

THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN IRAQ: GENDER WAGE GAP AND THE POSITION OF WOMEN WITHIN IRAQI SOCIETY

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Abstract: *Human rights should be protected and promoted without regard to race, ethnicity, religion, political philosophy, or sexual orientation, following our firm convictions. Thus, any infringement of these rights or disdain for; any use of violence against women undermines the principles and human values of equality and endangers the entire society, including its potential to live in peace and to make growth and development. This paper represents the condition of the new Iraqi women regarding issues such as the gender wage gap, education, health, and violence against women. The study aims to determine the impact of traditions and customs on the legal position of Iraqi women. First, it seeks to assess the effects of culture as a historical agency on the legal status of Iraqi women. Second, the influence of cultural developments in the later part of the twentieth century on Iraqi women's legal standing, and third, the importance of cultural variety as a progressive cultural component in women's legal position. Finally, the study highlights the representation of women in Iraq: Gender wage Gap, Women's liberation between culture and law, and the role of women within Iraqi society based on an Iraqi novel titled: Orange Light¹, in her book, the Iraqi author Nadia Al-Abu succeeds in portraying the post-war society's devotion to the sexual, emotional and mental marginalization of women in terms of the value of attendance. Since the study of Iraqi women's literature in Arabic-English translation is a new avenue of research that contributes to all three areas, this investigation aims to establish critical lines of engagement between contemporary Iraqi women's literature in English translation and feminist translation conceptual frameworks, and this is accomplished by first focusing on why analyzing Iraqi women writers' novels in Arabic-English translation is a timeline of inquiry that contributes to existing and emerging knowledge fields concerning Iraqi women writers' contemporary critical contexts and scholarship on Arab women's literature in Arabic-English translation.*

Keywords: *Women in Iraq, Equality, Women's education, violence, Gender wage Gap, Nadia Al-Abu, (Orange Light), Women's liberation, Iraqi women's literature, Arabic-English translation*

Postcolonial studies assist individuals in creating their own identities and their voices and making their choices by guiding people, changing and reforming the past, and catching the rest of the civilized progress world. Postcolonial writers use their writings to allow the reader to understand the idea of national identity and to listen to that representative voice that can inform the world of their existence as a colonial subject. Moreover, this research challenges Iraqi women's opportunities to participate in rebuilding

¹ *Orange Light*: Translated mine: The official name of the novel in Arabic is titled : ضوء برتقالي.

Iraqi society by creating new policies. These policies of hiring women in Iraq should apply justice compared to men. In the novel, *Orange Light*, victims of a hegemonic patriarchal society that does not recognize women's affection or their right to motherhood outside the legal and legal framework and covering up the scandal with the custom of the community can do justice to many single mothers' lives and the lives of their families. The true power of literature lies in its ability to make us think more clearly, feel more deeply, and, in general, become better people. Women in Iraq have performed an essential role despite the dangers of war and the deteriorating financial situation. They have struggled for quite some time to maintain harmony and ensure the survival of their civilization. Iraqi women continue to face barriers that put into question their right to equal access to leadership positions and limit their ability to protect the country, society, and family, despite their early participation in the process of construction and development; their role in shaping the future of Iraq; and the sacrifices they have made and continue to make on a daily and willing basis. According to Qasim Amin, an Egyptian Islamic modernist philosopher who has defended women's rights despite facing many troubles in Eastern societies. He argues that:

“On the other hand, women in nations with more advanced civilizations have gradually advanced from the low status to which they have been relegated and have started to overcome the gap that has separated them from men. One woman crawls while the other is taking steps; one is walking while the other is running. These discrepancies reflect the different societies to which these women belong and the level of civilization of these societies. The American woman is at the forefront, followed by the British, the Germans, the French, the Austrian, the Italians, the Russian woman, and so on. Women in all these societies have felt that they deserve their independence and are searching for the means to achieve it. These women believe they are human beings and deserve freedom, therefore striving for freedom and demanding every human right²”.

Culture is a decent starting point when looking at women's issues today. Because Iraqi society has changed significantly over the previous sixty years, studying its culture has become a severe scientific demand especially given the unusual conditions of the last two decades that have presented Iraqi society, particularly Iraqi women, with new realities. Unfortunately, these realities have reintroduced some of the traditional components of Iraqi culture that have evolved and may be traced back to Iraq's ancient civilization, Bedouin culture, and agrarian society. As a result, conflicts have emerged between two dominant cultures in Iraqi cities: "traditional culture," which has its roots in tribal traditions, and "urban culture," in its different manifestations. As a result, there is a clash between conventions, rules, social standards, and the law, and this is especially true when it comes to women's concerns.

“Iraqi society offered free access to education, and special attention was paid to women's education. Education became an entitlement for

² Amin, *The Liberation of Women*, 1992, p. 166.

all and not a privilege for a few. Progressive legislation regarding marriage, divorce, maternity leave, and polygamy improved the role of women in society. However, welfare decreased gradually when the sanctions began to take effect. The era of liberalization had ended. When the economy began to wane, the first victims were women. Maternity leave, child care, and public employment were undermined. Access to education and shortage in paying salaries, even for the most educated, drove teachers and professors to leave the country to seek a better life. Books became a luxury. Families began to hire private tutors to teach their children, and the disadvantaged preferred to send their boys to work or beg. Girls had to stay home and help within the household³.

Iraqi women writers' novels and short stories have been acclaimed for representing cross-boundary solidarity 'between marginalized groups' ⁴Since the study of Iraqi women's literature in Arabic-English translation is a new avenue of research that contributes to all three areas, the purpose of this investigation is to establish critical lines of engagement between contemporary Iraqi women's literature in English translation and feminist translation conceptual frameworks in accomplished by first focusing on why analyzing Iraqi women writers' novels in Arabic-English translation is a timeline of inquiry that contributes to existing and emerging knowledge fields concerning Iraqi women writers' contemporary critical contexts and scholarship on Arab women's literature in Arabic-English translation. In *Orange Light*, Nadia Al-Abru succeeds in portraying the post-war society's devotion to the sexual, emotional, and mental marginalization of women in terms of the value of attendance. In a war society, it is not surprising that a man cheats on his wife and a woman abandons her motherhood and sells one of her children. Alternatively, the father tells his daughter many stories and tales about "Hanaa," the midwife who drowned herself and for many years completed the profession of abortion for single mothers. Al-Abru starts her novel by describing her heroine, Hanaa saying:

"Where am I? In what neighborhood? Furthermore, where is the main street? Perhaps soon she will send her husband to her, and she will go to the land of snow and cold, and she feels a shiver running through her extremities; she is afraid of those countries. Nevertheless, it is okay to lose direction after all these long years of catching the streets and riding buses to and from the hospital. Tomorrow she will forget when her chicks surround her like a chicken. All of us, if he did not forget to give the poor the blessing of forgetting, we would forget. We must all forget, forget to live, and praise—the blessing of wealth and money. Yes, we will all forget, oh home, what evil has entered you. So far away from its snow and fog, I only want to die here. My neighbors take care of my washing and weep at my funeral, no I want

³ Yasmine Jawad, *The Plight of Iraqi Women. 10 years of Suffering*, 2013, p. 5.

⁴ Ghazoul, 2008, p. 198.

to be buried with strangers who are free to understand their language or talk to them, yes I should die here⁵”.

The analysis examines the necessity of gender, based on Judith Lorber's theory in: *Paradoxes of Gender*. Her ideas will be considered in comparison with an Egyptian philosopher Qasim Amin's, *The Liberation of Women and The New Woman*. Moreover, this article aims to challenge Iraqi women's opportunities to participate in rebuilding Iraqi society by creating new policies. These policies of hiring women in Iraq should apply justice compared to men. In the novel, *Orange Light*, victims of a hegemonic patriarchal society that does not recognize women's affection or their right to motherhood outside the legal and legal framework and covering up the scandal with the custom of society can do justice to many single mothers' lives and the lives of their families. The true power of literature lies in its ability to make us think more clearly, feel more deeply, and, in general, become better people. Lorber in *The Paradoxes of Gender* claims that “Like technology, traditions and religion; gender is a human invention that organizes human social life in any culture. Gender inequality structures the unequal conditions of procreation, not the other way around. Where women and men are different but not unequal, women's birth-giving is not a source of subordination⁶”. In other words, identity is constructed from the stories we tell about ourselves, reflecting our background and life experiences also the power of the words is important for women emancipation.

“My sister, Wafaa, must have gone crazy. How do you want me to go with her? She keeps committing adultery day and night in my daughter's ear for beauty there, comfort there as if she was born there; you cannot stop watching videos about Germany and its cities and villages. She learned a lot about those distant countries, and perhaps more than her people. I got to know her currency and cut her small coins before the big ones, all the fear if she decided to work as a peddler (indication) there. She memorized her history, admired Hitler, and how he invaded Europe; she praised Hitler, saying (he is a real man) a people who do not like Except for a dictator who suppresses his dreams if they exist at all⁷”.

According to Qasim Amin, an Egyptian Islamic modernist philosopher who has defended women's rights despite facing many troubles in Eastern societies. He argues that:

“On the other hand, women in nations with more advanced civilizations have gradually advanced from the low status to which they have been relegated and have started to overcome the gap that has separated them from men. One woman crawls while the other is taking steps; one is walking while the other is running. These discrepancies reflect the different societies to which these women belong and the level of civilization of these societies. The American woman is at the forefront, followed by the British, the Germans, the

⁵ Al-Abru, *Orange Light*, 2019, p. 9/ Translated mine.

⁶ Lorber, *Paradoxes of Gender*, 1994, p. 7.

⁷ Al-Abru, *Orange Light*, 2019, p. 10/ Translated mine.

French, the Austrian, the Italians, the Russian woman, and so on. Women in all these societies have felt that they deserve their independence and are searching for the means to achieve it. These women believe they are human beings and deserve freedom, therefore striving for freedom and demanding every human right⁸”.

Translation involves a social practice, and it is oriented in different ways adapting and re-acting other languages. Some powerful aspect is the historical aim in shaping national -identity Venuti argued that people cannot easily understand each other because the cultural world is removed from each other, so it might be said that the translation focuses on the acceptance of cultural differences by using the power of the language they may add to the original text because words are unforgettable or they never die. In a war society, it is not surprising that a boy drives his mother to the street with traces of milk still in his mouth, a man cheats on his wife, and a woman abandons her motherhood and sells one of her children. Alternatively, the father tells his daughter many stories and tales that the protagonist of the novel Hanaa drowned herself in, the midwife who for many years practiced the profession of abortion for single mothers. A hard life lived by the novel's women, made more bitter by the circumstances of the war, so they were victims of a hegemonic patriarchal society that does not recognize women's affection nor their right to motherhood outside the legal and legal framework. Young women who have no fault but that they love in a cruel society. The role played by Hanaa in aborting the scandal strengthened her position in people's hearts, so her family's house became known in the neighborhood as the house of the midwife Hanaa, and people had their secret from her. Unfortunately, a large number of women have committed suicide as a consequence of being humiliated and criticized. They were advertising the ideal life of liberation and equality in Iraq, whereas women still struggle to be out of this mass authority imposed by men.

“Oh, from us women, then ah. It seems we have been trained to be a bridge to cross over to their hopes and ambitions if we had some of their selfishness and a small part of their ever-changing hearts. It seems that you, my friend, received nothing of love except his dark, gloomy face; how could I convince you that I could convince you? He has another happy face! Who among us wants to taste recurring in front of him, without preaching the advice of his victims, as if neither the fall, he measures its bitterness with his tears and how much he has been. This is how love lures us until we fall, to stand, brandishing its victory, mocking our defeats. Come on, leave this talk, and let's have breakfast before love loses our appetite. Just as we lost our hearts⁹”.

In contrast to traditional views of gender, Labor does not ground gender in the individual or social group dynamics. Instead, she sees gender as a social institution that regulates not just anticipated individual behavior but also the interrelated social processes that make up the fabric of daily existence.

⁸ Amin, *The Liberation of Women*, 1992, p. 166.

⁹ Al-Abbru, *Orange Light*, 2019, p. 84-86/ Translated mine.

In addition, she considers gender to be both an independent phenomenon and an integral part of society's fundamental institutions, including the market, ideology, the home, and Government. Nonetheless, people's identities and the relationships they maintain with others reveal the processes by which gender is established and maintained. Lorber's *Paradoxes of Gender*, reflects her belief of what is taken as given about gender, its causes, and its consequences are either false or may be explained by looking more closely. Because of how individuals see the distinctions between the sexes, gender is integral to social interactions. Not only that, but the gender of the people involved is crucial in defining the type of power relations. The institution of gender continues to create and perpetuate socially substantial inequalities between the sexes, despite accumulating research showing that women and men have more similarities than differences. Gender differences appear significant, but they are a means to a goal. The goal of these distinctions is to legitimize the exploitation of a particular set of women. If one set of differences is successfully contested, another will replace it. Despite extensive and ongoing imperial interactions with Iraq, there is very little writing by Iraqi women in the English cultural system. In contrast, English literature spreads quickly worldwide, reflecting the worldwide imbalance in cultural interchange. Today, a combination of demand for an insider's view on women's lives in Arab culture and a desire to peer inside Arab women's spaces has resulted in the worldwide translation of an increasing number of their works.

Translation makes a foreign text accessible and understandable to a reader from another cultural system, with its culturally distinct nuances and meanings. Throughout the process, the translator must modify the text to meet the demands and conventions of the receiving language culture. At the same time, publishers must place the material discursively so that readers comprehend its cultural relevance. For instance, the Iraqi novel *Orange Light* by Nadia Al-Abu is not translated into English. Therefore, the research highlights Iraqi society, especially women's situation using translation process to create a parallel analysis and give an idea about Eastern women as an insider of Arab culture in the West. Moreover, the misconceptions, mass media, and violence generally in Iraq, besides the corruption in the law system, are the significant reasons that barrier women's rights as well as the misconception of Islam that avoids the stereotyping which forms discrimination: reduce violence and discrimination against women through attaching a value of inferiority or superiority of which human diversity is influenced by certain factors such as; ability, religion, and ethnicity. As a result, women's rights and social status in Iraq have been thrown aside and violated for several years. Today, women's rights struggle against intimidation, while women are putting all their efforts into promoting and improving women's status in education and the workplace and changing the canons and traditional aspects such as; 'honor killings' when a woman loses her virginity without legal marriage, her family judges her severely by ending her life. Furthermore, women's organizations are also trying to replace and change forced marriages.

Many optimistic or promising remarks have been made concerning women's roles in the new Iraq. However, a more severe fact emerges when we examine the numerous difficulties that Iraqi women face. The economic and security crises are the most immediate barriers to progression. A permanent solution to the first problem is possible. In the meanwhile, some organizations seek to damage women and girls and, in certain circumstances, impose "Islamic" restrictions on their rights to freedom of movement and speech. The Government's, the media's, and the public's handling of the matter make it difficult to comprehend the effects of violence and conflict on Iraqi women and how they deal with the difficulties they face today. A countrywide solution to this issue relies heavily on interpreting laws dealing with women, including those about their status, criminal law, and other areas of law. These also differ in their perceptions of policy formation on women's concerns and the extent to which a Western and powerful country can or should influence the economy and society in another Arab and Kurds nation with a Muslim majority. Finally, the legitimacy and efficacy of an empowerment program are analyzed here in light of the perspectives of American officials and politicians, Iraqi women and men, Arab women, and civilian groups involved in transformational programs.

"In Iraq, there are reports of fatwas being issued banning women from driving or being seen alone; you have got women being stoned for wearing makeup and professional women being murdered. Would you acknowledge that the status of women in Iraq is risky right now? The rights chartered in the constitution will also help consolidate the role of women in public life and help them play a greater role in public life¹⁰".

Religion-related issues need greater attention than sexism does. Within the framework of the sectarian system, women are categorized as either female Kurds, Sunnis, Shi'a, or Assyrians. Imagine a world where a woman's gender-related or personal aspirations are at war with the norms of her community. Her religion or race's established beliefs will take precedence over her ambitions. In other words, she will have to compromise. The efforts that the Government is undertaking to attract women to work at a pharmaceutical facility situated north of Baghdad were highlighted by Hijab. Buses brought women from Baghdad to the facility to work there since the locals in the immediate factory area would not let women be employed there. Consequently, the buses carrying the ladies were periodically the targets of violent acts.

On the other hand, antagonism and violence soon subsided, and local women began working at the facility once it was reopened. This paradigm will continue to rely on human connections; however, those connections will be dynamic and dependent on continually developing power combinations rather than being fixed and unchanging. Moreover,

¹⁰ Valeria Vilardo and Sara Bittar, *Gender Profile-Iraq, Women's Empowerment and Public Policy*, 2006, p. 11.

the challenges faced by Iraqi women are seen as secondary; they are seen as secondary to the need for stability and state-building rather than being an essential reflection of them.

“Only 7.4% of working women surveyed had access to childcare at work. Furthermore, most working women (85%) were expected to return home before 5 pm. Moreover, with weak legislative protection for women and families in the workplace, women are systematically excluded in the private sector. Another constraint is the job guarantee after returning from maternity leave. After maternity leave, women are not legally guaranteed their positions¹¹”.

However, in the story of *Orange Light*, the heroine, Hanaa, as a person, never had pleasure in her heart. She lived through multiple losses in love and marriage. She fell in love with her adolescent, Riyadh, and he ignored her passion; she married others, had children, and then disappeared from her and his family after being imprisoned on a political charge. Moreover, love knocked on her door again with Dr. Haider, working with her in the same hospital. At first, he exchanged love for her, but later, he preferred to travel and start a new life with an Iraqi doctor and found in her what he missed in the absence of family and homeland. Furthermore, she married Saleh. Moreover, she gave birth to him, and her heart did not beat for him until a bullet caught him, and he died:

“Rumors rolled around about Dr. Haider, who is now the softest stuff for empty mouths; the most reliable news was the news of his separation from his Iraqi wife residing in Libya. I knew that her recovery attempts were unsuccessful; the narrowing of livelihood that her father practiced on him did not bear fruit, so he returned to where it belonged, leaving his two sons with her. This news opened to me again the door of curiosity and stalking eyes. She moved away from the circle of his relations and acquaintances, closing the door in the face of the wind of gossip and speculation. My life has enough complexities and burdens. I preferred not to add a burden I do not need. Exactly, the tales of *The Thousand Nights and One Night* as if I have to be Scheherazade for Dr. Haider, and my life to be a scene for the fantasies and illusions of my co-workers and the substance of their rich conversations gossiping about my reputation¹²”.

Thus, despite all the harsh conditions, “Hanaa” lived her defeats in a transparent spirit, as a lover who folded in her memory a thousand stories and meanings of love and reconciled with life and with herself. Furthermore, because every level has an end, her life passed in front of her in clear, successive images in complete safety. a strong bright light takes her towards him. Then, gravity fails her, and her soul shaves lightly, stripping her of fifty years. Love or in her daily life, where Nadia Al-Abbru intelligently addresses through Hanaa burning social issues such as love and war. The novel ends with Hanaa's hope for a better life than the one she lived, the energy that made

¹¹ *Helping Women in the Kurdistan region of Iraq to Find Jobs. The World Bank in Iraq*, 2019, p. 1.

¹² Al-Abbru, *Orange Light*, 2019, p. 53-54/ Translated mine.

her follow the traditions and ignore her dreams of being an ordinary woman that has ambitions to create her voice, her choices, and her happiness without being ignored or criticized from the people around her. Any society cannot fulfill its growth and advancement goals if half of its people face discrimination and prejudice. When people lose their freedom, they lose their validity, dignity, freedom, and volition. Respect for human rights and equality measures a society's growth. Governments and organizations experience more peace and well-being when their constituents have equal rights and opportunities. The provision of human security is intimately linked to the notion of empowering women to become independent and fulfill their social needs. Women must therefore be included in efforts for peace and security on a national and international level in post-armed conflict and crises. Their participation and commitment to these initiatives confirm their status as agents rather than victims of these disputes. In Iraqi Society, there is a need to:

“Establish more safe spaces without the need for male accompaniment. Not all change needs to come from legislation, but it could come from observed changes or new technologies. For example, some of the necessities for the male accompaniment of women could be mitigated by the higher use of cameras in government offices. Increased cameras are an attractive policy in many countries responding to stories of unwarranted police mistreatment. There is little reason to think that more police stations could not be equipped with mandatory video cameras, with punishments for their misuse. Other ideas to improve opportunities for justice would be a training program to increase the share of women working in police stations or government agencies that deal directly with constituents or establishing women-only lines at police stations or government agencies¹³”.

This paper demonstrates that these theoretical tools can be employed to operate within and beyond the languages in question, it establishes a foundation for further critical engagements with how other literary and communication traditions translate their works, with a focus on Iraqi women's literature, this research is a significant scholarly contribution: women's empowerment is a broad concept that requires a slow but steady change in societal norms. This goal is frequently stated without nuance or detail in public policy documents, but its implementation is much more challenging. The data shows that for many Iraqi women, empowerment is both a means and an end: a way to get from where they are now, where they lack resources and security, to where they would have neither income nor security but would have more significant opportunities and would be able to take part in political and legal reform. Although some women in Iraq are vocal in their opposition to discrimination and their desire for equal rights (including the freedom to drive, work, attend school, and wear what they please), there is little appetite

¹³ Valeria Vilardo and Sara Bittar. *Gender Profile-Iraq, Women's Empowerment and Public Policy*, 2006, p. 29.

for changing the traditional marriage and family structure or embracing Western values.

Finally, Creating a vibrant and gender-balanced private sector in Iraq requires removing legal restrictions to women's involvement in the distant economy, giving maternity leave, and providing basic gender-friendly facilities such as safe transportation, childcare, and sex-disaggregated sanitation. It is necessary to expand workers' rights and entitlements and recognize rights to secure housing and land tenure and access to public space, raw materials, natural resources, transportation, and basic infrastructure and services. Furthermore, women must develop new policies to expand their participation in Iraq's societal reconstruction. The regulations governing hiring women in Iraq should be applied relatively compared to hiring men. Therefore, a perfect world doesn't exist for women in the Middle East, but, I hope there will be better life for Iraqi women when equality with men could be further elaborated in the Future. The analysis expects positive impact on women in Iraq since the study encourages girls and women to know their responsibilities and rights in several aspects of life such as; education, self-confidence in making decisions without being humiliated or ignored. Eliminating preconceptions of female inferiority while simultaneously appreciating and recognizing women for their professional successes may promote harmony in male-female interactions and a promising future for women in Iraq.

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