

# A Postcolonial Reading of Double Consciousness: Internal and External Displacement in Post-2003 Iraqi Novel

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**Abstract**— *The concept of double consciousness, coined by William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1903), has a figurative, rather than the medical, aspect dedicated for African Americans as a result of their feeling of duality. This study focuses on questioning its relevance to the postcolonial context in post-2003 Iraqi novels. The targeted individuals with this concept are reflected in a diasporic setting including internal and external displacement in the selected translated texts of *The Tobacco Keeper* (2011) by Ali Bader, *The Book of Collateral Damage* (2019) and *The Baghdad Eucharist* (2017) by Sinan Antoon. The concept is examined on Iraqi displaced characters of different minorities and identities. The hypothesis of the study arises from the similar posture of African-Americans with the situation of Iraqi asylum seekers and certain minorities inside their homeland Iraq and in hostlands all over the world nowadays. The distancing among their native people is more serious than the people abroad. As a conclusion, the selected Iraqi novels mirror the concept of double consciousness in a way that highlight a very wide range of settings within certain postcolonial issues. The novels entail the survival of Iraqi (internal and external) migrants with the unresolved sense of double consciousness of those problematic characters.*

**Keywords**— *Postcolonial diasporic characters; Du Bois's Double consciousness; Duality in Iraqi post-2003 novels; internal and external settings of Iraqi asylum seeker.*

## I. DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS

In general, as a modern sociological and postcolonial concept, "double consciousness" is asserted by William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868-1963) in (1903). It is dedicated to African-American people and seems to be of a great validity to what happens to Iraqi asylum seekers and migrants nowadays, especially. It points to the psychological challenge and experience of reconciling or harmonizing his (Du Bois's) African heritage with an upbringing in European dominated society. Du Bois's social philosophy, the concept of double consciousness that reflects the postcolonial and African American criticism underlying issues, focuses on the innate struggle and need. In fact, it is felt by lowered and subordinated groups of people in a brutal oppressive inhuman society or dissimilar one. Those individuals picture themselves as (insider and outsider) which refer to split or shatter consciousness. It is the (twoness) that matters for them. This comes under what is known as "acculturation" that is acquiring another culture in a disadvantageous companionable situation (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996a).

Generally, Du Bois postures three fundamentals to the theory of Double Consciousness: the veil, twoness, and second sight. The veil is an element that separates the races or declares the issue of the colour line. The second element, as an internal processing, is agitated by the external gaze of Du Bois's theory that is the sense of twoness. Twoness shows that within the progression of self-formation the racialized takes the position of two different worlds. Originally, the Black world, which they create behind the veil, and the White world, which degrades them through absence of recognition. Second sight is the third element of the theory of Double Consciousness. (Itzigsohn and Brown, 2015).

## II. "THE TOBACCO KEEPER": A PROCESS OF IDENTITY ADAPTATIONS

Here we find what may be termed colonial textuality, which is a kind of absorption or extraction based on the total erasure of another being's existence and the creation of a vacuum. (*The Tobacco Keeper*, p. 18)

Early in the 1990s, dramatic disturbances and considerable migration have been witnessed by the Arab political scene. Specifically, in the case of Iraq, sanctions, wars, and military occupation have reproduced narratives of grief that can hardly escape the latest past. Actually, the past always has a nightmarish look even in the narratives. Here, the characteristics of the diasporic colonized Iraqi individual can be noticed trying to manage among the many phases or identities given to him/her during the colonial recurrence in his/her homeland. The diasporic character who has an intimate attach to his/her mother country is always in between, physically and psychologically. Adapting new identities makes it hard for him like wearing masks. These identities or masks are far away from his belongingness and similar to his disinterestedness.

For Simone Weil, "to live as if everything around you were temporary and perhaps trivial is to fall prey to petulant cynicism as well as to querulous lovelessness"(Said, 2007, p. 183). Ali Bader's "*The Tobacco Keeper*" is a complex, emotionally charged novel of masks and shifting identities. It encompasses eighty years, and an overwhelming range of characters and landscapes, but always has one question pulsing beneath the text: How did the violent, terrifying Baghdad of 2006 come to be? (Qualey, 2011).

"Bader, who never visited Israel, already knows a lot about it. ... Bader is an ideologue, anxious to show his generation the way toward progress. Thus, he cannot have doubts, only certainties. The novel should be read as a manifesto. With this manifesto, he tries to reform Arab nationalism rather than do away with it" (Zeidel, 2013). "The writers are not so interested in the absorption and the life their Jewish hero had in Israel. The Jew is more of a symbol than a real person. He represents the purest form of Iraqi patriotism. Therefore, he cannot be at home away from his "homeland" and desire to return to Iraq. Against all odds, these Jewish figures, dead or alive, often manage to return" (Zeidel, 2013, p. 788). " Bader writes that the Jews "are in Filastin... but their spirit is somewhere else". "They have no real connection to the land" (p. 791).

"Author Ali Bader has long been fascinated with metaphysics and views of identity, and he uses the violinist's three personas, with their different personalities, in direct parallel with the three personas used by Fernando Pessoa in his poetry book *The Tobacco Shop*, selections of which begin the novel and echo throughout... The author continues the metaphysical parallels by suggesting that similarly, three different identities pervade and overlap among the Middle Eastern countries of Iraq, Iran, and Syria, with Israel providing yet another set of

characteristics and identity, and that it is these competing ideas of their own national identity which are responsible for the succession of wars among these countries" (Mary Whipple, 2012).

As it is expressed by Ali Bader, the novelist himself, that the story of this protagonist, Yousef Sami Saleh who then adopts other identities, indicates that identity is a process of adaptation. As soon as it has located itself in one particular historical moment then it deviates into a different moment. Moreover:

All these imaginary communities begin with a fabricated, invented narrative which denies that identities blend and overlap, but which at a certain point in time reveals such boundaries to be imaginary, constructed and fabricated, nothing but narrative concoctions. As a community loses its connection with its roots it attempts to regain its lost horizons, which it may achieve only through storytelling and imagination. (Bader, *The Tobacco Keeper*, p. 8)

As many other exiles, the narrator, an ego or black writer, is also facing a kind of longing to certain places in his homeland, Iraq, where the past and the present are existing all together. He says when he resolves in Syria, "I was in love with Bab Touma. My time there reminded me of some lost moments of my life in Baghdad because of the similarities between this neighborhood and Al-Karradah in Baghdad" (*The Tobacco Keeper*, p. 33). As a vital characteristic of diaspora people, they recall a shared memory, vision, or myth related to their homeland (Safran, 2007, par. 4). Sharing memories and dreams among exiles is so expected since a kind of community is set away from their homeland. Bab Touma, is a certain district in Syria, the neighboring land to Iraq. Many Iraqi migrants gather and communicate each other while visiting such places in diaspora. So, Iraq is behind this recall of memory and moreover, it is their yearning and worrying about their scattered identity in exile.

A lot of young Iraqi intellectuals, the second generation of fugitives flee from the pandemonium of Baghdad. While the first generation had fled the regime's hell and the repression that is now over, the second generation is fleeing terrorism, militias, occupation and religious suppression. The negative image stands opposite to the most positive image of Iraqis, in general where the first generation had danced to the music of the Beatles, the Shadows and the Doors, Cliff Richard, and talked about armed revolution and the socialist state, the next generation danced to rap and hip hop, the songs of Fifty Cent, Eminem and Fergie, while debating democracy and

human rights. There were also plans to emigrate to Europe, with Iraqis moving wave after wave to join their friends there. But they remained attached to those who stayed behind, especially in neighborhood countries (Bader, *The Tobacco Keeper*, p. 40). They do not stand being treated like passive entities. The intent of returning may parallel their desire to leave home. The frequently going back and forth motion, sometimes, happen when checking where to settle down and where to get work (Kwok-bun, 2012).

Ali Bader describes the situation where a fluid of migrants come repeatedly to Damascus, the capital of Syria, and other host homes as:

Many Islamist journalists and intellectuals also arrived from Baghdad. Some of them rapidly became caught up in pop music, mixed society, strange clothing and accessories of every kind. Before long they would shave their beards and let their hair grow, dazzled by the freedom of life in the West and embracing Western values. Others did not. They stayed true to their principles but learned a new type of collective rejection of bourgeois ethics. But this was a peaceful tendency that inclined towards sensual gratification, a domesticated anarchy that loved nature and animals and rejected conventional morality. (*The Tobacco Keeper*, p. 40-41)

The narrator also refers to the state of a friend of him. Farris Hassan, who, in order to evade falling into the depths of despair like other immigrants, had decided to return to the Arab world (*The Tobacco Keeper*, p. 55).

Talking to other friends, the narrator denotes to their inner feelings regarding their impression about their homeland, Iraq. He mentions that they'd been living in Stockholm for twenty years but had gone back to live in Baghdad after the fall of the regime. She talked about the hardships of life and compared the Baghdad of twenty years ago with the present day. (*The Tobacco Keeper*, p. 68). The Iraqi's past, in diaspora, gives the impression to be very essential. It is echoed through their memories which are picked selectively according to the in progress situation especially the ongoing violence in their homeland Iraq (Al-Khairo, 2008, p.11). With their homecoming, the past seems quite dissimilar to the present. This dissimilarity makes those individuals unfamiliar with the romanticized image of their homeland and reflects their persistent duality.

In another place, Bader sheds light on the types of people migrating from Iraq and the reason behind their departure. He states that:

They were mostly young people, recent university graduates. After the total collapse of the state in 2003 they couldn't find employment. All they could do was work as translators in the Green Zone, a hazardous line of work where their lives were constantly under threat. They were everywhere: on the streets, with foreign troops and at checkpoints. Those translators, influenced by Western literature, were mostly well-dressed, very civilized and highly Europeanized. They were far more sophisticated than the American soldiers and officers who treated them with such contempt. (*The Tobacco Keeper*, p. 79)

In addition to the above description of those people, they sometimes try to dissolve into the identity of the colonizer. The native informant or the mimic character meet together in the identification of those translators. They try to imitate, yet avoid the resistance. As he puts it, the narrator of Bader makes it clear that:

What was truly astonishing, at least from my perspective, was that they all had Western names: Michael, John, Robert, or Sam. They were never called by their Arab names...the Americans had trouble pronouncing Arab names such as Abdel Rahman, Majeed, Rebhi and Fakhri. So they used those fake names instead, which were easy and accessible and created no psychological barriers. (*The Tobacco Keeper*, p. 79)

These obstacles uncover the original and unavoidable enmity towards the colonizer. In general, Iraqi names proposed a kind of implicit enmity, while Western names, on the other hand, allowed Iraqi translators to overlook the realities of their state of affairs and live the illusion that they were truly American. This led them to act arrogantly as though they'd appropriated the white masks of the Americans for themselves. This was what Frantz Fanon meant by black skin and white masks. According to him, colonialism in effect oppresses and crushes people, hollowing them out and filling the void with a fragmented image of their original personality. In other words, the character of the keeper of flocks in Tobacco Shop is replaced by the character of the protected man, with a new name that is always American. It's a dreamed of character but one that cannot be fulfilled due to the oppressive, humiliating presence of the Americans. It is a character that is not in fact "protected". (*The Tobacco Keeper*, p. 79-80)

The different settings offer different adaptations and hiding behind the masks. The panoramic poor tasted

life of the musician with the oppressing politics and foreign names are described by the protagonist himself as, "isn't there more to life than finding oneself a complete stranger among other complete strangers?" (*The Tobacco Keeper*, p. 95). The line reminds us forcefully of Alberto Caeiro's words, in "*The Tobacco Shop*" for Fernando Pessoa, when he says: "The windows of my room, a room that belongs to an unknown person among the millions of unknown people in the world. And even if he were known, what could possibly be known about him?" (*The Tobacco Keeper*, p. 95). It is a very direct clear hint to the flawing condition and life of the protagonist who keep on searching for his real identity inside and outside his country.

The very obvious trigger of those individuals is represented in the necessity of leaving their homeland to an unknown host home. Emigration, wave after wave, is what makes whole communities depart their country. It is an indefinite destiny that puts them in the unknown future of their horrible present. This loud, yet, speechless voice of immigrants can be heard from the protagonist as he says:

But emigrate where? Emigration was a vague longing, a leap into the unknown. Would emigration tear down the walls? Would it banish the persistent scenes that gave him nightmares? Would it eliminate the Jewish fear of society that had persisted throughout history? Would it end the feeling of alienation and the impulse to go back to the womb? Would it demolish the wall separating the self from others or the 'here' from 'there'? What would lie beyond these borders? Chaos, nothingness or paradise? (*The Tobacco Keeper*, p. 142)

Relating to the epitome of double consciousness in *The Tobacco Keeper*, it is, obviously, presented in a way that makes a single identity distract or divert into different personas. The main character, whose life story has been reported by an ego writer, experiences an obliged displacement in different places with different identities. He is someone else wherever he tries to be back to Iraq. The duality or the three variant entities are used to help the protagonist survive in his external and internal diaspora. Yousef Salih Sami or Kamal Medhat or Haider Salman are all associated with the same person but they define each particular persona uniquely. So, the concept of double consciousness is reflected in the postcolonial setting through a flash back that is related to the past to scrutinize the problematic present.

Certain defying issues in certain settings have been caught, in this novel, that stand behind the concept of double consciousness. The political issue seems of a great importance since the protagonist with his family have been casted away by the Iraqi government in the twentieth century. Besides, the social issue is also another aspect for being in a defying postcolonial atmosphere that none of the acquired personalities can manage being safe in the local home. Moreover, for him and for other exiles, the unknown is all what they think about prior to their journey abroad as they ask, "What would lie beyond these borders? Chaos, nothingness or paradise?". This universal question stands still in the face of the horrible catastrophic postcolonial life.

The diasporic character has got the chance to relive in his homeland but on the condition that he should be pretending as someone else. The double or triple identity is used as a means for being accepted inside and outside the homeland. Kamal Medhat or Haider Salman are behaving differently, but at the same time they replicate the original character, Yousef Sami Saleh, the Jewish Iraqi citizen. The duality is present at each case since the character is still, originally, known as Sami but relive as Kamal or Haider. His intimacy with his country is the main push behind his swaying identity. It is dangerous for him to be recognized as Sami and it is quite hard to pretend as someone else from another religion. Even the narrator, who is a pseudonym along the whole novel, is suffering from a kind of duality, simply because of his work an ego writer, or a ghost writer, or a black writer. He has got a dream of becoming the one he likes, but his personal condition as an exile makes difficult for him to be himself.

Obviously, the tragedy is so apparent in the terrific setting of this novel. The main character declares his deep feeling of it before being assassinated by anonymous militias due to the postcolonial illness, sectarianism, when he utters, "I don't regard death as awful, but see him as an elegant gentleman. I will embrace him and call him brother . . ." (p. 305). Death, here, is another setting and means for escaping such an atmosphere of fear. To leave homeland in a way that saves the protagonist the agony of displacement abroad or even within homeland. Thus, the feeling of duality seems fatal for this persona as he says:

Through their characters he discovered the essential answer to the problem of identity. Each one of them was a facet of his personality, a single entity that was split and multiple at the same time. They were a three-dimensional cubist painting of a single face. (p. 303)

Ali Bader tries to reconstruct the setting of the past by making use of post-2003 era and reflecting the enforced emigration of certain individuals even though they are skillful people. A "brain waste" character, Yousef Sami Saleh or as he pretends to be after returning to Iraq (Kamal Medhat or Haider Salman), is presented as a musician of a good skill and who descends from a Jewish family in Iraq. His repeated casting away from and returning to Iraq tells that other reasons stand behind his estrangement. Such reasons could be enlisted under the heading of hybridity where ethnic groups try to reconcile a self-identity.

Basically, migrants transfer because they are already in the essence of contemporaneity. They cannot be treated like passive entities being converted along the world. The intention of returning may parallel their desire to leave home, but their main concern may change due to the experience along the way. The frequently going back and forth motion, sometimes, happen when checking where to settle down and where to get work. In such a crisscrossing, the reasons and consequences of migration are enclosed (Kwok-bun, 2012).

So, Ali Bader's protagonist, Kamal, experiences this push and pull move from and to Iraq. His priorities change with the passing of time and along the way from Tel-Aviv, Tehran, and Syria to settle again in Iraq. His different names (identities) make him feel the importance of belonging and of self-identity:

Kamal Medhat's life shows that identity is always closely allied to a narrative standpoint. A life is a story that is fabricated, formulated or narrated at a completely random moment, a localized historical instant when others turn into the 'other', into strangers, foreigners and even outcasts. (Bader, *The Tobacco Keeper*, p.8)

Obviously, it is all about identity as an essential aspect in diaspora. Several diasporic Iraqis have preserved their past in memory so as to survive with the bewildering present, and they assign this frozen past as a safe haven for their identity in the future. Iraqis' persistent claim that the present situation does not embody the "Real Iraq" indicates a romanticized impression of the homeland that is no longer there (Al-Khairi, 2008). Thus, this belief leaves them in between all the time.

### III. "THE BAGHDAD EUCHARIST": INTERNAL CONTRASTED DIASPORIC SETTINGS

"One of the "cultural heroes" illuminating Iraq's bleak realities is Sinan Antoon. Antoon is also a poet, scholar, and translator who was born in Baghdad in 1967 to an Iraqi father and American mother. His father's family belongs to Iraq's Assyrian (Chaldean) Christian minority. Antoon studied English literature at Baghdad University. He left Iraq in 1991 for the U.S., where he completed a Ph.D. in Arabic and Islamic Studies and where he resides to this day. His works describe life in Iraq during the past regime and in the period following America's invasion. His books portray the brutal and unending violence, but also include many glimmers of hope that suggest that Iraq, and the world at large, may yet transcend war and build a better future. His poems and novels have been translated to nine languages". The author depicts the nightmarish reality of his homeland, while showing ways to survive, to preserve one's sanity, and to recognize the beauty and goodness that still exists in the world" (Elimelekh, 2017).

"Antoon juxtaposes the terror of Iraqi life against characters seeking to survive through their mind-bending determination to see beauty in their fragmented world. To achieve his paradox, Antoon transports readers of his narrative's here-and-now into transcendent unrealities by using magical realism. A kind of three-dimensional dialectic operates between the natural and supernatural, and rationality and irrationality in which characters find in their dreams respite by suspending accepted definitions of time, place, and identity" (Elimelekh, 2017).

"In this novel Antoon focuses on the persecution, discrimination, and displacement suffered by the nation's ethnic minorities, whose members are considered alien and "other." A foreign enemy that must be eradicated by any means often involving extreme brutality.<sup>28</sup> The first part of the novel centers around an old man named Youssef and the second around his relative, a young woman named Maha. She and her husband find shelter in Youssef's large house after having been violently driven out of their home in Baghdad's al-Dura neighborhood. Lodging in the home of a relative, Maha is a refugee in her own city. She represents the younger generation, which is the complete opposite of the older generation to which Youssef belongs"(Elimelekh, 2017).

In *The Baghdad Eucharist*, Antoon tries to identify some historical, political and social events that took place in Iraq earlier to the targeted situation he is tackling in order to put the reader into the frame of the whole scene. In fact, these events could be away from colonialism but at the same time similar to its outcomes. Earlier in Iraq, Iraqi Jews, after an unwavering and cherished life, underwent a kind of dispersion inside their

local homeland. The reference to this diffusion turns to be similar to the following cast away happened to the remaining family members of those Jews and others caused by postcolonial causes. In a direct hint to such details, Antoon writes, "... the government passed the 1950 emigration law stripping Iraqi Jews of their citizenship" (p. 30), with the same directness to the following scattering of post-2003 he mentions that, "... After 2003, the remaining siblings and their grandchildren scattered to the four winds, ending up in Sweden, Canada, and even New Zealand" (p. 46).

Dreaming of diaspora, this is how the longing for departing the local terrible homeland starts being analogous to the idea of feeling like an outsider inside it. In an internal setting, such a controversial way of thinking finds its way through the continuing opposing discussions between Youssef and Maha. The dissimilarity seems unescapable. Old and young generations, specially of some minorities, depicts the old and new situations of Iraq, generally. The typical past image of Iraq versus the problematical threatening current one spreads all over the dialogues of most of the characters here. As Antoon puts it in the utterance of Youssef, "... but the disagreement was profound. She's very pessimistic... she thinks there's no hope left for us in this country. She just wants to get her degree and leave with her husband" (p. 61).

Leaving or staying, the warring minds and ideas about this disparity are very vital. It is no more than an individual personal decision, but it is rather an outward impact of the postcolonial discouraging surroundings. In spite of this difference, Youssef still finds room to excuse Maha for her rejection to continue being in Iraq:

My youth was not her youth, her time and my time were worlds apart. Her green eyes fluttered open to the ravages of war and sanctions; deprivation, violence, and displacement were the first things she tasted in life. I, on the other hand, had lived in prosperous times, which I still remembered and continued to believe were real. (p. 3)

Continuing his thinking and living in the past as a dominant setting, Youssef relates his love for his garden to his overwhelming love to his past where he can find refuge from the present, "Perhaps the past was like the garden which I so loved and which I tended as if it were my own daughter, ... just in order to escape the noise and ugliness of the world" (p. 3). So, a refugee in his green garden of his house in his great local homeland is what refers to a kind of real disturbance in Youssef's present.

Within this duality, the romantic image of Iraq in the past versus the present is quite clear and controllable.

Maha's husband, Luay, also keeps an eye on Youssef's reactions and innate desires as he tries to find out a reliable reason behind his intimacy to Iraq, "Luay asked Youssef if he'd ever considered leaving" and the response of Youssef comes, "At my age? Better suffer here than experience the humiliation of being a refugee" (p. 67). His answer shows the contrast of Youssef's impression about the inside and outside of Iraq. It is opposite to what Maha and Luay have got in their minds. He believes in the negativity of being away from Iraq and in the positivity of being inside it despite the recent threatening surroundings. For him it is a way of humiliation once you step outside your home whereas Maha, on the other side, regards it a source of hope and safety. Like all refugees, both of them need safety and stability but both of them think of it in a different way.

By mentioning the words of a song of an old Iraqi singer, Al-Qubanchi, Antoon justifies Youssef's strong intimacy to his country with a reference to the historical, social, and cultural pushes behind it:

Do not think that in leaving there is comfort  
I see nothing in it but grief and weariness,  
All sleep was rebbed from my eyes.  
I never thought and no one knew  
That it would be like this. (p. 67)

The author tries to excuse the personal opposite attitudes of Youssef and Maha towards emigration and settling in exile. The divergence is in the realistic way of thinking of Maha and the dreamy optimistic way of thinking of Youssef. She if fully involved in all the recent postcolonial circumstances while he seems detached of these circumstances, individually. Maha confesses that:

Yes, I would apologize to him, even though I'm convinced that he's living in the past. Despite his forays into the present, he is still cloistered in his own circumscribed world. Even though he read widely and follows the news closely, he has no idea what I go through every day. (p. 87)

The duality or double consciousness takes a form or a way of thinking within the minds of those individuals or characters to help them navigate, after all. She tries hard to remember an event or hint that makes her tolerate or change her beliefs. She, instead, and while counting her memories, picks the most similar ones to the present, as she says, "I'm trying to remember a time when I haven't felt alienated, smothered, or, as now, destitute. To me, our exodus from the house in al-Dawra didn't take place all at

once in the summer of 2007" (p. 95). She focuses on the most truthful part of Youssef's beliefs when she declares, "Perhaps Youssef was right on one count, when he said that nothing prior to 2003 bore any resemblance to the savagery that came afterward" (p. 95). This part of her speech makes it clear that the post-2003 invasion accumulates the whole situation and atmosphere in Iraq not only for minorities but also for the majority.

"We are being targeted", this is what Antoon ends up the novel with and tries to explain the real reasons behind thinking and planning for emigration to settle safely in diaspora then. He, moreover, refers to the dual feelings those minorities, like Christians, get and the resultant decisions they make to overcome such a social distress. Here, diaspora is the dreamy ideal world of the character with a double awareness and consciousness even if he/she is still inside Iraq as Antoon writes, "They are trying to make us leave this country" (p. 128).

In *The Baghdad Eucharist*, the concept of double consciousness is reflected through the most relevant characteristics of diasporas that is the continuing comparison of the past with the present of their homeland. During one of these discussions, Maha says, "Uncle, I know nothing about the old days! Nor do I want to know. All I want is to live with dignity and be treated like a human being!" (p. 17). Although it is a postcolonial internal diaspora, the feeling of duality or two-ness, of the protagonist, comes to be equal to that of the external diasporas. This feeling drives Maha to think of trying an external diaspora which may be better for her as a Christian individual. To be displaced, especially within your country, is something thought-provoking and not easy to deal with.

The disparate main characters, Youssef and Maha, are, recurrently, challenging each other when they start discussing the postcolonial Iraq. A very penetrating conflicting ideas are given during their speech about the present of Iraq in comparison to the past. Youssef keeps on arranging his house surroundings with what helps him maintain that serenity of the past while Maha tries hard to find a simple hint relevant to his personal claims. He used to sit in his garden listening to the old Iraqi songs in the radio, ...etc. Additionally, the Iraqi issue that could be traced in this novel is the hardship of old people, yet of forcing generations of Iraqis to leave their homeland. In a speech between Luay, Maha's husband, and Youssef, the old man answers one of his questions as, "At my age? Better suffer here than experience the humiliation of being a refugee" (p. 67).

Besides, the combination of postcolonialism and terrorism marks the image of Iraq as so gloomy that makes

Maha insists on her ideas regarding her pessimistic opinions of her homeland. Youssef and Maha are Iraqis who have witnessed what has happened to Iraq in 2003, yet each one has got his/her own viewpoint. This could be linked to the division of the generations of diasporas, the old versus the young one. The memory of the past ideal real Iraq becomes such a prolific trigger for the old generation, while the young generation has no such legacy. For external or internal diasporas, the feeling of alienation and estrangement is the same.

#### IV. THE BOOK OF COLLATERAL DAMAGE: THE DUALITY OF DIASPORIC SETTINGS

"Nameer is an Iraqi living in New York and teaching Arabic. He travels to Baghdad as a translator with a group of people filming a documentary. While visiting Al Mutannabbi Street, looking for books to buy, he meets Wadood, who owns a bookshop on Baghdad's famous bookselling street. While they are bonding over books, Wadood tells Nameer about his work on a writing project, an index that details the losses of war: not the military losses but the losses of people, animals, and objects. Details of every minute, what happened in that minute, the pain and suffering of people, animals, and objects.

Nameer is interested in the index, and he offers to translate it. At first, Wadood refuses. Eventually, Wadood starts sending part of the index to Nameer to read and give an opinion, and a correspondence spring up between the two. From the indexes Wadood sends, the author tells us stories. These powerful voices unfold the tragedies and the untold stories of ordinary people, who once had simple dreams of living a normal life, but these were taken from them for the simple reason that they were there, in post-2003 Iraq.

Nameer returns to U.S., a place he still can't call home, and he has an unstable feeling, a meshing of past and present. When a student asks him to abandon his lesson and teach him how to say "on your knees, put up your hands, go back" in Arabic, so he can use it when he joins the US Army in Iraq and Afghanistan, he decides to stop teaching Arabic. From here, he takes in an internal journey to the past and his childhood, and through his troubled sleep and therapy sessions we know that he is struggling, although it's a struggle different from Wadood's, who is still living in the middle of the tortured country" (Hend Saeed, 2017).

During his brief Baghdad stay, Nameer documents his experiences there as an exiled intellectual. His job, interpreting for the film crew, involves extensive wandering throughout the city. Despite enjoying the many fond memories of his childhood, he feels overwhelmed by

'a flood of confused images and feelings' and regrets having to be with the crew and not on his own, which would have enabled him to roam as he pleased. Wandering through the streets, he realizes that they are almost empty except for the American troops and tanks. At the end of the day he is physically and emotionally drained, leaving him with little time and energy to write out his thoughts and observations. He reads testimonies by other exiles who have returned to their homeland after long absences. They too have been repressing their memories and their yearning for home. At the end of his visit, Nameer wonders what the purpose his stay in Baghdad has served and laments the fact that the present realities are so far removed from his fond childhood memories (Elimelekh, 2019).

In exile setting, Nameer's character represents the Iraqi exiled who cannot find peace, neither outside their homeland nor disturbingly within its boundaries. For his part, Wadood, Nameer's doppelganger, also experiences exile but of a different kind. After his house is destroyed in the American airstrikes, he moves into a rented room which he fills with books, especially his own *Fihris*, "that includes everything I know and imagine" (p. 213). At a certain point, he visits the site of his old home and is amazed to find a grand new building standing there. He describes his feeling at that moment as, "I returned to my home. Yes, I returned one single time... I stood before the house, but it was not there. I found a different house, completely different, ... I returned and yet did not return..." (p.212). This passage reflects Wadood's state of internal displacement for he has lost his home at home. Antoon writes, "The most foreign of foreigners is one who has become a stranger in his own land" (p.244), which for the short time of his visit also applies to Nameer. According to Edward Said, "exile is an especially difficult state because it involves a perpetual sense of loss. A writer in exile remains crushed and is unable to find a new path for himself". He also adds, the writer who is in exile is like a 'distant critic' (Said, 2002).

In other words, Said regards the exiled intellectual as the ideal critic precisely because he does not feel at home abroad. *The Book of Collateral Damage* (Fihris) parallels the displaced academic from abroad, Nameer, and the autodidact, Wadood, from within, both of whom see themselves and each other as exiles. In this regard Said also observes that

There is a popular but wholly mistaken assumption that being exiled is to be totally cut off, isolated, hopelessly separated from your place of origin. The fact is that for most exiles the difficulty consists not simply in being forced to

live away from home, but rather, given today's world, in living with the many reminders that you are in exile. The exile therefore exists in a median state, neither completely at one with the new setting nor fully disencumbered at one of the old, beset with half-involvements and half-detachments, nostalgic and sentimental on one level, and adept mimic or a secret outcast on another. (Said, 1994)

Actually, as an exiled intellectual Nameer is in an in-between position. His deep-rooted background which exists with him in his memory has not been managed to be separate. Moreover, Nameer also embodies the uncomfortable, impatient, psychologically distressed intellectual who in Said's words persistently remains unsatisfied in a foreign country: "You can never fully arrive, be at one with your new home or situation" (Ibid. 39). This opinion seems closer to Du Bois's opinion in making the African American with double consciousness reach a state of harmony with his troubled selves and evolve into a third true one. The spiritual power is more important than the physical one, according to him. Following Nameer's American life, parts of Wadood's *Fihris* are so reflective. The parallels between the two voices are sometimes obvious, sometimes there are none. Ultimately, Nameer's voice grows closer and closer to Wadood's, as he loses faith in life more and more.

Ultimately, Antoon's novel is the story of a book that cannot be written. In Wadood's *Index* (Fihris), things speak and narrate their own life and death. Often, these passages take the form of a charade, where the reader discovers the nature of the object only towards the end of the passage. As even objects are attributed emotions, the reader gets a strong sense of the true meaning of loss. Despite Nameer's life in the US being quite fulfilling on paper – a professor of literature in a respected New York institution, in a relationship with a wonderful young woman – he is consumed by this sense of loss.

*The Book of Collateral Damage* is a novel about the disintegration of a homeland, and the impossibility to capture it. Antoon's novel depicts the chaos that reigns in Iraq and the fragmented and ambiguous socio-political and cultural reality that prevails in this country, and in so many others throughout the world. It also presents the crisis of Iraqi individuals, whether they are living abroad as exiles or surviving in their homeland in the face of danger and death all around them on a daily basis (Elimelekh, 2019, p.18-19). Nameer lives in parallel spheres: in the reality of the United States and in his memories of Iraq. Wadood, too, lives in a private, hopeful, individualistic fantasy that

is encapsulated in an inescapably ugly, destructive reality (Elimelekh, p.19).

Nameer and Wadood, as extremely conflicted characters, one from without (external) and one from within (internal) Iraq, are amalgamated by a unified spirit and style. Together they grow into one, a motivation signifying a single set of values, faiths and dreams that could be appropriate to a whole nation. Such a creativity is so influential if only their opinions or even a simple index of their beliefs are heard (Elimelekh, 2019, p. 19).

Repetitively, the internal setting appears either in a form of a short visit or a consistent memory. Nameer's debated utterance is set in his personal declaration as:

My sudden return to Baghdad with these Americans was also strange and impulsive. Had I come to rediscover something, or to make sure it was lost? Wasn't I ill at ease in this city and in a hurry to leave? Had I come back to examine the wounds I had left behind, or what? (p.28)

Nameer is still in need to find an answer to this personal yet vital wondering. The definite answer will set him right to his real identity. Otherwise, the recurring of his homeland in his memories will let him in between and in a state of double consciousness all the time. The duality is clear in this question which is addressed to Nameer by Nameer himself. It makes it similar to a soliloquy where no one can answer or hear him but himself.

Trying to excuse his disappointment after this short visit to his homeland, Nameer suggests many things. Some are related to his personal expectations and others are interconnected to his condition as an exile:

I went without expectations and I thought I had protected myself against any additional disappointment. For I read a lot about emigrants who went back home after a long absence and their search, consciously or unconsciously, about what is left. I, also, read about the selective memory and the trap of longing. But the texts did not work. (p. 27)

The phrase "what is left" is a direct hint to the wavering dual selves of those who have just come from a visit to their homelands. The search is left open. Besides, it is done consciously and unconsciously. It keeps an alike individual in an inconvenient state. The inward reaction or response to what has been experienced in homeland is explained by Nameer as, "My heart was confused and busy with what howled it of changing feelings between past and present, storms not emotional state" (p. 259).

There's a wonderful African proverb in Chinua Achebe's novel "Things Fall Apart" that says, "Until lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunters." The idea isn't new, of course, but the metaphor is a gem. The victors are always the ones who write history. By the time someone who wants to revise, question, or change it comes along, it's already too late. But what about the history of the victim? Or the victim's victim? (p. 41). In host land settings, meeting other exiles and appraising old and recent memories seems quite recurrent in a way that help situate them in a homeland setting. A friend of Nameer who is a deep-rooted skillful Iraqi-American lecturer asks him about his factual experience in homeland and about his feelings towards it. His name is Ali Hadi whose quest comes as, "Okay, and what did you make of the situation?". Nameer, then, answers frankly, "Chaos and confusion. It's all fucked up." (p. 74)

In his response, Nameer tries to cover his emotional as well as his actual notions during his visit to Baghdad. On the other hand, Ali tries to imagine what he cannot stand if it were him in that visit after a long period of time. Nameer continues by saying that:

I told him about the visit, about my conflicted and odd feelings, about how pale and shabby Baghdad was, and the chaos and the negligence and the sight of soldiers in helmets and bared wire and tanks in Abu Nuwas Street. (p. 75)

The outrageous reaction is so apparent in Ali's response as he shakes his head and says "alas" whenever Nameer stops to drink from his teacup. Further, Ali comments that, "The Americans are jerk and they're going to destroy the country. But I couldn't go. I wouldn't be able to take it" (p. 76). The exchanging ideas and comments continue as they center on the most important belongings for Nameer, Iraq and *Index*. He pictures this work of Wadood as, "Those are private papers. A sort of project, ... A documentation project." Then Ali tries to get it, "Research?". Nameer says, "No, a different kind of text. Not traditions." Ali goes on clarifying it, "Meaning what?". Nameer generally describes it as:

Meaning everything. History, but circular history. ... This is the project of a lifetime, an archive of the losses from war and destruction. But not soldiers or equipment. The losses that are never mentioned or seen. Not just people. Animals and plants and inanimate things and anything that can be destroyed. Minute by minute. This is the file for the first minute. (p. 86-87)

The setting or technique of dream vision is used in this novel as well. It helps picturing the innate needs and wonders for the intended persona. Nameer's dream comes as:

I saw myself living in a faraway country, where everything was clean and tidy. A quiet life without wars, sects, or religions. Immigrants and refugee had all the rights and freedoms humans could dream of. Even animals were respected and had rights. Science and technology were so developed that human beings could travel to the future or to the past, to visit or to stay, provided of course that they were adults and in good health and didn't have a criminal record. Even as I dreamed I knew I was dreaming, because I had lied on the application form. I wrote that I had never been in prison and that I didn't have any health problems. I signed the form without hesitation. I also knew I was dreaming because I was speaking their language fluently... They would let me travel only in one direction, into either the future or the past... I think that people are divided into two types: those who escape from the past and those who escape to the past (p. 232-233).

One day, and while Nameer and his friend Maria are having a tour in a ferry, the two exchange some symbolic significant phrases concerning immigrants in America in general. Passing by the Statue of Liberty, they watch the customs and immigration buildings on the island that have been turned into a museum. He tells Maria that they should visit it... She agrees, then adds, "Yes, of course. There's no harm in knowing more about the history of our immigrant forefathers." Nameer notices that she said the last two words in a different, ironic tone, and put quote marks in the air with her index and middle fingers to emphasize this fact. Such an appalling yet actual detail is so basic for all immigrant in America, especially. Those immigrants, as Du Bois mentions it, are proud of their souls rather than their physical roles. She continues, "If your ancestors hadn't been slaves, America wouldn't be America anyway,". At that point, she points to the west, saying, "Look at the Statue of Liberty and how small it looks from here." "It did indeed look much smaller than one imagines it to be" (p. 355-356).

The hostland setting is somehow pushing in many aspects. Nameer is shocked with the beliefs and impressions taken about Iraq as a postcolonial country with its people. He took out that day's New York Times, then began as usual with the opinion page. He was struck

by an article headlined "Do the Lives of Iraqis Have Value?" written by a professor of history at a university in California. The occasion for publishing the article was the official indictment of some U.S. marines for killing twenty-four Iraqi civilians in the town of Haditha in an outburst of anger and revenge, and also of some officers for failing to investigate the massacre. They were charged not with deliberate murder but rather with failing to identify targets or to act in accordance with the rules of engagement. "Shoot first and then ask questions" is what the principal defendant told his comrades. The writer looked back at the massacre that had been committed since the beginning of the war and the incident of rape and murder in al-Mahmoudiya. She quoted General Tommy Franks as saying, when asked about the number of civilians dead, "We don't do body counts." The writer wondered when, if ever, we would find out how many Iraqis had died in this war. She ended the article by saying that the insurance payout to beneficiaries as an American soldier killed in the line of duty was \$ 400,000, while in the eyes of U.S. government, a dead Iraqi civilian was worth up to \$ 2,500 in condolence payment to the family (p. 259-360).

In another situation with his girlfriend Maraya, an African-American woman, Nameer tackles a kind of a political topic. He refers to the American as Maraya's army considering her as a pure American citizen. He utters, "Your army control a lot of cities ...". Then Maraya answers nervously, "It is not *my* army, darling. I'm not part of what *we* or else it would be *your* army too." Later, Nameer responds with, "I'm sorry." Such a controversial idea leads Nameer to have a kind of insomnia and of unrest (p. 369).

Concerning the political aspect in *The Book of Collateral Damage*, p. 167 Adnan: "He (Zaid) graduated from the college of Engineering and he is experienced, and his father has made a new political party" N: "Yes, this is the most important qualification." p. 169 Adnan: "So, what have you done for Iraq? Tell me? Nothing but negatives and murmuring. When you stand philosophizing in a study hall inside the university, will this make Iraqi people eat?" N: "Who said that I am very helpful for Iraqis or so?" A: "You want us to leave it to the southern Iraqis of low standard to handle it?" N: "what is the difference between the thieves of Al-Ulwiya in Baghdad and the thieves of the southern Iraqis."

The reflection of the concept of double consciousness in *The Book of Collateral Damage* is very much related to things as well as to people inside Iraq in post-2003 era. It portrays the aftershock of the U. S. invasion that has done a considerable damage on the

psychological, social as well as poetical levels. Iraqi people, inside and outside, are attached to each other through the shared cultural and historical ties. The mutual interests in documenting the impact of the invasion on inanimate things and people inside Iraq is behind the feeling of insomnia and loneliness of Nameer and Wadood.

Above all this, the Iraqi aspect in this novel is typically in presenting the duality of everything in every single minute after the invasion. With this philosophy and deep grasp of their life, it is so important to go beyond the unknown through materialistic things. *Fihris* or *The Book of Collateral Damage*, as a title is talking about a catalog or a collection of feelings, emotions, and ideas that are invisible and that are so essential, at the same time. So, the double consciousness of things equals the duality of people.

## V. CONCLUSION

In this study, internal and external displacements are the very apparent relevant settings in the selected novels. Diaspora, as a postcolonial issue, is considered a typical atmosphere for the targeted characters in exile with double consciousness. In spite of their feeling as strangers abroad, those characters feel the necessity of leaving their homeland to the unknown. Yet, those host lands cannot be called home which will make those in exile get an in-between position most of the time and live the duality as well. In the internal settings of individuals displaced inside their homelands, it is noticed that those characters face double troubles. Obviously, the postcolonial consequence is doubled by the estrangement projected among native people themselves. That is why, those with external and internal exiles find room in the memory of their past real peaceful Iraq in order to escape the ugliness of the present. Kamal Medhat is forced to wear masks inside his country by adopting different identities with different names so that he can gain back being in the right place for him, Iraq. In exile, he also has no other options than pretending being someone else with faked identities.

Youssef and Maha share the same internal setting but with different impressions. Youssef looks back to the happy past and think of not leaving his homeland no matter what destruction has been done to it. Maha cannot think of the past and observes the distressed present only with no hope of staying home but rather leaving abroad as soon as she completes her study with her husband. The same setting but with different reflections from the same minority. The Iraqi-American intellectual, Nameer, becomes emotionally drained especially after his visit to his homeland and adopting a project of a postcolonial

lifetime that archives losses and destruction. Being so close to Wadood, the eccentric owner of this *Index*, Nameer continues documenting with conflicting and odd feelings. The feelings of emigrants who try to search for the remaining things during their visit home. Thus, this search for the real self in exile and in homeland setup him and makes him lose faith in life.

Within these settings, those major and minor characters' self-struggle is resembled in their sense of double consciousness.

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