

## The Intelligentsia and the Woman in Ali Bader's Novels

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### Abstract:

This study examines the relationship between the intellectual and the woman as depicted in several selected novels by the Iraqi novelist, Ali Bader. Ali Bader's novels are regarded as literary documents closely related to the middle class in the Iraqi society. They represent a re-reading of the modern history of Iraq, particularly the cultural aspects from a narrative perspective, discussing numerous important issues and visions on the political, social and cultural history represented by the narrative intelligentsia. Therefore, the researcher found the analytical approach to be the most proper critical method for examining Ali Bader's works. It was found that the character of the woman seeks female domination, and that the intellectual must comply and succumb contrary to the familiar traditions in eastern societies which marginalize women economically and constantly belittle her achievements. Therefore, several feminine characters in Bader's novels are shown to be of low education dominated by erotic dimensions; yet, a woman is entitled to play a role that enables her to dominate. Thus, the intellectual becomes subjected to her briskness. However, a woman is still a negative entity in the presence of the predominant mass pattern of men, but positive in the absence of it.

**Keywords:** Intelligentsia, intellectual, domination, discrimination, marginalization, ideologies.

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## أهل الفكر والمرأة في روايات علي بدر

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### الملخص:-

تبحث هذه الدراسة العلاقة بين المثقف والمرأة كما تم تصويرها في روايات مختارة من روايات الروائي العراقي علي بدر. تعتبر روايات علي بدر وثائق أدبية مرتبطة بدقة بالطبقة الوسطى في المجتمع العراقي. تمثل هذه الروايات التاريخ الحديث للعراق، خصوصا الدوايب الثقافية من منظور سردي، متناولة قضايا مهمة متعددة ورؤى للتاريخ السياسي والاجتماعي والثقافي متمثلة بالطليعة المثقفة المهتمة بالسرد القصصي. بناء عليه، وجد الباحث أن الطريقة التحليلية تعتبر الطريقة النقدية الأكثر مناسبة لدراسة أعمال بدر. تم اكتشاف أن شخصية المرأة تسعى للهيمنة الانثوية، وأنه يجب على المثقف أن يستجيب ويخضع متعاضا ذلك مع التقاليد المألوفة في المجتمعات الشرقية والتي تهمش النساء اقتصاديا وبشكل متواصل يقلل من شأن اسهاماتها أو انجازاتها. لذلك تعرض روايات بدر الشخصيات النسوية بأنها تمتلك ثقافة متدنية تهيمن عليها الأبعاد المثيرة للشهوة الجنسية، مع ذلك تكون المرأة مؤهلة للعب دور يجعلها تسيطر في المجتمع، وبالتالي يصبح المثقف خاضعا لرشاقتها وخفتها. على اية حال تعتبر المرأة كيانا سلبيا بحضور هيمنة جمهور الرجال، وإيجابيا في غياب هيمنة هذا الجمهور.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أهل الفكر ، المفكر ، هيمنة ، تمييز في العاملة ، تهميش ، ايولوجيات (مجموعة مفاهيم في موضوع الحياة )

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## Introduction

It is essential to differentiate between the two terms of intellectual and intelligentsia in English and their translation in Arabic for both are understood as indicating one meaning among Arab writers. The meaning of the term intellectual is not profoundly understood in the Arabic language. The Moroccan thinker, Mohammed Abid Al-Jabiri (2008) indicates that the term 'intellectual' in English is derived from the root word 'intellect' which bears the meaning of 'mind' or 'thought'; when used as a noun, it refers to a person who has a keen interest in issues related to thought and spirit. In Arabic, the term is a translation of the French word 'culture' which means the growing of plants or breeding of particular animals. As for the semantic aspect of the term, it firstly refers to the act of developing and cultivating a person's mental talents through exercises and pursuits; secondly, it refers to the person's whole acquired knowledge which enables him/her to strengthen his/her talent of criticism, appreciation, and judgment. This leads to the formation of an elevated education, which does not equate to the concept of 'intellectual' which refers to a professional involved in intellectual work (see Al-Jabiri, pp.21-22).

The term 'intelligentsia', on the other hand, is used to refer to the elites from among educated circles (Labeeb, 2002: 32, my translation). The concept of the intellectual, according to Antonio Gramsci, is specified by the intellectual's practice of a social task. This indicates that the intellectual is one who defends the extinct classes or those that are about to be extinct (Aswadi Hussein, 2013: 25, my translation). This kind of intellectuals are known as traditional intellectuals who stick to the past and do not conform to the various developments taking place at present; they continue performing the same work for generations such as being tutors, priests and the administrators. Gramsci (2010: 6-18) asserted that "the intellectuals are the dominant group's deputies exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government".

The meaning of intelligentsia later included the class of the educated and technical experts in general, after the Latinized French word became dominant and was adopted by many languages and cultures when 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris became the centre of Europe's exiled intellectuals, including Russian leftists, democrats, and anarchists who

took refuge there (Leclerc, 2008: 90). It is said that the intellectual is a 'cosmic' person. At the same time, he is an actor committed to a specific society and culture. To clarify the differences between the two concepts of 'intellectual' and 'intelligentsia', the following table is used:

Intellectual	Intelligentsia
A highly educated person whose interests are studying, and other activities that involve careful thinking and mental effort.	A group of highly educated people in a society, especially those interested in arts and politics. An intellectual can be a member of the intelligentsia.
Propagating a critical culture of the knowledge and conception prevailing in the society.	Establishing the prevailing culture.
Representing the high classes.	The culture of the elite.
Presenting novel ideas and thoughts.	Presenting common ideas and thoughts.
An organic thinker.	A traditional thinker.

Significant differences can be observed between the intellectual and the intelligentsia. The intellectual seems to be higher in rank than the intelligentsia. This is what Gramsci means by the organic intellectual.

As far as the intelligentsia in Iraqi novels is concerned, Iraqi novelists, especially in the development of modern Iraqi novels, have been greatly influenced by colonization, the World Wars, the successive revolutions and coup d'état in Iraq, and other social issues and problems which motivated them to prove their effectiveness and role in the society as well as their attempt to explore the developing patriotic features of the Iraqi personality for the spirit of mutiny and revolution (see Thamir, 1992: 38). Iraqi novelists look forward to building their fictional world demonstrating the problems in all aspects of Iraq's state of affairs and life led by an intelligentsia from the bourgeoisie and proletariat whose roles have emerged in the political and intellectual life since the World Wars. These classes descended from very close social origins, but they hold differing ideologies (see Ahmed, 2001: 62). As the intelligentsia is open-minded pondering over the problems in the society and reflecting them in his/her fictional world, he/she endeavours to bring down the uncultivated obstacles facing the development and rise of the society.

## 2. The intelligentsia and the woman

### 2.1 Theoretical introduction

In eastern society, issues related to women are linked to social changes. However, changes in the blurred vision about her liberate the

memory and form a new way of thinking to accept and welcome unfamiliar images. Men have a negative viewpoint of women in a way that makes the latter seem weak, functioning only as a vessel for seduction and lust. In addition, males speak disparagingly of females. Women have been enjoying paying custom duties on femininity in their social milieu because of the men's dominating attitude. Ibrahim (2011: 216) says:

..... sex basically specifies the value of the kind, and finally the centrality of masculinity was grounded on the principle of rivalry for superiority between the two sexes, and was based in its claim on religious, cultural and social values. Thus, the preference of masculinity to femininity is not due to the nature, but because of the culture and the social values. (My translation)

However, as a result of the development of the individuals and societies, there is a more positive attitude of "fighting the discrimination against women, and defending their rights" (Almanasra, 2012: 91). This has paved the way for the removal of some of the obstacles that had prevented women from stepping into the arena of man; in this way, man cannot get along without her, or abandon her. Thus, the attitude towards women specifies the attitude towards men, the society and the whole existence (see Mehadi, 2009). Consequently, women are tied up with the society in their power, attitude and senses. They are effective and strong enough to harmonize and interact with the movement of society. However, any attempt for distinction or superiority is reflected on the final effect of the whole movement of the society which hence creates loss for the actual emancipation of women, and so the whole society is negatively affected (see Alhawari, 2008: 74). Therefore, women's issue has taken an essential part in Arabic novels, and their images of representations and types vary as they are closely related to the masculine domination, the social influence of customs and behaviours, and the problem of liberty.

Moreover, they are considered as an example of beauty and seduction along with their hidden agenda pursuant to the imaginative effort of the novelist and the narrative concentration and construction of the text. For instance, when a woman is depicted to be just the image of seduction, eroticism and emotions, and as our education is mostly dominated by the hegemonic masculinity, it is very natural that the

image of women is marginalized in Arabic novels. Thus, the male is still the center and the female is marginalized (see Ibrahim: 2011: 211).

## **2.2. The narrative representation of the intelligentsia and the woman**

Studying the intellectual and the woman in Ali Bader's novels is of great importance for it is opposed to the commonly written narrative presentations. Built on the basis of a type of openness, silent divulgence with its realistic intrinsic nature is incorporated with the romantic or rhetoric until it forms the attitude of the intellectual towards women. This issue is looked at from two ways: the visible presence and the imaginary presence, although it has been observed that the meeting between the intellectual and the woman mostly aims at achieving a pragmatic exchange of cooperation and an agreement, and that this agreement is regarded as the basic mainstay for the characters referred to in this research after having examined the novels in question. It seems that the character of the women in these texts deals with the notion of 'Female Domination' as she is the leader and the intellectual is the submitting follower, contrary to the familiar hierarchical or patriarchal formula in eastern societies which clearly sees women as heavily subjugated to male dominance and power. Eastern women are still marginalized economically, socially and culturally. Women remain 'captives' in a society which instructs them to be obedient (see Ibrahim:1).

However, women appear to be educationally negative with the prevailing of the erotic dimension in several of Ali Bader's female characters; yet, they are entrusted with a role that results in their domination or motivation inside the fictional craftsmanship. So, the novelist entrusts to the marginalized women a central role that makes the intellectual a subject to their actions. Thus, the woman is a negative side in the presence of the dominating collective pattern, and positive in the absence of this pattern for it practices an influence connected to specified conventions and customs aiming at keeping women in their usual inactivity (see Dhurgham, 2010: 276).

## **3. Analysis of the novels**

### **3.1. *Papa Sartre***

The notions of the deal, an exchanging interest, and women's leadership are clear in the novel *Papa Sartre*, specifically in the first part entitled 'THE SEEKING JOURNEY' which lasts for three months



with a narrator named the 'biographer'. Here, the meeting between the intellectual and the woman's character is embodied by Nunu Bihar, and this meeting is for completing the deal of writing the 'biography' of the philosopher i.e., Abdul Rahman who lives in the Assadriya District. This character is innovated by Ali Bader in his fictional craftsmanship to be chosen as an Iraqi intellectual during the 1960s.

However, the writer of the biography resorts to manifest the abnormal character of Nunu Bihar by describing her as a person who was once dissolute and by depending upon perversion once again (*Papa Sartre*, 2009: 5, 14). She is a woman who does not observe the strict social traditions and customs. Because of her shameful behaviour, she is marginalized and placed in the depth of the Iraqi society. She translates these qualities by licentious gestures using expressions without reservations. Nunu Bihar has the power and ability to direct the writer of the biography. She says: "We'll give fundamental documents and some geographical signs which will be your starting point" (09, my translation) and "There is someone whose action is inconsiderate and doesn't write books, and we have to pay money for someone else to search, lie and compose to make out of him a real philosopher" (08, my translation). In her opinion, a philosopher is born, not made, as it is said that 'a poet is born, not made'; she bends the rules to give the title of a philosopher to someone who does not deserve it. She also fabricates the biography of someone who does not have a valuable historical background, and she also has a stick to evaluate and assess as an influential female held in contempt for the Assadriya philosopher without any fear or respect. Therefore, this makes the writer of the biography to retract, ignore the biographical writing, and falsify the facts in writing the biography of Abdul Rahman. The writer of the biography says:

I don't know why I was fascinated by Nunu Bihar's cunning, scandals, promiscuity, and her immorality; perhaps, she freed me from something that I had always scorned which is bestowing a kind of perfection and sublimity of knowledge upon the personality that has become ashes in a grave. Had not been for the free swearing, and the great amount of contempt and carelessness, I could have written similar to that of 'Admonan' and the life of 'St. Columba. (14, my translation).

However, the biographer deems her in a positive light due to her disregard for social customs and conventions, as well as her lack of education, knowledge, or manners.

In the biography, Nunu Bihar and her partner Hanna Yousif are described as humbugs who are fond of scandals and come "from brokers who deal in cultural fib" (Al-Muhsin, 2005: 44, my translation). She continuously changes her physical appearance and her epistemological perspective. She is in constant need of transformation to enable her to continue her influence and practice the pledge of authority. After the biographer finished his mission, Nunu suddenly appeared "greatly changed, with a haircut of an adolescent, wearing a tight pair of trousers like men with wide white shirt dropping down to her buttocks, while her face void of cosmetics" (*Papa Sartre*: 235, my translation). However, this change to a male look only occurred after the biography of the Assadriya existentialists had been completed; the new task represented the biography of the new Baghdad philosopher: "We have to create a philosopher for Baghdad, and this philosopher is to be the Alwaziryia structuralist" (237, my translation). Therefore, the death of the Philosophy of Existentialism in the Iraqi culture and the spread of structuralism were announced. As for Nunu Bihar, her appearance needed to be changed into a new childish look to give a sudden indication to the writer of the book on the Alwaziryia structuralists.

The biographer's viewpoint towards Nunu Bihar was generally negative i.e., he despised her behaviour and belittled her personality, as he was an idle intellectual and she a very wealthy woman but not well educated. However, as she along with Sadeq Zadeh was funding the project of writing the biography, she had an influence over the intellectual who renounced his ideals, principles and beliefs for money. In addition, the name of Nunu Bihar did not refer to any clear meaning, and this enhanced the negative view for the marginalized and lifeless entity (i.e., Nunu) in the text and to the reader afterwards, on top of her her dubious intellect.

As for Abdul Rahman Shawket or the Assadriya philosopher as he was called in the biography or the journey of writing, he was surrounded by a number of women and he indulged himself with various frivolous and insincere relationships. For him, women are just "quickly changed bedfellows" for sexual intercourse. He fancied any



woman to be "naked on his bed quantifying her night beauty, accurately judging whether she is favourable or not" (190, my translation). Because of his sinful inclination and deluded philosophical ambitions, he was not able to rein his desires. He deeply believed that the sense of life was just for sensual enjoyment. However, the narrative showed that Abdulrhman), during his childhood, felt disgusted of the female body after he had accidentally walked in on his parents. That event made him continually quarrel with his mother. He ran away from home after he confronted her with what he had seen, as she was for him the symbol of sanctity and righteousness with no sexual desires. Therefore, he considered her chastity to be false:

'What do you want?' He said with a harsh voice, then he turned to the pillow sobbing. 'I want to know what the matter is!

She said as she was standing at the end of the bed in a confused state of mind! 'You know.' 'I want to hear it from you.'

'What you doing with him?' he said it with tears in his eyes, and he started to breathe in difficulty. 'When you grow up, you'll know is...'

he interrupted her: 'I'm old ... I'm old.' 'My son' ...,

she said, and before she finished her sentence, she was overwhelmed by uncontrollable weeping. 'I'm not your son... no, I'm not your son. How... you 're my son [ ...] and he's your father, not a strange man.' He's not my father, I don't know him.'

'You don't have the right to disown us, it's not so easy to deny us,'

she said that as if she kindly treated him, and that increased his disgust.

He said with determination and stubbornly, 'Rather I say, my father is more honest ... and my mother is chaste.' 'Don't lie' ... chaste and I saw you with him having an affair! [ ...] 'Don't lie'. Even the servants are going to gossip about you. (147-9, 150-56, 176, my translation).

Subsequently, his detestation towards his mother and disownment of his father became clear:

He is your father... not a strange man, you need to tell the difference between making love with a husband and a stranger –he is not my father, and I don't know him – you've got no right to say that ... he's your father – No, he isn't, protesting, not my father, my father is another person ... you're not my family [ ...] your

criminals ... you snatched me away from my family's arms, and you ought to return me to them.

(151, my translation).

In the researcher's viewpoint, his rejection of his parents' conduct formed an Oedipus complex in the personality of the philosopher. The writer of the biography says: "Abdul Rahman bears a searing, unforgiving hate for his mother, loathing hatred that reveals an image of forbidden love" (148). He then lets her character retire, restoring the character of Rujina i.e., the maid. This means that the two women have become equal in Abdul Rahman's view. Rujina is a reflection of the image of his mother, and just as he had been peeping at his parents, he did the same act with Rujina and Sa'doun Al-Yabis. Although he used to think that violating others' privacy was immoral, he did not prevent himself from violating Rujina's body, and she was generous with her femininity. Hence, violating the maid was to make up for the loss of his mother's chaste image, and he regarded her as a more deserving woman than his mother (see pages 156-58, 175).

His only legal relationship was with the French woman, Germaine, whom he married and brought from Paris to the Assadriya District in Baghdad, and both knew what they wanted. Germaine lived a miserable life and gave up her previous laborious work as a servant for the wealthy. Abdul Rahman who came back from the country of Jean-Paul Sartre with a blonde French woman pretended to everyone that she is Sartre's cousin so as to establish his philosophical superiority and mentality and to assure that his connection to Sartre would introduce Arabic existentialism in the Arab world for the first time (see pages 39, 41, 49, 56-58, 101). He thought that Germaine was highly educated and knowledgeable of existentialist terms. However, what happened afterwards seemed contrary to her reality:

So, you're a French as Sartre, so you are Sartre's compatriot. Are you one of his relatives?

The blonde thin maid was astonished because she did not know Sartre, and she had never heard his name before; therefore, she surprisingly shrugged her shoulders –ah! You don't know Sartre!? Oh, what a pity, SheikHaniHlail refuted extensively Sartre's philosophical ideas by writing a book with three volumes. He attacked Jean, Paul's son, Sartre's son, the apostate. She asked bursting with laughter loudly, "who is that Sheik?" Oh... and you don't know Sheik Hani Hlail, too! ..

He is an old man, he was a student at the Najaf Seminary [al-Hawza al-Ilmiyya], and he was about to create a diplomatic crisis between France and Iraq of this book.

(4, my translation).

On top of Germaine's naivety, she was also unable to think or behave in an intelligent way and did not care for her appearance. However, Abdul Rahman has a deep affection towards her as he wanted his cultivated community to be dazzled by the blonde French; he wanted them to think that the Europeans, with all their geniuses and superiority, had endowed upon him one of their girls (see *Papa Sartre*: 58). Germaine agreed to marry and accompany him and become an expatriate in Iraq, a country strange to her, so as to improve her simple standard of living and social position in society because her husband was well off, and because she wanted to plunge into an adventure of going to the Orient which was charted in her imagination: "She was recalling in her mind what she had read in *The Arabian Nights*, and she was a Christian concubine imprisoned by her oriental prince in her compartment" (58). Anyway, the two could not live together in perfect harmony and their marriage, built upon their respective self-interests, lasted only one year. Germaine began to drift away from Abdul Rahman and his ideas: "There could be no longer a real room for the philosopher in the house; the nausea had gone by, and having sex with a woman with no philosophical talent was no longer true" (58). Moreover, "she no longer cares for the *Nausea* or for the other existential manifestations" (58). Germaine became just an illusion for the Assadriya philosopher denoting the Occident – the West – that is distinguished from the Orient – the East: "Germaine's presence is an illusion like her absence, and she is similar to all the other things surrounding him, illusions" (59, my translation). It seems that the disagreement between Germaine and her husband, the philosopher, was because she settled in Baghdad away from the relaxed ambience of Paris:

After having come back to Baghdad, the feeling she had had when she was in Paris disappeared [ ...], perhaps the existential atmosphere of Paris brought forth such philosophical susceptibility. When she had been in Paris [ ...] she was spontaneously overcome with nausea in different forms, but she left it with Abudlrahman to Baghdad – and

Baghdad, in fact, didn't have the atmosphere of Paris – nausea ceased, or it quite disappeared. (my translation).

This quotation shows that not all western cultural and intellectual products are appropriate for the oriental background, which is amply different.

When we look into Abdul Rahman's relations with numerous women such as Rujina the maid, Germaine, Dalal Masabni the dancer, or Flore the café waitress, none of it was a relationship of mutual love except for one woman namely Nadia Khaddouri, the Christian. She was the only woman he favoured for both her body and consciousness. He was introduced to her during his frequent visits to her place of work in the Mackenzie Bookshop. His relationship with her lasted for six months. However, falling in love with Nadia affirmed his deep relationship with her which was completely different from the previous ones. He preferred her to all the women who continued pursuing him, and felt that she was not like the other women who were lacking in beauty, humanity and education; moreover, she could share his existential experience (see pages 190-92). Abdul Rahman found in her a soft flesh full of lust and a good example of an educated woman who can penetrate his thoughts and illusions. Their shared knowledge and education were not really profound, but it was enough that Nadia knew the prices of the books of existentialism which enchanted the Assadriya philosopher. He said that Nadia "knows Suhail Idris and Dar al-Adaab, Simone de Beauvoir, Aida Matrachi Idris; and even if she knows only the prices of the books, it is a specialty over all the existentialists of the world. You can never find anyone else who knows the prices of the existential books" (192). She gave his philosophical personality a dimension of integrity; therefore, he flooded her with a speech of his immense faith in existentialism, taking her into the depth of the philosophical expressions such as 'nonexistence', 'nausea', and others. He did so for two reasons: firstly, to satisfy his sensitive philosophical personality and secondly, to own her body; while Nadia was infatuated with his obscure speeches, as described, she was willing to avoid anything that excites lascivious thoughts (see pages 200-1).

The appearance of Nadia serves as an obsession and a means of conflict infatuation among the philosophical schools and the ideological spectrum manifested in Iraq. That conflict was represented by the conflict between Abdul Rahman and Edmon Al-Qawshali who had a

secret affair with Nadia. Edmon was interested in 'Trotskyism' and did not believe in 'Existentialism'; thus, the philosopher's love story started with Nadia Khaddouri which was also the starting point of Edmon Al-Qawshili's conflict with 'Existentialism' and his inclination towards 'Trotskyism' (193). In general, this attribute shows very quickly and without any prior justifications to the nature and sentiment of the Iraqi individuality towards the exciting incompatibility, the sudden change, the unexpected, and the unpredictable of convictions (see Yaseen, 2010: 80, 98).

Edmon and Abdul Rahman used all the means available to create difficulties for each other to win Nadia's love. Edmon did so by kindling social and class issues and the differences in the religious identity between Nadia and the Assadriya philosopher. Meanwhile, Abdul Rahman was able to incite Nadia's strong fondness towards his philosophical expressions. Therefore, to keep Abdul Rahman away, Edmon resorted to an alliance with the bourgeois Elias Khadouri against the Assadriya philosopher. Their worries were hence personal rather than philosophical, with self-complexities similar to that of teenagers' speculation. Edmon suffered a lot whenever he saw Sartre prevailed over Trotsky, and was tormented when imagining Abdul Rahman happily walking with Nadia along the streets, or sitting with her in the cafeteria (see page 199). Hence, the personal emotions were associated with the cultural and ideational trends along with passion. Abdul Rahman did not succeed in any of his relations with women. Though he had been looking eastwards and westwards for a woman who would see him as a philosopher, he was in a situation of fraught with difficulties and frustration in all his experiences with women as a Don Juan. In return, he viewed women as a picture fallen apart of an erotic female heroine. For him, a woman was just a body satisfying his lustful nausea.

### **3.2. *Tumult, Women, and Obscured Writer***

Truly, a woman's social degradation as she became prey for men of different affiliations and ideologies was clearly depicted in Ali Bader's novels, as in *Tumult, Women, and Obscured Writer*. In this novel, Sua'ad the Turkish was an actress called 'the seducing queen' during the 1950s. She was passed from hand to hand as if she were a marketed commodity product in the masculine society. She was temporarily married to one of the sons of a well-off (al-Damarji) family, and then

she had an affair with the aristocratic director Asa'ad Mustafa who graduated from Oxford Institute. She had an affair with him when she served as a maid in his house, but that affair ended when his English wife discovered it. Consequently, Sua'ad was left by her lover and lived as a prostitute in very cheap flats at the Bataween District. After that, she was completely defeated when the Iraqi brokers and merchants started to bring foreign women, dancers, and prostitutes of different nationalities to Baghdad before the end of the Royal Era. Sua'ad felt broken and left worried about being alone and marginalized.

Sua'ad later managed to ascend the social ladder by working with her friend Mary. Her new job was to accompany a high ranked army officer, Mahmood Mawardi, a close ally to Abdul Kareem Qasim. The two officers accompanied Sua'ad and (Mary) in learning to dance:

At that moment, two officers entered wearing their military uniforms, the first, Abdul Kareem who was thin, shy, and hesitant, and the second, Mahmood who looked vigorous and cheerful. They wanted to learn slow dance: the former was supported by Mary, while the latter by Sua'ad. On the following day, both of them, wearing beige trousers and half-sleeved white shirts, were reeling laughing and guffawing into the two prostitutes' softest hands in Baghdad. However, those two officers seized the power in a military revelation over Iraq. (50-1, my translation).

Sua'ad knew that she was gradually climbing the social ladder as she was with the officer Mahmood Mawardi after the 14<sup>th</sup> of July Revolution, 1958. Her dream was not fulfilled because of the fall of Abdul Kareem Qasim's regime in a military coup in February 1963. Once again, she was looking for another lover even if he was from a lower class. The obscured writer says: "When she felt that she had ended in failure, her beauty withered and she became unattractive as to the way she used to be. She started to give up, and she no longer wanted to be with a high ranked officer; she's rather seek a low ranked officer, a guards-man, or a major, or a captain, or even an officer, but a lower rank than the former is impossible" (see page 58). Having not found someone who could care for her, she finally resorted to Abbood, a corporal, and the driver of her ex-lover. She knew that Abbood did not love her in person, but considered her a kind of compensation for a bitter and trivial past, as she represented a former beloved of a higher-rank officer.



According to the obscured writer, Sua'ad seemed worried and had suffered from social and economic difficulties; she was intellectually unstable following the volatile political condition. Her life was characterized by the masculine oppression and domination i.e. whereby a man sees a woman just as a means of entertainment and satisfaction of his sexual desires. Although Sua'ad had various affairs with different men like the educated person Asa'ad Mustafa, or the high ranked military officer Mahmood Al-Mawardi, their sexual desires were the goal. This reminds us of Simone de Beauvoir's words, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (De Beauvoir, 1949). She calls women the second sex, and by this she means that the man is considered to be the standard, whereas the woman is defined in relation to the man. Here she points out the inequity the woman is afflicted with because of the sex-gender distinction.

However, the obscured writer wanted to narrate the past history of Sua'ad – being his friend's mother, Abbas, and his beloved Tamara – because he chose her to be an analogy and a disguise for the social change in Baghdad, through which the change in the movement of struggle was judged. In Iraq, violence was widespread, the identity of the place was changed, and the nature of the society was distorted: "The social life was confused in Baghdad [ ...] to a great extent, became complicated, overlapped in an unreasonable way, and people began to engage in other things rather than life's entertainment and recreation as the people of the cities were engaged in during the fifties. [ ...] the scene of the militia carrying their weapons in the streets made them stay at their homes" (*Tumult, Women, and Obscured Writer*: 58, my translation). Hence, Sua'ad's tale "is inextricably entwined with the history of the politics, the society and the individuals in a strange exciting way, ... the shops ... the markets, the boutiques, the merchants, and the hotels ... are joined in a vivid picture, simply what is it called 'life'" (38, my translation).

### **3.3. Other Novels**

In the last part of *The Naked Feast* entitled 'The Place and the Space', it is noticeable that the woman's character is depicted as an icon of a female body for the man to satisfy his erotic fantasy. The narrator of this story, who is to some extent similar to the novelist, studies at the Department of European Languages and he is introduced to his Turkish girlfriend, Jihan Fikrat Alia, who is pursuing her PhD in

Turkish architectonic archaeology in Baghdad City. His relation with and consideration for Jihan is mostly focused on her body rather than her erudition:

While she was talking to me about the spiral minarets or the blue enamel or the bathtubs, I busied myself gazing at her Tatarian eyes, her pointy lips, her smooth hands, and her dialect mixed with a clear Kirkukli Turkish accent. I was so much interested in her rather than her speech which was about the effect of China on the manufacturing of baskets in India. (*The Naked Feast*, 2005: 272,274, 278, my translation).

The conflict among the different ideologies and the intellectual elite centred around women. So, there was a furious struggle between Ala'a Khalil i.e. the Iraqi intellectual with his sick obsession to compose a book in a foreign language, and Ayman Maqdisi i.e. the Palestinian academic born in Iraq and welcomed by the political regime at that time in taming Zainab Nasri's, the university professor and graduate of the American Colombia University in *Jerusalem Lantern*. Both Ala'a and Ayman were infatuated with the woman but they were in conflict with each other in most of their opinions and their prevailing sociological trends. Ala'a was deeply preoccupied with the west and its culture though he was not able to travel abroad, and that caused him to have an aversion to eastern women. Ayman Maqdisi, on the other hand, admitted a strong prejudice in favour of his Arab nationality, and felt disgusted of western colonialism although he was a graduate of a western university.

Both characters were only seeking to fulfill their own desires, and so both loved Zainab and desired to possess her. Her presence caused the two to be in constant discord, threatening and accusing each other of a treasonable act (see *Jerusalem Lantern*, 2009: 51-2, 58-9). Each one of them began to narrate their story: Ala'a saw Zainab as an example of an educated, rational, strong, and liberal western woman who embodied the image of the West he had dreamed to get at but could not; meanwhile, Ayman found her to be distinguished for she was adherent to the ideas and beliefs of the Palestinian thinker, Edward Said, who became a common denominator and a clear hope for both of them and the voice of their exhausted generation. That furthered the contemplation of the ideological conflict among the intelligentsia over winning the heart of an educated woman such as Zainab Nasri: "In this way, we entered into

heated tumultuous arguments once again making a great show of strength, threatening of bad ends in the future. All of a sudden, Ayman reverted to his cataclysmic feelings of patriotism, and Ala'a Khalil to his enthusiasm for brutal capitalism" (55, and see 57, my translation).

In *The Tobacco Keeper*, Bader presents women differently from the other novels. Yousif Sami Saleh Salman sees women as inspiring creatures. Yousif was an Iraqi, born in 1926 to a Baghdadi Jewish family, and was raised with wide knowledge and education. Yousif fell in love with his cousin Gladis, and she "made him awake every morning when the roosters crowed in Mousha's house" (*The Tobacco Keeper*, 2008, 117, my translation). His love to that girl made him a sensitive instrumentalist with feelings that enable him to perform music with passionate love. Had it not been for her devilish love, he would not have been that skilful in performing and composing beautiful melodies that were inspired by the striking features of his erotic beloved Gladis (see pages 107,118-121, 128-129). Although Yousif kept his distance from her when they broke up, he continued to keep up with news about her. However, Yousif fell in love with another woman named Munira who also affected his personality and art. Munira who came to Baghdad to work as a dancer at cabarets was from Aleppo, Syria: "When Yousif was at the cabaret attending Munira's dancing performance, he used to sit before the wooden stage enchanted by her performance while she was wriggling her body in exhilarating erotic ways" (138, my translation).

Munira had a great influence on his behaviour and music, and was one of the direct reasons for his life changes. He was no longer that bashful young man, worried and scared of leaving the enclosed quarters of the Jews; he began to accompany young Muslim men to their religious events such as the Prophet's Birthday, to restaurants and night cabarets at Abu Nua'as Street and Bab Alagha, and to be involved in squabbles with others and ending the night at the police station (see pages 125-26, 134-137, 141-42).

In exchange for that, his relationship with Fareeda Robin was rather different for it was not based on sexual bodily instinct, but on the elevated world of music. When he first met her at his aunt's house, she corrected the error he committed in performing the tune in front of her that he never expected; he was really surprised. He performed the musical phrase with a mistake on the tune with a

completely different key in front of her. She looked at him with a smile ... and made a sign to him with her hand to stop, and he stopped. He kept silent looking at her ... She said to him: 'Repeat this piece' [ ...], then said: 'This is not tune parameter ... he started to sob uncontrollably, yet she calmed him and relieved his worry. She told him that his musical talent was distinct for he owned to express himself by music [ ...]. Then she became to be his musical inspiring, and married her before his departure to Israel."

(140-41, my

translation).

Fareeda then settled in Israel and became a teacher at Al-Quds University teaching Arabic literature whereas Yousif did not like living there. Yousif made up his mind to go back home, so he travelled to the Soviet Union and then to Iran, and there he changed his identity so as to go back to Iraq. He became to be known as Haider Salman, born in Kadhimiya in 1924, studied music in Moscow after running away from his conservative Shi'ite family. While he had been staying in Tehran before coming back to Iraq, he met Tahira who is Ismail Tabatabai's sick daughter, and lodged with the family before falling in love with Tahira.

However, the intimacy and affection between Haider and Tahira was the result of the wide and charming world of music. Haider was able to make the isolated sick girl to listen to music and forget about her depressing life. An idea came to his mind: "He thought of playing on his musical instrument an hour daily for the girl lying patient in her bed with her sick withered face. She was continually attended by her wretched father who had never been cognizant that those small pieces of music would make the young girl psychologically relaxed and be better than she had been. She was in a good mood and gleeful" (175, my translation). Tahira became ecstatic about the new atmosphere, and started to feel passionate love that made her forget about the disease which weakened her.

Haider, on the other hand, became completely different upon returning to Iraq from how he had been living in the past years. He disliked staying late at night, did not frequent the tumultuous parties crowded with bewitching girls, and did not indulge in leisurely activities. He lived a normal life like any other high-minded person since his arrival in Iraq in 1952. He accompanied his wife, and then a baby named Hussein was born in 1961.

Subsequently, a new woman named Nahida Al-Saeed) who is a radical communist came into Haider's life. This woman had a great impact on him, and as she was a painter caused "a very strong change in his thinking or at least he found in her vision and ways of thinking a kind of solace for music. Her paintings had no attachment to the popular, folkloric and patriotic trends growing during that period" (see page 193). This made Haider, who used to have an aversion to the common people and the working class, harmonious with the beautiful aristocratic Nahida who totally rejected what was prevailing everywhere as she was only looking for the rational, exciting and intuitive; she did not seek a meaning or an ideological content (see pages 193-94). Their close relationship continued harmoniously until the coup d'état in February 1963 took place. So, the two were wanted by the authority of the new regime: Haider flee to Iran with the help of Ismail Tabatabai, while Nahida was arrested and hanged for she represented the rising revolutionist woman ready to sacrifice herself for her ideology and oppose the repressive coup d'état. Haider, on the other hand, stayed in Iraq until 1980 and then he and his family were deported to the Iranian borders for they were originally of Iranian ancestry. His wife Tahira died along the way and his son Hussein was arrested by the Iraqi security police. Therefore, Yousif returned to his native home Iraq, but with a new name i.e., Kamaal Midhat because he rejected the idea of living in exile; he considered "exile as a kind of symbolic death" (Ibrahim, 2011: 93, my translation).

However, Kamaal Midhat was described as a man of "frantic desire for appetizing things by tasting or touching them [...] he wants to indulge himself with smoking, enjoyment and sex; in every side of his soul there is an altar for a different god" (see *The Tobacco Keeper*: 253-54). Hence, he firstly married Nadia Alomari as a favourable deal, followed by his maid Fawzia and then the Russian musician Maria Ivanova. He also married Widad and Janet.

The struggle of obtaining the women in terms of authority and intellectuality led to violence and murder. For instance, the Christian Assyrian Janet who came from Basra to study music in Baghdad was forced to commit vice by being a sexual object in one of the brothels because of the economic and social fall in Iraq after the Second Gulf War. She was introduced to Kamaal Midhat in one of his concerts, and she was so passionately in love with him that she prostituted herself.

The critic Abdulla Al-Ghanami says: “A woman has been made to observe herself as an erotic body, and thus she became preoccupied in bringing this out” (2006: 34, my translation). Although she became ugly and psychopathic, and was not brilliantly educated, one of the politicians fell in love with her. Nevertheless, she was the kind of woman whose soul was engulfed with evil, and men loved her because they discover things in her that were not found in other women; they saw her as an angel and Dracula at the same time (see *The Tobacco Keeper*: 299; 301). This caused the politician who was enamoured with her to send a threat to Kamaal Midhat, her favoured lover. The politician practiced his power to keep the handsome educated musician off; yet, she was deeply in love with him that she could not think of anyone else. Consequently, Janet was shot during a hunting trip to Diyala city (see pages 301-03). Both Janet and Nahida Al-Saeed shared the same fate because they refused to be submissive to the authority.

Yousif had been living a tumultuous life in changing his identity, and there were inconsistencies in his behaviour as he embodied different personalities. However, he never forgot his mother land Iraq, and it was difficult for him to be away from it and the glory of music. As for his relationships with women, to some extent they were similar for the real character i.e. Yousif. The masks of that character were Haider Salman and Kamaal Midhat, irrespective of the religious and sect conversion. All of them shared a common characteristic represented by the wife alongside the mistress who was regarded as a supplement for the shortcomings of the legal wife. Therefore, besides Fareeda, Muneera, Gladis, Tahira, Nahida Al-Saeed and Maria Ivanova, Widad and Janet also represented an active female presence apart from his wife Nadia Alomari. The three personalities of Yousif were seeking common cultural and educational aspects with the women. However, a very important question is whether Yousif with his masks had exploited his women, particularly his wives Tahira and Nadia for the sake of going back to his country. Based on the narrative text, a critical reader may say that Yousif through his two masks i.e., Haider Salman and Kamaal Midhat had greatly exploited his two wives. Although his relation with Tahira was very close, he forgot her after having lost her when he was deported to the Iraqi-Iranian borders. While he was homeless in Iran, he began a relationship with Bari, Mohammed Taqi's daughter. He “feels Bari's young soft body, he



touches every part of her body” (see pages 242, 250-51). His relationship with Bari lasted a year and then he travelled to Syria where he met the well-off Iraqi Nadia Alomari. He seized the opportunity during her husband's absence: “Kamaal was able to entirely change her; he was also able to make her desire more sexual arousal than before; had he been the tobacco keeper, keeper of the emotional sexual arousal?” (see pages 271-72). However, he did not round up those women for the sake of cultural contents and the atmosphere of music; he did so for his own sublime personal interests to settle down in his country, Iraq. That was embodied in his life of being with the “three masks”. He said:

My life has not been characterized by the naïve spirit of patriotism, but rather I hate these feelings so much for they are the source of racism and hatred; but I feel as if I were a bird of rain, I feel that it is inescapable, I must come back on a rainy day [ ...]. Whenever I think about this matter, I feel my heart beating and trembling like a big squirrel.

(274, my translation).

#### 4. Summary

The image of the woman in the Iraqi intellectual's mind, as depicted in Ali Bader's novels, is sometimes extraordinarily fascinating. It is noticeable that the character that does not come into view leaves the recipient whether implicitly or realistically with a glamorous impression and atmosphere. As in the novel *Tumult, Women, and Obscured Writer*, it happened to the obscured writer in his mistaken relationship with Aisha Bint Said, the Moroccan girl, who was introduced to her by writing and translating the letters between Aisha and his friend Abbas into French. He used to send letters, which were supposedly from Abbas, full of translated pieces of poetry in which he asked her to send him one thousand dollars to enable him to leave Baghdad for Morocco to get married there. The intellectual's hunger for the woman as being a symbol of enjoyable beauty, and the difficulty of meeting her in reality makes him imagine her as being a female that is difficult to get: “I fingered the door with grief, the wardrobe of my clothes was cold; what if there were a woman's dresses [ ...]; what if there was a light blouse, her ironed shirts out of which a perfume was sent; what if she were surrounding me with her presence every moment [ ...]. It was the woman's dream, a woman with a brown skin, black gypsy hair, and wild eyes to be in my

flat [ ...] imagining a Moroccan face with an unusual longing and yearning that refused to fade away” (*Tumult, Women, and Obscured Writer*: 126-28, my translation).

The woman's presence as a body, as previously examined, was just a free association of the idea of puberty. The woman's body had become “a symbolic construction which is formed by our psychological, educational, cultural, and lingual representations” (Al-Fitnasi, 2013, 283, my translation), occurring within the realms of dreams and imagination. Moreover, the change in the structure of the beauty of the city and its deterioration contributed to one's dislike and denial towards it. The obscured writer was also greatly influenced by the culture and education of others, particularly the western culture, and thus ignored the eastern culture. This attitude can be justified by the circumstances surrounding the intellectual such as confusing and unstable political situations, the domination of the endemic corruption among the ruling elite and those that benefited from them: “Merchants, and police forces that became worse than the thieves themselves as described by him” (*Tumult, Women, and Obscured Writer*: see pages 150, 176).

The image of a woman in a learned man's dream was not only manifested by sketching her reality, but also by depicting her as Scheherazade of his dream by virtue of magic words:

Aisha is the odalisque Tawadod who knows everything, what if we live once, and we called all the extraordinary elements and the fantastic picture up and depart ...hadn't Sinbad the sailor went on voyages to India and China, aren't we like him? We'll do anew travel and moving away to isolated places seeking water and treasures [...]. Abbas submitted himself to Scheherazade's overlapping dream, and his tongue was held, and he was also enchanted to demons, genies and paranormal powers. He fell in love with the demon Aisha, who will be taken away to the sky. (See pp: 156-57)

Therefore, it can be said that the imagining or dreaming of certain personalities is regarded as a getaway from a painful truth, or an escape from 'hell'. However, his unruly illusions and fallacies continued. The obscured writer talks about himself and Abbas by saying: “We started talking Moroccan, we made a Moroccan play sinking in deep laughter. Abbas found a good job in Dar el-Beida –

after Aisha had sent \$1000, then travelled to Tangier and, of course married there – leaving Aisha in her house which they had bought in Tangier. He remained and worked there, and his new beautiful and well-off employer's daughter fell in love with him and tempted him to stay in Dar el-Beida ... Casablanca, which is full of adventures, women, money, and life, etc.” (147). Hence, the intellectual was sacrificing everything he owned in reality to satisfy his hidden desires by escaping and indulging himself in dreams and illusions. Consequently, the learned man's dream ended when he realized the frivolity of life which he had been living, for he could not fulfill his dream due to the destructive circumstances of the conflict between real life and illusions: “Browsing through a tourist brochure of Morocco – pictures of sea-sides, hotels, streets, and women – we drifted into a fantasy sphere of imaginative passionate yet desperate love. Morocco, however, was nothing for us but stones, pottery, pictures, names, and converted statues” (144).

Accordingly, the intelligentsia as represented in various ways in the novels seem to be completely besotted with the female body and constantly seeking it irrespective of the differences in age, education and social level. For the sake of satisfying his desire, the intellectual offers all that he owns to attain pragmatic love. Therefore, it can be said that the intelligentsia's viewpoint of the women in Ali Bader's novels entails the following:

- A) A woman who agrees with the intellectual's ideology such as Nadia who supported Abdulrahman's tendency for existentialism;
- B) A woman who fakes her intellectuality such as Hanna and Nunu Bihar who both falsely claimed to be educated;
- C) A woman who is attracted by the western culture such as the character of Zainab.

There are also shattered images of the woman.

In the intellectual's viewpoint, these are not real images of a woman but rather a mental, biological and social-free association of the intellectual's ideas. Among them are:

- 1) A woman who plays a pivotal role in the society such as the characters of Shameran, Suaad and Layla Al-Samaak;
- 2) A positive woman who supports the intellectual such as Farida;
- 3) A negative woman who lets the intellectual down like Nunu Bihar and Aida;

- 4) A woman with a strong desire to have sex with somebody like Rujina, Gladis and Janet;
- 5) A woman who is conservative i.e., does not have the freedom to achieve whatever she wants, or is bounded to the social or religious traditions and customs like Nahid Al-Said and Maysoun Abdullah;
- 6) A liberated woman i.e., one who is not confined by any ideology, traditions or customs like Zainab Nasri and Jihan Fikrat; and
- 7) A dreamy woman like Aisha.

After going examining a selection of Ali Bader's novels, it was found that the relationship between the woman and the intelligentsia is generally hostile and mostly ends in a tragic manner. The authority practices repression and subdual to control the intelligentsia. Although this image is sometimes presented positively, the negative image of the woman is dominant in the texts. The intelligentsia holds a pragmatic attitude towards the national heritage and they risk it by trafficking, without considering its sacredness. On so many occasions, they justify whatever they do believing that "the outcome justifies the deeds" in order to attain benefits for themselves.

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