

Women's Social Status in Western and Arabic Novels "Al-Kafira" *The Infidel Woman* by Ali Bader and *the Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne

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Abstract: This study aims at investigating women's social status in western and Arabic novels "Al-Kafira" the Infidel Woman by Ali Bader and the Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne in different cultures and centuries. To approach the aim of the present study; the researcher invests an analytical method in order to describe the women's social status in the Infidel Woman by Ali Bader and the Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne. However, this study has proven to be extremely women have found comfort in literature, particularly in novels, in pronouncing their life on earth and in announcing their resolution of liberty that enables them to express most of their thoughts and feelings. This study has defined the way the novels explores women's suffering and how they try to solve difficulties and succeed.

Keywords: Female's Social Status, the Infidel Woman, the Scarlet Letter, Arabic Novels, Ali Bader.

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature is generally accepted to be a reflection of society. Literature represents social expectations and behaviors. That describes life of humans through characters, expresses message for instruction, information and enjoyment through their deeds and words. Literature may be considered as a testimony to women's evolution over centuries. Since the past to present, the women's role in literature that is changing refers to the evolutions of women empowerment (Ruthven, 1990: 103).

Females live in a complicated position in the early 20th century, characterized by deprivation in rights of education and independence, and they have forced to stay under the control of their husbands and fathers all over the world. In the Victorian era American witnessed several improvements that affected English society in politics, economics and philosophy. This is also a prolific time of English Literature (Internet 1).

The Scarlet Letter shows important themes in the 20th century that are shaming and social stigmatizing in the society. While *the Infidel Woman* shows important themes in the 21st century, which are violence and cruelty in the Arab homeland society.

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The Arabian literature is so extensive that it is a daunting challenge to sift through the various works from the 7th century to the present day to achieve a "definitive" image of women in Arab literature. Poets, novels, stories and writers speak to us, both men and women, exposing their innermost selves. A review of this infinitely rich body of literature just provides a glimpse of the changing roles, values, and desires experienced by the Arab world (Internet 2).

Feminist literature is poetry, drama, nonfiction and fiction that promotes the feminist aims of identifying, creating and maintaining women's social, economic, equal civil and political rights (Hilary M., 1990: 203).

The American society has long been demanding its participants to fall into prescribed gender stereotypes which are strongly represented in the literature of the period. In ancient Greece the agreed rule for women was that they were to be seen and not heard. Ironically, in Greek dramas female characters predominated, while all female characters were portrayed by men (Claire, 1992: 3).

II. *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne

The Scarlet Letter has been written by Nathaniel Hawthorne who is short story writer, dark romantic and an American novelist. He was born in 1804 in Salem, Massachusetts. His works often focus on religion, morality and history (Auerbach, 1982: 120).

This novel was set in New England in a small village. Hester Prynne is the main character in this novel, who is a young woman, she lives in Boston in the 17th century; she was taken from a town jail with her little girl who calls Pearl, while the scarlet letter "A" on her chest (this scarlet letter was used to indicate that this person was adultery). In the midst of a crowd, an old man appears to tell them that Hester is being punished for committing the crime of 'murder'. Hester's husband had sent her to America before him, but he never made it to Boston, and there were reports of him missing at sea. At this time, Hester became pregnant, but she did not reveal the identity of her lover and the father of her child. The letter "A" was used and disgraced as a punishment for its secrecy.

Recently, Roger Chillingworth admitted that he was Hester's husband who lives in Boston and works in the medical field. Her husband plans to take revenge on Hester for her faithfulness. This pair is actually the old man who showed up in the crowd and told them to commit it. Hester and Pearl live as outcasts in a small cottage in a village far from Boston. Hester donated her work and gradually became respected by the women of the village. Many women continue to speak to her and take care of other older persons who need help. Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale gets sick repeatedly and looks as if he's punishing himself for something. Chillingworth doubts it and moves in with him on the grounds that he needs continued medical care. Hester recognizes him, but he makes her swear to keep it a secret. One day, as Dimmesdale is asleep, Chillingworth noticed something on his chest and realizes that his doubts are misplaced. In new forms Dimmesdale continues to torture itself. A few days later, after meeting a sick woman, as Hester and Pearl return home, they meet Dimmesdale, and he stands on a scaffold. Pearl begged him to reveal she was his daughter, but he declined. Hester wants to announce the name of Chillingworth in front of Dimmesdale, but Chillingworth continues to expose and silence Hester. Hester tells Dimmesdale at first chance and they agree to go out together from Boston. They book a ticket to a ship leaving to Europe after a few days and decide to live there as a family. Chillingworth knows about this and reserved his seat on the same boat. Dimmesdale gives his finest message to people the next day. Hester and Pearl stand on the scaffold. He moves towards them in an unconscious motion, kisses Pearl, announces finally that she is his daughter and then falls down. Chillingworth's dreams are that things are finished; it won't be Hester's or Dimmesdale's revenge. One year later, after leaving Chillingworth the village he has died. The death of Dimmesdale did not change Hester's plan of traveling to Europe with Pearl. Hester is working hard in Europe and sending Pearl to the best schools. Pearl grows into a beautiful, educated, and friendly miss who

meets and marries an aristocratic man. Pearl now lives in Europe with her husband and baby, and writes regularly to her mother. One day, Hester returns to the same village in Boston, and stayed in the same house. Hester once again wears the scarlet letter "A." She would be buried next to Dimmesdale when she dies and the letter "A" has been found on their graves (Baym, 1993: 139-143).

III. Women's Social Status in *the Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne

One may use a number of terms to describe Hester Prynne, the researcher decided to describe her as a feminist. The researcher wanted to name her that because the Puritan society did not believe that there were many rights women had. At the beginning of the novel Hester primarily followed the women's rules of puritan society. Yet because the novel continued, she started not to accept that all the rules that had been developed for women during this period had been right. Hester wanted to revolt against the Puritan ideals even though she recognized that she would have difficulty doing that. It can't be assumed that Hester was a committed liberal whose main aim was to get fair opportunities for women; it's only that she had progressive ideals.

In 1850 masterpiece, *the Scarlet Letter* has written and has sat in the 1600 hundreds in Puritan settled Boston. It's about an unfaithful female, a feminist text. This story is about Pearl and her mother Hester Prynne, as well as the punishment that Hester suffers from her Puritan society, a society that seeks to reconstitute culture by satisfying the Christian principle on Earth in the 1640s of Massachusetts Bay Colony. Throughout this novel, we have an exclusive view of sin, sexuality, love and women. This story about a young woman who are married, she commits adultery and embraces a daughter. It was considered to be quite shameful and punishable by a church-centered society.

Hawthorne demonstrated not only a wide diversity, but also greater complexity in the scarlet letter. The main characters in this novel are Hester Prynne and her lover, reverend Arthur Dimmesdale who are the top to step out of their presumption and become individuals in their own rights. The theme is the one that is already conscious of a sin perpetrated by the story releases earlier and of recounting the consequences of the crime through a community's survivals, which is about feminisms, in which the sin is adultery, but Hawthorne would not accept the absolute ethics of the puritan society that emphasizes permanent penance through wearing the the letter "A".

In this novel Hester was in love with Dimmesdale. Although, she was Roger Chilling's wife, whom she never loves, and who for years has been mislaid and reputed as dead. Hester has a big problem: Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale, the man she loves, is the spiritual cornerstone of the Puritan society they belong to. As anyone who is conceived to become the fulfillment of the demands of Christ on World, Reverend Dimmesdale will risk undying destruction if he were admitted to have fathered a child with Hester. Facing chastisement for her unfaithful sins, Hester loses to give the name of Pearl's father. However her rebuff ensures that she would increase her individual chastisement. Hester reveals out to be much more sturdy than her lover, Dimmesdale, who is afraid to admit his fault. But, the shame is hurling him up. Dimmesdale becomes weak, when Hester's powerful emerges over the years only to upturn.

"She hath good skills at her needle, that's certain," remarked One of her female spectator; "but did ever a woman, before This brazen hussy, contrive such a way of showing it! Why, Gossips, what is it but to laugh in the faces of our godly Magistrates, and make a pride out of what they, worthy Gentleman, meant for a punishment" (15)

In the forest, Hester tries to meet Dimmesdale in order to say that she believes that Chillingworth may be Chillingworth tries to identify Chillingworth's identity to Dimmesdale. In order to live as a family with Pearl, the lovers decided to travel to Europe. In four days they'll take a boat sailing from Boston. Both get a sense of relief and Hester takes off her scarlet

letter and lets her hair down. When Pearl saw her mother without the scarlet letter "A", She didn't recognize her as Pearl was playing nearby. One day before he sailing of the ship, the people in the town come to a holiday, Dimmesdale espouses his most erudite speech ever.

During history, incidents that are historically and socially newsworthy have driven authors and editors in their writing to record, help and express thoughts or emotions on certain occurrences. This was the case for American early feminist writers. Soon, after Abigail's written plea to her husband, several females, undermined by the stringent traditional social limits of the day and the lack of women's right, fell in line and decided to write to express feelings of anger and outrage about voter suppression laws, male domination and marital repression. (Cairns, 1912: 191).

IV. "Al-Kafira" *The Infidel Woman* by Ali Bader

Al-Kafira "*The Infidel Woman*" has written by Ali Bader who is an Iraqi poet, critic and novelist, Bader was born in Baghdad in 1979, where he studied French Literature and western Philosophy. He has written 15 works and novels and also as editor in chief of Alca Books.

In 2015, Ali Bader published his novel "*The infidel Woman*" that is the story of Fatima, who became Sophie. Fatima lives in a village attached to a small town on the edge of the de sert that is controlled by extremists who impose their laws. Fatima's family takes the side of the armed men and she works with her mother in their service. After her father dies in a suicide bombing, Fatima marries a young unemployed failure of a man who ends up believing he can only obtain symbolic value in society by carrying out a suicide bombing, which will turn him from a failure into a hero. He will then enter Paradise, where seventy dark-eyed virgins will be awaiting him. Following his death the armed men decide to marry Fatima to one of them. She escapes to Europe via people trafficker who rapes her on the way. She reaches Brussels, throws off her niqab, and turns from Fatima into Sophie. She has two personalities though: Fatima who works in the morning for a cleaning company, and Sophie, the European girl who goes out to bars every night and takes a handsome boy back to her flat. This is a form of revenge against her dead husband, who told her his reason for carrying out a suicide bombing was 70 virgins he would have in Paradise. She decides to screw seventy guys in Europe. But by chance she falls in love with Adrian, a Scandinavian guy who works as an aviation engineer. She later discovers he has Lebanese Christian roots. His father's entire family were killed during the civil war, and the father took revenge by killing a Palestinian family. The father felt guilty, however, and escaped to Norway in an attempt to forget. He confessed in a documentary film and lied out this event and later he suicided. Adrian returned to Lebanon to marry a saved daughter of his father's victims.

Sophie is involved in a complicated relationship with Adrian. She often travels with him, loves him, but finds out that he is married with a daughter. She didn't accept the situation, got angry with him. She wanted him all for herself. One day they quarrel before going to a party they are invited to. Adrian storms off and is involved in a car accident. Over ten days in a hospital, Sophie sits beside him and tells him her whole life.

V. Women's Social Status in "Al-Kafira" *The Infidel Woman* by Ali Bader

Al-Kafira" The Infidel Woman tells the story of Fatima, who lives in a remote city, which has been seized by terrorist militants and forced by her family to serve them. Her father was killed in a suicide bombing, after that she married a young unemployed man looking for his lost glory in a suicide operation to enjoy the promises of nymphs, and wearing the hero's dress when failure was the ultimate solution in life. After his death, the terrorist groups decided to go to a man of their armed forces, but this time she has refused their orders and she decided to go to Europe. She agreed with one of the escapees who would help her get to the city of Brussels but he had raped her on their way to Brussels. As soon as she arrives, she takes off the veil, and she changes her name to Sophie as well as she tried to revenge for her. Fatima has been worked in a company

at the morning, and Sophie works at night in bars and she comes every night with a handsome young boy; to avenge her husband, who told her that he will get seventy nymphs in the paradise; she decided to sleep with 70 young boy in Europe, until she falls in love with a young boy, which make the novel is good.

Ali Bader shows in this novel the roots of violence in the Middle East through narrative techniques ingenious, combined with the language of poetry transparent, the novel plays an important role in the survey and analysis of extremism in our societies, through the woman's body, which turns into a blog written by men of their violence and cruelty their love and let them down.

This novel is the novel of the feminine, but it is also oppression, where it tells the breakability of the man culture and its assimilation. Through this message, the speech travels politically and geographically from the Middle East to Europe, whereas colonial experimentation is.

II. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can see that the women's status in both novels are suffering from the same of problems as well as we also conclude that Fatima's (Sophie) suffering in Arabic Novel "*Al-Kafira*" *The Infidel Woman* that is written by Ali Bader is similar to that experienced by Hester in *the Scarlet Letter* that is written by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Whereas, both characters were exposed to injustice and suffering by the society in which they live.

These two novels represent a similar situation in two different centuries, i.e. the 20th and 21st in which the novels that took place. We can also conclude from these two novels that both female characters dreamed of the same dream of migrating to Europe and eventually fulfilling their dreams of arriving and living in Europe.

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