" Al-Shisma " and The Torn City: The Role of Narrative Space and The Problem of Identity in Iraqi Fictional Literature

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"الشسمة" والمدينة الممزقة : دور الفضاء السردي ومشكلة الهوية في الأدب القصصي العراقي

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Abstract:-

This article will examine some of the core concepts of narrative space and identity within Ahmed Saadawi's Frankenstein in Baghdad, focusing on the symbolic function that Al-Shisma-joined together from the parts of the bodies of bomb blast victims-represents with regard to post-war Iraqi society. Through the fragmented narrative structure of setting and physical environment in Baghdad, this paper tries to argue that in Saadawi, the setting has been used as a metaphor for personal and collective identity disintegration after the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Al-Shisma struggles to acquire an incoherent identity; this itself reflects the existential crisis for many Iraqis torn between the previous regime's unity and authoritarianism and the chaos of the post-invasion era. Ultimately, the article discusses the fragmented existence of Al-Shisma as personifying traumatic experiences, alienation, and disillusionment of a war-torn nation.

Key words: Al-Shisma, identity, narrative space, post-war Iraq, national identity.

الملخص:-

ستتناول هـذه المقالة بعض المفاهيم الأساسية للفضاء السردي والهوية في رواية فرانكشتاين في بغداد لأحمد سعداوي، مع التركيز على الوظيفة الرمزية التـي تمثلها شخصية "الشسمة" – التي تم تجميعها من أجزاء أجساد ضحايا الانفجارات – فيما يتعلق بالمجتمع العراقي بعد احرب. ومن خلال البنية السردية المجزأة للمكان والبيئة الماديـة في بغـداد، تحـاول هـذه الورقـة أن تزعم أن المكان في رواية سعداوي استُخدم كاسـتعارة لتفكـك الهويـة الشخصـية والجماعيـة بعـد غـزو العـراق واحتلالـه. وتكـافح شخصـية "الشسـمة" مـن أجـل اكتساب هوية غير متماسكة؛ وهذا يعكس في حد ذاته الأزمة الوجودية للعديد مـن العراقيين الممزقين بين وحدة النظام السـابق والاستبداد وفوضى عصر ما بعد الغزو. و في نهايـة المطـاف، تنـاقش المقالـة الوجـود المجزأ لشخصية "الشسمة" باعتباره تجسيدًا للتجارب المؤلمة، والاغتراب، وخيبة الأمل التي تعيشها أمة مزقتها الحرب.

الكلمـات المفتاحيـة: الشسـمة، الهويـة، الفضـاء السـردي، العـراق بعـد الحـرب، الهوية الوطنية.

1. Introduction

Ahmed Saadawi's Frankenstein in Baghdad (2013) is a provocative, darkly imaginative novel reworking Mary Shelley's Frankenstein within the violent, post-invasion context of Iraq. The novel revolves around Al-Shisma, a creature constructed from the body parts of bomb victims in Baghdad. Al-Shisma is both literal and metaphorical product of war, the embodiment of a nation torn apart by sectarian violence, political instability, and the repercussions of foreign occupation (Al-Ali 25). Saadawi's novel weaves together horror and social critique in a way that allows him to explore the consequences of war on both individual and collective identity. Through Al-Shisma's fragmented existence and his search for a coherent self, Saadawi tackles the greater issue of identity crisis in post-invasion Iraq by critiquing the instability and destruction that characterize life in a fractured nation.

Al-Shisma, who never adopts a true name and refers to himself only as "Al-Shisma," is an embodiment of the fragmentation and disintegration that has plagued Iraq since the U.S. invasion in 2003. The very lack of a coherent identity in naming the character is symbolic of the erasure of personal and collective history within the war-torn context (Antoon102). Al-Shisma is both a physical representation of his piecemeal existence-his flesh sutured together from parts of exploded bodies-as the city in whose streets he roams, being constantly bombed, remade, and renamed, and also as the shattered body of Iraq itself, a nation of violence, blood, and dust.

One of the major themes which post-invasion Iraqi literature has tackled is identity. In this case, writers explore how war, violence, and occupation disrupt the individual and collective sense of self. Other writers, such as Sinan Antoon in The Corpse Washer and Hadiya Hussein in The American Granddaughter, have also explored the trauma of lost identity and an attempt to rebuild a fractured national and personal sense of self after war (Antoon 98; Hussein 74). Like Saadawi, these authors make the aftershocks of violence part and parcel of understanding how Iraqis relate to their very own identities. The body, literal and metaphorical, becomes a signifier for these authors wrestling with how the effects of war will leave deep scars on the human psyche and national consciousness.

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Through Al-Shisma, Saadawi sharply critiques the fractured sense of self in a nation torn asunder by both internal strife and external intervention. The creature's body, literally assembled from the remains of others, becomes a chilling symbol of Iraq's own brokenness, as well as a reflection of the challenges Iraqis face in trying to reclaim a unified identity in the wake of war (Mikhail 205). This paper will, therefore, argue that the fragmented form of Al-Shisma symbolizes the post-invasion experience of Iraq in general and represents an important tension between personal and collective national identity for the protagonist.

1.2 Importance of the Study

A study of Frankenstein in Baghdad and the character Al-Shisma has much to offer for analysis into the complex relationship of identity, war, and narrative space in contemporary Iraqi literature. Especially, its exploration of a fragmentary identity against the fragmented metropolis provides a very sharp observation of the post-Iraq War condition and its repercussions upon the collective psyche of Iraq (Wogan 201). The importance of this research, therefore, lies in many factors: it contributes to the wider discourse on post-war literature, increases our understanding of identity in conflict zones, and deepens our appreciation of the power of narrative space in shaping both personal and collective identities.

This is a meaningful study because it throws light upon the themes of disintegration and identity crisis running consistently through most of post-invasion Iraqi fiction. In this, the novel essentially deals with Al-Shisma, a character with no real identity but largely symbolic of the destruction or disintegration of Iraq itself, providing specific insight into the existential battles and struggles of any individual in post-war societies. Iraqi writers, struggling with the trauma of war and occupation, question traditional notions of identity and show how prolonged violence forces one to confront the instability of their sense of self.

Al-Shisma's quest for identity within the torn space of Baghdad presents compelling research into the role of the narrative space itself. Saadawi's use of a Baghdad that is both the real and metaphorical fragmented space of violence creates the perfect opportunity to explore how it functions as a character on its own,

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shaping the life of its inhabitants and mirroring their fractured sense of self (**Larkin 147**). This is shown in the way that the research is conducted to see how the very disjointedness of the city is reflected in the narrative structure, indicating the importance of the setting and space in post-war literature. In *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, the physical landscape of the city speaks to the inner psychological and cultural landscapes of its people, always negotiating in a world broken, yet rebuilding.

2. The Role of Narrative Space in *Frankenstein in Baghdad*

In literature, narrative space is understood as the constructed environment in which the story unfolds. It's not a backdrop, but one of the active elements through which the characters' experiences are molded and that inform the thematic development of the text. This includes physical setting, social environment, and cultural context that affect the narration (**Hassan 247**). In *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, Ahmed Saadawi uses the power of narrative space to the fullest, placing it at the very core of the novel's considerations of identity, trauma, and social fragmentation. The war-torn city of Baghdad, in which the story takes place, is more than just a setting for the events of the novel; it is an active character in the narrative that contributes to the psychological and cultural fragmentation of the characters, especially Al-Shisma, the creature who personifies the nation's brokenness.

2.1 Description of Baghdad as the Fragmented War-torn Space in the Novel

In *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, Baghdad is a city shattered by war, occupation, and sectarian violence. The physical landscape of the city is littered with debris, bombed-out buildings, and streets that are unrecognizable from their former selves. Saadawi's depiction of Baghdad as a fractured, fragmented space reflects the greater social and political fragmentation of Iraq itself (Alwan 125). It is portrayed as a city that is constantly disintegrating and being rebuilt, reflecting the inhabitants' psychological state in endeavoring to reconstruct their identities following the many years of conflicts. According to Saadawi, "Baghdad had become a wound that never healed, a city where the bodies of the dead were not allowed to rest, and the living walked amidst the rubble of their own past" (Saadawi 82). The city's

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destruction is symbolic of how deep the scar has been left on the national consciousness of Iraq, with people forced to confront the horrors of daily existence amidst the crumbling remains of what was once such a vibrant city.

The streets of Baghdad function as unsafe and unpredictable places, more in tune with the vital element of survival rather than romantic representations of communal life or tradition. Saadawi does refer to the state of the city in her words-often of being broken: buildings lie reduced to rubble, roads are very poor to negotiate, with the air thick with dust and despairing thoughts. Such representations of the city instill a feeling of claustrophobia and helplessness in which the characters are struggling with the real and physical space of the city amid emotional and psychic baggage from living in such an environment (Campbell 169).

2.2 Saadawi's Use of Physical Space to Mirror Psychological and Cultural Fragmentation

Saadawi makes great use of physical space in Frankenstein in Baghdad, going much beyond description. A destroyed city reflects an emotionally and psychologically fragmented human race, especially Al-Shisma, the creature carrying the disintegrated Iraqi identity on his body. Quite literally, the body of Al-Shisma-made by stitching body parts of several bombing victims-is used as a metaphor for the split of the physical space of Baghdad (Hasan 50). Torn asunder by violence, much like the city, Al-Shisma is a patchwork of human remains that are not joined into a cohesive whole. His disjointed body reflects the incoherence of lives which have become fragmented by this space of chaos. As the creature says, "I am made of parts, not whole. I walk the streets of a city that is also broken, like me" (Saadawi 120).

The rubble and ruins that litter the streets of Baghdad serve as a metaphor for the shattered sense of identity and belonging experienced by the novel's characters. The physical destruction of the city is mirrored by the inner turmoil of its inhabitants, who are struggling to make sense of their place in a society that has been torn apart by war and occupation. The protagonist of the novel, Hadi, is tortured by memories of pre-war Iraq, where the city was whole and his sense of identity was not as deeply disturbed by the violence

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constantly happening around him. In one of the scenes, he muses, "The city used to have a soul, a pulse. Now, it is just fragments, scattered memories of a life that no longer exists" (Saadawi 98). This city, once coherent, seems also to echo this sense of loss, symbolizing the dissolution of personal and national identities in post-war Iraq.

2.3 Al-Shisma as Both Product of and Reaction against Chaotic Space

Al-Shisma's existence inextricably is connected to the chaotic space of Baghdad. The very creation is a monster assembled from body parts, is a direct answer to the violence and dismemberments that characterize this war-torn city. Just as the streets are filled with the debris of bombings, Al-Shisma's body is made up of the fragmented remains of various victims, each part representing a different individual, a different identity, or a different sect of Iraqi society. In this way, Al-Shisma can be seen as both a product of the city's chaos and a reaction to it (Lefebvre 147). He personifies the violence and destruction that have torn Baghdad asunder, his search for identity echoing that of Iraqis struggling to work out where they fit into this broken society.

Al-Shisma's inability to form a coherent identity, symbolized in his refusal to take on a proper name, serves only to reflect the greater cultural crisis that is post-invasion Iraq. His body is the patchwork of conflicting parts that are reminiscent of the city-a city torn apart by so many clashing divisions. One of the most touching moments in the novel is when Al-Shisma reflects on his fragmented existence: "I have no name, no place, no purpose. I am what this city has made me—broken, incomplete, wandering amidst the ruins" (Saadawi 145). His sense of dislocation is a result of an environment in which he was created. Where the streets of Baghdad are filled with debris, so Al-Shisma's mind is filled with all those conflicting identities and memories that simply cannot be reconciled with one another. His existence is, in many ways, a mirror of the city itself-a space that is simultaneously being destroyed and rebuilt but never fully whole (Metz 24).

2.4 The Narrative Structure: Multiple Perspectives and the Fractured Sense of Space

The narrative structure of *Frankenstein in Baghdad* contributes significantly to the fractured sense of space. Saadawi employs a multi-

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perspective narration, slipping between different characters' points of view-Hadi's, the doctor's, and Al-Shisma's. This serves to further underline the disjointedness of the city and its fractured inhabitants' identities too (Padrón 257). Each character's perspective is partial and subjective, offering only a partial view of the whole. For example, Hadi is consumed by the violence he witnesses around him, yet his personal story is muddled with a grief and a memory of a preexisting Iraq that no longer truly exists. The doctor obsessed with piecing together Al-Shisma from parts of various victims is fixated on the past, unable to get beyond the trauma that still continues to haunt him.

The shifts between these different perspectives are reminiscent of the fragmentation of the city, and the multitude of perspectives serves to underscore the lack of coherence in the life of those who inhabit it. These varying perspectives that Saadawi uses create a mosaic-like narrative, whereby a full picture of the city and its people can never truly be grasped (Perry 178). Each character's experience is framed by his or her unique vantage point, adding to a greater sense of dislocation and alienation. As Saadawi so eloquently puts it, "Each person sees the city differently, and yet none of them can see it as a whole. We are all fragments of a fractured place" (Saadawi 152). This technique foregrounds the theme of fragmentation while mirroring the shattered, ever-altering space of Baghdad.

The narration in *Frankenstein in Baghdad* is more than the background to the events within the novel; it constitutes one of the most powerful driving forces behind the characters and their personalities. Saadawi vividly describes war-torn Baghdad, filled with ruins, bombings, and bloodshed, at once a realistic image but at the same time metaphorically indicative of the psychological and cultural fragmentation pervading the lives of this novel's personages (Tuan 222). Al-Shisma-the creation from and reaction against chaotic space-carries in his body the jolting, fracturedness of the identity of Iraq itself. Through his navigation of both physical and narrative space alike, Saadawi can drive an incisive look into how city and identity can strive for their rebuilding after a war.

3. The Problem of Identity in Iraqi Fictional Literature

The question of identity has been recurrent in Iraqi fictional literature, especially since the Iraq War tore into the social, political,

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and cultural fabric of the country. From the invasion led by the U.S. in 2003 to sectarian violence and insurgencies afterward, Iraq's historical trajectory in recent decades has led to general traumas, dislocations, and a crisis of identity. This disruption of personal and collective identity has filtered into the current literature by Iraqi writers-those often wrestling with various themes such as loss, fragmentations, and quests toward meaning through violence (Abdalkafor 15). The context positions *Frankenstein in Baghdad* by Ahmed Saadawi published in 2013 as one of those powerful representations of the matter of identity in post invasion Iraqi society. This paper, therefore, attempts to look into the broader issue of identity in Iraqi fictional literature, especially in Saadawi's novel, where Al-Shisma is used both literally and symbolically to represent fragmented identity in Iraq's people and the nation as a whole.

3.1 The Impact of War, Occupation, and Sectarian Violence on Iraqi Society and Identity

The crisis of identity represented in Iraqi literature can only be contextualized within the historical framework of post-2003 Iraq. The US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, followed by occupation and sectarian violence, made the very concept of identity fluid and unstable (Abdalkafor 125). Besides the destruction of physical infrastructure, the destruction of Iraq's political institutions meant the overall upsurge of chaos and loss of national coherence. The demolition of the Ba'athist regime and the ensuing vacuum of power gave further license to sectarian differences between Sunni and Shia factions, and even the growth of terrorist organizations such as ISIS.

This atmosphere of ongoing conflict and instability significantly impacted the personal and collective identities of Iraqis. Traditionally important markers of identity, such as nationality, religion, and ethnicity, became increasingly problematized as individuals negotiated trauma from war and occupation. As Sinan Antoon writes, "The Iraq war was not just a military invasion but a destruction of the very fabric of Iraqi society. People were left with nothing to hold onto" (Antoon 17).

3.2 Exploration of Identity in Saadawi's Frankenstein in Baghdad

In Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, for example, the central character of Al-Shisma epitomizes that loss of identity symptomatic

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of the post-invasion Iraqi condition. A creature pieced together from the body parts of various bombing victims, Al-Shisma is a grotesque figure with no clear origin, no true name, and no coherent sense of self (Al-Asad 165). His very creation-through the act of collecting body parts from the rubble of Baghdad-is a metaphor for the disintegration of identity in a war-torn society. Al-Shisma's search for his own name and purpose is a metaphor for the greater struggle for meaning and coherence that so many Iraqis face in the aftermath of war.

The fact that Al-Shisma does not want to take any proper name but instead goes by just "Al-Shisma" is a very powerful metaphor for the lack of identity within a city and nation in turmoil. As Al-Shisma himself reflects, "I am not a person, I am a collection of things, pieces of people who no longer exist" (Saadawi 110). Without an identity, this reflects, more than anything, a dislocated and fractured view-the truth for Iraq itself. Saadawi takes Al-Shisma and builds an incongruous body through this figure to show forth just how broken even the notion of the self has been in a country that has struggled to grasp ideas of belonging amidst death and displacement. Al-Shisma's identity, much like most Iraqis, is composed of fragmented and broken pieces that simply do not add up to form a coherent whole (Alhashmi 156).

3.3 The Monster as a Metaphor for the Post-Invasion Iraqi Individual

Al-Shisma's crisis of the name can be viewed as a parable for the condition the Iraqi individual has endured since the invasion. Like Al-Shisma, so many Iraqis were in pieces, disillusioned and torn between what had been their previous life and the unforgiving realities of the present. Where these circumstances prevail, invasion and attendant sectarian violence caused a disruption in the social and cultural context from whence emerged this sense of belonging and continuity. Thus, Iraqis became tasked with the project of reordering shattered lives and identities into coherence within an indifferent world no longer meaningful. (Al-Leithy 12).

Al-Shisma's body, assembled from the body parts of various victims, therefore symbolizes the incoherence of Iraqi society, which had to literally put together one's life from the remains of a past that was destroyed. That he existed as a dislocated and

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incomprehensible being expressed the fragmentary nature of Iraq as a country and the inability of sectarian and ethnically divided peoples to emerge with any notion of common unity or national identity today. As Alnajar explains, "The use of different body parts highlights the failure of the parts to work harmoniously; the fragmentation of the political, religious, and social dimensions in Iraqi society" (143). Saadawi's Al-Shisma is neither quite human nor quite monster, which underlines the ambiguity and disillusion that mark the post-invasion Iraqi experience. In this sense, the monster is a powerful metaphor for the Iraqi individual: disillusioned, displaced, and searching for a sense of purpose in a world that has lost its meaning.

3.4 How the Narrative Challenges Traditional Concepts of Identity

Frankenstein in Baghdad challenges every traditional view of identity, personal, national, or collective, while underlining the way that such notions have been destabilized by the violence and chaos of war. Conventionally, identity is often perceived as being fixed, coherent, and embedded within a shared common sense of belonging. Saadawi's novel is populated, instead, by a world in which identities no longer remain in one single entity but are fragmented and fluid. Al-Shisma's lack of a proper name and his disjointed body reflect the collapse of traditional notions of identity, both personal and national (Bertman 50).

This question of identity in Iraqi fictional literature goes with the trauma of war, occupation, and sectarian violence (Shelley 123). In *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, Saadawi took Al-Shisma as an effective metaphor for the disillusioned fragmented Iraqi individual whose identity is forged out of the violence and chaos around him. This Al-Shisma character encapsulates the identity crisis enveloping Iraqi society in this post-invasion period when everyone is left to maneuver around a world that no longer offers the stability of a coherent national or personal identity (Elayyan 59). A comparison of Saadawi's novel to other works of Iraqi authors like Inaam Kachachi and Sinan Antoon shows that the problem of identity is a major concern in contemporary Iraqi fiction. Delving into fragmentation, alienation, and disillusionment, these authors strongly critique the traditional notion of identity and put in sharp focus the continued struggle for meaning and belonging in a country torn apart by war.

4. Al-Shisma as a Symbol of Post-War Iraq

In Frankenstein in Baghdad, the narrator has Ahmed Saadawi use Al-Shisma-a monster assembled from the body parts of various bombing victims-to be representative of the collective trauma and dehumanization created during the Iraq War and its aftermath. On that note, the fragmented identity—both physical and psychological—is that through which the creature is realized, becoming a powerful metaphor of post-invasion Iraqi society, left to contend with the disintegration of national identity, personal coherence, and social stability (Ghazi 4040). Al-Shisma incoherent identity reflects greater Iraqi struggles since the fall of Saddam Hussein: sectarianism, instability, and a collapse of cultural continuity have left Iraqis grasping for meaning from a society that has lost its foundation.

4.1 Al-Shisma as a Symbol of Collective Trauma and Dehumanization Caused by War

Al-Shisma is, at once, a creature of horror and grotesqueness-a symbol of the trauma through which Iraqis have gone through since the Iraq War left the country destroyed and divided. His body is stitched together from body parts of victims who have died in bombings and other forms of violence; he is, really, an embodiment of the literal physical cost of the war. As Saadawi describes, Al-Shisma is "a patchwork, a hybrid of broken lives and lost identities" (Saadawi 112). Each part of his body is from a different victim, each of whom had a different story, but he cannot recognize or integrate these identities into a single whole. This inability to become a unified being reflects the profound sense of loss and disintegration felt by Iraqis who have experienced the horrors of war and occupation.

Al-Shisma's constant search for a name is symbolic of the search for a stable identity on the part of the Iraqi people following the war (McWhir 80). The refusal of the name "Al-Shisma" means a rejection to be defined by an imposed identity, one that is fragmented, incomplete, constructed from external violence. The creature himself mentions, "I have no name, no identity. I am what this city has made me, broken and empty" showing negation in his identity since identity may mirror a "bigger catastrophe. [lived within] Iraq now." (Saadawi 120). With such divisive forces of sectarianism and with the so-called collapse of the nation-state, not a clear-cut national, much less personal, identity would result.

4.2 Al-Shisma's Inability to Form a Coherent Identity as a Reflection of the Larger Struggles of Post-Invasion Iraqi Society

Al-Shisma's inability to come up with a coherent identity is not personal; it reflects larger struggles that post-invasion Iraqi society grapples with. The 2003 fall of the Saddam Hussein regime opened a new, chaotic chapter in Iraq, where the dismantling of traditional forms of authority and national identity became the order of the day. The war and its aftermath have left Iraq deeply divided on sectarian, ethnic, and political lines, and the country has never recovered from the rupture in its social fabric (Mellor 15).

The disorientation and existential crisis of Al-Shisma-who am I, where do I belong-find their echo in the greater Iraqi population, equally adrift in a fractured national environment. There is no narrative or direction to which the country holds, and the lack of coherence resounds within the psychological and emotional states of the people (Phillips 380). Just as Al-Shisma cannot find his peace with a fragmented self, many Iraqis cannot reconcile the diverse elements of their identities that have been shattered by war, displacement, and sectarian violence.

Al-Shisma's reflection on his amnesiac, fragmented identity is one telling passage; this is the character's thinking of himself: "I was born in the rubble, pieced together by forces that did not care who I was or where I came from" (Saadawi 128). His sentiment speaks to the widespread disillusionment of post-invasion Iraqis, who continue to rebuild their lives piecemeal in the husk of a country blown to shreds. Iraqis are facing a world wherein personal and collective identities are in constant flux and wherein the comforting touchstones of nationality-ethnicity, religion, culture-no longer hold steadfast.

4.3 How Al-Shisma's Fragmented Identity Parallels the Fragmented Identity of the Iraqi People After the Fall of Saddam Hussein

Al-Shisma is a character who directly personifies the Iraqi people's fragmented identity following the fall of Saddam Hussein. Iraq, under Saddam, was a country that had achieved some semblance of political cohesion despite its authoritarian nature (Perry 302). Indeed, the Ba'athist regime, while being repressive,

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maintained an impression of national unity in suppressing sectarian divisions and furthering a single vision of Iraqi identity. This unity was torn apart when Saddam fell and gave rise to sectarian violence, ethnic conflict, and the fracturing of national identity.

Al-Shisma's body, thus, made up of body parts of different victims, symbolizes the complete disintegration of the Iraq national identity. Iraq ceased to be a whole but a collage of parts in conflict with one another due to different forces, some ethnic, sectarian, and other political. His fractured identity reflects how Iraq was cleaved into pieces by ethnic, sectarian, and other political forces and how this country has not been able to come together as one single cohesive nation till now (Teggart 1). Just as Al-Shisma's body parts come from different victims with different histories, so too the post-invasion Iraqi society is made up of people from different sects, ethnicities, and political affiliation-all carrying traumatic experiences with none able to form a cohesive whole.

Al-Shisma's "stitched together" experience from disparate parts parallels the condition of post-invasion Iraq, where the nation's fabric is torn and cannot easily be repaired. The loss of Saddam's unifying influence left a power vacuum, which was filled by sectarian militias, foreign interests, and the rise of insurgent groups. Iraq became a country where violence and division supplanted the relative stability that once prevailed under the former regime (Kachachi 153). In this sense, Al-Shisma's body represents the nation itself: a group of disparate parts unable to function as one cohesive unit, representative of the emotional and psychic devastation wrought upon the Iraqi people by the war.

The search for a name by the creature is another important metaphor to understand the identity crisis that ensued after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Al-Shisma could not define himself. So are many Iraqis, who, without the unifying presence of the dictator, no longer can assert their national identity (East 100). The fragmented nature of Iraqi society has made it irreconcilably hard to manage the very sense of belonging or belongingness to a cause; again, Al-Shisma's refusal of imposed identity is an instant reflection of the refusal by every Iraqi who refused to affiliate themselves with sectarian labels imposed onto them post-invasion.

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In one powerful moment of his, Al-Shisma reflects aloud: "What is a name? It is nothing more than a way of tying a thing to the past. I have no past, no future. I only exist in the present, a present of destruction and disarray" (Saadawi 135). This exists as an existential reflection of many citizens of Iraq in this time of post-invasion disillusionments. With the pasts destroyed and the future unsure, the present becomes a point in time that is endless in struggling through to make sense of one's world when identities of persona and nation are no longer relevant or coherent.

5. Conclusion

In *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, Ahmed Saadawi interweaves the themes of narrative space and identity to offer an incisive look into the post-war crisis in Iraq. Against the backdrop of a city shattered by war, the novel remarkably captures the fragmentation and disintegration of both the physical and psychological landscapes of the country. Through his innovative use alike of narrative space-that central figure of Al-Shisma-Abdul Saadawi dove deep into the complexities of identity engendered by war, continued occupation, and sectarian mass violence.

Narrative space in *Frankenstein in Baghdad* acts as the pivot towards understanding the greater socio-political context of post-invasion Iraq. Saadawi has used the physical environment of the city-the streets, the rubble, the bombings, and the decaying infrastructure-with great skill as an expression of the country's shattered identity. Baghdad, the "narrative space" of the novel, is not a background against which the story unravels but a character in itself, inextricably linked with the struggles and aspirations of its inhabitants. The fragmentation of space reflects the fragmentation of personal and national identities, while the city's rubble is symbolic of the emotional and cultural disintegration that Iraqis have suffered since the war. The multi-perspective structure of narration, flitting across characters like Hadi, the monster, and the doctor, adds another layer to this disintegration of identity that reflects the multiplicity of experiences and the fractured nature of the collective Iraqi psyche. This nonlinear, fragmented storytelling also underlines the chaos and instability that have essentially marked the post-invasion Iraqi reality and reinforces the very core of the novel: its theme of disillusionment with identity lost.

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Al-Shisma's search for identity also speaks to the greater theme of dehumanization in post-war Iraq. The creature is constructed from the remains of the dead, reflecting how human life has been reduced to mere fragments in a country devastated by war. His search for a name, something which will distinguish him with a sense of direction and meaning, is almost the same as that pursued by so many Iraqis in pursuit of meaning and coherence since the war. Just as Al-Shisma cannot ever escape the trauma of his fragmented existence, so a great number of Iraqis are trapped in a vicious cycle of violence and disillusionment, wherein they cannot reconcile their previous identities with the brutal reality of life in post-invasion Iraq.

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