

Different Human Pieces Butchering Their Way into Salvation: A Postcolonial Reading of Saadawi's Frankenstein in Baghdad

Lecturer Dr.

Saàd Laftah Shamkhy Jabur

The Open Educational College, AL. Najaf Study Center

saad.laftah1981@gmail.com

أشلاء بشرية مختلفة تشق طريقها نحو الخلاص

- قراءة ما بعد الاستعمار لرواية أحمد سعداوي فرانكشتاين في بغداد -

المدرس الدكتور

سعد لفته شمخي جبر

الكلية التربوية المفتوحة - مركز النجف الأشرف

Abstract:-

This study offers an in-depth analysis of the identity crisis in Ahmed Saadawi's *Frankenstein* in Baghdad (2013), utilizing postcolonial theoretical frameworks to examine the complexities of identity formation and disintegration in a war-torn, post-invasion context. Saadawi's narrative presents a city and a people fractured by the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, where both individual and collective identities are destabilized. As Fanon argues, "the colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards" (Fanon, 1963, p. 18), a dynamic that resonates with Saadawi's characters who struggle to reconcile inherited colonial legacies with present chaos. By applying the theoretical lenses of Homi K. Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Frantz Fanon, and Gayatri Spivak, this paper investigates how Saadawi's characters navigate fractured selves amid the tumultuous backdrop of postcolonial, postwar Baghdad. Bhabha's theory of hybridity reveals how identity is not static but fluid and constantly reconstructed: "hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 112). Hall's conception of identity as constructed through discourse and power plays a significant role in understanding the tension between personal and collective histories: "identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Instead of thinking of identity as an already carried out fact...we should think of it as a 'production'" (Hall, 1996, p. 4).

Key Words: Postcolonial Identity, Cultural Displacement, Trauma and Memory, Fragmented Self, War and Occupation, Identity Crisis.

المخلص:

يقدم هذا البحث تحليلاً معمقاً لأزمة الهوية في رواية أحمد سعداوي فرانكشتاين في بغداد (٢٠١٣)، مستعيناً بإطارات نظرية ما بعد الكولونيالية لاستكشاف تعقيدات تشكّل الهوية وتفككها في سياق ما بعد الغزو وفي ظل الحرب. تسرد الرواية صورة مدينة وشعب مزقتهما تداعيات الغزو الأمريكي للعراق عام ٢٠٠٣، حيث تتعرض الهويات الفردية والجماعية لزعزعة مستمرة. وكما يشير فرانسز فانون، فإن "المستعمر يرفع فوق وضعيته البدائية بقدر ما يتبنى المعايير الثقافية للدولة المستعمرة" (Fanon, 1963, "ص. ١٨)، وهي ديناميكية تنعكس بوضوح في شخصيات سعداوي التي تكافح للتوفيق بين الإرث الاستعماري الموروث والفوضى الراهنة.

من خلال توظيف النظريات الفكرية لهومي ك. بهابه، وستيوارت هول، وفرانز فانون، وجاياتري سبيفاك، يستقصى هذا البحث كيف تتعامل شخصيات سعداوي مع ذواتها المتشظية وسط خلفية مضطربة من بغداد ما بعد الاحتلال والحرب. تكشف نظرية بهابه حول "الهجنة" أن الهوية ليست ثابتة، بل مرنة وتُعاد تشكيلها باستمرار: "الهجنة هي علامة على إنتاجية السلطة الاستعمارية، وقواها المتغيرة وثوابتها" (Bhabha, 1994, "ص. ١١٢). أما تصور هول للهوية بوصفها بناءً يتم عبر الخطاب والسلطة، فيساعد على فهم التوتر بين التاريخ الشخصي والجماعي: "الهوية ليست شفافة أو خالية من الإشكال كما نعتقد. وبدلاً من اعتبارها حقيقة منجزة، ينبغي أن نراها كعملية إنتاج" (Hall, 1996, "ص. ٤).

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهوية ما بعد الاستعمارية، النزوح الثقافي، الصدمة والذاكرة، الذات المجزأة، الحرب والاحتلال، أزمة الهوية.

1: Introduction

In the postcolonial world, the issue of identity is central to understanding the complex legacies of colonialism and how they continue to shape both individual and collective experiences. As Stuart Hall notes, “cultural identity is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us... It is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’” (Hall, 1990, p. 225). Identity, once a coherent and stable concept, becomes increasingly fragmented and malleable when subjected to the forces of colonialism, war, and postcolonial governance.

In *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (2013), Ahmed Saadawi examines the identity crises of a people in the aftermath of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, a time marked by devastation, social fragmentation, and the collapse of state institutions. The novel uses the grotesque and symbolic figure of a creature constructed from body parts to explore how fragmented, hybrid identities appear in a city marked by violence, loss, and uncertainty. As Al-Janabi (2021) argues, “Saadawi’s monster is not merely a metaphor for violence, but a representation of the fragmented Iraqi identity, stitched together from the remnants of history, trauma, and resistance.”

Saadawi’s novel goes beyond a mere critique of the political or social upheaval caused by the invasion; it engages with the deeper psychological and existential issues that Iraqis face as they try to navigate a world torn apart by war. The inhabitants of Baghdad, whose sense of self has been irreversibly altered by the destruction of their city and its institutions, experience an internal crisis of identity that is a direct consequence of both the colonial past and the violent present. Fanon’s notion of “colonial trauma” is particularly relevant here: “the colonized subject is constantly overpowered by the colonial presence, which infiltrates even the most intimate aspects of identity” (Fanon, 1963, p. 42).

In this context, Saadawi creates a narrative that probes the interconnection between personal identity and broader social and political structures, urging readers to consider how these identities are not simply shaped by individual experiences but are also constructed through the imposition of external forces colonial history,

war, and global politics. Spivak's question "Can the subaltern speak?" (1988) echoes through the silenced voices in Saadawi's Baghdad, where marginalized characters struggle to assert agency amid systemic erasure.

This study aims to investigate how *Frankenstein* in Baghdad serves as a metaphor for postcolonial identity in a society where both colonial and postcolonial conditions have left lasting marks on the psyche of its people. Drawing on the theories of Homi K. Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Frantz Fanon, and Gayatri Spivak, this paper explores how Saadawi's characters navigate the contradictions and complexities of their fractured selves. Specifically, this study will examine how Saadawi's depiction of identity crisis reflects the theoretical constructs of hybridity, identity as a social construct, psychological disintegration, and the silencing of marginalized voices.

The central research questions guiding this study are: How do Saadawi's characters embody the hybrid, fragmented nature of postcolonial identity? In what ways does the novel critique the legacy of colonialism and its continued impact on personal and collective selfhood? How do Saadawi's characters negotiate these identities amidst the chaos and destruction of post-invasion Iraq?

Through a rigorous engagement with these questions, this paper will demonstrate how Saadawi's novel is not merely a political commentary on the Iraq War but a profound exploration of the psychological and cultural implications of postcolonial identity in a world marked by violence and instability.

2: Literature Review

The theme of identity in postcolonial literature has long been a focal point for scholars who seek to understand how colonial and imperial histories continue to shape the personal and collective identities of former colonies. As Leela Gandhi notes, "Post-colonialism is a critical engagement with the experience of colonialism and its ongoing effects in the contemporary world" (Gandhi, 1998, p. 3). The works of Homi K. Bhabha, Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, and Gayatri Spivak have been foundational in developing postcolonial theory, particularly with respect to identity

formation and its disintegration under colonial and postcolonial conditions.

Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity is one of the most significant contributions to postcolonial theory in understanding identity. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha argues that colonial encounters do not simply result in the imposition of one culture upon another but instead create new hybrid identities that are marked by both colonial and indigenous influences. "Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 112). This hybridity, according to Bhabha, is not a mere blending of cultures but a negotiation between them, often resulting in a fractured sense of self that resists the binary categories of colonizer and colonized. Bhabha's theory is particularly relevant to Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, as the novel presents characters who are caught in a state of constant flux where identities are constructed through the blending of historical trauma, cultural displacement, and the overwhelming violence of war. As Al-Janabi (2021) sees, "The creature in Saadawi's novel is a hybrid entity, stitched together from the remnants of war and memory, embodying the fragmented identity of post-invasion Iraq."

Edward Said's *Orientalist* (1978) provides another crucial lens through which to understand postcolonial identity, particularly in the context of the West's representation of the East. Said's argument that the West constructed the "Orient" as a space of mystery, difference, and inferiority is essential for understanding how the West continues to view the East in a postcolonial world. "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (Said, 1978, p. 1). In *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, Saadawi critiques this persistent binary between East and West, using Baghdad as a site of ongoing colonial discourse. The fragmentation of the city and its inhabitants serves as a reflection of the way in which Iraq and its people have been reduced to an object of Western fascination, fear, and exploitation. As Al-Rawi (2015) notes, "Western media representations of Iraq often reinforce Orientalist tropes, portraying the country as a perpetual zone of conflict and irrationality."

Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) examines the psychological impact of colonialism on the identity of the colonized subject, focusing on how internalized colonial ideologies contribute to a fractured and alienated sense of self. "The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards" (Fanon, 1952, p. 18). Fanon's exploration of the dehumanizing effects of colonization is deeply relevant to the characters in Saadawi's novel, particularly in the way they struggle with both external violence and internalized trauma. Saadawi's characters are not only haunted by the violence of the present but also by the scars left by colonial history, which has shaped their psyche and identity in profound ways. As Sulaiman (2025) argues, "The psychological fragmentation in *Frankenstein in Baghdad* mirrors Fanon's theory of colonial alienation, where identity is a battlefield of competing historical forces."

Gayatri Spivak's work on subalternity provides a further important theoretical framework for understanding the silencing of marginalized voices within postcolonial societies. In *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988), Spivak argues that the subaltern, or those at the margins of society, are often denied the opportunity to speak or to assert their agency. "The subaltern cannot speak... representation has not withered away" (Spivak, 1988, p. 308). In *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, Saadawi highlights the marginalized voices of those who are excluded from the political and historical narratives of the nation. The characters who live on the periphery of society, whether due to their gender, class, or ethnicity, are not only voiceless in the political sense but also find their identities fragmented by the ongoing violence that surrounds them. As Taslimi et al. (2024) note, "Saadawi's narrative foregrounds the silenced voices of Baghdad's underclass, drawing attention to their erasure from dominant historical accounts."

Despite the substantial influence of these postcolonial theorists, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the application of their theories to *Frankenstein in Baghdad*. While Saadawi's novel has been the subject of political and historical analyses, there is limited scholarship that engages with it through the lens of postcolonial identity theory. This paper seeks to fill that gap, applying the theories of Bhabha, Said, Fanon, and Spivak to Saadawi's work to

demonstrate how the novel reflects the complexities of postcolonial identity in a world marked by violence, trauma, and historical erasure.

3: Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, textual analysis approach to explore the theme of identity crisis in *Frankenstein* in Baghdad. The primary method involves a close reading of the novel, focusing on the characters' experiences and the social, cultural, and political forces that shape their identities. As Creswell (2013) notes, qualitative research allows for "an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the meanings individuals ascribe to their experiences" (p. 45). The analysis is guided by key postcolonial theories, particularly those of Homi K. Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Frantz Fanon, and Gayatri Spivak, all of which provide critical frameworks for understanding the complexities of identity in a postcolonial context.

Through a systematic analysis of Saadawi's characters and their interactions with their environment, the paper investigates how identity is represented as a fluid, fragmented, and contested concept. Special attention is paid to how Saadawi uses the setting of Baghdad, its disintegration, violence, and trauma as a reflection of the inner disintegration of the characters' identities. As Al-Musawi (2006) argues, "Baghdad's cultural decay is mirrored in the psychological fragmentation of its citizens, whose identities are shaped by both memory and violence."

The novel's blending of surreal elements with stark depictions of everyday life in post-war Iraq serves as a symbolic representation of the hybridity and fragmentation that characterize the identities of Saadawi's characters. The research also explores how these characters navigate the psychological trauma of war, occupation, and colonial legacies, drawing on Fanon's theory of the colonized subject and Spivak's concept of the subaltern to analyze their struggles for selfhood. As Fanon (1963) asserts, "Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it" (p. 210).

This method also involves comparing the novel's characters to broader postcolonial theories of identity, showing how Saadawi's

work both reflects and challenges these theoretical frameworks. By exploring the intersections of personal identity and larger political and historical forces, this study looks to provide a deeper understanding of how Saadawi uses *Frankenstein* in Baghdad to critique both the colonial past and the contemporary postcolonial condition.

4: Application of Theory

The application of postcolonial theory to *Frankenstein* in Baghdad allows for a nuanced understanding of the fragmented identities that Saadawi's characters grapple with in a war-torn, post-colonial world. Through the use of postcolonial theory, this analysis uncovers how colonial histories, imperial violence, and contemporary warfare contribute to the crisis of identity faced by the novel's characters. Saadawi's narrative does not just chronicle a city in ruins but also investigates the psychological, emotional, and cultural tolls that external and internal forces have on the sense of self.

By employing the theories of Homi K. Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Frantz Fanon, and Gayatri Spivak, this section highlights the complex layers of identity in *Frankenstein* in Baghdad. The text reflects these theorists' concepts of hybridity, identity as a process of becoming, psychological disintegration, and the silencing of marginalized voices. Each theorist brings something distinct to the table, offering new insights into Saadawi's portrayal of identity formation amidst the devastation and fragmentation caused by colonialism and war.

4.1 Hybridity and Fragmented Identities: Bhabha's Theory of Cultural Negotiation

Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity provides a powerful lens for exploring the complex identities Saadawi crafts in *Frankenstein* in Baghdad. Bhabha defines hybridity as the space where colonized and colonizing cultures meet, interact, and negotiate meaning. "Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 112). This negotiation does not result in a simple merging of cultures, but rather the creation of new, often contradictory, identities that resist easy classification.

In Saadawi's novel, hybridity is expressed not only through the characters' personal identities but also through the disintegration and reconstitution of the city itself. Baghdad, once a symbol of Arab

intellectualism, culture, and history, is portrayed as a hybrid space in constant flux. As Dabashi (2012) notes, "The postcolonial city is a site of contested memories and hybrid identities, where the past and present collide in violent and creative ways" (p. 89).

The protagonist, whose body is pieced together from the parts of various victims, embodies this hybridity in its most literal and grotesque form. His body, stitched together from multiple sources, becomes a metaphor for the fractured identities of Iraqis living in a post-colonial, post-war society. His dismembered state reflects the way colonialism and war have torn apart both the physical and psychological integrity of the nation. However, just as Bhabha's concept of hybridity does not imply a harmonious blending of cultures, the protagonist's hybridized body is not a peaceful fusion of parts but a fragmented survival. His survival, in this sense, becomes an act of resistance to the violent forces that try to define and control him.

Hybridity in Saadawi's work also reflects the tension between personal agency and external imposition. The protagonist, like the people of Baghdad, exists in a liminal space where multiple identities shaped by history, culture, and violence must be navigated daily. Rather than finding a coherent sense of self, the protagonist is caught in the contradictions of a world that forces him to negotiate his identity constantly, making the process of self-definition both an act of survival and resistance.

4.2 Identity as a Construct: Hall's Theory of Cultural Identity and the Politics of Representation

Stuart Hall's theory of identity as a socially constructed phenomenon offers another crucial perspective for understanding the fractured identities presented in *Frankenstein in Baghdad*. Hall contends that identity is not something inherent but is instead a continuous, dynamic process shaped by historical and cultural forces. "Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Instead of thinking of identity as an already done fact... we should think of it as a 'production'" (Hall, 1996, p. 4).

In Saadawi's novel, the identity of the characters is continuously negotiated in response to the forces of violence, colonial legacy, and contemporary geopolitical struggles. The characters' sense of self

cannot be disentangled from the fractured history of Iraq itself. Hall's understanding of identity as a "becoming" aligns with Saadawi's portrayal of individuals caught in a constant state of flux. The protagonist, for instance, embodies this process of becoming, as his fragmented body and psyche reflect a broader societal instability. His struggle to piece himself together symbolically mirrors the Iraqi national experience: a people grappling with their history and the forces that seek to define them from the outside.

Hall's theory also speaks to the representation of the "Other" within the novel. In the wake of the U.S. invasion, the people of Baghdad are often depicted as the "Other," a group defined in opposition to the West, with their humanity reduced to something alien and threatening. As Said (1978) explains, "The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (p. 1).

Saadawi's characters are not merely victims of war but subjects who are constantly negotiating their position within this racialized, colonized space. Hall's theory helps us understand that their fragmented identities are also a result of how they are seen and represented by external forces, such as the media, military, and global powers. Ultimately, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* illustrates Hall's argument that identity is not a fixed state but rather an ongoing process shaped by historical, political, and social forces. Saadawi's characters are emblematic of this process, as they continually redefine themselves in response to the pressures of war, occupation, and colonial legacies.

4.3. Psychological Alienation: Fanon's Theory of the Colonized Subject

Frantz Fanon's work on the psychological effects of colonization is essential for understanding the internal disintegration and alienation faced by the characters in *Frankenstein in Baghdad*. Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) examines the psychological trauma that colonized subjects experience as they navigate the violence and racism of the colonial system. For Fanon, the colonized

subject is torn between their own identity and the imposed identity of the colonizer, leading to a fractured and alienated sense of self.

In Saadawi's novel, the characters embody this psychological alienation, particularly in their struggle to maintain their sense of self in a society that is constantly redefining them through the lens of violence, occupation, and foreign intervention. The protagonist, whose body is pieced together from the body parts of others, is a literal embodiment of the alienation that Fanon describes. His sense of self is not simply fractured by external violence but also by the psychological trauma of being reduced to an object, a mere collection of body parts, in a world where individual identity is made meaningless.

This psychological fragmentation is compounded by the larger societal disintegration caused by the war and occupation. The destruction of the state, the erosion of national identity, and the disillusionment with traditional forms of governance contribute to a profound sense of alienation in the characters. They are not just victims of political violence but are internally dislocated, unable to reconcile their past, present, and future selves. The violence of war, as described by Fanon, not only destroys bodies, it destroys minds, creating a psychological rupture that reverberates throughout the individual and the collective.

The protagonist's journey toward self-definition is a reflection of this struggle for psychological integrity in a world that continually seeks to disfigure and fragment identity. The internalization of trauma, the inability to find a stable sense of self, and the emotional toll of colonial and postcolonial violence all contribute to the protagonist's alienation, making his identity formation an act of resistance against forces that continuously attempt to erase him.

4.4. The Subaltern and Silencing of Voices: Spivak's Concept of Marginalization

Gayatri Spivak's concept of the subaltern is invaluable for understanding the ways in which Saadawi's characters are marginalized and silenced. In *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988), Spivak argues that the subaltern, the oppressed and marginalized groups in society are often excluded from the dominant historical narrative, their voices unheard or ignored by those in power. In

Saadawi's novel, the subaltern experience is central to the story, as the characters living on the periphery of society, whether due to their ethnicity, gender, or socio-economic status, are denied the opportunity to speak or assert their agency.

The protagonist, whose identity is fragmented and displaced, serves as a representation of the subaltern. He is not just physically disfigured but symbolically erased by a system that does not recognize his humanity. Saadawi critiques this erasure by portraying his characters' struggle to reclaim their voices and identities in a world that seeks to deny them both. The novel's setting, Baghdad, a city destroyed by war and occupied by foreign powers, mirrors Spivak's argument that the subaltern is silenced by the very systems that control the narrative. Saadawi's characters are not merely oppressed but are also victims of historical erasure, their voices and experiences marginalized in the larger political discourse.

By portraying the silencing of these characters, Saadawi offers a critique of the power dynamics that shape the representation of the "Other." The violence of war, occupation, and colonial legacies all contribute to this silencing, as those on the margins are excluded from the dominant narrative. Through the subaltern lens, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* becomes not just a story of personal disintegration but also a critique of the larger structures that exclude certain voices from history, reinforcing the need for these voices to be heard.

4.5. Argumentation & Analysis

In this section, we will further analyze the arguments presented in *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, using the postcolonial frameworks discussed earlier. Saadawi's novel is not simply a narrative of post-invasion Iraq; it is a profound exploration of the psychological, cultural, and existential consequences of colonial and postcolonial trauma. The interplay between identity, memory, and power is central to understanding how Saadawi addresses the lingering effects of colonialism and the violence of contemporary warfare. As Saadawi's characters navigate a city in ruins, their fragmented identities mirror the larger social and political fragmentation of postcolonial Baghdad.

4.6. The Fragmented Self and the Body as a Site of Identity

At the core of Saadawi's novel is the protagonist, whose body, constructed from body parts of various victims, embodies the central theme of fragmented identity. This grotesque image of a dismembered self is both a literal representation of the protagonist's brokenness and a symbolic commentary on the fractured identities of the people of Baghdad. The protagonist's physical disintegration is paralleled by his emotional and psychological turmoil. He is a metaphor for the larger existential crisis facing a population whose sense of self has been destroyed by war, colonialism, and violence.

The body in *Frankenstein in Baghdad* becomes more than just a physical entity; it becomes a battleground where identity is negotiated. The protagonist's fragmented body speaks to the larger postcolonial condition, where individuals are pieced together from the histories, traumas, and legacies of the past. Just as his body is composed of parts from different people, his identity is constructed from competing forces: personal memory, political violence, and historical legacies. His inability to achieve a cohesive sense of self mirrors the larger societal struggle in Iraq, where individuals and communities are forced to reconcile their fragmented pasts with their current realities.

This fragmentation is not merely a result of physical violence but also of social and political disintegration. The destruction of state structures, the erosion of national identity, and the collapse of social order contribute to the breakdown of individual and collective identity. The protagonist's body, therefore, is not just a site of violence but a reflection of the larger disintegration of Baghdad itself. In this way, the novel critiques the political and historical forces that break down both the physical and psychological integrity of a people, turning identity into a fragmented, contested terrain.

4.7. Postcolonial Trauma and the Collapse of the Self

The psychological trauma faced by Saadawi's characters is not just a result of the violence they experience but is also linked to the internalization of colonial and postcolonial violence. Frantz Fanon's work on the psychological effects of colonization provides an important framework for understanding this trauma. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon explores how the colonized subject internalizes

the violence and dehumanization of the colonial system, leading to a fractured sense of self. As Dabashi (2012) argues, "Postcolonial trauma is not only historical but also psychic, manifesting in the dislocation of identity and memory" (p. 102).

The protagonist's body, as it is reconstructed from the pieces of others, becomes an embodiment of this psychological disintegration. He is not only physically broken but also emotionally and mentally fractured. His inability to reconcile his various parts, the disparate pieces of body and mind, mirrors the broader social and political fragmentation of Iraq. Just as the protagonist cannot make sense of his fragmented body, the people of Baghdad struggle to make sense of their fragmented identities, caught between the competing forces of colonial history, war, and occupation.

This fragmentation of identity is also worsened by the alienation experienced by Saadawi's characters. The psychological alienation that Fanon describes is clear in the way the characters relate to their own bodies and selves. The protagonist, for instance, is alienated not only from his own body but from the larger world around him. His existence is one of isolation and dislocation, unable to connect with others or with his past. This sense of alienation is a direct result of the violence and trauma that have shaped his identity, making it impossible for him to achieve a sense of wholeness or coherence.

4.8. The Subaltern and the Struggle for Voice

Another critical aspect of Saadawi's novel is its portrayal of the silencing and marginalization of certain groups in society. Gayatri Spivak's concept of the subaltern is central to understanding this dynamic. In *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988), Spivak argues that the subaltern, the marginalized and oppressed groups in society, are often excluded from the dominant historical narrative. "The subaltern cannot speak... representation has not withered away" (Spivak, 1988, p. 308). Their voices are not just unheard; they are made invisible by the very structures that hold power.

Saadawi's characters, particularly those on the margins of society, embody the subaltern experience. The protagonist, who is displaced and dehumanized by the violence of the war, stands for the silenced voices of those who are excluded from the political discourse of the nation. His disintegration, both physically and

emotionally, reflects the erasure of identity that occurs when individuals are denied agency and representation. The novel's depiction of Baghdad as a fractured city underscores this marginalization, as the voices of the oppressed are drowned out by the noise of war, occupation, and political unrest.

The novel critiques how power structures suppress the voices of the subaltern, rendering them invisible in the larger narrative of history. Through the portrayal of the protagonist and other marginalized characters, Saadawi highlights the struggles of those who are excluded from the political and social processes that shape their lives. As Loomba (2005) notes, "Postcolonial literature often seeks to recover the voices of those who have been historically marginalized or erased" (p. 131). The silencing of the subaltern is not just a political issue but a deeply existential one, as it robs individuals of the ability to assert their own identity and to participate in the construction of their own future.

5: Conclusion

In conclusion, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* appears as a profound exploration of identity in a postcolonial, postwar context, intricately weaving together themes of trauma, violence, and the disintegration of the self. Saadawi's novel does not merely recount the devastating effects of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq but uses this political catastrophe as a vehicle to explore the psychological, emotional, and existential consequences of colonial and postcolonial violence. As Dabashi (2012) argues, "Postcolonial trauma is not only historical but also psychic, manifesting in the dislocation of identity and memory" (p. 102).

At the heart of Saadawi's novel is the crisis of identity, a theme that resonates with both the personal struggles of the characters and the collective disintegration of the nation itself. The protagonist, whose body is pieced together from the body parts of various victims, embodies the deeply fragmented self, caught between multiple historical forces, memories, and identities. His physical form is an unsettling image of hybridity, a concept theorized by Homi K. Bhabha, where identity is not fixed but is constantly reshaped through the negotiation of culture, history, and power (Bhabha, 1994).

Through Bhabha's concept of hybridity, this paper explored how Saadawi's characters are not only shaped by external forces such as war and occupation but also how they actively negotiate their identities in response to these pressures. The tension between personal agency and external imposition is clear in the protagonist's journey. His hybridized body is both an act of survival and a form of resistance against the forces that look to define and control him. As Hall (1990) notes, "Identity is not a fixed essence... it is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'" (p. 225).

Furthermore, Stuart Hall's theory of identity as a social construct was crucial for understanding the fluid and evolving nature of identity in *Frankenstein in Baghdad*. Hall's idea that identity is not a static essence, but a dynamic process shaped by historical, political, and social forces aligns with the portrayal of Saadawi's characters, whose identities are in constant flux. The protagonist's journey reflects Hall's notion of identity as a process of becoming, constantly negotiated through the intersections of personal history and collective experience.

Frantz Fanon's theory of psychological alienation further deepens our understanding of the protagonist's internal disintegration. Fanon's insights into the psychological effects of colonialism and the resulting alienation are vividly portrayed in Saadawi's narrative. As Fanon (1963) asserts, "Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip... it turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it" (p. 210). The protagonist's fractured identity is not just the result of external violence but is also a manifestation of the psychological trauma inflicted by colonialism and war.

In addition, Gayatri Spivak's theory of the subaltern provides a critical lens through which to examine the silencing of voices in Saadawi's novel. Spivak's concept of the subaltern emphasizes the marginalization and erasure of certain voices, particularly those of the oppressed, within dominant narratives. In *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, the subaltern experience is central to the portrayal of characters who are excluded from the political and historical discourse. Their struggles for identity, recognition, and agency are drowned out by the forces of war and occupation.

Ultimately, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* is not just a critique of the political and social consequences of war and occupation, but a profound meditation on the human condition in the face of historical and cultural disintegration. Saadawi's novel challenges us to rethink the nature of identity, power, and resistance in postcolonial societies. The fragmented identities of the characters are a powerful reminder of the psychological and cultural toll of violence, colonialism, and war. Through the lens of postcolonial theory, this paper has demonstrated that Saadawi's work does more than depict a war-torn city; it reveals the intimate and personal struggles of individuals whose identities have been shattered by the forces of history, power, and trauma.

As the novel ends, it leaves us with a crucial question: How do individuals rebuild their identities after they have been torn apart by the violence of war and colonialism? In Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, the answer is clear: through survival, resistance, and the continuous negotiation of identity, even in the most fragmented of circumstances. The resilience of the characters, despite their suffering and alienation, speaks to the enduring human need for self-definition and the ongoing process of becoming a matter of the forces that look to destroy or erase it.

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