French campaign by secularity and blasphemy due to French anti-religious attitudes towards religion in general, and Islam in particular as a religion of majority in Egypt and they deceived the people by their call for equity and equality. The first secularization practiced in Egypt was replacing the Islamic jurisprudence with secular juric systems and intended to make French cultural and secular principles prevailed in Egypt.

Islam as a religion is not only a religion in its narrow perspective, a religion that should be practiced in the holy places of worshipping. It is more than this restricted sense of the word; rather, it is a mode and a method of life; it is the light of human life that decodes the mysteries of this big world and guides people to peaceful life. It is not occasional rituals practiced by a group of so-called Muslims. It is a religion which was spread by prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) and his companions to reach to all people over the world. Muslims’ commitment to Islam could not offer concessions at the expense of their religion. Islam as a religion reflects Muslim culture, mannerisms and ethics that would not be easy for a Muslim who is stuck to this religion to risk his Islamic constitution of life. It is not a matter of a relationship between humankind and God as much as it is a law of life. Misunderstanding of the repercussions of embracing the secular style of life for Muslim means to leave the core of this religion. From here, Muslims understand secularization and secularity in different way. Some Muslims cope with secularists and their allegation of progress away of Islam and its ethics and they admit to maintain Islam as occasional rituals practiced from time to time in holy places of worshipping such as mosques, while the other groups see in secular style of life a sense of denying any existence to the religion in their lives under the plea of backwardness of Islamic countries under Islamic life and favor to embrace a secular style of life, forgetting entirely the issue of religion, to live this sort of secularism. Here it is not a matter of separating state’s politics and religion; rather it is a sort of ignoring totally Islam as a source of shari’a in their daily life.

Islamic movements or what we called modern Islamic awakening, alsawah alislamiyah, appeared early during the second half of twentieth century; it is not our topic here to elaborate the Islamic movements, but it is necessary to indicate the importance of such Islamic movements to maintain the Islamic culture and Islam as a religion during colonialism and postcolonial hybridization. Such Islamic movements started in many of Arab countries, for instance, Muslim Brotherhood movement and other Islamic parties which call for return back to Islamic constitution to prevail in the lives of the people. Then in Algeria, Libya and even in other Islamic countries that do not lie under the tenet of Arab countries such as Turkey.

Arab Spring revolutions come to demolish the privileges of a group of people who run the state affairs and a few of people defend their interests under such secular regime which not pay any attention to the over trodden classes and their miserable life under their oppression and injustice. In contemporary era, the first revolution springs from Tunisia to reach its fire to most of Arab countries; some of their countries reached the throne after the fall of the old leadership, such as in Tunisia or after the old leader has been killed, as what happened with the late Mu'mmer Al Qaddafi, who has been killed by his people, or reach a sort of settlement that represented Gulf Accord in Yemen. However, Syria Liberation Army struggles to topple the rule of Al Assad, but not yet. All these revolutions come to express the suffering of the people under secular and tyrannical regime that pay no attention to the human rights and the right of nations to live an honorable life. A lot of sacrifices have been offered by the people of such countries to reach liberation from political oppression and injustice. These revolutions come as a reaction to give a voice to voiceless people who spend a long time suffering from their unfair regimes and unfetter the people from the restriction imposed upon them by their rulers.

Arab secularism is closely involved with westernization and modernization movements that moved to Arab world under the name of development and the desire of Arab World to make their countries in line with western civilization to reach progress. Arab secularism comes into Arab countries with other concepts that invaded the Arab and Muslim World such as modernism, post-modernism, colonialism post-colonialism, westernization, globalization…etc. exploring the stages that Arab secularism passed through, it is required to return back to the rise of such terms in the literary and philosophical writing of Arab World and the diverse phases of its development.
Who are the pioneering secularists who call for secularism? How do such terms as secularism and secularization or post-secularism incorporate into their thoughts and writings?

Secularism emerges in Arab world in very early stage as a result of contact with western new discourses and ideologies that attempt to find a place in the Arab world to limit radical Islamic movement and to restrict the Islamic rituals in the mosque, if not attempting to eradicate Islam from the heads and hearts of Arab Muslim communities. Many new cultural terms find a place in Arab writing and philosophy. Zakariyah (2005), one of the famous contemporary secularists in Arab World in (Fouad 2005) Myth and Reality in the Contemporary Islamist Movement argues three features of Arab secularism: the first one is imitating modern European in reconstructing the Arab world. The second stamp all aspects of Arab world with western style of modernization. The third is the negative appraisal for European colonial power.

The first generation of Arab secularists revealed in the three pioneering countries: In Egypt is Al Tahtawi (1801-1873), Lebanon is represented by Butrus Al Bustani (1819-1883) and Tunisia is represented by Khair Al Din (1810-1899). The second generation is Jamal Al Din Al Fghani (1839-1897), Mohammad Abdul (1949-1905), and Abdel Rahaman Al Kawakibi (1854-1902). Yared (2002) points out “unlike Islam, the Christian religion does not deal directly with worldly affairs, it is not surprising that it was much easier for Christians to take a secular stand”. During the second half of 19th century and the first half of 20th century emerged the main Arab Christian secularists, those secularists were Sibli Shumayyil (1860-1917), Yaquob Surruf (1852-1927), Faris Nimr (1856-1951) George Zaidan (1861-1914) and Salama Musa (1887-1958). Their secular ideas and attitudes had been published by their magazine such as Al Muqtataf Magazine which was issued by Faris Nimr and Yaquob Surruf who studied in Syrian Protestant College; they moved their Magazine to Egypt to find more space of freedom away of Othman empire. George Zaidan who studied in the same college of Syrian Protestant College established Al Hilal Magazine 1892. Both magazines reflect the new ideas of secularism and liberal writings about different aspects of life, focusing on science as a source of civilization and progress. Rather Al Hilal was more comprehensive than Al Muqtataf to encompass diverse areas of knowledge such as sociology, psychology, politics, literature...etc. Salama Musa was influenced by Sibli Shumayyil and Farah Antun who moved to Egypt to find a safer refuge to their secular thoughts.

The secular Arab Muslim movement initiated to emerge through Muslim scholars who followed the steps of Christian secularists in the Arab World such as Al Kawakibi, Qassim Amin (1865-1908), and Ahmad Lutfi Al Sayyed (1872-1963), he is called the teacher of the generation and the father of liberalism in Egypt, and Ali Abdel Raziq (1888-1966) who cast his doubts on effectiveness of Islamic rule and devalue Islamic principles. Hussein (1889-1974) discussed Islam as a religion, not a political system and Muslims are allowed to deal with worldly issues according to their understanding to such issues. Arab Muslim secularists from early stages of secularization attempt to harmonize the relationship between Islam and secularism, many efforts have been exerted to bring secularism closer to Islam, but most Muslim's voices reject such reconciliation between Islam and secularism if it comes at the expense of Islamic faith and values.

There are many contemporary secularists who emerged in Egypt to express their anti-religious ideas, judged by Al Azhar as blasphemy or apostasy. Their thought and liberal ideas raised heated controversial arguments which ended with murder of some Egyptian secularists during the second half of 20th century because of their anti-religious thoughts. Fuda (1954-1992), called the legend of secularism, is one of Egyptians who was murdered because of his liberal ideas and Al Azhar, the voice of Muslim in Egypt, accused him of apostasy due to his radical thoughts about Islam that encouraged the radical Islamists to assassinate him in 1992 as their claim of his apostasy. Foda's writings arouse a large controversy among thinkers and Muslim scholars, he addressed in his writing many issues featured with secularism and he called for separating state's affairs from religious men who viewed them as a source of backwardness in Egypt. He has written many books and articles that attack Islam and address secularism as a safe refuge for people in Egypt, for instance, Secularism to Where, To Be or Not To Be (having banned by Al Azhar), Terrorism, A dialogue About Secularism, Absent Fact, A dialogue About Sharia, and Before The Fall.

The second one who causes controversial debate in Egypt is Alaa Hamid who has written a novel entitled The Bed (The Mattress), a novel described a scene in which two lovers fornicate on a prayer rug. Al Azhar accused Alaa of blasphemy and public persecutor sentenced Hamid to a year in jail and he has lost his job as an inspector in Tax Authority in 1997. Another novel is written by Hamid entitled Voyage into the Human Mind, it is a sort of philosophical vision on faith and atheism, he received a sentence for one year, and he has been taken again to the court for another literary work (Sadness of Frogs). Hamid does not stop here but he has published The Void in a Man's Mind. God's Trial (Masafah fi Aql Rajul..Muhqaqmet Al Elah). This narrative will be addressed in this study to see his secularist ideas which aroused the anger feelings of the public. Ahmad Bajat addressed this novel in his article in Al Ahram Journal (3 March, 1990), using the title 'Another Salaman Rushdi'. Alaa Hamid has been taken to Disciplinary Court to be jailed for eight years.

Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, another secularist, (1943-2010) was enforced to divorce his wife after he has accused of
apostasy from Personal Affairs Court and under such circumstances he had to leave with his wife to Netherlands to continue his life away of such troubles. Later, he travelled to Indonesia for a scientific journey, but he came back inflicted with mysterious virus that put an end to his life to die in a hospital attached to Zayed Bin Sultan Suburb in Cairo. Another one accused of secularism and blasphemy in 2001, he is Salaheddin Mohsen. The Emergency Court convicted him with three years in prison with hard labor for writing articles devalued Islam, his books and publications have been confiscated for its radical ideas and secular thought.

Mahfouz (1911-2006) was accused of secularism and blasphemy after writing Al Jabalawi Childeren. This novel is banned by Al Zhar because it is a sort of blasphemy as claimed. And one of the Islamic extremists attempted to kill him but he failed and Najuib Mahfouz survived to be taken to the hospital affected by the stab in his neck. The damage in his neck nerves affected his right arm which restricted his writing and his health got worse to speed up his death in 2006.

Zakeryyia (1927-2010) is one of the famous secularists; he graduated from Philosophy Department, Cairo University, and he accomplished his Ph.D. in Ain Shams University. He has written many books that express his secular thought and attitude towards many public issues in diverse areas of knowledge such as philosophy and contemporary Arabic thought. He is considered by many Egyptian writers one of secular pioneers in Arab world who has dedicated his efforts to stabilize philosophical criticism and analysis. One of his significant articles is Secularism is A solution as emerged as a reaction of Egyptian Islamic movement motto which called for Islam is a solution. Some of his books are Human and Civilization, Culture and Thought Problem, Study of Plato Republic, Islamic Awakening in Mind Balance, and Arabic Culture and Gulf Crisis. The focus will be here on two literary narratives by Alaa Hamed (1989), The Void in a Man's Mind. God's Trial (Massaafah fi Aql Rajul) and Najuib Mahfouz's Adrift on the Nile (Tharthrah ala Annil) to value how Arab secularists and scholars represent secularism and secularization in their literary works, do their literary works reflect their faith in secularism? How such writers do understand secularism?

Alaa Hamid's The Void in a Man's Mind: God's Trial.

In Hamid's novel, The Void in a Man's Mind: God's Trial, if it is correct to be called a novel, is an offensive novel to religion in general and Islam in particular represented by the symbols of prophets, angels, hell, heaven, all other symbols of Islam. On December 1, 1981, Alaa Hamid was sentenced to eight years in prison on charge of blasphemy and atheism. The novel is started by a forward in which the writer interrogating about Muslim beliefs and the matter of his faith and his involvement with God and unseen world such as heaven, hell, angels...etc. It begins with a question "who am I?" a name in the list of waiters. Muslim by inheritance, if I was born from an atheistic father, I'll be like him, no choice for human being either in his birth or his religion" (p. 3). By such words Hamid starts the forward in this novel. Then he moved to cast doubts on religion as a source of East backwardness "what is the benefit of religion and it pulls the east into backwardness, while many nations do not believe in religions reach the peak of civilization, does this mean the religion no longer a beacon of civilization and its absence not necessarily collapse of ethics" (p.4). From here, we may understand that he wants to cast doubts on religions, specifically Islam, to prepare minds of the readers to admit his heresies in the following lines of the novel.

This paper would not address all the heresies and allegations which he argues in this so called novel, but it is an attempt to show the picture clear about how do Arab and Muslim secularists view the issue of secularism and secularization in their lives. In the novel, Hamid continues his journey into the paradise, sensual paradise as he called it, the paradise imagined by the author as sensual pleasures paradise. Hamid will meet Adam, he initiates to mock him and his sin, then meets Musa (Muses), mockingly he takes his stick and hit the stream, he claimed that he would not see what the Holy Quran discusses about the story of Musa and other prophets. He continues to mock all the sacred symbols of religions and Islamic religion in particular and what have been addressed in the Holy Quran. He devalues the belief in unseen (algaybiyat) and denies all religions either in the forward of this novel or throughout of the narrative, particularly that involved with Islam. He denies the existence of Allah and His prophets and he called for secular state that pay no attention to all religions, specifically Islam, he claims beliefs and unseen world are a sort of superstitions. Hamid casts doubts on the religion and how human was born to take as granted what he finds his parents believe in “may be his father would be from higher class and may be lower one, it would be his mother either a pious or a prostitute…” (p.3). Then Hamid drives the reader to think about secular life that not only separates state and religion or state and politics but also it estranges mankind from the reality of religion, to live a secular life that rejects any existence to any beliefs or ethics, no faith even in existence of Allah. He drives the readers to believe in their sensual pleasures which would not be satisfied only on this worldly life because he does not believe in the other life after death. He leads the readers to revolt against familiarities which have been inherited from their parents, what is learned from Islam such as permitted (Halal) or prohibited (Haram) is a sort of restrictions to the sensual pleasures on this earth. He secularize the minds of the readers by asking “why does not human being change his faith?” then continues to emphasize the uselessness of the religions “what is the significance of the religions?’. when they has pulled the east into the core of backwardness while the irreligious peoples reach the peak of civilization.
The situation is overturned and the religion becomes a defect in people history” (p.5).

Hamid attempts to shake Muslims in their faith and in their Creator to adopt instead a secular life that may not only separate Islam and state but also eradicate any sense of religion or religiosity in the heart of Muslims. It is a clarion call for irreligious life, featured with secularization and liberal thoughts which are not tied with Islam or its ethics, it is a life that does not glorify Islam or its prophets, but it does not glorify any Islamic values or any Allah's religions. It is the life without Islam or any remarks of its symbols. Hamid moves to mock Muslim scholars and portrays their religiosity as a tool to gain fruits of fame and fund, power and sensual pleasures "our educated teachers (he means Muslim scholars or Ulama), brothers of Shamhursh, religion becomes for them a target by itself, gaining the fruits of fame, fund, power and life's pleasures that are seen or unseen." There are many other statements in which he devalues Allah sacred Books and cast doubts about them "the sacred Books are human made fabrication believed and addressed by its owners in the claim of Divine…and the proposed bond between Allah and messengers is not supported by facts or evidences" Hamid in his secularization of facets of life and his call to leave Islamic virtues requests a review to such ethics that deprive human beings from enjoying sensual pleasures and frightening them by hell after death. "The ethics of this age in general and in east in particular require entire review…to new evaluation that put everything in its appropriate place and due to this evaluation, we reorganize the human relationships prohibited, non-prohibited, based on contemporary foundations, not on what we have inherited from superstitions and falsifications"

Hamid does not stop in his denial for prophets, angels, heaven and hell, mocking unseen which is a part and parcel of human's beliefs, but he also denies the existence of Allah and mocks its sacred Books and angels. "We are the fact and the others are an illusion. We are the fact, and the fact is us, as long as Allah is a fact, we are nothing but Allah..." this is very clear evidence to his apostasy but blasphemy would not be tolerated by Muslim and Islam. It is a sort of blasphemous philosophy and fertile heresies do not provide any progress in the lives of the peoples. He cast delusion by implanting blasphemous ideas which do not serve the plot of the novel or develop the other elements of narratives as much as they mock the prophets and casts doubts on their existence or if they are sent by Allah." Don't we have righteousness to interrogate in a time we reach to the moon and we have melted the superstitions to be thrown in a dirty historical sewage, don't we have righteousness to question 'who are the messengers? Who are they? What is their identity?" Hamid calls for materialistic secular doctrine " human requires a revival put the religions between human and his Creator" there is a sort of contradiction in calling earlier to disbelieve in religions and Allah and simultaneously he secularize the relationship between Allah and human beings to be restricted relationship between human and his God, and it would not interfere in social and political life of human beings. To Hamid, secularity is a sort of demolish for any mark of religion, it is not a matter of separation between Islam and state or between Islam and politics, but it is denial of Islam and its manifestations in Muslims’ daily life. Hamid manifests himself a theist who does not believe in a religion or its manifestations that made Al Azhar stands against this novel because it reflects the writer’s unambiguous blasphemy he himself confesses during investigations of his apostasy. He has taken a verdict in this issue to be jailed eight years.

Hamid continues to mock paradise and the life of paradise: "which paradise, inhabited by a group of sick people" (p. 32). And he compares the life of paradise as a life of sexual desires that have been satisfied there: "it is (the paradise) the swamp of sins and a paradise of liqueur". The messengers' miracles are described by the author sight-deception and he denies the resurrection and the other life after death. In page 34-35, he describes Islamists as drunks and they run after sensual pleasures: “The problem of the communities is those dregs who make the religion a curtain hide behind it all sins" and he continues in his blasphemy p. 42 to decide that he is the God and the God is the people and the people is the God, further he talks in the mouth of Musa (Muses) "the Jews on their way to eradicate Muslims who are featured with low mannerisms" (p. 61). Hamid denies existence of angels and describes them as superstitious extinct from very old ages: "Angels are superstitions which have been buried since three thousand years". He claims that there is no bond between faith and civilization: "Mankind is nothing but sheer materialistic theory comes into existence by coincidence and will die by coincidence. By his death, he becomes a memory in the premises of life, no God, no reward; no red devils, no white angels, and messengers are nothing but a host of alligators and liars".

Alaa Hamid's novel eradicates all Muslim beliefs and values and it also provides radical and destructive views that call for sedition and contempt of religions and prophets, particularly Islam. It is a call that may damage the national unity and social peace. Alaa Hamid does not want to secularize the style of life and separate the state and the religion, but also he calls for demolishing any tie with any religions, particularly Islam. He contradict himself in his narrative by giving space for religions to be as a manifestation of worshipping between mankind and his God and sometime he calls to ignore any connection with Islam or other religions which he reveals them as a source of backwardness and misery.

Najuib Mahfouz’s Adrift on the Nile

Adrift on the Nile is a novel written by Najuib Mahfouz to
reflect the reality of secularism and secularization during Abdel Nasser's regime and to show to what extent the spiritual emptiness reached the people of Egypt. The novel traces the lives of a group of people with diverse positions in the public sector gathered in the houseboat (awammah) to escape from their cultural and religious values. To be safe from the eyes of their community because they recognize well what they have practiced in the houseboat may not be accepted by the customs, culture and religion of their community.

Amm Abduh (uncle Abduh) is the servant on the houseboat, "I'm the houseboat...because I'm the ropes and floats, if I forgot any duties for a minute, it would sink or be carried away by a current" Amm Abduh is the main Islamic figures in the novel, he works not only to take care of the houseboat, but also he brings Kif (hashish) to the group of the houseboat, change the water pipe, and he has to bring the street girls to the people of the houseboat. Further, Amm Abduh lives another religious life in the mosque; he calls Muslims for prayers and leads them in the prayers. Anis Zaki, a member of the houseboat's group, asked him "have you found nothing else to make you happy after love?" his answer comes to surprise the readers " prayer is my comfort" “Your voice is beautiful when you call them to prayers” Anis Zaki remarked and he then added merrily " even so, you're not too holy to go to fetch the Kif, or bring back one of the street girls for us” Amm Abduh does not show any sort of objection or criticism but he emphasized that he " served the gentlemen”

Amm Abduh lives a secular life, he calls Muslim for prayers and claimed his comfort in prayers and he goes against Islamic values and faith. He finds no defect in separating between his religious life in the mosque and his practices in public life. He admits the life of secularization satisfyingly. The sacred sense of Islamic values disappears under the tenets of secularization, the focus here is on Adrift of the Nile and how a group of people escape from their daily lives to live a secular life. The houseboat is a symbol of their gathering and the secular life they led on the houseboat. They feel spiritual emptiness that leads them to secularize their aspects of lives.

The group of the houseboat represents the elite of Egyptians who has selected a secular life away of the restrictions of the community. Layla Zaidan favors to live a secular life on the houseboat because she has been influenced by the call for woman liberation and views Islamic values and culture as a restriction to her dreams and desires. Mahfouz portrays the success of secularization process to make the people lose their faith and their power to change the community for better. Mustafa addresses his friends in the houseboat “not now that our lives have become a sick joke”.

Mahfouz has selected the characters carefully to represent diverse segments of the community, particularly, the intellectuals to show how the life of secularization affect a large segment of the community to live secular lives and to separate between their personal Islamic life and their public lives, while intellectuals should reflect the religious values and community culture derived from their religion and work on shifting the fate and the future of their community to better. Secularization process, perhaps, finds easily away into the heads and hearts of the public because their religious void that be expected to be filled by intellectual's efforts to maintain the faith and the Islamic values of the community, but on the contrary, they were the first segment which neglect their responsibility in enlightening the people. Samara Baget comments on the group of the houseboat in her play " it is difficult to decide whether the loss of belief-any belief- [about Khlid Azzuz] was what brought him to decay, or whether decay was what drove him to refuse all beliefs”.

Muslim secularists adopt secularization a code of their lives and this sort of secularization leads the people to spiritual emptiness and loss. “just before you sleeping you heard Napoleon accusing English of killing by poison. But the English are not the only [scholar emphasis] who kill by slow poison”. Secularization and some destructive concepts put an end to Islamic faith and values, it is like a slow poison which definitely leads the people to their unlikeable end and find secularization are imposed on their diverse aspects of lives and they do not attempt to change the situation. The people of the houseboat eventually find the false peace and enjoyment that they claim they find through sex and smoking of hashish [Kif],
that sex devoid of love and real passion and it becomes as a part of their daily routine.

Amm Abduh who supposed to set a good example of real Muslim, practiced all the Islamic rituals represented by prayers in the mosque and reflect these Islamic values in his daily life, he become an incarnation of secularism. Mahfouz depicts the group of the houseboat admit the religion as a personal affairs between Allah and mankind, and religion does not require to be shown in our daily life. Amm Abduh comes to the houseboat to earn his living and he works as a night watch man, dedicated to security and safety of the houseboat. He is an Islamic man and a symbol of Muslim because he calls Muslim for prayers five times a day. He comes back from the mosque to practice a diverse life featured with secular life, devoid of Islamic values.

The problem with Amm Abduh is that he does not attempt to find better job for his living or to at least show his objection about this sort of secular life, but he appears satisfied with this secular life and he becomes a part of this secular life that does not match with Muslim life. He responds to the endless demands of the group of the houseboat such as change the water pipe; bring Kif or works as a pimp who brings the street girls to the people of houseboat, this job which is not suitable to Muslim who believes in Islam and the values of Islam. Further, Mahfouz portrays Amm Abduh as a machine that responds automatically to the demands of the houseboat without showing any objection. Mahfouz brings secularism and secularization in this novel as a separation between personal life and public affairs, but he does not deny the existence of the religion or the existence of God as Hamid did in his novel, The Void in a Man's Mind, Amm Abdu is more likely to do a job than a religious ritual which is a duty of Muslim to do. Islamic values become empty and would not lead to better change.

The secular aspects of life practiced by the group of the houseboat lead them to mock the day of prophet, Mohammed's Hagra from Mecca to Madinah which bears supreme sense for Muslims and reflect the suffering, struggling and sacrificing of Prophet Mohammed to spread Islam. This group celebrates this day by planning a trip to Saqqara on the road of the pyramids. They probably recognize the traditional way of celebration, but they require comprehending the great sense of this journey. The group of the houseboat recognize well that they drive a strange lives that are not involved with Islamic values, "the fact is that we are not neither Egyptians, nor Arabs, nor human beings; we do not belong to anything except this houseboat".

**Conclusion**

Hamid perhaps appears to be the one who has eccentric ideas that are not harmonized with the community religion or culture. He may find a safe refuge to express his blasphemous ideas and liberal thoughts through his narrative that may not reach the standard of narrative. He denied and rejected all the symbols of all religions, particularly Islam. He does not provide secularism or secularization as a separation between the state and the Islamic faith, but he entirely denies any existence to the Creator or the angels, prophets, and denies the unseen, while Mahfouz attempts to separate the Islamic personal life from the public affairs in his novel.

Secularization does not reflect the Islamic or Arab life derived from Islam and Sunnah, rather, it drifts the people away of islam and its values. A drift on the Nile ends when Anis Zaki narrates to Samara the story of the apes' paradise among trees. The apes want one of their members to "come back to the tree or the beast will get you...this one came down from the apes' paradise in the trees to the forest floor". This novel shows that the group of the houseboat unable to control their secular lives and they walk in an endless path. They are careless, powerless, and hopeless to change their secular lives which detach them away from their Islamic values and their cultural customs.

The *void in a Man's Mind* has presented distorted thought, lacks the artistic elements required by any narrative. Hamid appears as a man who likes to stuff his distorted ideas about religion and its symbols to satisfy his secularism and secularization interests. The parts of the narrative come contradicted to each other. What he denies at the beginning, he returns back to prove it as a reality would not be ignored, such as existence of religion and Allah. He struggles to eradicate any existence for these terms, then he returns back to show religion and faith are only a relationship between mankind and his God. Further, at the end of the book he would like to escape from his ideas and claims that he argues in the narrative by stating that "people will believe what I have written although we are in the era of lies...I'm not going to claim the miracle, the inspiration, or the prophecy with what my pen writes because my era is not the era of prophets". From here, you may touch the contradictions which his novel shows throughout this narrative.

**REFERENCES**


