

## Surviving the Shadows of War: A Psychoanalytic Study of Trauma, Repression and Negative Impact of War in *Frankenstein in Baghdad*

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### النجاة من ظلال الحرب: دراسة تحليلية نفسية حول الصدمة والكبت والأثر

#### السببي للحرب في رواية "فرانكشتاين في بغداد"

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#### المخلص

تصوّر رواية أحمد السعداوي (١٩٧٣) "فرانكشتاين في بغداد" (٢٠١٣) التعقيد النفسي الناتج عن الحرب من خلال منظور الصدمة والقمع، حيث يستخدم السعداوي شخصيات مثل الشمسه، وهادي، إليشوا، ومحمود لاستكشاف التأثير العميق للعنف على النفس البشرية. بناءً على ذلك، يهدف البحث الحالي إلى دراسة ومناقشة الصدمة والقمع والتأثير السببي للحرب في رواية السعداوي "فرانكشتاين في بغداد". يناقش البحث تأثير الحرب من منظور التحليل النفسي بتطبيق أفكار جوديث هيرمان (١٩٩٢) التي تتعلق بالعنف، والإساءة، والإرهاب السياسي. تتمحور مشكلة البحث حول مدى مساهمة التجارب الرهيبة للحرب في تشكيل الهوية الفردية والجماعية للأشخاص بعد الحرب. يُفترض أن يوفر البحث فهماً أعمق لكيفية معالجة وقمع الصدمة في الرواية. الكلمات المفتاحية: العنف، الصدمة، القتل، الشر، فرانكشتاين.

#### Abstract

Ahmed Alsaadawi's (1973) novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (2013) portrays the complex psychological tax of war through the lens of trauma and repression, using characters like the Whatsitsname, Hadi, Elishva, and Mahmoud to explore the profound impact of violence on the human psyche. Accordingly, the present research paper aims to study and discuss the trauma, repression and the negative impact of war in Alsaadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad*. The paper discusses the effect of war through a psychoanalytic perspective by applying Judith Herman's (2015) ideas that concern violence, abuse and the political terror. The problem of the research is the extent to which the terrible experiences of the war contribute to the formation of individual and collective identity of people in post war. The paper is hypothesized to provide a deeper understanding of how trauma is processed and repressed in the novel. **Keywords:** violence, Trauma, murder, evil, Frankenstein

#### 1. Introduction

Ahmed, in his novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, talks about how people really felt and how their lives changed completely after 2003. He found himself able to think clearly and express his thoughts without any fear. Frankenstein is a novel that talks about the horror, the scenes of fear and terrorist bombing sites around Baghdad (Perry, 2018,p.16).

Ahmed described the situation after the war in 2003: there were many victims, and those victims did not have the opportunity to be buried; their bodies were lost. Here, Ahmed introduces the theme of revenge, which is explained in people's violent actions (Balibar,2015).

Ahmed asserted the differences between classes in Iraqi society and how these classes were affected in a specific way by violence. Violence has many types, which are: physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, spiritual, cultural, verbal, financial, and neglect. The most important meaning of violence is the verbal one

since other types of violence are introduced throughout the verbal description of the events of Frankenstein. Violence brings death to human faces while they are still alive because people are afraid of the idea of death more than death itself (Metz,2018).

In fact, verbal and physical violence overlap in mutual interactions because violent people always feel powerless, so they try to get power and control their opponents by blaming others. The violence that comes as a result of war is considered a monster that dehumanizes people, so people sometimes become part of this monster. The relationship between violence and language is mutual; however, when the former stops, the latter begins, and vice versa (Alhashmi , 2020, p.45).

This paper will thoroughly analyze and examine the novel through the psychoanalysis theory, the multifaceted ways in which war has ravaged, ravished, and decimated the once thriving city of Baghdad, leaving no stone unturned in exploring its profound impacts on both the physical and emotional landscapes. The military invasion of Iraq in 2003 has unquestionably and irrevocably devastated the majestic architecture and intricate infrastructure that once defined and adorned the heart of Baghdad, thereby plunging the city into a state of agonizing disarray.

The essence of this paper lies in its unwavering focus on the human experience. Amidst the rubble and chaos, it becomes evident that war's most profound impact is on its people and their collective psyche. this paper aims to draw the readers' attention to the fact that people pay the highest price for wars and indicate the critical imperativeness of care, empathy, and recovery in a world full of bitterness.

## **2. Literature Review**

Frankenstein in Baghdad by Ahmed AlSaadawi has attracted a fair amount of academic interest in its portrayal of the war chapter, repression, and the effects of violence. Consecrated in themes to the plot of the novel, which is set in the chaotic period after the Iraq War, are actually the re-tooling of elements from Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. This review of literature aims to present knowledge related to psychoanalysis based on assessments made by experts and focus on the topic of trauma, suppression and the monstrous factor of war.

Raad Kareem Abd-Aun and Ameer Abd Hadi argue in their article "The Poetics of Adaptation in Frankenstein in Baghdad" (2018) that AlSaadawi adapts Shelley and casts Franken- Hein Frankenstein as a postmodern monster not only surfacing from his monster-ridden homeland traumas and the constant warring experienced in post-Baghdad Iraq. According to the authors, AlSaadawi's transformation makes the creature a metaphor for the broken mentality of the people of Iraq due to the current warfare. The construction of the monster from parts implies the divorce of body and soul and corresponds to the social and individual fragmented state after war. In this kind of representation the focus is put on the psychoanalytical process of repression: instead of depicting a work of order, people who try to hide the violence and trauma in themselves see these reflections of order as monstrous, which would correspond to the chaos of Baghdad.

In his article, "A Psychoanalytic Reading of Ahmed AlSaadawi's Novel Frankenstein in Baghdad" mostafa Al Leithy builds on the idea of the monster as repressed trauma. In analyzing the way, the characters of the novel cope with the spoils of war, Al-Leithy employs Freudian theory. "Whatsitsname" stands for the suppressed feelings and such feelings are the bloodthirsty monster of Baghdad people buried deep inside them. According to Al-Leithy, the shattered body represents psychological breaking apart of the characters, one of whom, details the horrors of the war that cries out that repression cannot suppress the horror of war. Through the actions of the monster and setting the movie in Baghdad, sculptor make the meaning of this phrase quite clear – the suppressed returns to make sure one pays for what they have done.

Saif Latif Manthur in his article The Representation of Violence in Frankenstein in Baghdad opens to discuss how violence is portrayed in the novel in terms of force and power. He also notes that AlSaadawi fails to illustrate violence conventionally: they present it as an all-pervading psychological construct which molds character behaviors. In this respect, violence now seems as something the characters carry within them and is apparent in their psychological splits. The monster created out of scattered body parts of the war victims represents a confirmation of psychological abuse of the people of Baghdad. Manthur rightly points towards the psychoanalytic analysis of the novel that shows how war induced violence causes loss of the self and traumatized self.

In the article "Mary Shelley and the Monstrosity of War: Exploring 'Frankenstein', and the Post-Waterloo Politics of Life", Ramsey contrasts and compels Shelley's original Frankenstein with AlSaadawi's adaptation. The article focuses on the signs deployed to represent the psychological and the political effects

of war in both novels. Similarly, as Shelley's creation is an allegory of the trauma and desolation after the Napoleonic Wars, AlSaadawi's monster embodies the Iraqi suffering and shattered mind after the Iraq War. The article argues for the significance of both Shelley and AlSaadawi's deal with the capacity of war to produce monstrous effects –real and metaphysical– matching the psychological trauma it produces.

In the second paper of Al-Leithy, entitled "A Psychoanalytic Reading of Ahmed AlSaadawi's Novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad*," the author goes a little further by pinpointing out the defense mechanisms that have been adopted by the characters in *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, a novel written by Ahmed AlSaadawi, due to war. He says that repression, displacement and projection are very important in analyzing the psychological response of characters to their environment intact. *Frankenstein's* monster represents the major vices in personalities of the characters where the creation frees the characters from guilt feelings, and native fears. But using this projection, as Al-Leithy points out, does not help the characters come to terms with their psychological issues but makes the problem worse, since the monster = is the characters' trauma. So, this paper deepens and builds upon the existing psychoanalytic analysis of the novel by showing that no matter how the characters struggle to repress trauma, they cannot successfully do so and thus are creating destructive forces.

Based on five literature reviews, this paper provides a psychoanalytic understanding of *Frankenstein in Baghdad* with emphasis made on the concepts of trauma, repression, and violence. Concisely their interpretation of novel as a postmodern adaptation of Shelley work is informative to understand Al-Saadawi's use of the monster as signifying the deviant identities from wars. Worth explaining that in both psychoanalytic interpretations, which Al-Leithy offers, repression plays a profound role in the formation of characters of the novel: Manthur focuses on the exploration of violence as a psychological function in the given novel. This paper has highlighted how Shelley's and AlSaadawi's monsters are to highlight the continued relevance of monstrosity stemming from war. Altogether, these studies show that *Frankenstein in Baghdad* share a message of powerful narrative of psychological war aftermath, told by repression by giving birth to monsters which reflect the society's unsolved trauma.

### 3. The Theoretical Framework

Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* by Judith Lewis Herman is a widely influential text for anyone studying trauma, trauma theory, and the process of trauma therapy; the book offers clear, organized thinking about the process of psychological integration in victims of trauma and traumas in the groups and communities in which the victims exist. Herman's concept revolves around three key phases in the recovery from trauma: The three major items identified are safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection. It provides survivors of trauma valuable knowledge about the path they transition through as they seek recovery and wholeness.

#### Stage One: Establishing Safety

As outlined by Herman (2015), the first of the three phases of recovery is the creation of safety This means the rebuilding of physical safety as well as the safety of the individual's emotions. Trauma can disrupt an individual's feeling of control and frequently leaves them feeling exposed and uneasy. During the safety phase, survivors strive to restore stability in their surroundings, which serves as a crucial initial step in alleviating feelings of powerlessness and reinstating a sense of empowerment. Herman maintains that without a secure environment, progress in recovery is nearly unattainable (p.159).

Ensuring safety can be a difficult task for individuals in abusive situations or those residing in politically unstable areas. For these individuals, ensuring safety may involve taking precautionary measures or even moving to a different location. Bloom (1999) emphasizes the significance of this stage in clinical settings, emphasizing the essential nature of trauma survivors feeling secure before addressing their experiences. As a result, Herman's emphasis on safety underscores the fundamental need for stability as a prerequisite for any subsequent recovery (p.99).

#### Stage Two: Remembrance and Mourning

During the second phase, recollection and grief, individuals who have survived a traumatic experience face their emotions and engage in processing and assimilating these memories. According to Herman (2015), this phase entails recollecting and recounting the traumatic incident, which may aid survivors in comprehending

their experiences and feelings. This procedure is frequently distressing, as it necessitates survivors to relive upsetting moments and confront the truth of their bereavement (p.299).

The process of remembering can be challenging. Trauma can cause memories to become fragmented, making it difficult for survivors to piece together events in a logical way. As Caruth (1995) explains, trauma can result in incomplete or distorted memories which make the grieving process more complex. At this stage, survivors not only mourn the loss itself, but also the impact it has on their sense of self. It is important for healing that these emotions are acknowledged and processed, as this is essential for moving past avoidance and denial, and for laying the foundation for reconnecting with oneself (p.72).

### Stage Three: Reconnection with Self and Others

The ultimate phase of recovery, known as reconnection, entails the restoration of relationships and the discovery of a fresh sense of purpose. During this phase, individuals who have experienced trauma strive to regain trust in themselves and in others. According to Herman (2015), the process of reconnection enables survivors to reintegrate into society and cultivate significant connections, enabling them to progress with a revitalized sense of self (p.206).

Reconnection does not just mean going back to how things were before the trauma, but rather it involves a process of reshaping the self to include the experience of trauma. According to Herman, this phase is about accepting a changed self that is able to fully participate in life and the community. Rothberg (2009) supports Herman's ideas by introducing the concept of "multidirectional memory" in the context of trauma, indicating that survivors often develop new connections by sharing their experiences with others who have also undergone suffering. This communal aspect of reconnecting is crucial, as it promotes resilience and a feeling of unity (p.145).

## 4- Discussion

### 4.1. Trauma and Repression in *Frankenstein in Baghdad*

Ahmed AlSaadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad* intricately depicts the consequences of violence in Baghdad, illustrating the profound psychological impact on its characters. Judith Herman's "Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror" offers a comprehensive framework for understanding these consequences. Applying Herman's trauma theory to the characters Whatsitsname, Hadi, Elishva, and Mahmoud in *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, trauma and repression emerge as the emotional and psychological focal point of the novel, which unfolds in post-invasion Baghdad. The characters navigate a city ravaged by war, contending with loss, violence, and a fractured reality, all reflective of the pervasive and unresolved traumas haunting the city. Elements of horror are that main component of the novel, the Whatsitsname, can be interpreted as a symbol both of the collective memory of the bombing and the mechanisms that societies and individuals use to try to assimilate and deal with the terrifying violence that permeates their lives.

In order to gain a more thorough understanding of how trauma is dealt with and suppressed within the novel, we can utilize Judith Herman's theoretical framework from her book "Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror". Herman applied the concept into the psychological way of analyzing characters, their personalities and phases of recovering from traumatic experiences which differs from the psychological approach in the novel and certainly is useful analyzing the characters of *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, where the experience of the violent trauma leads to personal disintegration, loss of memory and erasure of morality. This Herman's concept allows understanding how the characters deal with their traumatic experiences and hiding of such trauma in the middle of chaos.

The elements of horror of the novel – the Whatsitsname, a creature consisting of bomb victims' leftovers, metaphorically points at societal and personal repression of escalating violence within societies.

The Whatsitsname is the first character of the novel which is an amalgamation assembled of the remains of those who suffered in war. These two together are intended to depict the sorrow that this violent state of affair in Baghdad has caused. This very existence remains tortured and endangered and always chased and misunderstood; it only magnifies its emotions of fear and vulnerability. Herman focuses on the creation of security as the needed prerequisite for the work on trauma – that is something The Whatsitsname can never accomplish because of what has been done to it (Herman, 2015, p.300).

"Whatsitsname" violent actions and acts of revenge reveal its fighting to be stable and in protection. Baghdad's collective trauma, a direct result of bombing victim body parts, is symbolized by the "Whatsitsname" (i.e., Frankenstein's Monster), as a symbolic example of fragmented war related trauma. It surfaces from the violence with an aim to justice for the dead, but is confused further about its own identity and being, and falling aside into further fragments.

**Herman's Stage of Remembering and Mourning:** The entity's primary purpose is to give justice to the deceased but it becomes involved in more and more until it stops to exist as its own thing. This parallels the way Herman sees grieving in which people have to confront and absorb distressing memories to heal. However, the entity is unable to mourn or remember it continues to build new traumas unaffected by the old.

**Repression and Fragmentation:** The "Whatsitsname" is a symbol of an oppressed self that, as it grows ever larger, is unable to speak to that trauma. In the same way that the people of Baghdad are forced to attach themselves to their fractured psyches as a coping mechanism to survive, the entity itself suppresses the trauma of its fractured existence in order to remain, but is increasingly detaching itself from the very identity it helps its inhabitants deny themselves. Like post invasion Iraq, whose violence has led to such a deep collective trauma that it cannot be comprehended or resolved one bit, the creature's disorientation reflects the mess this world is in.

The body parts that make up its unprocessed sorrow and unresolved emotional wounds all originated from the deceased individuals from which it is made. It is meant to get vengeance for their deaths and as a wrong way to deal with and try to heal the violence and tragedy. The creature's maddened thirst for vengeance is a longing to see and to mourn the atrocities in a destructive way instead of within a devastation.

Its repulsive features — and the fear that provokes — make the Whatsitsname struggle to reestablish ties with human society. Only its seclusion is made worse by its suffering, allowing it no small connections, no healing. The few encounters it has with humans usually result in aggression or exclusion, underscoring its profound sense of isolation:

Hadi caught the Whatsitsname's attention. "That's not everything," he said. "What's worse is that people have been giving me a bad reputation. They're accusing me of committing crimes, but what they don't understand is that I'm the only justice there is in this country." (Alsaadawi, p.100)

Whatsitsname, he claims, that he is the only form of justice currently in the country., This is a breakdown of the system of justice. According to the theory of Herman, in its most extreme form, this breakdown could be the result of pervasive violence, exploitation or political oppression which means that a traditional route of justice and safeguarding has broken down. Furthermore, the character himself feels victimized (being subject to unfair accusations), a feeling felt by trauma survivors who often feel that the world isn't grasping his pain or is unreasonably suggesting and attempting to make the case that it's all only in his mind.

The Whatsitsname offers itself as both accuser and dispenser of justice. Herman goes on to explain that people who perpetrate acts of trauma may see themselves as either a ... rescuer, or a harsh justice enforcer, in the midst of or in an environment of violence or other lawlessness. It's often this self justification and tends to happen especially when a lot of abuse or terror is going on and there's those in authority justifying what they're doing as being for the order of the society. The statement of the Whatsitsname may embody this rationalization: Although others see him as a criminal, he views himself as supplying the only form of justice open to it, which is usually a warped notion in traumatized societies.

Commonly, but not always, trauma resulting from violence or political oppression produces fragmented identity and changed moral standpoint. The Whatsitsname seems to be torn, if not physically, then spiritually, between his wronging (earning a bad reputation) and his righteousness (seeking justice). Herman's concept of the 'dialectic of trauma' also explains the two: namely, those who have been traumatized become part of complex negotiations in which condemnation and punishment, revenge and victimization are all blurred.

The 'Whatsitsname' was invented by the junk dealer Hadi who works in a dangerous environment. Clearly Hadi's development of the "Whatsitsname" is the result of the trauma and suppression he has experienced. From the days of overflowing with violence and disorder in Baghdad somewhere Hadi lives, where death and devastation is normal everyday thing. He felt the sickness of terror that permeates the city all around him with the corpses piling up around him. Hadi, although, deals with his emotional reaction to this trauma by telling stories and making the creature up to give the voiceless dead a voice.

**Herman's Stage of Safety:** Hadi produces a physical fence between himself and the trauma he observes by turning to humor and exaggerated storytelling, Hadi creates physical barrier between himself and what he

sees and suffers so much in. But his initial detachment to violence is established safety to the violence, a safety as fragile. But now that Hadi stitches the body parts of bombing victims together, he can no longer repress the trauma. Essentially, the creature is the repression of his feelings, the blame of Baghdad. This is Hadi's creation, a way to honour the dead, which soon becomes a grisly reminder of the violence he can no longer quite forget.

**Repression and Fragmentation:** Hadi, like traumatised people in general, is unable to deal with his trauma directly, this creates a division in his self, which often occurs with trauma. It externalizes the trauma, making him disconnected from his emotions, and it becomes 'The Whatsitsname'. This is an entity representing unprocessed sorrow and anger of those who were made to be a violence due. In time though, Hadi's attempts to suppress them fail, the 'Whatsitsname' goes autonomous and forces Hadi to confront the trauma that he had been trying to avoid.

In the passage Hadi uses the practice of storytelling and formation of the Whatsitsname as a practice of commemorating and grieving to those those who were affected by violence. Amongst the deep psychological need to keep the memory of those departed, his urge to gather body parts, and construct narratives, is his urge to gather bodies parts and construct narratives. Hadi's Whatsitsname is also a powerful show of his mission to perch his sadness to manage.:

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. (AlSaadawi,2013,p.98).

This quotation indicates the emotional distress, self denial and acceptance of defeat to Hadi's character. This portrayal of hopelessness and isolation can be analyzed through Judith Herman's trauma theory as outlined in her influential book "Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror."

According to Herman's theory, individuals who have experienced trauma frequently struggle with emotions of insignificance, a loss of sense of self, and the longing to break free from a life that appears to lack purpose. This statement, reflecting a profound sense of hopelessness and detachment, aligns with Herman's ideas of emotional numbness, detachment from oneself and others, and the damaging effects of violence (p.299).

The quotation illustrates a deep feeling of emotional detachment and hopelessness. Herman notes that individuals who have experienced trauma often undergo a desensitization of their emotions after enduring extended periods of violence, grief, or distress. In these instances, life can appear devoid of purpose, and the person may sense a disconnection from their own identity, mission, and worth.

Hadi claims that life does not possess intrinsic value.—"What's living to someone like me?"—The sentiment is characteristic of trauma survivors, especially those who have endured prolonged violence or neglect. In the novel's depiction of war-ravaged Baghdad, these hopeless expressions reveal the emotional and psychological toll of living in a traumatized environment. The speaker's sense of self has been diminished to "nothingness," signaling a significant detachment from their own value.

Herman(2015) explains the phenomenon of trauma survivors suppressing their emotions as a means of coping with intense suffering. This emotional detachment enables them to carry out basic tasks, but it can also result in a deep feeling of hollowness, as evidenced by the speaker's remarks. This numbness serves as a protective measure to shield against pain, but it also eliminates the ability to experience happiness, optimism, or interpersonal bonds (p.299).

This persisting self-denial within the individual "I'm nothing, whether I live or die. I'm nothing." The state of complete loss of identity and agency, as discussed by Herman, is evident in the Hadi. They feel that their existence holds no significance, possibly due to the constant exposure to death and destruction in a war-torn environment. As a result of the trauma, they have lost their sense of individuality and purpose. The repetition of the word "nothing" underscores the depth of the Hadi's self-negation. This extreme form of repression has left them without identity and purpose, feeling disconnected from both life and death. According to Herman, this level of repression is a response to overwhelming trauma, leading the survivor to shut down emotionally and disconnect from the world. Hadi's resignation ; "Leave me till the end"—It is a clear manifestation of surrendering to life, a typical response among individuals who have experienced trauma and have lost their feeling of control and optimism. According to Herman, the will to endure is frequently destroyed in instances of extreme trauma, particularly in settings where death and violence are prevalent. The individual not only no longer desires to live but also explicitly asks to be the final casualty, suggesting an acceptance of death and a lack of motivation to fight for survival.

Herman (2015) asserts that experiencing trauma can lead to a significant disturbance in an individual's ability to survive. Those who have survived may experience a sense of displacement and a reduced motivation to persevere. "Make me the last one," This signals a significant decline in the desire for life, as individuals no longer perceive any worth in their ongoing presence(p.298).

The phrase "Kill me, but at the end. Make me the last one" is an existential Resignation reveals a level of existential resignation that goes beyond mere hopelessness. Hadi has accepted death as inevitable and even preferable to continuing to live in a state of numbness and worthlessness. This acceptance of death often occurs when trauma survivors feel so overwhelmed by pain and loss that they no longer see a future for themselves.

Hadi's interactions with his neighbors demonstrate his difficulty in finding a sense of belonging in an increasingly divided society. His creation of the "Whatsitsname" further isolates him from the community. The various responses of his neighbors to the creature, from fear to fascination, highlight Hadi's complex relationship with his community and his struggle for mutual understanding. As a central character in the novel, Hadi serves as a reflection of the experiences of the Iraqi people during and after the war. The author, Ahmed, attempts to depict the difficult conditions faced by the people of Baghdad through the lives of the characters in the novel. Hadi learns the painful reality of losing his close friend, Nahem, and is left shocked by his death:

The shock of Nahem's death changed Hadi. He became aggressive. He swore and cursed and threw stones after the American Hummers or the vehicles of the police and the National Guard. He got into arguments with anyone who mentioned Nahem and what had happened to him (AlSaadawi,2013).

Following the distressing loss of Nahem, the main character Hadi undergoes a significant change in behavior, displaying aggression and resistance towards figures of authority, such as the American military and local police. These actions are consistent with common trauma symptoms, including anger, hypervigilance, and hostility, which are often observed in individuals dealing with grief and unresolved trauma. Hadi's hostile behavior, such as throwing stones and using curse words, are clear signs of his psychological distress and the feelings of vulnerability often associated with traumatic experiences.

Herman (2015) examines trauma as a psychological injury that can result in three primary phases of reaction: safety, recollection and grieving, and reconnection. During the safety phase, a person aims to regain a sense of command over their existence (p.300). However, Hadi appears to not have reached this phase, as his behavior indicates that he is still firmly entrenched in the turmoil of trauma, unable to establish stability or safety. His aggression and violent reactions may be efforts to assert dominance over a reality that now seems uncertain and hazardous.

In the remembrance and mourning stage, Individuals who have experienced trauma are faced with the challenge of addressing their memories and working through their feelings of sorrow. Hadi's reluctance to discuss Nahem and his hostile behavior towards those who do so may suggest that he is struggling to acknowledge and work through his emotions. Herman contends that avoidance is a typical reaction to trauma, and Hadi's avoidance takes the form of outward aggression and hostility.

Ultimately, the reconnection stage focuses on rebuilding ties with the community. Nevertheless, Hadi seems to be distancing himself even more from society. His animosity towards those in power and overall hostile demeanor imply that he has not advanced to this phase. Instead of incorporating his ordeal and progressing towards recovery, Hadi remains entrenched in a pattern of hostility and conflict, further deepening his feelings of seclusion.

Elishva, serves as an additional exemplar for delving into her character deeply; as an elderly Assyrian Christian woman, she clings to her religious icons and recollections of her missing son, Daniel, as sources of security. Her dwelling is simultaneously a sanctuary and a confinement, reflecting her anxiety and yearning. Despite the precariousness of her situation, her religious rituals and optimism for her son's return offer a sense of safety. Elishva (the Old Woman) epitomizes a more individual, personal manifestation of trauma. Having lost her son Daniel in the war, she lives in a perpetual state of grief. Her refusal to depart from Baghdad symbolizes her unwillingness to release her son, and she suppresses the reality of his passing by convincing herself that he will come back.

**Herman's Stage of Remembrance and Mourning:** Elishva's Mourning is at a standstill as she is unable to come to terms with the fact that her son is no longer with her. She wishes Daniel back on the creature, as the

incarnation of her son, instead of transmitting that wish onto the creature. The continued notion that her son lives causes her emotional distress searing away her ability of properly grieving..

**Repression as Denial:** Suppression of Elishva shows itself through denial, a common defense mechanism for those that have experienced trauma. She contrives another world in which her son will come back to her, rather than seeing the truth of her sadness. This refusal to accept reality hinders her progress in overcoming her trauma.

Elishva's suppression of her trauma causes her to attribute her emotions to the "Whatsitsname," believing it to be her son. This illustrates how trauma can warp one's perception of reality, as individuals struggle to cope with their sorrow and absence in a constructive manner:

"I'm not going anywhere. I won't leave my house."

"But what use is the house, Umm Daniel? What use is it when you're alone, like someone sitting in a tent in the desert?" I know, but don't you miss your daughters?"

"They're fine. Why are they asking me to leave my house?"

"Well, you know, life's getting hard here. What use is the house if life is hard? Fear, death, anxiety, criminals in the street, everyone watching as you walk past. Even when you're asleep, it's nightmares and jumping in fright all the time. The whole country's starting to look like the Jewish ruin next door."

"Fear not those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul."

"Yes," replied Nader, who had no ready reply to the biblical reference (Alsaadawi, p.150).

Elishva's existence is largely shaped by the recollection of her son and the unresolved emotional pain stemming from his disappearance. Her conviction that the Whatsitsname is her son, returned, is indicative of her continued battle with memory and sorrow. She attributes her grief to the creature, perceiving it as the reincarnation of her son.

Elishva's engagements with her neighbors and the Whatsitsname indicate her efforts to reestablish connections with her past and achieve a sense of closure. Her strong religious devotion and visions of her son's return serve as coping mechanisms for her enduring grief. The concern shown by her neighbors regarding her mental wellbeing underscores the challenges of reconnecting in the presence of unresolved trauma.

According to Herman's theory, trauma frequently disrupts the connections individuals have with themselves, their environment, and their loved ones. In the given statement, Umm Daniel is encouraged to depart from her residence and rejoin her daughters in a safer location, but she is hesitant. Her emotional tie to her home, despite the risks that exist there, reflects Herman's assertion that survivors of trauma often hold onto what is familiar, even when that familiarity poses a continual threat (p.299).

For Umm Daniel, the act of departing from her residence signifies relinquishing a pivotal aspect of her sense of self and the established life she has constructed. Her decision to remain appears to be an endeavor to uphold independence and authority amidst circumstances where she perceives a growing lack of control. Individuals who have experienced trauma frequently encounter challenges related to being displaced, and relocating from familiar surroundings can exacerbate their distress, compounding their sense of displacement.

Herman underscores the impact of how trauma can shatter an individual's perception of purpose and security. Nader advises Umm Daniel to make her safety a top priority.: "What use is the house if life is hard?" (AlSaadawi, p.150), He enumerates the anxiety, mortality, and bad dreams that define existence in Iraq. Nonetheless, Umm Daniel's reaction is based on something more profound than mere survival, "Fear not those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul," (AlSaadawi, p.150), She discloses her faith in something more lasting than mere physical security - a belief in spiritual strength, a central theme in Herman's exploration of healing. Herman observes that individuals who have experienced trauma frequently grapple with fundamental questions about existence and rely on deeply held convictions in their attempt to understand their pain.

In this instance, Umm Daniel has potentially discovered a means to maintain her personal identity through her religious beliefs and her bond with her residence, despite the imminent physical dangers. Her home serves as a representation of her sense of self, her existence, and her ties to the society. Consequently, departing from it, even for protection, could be perceived as an attack on her inner being, exacerbating her psychological distress.



Herman discusses the consequences of trauma, which often result in survivors feeling isolated and disconnected from the people around them. Umm Daniel's case serves as a clear example of this. Despite living in a perilous area, she finds solace in her home, considering it an anchor that ties her to her community and family. If she were to leave, her sense of isolation would surely worsen.: "My family are here and my neighbors. My life is in this house." (AlSaadawi, p.150), Her feeling of being connected to a place is closely linked to her physical surroundings, and departing would worsen her emotional pain by cutting off these ties.

Nonetheless, Nader's request highlights the seclusion of the rest.: "What use is it when you're alone, like someone sitting in a tent in the desert?" (AlSaadawi, p.150). The illustration of feeling emotionally isolated, even while being physically there, mirrors the emotional disconnect frequently encountered by individuals who have gone through trauma. Daniel is grappling with the dilemma of two different types of isolation - staying in a familiar but perilous environment, or departing for unfamiliar territory and forsaking her strong attachment to her current location.

Nader's portrayal of the Iraqi surroundings—"fear, death, anxiety, criminals in the street, nightmares" (AlSaadawi, p.150), The description effectively conveys the sense of fear and ongoing peril that Herman links to the impact of political violence. Herman details how the constant threat of danger can lead to a heightened state of vigilance, as individuals remain on edge in anticipation of further violent acts. Daniel's decision to remain in her home despite these risks indicates a degree of acceptance of this pervasive atmosphere of fear. She has come to view the violence as a normal part of her environment, reflecting a typical reaction to prolonged exposure to trauma.

Her reluctance to leave might also suggest a type of psychological desensitization or dissociation, which Herman considers to be a defense mechanism. She may perceive the physical and emotional dangers of remaining as less intimidating than the emotional distress of starting over.

In addition, the news reporter Mahmoud who covers the creature himself has a change in his nature over the course of the book for he gets more himself connected with the war and disorder in Baghdad. When he first becomes a journalist he's detached and impartial but he cannot bottle emotions anymore and feels the suffering around him. In asking Who Whatsitsname, he sees the pitfalls of what he does.

**Herman's Stage of Safety:** Mahmoud, first, aims to provide emotional and psychological security by being a bystander, a person that records something while not being personally involved. However, as the level of violence rises, he becomes more and more absorbed in the narrative, and his feeling of security is undermined.

**Repression and Emotional Numbing:** Similar to many individuals who have experienced trauma, Mahmoud seeks to suppress his emotions by concentrating on his duties as a journalist. He creates a disconnect from the distressing events he witnesses by analyzing them intellectually. However, as the violence escalates, he is no longer able to suppress the trauma, and he starts to question his responsibilities and role as a journalist. Mahmoud's role as a journalist entails recording the violence and trauma in Baghdad, serving as a form of collective remembrance and grief. His articles strive to give a voice to the victims and provide understanding in the midst of the chaos (Herman, 2015). Through recounting the stories of the victims, Ali participates in public grieving and endeavors to raise awareness within the community.

Mahmoud strives to reunite the fractured society through his publications, promoting a feeling of unity and common understanding among his audience. His efforts help to bridge the divisions caused by conflict, as his in-depth articles aim to cultivate comprehension and reconnection among readers. Mahmoud's suppression eventually weakens, compelling him to address the trauma he has been attempting to elude, resulting in an identity crisis.

The primary themes of trauma and repression in the novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad* are in some way a reflection on the psychological and emotional toll one would suffer from being in a war torn area. As we can glean by utilizing Judith Herman's theory of trauma and work through process of healing we can begin to understand how the characters' deal with violence, bereavement and dismember of their own character. Trauma that is presented over and over in the novel makes the progression towards recovery, safety, remembering and mourning, and reconnection with others, all impossible. Therefore, the characters become victims in cycles of repression and emotional desensitization.

This symbol is called the "Whatsitsname", reflects the imagery of compendia forming, or the fractured and numbed selves of people who have suffered from the war. The novel shows how individuals face and deny their trauma in many such characters as Hadi, Elishva and Mahmoud, how these traumatized views

transformed distorted perceptions and fractured feelings about themselves. Each character's journey mirrors the various stages of trauma recovery: Remembrance and Mourning, Safety and Reconnection. Yet in the face of continuing unresolved violence and the phenomena of trauma, in the end, AlSaadawi's work suggests that overcoming trauma is an insurmountable, formidable task.

## 4.2. The Negative Impact of War in *Frankenstein in Baghdad*

### 4.2.1. Physical Destruction

War is responsible for a myriad of negative elements including physical destruction. In wars, between nations or in one country civil war, there is big destruction in different areas such as schools, hospitals, houses and the public facilities.

The typical human reaction to peril is a sophisticated, cohesive set of responses involving both the physical and mental faculties. Initially, the sympathetic nervous system is activated by the threat, leading the individual to experience a surge of adrenaline and enter a heightened state of vigilance. The threat also causes the person to focus attention on the immediate circumstances. Furthermore, the threat has the potential to alter regular perceptions, allowing individuals in danger to ignore feelings of hunger, exhaustion, or discomfort. Lastly, the threat triggers strong feelings of fear and anger. These changes in arousal, attention, perception, and emotion are natural and adaptive responses, preparing the threatened individual for intense action, either in combat or in escape (Herman, p.37).

Physical destruction also occurs in the environment surrounding the war area. Imagine when war happens, there are bomb blasts everywhere, leaving a lasting impact on everyone's hearts. This situation harms the people living in the area and it may take many years to recover what has been lost.

Herman (2015) asserts that traumatic reactions occur when individuals are unable to take action. When resistance or escape is not an option, the body's self-defense mechanisms become overwhelmed and disorganized. Each part of the usual response to danger persists in a distorted and intensified state long after the danger has passed. Traumatic events cause significant and enduring changes in physiological arousal, emotion, cognition, and memory. Additionally, these events may disconnect these typically integrated functions from one another (p.37).

Even though violence is a common form of terror, the person carrying out the violence may not use it often and only as a final option. It is not essential to use violence frequently in order to maintain a continuous state of fear in the victim. The threat of death or serious harm occurs much more often than actual acts of violence. Threats against others can be just as impactful as direct threats against the victim. For example, women who are victims of abuse often report that their abuser has threatened to harm or kill their children, parents, or friends if they try to escape (Herman, 2015, p. 71).

According to the Cairn War and Australian Secondary School, the result of physical destruction due to war is bad and irreparable. This is because the changes that have occurred are very fundamental and difficult to correct. The activities following the war cause irreversible changes to the human environment. (Kong & Zhao, 2023)

### 4.2.2. Emotional and Psychological Impact

The experience of psychological trauma is one that affects those who feel powerless. In moments of trauma, individuals are left unable to defend themselves against an overpowering force. When this force comes from natural sources, it is referred to as a disaster. If it comes from other people, it is considered an atrocity. Traumatic experiences disrupt the usual support systems that provide individuals with a sense of control, connection, and purpose (Herman, 2015, p.297). The negative consequences of war affect people in varying degrees. One of the most severe impacts of war is the effect on the emotional and psychological well-being of those involved. It is not possible to accurately measure the severity of traumatic events using a single method. Attempting to quantify trauma in a simplistic way will only result in meaningless comparisons of the horror experienced. Despite this, specific identifiable experiences can increase the probability of trauma occurring (Herman, p36).

This often culminates in traumatization while holding long-lasting effects on the individual and those associated with them. Horowitz (1985) stated that the harm to relationships is not merely a side effect of trauma, as previously believed. Traumatic events have direct effects on the psychological foundation of an individual and the connections between the individual and the community. Horowitz characterizes traumatic

life events as those that cannot be integrated into an individual's "inner schemata" of self and their relationship to the world.

Bulman (1985) claimed that traumatic experiences shatter the victim's core beliefs regarding the safety of the world, their self-worth, and the meaningful structure of life (pp. 15-35).

In the novel of *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, the author shows examples of the emotional and psychological impacts of war on a number of separate individuals using personal encounters and ordeals in their struggle to exist. This is reflective of war-torn Iraq a, in which inhabitants have had to endure long-lasting states of violence and terror. (Jani, 2023). Herman declares that:

The traumatized person may experience intense emotion but without clear memory of the event, or may remember everything in detail but without emotion. She may find herself in a constant state of vigilance and irritability without knowing why. Traumatic symptoms have a tendency to become disconnected from their source and to take on a life of their own (P. 37).

Traumatic memories possess several unique characteristics. They are not stored in the same manner as the regular memories of adults, which are typically expressed in a verbal, linear story that becomes part of their ongoing life narrative. Janet clarified the distinction:

[Normal memory,] like all psychological phenomena, is an action; essentially it is the action of telling a story. . . . A situation has not been satisfactorily liquidated . . . until we have achieved, not merely an outward reaction through our movements, but also an inward reaction through the words we address to ourselves, through the organization of the recital of the event to others and to ourselves, and through the putting of this recital in its place as one of the chapters in our personal history. . . . Strictly speaking, then, one who retains a fixed idea of a happening cannot be said to have a "memory" . . . it is only for convenience that we speak of it as a "traumatic memory." (Janet, PP. 63–66).

Pierre Janet stresses that regular memory involves a dynamic process of creating a narrative that combines experiences into an individual's personal chronicle. Janet contends that genuine understanding of an event only occurs when it is shaped into a cohesive story through both outward behaviors and internal contemplation. Conversely, traumatic memories are rigid and devoid of narrative consistency, resembling intrusive thoughts rather than processed memories.

Janet's observations emphasize the significance of storytelling in the process of recovering from trauma, as demonstrated in therapeutic methods that assist individuals in expressing and framing their experiences. Through this process, they are able to incorporate traumatic events into their personal narratives, lessening their intrusive and disruptive effects. Janet's concepts continue to hold relevance in the present day, illustrating the role of storytelling in regaining a sense of agency and coherence in one's life.

Accordingly, Emotional and Psychological Impact can be seen clearly on Iraqi people because of the war, war is a destructive power on the people and it comes opposite to the Iraqi expectations. Because the fear, violence ,and injustice of the former regime of Saddam, people thought that the invasion of the American army comes as a rescuer. And as a matter of fact, the war changed the life of Iraqi people upside-down and make the life as an arena of crimes, death, violence, adding salt to injury and increasing the pain and sadness. Violence, explosion, bombing, crimes, fragmentation, unknown future are considered as consequences of that war. Hadi and other characters in the novel can be seen as mirror of how this war affected on them emotionally and psychologically, Hadi lost his dearest friend Nahem made him another person who has changed to be so aggressive and soul of revenge has ignited in his character, he started to show hatred towards the American army and even throwing stone on them. Considering them as the main reason of the death of his friend.

#### 4.2.3. Creation of Monsters

*Frankenstein in Baghdad* novel is abound with horror and magical realism effects. The effect of war is on control of the monsters as it is beyond humanity and uncontrollable to condemn them. The novel portrays its monsters not as mere products of the scientist's over-ambitions, but as symbols of the societies they were created in. The Iraqi literature tells us that what happened in the end is that society shunned the Monster. As part human, he had tried living as a human with a job and an apartment. But like AlSaadawi and the Whatsitsname itself, society could not move beyond the sewn-together bits of the Monster's body. When war brought him to life, Iraq was given a chance for a fresh start to finally make a proper nation for all of its peoples.

The Whatsitsname could have been the ideal citizen, processing a sense of justice and working towards a better future for the generations to come. But no matter how noble the intention, the blood on his hands will always make him a criminal. (Dow et al.2024)

This is the same Iraq becomes in the eyes of the monster's makers and the parts that profited from their creations. The monstrous fruition of a crime begun long ago. An Iraq that had much potential has had war waged on it time and time again, like so many bolts of lightning from the clouds.

At this point, the various factions that make the nation are not unlike the simple parts that went into the Monster, and the carcasses of innocent people are sewn together into grotesque parodies of the real thing. They are unacceptable, but unlike the Monster, society has not an option to abandon them in the forest. And there is no telling if they too will wander off and try to live normal lives. (Dow et al.2024)

When the monsters were eventually successful in committing their first murders, these being the unfortunate friends of the Seeker, the Seeker himself and a poor junk dealer. The effect here is to show the monsters as symbols of society during the time of the novels release. In these times, it was not unheard of for cases of reported and unreported murders in the Iraqi society to be seen or heard on a daily basis. Although the murderers had done their crimes it still cannot see any changes to their selves or compare experiences to others because that's the only way for them to forget their worries and misery. This matter is seen being reflected on the monsters who still could not move away from their own personalities and found it almost as a 'mission' to do away their previous memories of being the collected body of various Iraqi people (Alhashmi, 2020).

## **5. Conclusion**

Ahmed AlSaadawi explores the profound psychological and social effects of war, symbolizing the fractured reality of post-war Iraq through the grotesque figure of the Whatsitsname. This analysis of trauma, repression, and the detrimental effects of war demonstrates how violence breaks down both the physical and mental aspects of individuals and communities, making it difficult to establish a cohesive sense of identity. Taking psychoanalytic theory of trauma and repression, the novel describes how settling into being in a constant state of fear, instability and displacement leaves lasting psychological scars. In the form of his novel, *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, Ahmed AlSaadawi can expertly illustrate the exact similar emotional difficulties brought by war by referring to the themes of violence and cover over. The study investigates the deep influence of violence over human mind through the characters such as Whatsitsname, Hadi Hassani, Elishva and Mahmoud. Examination of these characters reveals awareness of a wide range of responses to that continuing trauma from the Iraq War, illuminating the long-term effects of violence and trauma on one's ability to recall, the degree to which one's sense of self is bound up with violence, and the capacity to act in response.

As a physical analogue for the disintegration wrought by both the psychical and the psychological results of war, the Whatsitsname figure represents Herman's theory of trauma's capacity to make the difference between the spectator and the sufferer unclear. The Whatsitsname shows that the city's anguish and brutality lingers, that its being trampled still gives the city patterns of trauma and devastation. This figure was created by Hadi who represents a need to put order in agentless acts of violence. But similar to the way in which Herman realizes trauma often amounts to losing control over one's own personal account, the monster reflects the same inability to maintain control.

Elishva, motivated by her deep yearning for her departed son, demonstrates the lasting impact of unaddressed sorrow, holding onto optimism despite enduring significant personal hardship. Her emotional detachment from the present reflects the psychological seclusion seen in trauma survivors who encounter difficulty in coping with overwhelming loss, as described by Herman. Meanwhile, Mahmoud, the journalist, wrestles with the ethical and emotional weight of observing and recording the horrors of war, highlighting Herman's stress on the significance of bearing witness and the emotional toll it takes on those who witness violence.

AlSaadawi's novel skillfully portrays the deep psychological effects of war on both individuals and communities by entwining their encounters with trauma, suppression, and grief. Judith Herman's theory underscores the continual obstacles of healing in a society where violence is prevalent, underscoring the recurring pattern of trauma. Ultimately, "*Frankenstein in Baghdad*" shows that addressing the unresolved wounds of trauma is essential for enduring the enduring effects of war, which distort the past, complicate the

present, and cast a long shadow over the future. Ultimately, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* provides a poignant examination of how war not only damages cities, but also devastates the mental and emotional well-being of its inhabitants. The novel, with its psychoanalytic perspective, exposes the disturbing truth of suppressed trauma, demonstrating how unaddressed grief and pain fuel ongoing violence and suffering. It highlights the lasting impact of war, where healing is difficult to achieve, and trauma continues to affect future generations.

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