

**Isolation at Home – A Unique Experience in Ahmed Saadawi's
*Frankenstein in Baghdad***

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العزلة في المنزل – تجربة فريدة للكاتب أحمد السعداوي في رواية فرانكشتاين في بغداد

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Abstract:

The research aims to study the novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, study the characters present and analyze them in the novel, and also study isolation in the homeland and the post-war social reality and analyze the reasons that make isolation a part of the individual's personality due to circumstances or the nature of life. Post-colonial literature in Iraq contains much of the tragic reality of wars. The research focused on the main characters and reflected on the theme of isolation.

The research is interested in studying post-colonial literature in Iraq or war literature by studying society and political and social problems such as corruption and moral decay and their reflection on the characters. Literature is a reflection of reality and a direct picture of all aspects of society. The important events that lead to destruction, terror, and terrorism and how they shape the image of the individual in this society. Discussing these conditions and variables and studying the extent of their impact on the individual's behavior.

The research concluded that war and political corruption destroy society. The disastrous consequences of wars were discussed, how corruption spread, the destruction of love between Iraqi families, hunger and poverty. Friends become



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enemies and begin to doubt each other. The lack of security and the disintegration of all administrative systems force citizens to leave their homeland and migrate elsewhere. Those who have no alternative continue to survive amidst danger. Some have no choice, like Hadi, or others have a reason to stay home, like Elisheva. However, one thing is certain. Those unfortunate beings who stay, for whatever reason, feel isolated and abandoned by their homeland. Nothing could be more tragic than this. They are physically separated from their family members

ملخص البحث

يهدف البحث إلى دراسة رواية فرانكشتاين في بغداد ودراسة الشخصيات الحاضرة وتحليلها في الرواية وأيضاً دراسة العزلة في الوطن والواقع الاجتماعي ما بعد الحرب وتحليل الأسباب التي تجعل العزلة جزءاً من شخصية الفرد بسبب الظروف أو طبيعة الحياة. يحتوي أدب ما بعد الاستعمار في العراق على الكثير من الواقع المأساوي للحروب. ركز البحث على الشخصيات الرئيسية و انعكس على موضوع العزلة.

يهتم البحث بدراسة أدب ما بعد الاستعمار في العراق أو أدب الحرب من خلال دراسة المجتمع والمشاكل السياسية والاجتماعية كالفساد والانحلال الأخلاقي وانعكاسها على الشخصيات. الأدب هو انعكاس للواقع وصورة مباشرة لجميع جوانب المجتمع. الأحداث المهمة التي تؤدي إلى الدمار والرعب والإرهاب وكيف تشكل صورة الفرد في هذا المجتمع. مناقشة هذه الظروف والمتغيرات ودراسة مدى تأثيرها على سلوك الفرد.

وخلص البحث إلى أن الحرب والفساد السياسي يدمران المجتمع. وتمت مناقشة العواقب الكارثية للحروب، وكيفية انتشار الفساد، وتدمير المحبة بين العائلات العراقية، والجوع والفقر. يصبح الأصدقاء أعداء ويبدأون في الشك في بعضهم البعض. إن انعدام الأمن وتفكك كافة الأنظمة الإدارية يجبر المواطنين على مغادرة وطنهم والهجرة إلى مكان آخر. أولئك الذين ليس لديهم بديل يواصلون البقاء على قيد الحياة وسط الخطر. البعض ليس لديهم خيار، مثل هادي، أو البعض الآخر لديهم سبب للبقاء في المنزل، مثل إليشيفا. ومع ذلك، هناك شيء واحد مؤكد. هؤلاء الكائنات البائسة الذين يبقون، لأي سبب كان، يشعرون بالعزلة والتخلي عن وطنهم. لا شيء يمكن أن يكون أكثر مأساوية من هذا. إنهم منفصلون عن أفراد أسرهم.

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, there was a surge of fiction in the country that served as an expressive outlet bringing about a change in the themes, the technique, and the narrative style of the novelists. Post occupation Iraqi fiction depicts corruption, violence and death. (Hamedawi, 2017, p. p 211) has aptly

said that “the Iraqi postcolonial novel has established its own distinctive voice, varying from realism to fantasy to speculation, to myth, from harsh objectivity to subjective sympathy.” The fiction of the period is marked with several awards and nominees at home and internationally as it cries out in a melancholy tone, narrating the destruction and tragedy and raises its voice anxiously to be heard by the world. There is a long list of works with a range of themes that describe the events and their consequences after colonialism struck Iraq. The post-colonial novel is far different from the traditional fiction which has set a fence around itself and dared not venture out of it. Fiction as a popular literary genre was just establishing itself and replacing poetry, which was more common before the war. Fiction as a genre was looked upon as a western tradition. Telling stories was considered to be a women’s job. Iraqi society was conservative, and the men believed that they were made for more important tasks. Moreover, the turmoil and change in the political and social scenarios kept the men occupied with basic concerns of safety, security and stability. People had to strive to face death, poverty and oppression.

Frankenstein in Baghdad is penned by Ahmed Saadawi. It is a unique combination of the grotesque, fantasy, and the beauty of human nature amidst terror. It is based on Mary Shelley’s horror story about a man composed of different parts of the body for the sake of biological interest. The background of the novel is the U.S. occupation of Baghdad, followed by the war, with constant terror attacks, bombings and deaths. The camera is also in a neighbourhood following a way of life under siege. Violence is rampant. There is no logic, no reason, or no control. There is utter chaos everywhere. Troops of militants pervade a country that they have come to occupy.

The residents of Baghdad found it very difficult to survive in the circumstances. While some left the place, others continued to live there for some reason or another. Baghdad is their homeland after all; yet, the researcher observed that most of the characters in the novel experienced a strange kind of isolation. This paper examines the strange and unique experiences of the original Iraqis and the isolation they experienced.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

- To read the novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad*
- To list and analyse the important characters in the novel
- To highlight their strange isolation in their homeland

1.3 Scope and Limitations

The study is limited to the novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad* by Ahmed Saadawi. The focus is on the main characters.

1.4 Importance of the study

Amidst the vast research on post-colonial literature in Iraq, we find the social and political issues handled from a number of angles and perspectives. The volume of social and political controversy is directly proportional to the magnitude of its impact on human life. Fiction is considered to be a reflection of reality. Whenever events take place in any part of the world that affect human life extensively, particularly events that lead to destruction, horror, and terror, writers and artists find an opportunity to bring them before the world through their own art forms. The reason may be a kind of warning, cautioning, or creating awareness about harsh realities. Post-colonial literature in Iraq has been handled by various authors in different ways and from varying perspectives. The fact that this kind of literature is read and appreciated points out that the authors have succeeded in their intentions and that readers want to read about it. Perhaps, the author of the novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad* had similar intentions. More than anything, the element of horror that is so loudly depicted in the novel shows that the author was concerned about the human race, the extent that one could fall to whether it is worth being called the human race, and so on. The repercussions of significant historical events can be economic, physical and also psychological. This study focuses on the psychological angle the effect on the minds of the natives, who survived the horrors in their own land, and preferred to live on in their native place and did not migrate like so many others did.

SECTION 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Emergence of fiction in Iraq

Let us briefly discuss the evolution of fiction in Iraq from pre-war times to the period after the invasion. Generally, a novel is understood as a genre that has immense power to entertain, as it has been doing so widely in Britain. As a novel is set in some background that resembles a real situation even if it is not totally realistic, a novel invariably includes social and political elements that make up the background. Since these are not meant to be authentic historical documents, they often describe the situations more realistically than otherwise. Yet, basically, the prime function of fiction is to provide entertainment to the reader; hence, few elements that serve this purpose are part of the novels. This was precisely missed out by beginner novelists in Iraq, and any element of entertainment can be called a coincidence. Political struggle continued from the First World War, followed by a period of British authority, independence in 1932, the Iran-Iraq war, and then a brief phase of monarchy which was overthrown by the socialist Ba'ath Party in 1958. This continued till the Coalition was formed in 2003. According to Salam Ibrahim, "this bloody history of the last three decades has made the Iraqi individual largely

preoccupied with ways of saving himself from death that lurks and threatens him, whether at the war fronts, in detention, or caught in the claws of hunger during the years of economic siege” (Ikraam, 2015, p. 34 page 9). Ikraam Masmoudi states that many Iraqi novelists established the foundations of Iraqi novel on such violent political and historical background (2015, p 9).

The first ever work that had the features of a novel was *Al-riwyah al-iqaziyyah (The Awakening Novel, 1919)* by Sulaymān Faydī, which solely focused on social awakening and moral reform, without any intention of entertainment or romance (Kashou, 52). Next came Ahmed Mahmoud Alsaeed, who extended the topics to include social, political, educational and moral issues. In his novel *Khalel Jalal*, he states that British colonialism can be tackled only through education, the spread of knowledge, and the riddance of traditional and useless customs. He also argued for the rights of women. This work was one of the first narrative works of Iraqi fiction that had the features of a novel. Fu’ad Al-Takarli, experimented with the short story form. However, the first work that had all the features of a novel came in 1966, namely, *Palm and Neighbour* by Gha’ab Tumaā Farman (Ibrahim, 3). It is a realistic novel that describes the poor and miserable conditions in the vicinity of Baghdad during the Second World War, and the main focus is the everyday lives of the citizens. Most of these novels including Fahdil Alazaawi’s, *The Fifth Castle, deal with the common Iraqi man, the simple life of the folks, all depicted in the local Iraqi dialect. They all share a pessimistic view of life.*

Artists faced very hard times during the Al-Ba’ath Regime and when Saddam Hussein was The President. Writers were regarded with suspicion and worked under pressure. Most of them worked secretly. Hence, the work they produced was nowhere near par with fiction written elsewhere in the world or in the Middle East. They were under the vigilance of the police and were forced to abandon their vocation. Hence, they avoided realism, preferred symbolism and pretended to be faithful to the regime. At the most, they glorified death or paid homage to the war heroes. Some good examples are Mohamed Khediar’s *Qadisiyah Saddam* (1983) and *Basriaytha* (1996), and Mahmoud Jindar’s *The Edges* (1989). The war with Iran which continued for eight years, had devastated the country. Both ordinary citizens as well as Iraqi intellectuals were preoccupied with the struggle for life and had no inclination to express their sorrows through creative writing. Most of the writers and intellectuals had fled the country. Those who stayed on were lucky to get the opportunity to promote the novel form in Iraq after April 9 2003, a date that was crucial to all but specifically to writers in the history of Iraq.

After the end of the Ba’ath regime, the mental stress was suddenly lifted, and novelists penned rich fiction. Publishing houses opened everywhere and promoted the writing profession. Millions of books were published, and the

internet opened more gateways to express thoughts publicly, reaching out to all parts of the world. Yet, the prior experiences and the collapse of Saddam Hussain weighed on the minds of Iraqis to some extent, making them feel uncertain and apprehensive about the future. They looked at the international coalition with doubt. Naturally, the novels of this phase are marked by two trends: one focused on the tragedies before 2003 and the other rejoiced in the transformations after the invasion. Finally, after much struggle and challenge , Iraqi writers succeeded in establishing a new identity for Iraqi fiction. Writers turned their attention to social and political reality and managed to present it skilfully in their narratives. The new situation afforded them a chance to create their own original style through which they could respond to the circumstances. According to (Alshebeby, 2014), “the Iraqi novel is a very flexible genre, capable of manipulating all narrative shapes and styles to produce different thoughts and visions far removed from pragmatic reality (Alshebeby, 2014).” He adds that the questions and conversations initiated by the Iraqi authors are an ideal, ideological , and psychological response to the reality of Iraq after the 1960s.

The political scenario in Iraq and The post-colonial fiction are closely related and cannot be separated from each other. On the background of events following 2003, the writers were anxious to write about the radical changes taking place in the country. The existing cultural conditions provided the necessary support. The novelists competed with each other to present as realistic a picture of the wars and invasions as possible. The novel as a genre has the power and magic to portray the huge political crisis in Iraq through narration. The Writers had a wide choice of themes to choose from: corruption, war, destruction, devastation, crime, rape, death, oil theft, kidnapping, discrimination and the list goes on. These themes comprised the realities in Iraq after 2003 and enriched the novels of the period.

2.2 Important writers and their representative works

It will be convenient at this juncture to discuss in brief some of the novels written by Iraqi novelists following the 2003 invasion , This will give an idea of how the themes mentioned above were handled by various authors and how they perceived the various socio-political issues.

Dhiaa Aljbaili's Márquez's Curse was published in 2007 and is a representative novel that throws light on the different characteristics of Iraqi post occupation fiction. The main theme of the novel is the destruction of Iraq on a mass scale. The government offices and the infrastructure that supports the government, the buildings and various service systems were destroyed during the war, thus cutting off the stems of a government. This can be a great loss to any nation and has an impact on the daily routine of the life common man, on the economy of the nation and on politics. It was physical, material destruction. The wave of

fear and panic on the first entry of the coalition in Basra province which is south of Iraq is described by the writer. The chaos resulting from the international coalition is a significant theme in the novel.

The writer has chosen the mailbox office as the central place of action. Immediately after the news of the end of Saddam Hussain's government, the office was attacked, and all official as well as personal documents were destroyed. The place was ransacked and left in a miserable chaotic condition. This incident would have long consequences. The writer wants to point out that it would take a long time for things to return to their normal state. The past and the present are beautifully juxtaposed in the narrative. The draft of this novel is found among the papers, all ready for despatch but without a stamp. The draft is all about pre-2003 conditions. The sender's name and recipient's name are missing. There is a secret code that implies that the draft would go out of Iraq secretly, without being caught by Saddam's police force. The draft is the work of five young men, who have worked independently on each of the five chapters and do not seem to be in agreement with each other. One of them is the writer. The situation is symbolic of the situation in the country. There is chaos and conflict everywhere. This enables people from other nations to take over the reins and rule in their own selfish way. They exploit the country in their own interests.

The writer has cleverly conveyed the reasons for the failure of the Iraqi intelligentsia to assert themselves. They were submissive in the face of Saddam's oppressive policies. They shared an inferiority complex as they believed that only the West had the ability to produce rich literature. They seem to be paralyzed. They had, as if, handed the identity and culture of Iraq to foreigners. Thus, through symbols and analogies, the writer has artistically depicted the real and ghostly picture of the country, the mental pressure among the residents and the paralyzed condition of the intellectuals. The chapters are disconnected and the conclusion is not clear. These elements reflect the paralysed state of the country.

The compromise with cultural identity was a great concern for the intellectuals in Iraq after 2003 and served as a source of inspiration for many writers. They believed that the foreign agenda was to destroy the cultural identity of Iraq, to destroy the educational, cognitive, and intellectual capacity of the country. The intellectual and cultural situation in India served as a source of inspiration for writers after 2003. Another example is the novel *Jannat Al-'atād* by Alsebt published in 2010. Ibrahim Alsebt also shares the perspective of this intentional destruction of Iraq. His focus is more on the colonial influence that affected the moral values of Iraqi society. The book describes the attack on a famous book selling street in Iraq named Almutanabbi which is symbolic of an attack on intellectuals and scholars. It was like an attempt to weaken the state of the

country by weakening its education system. The novel also refers to an attempt to destroy the history of Mesopotamia. One native trades the nation's treasures and becomes rich. He has no scruples about doing so and no sense of regret. It resembles the changing nature of people who have lost moral values and have become selfish. The novel thus portrays the deteriorating state of the country after 2003. The poverty, bomb attacks, violence, murders, and theft that are described in the novel provide a mere glimpse of the actual conditions, which are beyond imagination, according to the writer.

Abdul Alzahra Ali's *Poisoned Wind (Riah Alsamum, 2010)* is another work of fiction that deals with a realistic picture of violations since the International Coalition in 2003. In his work of fiction, Ali brings out the shattered economy of Iraq after 2003. The storyline starts with the market place which maintained a delicate balance economically, and moves on to describe the exploitation by businessmen in the absence of any legal authority or control. The illegal market place trades in stolen goods, spare parts, pharmaceuticals, electronic gadgets etc. that are all overpriced and inaccessible to the common Iraqi citizen. There is sale of alcohol and drugs, which are detrimental to the intellect and destroy cultural values and identity. The businessmen especially target the young generation, making them slaves to new fashions and bad habits, compelling them to spend exorbitant amounts on unnecessary goods. The novel touches on issues like corruption in government organizations.

Ward Bader Salam's novel *Eajayib Baghdad*, mainly deals with the rise of sectarianism in Iraq during 2006. It highlights the factors that led the Iraqis to sectarianism. The search for identity was a desperate motive of the common citizens who suffered the tragedy. The novel includes multiple stories woven together, appearing like an encyclopedia that documents reality. It depicts a picture of misery, death and chaos.

The novels that follow continue to deal with the conditions before and after 2003 from different perspectives. The ISIS invasion in 2014 and its consequences are another source of inspiration for Iraqi novelists. All through the years, we find little evidence of fiction that is purely entertaining in nature, that deals with simple themes of life like love and romance, like social realities, and routine life of the common man. It was as though the writers considered it their mission to bring out the tragic hazards that swept the country and create awareness among the Iraqis about the miserable state of the nation. Together, the novels present a kaleidoscopic vision of the reality. They are like a literary record of history, economic crisis, religious collapse, and political turbulence.

2.2 War and isolation

Humans are social creatures and are not meant to live alone but to live among others of the same race. It is a natural human tendency to seek companions and prolonged social isolation can lead to depression, anxiety and substance abuse.

A lonely man feels uprooted, especially during wartime. War leads to economic isolation (Erik, 2019). Isolation affects the quality of life. War destroys social organizations. War affects both combatants and non-combatants not only physically but also emotionally. War leads to death on account of illness, malnutrition, disability, injuries, and violence. There are also emotional effects like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety. War spreads terror among people, breaking bonds and relationships between them. People remain emotionally disturbed. Elbedour, Bensel, and Bastien (1993) called the helplessly victimized children and families caught in the experience of war the “collaterally damaged” population (1993, p. 806).

2.2 Literature Review

“War and Occupation” by Ikraam Masmoudi was published in 2015. The book is divided into four chapters that follow a chronological order. The book covers Iraqi fiction starting from the Ba’ath regime until the occupation in 2003 and thereafter. In the first chapter, he analyses some novels that deal with the period of Saddam’s dictatorship and the war between Iran and Iraq. He brings out the marginal position of artists and intellectuals. In the second chapter, he refers to the Gulf War of 1991. He describes the post-modern war as depicted in Iraqi novels. The third chapter describes life in the new Iraq and the last chapter describes life in the camp.

Roger Luckhurst in his article titled “In War Times: Fictionalizing Iraq” (2012) poses some basic questions about the 2003 invasion. He believes that it is far from a logical consequence of 9/11. “When did the war in Iraq start? With the Gulf War in 1991? Earlier? Is it separable from the war in Afghanistan, the longest military engagement in U.S. history? Has the war in Iraq ended?” are some of the questions he has raised in the article. Adam Robert’s article, titled “The End of Occupation: Iraq 2004” contains answers to some of the questions. While referring to the end of the occupation, he opines that a military occupation-and all the responsibilities of an occupying power cannot end at once, especially without the actual departure of the foreign military forces involved.

Yasmeen Hanoosh deals with the issue of sectarianism in her article. Traditionally, secular Iraqi discourse avoided the mention of sectarianism openly due to the prevalent idea that sectarian identities are mutually exclusive and oppose national identity. Iraqi identities and their mainstream formulations became noticeable only after 2003 in Iraq. This can first be noticed in the Western diaspora.

(Wolk, 2016) talks about the Iraq-US conflict, with a particular focus on the ways in which the US modified the space in Iraq, especially within Baghdad, through the installation of checkpoints, barriers, and the “Green Zone.” She discusses how the US controlled public monumental space through the

construction of the military bases and the destruction of iconic statues. she has examined the ways in which statues and monuments are described in post occupation novels with an emphasis on the ways remediated monumental space informs the post-2003 Iraqi national identity.

(Khammas, 2018) argues that contemporary Iraqi fiction establishes revolutionary and creative links between ideology and masculinity. Images on television of tortured corpses during and after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 changed the concept of the body in contemporary Iraqi fiction. Contemporary Iraqi fiction offers a different use of masculinity. The writer has analysed two extracts from *The Corpse Washer* (2010) by Sinan Antoon and *Al-Raj' Al-Ba'id "The Long Way Back"* (1980) by Fou'ad Al-Tikerly.

Most of the works emphasize violence, horror and terror. Some works however, depict the changes in the country brought about by the US occupation. The marginalization of the natives is also discussed. However, the researcher did not come across any study that considered the psychological impact on native individuals who remained firm in their country rather than leaving it as some opted for. Staying through the bad times, staying through the transition phase and witnessing mass changes is bound to lead to psychological problems. This is the main focus of this study. Marginalization is seen from the point of view of outsiders; isolation is an individual experience but can be a shared experience when a community is passing through similar circumstances.

SECTION 3

ANALYSIS OF CHARACTERS AND THEIR SENSE OF ISOLATION

3.1 Introduction

Frankenstein in Baghdad is penned by Ahmed Saadawi. It is a unique combination of the grotesque, fantasy and beauty of human nature amidst terror. It is based on Mary Shelley's horror story about a man composed of different parts of the body for the sake of biological interest. The background of the novel is the U.S. occupation of Baghdad, followed by the war, with constant terror attacks, bombings and deaths. The camera is also in a neighbourhood following a way of life under siege. Violence is rampant. There is no logic, no reason or no control. There is utter chaos everywhere. Troops of militants pervade a country that they have come to occupy. In these conditions, it is observed that the residents of the country are severely affected. Among other things, they experience depression and a sense of isolation. Several people choose to migrate to safer places. However, those who have roots or some obligations are compelled to stay on in spite of the suffering. Some others know that they will be unable to settle and re-establish lost positions or properties in foreign lands if they continue to stay in their own country. This paper takes up the case of individual characters in the novel and explains how they become lonely in their own land.

3.2 Isolated beings

Hadi is a junk seller who makes a difficult living by purchasing unwanted furniture etc. discarded by residents either due to poverty or because they migrate. He lives alone in a dilapidated structure in a poor neighbourhood and the neighbours are his only companions. All of them do not have a very favourable impression of him; they criticize him in his absence, but they tolerate him, perhaps, out of pity. Hadi often had to argue with people to sell their belongings to him and even the loss of a single customer was a great loss to him; he found it difficult to fulfill his basic needs. Hadi's sorrow is expressed in his words "No day passed without at least one car bomb. Why did he see other people dying on the news and yet he was still alive? He had to get on the news one day, he said to himself (p 80)." While talking to What sits name, who had made it his mission to kill all criminals, he makes a strange request. Hadi knew that he was on the list. Yet he requests, "Leave me till the end," he said. "I don't want to live anyway. What's living to someone like me? I'm nothing, whether I live or die. I'm nothing. Kill me, but at the end. Make me the last one (p 98)." These words are touching. He sees no meaning in life nor any cause to live. He is alone. His death would not lead to loss for anyone. His very existence seemed unnecessary. He worked only to provide for his own needs. The excess money that he got went into drinks. For lonely, isolated people, drink is the only solace. In spite of being an original resident of Iraq, he experienced isolation among his own people. When Hadi was suspected of being Whatsitsname, he was beaten cruelly and tortured. It was the neighbours who looked after him until he recovered enough to manage on his own. In the action of the neighbours, we observe a trace of humanity. Knowing that Hadi had no one of his own, they did not leave him to die alone.

One cannot fail to notice the misery of Abu Anwar, who owned a hotel in the same locality. Mahmoud, the journalist had been one of his guests for a long time. However, Mahmoud had left for a better place and the number of guests in the hotel began to dwindle. The hotel provided just the necessary facilities and there was no sign of luxury or decorum. Abu Anwar was well aware that there was a need to renovate the place from top to bottom and inside out. He did not have [the](#) money to do so. He was finding it difficult to maintain the hotel and its staff as they existed so any idea about renovation was troublesome and disturbing. Abu's guests in the hotel were his regular companions. When they started leaving, he became more and more lonely and experienced isolation. There was no hope of improving his business; that would have been consoling in spite of the loneliness. He sadly remembered his past days of youth and glory and how he had bought the hotel from the previous owner. Renovation would lead to debt and there was no guarantee that the business would flourish. Faraj offered to be his partner and help him; on the condition that he would change

the name of the hotel. Abu was angry. He did not want to be the minor partner and he could not tolerate the idea of changing the name of the hotel. When he thought practically, he arrived at the decision to sell off the hotel to Faraj. Abu's case is another one where he becomes isolated, has to close down his business and move away from his homeland. The tragedy is pronounced in the following paragraph:

“A day earlier someone else had left Baghdad, in this case with no plans to come back. This was Abu Anmar, the owner of the Orouba Hotel. He turned the ignition key of the new GMC truck he had bought with the money from his deal with Faraj, then adjusted his headdress and headband and looked at his face in the rearview mirror: he felt he was on top of the world. He had transferred the rest of the money to his nephews in his hometown, Qalat Sukkar, in the south, where he was now headed, having washed his hands of Baghdad, a city he no longer recognized. After twenty-three years, the city had abandoned him, becoming a place of murder and gratuitous violence.” (page 166)

Soon after he left, Faraj tore down the name of the hotel ‘Orouba’, which means ‘Arabness’ and trampled on it. This action is symbolic.

Whatitsname was a creation of Hadi. The very fact that he was not a normal creation of God and the only creature of his kind, separates it from the human race. What its name did find a home with Elishva who looked upon him as her lost son Daniel and showered all her affection on him, but he knew very well that this pretension would be short-lived and perhaps, even Elishva knew deep inside her mind that he was not her son Daniel. However, she felt solace in assuming it, the solace that she badly needed at the time. When the police started looking for the mysterious creature, Whatitsname had to go around cautiously, hiding through narrow lanes and paths. He could not bring either Elishva or Hadi into trouble by visiting their houses. Hence, after helping Hadi to recover from the government officers' attack, Hadi never saw him again nor anybody else in the neighbourhood. Whatitsname deliberately had to keep himself away from his creator Hadi, his so-called mother Elishva and the others. He was a lone person on a lone mission. He continued his mission as long as he survived his strange existence by replacing his body parts with those of new dead people. His creation was unique and the only one of its kind; his existence and his mission were the only ones of their kind and he was separated from other human beings. Thus, in every sense, he was isolated – physically and psychologically.

“He felt lonely. He hadn't spoken to anyone in weeks. He had only two acquaintances left: the junk dealer and the mad old woman” (page 142). Hence, although a strange creation, he did feel the need for companionship. He knew that Hadi was his creator, so he felt a kind of obligation towards Hadi and

thought that he must help and protect Hadi – “ He could have finished off the pink officers and their three assistants without batting an eyelid, but that would have created a bigger problem for the junk dealer, who would be accused of killing them. In order to help Hadi resume his normal life, he had better not show his face to him again” (page 142). This reflection of Whatitsname shows that if he kept himself away from Hadi, it was for the sake of Hadi although it would make himself feel lonelier. If Whatitsname can feel the need for companionship, of course, human beings crave for it, as they belong to the race of social animals.

The loneliness of Nader Shamoumi is also pronounced in the novel. He was the deacon and he sensed danger when he discovered one morning that the keyhole of his door had been filled with some kind of glue in his absence. This happened twice and he decided to leave Baghdad for good. He realized that there was no security in Baghdad and one could not lodge a complaint anywhere. He called a family meeting and planned to move away ‘... until things calmed down. He didn’t foresee the possibility that never coming back would become a very real option’ (page 147). Before he left, he succeeded in giving Elishva the message from her daughter that she was going to arrive in Baghdad to take Elishva with her. Elishva had stopped visiting the church on account of the bomb explosions, while her daughters kept calling her and insisted on talking to her. Father Josiah kept assuring them that she was safe.

The most tragic victim of isolation in the novel is Elishva. Elishva had no ties in Baghdad, and her daughters were ready to take her with them and leave the country. Yet, she could not leave Baghdad because she survived on the faint hope that her son Daniel, who had enrolled in the war twenty years ago , would return to the house one day. To him, that was the house where he would expect to meet his mother and sisters. Elishva could not tolerate the idea of quitting the house and the country in case Daniel returned and found his family gone. She was one of those who were compelled to live in Baghdad in spite of the risks and dangers involved. The neighbours were certain that Daniel must have been dead long back but how could they make Elishva believe it? After all, she was a mother. Daniel was her only hope that kept her alive. She was so collapsed that she imagined that the figure of Christ in her room spoke to her. She showered all her love on Whatitsname, taking him for her son Daniel. Even though for a temporary period, Whatitsname enabled her to survive her loss. Of course, he could not keep up the pretence permanently. Fortunately, her grandson and her daughter did arrive one day and then she sold her house and left Baghdad. Her visits to the church where she received calls from her daughters, her lonely miserable life and patient wait for her son Daniel, really make the readers feel sorry for her.

It is not just these few characters, but almost every character in the novel who feels isolated to some extent. There is no mention of any family, living happily among relatives. Saidi, Majid, even Mahmoud are all lonely while in Baghdad.

Section 4

4.1 Conclusion

The above discussion shows that war affects every individual and every element of society. The dire consequences of war are highlighted in the novel. Poverty is a common result of war. People lose their means of livelihood. The entire economic system gets disturbed, since the business of one person depends on that of another. There are no opportunities for employment. People are compelled to join the army. Families fall apart. Bonds of love and friendship are severed. It is impossible to lead a normal life. People lose faith and trust in each other. Friends become enemies and start suspecting each other. Lack of security and disintegration of all administrative systems compels citizens to leave their homeland and migrate elsewhere. Those who have no alternative, continue to survive amidst danger. Some have no choice, like Hadi, or others have a reason for staying in the homeland, like Elishva. Yet, one thing is certain. These unfortunate beings who stay on, for whatever reason, feel isolated and abandoned in their own homeland. Nothing could be more tragic than this. They get physically separated from their family members. At the same time, they experience a psychological sense of isolation. In extreme sense of isolation can be very harmful. One may lose mental balance, fall prey to some psychological disorder, do self-harm or even commit suicide.

One has special ties with the homeland, where childhood days of happiness are spent. The need to leave behind friends and relatives and migrate to some unknown land sounds very cruel. It is even more difficult to take the step. One can only imagine what mental torture and political pressure such victims might be going through. It must indeed be difficult for them to leave their homeland forever.

4.2 Suggestions and recommendations

War has many aspects and angles. The impacts of war can vary for individuals. A study can be conducted on how literature based on war deals with various aspects of war and its impact.

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