**Cover Sheet**

Title of the Article:

**Fragmented Mirrors:  
 Repression of Women in the Arab Feminist War Novel**

Author’s Name:

**Dr. Samir Hajj**

Academic Affiliation: Beitberl Academic College

E-mail Address: samir Hajj <samirfus@gmail.com>

Telephone number: 00972-4-9502193 Mobile number: 00972--524297906

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**Abstract:**

This article discusses the manifestation of repression of women in the contemporary feminist Arab war novel. It seeks to show the social change resulted from war in the consciousness of women and the evolution of their way of thinking by looking at war as an existential struggle. In the aftermath of war, women became more daring and effective within the male-dominated society, rather than being idle and silent human beings. This change is highlighted in the hostility of women to war, whereby they used their seductiveness and potency to stop it. War wakes up their femininity; reveals their physical body and reconcile with it, by increasing love relations and sex as a form of attachment to life and fear of deathand extinction.

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After the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), the America’s Iraq War (2003) the war novel in modern Arabic literature flourished and became a separate literary genre. It exposed a lot of psychological and physical repression of women in their societies. This article will examine the physical and mental repression of woman in five Arab feminist war novels and one collection of short stories written by Lebanese, Palestinian and Iraqi women writers, published during the period 1980-2014: *Hikayat Zahra* (Zahra’s Tale) (1980) by the Lebanese writer *Hanan al-Shiekh*; *Maryam al-Hakaya* (Maryam’s Tales) (2002) by the Lebanese writer *‘Alawieh Suboh* ; *Haleeb al-Teen* (Fig Milk) (2010) by the Palestinian Writer *Samia Issa*; *Baynama Yanam al-Alam*, (While the World is Sleeping) (2010) by the Palestinian writer *Suzan Abu al-Hawa;* *Nusf Lil-Kadifah*, (Half for the Shell) (2014) by the Iraqi writer *Sumayah al- Shibani*; and a collection of short stories, *Hawatif al-Liel* (Night Calls) 2012, by the Iraqi writer *Bushra al-Bustani.*

**1-The Lebanese Feminist Novel:  
 *Sex, War and Psychological Fragmentation.***

*Hanan al-Sheikh* (1945) is considered one of the first and daring Arab writers in breaking taboo content in her novels. She is interested in portraying the suffering of Arab women in the male-dominated society, revealing the personality of men who practice various forms of repression towards her. She is well-known by introducing intensive sex in her novels, starting with her first novel “*Intihar Rajul Maiet*” (The Suicide of a Dead Man) (1970), and “*Hikayet Zahra*” (1980). She explains this by saying: "I think that you cannot be honest by being distant from sex”. She started in “*Intihar Rajul Maiet*” addressing the subject of sex through a man who lost his sexual capacity and followed the subject in most of her novels and stories. In *Hikayat Zahra* for example, sex was bitter and disgusting, but it reflected intimate characters and relationships, and the writer enjoyed the discretion of Zahra, for example, while she prepares to meet the sniper: “Sex is a vital social issue to the extent that it allows me to say that it is the engine that move relations between human beings, even if they thought the opposite or negated that"(*Saydawi* 2005.101**).** In *Hikayat Zahra*, the presence of sex is combined with war in order to perform different functions and connotations. It is used to domesticate the man/Shehriar, the sniper, in order to limit and reduce the number of his victims in the Lebanese Civil War. On the other hand, sex represents a mirror that reflects the ugliness and brutality of men, since they did not stop suppressing and exploiting women; a reflection of the stereotype of man’s power in the male-dominant society. Man prevails in the novel because the sex that Zahra used as a weapon to domesticate the sniper, failed to stop him from killing people, and led to her rejection after she became pregnant from him.

The impact and repercussions of the Lebanese civil war appears in this novel on both men and women. War increases the suffering of women, the brutality of men and their repressive authority toward women. This is reflected in the personality of *Zahra*, the Shiite woman. She saw from her aunt *Safieh’s* room on the roof of the neighboring building a sniper carrying a rifle. Standing in fear, she asked herself: “What will make the sniper distract from pointing the gun and open his mouth of surprise?” (*Al-Shiekh*, 2004, 185). *Zahra* used her feminine ruse and seduction; she took off her clothes, drew a towel around her waist, a towel on her head and walked singing across from him half naked. She was able to seduce him and have thrilling sex with him on the dirty floor of an abandoned building. She has reached with him sexual ecstasy that she did not experience since thirty years: “I shouted: What happened to me on the dirty floor in an abundant building full of horror, sadness and death? My body is irritating for the first time in thirty years, pleasure has shaken it, and it seems like it is watching me (A*l-Shiekh* 2004, 182). Strangely enough, *Zahra* was a victim of the war in spirit and body. Not only did this weaken her resolve, it led her to struggle with Schizophrenia before dying. On one hand, she hated everything brought on by war, but on the other, she enjoyed being with *Sami* the sniper who symbolizes war and sexual desire; something she did not enjoy before the war with other men: “Why I did not feel this pleasure before and did not cling to the back of a man on a normal bed, while I cling to the back of the sniper?” (*Al-Sheikh* 189, 2004). *Zahra* underwent sexual obsession and psychiatric disorder and was addicted on having sex with the sniper. She considered it as a way to overlook and erase her past: “I was screaming, screaming without letting him hear me: O sniper... sitting on me like a lofty mountain without weight, digging deep trenches in my body; can you dig deeper and deeper until you open another outlet in my body, in order to let away these long fearful moments and the planted images inside me with its colors, forms, effects, which no longer budge (*Al-Sheikh*, 2004, 190)

This sex scene is absurd, shaped with dirtiness and male brutality. It reveals the psychological disorder of *Zahra* and her alienation from her body and community, because of past traumas and severe nightmares resulting from the suppression of her father. The dirty place where she had sex in the abandoned building and the identity of her partner the sniper, refer to the mania of which *Zahra* was suffering. The deserted and dirty place symbolizes the disruptive relationship between the two and foresees a tragic and unsuccessful end to this seasonal relationship dictated by war.

It is true that *Zahra* became obsessed by sex with *Sami* the sniper and saw in this the pluses of war in her life. However, this feeling overflows in her as a form of revenge of her repressive father who disappeared during the war. Zahra used sex, the biggest taboo in the male-dominated society as a strong criticism to it. This is what she reveals in her monologue, while she was having sex in an abandoned building: “The war came... Do you hear me my father? Here I am lying unable to turn my head. Ecstasy is flowing in me again and again without end. War made me expects anything to happen between one moment and the other. This new thing is not so bad”. (*Al-Shiekh*, 2004,193). Having sex for *Zahra* was an insurgency against the repression and inferiority complex instigated by her father. In every flagrant sex scene, at the top of her sexual ecstasy with the sniper, she addresses her father to provoke him by screaming and asking him to come and see her exposed body resigned to the sniper and etched by his sex organ, in order to shock him, shake the patriarchal society, prove to her father that there is a man who is in love with her and make sex with her despite the ugliness that he used to attribute to her: “Let me shout O sniper of pleasure, so that my father can hear my scream, to come and see my body lying, docked messily on the dirty floor of the death building. Let him see my unfolded thighs resigned totally, see the lower part of my front and its soft hair, my chest with its sleeping nipples and my hands too tired but to relax. Only my eyes are wakeful. The god of war came and took away my lost virginity once, twice and many more, so I can feel that war abolished my virginity. No one can see me now except the walls of this death building and the sniper to whom I am always thankful, because he accepted me despite my ugliness. He is a realistic man (*Al-Shiekh* 192, 2004)

This scene suggests "that we are also in face of an oppressor that repeals the female ego and marginalizes it and at the same time in the face of a domesticated female slave begging her virile master to enter her physical paradise" (*Sayegh* 2008.200). This disorder and schizophrenic behavior in her personality stems from the impact of war. The stretched body of *Zahra* was violated by the sniper and she surrendered completely to him except her eyes, which can’t do anything according to the popular saying: “The eye has insight but the hand is short”. The body of *Zahra* is a symbol of the Lebanese homeland which has become incapacitated after it was divided and torn by the civil war.

On the other hand, the war played an incentive role in the liberation of women from the strict and male-domination society and represented the level of awareness and attitudes in the treatment of women in a hypocrite and destabilized society. The war awakened *Zahra* and revived her consciousness, and self-confidence; it made her forget her straining past and personal suffering; but brought her to death at the end. Dr. *Hanadi al-Saman* says in this context: “War novels constitute a new forum to represent the patriarchal violence on the woman’s body. We see also *Zahra* the heroine of *Hanan al- Sheikh* in the novel (1986) suffering from a series of rapes, abortions and even murder at the end by the sniper of the neighborhood, which represents a tool used by the patriarchal system (*Al-Saman, p.* 87).

When the war broke out, *Zahra* left her fear, silence and isolation at home in Beirut and turned from being a silent negative person into an active person concerned by the human fears: “The war killed them but it did awaken me up and made me alive” (*Al-Sheikh*, 2004,155), “It is like an insect that crept into a white flour sack and settled there" (*Al-Sheikh* 2004,164). According to Roger Allen “The story of *Zahra* in the first section of the book is a story of silence; the book begins precisely with complete silence: the mother closed her mouth tightly by her hand.” (Allen 1990, 300-301). The war, on the other hand, brought destruction, death, poverty, terror, prostitution, and sectarian and partisan division.

*Zahra* was shocked by the behavior of her brother *Ahmed* who joined the *Shi’ite* Militia. He had taken killing and looting as a job after he was without a job. Zahra failed to bring him back to his non-violent past, convinced that the war changed everything. *Zahra* failed also to humanize the sniper. However*, Zahra* which represents the voice of the fragmented Lebanese society during the war has two faces: one conscious face which rejects the war and calls for its end and another real hidden face in harmony with the sniper. She makes love with him in secret and aspires to marry him. The name *Zahra* with its symbolic feminist signification and sexual connotation embodies the life of women in an oppressive patriarchal society, in which they are only a body that male can pick, smell and throw afterward. This is what happened with *Zahra* in the novel. Moreover, the names of men who intimidated her; *Malek* (friend of her brother), *Qasim* (her cousin), *Hashim* (her uncle), *Majed* (her husband), *Sami* (the sniper), in addition to their linguistic and symbolic signification are all in the linguistic form of *Ism Fa’il* (actor) which confirms the male authority over the female in the Arab society. From structural point of view, *Zahra* narrates her story by using flashback and monologue, emphasizing her alienation, isolation and repression within her family and her Lebanese society. No one listens to her; therefore the dialogue was missing in the novel.

Another example of repression and breakdown of women in the Lebanese feminist war novel is shown in the writings of ‘*Alawieh Suboh* (1995). She is well known for her daring and shocking writings about the daily affairs of women, mainly in issues related to sex and body. In her novel, *Maryam Hakaya*, the Lebanese women are present in their diversity, contradictions and divisions, through stories of defeated, distressed women during the civil war and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. These women are *Maryam, Ibtisam, ‘Alawieh* and *Yasmin*. The daring sex is heavily employed in the novel to face the war, expose the fragile Lebanese society, and detect it falsity, failure and blights. Sex is present during the war in an erotic and shocking manner as an expression of the trauma of the war and its scorching tragedies. *Ibtisam* and *Karim* are having sex under the Israeli artillery bombardment of Beirut (*Suboh* 2002, 92-93). Sex here represents an existential function and an element for the defense of life and fight against the blockade.

The women rush for having sex during the war was an expression of their fear of death, frustration from the reality, or due to the death of a lover or husband. These circumstances made them audacious in having sex with men. *Mariam* says as a justification for having sex with *Mustapha*: “The fear of death made the fear of all other things worthless and meaningless (*Suboh* 2002, 57). This image is frequently represented in the novel. *Mariam* which represent the collective voice of the Lebanese women worked officially during the war in a law office which belongs to *Abass.* Her real intention was to have sex with him. She saw the touching of her body by him a way to escape from death. She narrates erotic details of several scenes between them, describing the movements of his sex organ while penetrating her genitals, which she described as follows: “He felt the moment he entered me that his sex organ penetrated a well between my thighs, descending into its bottom which is without bottom until he reached his orgasm. But when he pursed and relaxed after his climax, he discovered his fear of the unknown secrets in piercing emptiness and death (*Suboh* 35).  *Abass* is an image of Arab men in the patriarchal society. He took advantage of the weakness of *Mariam* during the war to satisfy his sexual desires.

Sex represents a mirror which reveals the characters of the defeated narrators when they resort to narrate stories of men with women as a catharsis and escape from the trauma of war which defeated the society as a whole, and claimed a lot of victims. Because of the large number of deaths, *Asmahan* reopened her sewing machine to sew burial shrouds for women *(Suboh*, p. 118). Sex in the novel is the preoccupation of the defeated popular classes. It illustrates the alienation of the body and the defeat of the spirit. It is also a testimony to the repression of women and violation of their body. Sex was practiced in social chaos away from affection, love and marriage. This is what happened to *Ibtissam* and *Karim.* He abandoned her after having sex with her. He got married with his relative from Brazil who asked *Mariam:* “Do men differentiate between love and marriage in our country, between the body and the spirit of women? Between the female and love, or even between the female and her body. (*Suboh* 101). Sex in this novel has other implications. It represents a code and a way for women to discover their bodies. Moreover, it represents a signal of their alienation, and an evidence of the brutality and bestiality of men in devouring their bodies like a piece of meat. This estrangement and disaffection was felt by the defeated *Mariam* while having sex with *Mustapha* in his house: “*Mustapha* returned the alienation of my body to me while he was taking off my cloth. My body looked like a piece of meat in front of me when he continued biting it by his mouth like a dog when he bits his food (*Suboh,* 56). Men in this retrograded society reduced women only to their bodies and age. *Mustapha* betrayed *Mariam* with a small young woman with a blond hair in the Gondola Café. She was shocked from his answer when she discovered this and admonished him for his unfaithfulness. He said that he will not marry her because she is old, while she was only 28 years old: “His answer landed like a thunderbolt on my head. Am I old”? *(Suboh* 2002, 60). *Mariam* was a victim of abuse and repression of many men. In addition to *Mustapha*, *Abass* the married man exploited her and had sex with her. Moreover, her repressive father used to beat her and beat her mother. Because of her defeat and social alienation she was forced to get married with *Amin* who was rejected by her 25 years ago.

We can conclude that the rest of women were shadows and mirrors for the personality of the defeated *Mariam* politically and emotionally, due to opportunism of men and their repression. In fact, the repression of women in the Lebanese society by men stems from their political defeat. They are replicas of the typical Arab male character since the Abbasid period as it was represented by the Caliphate *Harun ar-Rashid* (763-809).

**2. The Palestinian Feminist Novel:   
*2.1. Shocking Erotica and Sisyphean Suffering****.*

Palestinian women represent an example of male repression as a result of the 1948 catastrophe and the successive wars and massacres carried out against their people. They were displaced from their homeland and lived in humiliation and poverty in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and the Diaspora. They suffered from corruption and discrimination of the state institutions which dealt with them as refugees; the repression and exploitation of the male leadership in the Palestinian camps, and were exposed to sexual abuse and extortion, which resulted in their social deviation. Consequently, Palestinian women writers in exile resorted to break the taboo by exposing the suffering of Palestinian women in the diaspora; exposing the hidden, and portraying the relationship of woman to her forgotten femininity and her body thirsty for sexual relations. The small and closed place, in which they were forced to live in inside the camps, usurped their femininity and did not provide them with privacy and lifetime as females. These harsh conditions forced the Palestinian women to rebel and not to keep silent, resort to sex and fall victim to prostitution.

The Palestinian writer Samia Issa, who lives in Dubai, is considered one of the writers who showed interest in the daily life issues of Palestinian women inside the Palestinian refugee camps in the Lebanese diaspora. She portrayed detailed fact about the repression of Palestinian women in a daring and shocking manner, by exposing their sexual abuse and blackmail by the supervisors in the camps. She also portrayed the daily suffering in the life of the women after the loss of their husbands and children as a result of the *Nakba* and the different wars. Her novel “*Haleeb at-Teen*” narrates the story of repression and abuse of a Palestinian woman, an immigrant in Denmark, called *"Sadika*". She lived the repercussions of war, defeat, poverty and widowed at a young age. She lost her martyred husband and was subsequently sexually abused by the supervisors of the Palestinian camp in Lebanon. This scandalous shocking novel with its daring sexual and provocative images of political corruption undermines the holiness which tinted the image of Palestinian camps and the prestige of its leaders. It is a novel of revelation and condemnation. It removes the mask on sexual and political taboos; exposes the suffering of Palestinian women inside the camp; and portrays the repression and abuse of her body by the friends of her martyred husband. The novel refers from the beginning to the shock that was made by Fatima by revealing the “untold Story”. The novel go deep into small delicate details in hidden places, “the women’s bathroom” in the camp, to reveal the deceptiveness and corruption of the leaders in the camp; the neglect of the Palestinian women of her femininity and body; the harsh conditions; the lack of privacy and carelessness of the patriarchal society. The woman’s courage in making the invisible visible emerged particularly in the feminist literature, from a perspective different of the perception of men. The American writer Miriam Cook says: “Women’s literature opens a window on to lives that had been led in the shadows and therefore gives a different perspective on society as whole. Women’s literature plumbs the depths of tensions and confusions that riddle daily life, and is not content to observe their surface “(Cooke 1996, 83).

The novel begins in making the voice of voiceless women heard; the voice of women in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon who lived in alienation and neglected their bodies because of the bad and humiliating conditions in which they lived. After the loss of their martyred husbands they reconcile their oppressed femininity and delinquent body. Fatima the widowed grandmother is more than fifty years old. The *Nakba* made her pay the price during her life in the exile by deprivation, loss of femininity and male repression. She looked for a closed room inside the open camp in order to reconcile with her forgotten body. She used the public “bathroom” the only place in the camp which women used to exercise masturbation and in which she unveiled screams of ecstasy and desire. On the other hand, from the other side of this public bathroom, a man from the camp watched her and masturbated on the rhythm of her screams. This unknown man to her was *Rakad,* the head of the popular committees in the camp. He was a symbol of political corruption. In fact, after the Israeli invasion of Southern Lebanon, he collected the arms from the camp and sold it to arms dealers. In reality, Palestinian women in the camps lived in harsh and humiliating conditions. The camp did not provide a "closed room" for privacy. In fact, the only “closed room” in the camp which provides privacy was the bathroom used by all the inhabitants in the camp. It holds a semiotic connotation, because it represents the grim reality in the camp. The attention of Fatima to her body albeit late, indicates an awakening in the life of a repressed women inside the camp. It is also considered as a revolt and shattering of the thick mirrors that cover their bodies; an uprising against the male-dominated authority that control their life.

There is a second feminist character in the novel, victim of poverty, sexual abuse and corruption of Palestinian leaders. *Sadika* the wife of *Ahmad* son of *Fatima,* a young and beautiful widow was bargained by *“Abu Ali’* the Palestinian official in the camp for sexual favors in exchange of the salary of her martyred husband. This was a tragic punishment and an intellectual review of the Palestinian bitter reality.

*Sadika* experienced successive defeats and disappointments andwas fed up with her life in the camp. She left her three children with her mother in lawand ran away from the camp to Dubai. There she worked as hairdresser with *Nawal* who left the camp in Lebanon after the death of her husband and children in the *Sabra* and *Satilla* massacre. In Dubai, *Sadika* changed her name to *Hiyam* and discovered that the saloon of *Nawal* is a place to hunt women to work as prostitutes*. Sadika* was a victim and suppressed by both men and woman, as it was represented by the relationship between *Abu Ali,* Nawal and *Sadika*. *Nawal* is a procurer, accused and responsible for the fall of *Sadika* and her work as prostitute. Because of her, *Sadika* suffered badly physically and psychologically. One night *Sadika* ran away from the hotel naked except with a mantle because a sadist Saudi customer whipped her body before having sex with her. When she complained to *Nawal* she exulted over her (*Issa*, 209). Actually, the way how different men in this novel view woman is archetypal. They look at her body to satisfy their instincts and whims. Women however, surrender to their control due to the implications of the *Nakba*, defeat in wars, solitude in which they live after the death of their husbands.

However, *Sadika* wake up after a series of Sisyphean disappointment. She is no longer able to work as a prostitute to meet the whims of sick customers. However, this awakening does not offer her a solution, but an escape and a new experience in loss and dispersion. Furthermore, the sexual cry launched by “*Fatima*” at the beginning of the novel from a public bathroom, is a hint in the novel to make the voice of an intrusive Palestinian woman heard. In chapter nine, the last chapter in the novel, Fatima before the ears of her neighbor “*Um Faisal*” accuses and condemns the prevailed corruption among Palestinian leader, such as the luxury life, trafficking in the lives of the children of the camps: “She looked at her neighbor and continued while she was slapping her cheeks: *Um Faisal*, How we can get Palestine back? They send our kids to war; live in apartments and palaces; drive last model cars…send their spouses for shopping in Paris and London and sleep in five stars hotels” (*Issa* 208). This scream to breach the taboo in the Palestinian camps, comes from a woman after the discovery of her body and regaining her delinquent and dormant femininity since a long time.

Despite repression in the camps, women wake up at the end. This was demonstrated in the novel by the words of *“Fatima*”. She displays a new awareness and participation in the vital political and intellectual life of her people, by breaking the political taboo and daring to express criticism and condemnation to Palestinian institutions and leaders profiting from the repercussions of the *Nakba* and exploiting the children of the camps for their own interests. The Palestinian woman in this novel lost everything. She lost her home, and then she lost her husband and children. She also lost her femininity and sentimental life, and then sold her body to men and women alike. She has nothing to regret for, therefore she decided after this defeat to try a new diaspora by living in Denmark together with *Sadika* which followed her later.

“*Haleeb al-Teen*” is a novel of fear of the lost time of a woman who discovered her body. The freedom of her body is a code which represents for her the freedom of thinking and the freedom of the land. However, the solution posed by the novel in the words of *“Fatima*” and *“Sadika”* is obscure, defeatist and deserting. This solution does not fit the spirit of revolt and rejection of the facts which *Sadika* followed when she left prostitution in Dubai. It does not fit the backgrounds of these two characters which grew up in a life full of sacrifice*,* lived the misery of the camp without defiance. They are both defeated characters and in crises from intellectual and psychological point of view. For example, those who criticize the corruption in the camp do not accept to legalize it in the Diaspora-Dubai. Those who criticize the corruption of the authority does not pose a corrupt solution; the defeat and escape into a new alienation and a mysterious Diaspora.

***2.2. Obsession of Extinction, Identity and Sense of Place***

In recent years, the Palestinian women writers living in exile, showed their interest in recording the historical facts and tragic events in the life of the Palestinian people, to preserve the Palestinian narrative and highlight the Palestinian attachment to their land from which they were displaced and exiled. Among these women's voices, is the Palestinian writer *Suzan Abu al-Hawa*, who lives in Pennsylvania in the United States of America. In her novel which was first issued in English under the title “Mornings In Jenin” (2009), then translated into Arabic under the title “*Bienama Yanam al-‘Alam*” (2012), she displays in a dramatic manner, the bloodbaths in the life of *Abu al-Hija* family throughout four generations, starting with the forced relocation of their Palestinian village "*Ein Hodd*" east of Haifa; the defeat of June 1967; the events of Black September in 1970; the massacre of *Sabra* and *Shatila* in 1982; and finally the massacre at the Jenin refugee camp in 2002.

Survival and fear of extinction is the subject treated in this novel. It records the repression and suffering of the Palestinian people since the Nakba and the recurrent tragedies and massacres. The writer narrates from her memory the repercussions of the *Nakba* in the life of the Palestinians, the destruction of the place and erasing its identity. *Amal* the family granddaughter narrates in a dramatic way the tragedies in the life of her famil*y “Abu al-Haija*” which used to live in peace in their village. However, the family ceased to exist completely except her. The woman in this novel embodies the collective memory of the Palestinian people. *Amal* who was born in the Jenin refugee camp after the displacement of her family, displays the tragedies experienced by her family and shows enough knowledge of the history of her people, a history that is squeezed with blood. In 1948 the family was displaced from their village *“Ein Hudd*”: *Dalia* lost her family except two of her sisters; her child *Ismail* was kidnapped by a Jewish soldier from her arms during their displacement. After the displacement the family lived in Jenin. *Dalia* the mother of *Ismael* suffered a coma after the disappearance of her son. Her grandfather *Yahya Abu al-Haija* infiltrated one day to his village *“Ein Hodd”* and was killed by a Jewish soldier. During the 1967 war, the Jenin camp was destroyed, *Hasan* the father disappeared, and the baby *Amal* was put in an orphanage in Jerusalem. When she finished her education in the orphanage, she got a scholarship and travelled to America after the death of her mother.

Another subject treated in the novel, was the confusion in the Palestinian identity. The identity of *Ismael* who was kidnapped from his mother as a child was confused. He was raised in the Israeli military and was changed in body and spirit. However, a single physiological sign on his body indicated his origin and referred to the place where it was dug in his face; otherwise he would have remained unknown. There was a scar in the face of Ismail that was caused before being kidnapped, as a result of falling out of the hands of his brother *Yusuf*. This scar formed a semiotic sign in the identity of *Ismail* the unaffiliated, and a sign to recognize him by his brother *Yusuf* in Jenin refugee camp, when it was occupied by Israel in 1967. *Ismael* was in an Israeli soldier uniform. This is what *Yusuf* said to Amin: “It was him! I saw the scar! He is alive. He is a Jew and they call him David!!!” My brother saw a Jewish soldier, with an identical scar to the one that characterized the face of our brother *Ismael* who disappeared seven years before I was born” (*Abu al-Hawa* 139). The change of the place created a rupture in his identity and affiliation. *Ismail* was kidnapped by a Jewish officer called Moshe because his wife “*Yulanta*” did not give birth because of her suffering during the Holocaust in the German Nazi camps: “In one moment *Ismail*, her six months son who was on her arms, disappeared. ( *Abu al-Hawa*, 60). The Irony was that the Israeli soldier *David* formerly *Ismail* slapped *Yusuf* on his face without knowing that he is his brother. He hit him with his rifle until he fainted in the military watchtower in Jenin in 1967, (*Abu al-Hawa*, 158). The events that surrounded the disappearance of *Ismail* in the novel suggest that the Palestinians paid the price for the Jewish Holocaust.

This novel intersect with the novel of *Ghassan Kanafani* (1936-1972) “Return to Haifa” (1969) in terms of the Jewish education for the infant *Khaldoun*, who was left by his mother in her home in Haifa during its occupation in 1948. She went looking for her husband *Sa’id* then they were forced to flee. When they returned to their home in 1967 to look for their infant, they found that he became an Israeli Soldier with the name Dove. Dove was biased to his Zionist ideas. But *Kanafani* was conscious of the Palestinian silence and failure in leaving *“Khaldoun*”. Admitting that the mistake became an issue of complex identity and the recovery of *Khaldoun* by his father *Sa’id* is useless without the recovery of the homeland. Moreover, The end of the novel was unrealistic because of the shattered reality and the artificial meeting between the non- affiliated *Ismail* or David with his sister *Amal* in Pennsylvania State in America far from home, as opposed to the meeting of *Said* with his son *Khaldoun* fifty years before in “Return from Haifa”. The breach between them is clear, because of the circumstances which fused Ismail in the Zionist military culture on which he was raised and which rejects the other. He is still keeps his previous identity and his Hebrew name in addition to his old Arabic name. Therefor his meeting with his biological sister was half-hearted and free from warmth and burning desire despite their long separation. The Palestinian writer plunged into the trap of romantic passion, when she intruded the reconciliation with Ismail, who became an Israeli soldier, without providing a radical solution to the issue of the Palestinian people.

The author in this novel gave a personal and emotional view of a Palestinian woman with dual affiliation. After the arrival of *Amal* to Philadelphia in the early seventies was hunted by nostalgia and longing to her homeland: “Palestine was stemming from my bones to the center of my new life, simply and without prior notice” (*Abu al- Hawa*, 250). Her relation with her homeland was interrupted because she lives in the American Diaspora far away from the daily suffering of her people. The disruption in her life represents the distraction in her identity and belonging to a place. She suffered from schizophrenia and fissures in her personality. Her affiliation and relation with her homeland is a series of stories and stored memories from her childhood. However, with time, the weakening of this worry made her adapt to the new world: “There are no soldiers here! No barbed wire or prohibited areas to Palestinians!” *(Abu al- Hawa* 266). When she got a green card, the United States become her new country and she changed her name to Emmy” (*Abu al-Hawa*, 267).

This detachment from the homeland is the manifesto of the Exile Literature. Those pulled from their place of birth have a weak link to it. The new place will not accept them on the one hand, and they will not be able to integrate into it on the other. They will remain living in nowhere, and in conflict between the “ego” and the “other” and between “here” and “there”. This was expressed by the Palestinian intellectual Edward Said (1936-2003) when he wrote a definition for exile: “It is the imposed rift that does not heal between the human being and his original place, between the self and its original home: the sorrow and anxiety that it generates cannot be overcome” (*Said* 2004, 217).

**3- The Iraqi Feminist Novel:   
*Distortion, Extension and Fragmentation of the Place*.**

In the modern Iraqi feminist narratives there are clear presence of war, shocking events and stories which are carved in the collective memory of the Iraqi people. Women are suffering the most, because they live hunted with horror, oppression and apparitions. In the novel “*Nusf Lil-Kadifa*” (2014) by *Sumaya Shibani*, the woman risks her life for the defense and survival of her country. In this novel, the narrator *Mariam* returns by plane to Iraq, a country full of death and killing as a challenge and for endurance. It is through love, hope and work that she looks for the revival of her homeland. She raises her voice in the face of the world which participates in the destruction of her people: “Thus we are half a people and I am half a citizen. Wars taught us how to be content with half a meal, drink half a cup, sit in half of a room and leave the other half for the shell... we got used to half dreams, half wishes, half solutions, half children and soon the world will talk about a miracle happening in Iraq; the phenomenon of having half children, because we make half love to have half a baby, who will have only half feed and accept a half mother” (128).

The woman in this novel is looking for love and joy despite the war, destruction and psychological fissures in her life. This is what *Mariam* experienced in the plane while she was returning from Amman to Iraq after she got to know Adam the Iraqi-American before the US invasion of Iraq: “Was earth under my feet? Or a carpet of silk slips with me and fly like a butterfly in my very quiet house”? Am I that girl who went down the stair yesterday in the house of her sister, eager to return to her crazy country and loaded with all the world concerns? Or, am I the other woman who became suddenly the happiest in the world? Does true love comes suddenly, invade us, pull us and throw us into the unknown?” (p. 108). The Iraqi woman in the words of *Mariam* looks for love, kindness and freedom of her country. She is in constant search for joy inside her defeated self. The woman in this novel is well educated and well informed, though; she lives in permanent escape from war and continues to look for life and survival despite the deflections and defeat flooded on her.

However, the woman like her homeland lives in permanent panic and suffering. *Mariam* because of her failure and fear faded into half and became half a woman such as half of the body of her brother Ibrahim. She lives in half of her homeland half a life. This is what she expresses in her monologue:” Do I close one eye and open the other in order to see what is left of Ibrahim? What should I do? I looked at my brother -ashamed and in fear- with half of my eyes and I felt at that moment that I live in half of my country and that I am now half a woman living half a life. We’re only halves roaming in search of our other halves. The entire people are running around looking for a half or running away from a half. Half of the sky is above our heads. We sleep with half an eye. Our children go in the morning to their schools with half a shoe and learn half of the language and we read half of the news in the newspaper. Between our rips there are half hearts which give half love. We are half human beings. We are only halves. Why I pick on *Ahmad* to beg me to be half sweat heart? “Saddam is a half president and we’re half of the people…” (p. 127-128). *Mariam* is living the nightmares of Iraq and these nightmares live inside her. She is in panic spilling her thoughts through a monologue flowing in a closed room. It is a monologue not a dialogue. This is the only way to narrate and spill ideas and existential questions in Iraq, away from the detective, the censor and the thug.

The Iraqi woman has an effective and daring presence during the war. She lives in terror and sorrow, hates death and searches for life. Here is an Iraqi school teacher facing the cameras of journalists and screams in front of them; “Let the world see me in my worn figure. Let the world portray my worn mantle. Is the world listening to what I say? Since I opened my eyes in the world, I am running away from death. I contradict myself when I stand in front of the students to teach them about life. Where is life? Since thirty years I am running away from death! I do not remember when I washed my face last time…” (p. 150). After grief, destruction and loss of parent, she was persuaded to abandon her homeland Iraq and escape from it. But then again the shell torn her and tattered her husband *Adam* inside her homeland during the American occupation of Iraq. From her perspective, the physical homeland is fragmented by the shells, identity is fading, and belonging disappeared. The Iraqi woman shouts and condemns the terrible silence which hangs over the world while Iraq is screaming and destroyed. This overload the novel with ideas, events and war vocabulary. This is the meaning of the cry of Scheherazade at the end of the novel after her assassination: “I scream loudly and no one hears me. Iraq is slaying me and filling my lungs with dirty water. My fate is to die blue like ink, rubbed by earth and turned into an old worthless rag” (p.300). In her last words, Mariam refuses a homeland that murder and crush her. She intersect in her ideas with the character of *Mariam* in the novel “O Mariam” by the Iraqi writer and scholar *Sanan Anton* when she realizes that home is no longer home.

Another image of the suppression of Iraqi women and her psychological suffering, during the American war on Iraq in 1991, is heavily reflected in the writings of the Iraqi poet and novelist *Bushra al-Bustani* in her collection “*Hawatif al-Liel*” “Night Calls” (2012). In this depressed short stories collection, men are the victims of war on the battlefronts. They are martyrs, prisoners or missing. Women suffer from the trauma of war and live in anxiety and constant fear of death. The blame in her point of view is on the American occupation first, and the Iraqi regime second. In the story of “*Al-Jidar al-Hajari*” (The Stone Wall) the mother is crying relentlessly after the emigration of her ninth son to Denmark. The other eight sons fled earlier from Iraq. He son justified his emigration by saying that the Diaspora gathers him with his brothers (*Al-Bustani*, 59). The exotic scenes became familiar and daily in Iraqi women's lives. The bride in the story of “Al-Arouse” (The Bride) gives birth to a child with one hand and one leg due to the impact of war and radiation.... she was shocked and fell into a coma” (*Al-Bustani*, 68). In *Hawatif al-Liel*, the son was killed in his home while watching a sport match on TV (*Al-Bustani*, 22). In “*Tawabeet*” (The Coffins), the husband returns from captivity and find out that his wife got married to his brother because she was told that he was killed in the war. She was prevented from seeing his coffin on the pretext that opening coffins of martyrs is forbidden. However, when she saw him she rushed to him, soaking her tearful face with his hands, as she did when he returned from vacation, without thinking of those around her. The most important for her is that he is still alive (*Al-Bustani*, 13). In “*Al-Yawm al-Sadiss*” (The Sixth Day) the groom is forced to go to war. He left his bride after six days of their marriage. After nine months his wife gave birth to a child and she called him "War" in order to remember that war hijacked her lover in the first days of their marriage. She refuse to get married again because men are in her view are projects for death as long as wars are going on and claim their lives; as long as the others declare wars whenever they want and practice aggression whenever they want. Therefore, why should she venture with another husband that will be missed again" (*Al-Bustani*, 55). The rejection of marriage as long as wars are going on, means submission to extinction because of frustration and despair resulting from frequent wars.

The Iraqi women suffer from the repression of the male dominated society and its failure during wartime. In the short story “*As-Sadmah*” (The Shock), the husband decided to marry a second woman, because his wife gave birth to four girls respectively. He justified his decision by saying that our country is in a state of war and we need men for battle. As his first wife was giving birth for the fifth time, he was accompanied by his aunt in the house of his new promised wife. However, his first wife gave birth to two male twins, and when she returned home she suffered a heart attack from the shock caused by her husband” (*Al-Bustani*, 66).

**4- Conclusion**

The Arab feminist war novels portray an increase in the repression and oppression of women in the male-dominated Arab societies, which refuse to deal with them as equals who may enjoy the same rights and dignity. These novels expose the violation of their bodies and highlights the use of intensive, daring and shocking sex for several reasons: to show the upsurge in the abuse of women’s bodies and their repression by men; to express their revolt on the patriarchal society by revealing its falsity and failure; to stress their opposition to war by showing the trauma of war and its tragedies; and to emphasize their attachment to life and escape from death. The novel of *Samia Issa,* *Haleeb al-Teen* features the scandalous erotic images inside a Palestinian camp in Lebanon as one of the consequences of the different wars and the *Nakba*. It shows the corruption of the Palestinian officials and their exploitation of women’s bodies to their liking; reveals the awakening of Palestinian women and their reconciliation with their forgotten femininity and delinquent bodies. In *Baynama Yanamu al-‘Alam*; Nusf *Lil-Kadifa* and *Hawatif al-Leil*, the sex is absent and the attention is concentrated on the tragedies of wars; the demise of the human being; the destruction of the land; and the distortion of the identity and belonging.

The Arab feminist war novels portray the psychological and physical abuse of women in the male-dominated societies to satisfy the sexual instincts of men and restore their whipped manhood due to their weakness, defeat, and failure in war. This repression is expressed by rape, exotic and blatant sex without passion or any feelings of love. War distorts the way of thinking of men; reveals their retrograded views of women; their sexual incapacity and political failure. This is exemplified in the novels by shifting their leftist and national views into religious pianism and resorting to prostitution and alcohol addiction.

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