

موسم الذئب للكاتبة هيلين بنديكت: دراسة سعيدية للاجئين العراقيين بعد عام 2003

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Benedict's *Wolf Season*: A Saidian Study of Iraqi Refugees of post 2003

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المستخلص

موسم الذئب لبنيديكت (2017) هو عمل أدبي بارز يُظهر حالة معاناة اللاجئين وعدم قدرتهم على الاندماج في البلد الجديد، البلد المضيف. باستخدام *الاستشراق* لسعيد، تدرس هذه الورقة حالة هؤلاء الأشخاص، مع التركيز على مفهومه عن "الآخر" الذي لا يقبله السكان الأصليون. وتسعى إلى التحقيق في وجهة نظر سعيد للتمثيل الغربي للشرق على أنه أدنى، وأولئك القادمين منه للعيش في المجتمع الغربي على أنهم خطر بغض النظر عن أسباب هجرتهم. ويتم ذلك من خلال تحليل رواية بينيديكت، موسم الذئب، التي تقدم تجربة الهجرة العراقية من وجهة نظر غربية، مستخدمة التمثيلات المجتمعية والصور النمطية لنقل صورة شاملة لهذه التجربة. وتخلص إلى أن تجربة اللاجئين العراقيين في الغرب مليئة بعدم الانتماء بسبب الرفض المجتمعي من جانب الدول المضيفة، والعزلة التي يواجهونها نتيجة لوجهات النظر العرقية.

Abstract

Benedict's *Wolf Season* (2017) is a prominent literary work that shows the state of suffering of refugees and their inability to integrate into the new county, the host county. Using Said's *Orientalism*, this paper examines the state of those people, emphasizing his concept of the "other" that is not accepted by the native people. It seeks to investigate Said's view of the Western representation of the East as inferior, and of those coming from it to live in Western society as being a danger regardless of the reasons for their migration. This is done through an analysis of Benedict's novel, *Wolf Season*, which presents the Iraqi migration experience from a Western point of view, employing societal representations and stereotypes to convey a comprehensive portrait of this experience. It concludes that the experience of Iraqi refugees in the West is full of non-belonging due to societal rejection, on the part of host countries, and isolation they face as a result of ethnic views.

1.Introduction

When the US military forces entered Iraq in 2003, Iraqi resistance increased because of the widespread rejection of the occupation by a segment of the population. Due to this social rejection, American forces suffered from a high rate of guerrilla and rebel attacks in the early days of Saddam Hussein's fall. The violence in Iraq during and after 2003 was not only against Americans, but also against all the Iraqis who helped them. Given the important role each of them played in assisting American forces, many in Iraqi people, especially the armed groups, view them as traitors who prefer a foreign power to their own. The interpreters, as key supporters of the United States forces, faced danger in their work as they were either kidnapped or killed on charges of treason.

Iraqis conditions of living after the American occupation are not better than those before. They were disappointed because the occupation could not provide them with the life they dreamt of. The American occupation could not give Iraqis stability and a safe life, and even the simplest necessities of life such as electricity and other services. Moreover, Iraqis felt tired and bored with the deteriorating security situation and the sounds of explosions and exchange of gunfire, leading them to rebel against the American forces. Despite this, America clings to the argument that the American presence is very necessary in order to prevent a civil war between Sunnis and Shiites, although the withdrawal of American forces ends the tensions between Sunnis and Shiites because America is the main cause of these tensions. It's only natural for a people's rejection of another country's armed forces within their homeland to lead them to



leave or fight. The presence of US forces on Iraqi soil led to resistance from a part of Iraqis, while the other part could not continue to live in Iraq, so they decided to leave the country. The fact that Iraqis deserted the country after the entrance of US military forces does not just mean they dislike the armed American forces, but that they are harmed by them.

Specialist, Steven N. Simon, to name one, (2007, pp. 15-17) traces how with the spread of news confirming that the American forces could not control the security situation, neither they nor the Iraqi army, the number of armed rebels began to increase. He believes that as is usual with rebels, they initially were scattered groups consisting of small numbers, they were less than twenty militants in each group, but despite that they were able to inflict human losses on the American forces. The existence of such armed groups moving openly in the streets of cities and gaining the support of a portion of the citizens on a sectarian basis confirms the inability of the Iraqi government to maintain the safety of citizens and poses a major threat to the security situation in Iraq. In short, after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, due to the occupation, chaos ensued because the situation became unsafe. All of that presents, simply, an aspect of political reasons for migration.

As a result of the occupation, Iraqis lived in economic deprivation, which directly contributed to the migration of many of them. Although oil dominates the Iraqi economy, it has not been sufficient to compensate for the economic shortfall and poverty because the war with the Islamic Republic of Iran cost Iraq dearly. Ibrahim Sirkeci (2005, 203) emphasizes that successive wars, international sanctions, and the Iraqi government's mismanagement of state funds are what brought the economy to a dire state. All of this meant that the living conditions of citizens did not improve, seriously forcing them to make the decision to emigrate.

The poor quality of local services enrages Iraqis to rebel against the American forces and to immigrate to other countries. So, people began to acknowledge the government's failure, which created a lack of trust between citizens and the state. Those social social reasons for migration are closely linked to political and economical reasons, and it appears that these reasons plunged Iraqis into psychological crises, making them unable to tolerate remaining within the borders of this country. All of this had an impact on their identities in one way or another.

The state of war and occupation that Iraqis experienced during and after 2003 had a clear impact on their identities, given that war is one of the



most important factors affecting people in all aspects of their lives. Identity is directly related to how an individual views himself via multiple factors including gender, age, occupation, social class, race, culture, etc. MariaCaterina La Barbera (2014, p. 9) sees that identity consists mainly of two processes: “self-representations and social categorization.” Immigrants often experience a loss of identity, though the process of constructing a new identity is very complex and difficult (Madsen and Naerssen, 2003, p. 26). An immigrant goes through many events that affect his/her relationship with him/herself in his/her search for their identity. Identity, as well known, is one of Edward Said’s most important concerns as he writes extensively on issues of Palestine because his family is Palestinian and he has a cultural background. Being an American of Palestinian origin, creates a paradox in Said's identity: “Said’s paradox of identity is indicative of the complex identities of diasporic and post-colonial peoples throughout the world today” (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 2007, p. 2).

1.Said: An Intellectual Model

Jeffrey Guhin and Jonathan Wyrzten (2013) notice that Said is such an influential thinker in postcolonial studies that he has become a primary source and reference for many interested in this field, in addition to his influence on many disciplines, including sociology, especially given his interest in the relationship between power and knowledge. Said is influenced by Foucault's ideas on this matter and sees knowledge as closely linked to power. Said analyzes a number of speeches and studies, concluding that the agency which holds power is the West or the colonial powers (Varol, 2017, p. 321). Fatih Varol explained that Said suggests that knowledge of the East is primarily based on power which makes it impossible to get nonpolitical knowledge. For him, every researcher is linked to his society, and his discourse cannot be separated from being part of a society that dominates or despises the East. Said agrees with Foucault that what is circulated through studies and discourses are representations, not reality, where language has been used as a tool to exercise power, then “The value, efficacy, strength, apparent veracity of a written statement about the Orient therefore relies very little, and cannot instrumentally depend, on the Orient as such” (Said, 1979, p. 21). Said's writings as Sumit Chakrabarti (2012) sees them as revolutionary writings that contributed to the spread of his views, which attacked the rhetorical hegemony of the West and criticized the stereotypical image that was created to represent every Easterner.





One of Said's chief agenda in terms of the politics of representation is to oppose the othering of the colonial subject through the formation of stereotypes. He realizes in his binary conceptions that a complete negation or disavowal of stereotypical representation might not be possible (even if decolonization is possible), and thus there is the need for an alternative language of resistance within this encounter between East and West. (10)

Said, in *Orientalism* (1979), argues that Westerners divide human beings "into "us" (Westerners) and "they" (Orientals)" (45), wondering about the possibility of avoiding hostility between them. The existence of these two divisions logically requires the strength of one at the expense of the weakness of the other, and this is what Said does not hesitate to present: "Orientalism can also express the strength of the West and the Orient's weakness-as seen by the West" (45). He reveals that *Orientalism* is exercised as a power over the Orient through representation: "Once we begin to think of Orientalism as a kind of Western projection onto and will to govern over the Orient, we will encounter several surprises" (95). Even though there were Orientalists who truly loved the Orient, their discourse, as it seemed to Said, was not neutral enough, or was originally against the Orient. According to his ideas, the Westerner does not treat the Oriental as an equal human being, but rather as an alien entity that must be controlled and restricted. This desire for control does not result from an attempt to understand the other, but rather from a constant emotion and sense of confrontation and domination: "What seems to have influenced Orientalism most was a fairly constant sense of confrontation felt by Westerners dealing with the East" (201) And he goes to conclude that "representations have purposes, they are effective much of the time, they accomplish one or many tasks" (273).

Said presents the East not as something that exists, but as an invention "The Orient was almost a European invention," (1). This claim is central to the book, where the Orient is understood as an idea, not an independent entity, but rather a construct. In the past, Europeans associated the Orient with romance, landscapes, exotic creatures, and other imagined things—things the European visitor did not find when he actually visited the Orient, which he perceived as a place of suffering for its people. This reflects that the stereotypical image of the East is based on preconceived ideological notions that do not necessarily mean that they are true, but may be mere imagination, which is closer to reality.

The West itself did not form its identity apart from or in isolation from the East; rather, it chose to be in comparison with the East, where it is the opposite "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting

itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (3). Thus, the "other" participates in the construction of the Western self, which feeds on portraying the East as inferior. It is important to note here that Orientalism, in addition to being a cognitive tool, is also a means of reinforcing the Western self, where comparison represents an intellectual strategy that supports cultural hegemony. In the same vein, Said refers to the West and Orient each influences the other: "The two geographical entities thus support and to an extent reflect each other" (5). Said insists that the relationship between East and West is not equal: "The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemon" (5). He explains that it is a relationship of dominance, where the West controls writing and representation, thus possessing tools that the East lacks. The East then becomes subject to these tools, creating a shift in the balance of power, given that the knowledge produced by the West is, in one way or another, imbued with power. This power is not necessarily limited to military authority, but also includes intellectual and cultural power.

By demonstrating that both entities influence each other, the importance of Orientalism's non-neutrality to Western society becomes clear. It is used as a practice of cultural hegemony, rather than being neutral and impartial. Information about the East serves Western supremacy. The West controls the quality and quantity of information about the Orient, as well as the production of images and representations:

It is hegemony, or rather the result of cultural hegemony at work, that gives Orientalism the durability and the strength I have been speaking about so far. Orientalism is never far from what Denys Hay has called the idea of Europe,³ a collective notion identifying "us" Europeans as against all "those" non-Europeans (7)

In this way, cultural hegemony is highlighted, where there is a relationship between culture and power, and where Orientalism has a role in shaping Western attitudes based on its hegemony in determining what is known about the East.

More importantly, in his *Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors* (1989) Said shows that "the colonized had become synonymous with the Third World" (206) which means an inhabitant of the regions ruled by Europe outside the borders of Europe itself. He insists that the colonized suffers from racism, dependency, poverty, underdevelopment, and so on, even nations that have gained their independence remain victims of the past. In addition, Said explained that narrative plays an important role in representation, as it is possible to convey the colonized experience beyond the borders of his homeland





where “Exile, immigration, and the crossing of boundaries are experiences that can therefore provide us with new narrative forms” (225). Said opposes the tyranny of post-colonial governments and their corruption, as he seeks humanity. He embodied and exuded a humanistic sensibility, a yearning for a more humane world subject to universal standards of justice, a world we could all call home, without the suffocating and terrorizing and binaries” (Zezeza, 2005, p. 2).

Said calls for the creation of a discourse that restores the Easterner's rights, whether by presenting him in a dignified manner before societies or by allowing him to express himself. He criticizes Western centrism and calls for deconstructing "otherness" so that the Easterner can reclaim his place in the narrative. Because narrative is important to Said, it is useful to present Saidian analysis of a novel that deals with the issue of Iraqi refugees as the “ other" within a Western society.

1. Benedict's *Wolf Season*: The Portrait of the Other

Benedict's *Wolf Season* (2017) is considered as one of the most important novels in that it shows the state of immigrants and refugees, where the novelist sheds light on issues related to war by focusing on themes like trauma, racism, displacement, and isolation. In her novel *Sand Queen* (2011), the events took place in Iraq, where Naema first appeared as a medical student and then became a refugee in *Wolf Season*. In fact, *Wolf Season* is based on the events of the novel *Sand Queen* though with a difference in characterisation. The events of *Sand Queen* revolve around two female characters: one is an American soldier named Kate Brady, and the other is an Iraqi citizen and student named Naema Jassim. A friendship develops between these two women since they met in 2003 when Naema tries to find out about her imprisoned brother and father, Kate decides to help, leading them to decide to help each other continue living in Iraq. Kate, the protagonist, is portrayed as an independent woman capable of doing everything a man can do, even war; therefore, she joined the US Army and served in Iraq, considering it an honor. This displeased men who were accustomed to controlling everything, including women, leading to their discomfort. Men use the derogatory term "Sand Queen" which refers to a woman they find undesirable but are forced to choose due to limited options. The turning point came when the sergeant tried to assault Kate. Then the war leaves its mark on both women.

Wolf Season was well received in reviews and comments. In her review of the novel, author Jane Rosenberg LaForge (2018, p. 17) draws attention to the character of Beth as an American who constantly meddles in other people's affairs. In the same review, LaForge observes how this

character caused concern and a major problem for Rin's family, then simply abandoned everything and left to become a sort of refugee in a new place, Brooklyn. This is more like a reference to what America did in Iraq after the invasion: leaving after causing chaos. In her review, Lynette G. Esposito (2017) writes that Benedict covers both the psychological and physical impact suffered by those returning from war alive, whether soldiers or civilians "Benedict addresses both the psychological and physical damages as well as changes inflicted on the survivors whose stories stay with you after you have finished reading the book" . About a year after the novel's publication, Rebecca Foster reviewed it on BookBrowse website, confirming that prejudice against Arabs was one of Benedict's strongest motivations for writing this novel. On her part, Wendy Smith (2017) wrote a similar notion in Publishers Weekly under the title Helen Benedict, Scribe of Women and War. In this essay Smith tries to convey Benedict's idea of representation of the "other" where Benedict sees that people consider all Iraqi women as they never studied their whole lives to the level that they surprised to know about a female doctor from Iraq. As if they imagine women there doing nothing but sitting at home and wearing burkas when going out, without studying or working. This is one of the wrong ideas that Said repeatedly attacks in his *Orientalism* about having negative stereotypes about Easterners, especially Arabs. Europeans portray Arabs as uneducated to make themselves appear more educated. If Arabs were truly educated, Westerners wouldn't appear so either. Their method of asserting superiority is to belittle others and portray them as inferior.

The story unfolds in New York, focusing on three women and their children, all of whom have been directly impacted by the war. Rin, a former American soldier in the Iraq War, lives with her blind daughter, Juney. Beth, the widow of an American soldier killed in Afghanistan, lives with her wayward son, Flanner. Naema, an Iraqi refugee, doctor, widow, and orphan, lives with her wounded son, Tariq. All these women have profoundly traumatic experiences of war, which Benedict explores, revealing the enduring impact of war even after its end—a central theme of the novel. Despite their differences, these women share a common thread: they all suffer. Rin struggles to maintain her equilibrium after having post-traumatic stress disorder, while simultaneously trying to protect her blind daughter. Beth is exhausted by her desperate attempts to control or even understand her son, all while grappling with her husband's sudden change of heart and eventual death. Naema fights for survival in a foreign land that has invaded and devastated her homeland, fearing for her son's safety amidst this harsh reality for both of them.



In this novel, Iraq was mentioned right from its beginning, where Juney, the daughter of Rin and Jordan Drummond, who were soldiers in Iraq, is born. She was in the third grade at the time of the novel. Iraq, in the novel, is not portrayed in a positive way; because it represents a negative past for one of the characters. On the contrary, it shows a dark past for this character, not just for the Iraqi refugee family. Despite Rin remembering moments that were supposedly romantic with her husband, these moments are not mentioned in a positive description: “But even through the slickness, even through the wanting and wanting, she felt the desert grinding deep into her blood. Toxic moondust and the soot of corpses” (Benedict, 2017, p. 19)

When Juney is taken to the clinic, the Iraqi refugee doctor Naema Jassim is introduced as working in the same clinic. She had very brief moments of calm, which she rarely gets during her day. From the very first moments, she doesn't seem comfortable in her life, her hands are described as dry due to frequent washing. The setting reflects the state between the couple, that the weather at the beginning of the novel is unstable, a case so evident to both Rin and Naema. The sky turns a tense, electric green, and appears turbulent. In the clinic, the doctor was not in a bright or even pleasant place; quite the opposite, as the novelist presented her “standing in the white starkness of that same clinic” (Benedict, 2017, p. 23). The word " starkness" could be interpreted as Naema always being in secluded places, devoid of people around her, even when treating many patients. The word could also refer to her generally solitary life. Although Dr. Naema Jassim is very good at medicine, the fact that she is not a native speaker draws negative comments about her being of Middle Eastern descent. It isn't necessarily wrong, but she is accused of having this trait because of her Middle Eastern heritage. Nurse Wendy Fitch observes that this doctor has no sense of time. The nurse doesn't know exactly why, but the first thing that came to her mind was her (Eastern) cultural background. This is not the only impression one gets of Naema:

Rin can't believe they gave Juney an Arab for a doctor. Typical of the VA to hire the second-rate. The woman probably bought her certificate online, did her training on YouTube. Probably blew up some sucker of a soldier or two on her way here, as well. (Benedict, 2017, p. 28)

In reality, Rin knew nothing about the doctor she assumed was one; all she knew was that she was an Arab. Apparently, being from the Middle East is a crime in itself as Said noticed during his study of the Western

mentality which considers being Oriental to be a guilt (Said, 1979, p. 39). Rin interprets everything about this Iraqi woman negatively, even when she doesn't say hello which is a rude behaviour for Rin. If only it had stopped there, but then the hurricane started hitting the clinic, when a torrent of water entered through the clinic window, announcing the start of the hurricane, Rin was:

kicking away the flailing doctor tangled in her white coat, her long hair, her scar, and her legacy.

Rin slams her face down in the water and steps on her, using her body to lever her daughter through the door and out of the water to safety. (Benedict, 2017, p. 29)

Apparently, Naema didn't live a happy life in America, especially with the recent hurricane incident that she'd never faced in her native country, Iraq. While the Care Danmark (2016) report focus on the impact of climate change and its role in causing the migration of many people where "climate change amplifies other drivers of migration and displacement" (40), Naema finds herself facing this problem, but in the host country, where she cannot escape to another place. Because of the hurricane and what Rin did to her—kicking and stomping on her—Naema ended up in the hospital, unable to breathe without an oxygen mask. In those moments, she wasn't thinking about her current situation; instead, her mind was consumed by memories of her son, Tariq, and how he was injured in Iraq. Sometimes, a person fails to isolate himself from his surroundings because he is forced to live among them due to work circumstances, as happened with Naema. This can lead to a kind of mental isolation at the first opportunity, like a dream or a coma-like state. Rin's power here reflects the power of the colonizer itself, as it tries to hide the colonized, considering that the latter deserves to disappear because it is inherently voiceless and does not deserve to have a voice. Naema was suffering, and Rin's behavior seemed to her like she was being denied life, as if she were telling her that life wasn't for her but for the natives, and that she should leave by any means necessary, even if it meant being kicked and trampled. Said noticed that and addressed that "The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (Said, 1979, p. 5) The same power and control that Rin tried to impose on Naema. The fact that this Iraqi woman is a refugee first, meaning she belongs to a small group in the host society, and second, that she is a woman, usually less powerful than a man or controlled by a man, all of this makes her crushed by domination, as if she was born to be that way, and This causes her more and more trouble. Naema wasn't well; she could have died



before she was rescued, Louis, a former soldier and old friend of Naema recalls:

the details Wendy Fitch told him too raw in his mind. How she was hurrying the patients out of the collapsing clinic when she saw a white coat floating by like a great lily, a tangle of black hair straggled across it. How she had taken a moment to realize Naema was inside that coat, face down. How she had waded back into the flood, the water snatching at her knees, to seize Naema under the arms, haul her up to dry ground and give her CPR. How it had taken the ambulance for-ever to get to them through the floodwaters, Naema lying there with a stillness you rarely see in the living (Benedict, 2017, p. 57)

Rin's attempt to isolate her from the living, or from the hurricane survivors, is definitely clear and requires no further explanation, regardless of Rin's motives or how much she tries to convince herself that it's a logical or even unintentional act. The result is the same: to separate Naema from Rin and Juney so they could survive while Naema fell. Although she didn't die and was rescued and kept alive, isolating her in such a violent manner was undoubtedly an attempt to eliminate her presence as an Easterner within a Western society where a segment of the population doesn't welcome her. Naema's state of "stillness" at that time indicated her need for it. Her life had been filled with events and dangers, from the death of her husband and the injury of her son to her experience as a refugee; everything had been painful for her. It seemed she hadn't been this calm in a long time. Her continued stillness and lack of awareness suggested a rejection of reality and a preference for isolating herself from such a life. She didn't want to return to live in that place again. Despite her denial of reality at that moment, what she was experiencing inside her mind was not a perfect world. It was a world stained with blood, filled with memories of the war in Baghdad and an atmosphere of fear, killing, and destruction. The memory of the immigrant is not erased but remains active through memories and imagination to evoke the past and recall traumas they faced in their homelands (Thakur and Sahi 107-116).

Naema's main reason for emigrating was social; the sectarian community no longer accepted her presence. She was viewed as a traitor; her husband deserved to be killed, and she deserved it too. There was no place for traitors in the new Iraq, the Iraq after the fall of Saddam. The other reason was political; the war had ravaged her family and community. A country at war is not a suitable place to live. She has a ten-year-old son named Tariq with a prosthetic leg where he needed seven years to heal, to





harden the area above his knee. He has just finished the fourth grade and was only three years old when he lost her leg. He moved with her to Huntsville in their second year in America after they were in Albany. when his friend Flanner comments that fish can drown if mud prevent the breathing. Tariq is saddened inside because this is exactly what happened to his mother but talking about that makes him crying, so he prefers to say nothing. He felt it despite his bravery, and he was looking for wolves in the woods. Although it's natural for a boy to feel at the right place when his mother is there, Tariq felt misplaced when he went to the hospital to visit her. Naema was still ill and hadn't woken up yet, but he felt her presence with him, even though they weren't where they should be. He hesitated at first, then relied on his courage to stay and not leave, despite his high level of misplacement. Even on the second visit, when Tariq came to see his mother some time after his first visit, he was not prepared to be in the place despite his concern for his mother and his desire to see her: "I don't want to go in yet" (Benedict, 2017, p. 106). The same place, the same feeling, the same people; it's as if nothing has changed except time. Even when Naema's health improved and she woke up, Tariq described the place as a creepy place where he and the place refuse each other. Tariq feels controlled by this place, for it represents its people, the Westerners. The presence of Orientals and Westerners in one place creates a necessity for imposing Western hegemony over the "other," just as Said explained: "There are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominate; the latter must be dominated" (Said, 1979, p. 36). The truth bothered Tariq so much that it made him feel an urgent desire to leave.

Rin, sometimes, tries to push Tariq away using hints, for example, asking him if he has any chores at home that he needs to go and do in order to get out of their place. The idea that he may betray her dominated her mind. Even when he told her he was working on a school project about wolves, she was worried he'd talk about her wolves in front of the teachers, unless he promised he wouldn't. Rin didn't trust him enough to believe his promise, but she hoped he wasn't lying. However, she notices that he gets involved in problems for which he is not to be blamed during his life in America, she "figures Tariq must get pulled into quite a few fights. He has to be a target with his one leg and his name. He has Outsider stamped all over him, just like Juney" (Benedict, 2017, p. 211). No matter how hard Tariq tries to accept his life and adapt to his situation, he will forever remain an "outsider" neither a local nor a member of the community, and no one will ever consider him one, even if he makes a number of friends, as he did with Flanner, who abandoned





their friendship and became an enemy, verbally and physically abusing him. His relation with Flanner is one of the reasons that lead Rin to become suspicious of Tariq, because he was the one who told his mother, Beth, about the wolves, and she was the one who called the police to make a complaint. He was not the friend Tariq deserved, nor was he the person Tariq hoped he would be. Not only that, but Flanner incites the other boys against Tariq, calling him racist names that imply he is a traitor, an enemy, and an outcast, ostracized against his will. He no longer even likes being in his class because of the isolation imposed on him by these dominant boys, they deal with the place, the class, as it belongs to them, not to the stranger. His friendship with Juney isn't like that; it's not the same as Flanner's. They accept each other despite their unusual circumstances. When Tariq goes to her, he finds feelings he's been missing in his life, he felt that the room they were sitting in at Rin and Juney's house was filled with the warmth and security of family that he and his mother had lost. Juney was not only accepting Tariq but also accepts his mother, whom she saw as a heroine, just like her own mother. However, after learning who his mother was, Rin didn't dare meet her because of what she had done to her in the hospital and how she had hurt her there. The strangest thing Rin did was to enter an Iraqi house unarmed for the first time in her life after the war. Despite Naema's welcome and thanks for hosting her son "I must now repay you with some Iraqi hospitality" (Benedict, 2017, p. 223). However, the "Iraqi hospitality" that Rin knows means torture and violence, as she experienced it during the war. She couldn't shake her negative suspicions about Iraqis even when Juney was eating cookies in the kitchen. Rin expected that they would kidnap her simply because they were Iraqi. Then she talked to Juney on her way back without thinking about the impossibility of being a friend of Naema. This rejection, without even bothering to think, explains the nature of the relationship between East and West, and that trying to make them friends is a very difficult task "It's just hard when you've been trained to see Iraqi people as your enemy" (Benedict, 2017, p. 231) she commented.

In her novel, Benedict uses the innocent child Juney to convey her ideas of accepting other human beings to readers, attempting to eliminate, or at least mitigate, the tendency to attack others for different reasons, and to use logic to make the society accept them rather than isolate them. Juney explains to her mother that Tariq and his mother didn't kill anyone, and that Americans have always killed many people, whether Iraqi or even American. They kill each other, even in schools, she said. It seemed

logical for Rin, but just as she dislikes Naema, Naema in turn dislikes her and sees her as cruel and brutal.

Tariq is usually quiet, and although he appears mature, he can no longer bear his existence as a refugee. He wants to live a normal life, to be part of society and not isolated from it. He wants to feel that he belongs where he belongs and not be forced to stay where he is, rejected by the people there. It is not the life that he dreamed of:

How many times, even before Flanner attacked him, has he wished he were like the other boys at school: American, whole-bodied, tough? How many times has he wanted to tell his mother to stop talking about war and death and staying strong, about being a refugee and being Iraqi and being Muslim and being and being and being ... How many times has he squeezed his eyes tight and hoped that when he opened them, he would find himself like everyone else? (Benedict, 2017, p. 215)

Tariq is tired of being isolated and is trying to integrate, but no one accepts him because he's an Eastern refugee. Perhaps a few people accept him, like Louis, who admires his mother, and Juney, who sees him as her only friend, but that's no longer enough for him. This profound sense of being different—first as a refugee, and second as someone who has been injured—hurts him and creates an internal conflict that perhaps goes unnoticed by others. No one blames him for feeling this way, and no one blames his mother if she has similar feelings.

Benedict employs two refugee characters in her novel, Naema and Tariq. Throughout the novel, Naema is presented as one of the most complex and compelling characters. Benedict portrays her as a deep figure, not only because of her refugee status, but also because of all the hardships she endured: the war, the period before her migration, her first migration to Syria, her second migration to America, and all the problems and difficulties that these stages entailed—hardships that few could bear. Naema is the type of a person who suddenly finds himself without family, without a homeland, without even the most basic necessities, and almost without an identity, or with a shattered one—a very common situation among refugees. From a postcolonial perspective, she represents a struggle between memory and reality: an Iraqi memory burdened by war and all its loss and violence, and an American reality that doesn't even consider her as a human, to the point that it doesn't even grant her the opportunity to integrate or help her at least forget or ignore the past. She is constantly surrounded by suspicion and preconceived notions from American society, where people don't listen to her, nor do they even try, considering her as voiceless or her voice completely unimportant. From





her very first appearance, Benedict is presented as surrounded by tension and a constant feeling of being watched, which clearly indicates that she doesn't feel safe where she is. She is completely misplaced, in the truest sense of the word, uncomfortable, and without the option to leave. She is forced to stay, but in reality, she is not in one place; she is torn between two: Iraq and America, and she doesn't belong to either.

Through the novel, *Wolf Season* presents a character who has lost everything that could give a person a sense of security or even stability. She has lost her father, her brother, her mother who died of grief after Naema left Iraq, her husband, her relatives, the homeland she will never return to, and even her son's leg, which will never be recovered. She is alienated from her language, her culture, her home, her family, her relationships, and the social order that once assured her she was not alone. Simply, being Arab puts her at odds with a society that belittles her, or perhaps even despises her, because they are native speakers while she has a foreign accent, as if language were not a means of communication but a measure of sophistication. Furthermore, she is often judged in ways that are never true, but they don't care about the truth; for them, truth is only what they know, just as Said described them in his *Orientalism* where he declared that for Westerners, the East is nothing more than their knowledge of it, not its true nature.. They do not see experience, skills, and hard work; all they see are ready-made templates inside their minds that they apply to every Oriental. After all that, she is required to remain strong, not for her own sake, of course, but for her son, because she is the only one left for him, which forces her to try to build a version of the previous Naema, a distorted version without history or place, but nevertheless she tries to create a new life in the hope that she will adapt later.

While Naema is treated as inferior by the society, Rin treats her as an enemy. This young American mother views this woman as an enemy simply because she is from Iraq. This isn't an isolated incident of hostility towards Iraqis; but a natural consequence of post-colonial discourse that portrayed Eastern Americans as a threat and instilled in their minds that every Easterner represents a danger. Therefore, reactions like Rin's aren't based solely on her personal experience in Iraq, but on a network built by the authorities against Iraqis. The authorities create an image of Easterners, and then they treat them according to this image, even if they know nothing about them. This, in itself, represents an important post-colonial dimension in the novel where "Theories of the social construction of identities depend on an epistemological argument about

the active role of representations in constituting the realities they purport to represent” (Barnett 172).

Based on the events of the novel mentioned above, Naema's suffering is divided between how others perceive her and an internal struggle concerning the concept of homeland. A person who loses their homeland can never live in peace, let alone one who has lost everything else, as Naema has. For her, homeland is not merely a physical thing, but something metaphysical, something she constantly relies on. Therefore, her memory always returns to Baghdad, even though she is no longer physically there. Baghdad dwells in Naema's memory, and her pain intensifies each time she realizes she will never return. This feeling is among the harshest experiences a refugee endures, knowing that attempting to return means death, and that remaining where they are does not mean life. Loneliness is a powerful force in Naema's life, preventing her from severing ties with any Iraqi she knows, even those she doesn't love. For her, they represent an attempt to reclaim a lost homeland, making her relationships with them symbolic rather than personal. All of this reflects the depth of Naema's psychological crisis.

Benedict sheds light on several aspects of Naema's life, including her maternal side. Her relationship with Tariq is not a classic, or even ordinary, but a maternal one. She feels guilty for not protecting him during the explosion, and her pain increases when she sees him bullied and rejected by others. What happened to Tariq doubles her grief, as she mourns the past and what will happen to him in America as a disabled refugee with only one leg.

Tariq's character in *Wolf Season* is one of the most interesting and intriguing in the world of Middle Eastern immigrants to the United States. He is a refugee child living a daily struggle between his Iraqi heritage—he has lived there for nearly three years—and his life in America as a stranger, having lived there longer than he did in Iraq, yet still feeling like an outsider in a society that doesn't understand him and doesn't even try to. Tariq appears in the novel as a mature individual, not just a child.

1. Conclusion

Benedict's *Wolf Season* is a highly suitable narrative model for applying Edward Said's ideas regarding the representation of the "other." The novel reproduces the image of the Orient, presenting the Arabs Naema and Tariq suffering a harsh transition permeated by a constant feeling of not belonging or stability. The tragedy of a generation that neither chose nor understood the justifications for war is embodied in Tariq, who bears





the physical scars of Iraqi war against the invasion. Tariq, thus suffers internally, feeling alienation from both Iraq and America, as he doesn't fully belong to either, having left Iraq at the age of three. This is one of the effects of imperial violence on him, a trauma he continues to suffer until the end of the novel, with no hope of escaping it. His state, therefore, reflects the suffering of immigration, where one of the most difficult tasks is finding a place that will accept a refugee, despite that society's claims of openness and multiculturalism. Consequently, he and his mother are always viewed as inferior to the rest of society simply because they come from Iraq, without any consideration for their skills. Thus, Iraqis are doubly victimized: victims of imperialist violence embodied in the occupation and the war that ultimately led to sectarian violence, causing many Iraqis to refuse to live in Iraq; and victims of a Western society that does not allow them to create their own image but rather reproduces it in an undesirable way.

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