

Family Violence, Amputation, and their Impact on Characters` Development in the Novel “Aghithni” by Nuha Hamdalla

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Abstract: The study aims to explore the impact of family violence and amputation on the characters of “Aghithni” (Help Me), a novel by the Jordanian novelist Nuha Hamdalla. The novel focuses on the impact of violence and the effect of a sudden amputation on the development of characters. It also reveals the novel's ability to incorporate characters' psyches through their interactions with one another and the impact of society and the environment on their psychological development. The characters were suffering from psychological crises, resulting from society's pressures. These affected their attitude toward themselves and the way they dealt with various life situations, leading to a hesitation between adaptability and non-adaptability.

The psychological critical approach, in addition to some modern psychological studies, was used to discuss the sequential impact of violence against women as manifested in Noor's personality and the impact of amputation on “Suhaib”. The technical tools, such as monologue, dialogue, and memoirs that helped reveal characters' psyches, were also taken into consideration.

The study concludes that domestic violence affects characters' behavior. It also revealed society's impact on the development of characters' psyches, particularly how amputation influenced the personality of a major character, such as Suhaib.

The study recommends that researchers pay closer attention to the relationship between literature and the psychological aspects of characters in the novel, as well as how content influences the artistic form of the work.

Keywords: amputation, characters, family violence, violence against women

1. Introduction

The novel is one of the literary arts in which the novelist expresses his/her vision and ideology without using the direct method. Instead, he constructs a literary text that opens a field for readers' interpretation, allowing characters to drive the narrative and unveil how events impact their lives and psychological makeup.

The novel is also part of literature, which is a creative, interpretive, and imaginative art form. This is why it has been of interest to philosophers and critics. It also relates to the human, encompassing their image, actions, underlying motives, emotions, and imagination. The novel also presents an integrated vision of a particular issue or a set of issues linked to individuals and society (Madi 2011: 17).

To achieve its impact on the individual and society, literary texts must be examined consciously, with depth that can be gained via various literary critical approaches

that interact with the text to highlight its dimensions and thematic and aesthetic values (Madi 2011:20).

The study adopted the psychological approach to examine the contents and visions of Hamdalla's novel (Aghithni) to unveil society's impact on an individual's vision and ideas, besides its impact on the psychological dimensions. It will also reveal the psychological and social pressures, their impact on the characters' changes, and how they cope with life and the people around them. The impact made them unable to adapt to life, especially after experiencing events that changed their lives. For example, the blaze that burnt Suhaib's house led to the amputation of his feet, transforming him from an able-bodied person into someone with special needs. Similarly, Noor experienced severe family violence from her husband, alongside Maryam, who was exposed to different types of pressure throughout her life, such as the sudden loss of her parents and the loneliness that accompanies aging. In addition, the family persecution inflicted on Suhaib by his mother pushed him to leave his family and live alone. All these events altered the life courses and dreams of characters whose psyches were revealed through a critical literary style based on the psychological approach, which examines, analyzes, and absorbs literature in accordance with psychological criteria that unveil characters' motives and behaviors (Madi 2020: 93).

The study analyzes the novel and its characters critically, highlighting the psychological changes they underwent, which influenced their behavior and adaptation to life in general. This changed their lifestyle to accommodate their new circumstances. Therefore, the psychological approach on which this study relies in analyzing the novel is the closest approach that copes with the nature of literature, which is usually used to express the inner world of the writer that he likes to convey to others, enriched with diverse cognitive experiences, hidden experiences of the past, and accumulated experience within the self. This is why the relationship between psychology, literature, and creativity is important (Mallal 2017:2). What underscores this relationship is that literary works across different eras and authors consistently reveal characters' obsessions, fears, despair, ambitions, and more. They also highlight the intricate relationship between the characters and themselves, the universe, nature, and humanity (Bahi 1991: 133). This does not make literature a source of pleasure only, but also a means of reshaping the self. It also influences the reader by helping him adapt to life and eventually succeed (Qurn 2001: 105,108).

Literature and psychoanalysis are closely interrelated, as creativity is deeply linked to the human psyche, as Freud noted. Through creativity, the writer transforms the real world into an imaginary one that aligns with their vision, desires, and emotions, which enables them to assign roles to characters in a way that makes the reader empathize with or sympathize with them. Therefore, psychoanalysis might be implicitly literary, while literature might be an implicit analysis of the psyche. Such a thing highlights the relation between them (Verni 2021: 83-84). Thus, the novel grants the writer a realm of imagination and instills in them a sense of absolute power, allowing the narrative to represent reality and serve as an escape from the constraints of everyday life. Reading the novel, from a psychological

perspective, entails learning from psychological theories, which enables readers to analyze it in light of that perspective (Verni 2021: 135).

This means that the psychological approach is concerned with the writer, reader, and critic, who engage themselves with the text to uncover the nature of that art. It is one of the ways by which the writer conveys his ideas to us. Thus, the reader and the critic help the writer revive his experience. The psychologist, Pert, points to an important issue: the experience of taste, which, for him, is relative and influenced by numerous personal factors, whereas beauty is objective, as it relates to an aesthetic topic (Seddiq 2015: 25).

Thus, literature is the outcome of the writer's feelings about their surroundings. In other words, it is the product of the human psyche, its impulses, awareness, and way of thinking. Therefore, psychologists such as Freud, Adler, and Jung considered the work of art to be the product of an implicit or explicit cause. Each of these psychologists analyzed the work in accordance with their theories (Qattoos 2022: 25-38).

Since the critical psychoanalytical approach relies on multiple, and sometimes contradictory theories, it changes the work of art into a kind of psychological document. This approach has its pitfalls, as it can portray the literary pieces as if they were a mere collection of impulses or repressions that the writer seeks to express artistically. Therefore, one must avoid exaggeration when applying this approach to literature (Khalil2007: 58).

The researcher adopted a psychological approach to analyze the novel *Aghithni* in terms of the content it incorporates and expresses through its narratives. It also focused on domestic violence, as typified by the husband's abuse of his wife, illustrating that such a husband was suffering from psychological problems and a weak personality that impacted his relationship with his wife. It also focused on another type of violence exemplified by the son whose desires were never taken into consideration by his family. Such things were reflected in the personalities of Shehab and Suhaib, who had a sudden accident that turned him into a person with special needs after being healthy. This influenced his psyche, which made him unable to adapt to life, from which he ultimately withdrew. One might also refer to the old lady, Mariam, who revealed her husband's story and how she felt about it. She later realized the mistakes she had committed and how they had affected her perception of life, turning her into a wiser and more patient person.

The researcher analyzed the relationships between characters and the social pressure, which were an inseparable part of their daily suffering. Thus, the characters' suffering might represent the suffering of others in society as well. The researcher did not attribute the suffering to the novelist's life to avoid turning the text into a psychological document and to ensure the use of technical aspects, such as monologue and memoirs, that help reveal the psychological secrets of the characters.

It is noted that the novelist made her major character, Noor, a writer who wrote about her life in the form of a novel. This made the text appear as if it were a novel within a novel, which helped in analyzing her psyche.

2. Analysis of the novel

In analyzing incidents from the novel, the researcher cited some lines from the text, which she translated from Arabic into English, to support her argument. Therefore, all the citations were translated by her.

The novel begins with events narrated by one of its main characters, "Suhaib," who unfolds the story, encouraging readers to read it to learn its details. This creates the element of suspense. Suhaib talks about his sixteen-year-old sister, Noor, who loves learning and dreams of becoming a writer despite the hardships she faces. He also reveals that a fire occurred in their house and disfigured his face, leaving him physically disabled and preventing him from attending school. However, his sister read books and poetry to him. She was his supporter despite the conditions engulfing them. This is apparent in his words: "My sister is not afraid of my appearance after fire; she does not mind the disfiguring scars and deep craters on my face...." (Hamdalla 2018: 9).

Suhaib reveals his feelings about the sudden change in his life caused by the house fire, saying: "Noor pushed me in my wheelchair towards them; the chair has become my prison since my feet were amputated after the fire in our house" (Hamdalla 2018:12). This illustrates the extent of pain and sorrow Suhaib endures after the fire. He felt he had become a frightening figure, confined to a wheelchair that was never part of his life before, which deeply impacted his psyche and self-perception. Thus, his mother became his only hope, and her face brought him reassurance. "She is my beautiful half that remained after the fire had disfigured my other half" (Hamdalla 2018: 13), especially after the death of his father in the same fire. However, his mother also passed away shortly afterward. Consumed by grief and pain over what happened,

"She refused to live without my father, so her spirit followed him. Her departure was veiled with longing for a reunion in the hereafter... her heart so full of love for my father that it became a part of him. The heart does and lives as long as it is still living" (Hamdalla 2018: 17).

Such a thing aggravated the pain for both Noor and Suhaib, who have swallowed the bitterness of orphanhood and pain, and their lives have become more miserable. Although they live with Uncle "Marwan," they feel the hardships of life, which add to Suhaib's burden and keep him questioning their existence. Being a disabled person, he constantly wonders:

"The gusts of storms make me cast my questions: Can a crippled boy like me protect his older sister in the absence of their parents? Or will she be the one to protect me? Will I lose my sister? Or will she lose me? Will I be able to find a job in a wheelchair? Who will support my sister if her brother fails her? Endless questions accompany me to the grave" (Hamdalla 2018: 18).

These questions fill Suhaib's soul on his way to visit his parents' graves. They are questions that embody anxiety, pain, and fear in a character who experienced a sudden event that changed his appearance and life.

As for details of the incident and what happened to Suhaib, the novelist relied on dialogue between Noor and Suhaib regarding the fire. Noor recounted how she saved him and what the doctor said about his condition. The fire severely burned

his feet, necessitating their amputation. However, Suhaib feels a sense of guilt. He addresses himself, saying: "I wish you had not done that, my sister... I wish you had not saved me... oh if only you had let my body burn to death..." (Hamdalla2018: 20). Such words reveal that the character has not adapted himself to the current situation in which he lives, shackled by the sorrows of life and disability. Suhaib falls into a state of depression as a result of his mother's death, which for him means pain and orphanhood on one hand and disability from which he suffers on the other. This leaves him bewildered, as revealed through the monologue technique used, which expresses the character's suffering and anxiety about death. This is evident in Suhaib's words:

"My situation is strange. How can I be away from my only sister? Perhaps my grief exceeds that of my miserable wheelchair. I hate seeing my image reflected in her mirror, the image of a handicapped orphan, a dependent family member, and a heavy burden, without realizing it. We feel grieved for the passing away of our loved ones; they leave us because we love them. I have decided not to love anyone anymore. I will not love myself, not even Noor, because if I do, she might leave me too" (Hamdalla 2018: 21).

Suhaib tried to adapt to his reality by accepting the idea of going to a care home for the disabled. Although he tries to hide his fear of this new world, it is reflected in his talk to his sister, Noor, as he consoles himself while trying to accept his sudden disability. He hopes to find companionship and relief from boredom by making friends there. However, his emotions are dispersed between pain for leaving the family and acceptance of going to the care home.

The omniscient narrator describes these emotions, saying: "Battles of depression raged within him. He sat on the doorsteps of separation crying to everyone. They all abandoned him at a critical time after Noor left" (Hamdalla2018: 97).

Suhaib adjusted to his new life at the "Al-Basateen Home for the Disabled." He became friends with "Kazim," his roommate. Over time, they bonded deeply, as if they were two halves of the same heart (Hamdalla 2018: 98). Their entwined stories, pains, and suffering were enough to strengthen their relationship. However, this did not last long, as a sudden fight in the home resulted in Kazim's death, and that affected Suhaib physically and psychologically. Therefore, he withdrew from others in the home and contracted a fever, which resulted in deafness and added to his burdens. He is no longer just confined to his wheelchair but is also unable to hear and communicate with his surroundings.

What preceded shows that Suhaib has been suffering from multiple problems that affected his psyche and his ability to adapt. He endured amputation due to a sudden house fire, which resulted in losing an organ of the body, which affected his psyche and society's perception of him. In such a case, the individual needs support to adapt to the new physical reality (Al qadi 2009: 79). However, Suhaib never got that; instead, he felt abandoned by everybody. Being in the care home made him feel like a burden to everyone. He tried to adjust to the new situation but failed, especially after the death of his friend, Kazim. Consequently, his defense and adaptation mechanisms turned into suppression, isolation, and denial (Al qadi 2009:

86). This shows that the character dealt with amputation as a shock that impacted his psychological health and attitude toward life (Khalaf 2012: 21). This is clearly stated in the monologue in which Suhaib blames his sister for rescuing him from the fire, believing that it would have been better to perish than to live the life he does now. Despite his hardships, he attempted to befriend Kazim in the care home, as they shared common ground, which brought him a feeling of equality and happiness. Such a friendship helps isolate Suhaib from the outside world, where he feels inferior due to societal expectations. The similarity of situations lessens the gap between what the disabled feel (Khalaf 2012: 26).

Suhaib negatively dealt with amputation due to the challenges he faced, especially after the death of his parents, his sister's marriage, and abandonment by his uncle's family. Add to that the bad treatment he received from his uncle's wife, "Saadiyah." All these factors negatively affected his personality. The negative image of his body made him resent his life, which profoundly impacted his self-confidence (Shadli 2017: 35). The social stigma that he suffered from made Suhaib feel ashamed, perplexed, and depressed in a devalued life (Qaddah 2020: 59).

As for his sister Noor, she also suffered from orphanhood and loss like Suhaib. Her dreams of education and writing were shattered. What added to her distress was the insistence of her uncle's wife, "Saadiyah," to marry her to Adel, whom she knew nothing about except what she was told. Moreover, Noor did not think the time was suitable for marriage, as she was still young, busy with her education, and caring for her brother. Nonetheless, she married Adel. After marriage, she discovered that he was stubborn, did not care about her opinion, and made decisions about residing with the family. In addition, Noor did not choose any furniture for her house, nor could she design any of its rooms. This created an internal conflict in her, raising questions, as reflected in the following monologue: "Did he (her husband) mean that she would not be able to build her dream home herself one day?" (Hamdalla 2018: 48). Noor was puzzled by Adel's silence and his lack of interest in what she said. This made her keep silent again and wonder, "Is there a barrier of sound or thoughts between them? She justified that "some men simply do not love to talk much or gossip" (Hamdalla 2018: 63).

These matters revealed Noor's suffering after her marriage to Adel. She faced physical and emotional abuse from someone who had concealed his true nature from her, which only came to light after marriage. This situation reveals the psychological dimensions of Noor's personality and how that compels her to cope with the reality she was forced into.

Afterward, Noor discovers Adel's family and some secrets she has learned through family gatherings. Samira, Adel's sister, revealed some issues about her other brothers to her. Noor noticed that the family does not accept any newcomers, attributing all mistakes to them; they care only for themselves, disregarding the emotions of others. She couldn't understand why her husband hadn't told her about that. It was a disintegrated family, whose secrets were occasionally revealed by masked faces. Noor could not adapt to the new family. However, she had to adapt herself to the family's way of life, which differed from hers, based on love and respect.

In addition, the constant conflicts between her and her husband made her resent her home. Adel fabricated these conflicts for no reason.

Due to that, “Noor disavowed her home with aversion as if it were an enemy she had to face or her solitary prison. She began to despise everything in her home and grew increasingly bored with life there... It became her fiercest enemy” (Hamdalla 2018: 74-75).

Noor suffered from their constant disagreement and Adel’s indifference to her sorrows and desire to visit her brother. Each time, he repeated the same excuse: being busy with work. This was a way of escaping the reality he lived in. This is an example of family violence in our contemporary life (Qarquti 2015: 20). Adel was living in a different world, far from her way of thinking and feeling. Therefore, she turned to her diaries to express herself, complaining about loneliness and her husband, who seemed to know neither love nor emotion. He only knows how to criticize. Such things reflect the intellectual, social, and personal incompatibility between the couple that widens the gap between them, aggravates differences, and leads to violence (Shaibani 2008: 95).

The diaries in the novel were important for Noor, as they were her only means of freedom. She could divulge her emotions through which the hidden events were unveiled in a poetic language.

The circumstances worsened for Noor, “She could not keep silent; her house was like a prison where torture was worse than that of imprisonment...” (Hamdalla 2018: 115). She argued with Adel about visiting her family, but that was to no avail. The dialogue unveiled a significant discrepancy between them, reflected in Adel addressing her about her family:

“Are you still disillusioned, girl? They got bored with caring for orphans and the handicapped. They married you to me to prevent you from seeing or even hearing about you. They sent your brother to the care home to get rid of that terrifying monster; your mean father did not bequeath any money to you” (Hamdalla 2018: 119).

This highlights Adel’s hard-heartedness compared to Noor’s kind-heartedness, in addition to being a husband who only knows how to compare, criticize, and downgrade her by slapping her on the face, warning: “Who are you to have rights? You have no value among us and no weight in my family...” (Hamdalla, 2018:119)

The preceding text shows that Noor was subjected to domestic violence, both physical and verbal. Violence against women is one of the most prevalent social issues worldwide today (Sardieh 2018: 10). It is an abusive behavior that involves using force to harm another person. It is a deviant behavior that results from several social factors surrounding society and individuals (Qarquti 2015: 11). The degree and forms of violence between spouses vary. They include negligence, humiliation, procrastination, postponement, battering, frequent absences from home, and abandonment (Sardieh 2018: 19).

Noor was also subjected to verbal abuse from her husband. It is the most damaging form of violence on a wife’s mental health. In addition, she was subjected to social violence, as exemplified by depriving her of her social rights, including

visiting family, relatives, and friends. She is not allowed to make social relations either (Sardieh 2018: 26).

The domestic violence Adel inflicted upon his wife was not random. Noor unveiled some issues related to Adel's upbringing. "This is how Adel was brought up in Hajj Khalid's family. During nightmares, he sometimes revealed something about his childhood. He used to see his father hurling shoes and household utensils at his mother once she disagreed with him" (Hamdalla 2018: 120). Consequently, Adel's violence towards his wife was natural. He never cared about her feelings and frequently chastised her. Studies indicate that any husband raised in a violent household often perceives this as a model of dealing with his wife in the future (Sardieh 2018: 28). There are several factors behind violence, the foremost of which are self-factors that impact an individual's personality and influence their psychological and social makeup, such as mental or somatic diseases. There are also factors that contribute to dysfunction in the family system, where family members resort to violence to solve conflicts or satisfy needs, in addition to dysfunction in family upbringing that leads to violence as a means of expressing dissatisfaction with reality and circumstances the individual lives in (Qarquti 2015: 18-19). This is supported by Freud's theory, which posits that human behavior is driven by subconscious motives and repressed drives that constantly affect actions. He emphasized that repressed childhood drives are related to growth, emotions, outbursts, and disturbances, which are the factors that determine personality traits (Madi 2005: 132).

Despite Noor's challenging circumstances, she tried to adapt to reality. She asked Adel for permission to pursue her studies, but he refused since repression and selfishness are among his traits. She tried to overcome this by fostering a good relationship with him and his family, but they treated her poorly because, for them, she was inferior and belonged to the poor class. When she complained to Adel about his family's mistreatment, the response was equally painful and humiliating because his way of thinking was like his family's. He said: "My family is your master; their hands are what feed you and provide you with bounties" (Hamdalla 2018: 135).

The conversation ended with Adel hitting her because she objected. Noor had to accept her reality and was compelled to change her personality to please those around her. She did not want to destroy the home she once dreamt of. However, she was not satisfied with the new changes in her character and yearned for her past. This is evident in her inner dialogue, which unveils the psychological crisis she is experiencing.

"Amidst these changes and all the surgical and cosmetic modifications I made to my new personality to gain acceptance from those around me and align with their attitudes and whims. Amidst all this, I lost precious qualities that cherished me one day in the far-forgotten past" (Hamdalla 2018: 148).

Consequently, she felt lonely, orphaned, and in pain. She turns to writing in her diary, which provides her with a space for freedom and hope to resist the injustice inflicted upon her by her husband, Adel, whose name contradicts his actions. Despite her love for and attempts to please him, she felt she had lost herself

and had become devoid of will. She did whatever he wanted without considering her own desires. Despite her repeated attempts to please her husband, she received only physical abuse and violence, which left her with bruises, wounds, and psychological pain she could never forget. Though she loved Adel despite his cruelty and battering, she returned to him after the first leave because of her child and because she wanted to keep the family together.

Noor discovered that Adel was contradictory, without a consistent stance toward her. At times, she felt he loved her, but more often, she thought he resented her for no single reason. He just wanted to prove himself superior and assert his control over her, for which she felt imprisoned in her home, which became a place of misery. For Noor, the house was a prison that severed her ties with life and the family she grew up with. Adel's actions indicated that he had motivations to practice violence against his wife. Domination is a form of self-motivation, a self-behavior exhibited by the husband that reflects the influence of the outside environment on him. For example, the family was heedful about downgrading the wife's status and the husband's change of opinion toward her. However, the cultural norms and traditions of some families reinforce a love for domination and self-assertion, which are perceived as manliness (Sardieh 2018: 34).

Noor could no longer bear to sacrifice more; she had already given up everything, including the dreams that once surrounded her, for the sake of the unborn child. She hated being labeled a divorcee because she wanted to avoid the negative attitude of society and the traditions associated with such cases, as well as the burdens that came with being a divorcee (Khaldi 2008: 178). However, the situation was too painful to bear. Therefore, she fled the house to gain freedom and break the shackles of prison. Thus, she escaped on foot, leaving painful things behind. Her escape was a result of constant abuse that negatively impacted her personality, psychological adaptability, behavior, and normal life to non-adaptability (Sardieh 2018).

After the escape, Noor went into labor. She was saved by an elderly lady she met by chance at the train station. The old lady accompanied her to the hospital and then took Noor with her son, Anas, to her house. This marked the beginning of Noor's journey to freedom from oppression.

She got to know the elderly woman, Maryam, with whom she shared her story. The novelist used dialogue to unveil details of their lives and to avoid lengthy narratives and descriptions. The dialogue revealed that Maryam offered her help to Noor because the former reminded her of her daughter, "Fatoon," whom she lost many years ago. Through kindness, Maryam rekindled light in Noor's life that had been deprived of. Unbeknownst to Maryam, fates came together between "Noor" and "Shihab," her cousin, once again.

The elderly woman, unaware of the connection, served as a common link: "Fates interact in mysterious ways." The woman did not realize that Noor was Shihab's cherished cousin, and their destinies intertwined to give birth to a new fate (Hamdalla 2018: 221).

Sorrows united Noor and Maryam through death, orphanhood, fire, and pain. This bond encouraged Noor to reveal her story, confirm her change, and

escape from persecution, from which she would never return. "I deeply regret the woman I was yesterday; I felt worthless. But today, I am a mother; I escaped oppression, and I am haunted by humiliation and threatened with imprisonment. I will never be what I once was" (Hamdalla 2018: 222).

With her newborn, Noor left the old woman's house for the train station to visit her brother Suhaib at Al-Basateen care home in the city. At the station, she was surprised to encounter "Shihab," from their conversation, she knew some details about her uncle's home.

She went to visit her brother at the care home, only to find him in poor condition, as Dr. "Ghassan" told her. Suhaib had lost his hearing and was suffering from depression, avoiding conversation with anyone. After seeing Suhaib, she went to her uncle's house, where she was surprised to find her husband, Adel, waiting for her. They argued, and she asked her husband not to send her back to him. However, the uncle tried to solve the problem, as he opposed divorce because he was concerned about society's comments and wanted to preserve the family's reputation. Noor returned with him, but when Shehab learned about what happened, he reacted differently. This situation highlights the contrasting reactions to what had happened. The problem also reflects the uncle's fear of society's attitude toward a divorced woman, but Shihab's attitude is different.

Noor surrendered to her uncle's wishes and returned home, silently enduring her pain while fulfilling only what was required of her. Yet, her heart could no longer bear the burden. Despite this, she gave in to her painful reality to protect her son from her husband's merciless family.

This highlights the fear of family disintegration that can be caused by divorce. They are also concerned about family reputation and societal judgment, even if the husband is abusive. All these things forced Noor to succumb to the family's wishes.

Attitudes toward divorce vary according to the society in which the girl lives and the social class she belongs to: the upper class considers it disgrace and shame. In contrast, the lower class considers it expected and natural (Khaldi 2008: 176).

From what has preceded, it becomes clear that Noor's character in the novel is a dynamic one, evolving throughout the story from its beginning to its end. At the outset, she was a simple orphaned girl living with her uncle and brother, Suhaib. Later, she moved to her husband's house, finding herself in a new world that was different from where she grew up. She tried to adapt to her husband and his family, to know their nature so as to make them happy. Yet she failed in this endeavor, discovering that the family was disintegrated, with hidden problems and secrets unknown to her. Thus, she found herself an outcast in this family. Nevertheless, she tried to preserve her home, fearing the specter of divorce. But when she realized that her home had turned into a prison, and her husband was a man devoid of feelings, who abused her verbally and physically, she decided to run away to change her life and never return. Even though she had already experienced motherhood, she did not care about what society might say about her. She only cared about psychological stability and protecting her son from her ex-husband's family, and to

do her duty toward her brother, whose feet were amputated. Before the divorce, the husband prevented her from visiting him and her family. Thus, Noor's personality had undergone a change. She tried to depend on herself more to escape the agonizing reality she was living in. Noor's psychological suffering resulted from her marriage and her life with her husband and his family, who hated her for no reason.

Contrary to Noor, Suhaib never adapted to his new situation after the accident. He lived alone, isolating himself from others and avoiding any contact. He sought friends who were in a similar situation, so he would not feel different from the rest of society. The researcher believes that this character did not adapt to his reality because what happened was a shock for him. He was suffering from post-traumatic psychological distress. This is different from someone who was born with a disability who could integrate and adapt to life, having accepted his body's nature, more than someone who transforms from a fully able-bodied person to someone whose legs were amputated. This means that the two characters, Noor and Suhaib, differ in the way they approach the difficulties of life they face.

Despite Noor's efforts to keep her family together, she could not withstand the family's hatred toward her without convincing reasons. They just loved to dominate others and humiliate her. However, what she went through pushed her to change. She was no longer trying to adapt and satisfy the family. She turned from a peaceful person into a strong one, determined to defend her son. But she faced violence once again at the hands of her husband, who tried to take her child away. Thus, nothing was left to her except constant prayers to Allah, seeking his help, saying: "Oh Allah! Help me." This is evident in many instances throughout the story. This is where the title of the novel came from.

The injustice Noor endured remarkably impacted her personality, leading her to reject weakness and resolve to break free from oppression. Her only salvation was to scream from the window, hoping a neighbor would hear her, for the door was locked by Adel, who prevented her from leaving. A neighbor in the adjacent building heard her and called the police, who questioned the husband regarding her broken hand and decided to leave him for good. She afterward left the police station, accompanied by her cousin Shihab. They welcomed her with an ovation, apologizing for their past events.

Noor never forgot her aunt Maryam, who has always helped her and continues to do so. She sent her cousin, "Rafii," the lawyer, to defend and secure her rights. Thus, life returned to her after she got rid of oppression, pacifying her fears of societal judgment for being a divorced woman. Instead, she considered it a victory over oppression and violence from which she suffered. She is now free and can decide to live with her brother in Aunt Maryam's house. She resumed her education, striving to regain her strength and erase the negative psychological impacts caused by her husband. This is apparent in her words: "My previous life had inflicted a great deal of damage on me; I do not think that a heart broken by that damage will ever fully heal" (Hamdalla 2018: 259). Despite such difficulties, she tried to adapt to her new life after the divorce. Psychological studies have proven that "The impact of violence on the psyche or body of an abused person by

psychosomatic pain will negatively affect interaction with oneself and with others” (Qarquti 2015: 111).

However, it took time for Noor to overcome her pain and adapt to the new situation. This psychological transformation and self-awareness of dealing with life gave her hope, tranquility, and success. It also helped her discover things about people around her, such as Shihab’s range of love and care for her, in contrast to the selfishness and deception of Adel, who used to attribute their marital failure to her alleged mismanagement and carelessness.

This reveals that the divorced woman works hard to achieve integrity, which allows her to adapt to new circumstances. The most challenging point in her new life was the psychological conflict she encountered, which resulted from a failed experience that required re-adaptability (Khaldi 2008: 176).

The novel’s ending comes as a surprise to the reader. It reveals that Noor wrote these events in which she portrayed her life in her first novel (Aghithni), “Help Me.” It took her three years to express her pain and change through writing; the author had the protagonist express herself through writing. Throughout the novel, Noor frequently alludes to her dream of becoming a writer. She started writing her book after her divorce. Thus, the novel by “Nuha Hamdalla” sounds like a story within a story. Therefore, the novel written by Noor echoes her, and literature echoes the author’s self. Every self has its inclinations, desires, awareness, and ways of thinking and analysis. “The novel is the outcome of a psychological cause; it is a method of expressing oneself and ridding of pressures” (Qattoos 2016: 41).

Despite Noor’s patience, Adel insisted on severing every connection with her. She signed her memoirs in which she expressed her innermost feelings of pain. By reading some of their texts, Adel discovered that they addressed him in every single word. Therefore, he burns them to erase Noor’s words, revealing truths he refuses to acknowledge. He considered that a type of marital betrayal that disclosed home secrets, so he got rid of them. Such an event unveils the state of denial that characterizes Adel’s personality.

Such acts made Noor doubt Adel’s mental health, so she searched his belongings to discover that he was taking psychiatric medication. He suffered from extreme irritability, which made it difficult to control himself. Despite this, Noor remained committed to her husband and decided to be patient. Psychological studies confirm that a successive decline in marital satisfaction may lead to somatic violence, where psychological aggression of the husband escalates to physical abuse. Violent husbands are characterized by three traits: severity or psychological violence, violence generalization (domestic or outside the family, psychiatric illnesses, or personality disorders like personal extremity and antisocial personality) (Abu Eiteh 2019: 130).

What preceded reveals the psychological dimensions of Noor’s personality and how it was affected by her husband, Adel, who was suffering from many psychological problems. Due to pressures from family, work, and society, he became easily infuriated over trivial reasons, which affected his psyche and led him

to resent his wife. All these factors, according to psychological studies, lead to aggressive behavior and sometimes to committing crimes (Shaibani 2008: 76).

After highlighting the personalities of Noor, Suhaib, and Adel, around whom the novel's events unfold, it may be helpful to shed light on other supportive characters, such as Shihab and Maryam, and analyze their personalities based on their interrelationships.

The old lady, Maryam, who had supported Noor and Suhaib, later met Shihab by chance when he assisted her with her road and household affairs. Therefore, a strong, friendly relationship emerged, allowing them to reveal their secrets. Maryam's stories, which echoed old-age wisdom and were very painful, made the young youth incessantly listen to such stories from which he sipped wisdom. Therefore, in telling her stories to Shihab, she feels as if she were "on the seat of confession to purge sins..." (Hamdalla 2018: 53). Here, the use of the flashback technique in the novel is evident; it creates a story within a story. The old woman's tale is not presented in one complete sequence, but in segments, as she shares parts of it with Shihab on every visit. This approach builds suspense gradually, revealing the entire narrative.

Maryam can still turn the pages of her memory, bringing past scenes to life. Recollection for her revives past events of love, nostalgia, mistakes, and stumbles that occurred here and there. Through that, she could unveil certain painful moments and how experience refined her with age. She reflects on events with depth as if viewing them from afar, re-evaluating and interpreting them for Shehab, who listens to her stories with love, empathy, and eagerness. This is evident in her words: "My selfishness is a long story... I am not the only one who pays the price. When time overshadows memory, regret becomes the harshest punishment. Dust confesses the sins of steps after time has elapsed" (Hamdalla 2018: 128). Maryam allowed herself to revisit the past by recounting her story to Shehab once more as if she were reliving it.

"The same smile of youth... and the same confusion appeared on the face of the old woman. She lives the past as if it were present, as if it were just yesterday, so close that she could almost touch it and smell its scent" (Hamdalla 2018:124).

Maryam was the opposite of Noor in her relationship with her husband. Contrary to her husband, Hamza, who was content and generous, she was discontented and selfish. Maryam described her husband as "a generous person with overflowing emotions who spends his time and money for my happiness" (Hamdalla 2018: 123).

The old woman's memories unfold, beginning with a joyful welcome to Shehab and ending with his tears, feeling sad for her narratives, which reveal the extent of suffering she experienced throughout her life. It began with her mother's death from cancer, followed by her father's death because of an unexpected fire. These events unveiled the reasons behind Maryam's psychological crisis, adding to her strained relationship with her father. When she tried to mend things, time did not allow her to complete what she had already started with her father. Thus, the fire incident was another blow to the might of a woman who had abandoned her father since childhood (Hamdalla 2018:185). This aggravated the impact on

Maryam. Pain could never be trespassed, and mistakes could never be amended; time has passed.

Memories return to the old woman in Shehab's visit, whose presence evokes heroes of the past in her mind. She recalled the birth of her young daughter, Fatoon, for whom she had waited for many years. She was shocked when she realized that Fatoon suffered from a lack of oxygen at birth, which resulted in a mental disability. Despite the pain she felt, Maryam accepted her daughter. In a moment of self-reflection, Maryam remembered her cousin Masoud, who suffered from autism. It seemed as if fate's circle tightened around Maryam's life.

The old woman continues the story of Fatoon, who, at nine years old, had not uttered a word, knowing nothing of life beyond her parents' faces. One day, her father traveled, leaving her with her mother, Maryam. Missing him, Fatoon kept crying. Due to her mental disability and limited understanding of the surroundings, she suddenly opened the door and ran out quickly, reached a high cliff, and fell into the lake, but nobody could save her. Her father returned to bury her and disappeared afterward. Maryam did not know where he went; perhaps he wanted to escape reality or could not bear life without his daughter. Thus, Hamza's fate remains unknown. Maryam lived alone till the age of seventy, finding solace in memoirs, pictures, and visits to Shehab, which rekindled the old, beautiful days when she lived with her small family.

Maryam is without a family and has no aims in this life. This makes her cling to memories. She tried to adapt to her life and solitude till she met Noor by chance, who became her savior and relieved her from persecution. Thus, the characters' tales in the novel look similar, meeting at one point and diverging at another. This was her motive behind helping Noor and Shehab. By doing so, she felt she had won a victory for herself and, through experience, could correct her mistakes over time. Helping them was a way to conquer the loneliness and silence that filled her life. Maryam helped others by helping herself.

As for Shehab, he supported Noor and Suhaib in times of crisis. He is their cousin who loved them dearly but grew weary of his authoritative mother, who controls family members' affairs. He could not even discuss his intention to propose to Noor with his father after graduating from the engineering faculty and securing a suitable job. His dreams collapsed due to his mother's domination over the family affairs. She became an obstacle to his expression of feelings one day. She imposed on him shackles of oppression and kindled war inside him. Therefore, he preferred to conceal the secrets of his love and left abroad brokenhearted (Hamdalla 2018:29). This drove Shehab to flee to the eastern coast with his friends a day before Noor's wedding day in an attempt to forget or disregard the events surrounding him. Perhaps "he lacked the courage to confess his love. Maybe his mother had already torn apart the pages of love before being written" (Hamdalla 2018: 45) by the authoritative decision she made regarding Noor.

Shehab was a person who cherished the old lady. He was always careful about listening to her stories, from which he gained wisdom and life experience. However, his stance toward his parents rises occasionally, revealing the psychological impacts that negatively affect him. This stance was clear when responding to the old woman

when she asked about his parents: “My father is busy with his work, and my mother spends her time shopping. She even forgot to ask me about my state and what I would do on the weekend” (Hamdalla 2018: 54). Shehab also revealed to the old lady his love for his cousin’s daughter, who got married. The writer wove these events into the novel’s plot by intertwining the characters’ relationships. The old woman and Shehab needed this friendship, as each was searching for something missing, which he found in the other. This is evident in the words of the omniscient narrator:

“He fell silent, contemplating, and the looks completed the conversation. His heart pounded like a lover. It was not difficult to understand the strong bond that united them. She loved motherhood, but he lost it.... Both were lonely, and both needed friends” (Hamdalla 2018:170).

This reveals Maryam’s feelings towards motherhood and, on the other hand, Shehab’s relationship with his authoritative mother, Saediyeh. It also demonstrates the mutual empathy between Shehab and Maryam, as well as Shehab’s empathy for Noor and Suhaib. His mental state worsened after hearing about the violence inflicted upon Noor by her husband. Shehab also felt sad because of his family’s bad treatment of her. He felt his family had let him down by abandoning him.

From what preceded, one notes that the four main characters in the novel struggled with psychological issues and pressures beyond their control and were influenced by their surroundings. Suhaib suffered from orphanhood and loss, along with physical deformity, which hindered his adaptability to society and led him to isolation despite his efforts to overcome the difficulties and circumstances to which he surrendered. As for Noor, she, too, suffered from orphanhood and loss, assuming that her husband, Adel, would be supportive of her. But she was shocked to discover that he had been grappling with psychological issues since childhood. She tried to help him overcome them or accept reality as it was, but she could not endure the incessant emotional and physical abuse to which she was subjected. Therefore, she decided to break free and reconsider her life. She wrote a novel after the separation to express herself, trying to trespass on the past for a better present. Though Shehab sided with Noor against the persecution her family and husband inflicted upon her, he was a victim of an authoritative mother and a neglectful father. He tried to support Noor and the old woman, Maryam, who compensated him for what he had lost in his family. In return, he compensated her for what she had lost, filling the void and relieving her loneliness. Maryam’s support for Noor during her crisis helped the latter overcome it, creating a sense of redemption for her past actions. Thus, the researcher attempted to analyze the novel to highlight the psychological dimensions of the characters by examining the nature of their relationships and how these relationships influenced the narrative structure of the story.

3. Conclusion

The study came up with the following results:

1. The novel presented various life problems faced by the characters, including violence and amputation, and explored how they dealt with them. Though the suffering varied, the characters' feelings regarding anxiety, fear, sorrow, orphanhood, and ability to adapt to life problems were the same.

2. The novel revealed an apparent impact of society on the character's psychological makeup. Because they were psychologically suffering, they were unable to assert themselves or even adapt to the life conditions that had been imposed on them. For example, Suhaib's amputation resulted from a sudden blaze in their house, which was clearly stated by him: "My sister never tires of trying to restore my smile to life, even though she knows with absolute certainty that my smile died and burned along with our home, and was buried in my father's grave eight months ago" (Hamdalla 2018: 10). Violence against Noor was caused by the surrounding circumstances that compelled her to marry a man whom her uncle's wife chose, even before graduation, to discover that the husband could not communicate with her except through violence. She says: "I live in a house like a prison, where the torment here is harsher than that of any real jail. The whips of longing have tortured my soul without mercy" (Hamdalla 2018: 115). Shehab suffered from an authoritarian mother with whom he could not get along, so he left the family and joined friends, among whom was the old woman, Maryam, who was also struggling with various life circumstances, to which she tried to adapt through nostalgia. That was apparent in her statement, "I do not know why I found a certain relish in disobeying my father ever since my mother passed away, and my feelings toward him waned. Perhaps I wanted to defy him for the sake of defiance. I may have been avenging myself for the absence of my mother or making a decision to correct the errors with which my memory is full" (Hamdalla 2018: 108). Such words were part of her recounting of the story to Shehab. She also supported Noor and Suhaib later.

3. The novel revealed the nature of Adel's character, the husband, whose violence was motivated by his desire to please his family and gain friends' admiration by controlling her, disregarding his own feelings and those of his wife. This became quite evident when he was initially delighted by the news of her pregnancy, once the doctor had confirmed it to him. Yet his attitude changed drastically afterward; he found that his family did not welcome the news. This is explicitly stated in the narrator's words. "Noor entered to talk to him, but he showered her with insults and humiliation, blaming her for the disappointment of his family upon hearing that she was pregnant. He prayed that she and her fated fetus die. His family's pride was in his personality, which led him to desert her." Additionally, the unhealthy family upbringing impacted his life. His mother was abused by his father, which led him to perpetrate violence against his own wife. He could never master the art of dialogue. Moreover, he suffered from a psychological problem caused by the circumstances engulfing him.

4. The novel employed a variety of techniques, among which are monologue, or internal dialogue, which reveals the psychological crises the characters were experiencing. The memoirs of Noor played a role in uncovering the hidden aspects of Adel and his family, as well as Noor's genuine feelings toward those around her. The dialogue between characters revealed the extent of harmony and differences between characters, in addition to the flashback technique, which was used to unravel the past lives of some characters.

5. The writer could successfully convey her ideas and the characters' suffering that might have resulted from society or from people around them. In doing so, the novelist portrayed one type of society, revealing how each character dealt with reality and how it impacted his psyche.

6. The novel portrays a type of family violence from which the Protagonist Noor suffered. Despite the hardships and the orphanhood, she did not surrender to reality. Instead, she began a new life and started writing a novel in which she delineated her suffering and how she overcame it. Thus, her story was an embodiment of challenge, a refusal to give in to hardships, irrespective of how daunting they were.

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