

## استكشاف "التلميح" في رواية فرانكشتاين في بغداد لأحمد سعداوي في ظل نظرية العدل الالهي

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### الملخص

يستكشف هذا المقال فكرة العدل الالهي (الثيوديسيا) في رواية "فرانكشتاين في بغداد" لأحمد السعداوي من خلال التلميح الالهي (الإحالة). وتشير الى أن المؤلف يثير المشاعر أو الارتباطات الثيوديسية، ويشرك المعرفة السابقة للقراء والوعي الثقافي لهم لتمكين الهوية الدينية والثقافية في عمله من خلال ثلاثة أنواع من التلميحات: التلميحات الشخصية وتلميحات الفكرة وتلميحات الموضوع. وتعتمد طريقة اختيار المادة على متابعة التلميحات الشخصية والموضوعية والنظرية المذكورة في نص الرواية اعتماداً على طريقة القراءة الدقيقة. بعد ذلك، تشرح المقالة الجوانب التي تم استحضارها من هذه الإدخالات فيما يتعلق بالموارد الأصلية وعلاقتها بفكرة العدل الالهي (الثيوديسي) وفقاً لإحداث وافكار الرواية. ومن خلال إظهار وجهة نظر فريدة حول عواقب الحرب الأهلية والعنف على الفرد والمجتمع، فإن رواية السعداوي، الحائزة على "جائزة البوكر العربية"، تتشابك فيها عناصر الرعب والاستعارة والسخرية المظلمة. ويهدف هذا البحث الى فحص الثيوديسية الكامنة وراء هذه الحوادث التعايشية المتنوعة المتضمنة وراء هذه التلميحات التي تساهم في فهم موضوعات الرواية. وخلص المقال الى أن المؤلف يلمح إلى جوانب مختلفة من المرجعيات، والتي تساهم جميعها في فهم وتقديم الهويات الدينية والثقافية وتشرح مفهوم الشر الكامن في شخصيات الرواية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإحالة، احمد سعداوي، فرانكشتاين، الذي لا اسم له، العدل الالهي

## Unraveling the Theme of Theodicy in Ahmed Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad* Through the Literary Devices of Allusion

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### Abstract

This article explores the theme of theodicy in Ahmed Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad* through the literary devices of allusion. It claims that the author evokes theodicean emotions or associations, and engages readers' prior knowledge and cultural awareness to empower religious and cultural identity in his work throughout three kinds of allusions. Showing a unique view on the consequences of civil war and violence on both individuals and society, Saadawi's novel, winning the "Arabic Booker Prize," obviously intertwines together elements of horror, political allegory, and dark satire. The aim of this work is to examine the theodicy behind this diverse coexistence novelty implied behind these allusions that contributes to the understanding of the themes of the novel. The study revealed that Saadawi alludes to different aspects of references, which all contribute to the comprehension and presentation of religious and cultural identities that explore the evil of his national culture.

**Key words:** *Allusion, Ahmed Saadawi, Frankenstein, Whatsitsname, religion, cultural identity, theodicy*

## Introduction

Ahmed Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad* is a contemporary work of fiction that presents a multifaceted zone of thematic inquiries, including divergence of violence, the quest for existential significance, and the complex moral perplexities and anxiety inherent in the human condition. The story delves into the moral and ethical dilemmas surrounding the genesis and sustenance of an emergent entity, probing the nuanced intricacies of its existence. Moreover, it undertakes an examination of the pervasive impact of warfare and violence on both individual entities and collective communities, thereby accentuating the profound trauma and suffering experienced by the denizens of Baghdad. Nevertheless, readers are confronted with probing questions pertaining to the fundamental nature of humanity, the associated ethical responsibilities, and the far-reaching consequences of human agency. The primary objective of the present study is to discern and explicate the intricate and thought-provoking exploration of theodicy within the novel through a meticulous analysis of allusions. This study posits that the narrative adeptly interweaves a philosophical and theological problem, specifically the reconciliation of the existence of malevolence and suffering, with the professed belief in a benevolent and omnipotent deity. The novel, in its narrative arc, challenges established paradigms of justice and order within a realm characterized by chaos and destruction. A pivotal thematic focus is directed towards the exploration of religious identity, a salient element within the narrative, particularly given the contextual backdrop of a post-war, tumultuous Baghdad where diverse religious groups coexist, albeit often amid tension and conflict. Simultaneously, the study engages in an exploration of the intricate theme of cultural identity, employing the allegorical construct of a makeshift Frankenstein monster as an approach through which to scrutinize the complex, fractured cultural and social landscape of the nation. This examination extends to discerning the processes by which cultural identities are both constructed and deconstructed amidst periods of conflict and upheaval.

While scholarly investigations into *Frankenstein in Baghdad* are not without precedent, the present study, to the researcher's knowledge, offers a distinctive contribution by specifically delving into the nuanced dimension of reconciling the existence of evil and suffering through allusions to religious and cultural identity. Prior scholarly endeavors, such as those by Webster (2018), Murphy (2018), Al-Hajaj (2020), Alkhayat (2022), and Amin (2022), have studied Saadawi's work through varied methodological approaches, exploring themes ranging from biomedical salvation to biopolitical theorization, magical realism, mysticism, belief legacy, and gothic elements. However, the current article tries to find out entities that carry references to names, events, or notions in the previous history of humanity. It aims at inspecting the theme of theodicy behind these allusions.

## 2. Art of the literary Allusion: Words Dance in Hidden Harmony

In the gigantic world of literature, where expressions intertwine sophisticated textiles of narratives and notions, an allusion, as figure of speech, stands out for its ability to add depth and significance to the written expressions. In literature, an allusion is a literary device that alludes to a person, a place or an event, from history, mythology, religion, literature, or widespread culture. Such mentions can be implicit or explicit, and they function to enhance the text by drawing on the reader's prior knowledge and connotations with the alluded-to subject (Irwin, 2001). Whereas allusions may not constantly be directly obvious, they add layers of meaning and complexity to the manuscript. According to *A Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms*, an allusion is a "reference

within a literary text to some person, place, or event outside the text"(Manser 2009, 20). In *The Oxford Dictionary of Allusions*, the term "is defined as the mention of the name of a real person, historical event, or literary character which is not simply a straightforward reference"(Delahunty et al. 2001, vii). In the same sense, Martin Manser argues that "An allusion is a reference that evokes a certain set of aspects or features of a person or thing" (2009, ix). According to these definitions, an allusion can be classified into three main types which are the "topical," which alludes to events, the "personal" which refers to specific people, and the "notional" which alludes to a summary of an idea or a notion.

### 2.1 Allusive Theodicy: Crafting the religious and cultural identity

In the philosophical work *Theodicy*, the Enlightenment theorist Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz presents the problem of evil, suggesting that we live in the "best of all possible worlds,"(2018, p.114) arguing that God, in His immeasurable wisdom, creates a world that is perfect in its own way, despite the existence of misery and evil. Considering the subject of theodicy, which is the attempt to reconcile the existence of evil and anguish in the world with the belief in an all-powerful and benevolent deity, writers may employ literary allusions to help transfer their ideas or to conjure certain themes or emotions.

In *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, Saadawi alludes to the problem of evil and suffering in subtle or indirect ways to provoke thought and discussion. He depicts the debilitating regenerated violence in Iraq after 2003. It is centered on a junk dealer, Hadi, a monster, Whatsitsname, and Elishva, an old widow. Hadi collects and sews limbs of different bodies scattered in streets because of the suicide bombs. How evil was this? and how does Saadawi try to reconcile this through his protagonist 'Hadi'? It all goes through Hadi making a full corpse of these parts so that it can provide victims a respected burial and a peaceful rest afterlife. The faith in afterlife is a recurring theme in literature that explores the profound influence of faith, spirituality, and belief systems on individuals and societies. This religious identity is used as a vehicle to examine complex questions about morality, purpose, and the human condition in a city which is rich of its religious diversity. The novel highlights such diversity throughout its characters. Furthermore, the novel takes place during a period of sectarian violence in Baghdad, primarily between Sunni and Shia Muslims. Furthermore, the novel reflects the sectarian conflict during the period through its characters who are affected by this conflict. After stitching the body, the roaming soul of Hasib Jaafar, a security guard who was faded away in a terrorist attack, has animated the corpse to become a new creature under the name Whatshisname.

Whatsitsname is seen as a "monster" by some, reflecting the fear and prejudice that can arise when religious or ethnic identities are blurred or distorted by violence. This act of creating a monstrous being can be seen as a metaphor for the destructive consequences of religious and sectarian violence in the city. It reflects the idea that such violence can result in monstrous and dehumanizing outcomes. Whatsitsname is going to lead a mission of revenge. Elishva, who does not believe the death of her son twenty years ago and is waiting his return, becomes convinced that god has answered her pray and the monster is the reincarnation of her missing son. The story of the monster speared out in the country after Mahmoud had heard the story of creating the creature from Hadi and turned it into an article under the name *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, as a direct reference to Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*.

Undoubtedly, one of the preeminent themes explored in the novel is the disintegration of cultural affiliation when confronted with brutality, removal from one's homeland, and ontological unpredictability. The protagonists find themselves embroiled in a profound interrogation of their intrinsic essence and where their place lies within a social order unraveled by armed antagonism and sectarian discord. Indeed, the very nature of the fabricated figure itself serves as a mirror of this crisis of self-conception, as it is assembled from the remnants of individuals with diverse ethnic and confessional lineages.

The novel does not simply narrate a story of some characters who live in a specific place and time. Rather, it discloses multiple layers of thoughts and themes that can be reached and understood throughout discussing the different allusions tackled in this article. Various characters in the novel grapple with moral dilemmas related to religious identity. Some characters, like Riyadh Mahmoud, a Sabeen, are forced to hide their religious identity to avoid persecution or violence. Others, like Brigadier Majid, a Sunni Muslim, struggle with their own moral compass as they navigate the chaos of the city. Elishva prayers and her faith serve as a counterpoint to the violence and chaos in the city, highlighting the role of religion as a source of solace and hope for some characters.

### 3. Data

#### 3.1 Plot Overview: Getting to Know the Novel

The article depends on Jonathan Wright's (2018) translation of Ahmed Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad* as the main data source for the English text of the novel. Where necessary, the original Arabic version was also used.

*Frankenstein in Baghdad* is a novel by Ahmed Saadawi that reimagines Mary Shelley's classic *Frankenstein* in the context of war-torn Baghdad, Iraq. The story is set in the aftermath of the 2003 American invasion and follows the lives of various characters in a city filled with chaos and violence. The central character is Hadi, a junk collector who decides to stitch together body parts from victims of bombings and violence in the hope of creating a complete human being. When a stray soul inadvertently enters this stitched-together corpse, it comes to life as a vengeful and confused creature known as "What's-its-Name." Through a blend of dark humor and social commentary, Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad* offers a thought-provoking and allegorical look at the impact of war on individuals and society, as well as the moral and ethical dilemmas faced by its characters.

## 4-Analysis and Discussion

### 4-1-The personal Allusion in The novel

Personal allusions offer a personal touch to the writing, consenting readers to connect with the text on a more intimate level. They can be used to transfer emotions, partake insights, or illustrate a point through the author's unique viewpoint. Myriads of personal allusions can be found in the story including the allusion to Hadi, Saint George the martyr, the prophet Abraham, Robert De Nero, etc.

#### (a) Hadi

Employing Hadi's name as a main character in *Frankenstein in Baghdad* adds depth to the theme of theodicy in several ways. Hadi's actions, as a junk dealer who collects body parts from the streets of Baghdad to create a composite corpse known as the "Shisma," can be seen as a reflection of the

chaotic and fragmented nature of life in Iraq during the post-Saddam Hussein era. While Hadi's specific religious identity is not a central aspect of his character, his name is a subtle reference to the Arabic word "Hadi," which means "guide" or "leader." This religious-related identity, which appears to be a subtle allusion to the role of religion in shaping identity in Iraq, is often overshadowed by the larger issues of violence and chaos in Baghdad in a society where people are defined by multiple features, comprising religion, politics, and social class. Hadi is a complex and multi-faceted individual whose cultural identity is deeply intertwined with the social and historical context of Iraq marked by decades of conflict and turmoil. Here, we see how religion and identity are interwoven to draw the theodical context, action, and representation of the plot. Hadi's character can be perceived as a symbol of the theodical context of Iraq after 2003. Saadawi personalizes theodicy when he gives the main character the name "Hadi," making it relatable and tangible, so readers can empathize more with Hadi's struggles and questions of faith. Moreover, using the name "Hadi" can challenge traditional notions of religion and faith. By questioning Hadi's faith in the midst of violence, the author highlights the intricacies of maintaining faith in the face of trauma and misery. Additionally, it highlights the limitations of religious belief and the need for personal interpretation and reinterpretation. In the novel, Hadi creates a new human being according to the situation of the country. In this way, Hadi is struggling to make sense of the world. Thus, using Hadi's experiences, the writer nurtures important questions about the nature of religion and the need for a more nuanced understanding of the world around us.

#### **(b) Nabu: God of writing and wisdom in Babylon**

Saadawi's novel involves the character of a cat named "Nabu." Affected by the consequences of the war, the cat was getting thinner and uglier throughout the story, which is an implied reference to the cultural identity of those individuals affected by war and violence. It became a close companion to the character of Whatsitsname. The existence of the skinny cat in this novel may remind the reader of the black cat of Edgar Allan Poe, where the gothic atmospheres in both stories can resemble each other. However, the religious implication behind the name 'Nabu' is inevitably symbolic, and the writer deliberately uses this term to reconcile decadent 'Art' and 'knowledge'. Nabu alludes to the name of the Mesopotamian god "Nabu," who is "one of the four deities who 'assign to humans their roles in the social order and teach them the arts of civilization and knowledge of the world'" (Perdue 2008, 131). According to the "Encyclopedia Britannica," Nabu is the "major god in the Assyro-Babylonian pantheon. He was patron of the art of writing and a god of vegetation." According to the mythology, "it was Nabu, the son, who knows all and sees all" (Encyclopedia Britannica 2007). Saadawi intends to give the cat this name as an allusion to Nabu, where the cat is watching the events of the story like an omniscient god. Unexpectedly, Saadawi has this theological intent to reconcile 'Art' in his choice of characters. At the first chapter of the novel, Nabu is introduced as a character, where it was the only solace to Elishva (Saadawi, 2018, p. 8). The last sections of the novel show that the cat was watching everything as a witness. "He [Hadi] looked up at the wall between his house and the old lady's and saw the mangy cat looking down at him in silence, as still as a statue" (Saadawi 2018, 235).

#### **(c) Azrael, the Angle Of Death**

Shedding more light on the religious procedure of reconciliation, Saadawi metaphorically refers to Shisma as Great Azrael. He alludes to the angel of death in Islamic tradition to indicate the

inevitability and the hegemony of Whatsitsname, whose power is similar to Great Azrael's. Great Azrael serves as a metaphor for the horrors of war and the consequences of violence on both a personal and societal level. When Whatsitsname was telling his story in the recorder, it states that people who were helping him in his mission of revenge, elder madman and his followers, had considered him the "Great Azrael" (Saadawi 2018, p.147); the angel who stands for the "Personification of death" (Manser 2009, p.19). Azrael embodies a power that hovers over the characters, symbolizing the inescapability of death and the consequences of the character's actions. The allusion to Azrael highlights the ethical dilemmas confronted by the characters, as they struggle with the moral implications of their fate in a world plagued by violence and anguish. Theodicy comes into play as the community in the novel grapples with questions of injustice, divine interference, and the meaning of life in the face of so much death and disorder. The creation of the creature by Hadi raises questions about the restrictions of human agency and the potential for restoration in a world filled with carnages. Great Azrael serves as a reminder of the inescapable reality of death, prompting the characters and readers alike to reflect on theodicy and the moral complexities of their actions. It also reflects the idea of destruction and mortality, where every human being should face in this universe, and the notion of the inevitable death that humans suffer.

#### **(d) Midas Touch**

In the context of his novel, Saadawi refers to the "Midas Touch," where one could draw a parallel between Hadi's ability to create life from death and the mythical power of King Midas, who could turn everything he touches into gold. In both cases, there is a profound transformation occurring, but in Hadi's case, it is the transformation of death and destruction into a kind of twisted existence. In this surrealistic description, Mahmoud's identity is neglected, and shifted to another unreal, as if Iraqi youths eager to catch their simple dreams such as marriage or getting a girlfriend. In the context of Mahmoud's dream, Midas Touch functions as a poignant reminder of the limitations of virtual identity-shift reconciliation. Throughout a dream, Mahmoud lived a sexual world which is better than the real one, which is the way Saadawi tries to theodically reconcile the destroyed realities represented by unfinished works and unachieved dreams. "There was an assurance of something better, making things seem less oppressive or, like the Midas touch, turning them into gold" (Saadawi 2018, P.211). According to *The Facts On File Dictionary of Allusions*, the term Midas touch is an allusion to the gifted ability of the Greek Midas of Phrygia, who had the power to turn everything he touches into gold. Turning everything into gold is a wish that Midas later regrets because it turns his daughter and food into gold. (Manser 2009, P.314). However, Mahmoud's dream was going peacefully till the end; he asked the girl a disgusting question, "Have you ever seen a golden piece of shit? [...] Do you think it would be beautiful or just another piece of shit?" (Saadawi 2018, P.211), the writer refers to the disadvantage of the existing things in Mahmoud's world, even if they are turned into gold, insisting that this identity-shift reconciliation, however virtual, does not work. It reflects the shortcomings of the results in such a dystopian state, even though they were made of gold.

#### **(E) The superman**

The term "superman" is widely understood and used in the Arab world. People often describe someone with an incredible power as a "superman". The exploration of the superman concept in *Frankenstein in Baghdad* alludes to various themes, including the complexities of human nature,

the consequences of unchecked ambition, and the connection between theodicy and people's suffering. Alluding to such fictional models in the novel can shape the novel to be a magical realism text. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Allusion*, the superman is a "US comic book superhero who possesses prodigious strength, the ability to fly, and other powers" (Delahunty et al. 2001, p.408). In the novel, the superman concept is associated with the characters of Hadi, Whatsiname, and Saidi. Hadi has an ambition to be a "superman" to shape a new identity for himself by gathering body limbs from victims and sewing them together to create a whole body. Bridger Majed was skeptical that the Hadi resembles the character of Clark Kent in the story of the superman, where Clark Kent and the superman are one and the same. Majed was wondering if Hadi plays two roles in a similar way to the character of the superman and Clark (Saadawi 2013, p. 210).

Having an extraordinary power and uniqueness, Whatsiname represents the concept of the superman in diverse ways, for example he is a combination creature of the memories and personalities of different individuals whose body limbs were used to create him. Then he stands above normal people and has the possibility to make change. Both, Hadi and Whatsiname have the desire of playing the god-like roles in society. In this regard, the concept of the superman in the novel can be associated with the concept of theodicy as the act of creating the creature raises inquiries about challenging the traditional accepting of God's role in the world and the presence of evil. It also raises inquiries about the responsibility of humans' role, like Hadi and Whatsiname, in confronting evil due to their limits of power and control compared to God's.

Ahmed Saadawi in this point directly hints to the story of the superman because the confusion was controlling the mind of the characters in the story about the relationship between Hadi and Whatsitsname. Moreover, Whatsitsname was given many super qualities similar to the superman's. Like the superman, Whatsitsname is not affected by the guns of the security forces, and he has an incredible strength and an impervious body. The theodical elements of creating and controlling a powerful Shisma to reconcile the situation may lead to the conclusion that current political identity is unworkable, or at least needs supernatural power to achieve peace and security. Whatsitsname is not merely a physical abomination; it also embodies the moral and ethical complexities of the world it inhabits.

Whatsitsname's extraordinary power and existence raise profound questions about theodicy. On one hand, the creation of the monster is a result of the violence and disorder that outbreaks in Baghdad. Its very existence serves as a symbol of the horrors of war because it is a product of human brutality and suffering. This highlights the religious question whether this is a punishment by God or not, or whether the savior can save people, who are waiting its coming, from anguish or not.

Whatsitsname's identity evolves throughout the novel, exhibiting human-like qualities, including empathy and a desire for justice. He starts as a vengeful and murderous, seeking retribution against those responsible for agony of the body parts he was assembled from. Whatsitsname starts with exhibiting human-like qualities, including empathy and a desire for justice. However, as the story progresses, Whatsitsname begins to exhibit the evil hidden in his personality.

The superman concept is also alluded to in the character of Saidi. In the novel, Mahmoud compares Saidi to the superman highlighting that he has unusual qualities that make him a "real superman" despite lacking supernatural powers and relying on his own human talents (Saadawi 2018, 173).

Thus, the investigation of the superman concept in the novel relates to the human nature, ambition, theodicy, and the limits of power. Ultimately, through the characters of Hadi, Whatsiname, and



Mahmoud, the novel suggests that the superman concept is not limited to supernatural powers, but rather incorporates the extraordinary abilities and potential of human beings, highlighting the relationship between theodicy and suffering and challenging the question of waiting the coming savior.

#### **(g) John the Baptist and Jesus Christ.**

Saadawi employs the technique of allusion to draw a connection between the figures of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ and other characters in the novel. Such an artistic technique serves the overarching theme of theodicy, which highlights the justification of God's actions amidst the existence of evil and agony in the world. By juxtaposing the characters of Saidi and Mahmoud with John the Baptist and Jesus Christ respectively, Saadawi presents a parallel that adds depth and nuance to the story.

John the Baptist, as elucidated by Manser (2009, p.254), is recognized as the prophetic figure who prophesied the advent of Christ and subsequently baptized him in the Jordan River. In an elaborate email message sent to Mahmoud, Saidi reveals his profound respect for his counterpart and confides in him a secret. Saidi discloses his intentions to groom Mahmoud for a prominent position in the political arena, basing his aspirations on the visions of astrologers who forecast Mahmoud's future ascension to the role of prime minister of Iraq. Anchoring his intentions in this prophecy, Saidi reveals, "I will be John the Baptist, and you will be Christ. I will help the weak sapling become a mighty tree" (Saadawi 2018, p.267).

By invoking the character of John the Baptist, Saidi symbolically aligns himself with the role of a prophet who heralds the arrival of a new prophet, thus aligning his purpose with that of John. Saidi contends that his purpose in training Mahmoud is to prepare him for this significant position. Consequently, the reference to John the Baptist becomes apt in Saidi's mission, as he assumes the role of a prophet who propounds the arrival of a new figure. This allusion to John the Baptist effectively serves the theodicy framework by facilitating the reconstruction of Mahmoud's identity through religious symbolism.

Moreover, Elishva presents an essential role in the religious underpinning events of the novel. Bestowing upon him the name "Daniel," Elishva baptizes the creature and posed his duty as a savior, reminiscent of John the Baptist's role as a herald of Jesus. While not directly alluding to Jesus Christ, Hadi's act of creation reflects profound themes of human intervention, responsibility, and the consequences of assuming a godlike role. In a similar vein, Hadi, can be seen as a parallel to Victor Frankenstein from Mary Shelley's seminal work. This repeats the eternal fiction of Frankenstein and excavates the examination of the influence of playing the role of a divine creator. Employing such religious allusions, the story delves into the deep impact of faith and redemption on the individual and social levels.

It serves as an artistic vehicle for exploring the transformative power of religion in shaping the identities of individuals and society as a whole, thus offering insight into the intricate interplay between faith, redemption, and theodicy.

#### **(h) Saint George the Martyr**

The image of a hero who saves an imprisoned person, especially a woman, and presents a help for the confronted people is a Recurring theme in many narratives. St. George, the legendary Christian

martyr known for slaying a dragon became a famous religious symbol of rescue as “the patron saint of England, and is popularly portrayed as the archetypal dragon slayer and rescuer of fair maidens”(Delahunty et al 2001. P.328). He becomes a powerful symbol of courage, strength, and the battle against evil. Elishva believes that her son Daniel, who was killed in the war, is alive and she thinks that Saint George accepts her pray and sends her son back through the creature formed by Hadi. Thus, the allusion to St. George serves as a symbol of rescuer. Elishva christens this creature "Daniel," and she becomes convinced that he is a vessel for the spirit of her deceased son. Saint George became a powerful religious symbol of resurrection, regeneration, and rescue for the old woman. It stands for an image whom Elishva begs for rescue. She regards him as her patron who can bring her son back after he was killed in the war. (Saadawi 2018, 327). Elishva is a distorted, desperate and lonely character because of the aftermath of the wars and the loss of her son. Her plight brings her closer to the world of fantasy, where she asks a sacred person to save her. As such, she situates Saint George as her savior, patron and comforter because “nobody really listened to her when she spoke about the son she had lost twenty years ago, except for her daughters and Saint George the Martyr”(Saadawi 2018, p.7). Elishva's strong faith and her connection to Saint George are central to her belief in the identity of the creature. She sees the creature as a potential force for good in a city consumed by violence and despair, much like Saint George's role in slaying the dragon to protect his people. However, Elishva's call for her patron to accomplish his mission in killing the dragon, goes side by side with her hope to get her son back. She was in a constant argument with the saint. These unfinished deeds brings infinite torment to human being and makes people blame god that god does not put an end to the evil; she addresses her patron that “You’re tormenting me,”(Saadawi 2018, p.197) because she feels that her pleas remain half completed, and that "she wasn’t exactly a living being, but not a dead one either"(Saadawi 2018 p.197). The author re-identifies the picture of the saint in the mind of the reader as a knight wearing an armor, rather than a religious man wearing an ecclesiastical dress, which is an opposite direction of Saadawi’s religious presentations throughout the novel. This image reflects the effect of the religions as a source of wars that highlights the main theme of the novel. However, a rhetorical move by which the author wants to send a specific message that peace cannot be achieved throughout weapons especially the fight conducted and fueled by the religious sectors is that when Elishva cut in circle and take only the beautiful face of her patron's picture, leaving the picture to be hostile toward her (Saadawi 2018, 234). The picture with only the armored man became no longer a solace to Elishva. This situation symbolizes that although the saint was her patron, he also has a bad side related to war and fight. This part of his character is the main cause of shattering people and destroying countries. She wants to get rid of the dark side of her patron, the hostile one, and deals with the beautiful side of religion. By alluding to St. George, the author sends a great message that says religion should be a means of peace . In addition, this particular scene of the story highlights the theme that most the archetype characters in the novel, including the religious ones, share part of the evil and destruction in the country where "Each of us has a measure of criminality"( Saadawi 2018, p.149). Characters in the novel, including the religious ones, share part of the evil and destruction in the country. Therefore, Saddawi utilizes the imagery of St. George to explore themes of theodicy and the destructive side of religion.

**(i) Robert De Niro**

The narrative employs a significant allusion to Robert De Niro, playing a pivotal role in the unfolding storyline, where his cultural identity introduces a nuanced layer to the narrative structure. The accusation by a German journalist against Hadi, implicating him in the appropriation of stories featuring Robert De Niro, underscores the thematic importance of this cultural reference (Saadawi 2018, p.18). Additionally, Mahmoud's article in the magazine features an image of Robert De Niro from the film Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, further strengthening the association between De Niro and the narrative (Saadawi 2018, p.133).

As an American actor renowned for his versatile roles, De Niro's mention in the novel introduces a distinctive amalgamation of American culture against the backdrop of war-torn Baghdad. This juxtaposition serves as a theodical reconciliation of cultural elements within the narrative. De Niro's cultural identity extends beyond his American heritage, symbolizing the broader influence of Western culture, including its representation in Iraq. He emerges as a symbol of Hollywood and the pervasive impact of American cinema on a global scale, even in the disparate context of Baghdad. Remarkably, De Niro's film roles in the 1970s and 1980s portrayed characteristics emblematic of that era - violence, alienation, and wrath. Aaron Baker's assertion that several of De Niro's roles in the 1980s built on the delusional vigilantism of his character in *Taxi Driver* underscores the thematic significance of De Niro's filmography (Eberwein 2010, 20). This thematic resonance is particularly relevant to the character of Hadi and Whatsitsname, aligning with the novel's overarching theme of vigilantism.

The utilization of the term "vigilante" as defined by the *Oxford Dictionary*, further elucidates the connection between De Niro's roles and Saadawi's narrative. The protagonist Hadi, drawing inspiration from De Niro's vigilant roles, becomes a manifestation of self-righteous violence, a theme interwoven with the broader concept of a savior. The parallel drawn between the allusion to the name "Hadi," meaning a guide, and De Niro's vigilante roles strengthens the thematic depth of the narrative. This connection is reaffirmed at the story's conclusion when the supreme security commander identifies Hadi as the criminal creature responsible for previous crimes (Saadawi, 2018, p.270)

Beyond his on-screen violence, De Niro's reputation for creativity as an auteur, shaping both form and theme in his film performances, finds a parallel in the character of Hadi. The accusation against Hadi of being influenced by De Niro in the creation of Whatsitsname resonates with the concept of the auteur, where the character becomes a manifestation of De Niro's film roles (Eberwein 2010, 19). According to François Truffaut's Auteur theory, the director's film has a great role of shaping the final work based on their creative choices and personal artistic vision. (2008). What is remarkable here, the actor, De Niro, himself plays the role an auteur in the film *The Creativity of De Niro* makes him a movie star who has a distinctive personal style because of his willingness to change his physical appearance to portray a character.

The German journalist's comment that Hadi has "stolen his story from a Robert De Niro film" (Saadawi 2018, p.18) reinforces the thematic association between De Niro and the narrative. The continued reference to Robert De Niro serves to tether the narrative to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* adaptation, as De Niro played the role of the monster in the 1994 film. The magazine cover featuring De Niro's grim face, juxtaposed with the altered headline from "Urban Legends from the Streets of Iraq" to "Frankenstein in Baghdad," establishes a vivid image in the reader's

mind, foreshadowing the upcoming events and the vigilantism of Whatsitsname (Saadawi 2018, 133-134).

De Niro's personal life, characterized by mystery and anonymity, as "Hollywood's most unreachable actor," contributes to the horrific and mysterious persona of Whatsitsname in the novel (Quoted in Eberwein 2018, p.20). This aspect adds a significant layer to the thematic exploration of the novel.

In conclusion, the recurrent allusion to Robert De Niro enriches the thematic exploration of theodicy, justice, and evil within the novel. The analogy between the character resembling De Niro and the actor's intense, anxious personality introduces a nuanced layer to the storyline, symbolizing the widespread impact of Western culture, particularly American cinema. This cultural amalgamation reflects a theodical reconciliation, highlighting the broader influence of external forces on a war-ravaged country. Theodicy, in questioning divine justice in the face of suffering and evil, finds expression through the character's embodiment of De Niro's roles, particularly the theme of vigilantism. The association of the name "Hadi" with De Niro's vigilante roles further intertwines the themes of justice, evil, and savior within the narrative. The reference extends to the notion of De Niro as an auteur, influencing Hadi's creation of Whatsitsname, echoing the actor's film roles. This innovative aspect, combined with De Niro's link to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* adaptation, underscores the thematic association between the actor's roles and the monstrous personality of Whatsitsname .

#### 4.2 Topical Allusion

Topical allusions denote current occasions, movements, or issues that are related to a specific point in time. These allusions assist writers to engage readers, who are familiar with the mentioned topics, with the literary work. *Frankenstein in Baghdad* carries some topical allusions including the expel of the Jewish from Iraq in the fifties of the nineteenth century, the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, the sectarian fight in Iraq after 2003, etc. As these allusions add depth and relevance to a piece of writing, they can also become out-of-date as time passes.

##### (a)The aftermath of the American invasion of Iraq in 2003

Set in the advent of the war in Iraq, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* discloses the impact of this war on the lives of ordinary. Hadi represents the disappointment that many Iraqis felt after the invasion. The fragmentation and destruction of Iraqi people during that time is depicted through the creation of the monster from body parts collected from the streets of Baghdad. Additionally, the novel's portrayal of the different factions and militias vying for power in Baghdad can be seen as an allusion to the complex and often violent political landscape in Iraq after the invasion. The various characters and groups in the novel reflect the sectarian divisions and power struggles that were a significant part of Iraqi politics at that time. The assembled limbs of the monster represents this sectarian division in Iraq.

Daniel's return to Elishva's house under the name "the Shisma" coincides with the roaring sounds of the American helicopters. This synchronization alludes to the assumption that the American invasion of Iraq breathes life into terrorist organizations in Iraq. There is also a focus on the city's fractured and wounded identity rather than solely on religious violence. During a chat between

Mahmoud and Saidi, the latter confirms that Brigadier Majid was "employed by the Americans' Coalition Provisional Authority to lead an assassination squad" (Saadawi 2018, 170). The writer indicates also that the policy of setting up such an assassination squad was "to create an equilibrium of violence on the streets between the Sunni and Shiite militias" (Saadawi 2018, 170). The novel portrays how religious identities are manipulated and weaponized to justify violence, and it highlights the destructive consequences of such actions on individuals and society as a whole. As an omniscient narrator, the author also states that "it was the Americans who were behind this monster"(Saadawi 2018, 259). Wherever a terrorist attack happens during the events of the novel, the writer mentions the American Coalition to indicate its responsibility for the chaos and violence in the country.

### **(b)Expelling the Jewish community from Iraq**

Throughout the story, the writer hints to the religion-related expelling of the Jewish community from Iraq in the 19950s of the twentieth century. In addition, the novel hints to the authentic existence of the Jewish community in Baghdad.

After the rebellion controlled by Rashid Al-Gailani in April 1941, there was a pogrom perpetrated on the first of June to expel the Jewish. Moreover, in 1949, the Iraqi government led by Nuri al-Sa'id planned to banish the Jews from Iraq. According to this plan, the Iraqi Jews would be moved from Iraq to Israel, on the other hand, Iraq would accept Arab refugees from Palestine. The Iraqi Jews would be given compensation for the property left behind (Moshe Gat 2003, 204-208). Therefore, dealing with Jewish symbols and remnants, including the Hebrew language, was considered a great taboo throughout modern Iraqi history. This fact led the Iraqi people to shy away from anything related to the Jewish community. The hint for this fact is clear in the novel when Hadi felt bang when he discovered the Hebrew inscription in his home.

After the two interrogator had tortured Hadi and destroyed the icon of the Virgin, Hadi discovered that there was a Jewish remains behind the statue of the Virgin; it was "an engraving in the shape of a tree. In fact, it was a large candelabra with writing above and below in what Hadi soon realized was Hebrew"(Saadawi 2018, p.197). Although Hadi thought of selling these remains and got good money, he neglected this idea because of the sense of fear of the previous night of torture.

Elishva's house is filled with memories of her past, including a room she calls "The Jewish Room." This room contains artifacts and belongings left behind by Jewish families who once lived in the city but were forced to leave during periods of conflict and political turmoil. Elishva takes it upon herself to preserve the memories of these departed families by caring for the items they left behind (Saadawi 2018, p18). The Jewish remains are symbols of the rich history and multicultural heritage of Baghdad, which has been eroded by years of violence and displacement. It represents the idea that the past can be a source of solace and connection in a city that has experienced so much trauma.

The "Jewish ruin" becomes the setting of different events throughout the story. First, it is the house of Hadi and Nahem who rebuild and reside it after 2003. It was called "Jewish ruin", "although nothing Jewish was ever seen there—no candelabra, no Stars of David or Hebrew inscriptions"

(Saadawi 2018, 22). Then, it is the house where the body of Whatsitsname is stitched and born. It becomes a landmark by itself to conduct people to the right address on Lane 7 in Bataween (Saadawi 2018, p.163). When Nader was speaking with Elishva to convince her of leaving the country and travel with her daughters, he describes the situation of the country as a Jewish ruin; “Well, you know, life’s getting hard here. The whole country’s starting to look like the Jewish ruin next door” (Saadawi 2018, p.200). The mention of the Jewish ruin in the novel can be seen as a symbol of the city's past, a reminder of its multicultural history, and a reflection of the tragic consequences of conflict and displacement. It underscores the idea that Baghdad, like the monster in Mary's *Frankenstein*, is a composite of different elements and histories, and that its past is still present in the midst of its contemporary turmoil.

The modern generations of the Iraqi people are tremendously driven towards hatred of the Jewish community, especially at the time of the Bath regime. Although nearly all the Jewish are fled, or ejected from, the country, a lot of their remains and ruins still denote their existence in Iraq. Throughout the suicide explosion in lane 7 in Bataween street, the Jewish signs in Hadi's house including "the dark wooden panel of the Jewish carving fly through the air and the wooden candelabra break loose from it and shatter" (Saadawi, 239). This event hints to the new phase of expelling the Jewish community after 2003 when the turn comes to uproot the ruin of the Jewish community.

Hadi promises himself that he will leave "the damned Jewish ruin" (Saadawi 2018, p.192) if he gets relieved of his injuries caused by the torture of the two "pink" officers. Jewish ruin is described as damned because it brings nothing but pain and agony. The writer wants to hint to the agony that not only goes along with the existence of the Jewish community in Iraq, but it also accompanies the existence of their remains.

The author's reference to the Jewish expelling portrays the religious chaos and fragmentation in Baghdad, where different communities and individuals, like the deacon Nader Shamouni (Saadawi 2018, 189-199), are struggling to survive amidst the violence and uncertainty. It explores the consequences of war on Jewish and Christian communities in the city, highlighting the universal human experiences of loss, grief, and the search for meaning in the midst of destruction. All kinds of holy entities, all gods and holy spirits in all religions stand helpless against violence and agony in the country.

### (c) Allusion to Halabja Massacre and the Forbidden Apple

Alluding to the notion of the forbidden apple and the occasion of the **Halabja Massacre** in *Frankenstein in Baghdad* Highlights the theme of theodicy in various ways. First, the smell of apples, linked with the Halabja Massacre, a chemical attack carried out by Saddam Hussein's regime in 1988 against civilian Kurds, is employed in the novel to evoke the reminiscence of the existence of evil imposed upon the Kurdish community. The author deliberately alludes to the apple scent in the office of Brigadier Majid, the Baath party member, to remind the reader of the carnages committed by Saddam Hussein and the Baath party, which follows an oppressive ideology. The

reference to the apple becomes a symbol of theodicy in the novel in the sense that it hints at the problem of evil which is part of the excessive evil that exists in the world.

Secondly, the connection of the apple scent to the Halabja Massacre in the novel can be grasped as a critique of the notion of a benevolent deity, where the idea of a loving God is challenged in the face of great suffering and injustice.

Thirdly, the allusion to the apple can be linked to the story of Adam and Eve in paradise and the fall from innocence after eating the forbidden fruit that leads to the harsh realities of the outside world. Similarly, the Halabja Massacre represents the fall from innocence after killing innocent people, which is similar to the fall of Adam and Eve after committing the sin.

Although the novel is more concerned with the consequences of the war, the sectarian violence, and the impact on ordinary citizens after 2003, the author alludes to Saddam Hussein's name and legacy as part of the historical backdrop against which the novel is set.

Saadawi brings to light the sadist identity of Saddam Hussain, who used chemical weapons to attack Halabja on March 16, 1988. While he was speaking to Mahmoud, Bahir Al Saidi mucked on the Brigadier Majid, for he uses the apple scent for the air freshener in his office, which resembles the smell of the chemical weapons used in the Halabja massacre. For this reason, Bahir Al Saidi said, with satire and laughter, "that Baathists loved the smell of apples." The chemical weapons they dropped on Halabja smelled of apples. (Saadawi 2018, p. 75) The reference to the apple scent in Brigadier Majid's office is a sign of this bloodthirsty. The smell of apples is associated with the miserable history of the city of Halabja because many inhabitants have witnessed that they have smelt a strange smell similar to the smell of apples after the attack. In his book, *Ghosts of Halabja: Saddam Hussein and the Kurdish Genocide*, Michael J. Kelly lists loads of witnesses' statements that ensure smelling the apple scent at the time of the chemical attack in Halabja. (Kelly 2008, ps. 30, 34, 82).

Saadawi tries to remind his readers of the cultural destruction Saddam Hussein was trying to make to Kurds and the demographic change he intended in the region. It is like Saadawi attempts to reconcile demographic and ethnic conflict through peaceful coexistence among different communities. In his book, *A Poisonous Affair: America, Iraq, and the Gassing of Halabja*, Joost Hiltermann enlists many reports about the Halabja chemical attack. One of these reports was written by Aubin Heyndrickx, head of the University of Ghent's toxicology department in Belgium, who personally visited Halabja three weeks after the attack and described Halabja as a city of ghosts where everything in the city was dead. After collecting samples from the city, he concluded that the city was attacked by a cocktail of gases, including mustard gas, cyanide, nerve agents such as tabun, sarin, and soman, and other types (2007, pp. 194–195).

The way in which Mahmoud was brought into Brigadier Majid's office rings a bell of danger in his mind. The situation in the office where the apple scent is smelled stirred up a feeling of fear in him. The writer describes the atmosphere of fear in this scene as follows: "looking at Brigadier Majid's face... smelling the scent of apple, and tasting the slightly bitter astringency of the weak tea before it slid down into his rumbling stomach (Saadawi 2018, 160).

Employing the motif of the forbidden apple and the occasion of the Halabja Massacre within the framework of the narration of *Frankenstein in Baghdad* serves as a rich locus for the consideration

of the themes of theodicy, which serves as a poignant mnemonic device within the novel. It also discloses the multifaceted nature of evil, theodical dilemmas, and human circumstances in the face of malevolent forces.

#### (d) Abraham Story

Throughout the novel, the author keeps the religious identity alive. He hints at some Quranic references which are well-known to the reader. He refers directly to the story of the honored guests of Abraham, a biblical leader, considered to be the father of the Hebrews. (Delahunty et al. 2001,148). This allusion is also extended to Sarah, Abraham's wife, symbolizing the archetype of the aging woman, whose childlessness is presented in Genesis 17:15–22, wherein she begs heavenly intervention for progeny and consequently gives birth to Isaac (Manser, 2009, p. 415). The Quranic rendition of Abraham's tale is exhaustively expounded across three chapters of the Quran (The Quran 51:30, p. 333-4).

The allusions in *Frankenstein in Baghdad* to the story of Abraham are strictly related to the theory of theodicy, which is the endeavor to reconcile the existence of evil and misery with the concept of a benevolent and omnipotent God. The story of Abraham, particularly the allusions to the angels as guests and the events surrounding them, shows parallels that contribute to the exploration of the main themes in the novel like justice, divine intervention, and the consequences of human actions.

In the biblical and Quranic story, the angels who visit Abraham play a role in the punishment of the sinful people of Lut. This echoes a theme of divine justice, where wrongdoing is encountered with consequences. Likewise, in the story, Whatsitsname expresses a plea for revenge and justice, claiming to be the only source of justice in the land. Whatsitsname comes to take revenge that he considers himself "the only justice there is in this country"(Saadawi 2018, p.130). He frankly claims that "I will take revenge on all the criminals. I will finally bring about justice on earth"( Saadawi 2018, p.137).

This mirrors the divine justice concept found in the story of Abraham's guests. The allusion to Sarah, Abraham's elderly barren wife who prays for and eventually bore a child, adds another layer to the theme of theodicy. Despite the challenges and apparent impossibilities, Sarah's prayer is replied, signifying a divine plan that transcends human understanding. This theme is echoed in *Frankenstein in Baghdad* when Elishva, an older character, receives a special guest and experiences a form of maternity relationship with him calling him by the name of her son Daniel (Saadawi 2018, p.51). The coming of the creature to Elishva alludes to the coming of Isaac to Sara. Elishva thanks her patron Saint George that he answers her prays, although not realistically, and he carries out his promise (Saadawi 2018, p.228).

Also, the nature of Whatsitsname as a collective entity made up of different parts of dead people draws parallels to the non-human features of Abraham's honored guests. Both instances challenge conventional notions of humanity and introduce supernatural or divine elements, reinforcing the theme of theodicy by exploring the intersection of the human and the divine. Moreover, Elishva's special guest alludes to Abraham's guests who do not eat any of the food she puts in front of him, although both kinds of food, Abraham's and Elishva's, are chosen from the best kinds(Saadawi 2018, p.58). Overall, the allusions to the story of Abraham in *Frankenstein in Baghdad* contribute to



the exploration of justice, divine intervention, and the complex relationship between humans and the divine which are key themes within of the novel.

### 4.3 Notional allusion

Notional allusions are references to abstract or conceptual ideas, rather than specific events or individuals. These allusions often draw from cultural, philosophical, or literary concepts to enhance the depth of a piece of writing. The lamb of God and the act of creating the first human being are two main allusions in the novel.

#### (a) The number 666

In Christian theology, the number 666 is often associated with religious significance, particularly as the "number of the beast" in the book of Revelation (Revelation 13:18). The beast symbolizes the evil antichrist figure and represents the primordial demon. (Strobel, 1981, 149) The beast struggles to create chaos in the universe (Adela, 1979, 94). In the novel, the number 666 is the contact code registered to Nawal al-Wazir in Saidi's contact list. Mahmoud thought of Nawal as the "devil incarnate" (Saadawi 2018, p.79). He called her a "devil woman" (Saadawi 2018, p.111) and "female devil" (Saadawi 2018, p.115). She represents the devilish effect of women on prominent men in Iraq is described as a "whore" who causes troubles for Saidi.

Saadawi's reference to the number 666 depicts the evil incarnation of some individuals who try to disrupt the order of the country through their immoral relationships with government figures. It also explores the consequences of dehumanizing people by treating them as numbers rather than dealing with them by their real names. It represents part of the identity crisis in Iraq where people lose their individuality, agency, self-esteem, and emotional expression. Throughout the novel, Nawal appeared as a number on the contact list rather than a real personality. Saidi exploits Nawal as his "fuck buddy" and Mahmoud tries to do the same with her. Therefore, the allusion of the number 666 reveals that Nawal uses her beauty as a source of evil, and she is dehumanized and loses her identity by Saidi.

There is a mutual evil relationship between the characters who uses the number of the beast 666. Nawal and Saidi want to exploit each other in a satanic way. This allusion represents a central idea of the novel that "each of us has a measure of criminality" (Saadawi 2018, p.149). It represents the balance between good and evil as evil resides in the nature of all characters in the story.

#### (a)The Lamb of God

In Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, the reference to the "Lamb of God" enhances the narrative of theodicy by linking it to the religious and moral dimensions, expanding the exploration of violence, innocence and the consequences of war in the story. It is well-known that Jesus Christ is sometimes defined as the lamb of god. He is referred to as a biblical sign of meekness and innocence: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i: 29). These qualities are related to "his full obedience to god's determination as a sheep and servant who carry the sins of the world and goodness" (Delahunty et al.2001, 208).

In the context of the novel, this allusion prompts readers to contemplate the ethical implications of Hadi's actions and the larger questions of justice, redemption, and atonement. It invites readers to

consider whether Hadi's quest for justice is a noble act of redemption or a morally ambiguous endeavor that mirrors the cycle of violence he seeks to confront.

In Christian theology, the sheep or the lamb of god is looked at as a vital message of Christianity. It alludes to various aspects of Jesus' identity including his role as a savior who reconciles God with humanity via his sacrificial death. In the novel, the "Lamb of God" becomes a religious metaphorical term that denotes the innocent victims of the continuing fight in Iraq. These are individuals who have been unjustly killed or injured as a result of the violence and chaos in the city. It becomes a symbol of the moral and religious sacrifice surrounding the storyline of Elishva and other characters in the novel, like Hadi. While Hadi's intention of creating the Whatsiname is driven by a desire to bring justice to the victims, his actions raise questions about the ethics of using violence and revenge as a means to achieve that goal. The novel explores the complex consequences of seeking retribution in a society torn apart by conflict.

Hadi's act of mediation between the creature and society can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of Christ's role in reconciling humanity with God through his sacrificial suffering. This mediation becomes evident when Hadi willingly facilitates the transfer of the digital recorder from Mahmoud to the creature, and subsequently returns the device from the creature to Mahmoud (Saadawi 215). This sequence of actions serves as a metaphorical parallel to the redemptive mission undertaken by Christ, emphasizing the themes of reconciliation and sacrificial exchange. Based on Hadi's mediation and Christ's redemptive mission, the allusion to the Lamb of God can contribute to the theme of theodicy by suggesting that acts of mediation and sacrifice can offer a framework for understanding the presence of suffering and evil in the world. Hadi's injuries and wounds caused by the torment of the cruel officers and the terrorist explosions allude to the sufferings of the Jesus and his crucifixion (Saadawi 183). As Jesus Christ is often a symbol of a sacrificial figure who takes away the sins of the world, the torment of Hadi can allude to crucifixion of innocence through the theological allusion of the lamb of God.

Elishva is defined as the sheep of god that had suffered a lot with full obedience to god. The coming of Whatsitsname to her life sparks the hope of the return of her son because "it was time the Lord and His holy images listened to the bleating of His lostsheep" (Saadawi 2018, 52). She is equalized to Jesus Christ, who burdens the sins of people and the world. In the novel, Elishva stood alone facing the miseries and carrying the sins of other members of the Iraqi Christian who fled away because of violence in the country; she refuses quitting the country like other members of her community. She was also described as "the poor sheep who had been abandoned by the rest of the flock and had almost fallen into the abyss of faithless perdition" (Saadawi 2018, 15). Her loneliness is a clear allusion to the loneliness of Jesus Christ, who disciples fled away from his accompany: "Then everyone deserted Him and fled" (*Mark 14:51*). The writer called Elishva a "sheep" or a "lamb" for the greatest suffering she has been confronted.

The term "sacrificial lamb" is also mentioned in another part of the story to show how the innocent people are killed for no reason or merely to sacrifice others. According to *Merriam-Webster dictionary*, a sacrificial lamb is "someone or something that is deliberately sacrificed to promote a cause or for the benefit of others" ("sacrificial lamb" Merriam-Webster.com). These victims, like lambs, are innocent casualties of the conflict, and Hadi's actions can be seen as a form of "sacrifice" as he attempts to give them a voice and identity. The allusion to the "Lamb of God"

underscores the idea that these victims are, in a way, martyrs to the violence and chaos of their environment and that even God can't interfere to save them.

Throughout his mission, Whatsitsname uses the limbs of other people to change the faded parts of his body. Sometimes, he uses the limbs of innocent men. Whatsitsname killed an acquitted man for no reason, just to spare his parts. The cause given to this crime was that it "had only hastened the old man's death"(Saadawi 2018, 155), or the old man was just "a sacrificial lamb that the Lord had placed in my path"(Saadawi 2018, 155). When readers of the novel read the description of the innocent man as a lamb, they can link the man's death to the uselessness of wars where people are killed for the sake of a mysterious reason or through a religious purposes. This occasion reflects the cruelty of the sectarian war in Iraq where some militia groups, represented by Whatsitsname, were constructed in Iraq for revenge and acting justice. However, these groups turned to kill any man, even the innocents, in order to enlarge and empower their existence.

As the narrative progresses, the "Lamb of God" becomes a deeper and more symbolic significance, signifying the overarching themes of sacrifice, innocence. It reminds us of the human cost of violence and the importance of empathy and understanding in a world ravaged by strife.

#### **(b) The Command Of God and the act of creation**

The idea of God's command is a firm notion in the beliefs of all religions, especially in Islam and Christianity. There are many verses in the Quran which ensure that the prophet Jesus Christ uses the word of God to cause dead people return to life. In other stories, the Quran refers to the command of God to return dead people to life even after many years of their decease, such as the story of the people in the cave: "We sealed their ears [with sleep] in the cave for years. Then We woke them"(The Quran 18.11-12), the story of the prophet Yunis, "the man with the whale" (The Quran 21.87-89), the story of Uzair "who passed by a ruined town. He said, 'How will God give this life when it has died?' So God made him die for a hundred years, and then raised him up"(The Quran 30. 259), the holy power of Jesus Christ: "I will make the shape of a bird for you out of clay, then breathe into it and, with God's permission, it will become a real bird"(The Quran 38.49). Therefore, the allusion to God's command reconcile with the notion of theodicy. In *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, the allusion to the command of God can be seen in Hadi's act of creating the monster. It shows the human attempt to assert god-like control over life and death. Hadi's actions show that there is a tension between the idea of divine command and human agency. Also, Hadi's work stands for a form of blasphemy or a challenge to the traditional religious beliefs. He plays the role of the creator, which is interpreted as an attempt to play God's role, as he uses his own agency and judgment to create life from death. This brings up difficult moral and ethical issues regarding human boundaries and the fallout from tampering with creation. But as the story progresses, it becomes clear that his actions had far from divine repercussions, and the distinction between good and evil is further muddled. This topic can be seen as a meditation on the idea of divine power and the human tendency to act independently of God when it appears that justice or God's instructions are lacking or insufficient.

The roaming of Hasib's soul plays a significant role in exploring themes of identity, and the consequences of violence. Hasib is a young man who is killed in a car bomb explosion in Baghdad. His death becomes an important factor of creating Whatsitsname, a composite being made up of

various body parts from victims of violence, including Hasib's soul. After the explosion, Hasib's soul went to the cemetery of Najaf in searching for its body which was faded away in the explosion. He found a young boy wearing silver bangles sitting on his tomb. The boy urges Hasib to get back to his body because sometimes God changes the command of death and God may grant him a new life; "the Angel of Death changes his mind or corrects the mistake he has made, and the soul goes back inside its body. Then God commands the body to rise from the dead"(Saadawi 2018, 37). Hasib's soul is a central element in the story because it implies that his soul might have remained attached to his body even after death. This notion contests traditional beliefs about the afterlife and the departure of the soul from the body upon death. It also stirs up questions about the nature of the creature itself, as it looks to be more than just a lifeless gathering of body parts; each part of the monster's body relates to a human soul. So the writer of the novel hints to the possibility of executing the command of god that Hasib may raise from death if he finds his body. Because Hasib's body has fallen apart in the explosion and his spirit sank into the body which was made by Hadi, it is possible to go back to life by the command of God, but this time the command came from the sacred old woman Elishva who said "GET UP, DANIEL, [...] "Get up, Danny. Come along, my boy" (Saadawi 2018, 51).

On the other side, Whatsitsname considers himself the answer of the call of the poor people, especially Elishva's, Whatsitsname declares, "Is that junk dealer really My father? Surely he's just a conduit for the will of our Father in heaven, as my poor mother, Elishva, puts it. She's a really poor old woman" (Saadawi 2018, 136).

Although there was a dead body without a soul collected by Hadi from different limbs of different people's bodies, and a stray soul of Hasib, this wasn't enough to create a human being. It needs a command of creation from a sacred entity, similar to the way of creation of Adam, (When I have fashioned him and breathed My spirit into him, bow down before him" (The Quran 15.29).

The writer prepares for idea of the holy power of Elishva earlier in the novel when he narrates that Umm Salim, Elishva's neighbor, believes firmly that "Elishva had special powers and that God's hand was on her shoulder wherever she was"(Saadawi 2018, 9). Elishva's personality conveys a profound allusion to the holy power of faith and spiritual conviction in the midst of chaos and violence.

The holy power of Elishva's character lies in her ability to transcend the earthly turmoil and violence that permeate the city. Her faith represents a source of solace and hope for some of the other characters in the novel, even in a world where it seems that God's presence has been eclipsed by the horrors of war.

God may grant the feature of sacredness to some people. According to the Quran, Jesus said that God has "Made me a prophet; made me blessed wherever I may be"(The Quran 192.31). Thus, numerous conditions lead to the creation of Whatsitsname starting from the promise of saint George to Elishva that one day her son will return, the lost wandering soul of Hasib, the stitched body of Hadi, and finally the command of the old woman who has a special power. The writer puts it clear that "With her words the old woman had animated this extraordinary composite— made up of disparate body parts and the soul of the hotel guard who had lost his life. The old woman brought him out of anonymity with the name she gave him: Daniel" (Saadawi 2018,51). Thus, the allusion

to "the command" has a vital role in the narration of the novel because it leads to animate Whatsitsname by the words of Elishva.

The idea of command indicates the fact that although god has fixed rules to follow from the early age of creating the cosmos, people want exception throughout human commands. However, such exception can lead to disorder in the chain of being as it happen when the creation of Whatsitsname shifts to a disaster.

The novel mixes the reality of the cosmos system of rules with the fantasy of the command, where rules can be broken down for a reason. The command from sacred people comes true if it meets the will of god. In the case of creating Whatsitsname, there is a command to stir up the creation to play a significant role in a world full of contradiction, injustice, violence and cruelty. The writer finds out that the situation needs a command to catch the change: "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (The Bible, Hebr.p.11.3)The religious identification of characters was profound throughout this allusion.

The word (*Amr*) in Arabic is sometimes translated to "command." In the Quran, the command may refer to the "judgment." This can be found in *Surah An Nahl* (the bee) "God's Judgment is coming, so do not ask to bring it on sooner" (The Quran, 16.1). The Arabic word (*Amr*) also refers to the order of creating and making things by God using the Arabic word (*Kun*) which literally means (be), "When We will something to happen, all that We say is, 'Be,' and it is" (The Quran 168.40). So the command of "animating" Whatsitsname , which is ordered by a sacred woman, comes for the sake of judgment to practice justice. Throughout his recording, Whatsitsname states that "I'm the answer to the call of the poor"(Saadawi 2018, 136). The command from the old woman is an allusion to the command of punishment against those unbelievers or criminals. In addition, the Quran is full of images where God is going to do a resurrection. God also gives many answers and proofs to the unbelievers of restoring life. One of these answers is that "What! After we have died and become dust and bones, shall we really be raised up again, along with our forefathers?' Say, 'Yes indeed, "( The Quran 37.16). In fact, the idea of reconstructing the body of Whatsitsname by Hadi the junk and animating this body by the command of Elishva is nothing but a form of resurrection.

#### 4-Conclusion

In summation, the principal objective of this inquiry has been to unveil the theodical methodology employed by Saadawi in the manipulation of allusions pertaining to religious and cultural identity, with the overarching goal of reconciling the presence of evil and suffering in the context of Baghdad. Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad* encompasses a diverse array of allusions encompassing religious, cultural, mythical, and historical figures, such as the Prophet Abraham, Midas, and John the Baptist.

The majority of these allusions entail cultural and religious precognition, as Saadawi endeavors to stimulate intellectual engagement among readers, encouraging them to decipher the concealed meanings inherent in his allusions. An illustrative instance of the former occurs when the author references the Baath crimes in the Halabja massacre, wherein the objective is to impart a stark reality to the reader. In the latter case, allusions to Christian and Quranic events, such as the narrative of Abraham's guests and the Lamb of God, manifest Saadawi's religious pluralism,

embodying themes of faith, totalitarianism, ambivalence, and the incitement of war rooted in religious creeds.

The utilization of names and notional allusions, familiar to the reader, serves to connote the omnipotence of God and the dialectic between good and evil within the novel's thematic framework. Through these allusions, Saadawi guides readers to draw parallels between the emergence of the enigmatic "Whatsitsname" and religious beliefs concerning Ibrahim's guest and the archetype of a savior prevalent in various religions. Such allusions intimate the populace's anticipation of divine intervention to alleviate them from the afflictions of injustice and suffering.

The story unfolds in the context of post-war Baghdad where various religious sectors coexist amidst occasional tension and conflict. The religious allusions, prominently featuring the beseeching of Saint George the Martyr by Elishva for intercession, engender a philosophical and theological quandary regarding the harmonization of malevolence and suffering with the professed benevolence and omnipotence of God. Moreover, the references to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, along with allusions to well-known figures like Superman and Robert De Niro, play significant roles within the story. Against this backdrop, the allusions, especially the one to Frankenstein's monster, serve as powerful reflections of the fractured cultural and social landscape of the nation.

Employing allusions to Nabu, Frankenstein, and Superman, the author firmly locates himself within the theoretical realm of surreal and gothic fiction, similar to the literary norms established by famous figures such as Franz Kafka, Edgar Allan Poe, and Jorge Luis Borges. This deliberate incorporation of allusive elements serves as a pivotal marker where Saadawi aligns his narrative within the rich tapestry of literary genres characterized by their surreal and gothic attributes, echoing the stylistic and thematic nuances synonymous with the aforementioned literary luminaries. Employing a variety from personal and topical to notional, Saadawi's allusions include elements such as the Midas touch, Superman, Robert De Niro, the Lamb of God, the command of God, and the American invasion of Iraq. This incorporation of allusions to fictional and fantastical paradigms within the narrative has catalyzed a metamorphic reconfiguration of the novel, endowing it with the attributes emblematic of magical realism. The author's concerted efforts to establish a collective cognitive framework with the readership impel them to discern the subtleties embedded in these allusions, thereby amplifying the thematic depth of the narrative.

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