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To the soul of my husband Ibrahim Haider Farhan

May God rest his soul in peace

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INTRODUCTION

When I started this work, intending to select Iraqi novels to compare them with Drabble's work to investigate the theme of violence, I thought my task would not be that easy, as I anticipated that I would find more differences than affinities.[1] To my surprise, the close textual reading of these texts, particularly the Iraqi ones, showed something different than I expected. The selection of texts in this study is based on the evidence of initial similarities of themes and situations in these texts. Through the selection of these texts, I search for how the authors from two different societies and traditions presented continuities and differences in gender, class and sexual and regional politics in two distinct settings. I selected four of Drabble's novels, namely, *The Radiant Way* (1987), *The Gates of Ivory* (1991) *The Red Queen: A Transcultural Tragicomedy* (2004), *The Pure Gold Baby* (2013) and four Iraqi novels, which are, Hadiya Husayn's *Ma ba'd al-hubb* (2003), translated into English and published as *Beyond Love* in 2012, Ahmad Sa'dawi's *frankenshtayn fi baghdad* (2013), translated into Englishand published as *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (2018) in Britain and was shortlisted for the Man Booker International Prize, Lutfiya al-Dulaymi's *sayyidat zuhal* (*Saturn Ladies*) (2009) and Aliya Mamduh's *al-mahbubat* (2003), translated into English as *The Loved Ones* and published in 2006 in Cairo and in 2007 it was published in New York with a Forward by Hélène Cixous and an Afterword by Ferial Ghazoul. I investigated these novels in pairs and used the figure of Shahrazad from the *Arabian Nights* to promote the comparison between two of these novels, *The Red Queen* and *Saturn Ladies*.

Margaret Drabble is hailed as "the most influential British author of the last 50 years" for achieving great respect as a writer and critic on both sides of the Atlantic ("Margaret Drabble on the importance", 2016). She

[1] It is worth explaining, here, why it is only Drabble that the study focuses on. The choice of Drabble rather than other British writers (Doris Lessing or Penelope Lively, for example) was based on Drabble's interest in feminist lives in Britain and the flaws in foreign policy. A writer with a colonial background such as Lessing might arguably have more to say about key theme of exile than Drabble, but too much research has recently been done on Lessing and Iraqi authors.

has published nineteen novels, one volume of short stories, plays, screenplays and several works of non-fiction, including studies of Wordsworth, Arnold Bennett and Angus Wilson. She has also edited two major revisions of the *Oxford Companion to English Literature*. She has spoken about her childhood in a very literary family: "We read a lot and we talked about books – that was what we did" (Drabble, "Why I don't", 2007). Her older sister is A.S. Byatt, another noted novelist; her youngest sister is the art historian, Helen Langdon, and their brother, Richard Drabble, is a Queen's Counsel. After attending the Quaker boarding-school, the Mount, at York, Drabble obtained a scholarship to Cambridge, where Dr Leavis used to teach. She joined the Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1960, along with her first husband, Clive Swift. There, she served as an understudy for Vanessa Redgrave, before she left it to pursue a career in writing.

Drabble is proud that there are a lot of people around the world who read her, like the Japanese, as she tells Olga Kenyon, but now she can add to her list of readers the Iraqis who will hopefully become familiar with this book (1980, 42). Though she has never been to Iraq, Drabble did create an Iraqi character, in *The Middle Ground* (1980): Mujid, an Iraqi student, is a guest of the protagonist, Kate Armstrong. Drabble has not known any Iraqis, but she knew some Lebanese writers, such as Rachid El Daif, who "was a good friend and we talked a lot about Middle Eastern politics and conflicts. I owe him a great deal", Drabble states that in a correspondence with me in January 2014.[2] She also said that she invented Mujid, "purely from research and reading and art exhibitions".

Drabble is an ardent defender of Iraq, and was so particularly at the time of the U.S. invasion, when she wrote the article, "I loathe America, and what it has done to the rest of the world" (2003), in which she called herself anti-American because of "what [America] has done to Iraq and the rest of the helpless world". In this sense, Drabble can be seen to share the same concerns about the recent history of Iraq as al-Dulaymi, Hussein, Sa'dawi and Mamduh.

[2] El-Daif can be seen as related to Mujid in Drabble's description of her encounter with the writer back in the 1970s in an article published in a book about Lebanon and posted in El-Daif's official web site (Drabble, 'Lebanon', 2006).

The Iraqi novels

The comparative literary corpus I have selected for my study is both recent and somehow little studied in public and academic circles either inside or outside Iraq. Also, we need to take into consideration that the work of Aliya Mamduh was banned in Iraq for a long time and even now is still banned, as she confirmed in her correspondence with me, due to

> the shocking and controversial nature, which explores the struggles of women and others against the power of authorities and cultures of cruelty and deception, beginning with the political and not ending with the sexual.[3]

Hadiya Husayn's books were banned for political reasons, but they became available only after the downfall of Saddam's regime. So far, no comparative study on Iraqi writers and Drabble has been carried out, despite the evident value of such a project, which has the potential to illuminate the way in which women in both cultures have shared experiences in relation to men and to violence, to a degree.

Some of the interest of a comparison of Iraqi novels with novels written by a western writer is based on the fact that "western literature exercised much influence on Arab writers throughout the twentieth century", as Fabio Caiani states in *Contemporary Arab Fiction* (2007, 10). The translation of European and American literary works played a major role in the introduction of the western literature and culture to the Arab world.

The influence of British and American writing started in the Arab world, including Iraq, in the early 1950s, due to translations from English into Arabic. Before the 1950s, the Arabic literature was influenced mainly by the French because of what is now known as the Arabic Renaissance, which goes back to 1798, with Napoleon's campaign to occupy Egypt. In Iraq, T.S. Eliot was colossal in his influence on modern Iraqi poetic forms, because "the people who read him most and translated him and commented on his work were themselves the leading young writers and poets of the new generation" (Jabra 1971, 81). The contact of Iraqi writers with European authors through the translation of the latter's works into Arabic, inspired the former to employ new literary devices and literary critical and psychological concepts in their own works. Jabra commented on the assimilation of the western literary and psychological concepts with the modern Arabic scholarship, stating that "what came through vividly

[3] She wrote that, on 20 June 2017, in a reply to my email about the availability of her books in Iraq.

was their vision and experience, fundamentally Arab, no doubt, but part of the human condition everywhere" (Jabra 1971, 89). Jabra holds that a close study of Arabic fiction and criticism reveals that they have acquired their form "not only of Sartre and Camus, but of novelists such as James Joyce, Proust, Kafka, Aldous Huxley, Lawrence, Durrell, Hemingway, Steinbeck, Faulkner, and of critics such as Eliot, Richards, Leavis" (1971, 89).

We should recollect that the Iraqi contemporary novelists discussed in this study were exposed to the literary devices employed by the English-language writers such as "the stream of consciousness, the flash-back, the interior monologue, the 'intellectual' dialogue, the multi-angled presentation of an event, the undercurrent of symbolism" (Jabra 1971, 89). Moreover, though western literary and critical culture was dominated by men in the first half of the twentieth century, when modernism reached its zenith, in the second half of the century, female writers and critics were significant in these areas. Aliya Mamduh, who has lived in Britain and then in France for a long time and is a personal friend of the French writer, Hélène Cixous, mentions the theorists Pierre Bourdieu and Hannah Arendt, and the Marquis de Sade, in her novel, *The Loved Ones*, and as a graduate with a degree in psychology, she is evidently familiar with Freud's psychoanalytical theories, though she does not mention him by name. Similarly, it is obvious from the title of his novel, *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, that Ahmad Sa'dawi has drawn inspiration from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), showing an engagement with radical aspects of the historical western canon. In addition, Lutfiya al-Dulaymi was greatly influenced by Doris Lessing. She had a grant from the British Council in 1978 to do an English language course at Goldsmiths College, the University of London, and bought Lessing's novel, *The Grass is Singing* (1950), along with Iris Murdoch's *The Black Prince* (1973) and Tom Stoppard's plays, which were part of the syllabus of the course, as she states in an article in *Narjis* magazine (2011, 37). "It was Lessing's name that bewitched me", she said:

> Doris Lessing's works inspired me to care about the human condition and the awareness of the individual of his world, which I reflect in every work that I write whether the work is subjective or objective. (Dulaimi, "Doris", 2011, 37)

Al-Dulaymi is also a translator and has four published books of translation from English to Arabic, including, *From the Diaries of Anaïs Nin* (1999).

Another significant factor in Iraqi writers' encounter with Western culture is exile. Political violence and wars have forced many writers out of Iraq, which has had "a positive outcome despite the hardships associated with it", as Shakir Mustafa points out in his anthology, *Contemporary Iraqi Fiction* (2008, xv). Migration brought these writers into direct contact with the cultural traditions of their host countries, which "has revitalized Iraqi writing" (Mustafa 2008, xv). Among the four Iraqi novelists I selected for this study, three of them, Hadiya Husayn, Lutfiya al-Dulaymi and Aliya Mamduh, currently live in exile. Thus, exile is one of the main themes explored in their novels. In *Beyond Love*, Huda takes refuge in Amman; in *The Loved Ones*, Suhaila is a refugee in Paris and Hayat in *Saturn Ladies* is exiled for some time in Amman. However, in *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, all the events are located in Iraq probably because the author, Ahmad Sa'dawi, has lived there all his life. Although these connections among authors and characters are coincidental, and exile is as common for men as for women, and for male as well as female authors, these novels focus on the specific ways in which exile affects females. The living and social experiences of the four Iraqi contemporary novelists have inspired them to create fictions which can be compared to Drabble's four works dealt with in this study.

Iraqi authors have been prolific, particularly since the fall of the regime in 2003, when they started to produce an unprecedented number of novels and short stories, mostly about life under dictatorship and the successive wars their country has witnessed, as well as the internal political strife and civil war that followed the invasion of Iraq. As a matter of fact, the invasion of Iraq has led to an upsurge in Iraqi literary production because writers were encouraged by the translation of their work in Western countries, which intensified after 2003. As Ikram Masmoudi points out,

> Since 2003, as a result of the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime, the occupation of Iraq by American forces and the internal political strife, interest has increased in Western countries in Iraq in general and Iraqi society, culture and literature in particular. (Masmoudi, *War and Occupation*, 2015, 1)

In his interview with Anaam Kachachi, a new female voice emerged in "the post-2003 Iraqi novel boom", al-Mustafa Najjar states:

> Ironically, Iraqi fiction has been flourishing ever since the US army invaded Baghdad in 2003. Several prominent Mesopotamian writers have emerged in the Arabic fiction arena, penning daring texts that seek to

> deconstruct the Iraqi identity during this critical phase in the country's history. (Najjar, "Inaam Kachachi", 2014, n.p.)

Ferial Ghazoul also notices that "Iraq is a fashionable subject in 'scholarship' nowadays" (2007, 114). The interest in Iraq and Iraqi literary writings increased even more after Ahmad Sa'dawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad* won the seventh International Prize for Arabic Literature in 2014.

Three novels discussed in this work were written by women writers concerned with the oppression of women in a patriarchal society, while *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, which is written by a man, is inclined to show the misogynistic attitudes exercised by men against women though the author does not seem to be conscious of the presence of such attitudes.

Critical and Theoretical Framework on Violence

In this study, several theoretical models are referred to in order to offer different ways of exploring the selected literary texts. It includes several discussions about feminism, and invokes several feminist critics and theorists, such as Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigarary, Toril Moi. Marxist theory is discussed in relation to representations of class conflict and social transformation in Drabble's *The Radiant Way* and Hadiya Husayn's *Beyond Love*, and in relation to the concept of intersectionality. Gender politics is also discussed with reference to Raewyn Connell's reconceptualization of the notion of gender as a social structure. Foucault's concepts of biopolitics and governmentality, which show how the state practises violence by controlling its populace in macro-economic and socio-cultural ways, are also discussed.

Freudian and post-Freudian theories are referred to in relation to Drabble's *The Gates of Ivory* and Ahmad Sa'dawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad*. These theories include Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque and Kristeva's idea of abjection, which are also discussed. Theories of storytelling, narration and testimony by Adriana Cavarera, Foucault and Derrida are examined in Drabble's *The Red Queen* and Lutfiya al-Dulaymi's *Saturn Ladies* as well as Husain Haddawy's and Richard Burton's *Arabian Nights*. Moreover, in relation to Drabble's *The Pure Gold Baby* and Aliya Mamduh's *The Loved Ones*, Bourdieu's theories are discussed, showing how they are derived from the post-Marxist critical context of the late twentieth century. There are also references to post-colonial theorists, such as Frantz Fanon.

Violence is the main theme in this study. To investigate the violent universe and put it under scrutiny, the study begins with a brief philosophical analysis of the concept of violence and explores some theoretical issues regarding its nature and scope. Within philosophy, there are two ways of thinking about violence: as direct acts of force and as indirect violence, or soft violence. We should bear in mind that violence is mainly defined as "behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something" (Stevenson 2015, n.p.).

An investigation of the etymology of the word "violence" shows that it is derived from the Latin *violentia*, meaning vehemence or force. Yet there is an interesting feature of the etymology, in that the word "violation" comes from the same source as the word "violence", as Newton Garver points out in his much-quoted essay, "What Violence Is" (1973, 256-266). Indeed most attempts to define violence tend to combine the idea of an act of physical force with a violation.

The idea of force in connection to violence is very significant because, as Garver points out, "there is no question at all that in many contexts the word "force" is a synonym for the word 'violence'" (Garver 1973, 257). Bufacchi and Gilson, in "The Ripples of Violence" (2016), argue that the received view in mainstream philosophy that violence is an "act", to be defined in terms of "force" and "intentionality", is in fact "prioritising the agent", and thus supporting the act of violence in question and not the victim or survivor of violence (27). They also argue that violence "should not be thought of merely in terms of an 'act', but also as an 'experience'", because "an act is temporally determinate, while an experience is temporally indeterminate" (2016, 27). Bufacchi and Gilson analyse Alice Sebold's novel, *The Lovely Bones* (2002) and her memoir *Lucky* (1999) to show "the devastating impact of violence that characterises the experience of sexual violation and its aftermath" (2016, 27). These examples from Sebold also enable them to reveal the experience of violence which lies beyond the act of violence, which they term as "the ripples of violence". Influenced by Bufacchi and Gilson's contentions, but applying them to new contexts, my thesis is concerned with the ripples of violence through time and across societies, rather than the act of violence itself. It also prioritises the victim or the survivor, who is at the receiving end of the violence. Moreover, the thesis also questions the influence of violence on the perpetrators of the act of violence themselves and whether their violence towards others has an effect on them as well.

According to Garver, the form of quiet violence is psychological, which "often involves manipulating" and "degrading people" (1973, 262). Garver gives examples from George Orwell's *1984*, in which the protagonist is terrorised by the idea of being bitten by a rat, and is broken down by this imaginary threat. The threat of violence, here, is a kind of pre-traumatic disorder, though Garver does not use this new term. Garver believes that covert violence is "both personal and institutional" because it involves individuals as well as social institutions that are responsible for the violation of the autonomy of persons (1973, 260, 261). In being both individual and institutional, quiet violence comes close to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, though the latter is a more unconscious one. Garver points out that "institutional violence is always of greater harm" than physical violence (1973, 266). But is symbolic violence more harmful than the physical? And what is the connection between the two? I will address these questions particularly in chapter four, where I use the term "soft violence" in reference to Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence.

The study explores different types of violence, including physical (hard) violence, or what Garver terms "overt" violence and non-physical (soft) or "covert or quiet" violence (1973, 259). It is divided into four chapters in which different aspects of violence can be located somewhere on a spectrum between hard and soft violence. Given that this study consistently critiques binary thinking as patriarchal and western colonialist, it tries to avoid reproducing an unintentional binary (soft/hard violence) by viewing it as a spectrum and inclines for adopting the "continuum" or "spectrum" concept for hard/soft violence. All the chapters show this relationship, just from a different perspective: the first three from a primarily "hard" violence view, the last vice versa. In this context it is worth mentioning that overt violence has been perpetrated on a vast scale in Iraq in recent decades and in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century, in a sense; whereas covert violence is present in some form in all modern societies, and Drabble and the four Iraqi authors are in an especially good position to appreciate the relationship between overt and covert violence.

The Structure and Framework of Comparison

All the novels discussed in this study were written in a period of increasing globalization, which not only led to a mixing of literary taste and methods, but also to an increase in common themes and concerns. All the novels seem to reflect the perspective of an emerging middle class which profited from globalization and that became implicated in emerging

transnational encounters, conflicts and networks in various ways. At the same time it is clear that the situation for the British middle class and its intellectual interests is different from the Iraqi situation, because responses to the growing interactions and positions within the globalization process differ. The differences are explained in the following chapters which illustrate the different socio-political conditions in the two countries. It is clear that the circumstances in Britain and Iraq are widely diverse, but there are also segments and developments which necessarily interlink, because they are part of the same broader process.

Among the effects of globalization is the increasing involvement of the middle class protagonists with issues of colonialism and imperialism, both sources of unequal power relations and forms of violence. Again, the perspectives of the various characters differ, but they are linked to an overarching process, which co-determines their position in, as Margaret Drabble puts it in *The Gates of Ivory*, "Good Times" or "Bad Times" (GoI 10). All these concerns are presented in the novels within a predominantly realistic setting, enhancing the documentary aspects as a common denominator.

In Chapter One, Margaret Drabble's novel *The Radiant Way* is compared to Hadiya Hussein's *Beyond Love*. The main thematic focus is on class and gender asymmetries, based on class and social theories of Marx, Foucault, and others. Both novels are characterized as "metafiction", giving a realistic presentation of socio-political differences and government policies based on bio-political aims to control gender relationships, or, more particularly, to regulate the socio-economic position and roles of women. A detailed comparison reveals striking similarities in Iraq and Britain with regard to government strategies for bio-political control which produce various forms of inequality and violence in both societies. The novels attempt to document these tendencies, but, as the author concludes, in spite of the many similarities, the differences are significant, too.

In Chapter Two, the novels *The Gates of Ivory* and *Frankenstein in Baghdad* are compared, which are both concerned with the absurdity and psychical monstrosity of unrestrained violence. Both novels are intertextually linked to earlier English novels, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which convey a sense of horror by, respectively, penetrating into a scene of infernal violence and irrationality, and monstrous transformations of the human body. The chapter focuses on gender aspects – the presentation of female bodies as grotesque – and the effects of mutilation and bodily fragmentation in situations of extreme,

indiscriminate, violence. Theoretical references are made to Lacan, Bakhtin, and others. Apart from violence and physical monstrosity, themes include gender aspects and sexual politics.

In Chapter Three, Drabble's *The Red Queen* is juxtaposed to *Saturn Ladies* by Lutfiya al-Dulaymi. The link between the two novels, it is argued, is their imitation of the narrative strategy of Scheherazade, the famous narrator of the *Thousand and One Nights*, although, as it is observed, Margaret Drabble was not directly influenced by the example of Scheherazade. In both novels, narration is used as a strategy for survival, in situations governed by violence and a regime of male dominance. In *The Red Queen*, it is the princess telling her life story who survives the tyranny of her violent husband; in *Saturn Ladies*, it is the female narrator who creates an imaginary space for herself which enables her to survive the horrors of war and random violence in Iraq. Scheherazade is presented as an "archetype" both related to storytelling and to female resistance against male oppression. Both novels are typified as "metafiction", *The Red Queen* containing a fictional autobiography, and *Saturn Ladies* consisting of a fictionalization of history. In both novels the motif of survival is at the heart of the story.

In Chapter Four, finally, the framework of Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "symbolic power" is used as a tool to analyse forms of "soft violence" in Margaret Drabble's *The Pure Gold Baby* and Aliya Mamduh's *The Loved Ones*. At the centre of the analysis is the opportunities for women to break out of their situation of social and sexual oppression through education. Education, in various forms, but especially higher education, can increase the self-awareness of women and release them from the sexual dominance of men, who are, socially or intellectually, their superiors, and can enable them to reflect on their control of their sexuality. Both novels show how intricately gender relations and power relations are intertwined.

The Conclusion suggests that a comparison of the novels shows how all authors portray victims of violence, who can become survivors, and in doing so gain a degree of enlightenment and self-understanding, which may not otherwise have been possible. The novels also reveal how the impact of violence is very similar across cultures and periods.

All chapters contain through analysis of the novels discussed, from a broad array of theoretical perspectives and with a varied set of analytical tools. The main themes are in all cases violence and its entwinement with social and gender relations and political repression.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used for the editions of novels written by Margaret Drabble and four Iraqi authors: Hadiya Husayn, Ahmad Sa‘dawi, Lutfiya al-Dulaymi and Aliya Mamduh

TRW *The Radiant Way* (2014)

BL *Ma ba‘d al-hubb* (2003), or *Beyond Love* (2012)

GoI *The Gates of Ivory* (2014),

FiB *frankenshtayn fi Baghdad* (2013), “from the novel: *Frankenstein in Baghdad*” (2012) and *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (2018)

TRQ *The Red Queen: A Transcultural Tragicomedy* (2004)

SL *sayyidat zuhal: sirat nas wa-madina* or *Saturn Ladies: A Tale of a People and a City* (2012)

PGB *The Pure Gold Baby* (2013)

TLO *al-mahbubat* (2008), or *The Loved Ones* (2007)

CHAPTER ONE

THE IMPACT OF VIOLENCE ON CLASS, GENDER AND IDENTITY POLITICS IN DRABBLE AND HADIYA HUSAYN

Introduction

This chapter explores the relationship between violence, gender and class in Drabble's *The Radiant Way* (1987) and *ma ba'd al-hubb* (2003) or *Beyond Love* (2012), which is the third novel of one of "the leading voices in Iraqi fiction today", Hadiya Husayn (Masmoudi, "Introduction", 2012, xv). Drabble's novel, which is the first volume of a trilogy, consisting of *The Radiant Way* (1987), *A Natural Curiosity* (1989), and *The Gates of Ivory* (1991), follows the lives of three women, Liz, Alix and Esther, who are "in their mid-forties" and have been friends since their college years at Cambridge in the 1950s, while Hussein's novel is about two Iraqi college-educated female friends, Huda Abdel Baqi and Nadia Mazloom, who are in their early thirties, and have endured the hardships of an unparalleled succession of wars, dictatorship, sanctions and exile. The two focal novels are set in two different contexts, West and East, yet the chapter aims to show that whether they both address similar issues, including: the threat of violence against women and how this affects women's life choices; whether women's reaction to the threat of violence is a kind of submission or an act of resistance; and whether the literary technique flash-forward/prolepsis used in both works can be said to represent biopolitical control of the population, and especially females, through fear.

The chapter begins by considering the socio-political backgrounds of both novels and how this influences their genre, form and content. It discusses the documentary and realist strategies used by both authors, and explores the extent to which they can be considered campaigning novels. It then goes on to show how the socio-historical context of the novels and the methods used by the authors are relevant to the depiction of class divisions and class status, as well as discussing and critiquing theories of class and class conflict. It considers the value of applying a Marxist critique to the

given contexts and the limitations of such an approach. These limitations lead to a consideration of intersectionality, geo-politics and religio-ethnicity as factors which constitute other forms of inequality, alongside class and gender, pointing towards a more hybrid and fluid model of power and socio-economic structures that reflect the complex nature of oppression.

Throughout the chapter, the issues of otherness and difference are explored in relation to the context of war and violence in which both novels are situated, although Drabble's representation of post-war Britain necessarily reflects this in a less direct way than Hussein's novel, in which war, conflict and death are ever-present. The chapter considers the way both writers see war in relation to history, society and government and, in parallel, the effects of war and conflict on individuals, their psyches, and their relationships.

This chapter also takes up Raewyn Connell's reconceptualization of the notion of gender as a social structure (2009, 11). She informally defines gender as "the way human society deals with human bodies and their continuity, and the many consequences of that "dealing" in our personal lives and our collective fate" (Connell 2009, 11). A number of qualities can be ascribed to gender under this definition, such as its "multi-level or multidimensional models", its "fluidity", hybridity and its negotiability, in contrast to ideas of its innateness or essentialism (Connell 2009, 75, 112). Gender will be examined with special reference to sexuality, which can be seen in similar terms. In the two novels examined in this chapter, power relations are at the root of gendered violence as well as violent expressions of sexuality. In this chapter, Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1978) is employed to show how complex violence can be in relation to gender politics. It also considers sexuality as a social construct, as well as "a historical construct", which is linked to "major strategies of knowledge and power" (vol.1, 1978, 105-6).

This chapter also aims to provide a detailed understanding of the mechanisms and processes through which violence, class, gender and sexuality are shown to be negotiated in the two novels under discussion, especially in relation to character development. The chapter deals with this question in relation to both novels and the way in which they explore war, austerity and political radicalism and conservatism in a historical context. It also refers to the boundaries faced by Middle Eastern women as observed by David Ghanim in *Gender and Violence in the Middle East* (2009) and particularly the term "self-policing", which Ghanim explains as "promoting strict conformity with the unjust and oppressive gender structure" (119).

The chapter examines the effect of such violence on women and how imagined violence influences them. According to Foucault, "the threat of punishment" or violence puts people in "the cycle of prohibition":

> Thou shalt not go near, thou shalt not touch, thou shalt not consume, thou shalt not experience pleasure, thou shalt not speak, thou shalt not show thyself; ultimately thou shalt not exist, except in darkness and secrecy. (Foucault, *History*, vol. 1, 1978, 84)

The question of governmental violence, or state repression and conditioning, its relation to war and violence, and its role in society at the level of the family and the individual are explored, in particular in the final section on the stake of the state in marriage, and how this institution changes under the influence of war, biopolitics and historical processes. The breakdown of such structures can be seen in the context of the processes of capitalist development, on the one hand, and the permanence of patriarchy on the other.

Part of the argument will be that Drabble and Hussein both reflect the influence of 1980s politics and culture on their novels, especially in relation to two tough political leaders in power in the focal countries during this period: Margaret Thatcher, who took power in May 1979 in Britain; and Saddam Hussein, who seized power in Iraq in July of the same year.[4] The chapter will show how the threat of violence shapes people's actions and choices, and what brings about those real or projected threats, and why. It also considers whether either or neither or both novels locate a site of hope, transformation and/or healing amid the cycles of violence and oppression.

Author and Genre: Documentary Fiction and Historical Metafiction

This first section focuses on establishing the type of novels these two focal texts represent: the genre they belong to, and how this affects the way both writers construct narrative in ways which involve a strong degree of realism. Drabble, for instance, was very interested in "the documentary novel" and was "trying to portray contemporary Britain – social attitudes, the way people behave, the way they dress or think – through a variety of viewpoints" during the 1970s and 1980s, as she told her interviewer, John

[4] I will refer to Hadiya Hussein as Hussein and to Saddam Hussein as Saddam throughout the study.

Hannay (1987, 133). Drabble also stressed that "writing isn't about writing; it's about the other thing, which is called life" (Hannay 1987, 130). She told another interviewer, Olga Kenyon, that she was "recording" because "an important role for a writer is simply to use your eyes and tell the truth" (1980, 33-34). The author asserted that she would like to "think I write books which might contribute to a way of seeing British Society", therefore Phyllis Rose wrote that for Drabble, "Britain is her most important character" (1980). Rose also describes Drabble as "the chronicler of contemporary Britain" and

> the novelist people will turn to a hundred years from now to find out how things were, the person who will have done for late-20th-century London what Dickens did for Victorian London, what Balzac did for Paris. (Rose 1980, n.p.)

Drabble did not object to being labelled as "Dickensian" because she was "expected to do a Dickensian survey of London Life. If only I could live up to it, I'd be happy", she said (Kenyon 1980, 34). However, in her more recent novels she has increasingly focused on subjectivity and, as she has aged, on an older demographic, as well as experimenting with authorial voice and narrative form, which has involved less focus on socio-historical contexts.

Likewise, Hussein's work is documentary because the novel "has a complex relationship with memory and history", relying on autobiographical accounts as well as memoirs, such as "a diary of an Iraqi soldier [by the] poet Ali Abd el-Emir" (Qualey, "Beyond Memory", 2012, n.p.; BL 140). In an interview, Hussein states that she "wrote about the past wars, which [she] experienced, the severe injustice and militarization of life" in Saddam's dictatorship. The reason for such a kind of writing, as she says, was that "these were crimes [which] went unrecognized by the world, or were recognized but not discussed" (Qualey, "Interview", 2012, n.p.).

In *Telling the Truth,* Barbara Foley defines the "documentary novel" as "a distinct fictional kind" that "purports to represent reality by means of agreed-upon conventions of fictionality, while grafting onto its fictive pact some kind of additional claim to empirical validation" (Foley 1986, 25). The term also covers what Foley calls the "metahistorical novel" and various other genres such as autobiographical accounts and memoirs (Foley 1986, 195). Many current incidents and actions are discussed in both novels as well as references to historical events. It seems to me that it is very important to examine whether the highlighting of current and past events and their relation to violence, gender and class make these two texts

what Barbara Foley calls “documentary” novels or what Linda Hutcheon (1989) calls “historiographic metafiction”. Are they campaigning novels about different contexts or are they more literary? And does documentary fiction raise awareness or call for change?

The Radiant Way can also be viewed as a historiographic metafiction because of the overt employment of intertextuality, the profusion of literary allusions - more than sixty writers and about a dozen visual artists appear in the text - and the self-reflexiveness of the novel (Hannay 1987, 133). *The Radiant Way* certainly conforms to Patricia Waugh's definition of metafiction as a term given to fictional writing which “self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality” (Waugh 1984, 2). Drabble also states that “the problem with someone with a background like mine is that I'm overloaded, not underloaded, with literary allusions” (Hannay 1987, 130). According to Pamela Bromberg, in her mature work, Drabble has employed a “variety of innovative narrative techniques and complicated intertextual dialogue with the literary past” to deconstruct tradition and invent “a new feminist metafiction” in order to write what she called, in her 1985 lecture, “Mimesis”, the “new reality” of contemporary women's lives (Bromberg 1990, 5). Drabble’s “new reality” is in fact “a new metafictional feminist realism”, as Pamela Bromberg argues, which includes a “destabilizing discourse about her own narrative craft and the European novelistic tradition she has inherited, critiqued, and revised” (Bromberg 1990, 7). Drabble’s regard for traditions, especially that of realism, which she “allies herself with”, is summed up when she remarks to a BBC interviewer in 1967 that “I'd rather be at the end of a dying tradition, which I admire, than at the beginning of a tradition which I deplore” (Greene 1992, 5; qtd in Bergonzi 1979, 65).

Unlike Drabble, Hussein does not have the strength of literary tradition that Drabble has built on such as nineteenth-century women novelists and feminist movements. The pioneering Iraqi women writers “were exclusively poets” (Zeidan 1995, 58). It was also generally understood that the short story and novel-writing was dominated by male writers in a patriarchal society and it was only in the 1970s that the achievements of some Iraqi women writers were added to Iraq’s literary map. These female fiction writers, like their male counterparts, had “thrived on realism”, adhering to “traditional social themes” (Mustafa 2008, xiv, xv). Hussein’s fiction is by no means less realistic than that of her predecessors, although she, as well as her contemporaries, suffered from what Shakir Mustafa describes as “the stifling presence of censorship during [Saddam’s] Ba‘thist rule”

(Mustafa 2008, xv). As Ikram Masmoudi points out, the contemporary writers'

> perspectives on and articulations of these realities demonstrate a radical shift from the war writings of the 1980s generation, which were mostly state-commissioned by the Iraqi government. (2010, 60)

Ironically, as part of the state control of contemporary fiction, many writers were forced to leave Iraq. However, since many of these contemporary writers continue to write, their relative independence, compared to the writers of the 1970s and 1980s, meant that they were able to make some direct critiques of the Saddam regime.

Because of Saddam Hussein's regime, Hadiya Husayn could not write any novels until she left Iraq and went to Amman for good because she was "blacklisted". There she wrote many of her novels before she emigrated to Canada. While in Iraq, writers were "imprisoned, or, alternatively, were rewarded, according to their positions toward the state" (Mustafa 2008, xvi). Hussein's husband, Abdul Sattar Nassir, suffered a year in solitary confinement "for publishing a short story built around a parable that denigrated the kind of absolute power embraced by the Saddam regime" (Mustafa 2008, xvi). However, the shadow of the censor can be seen in her novels, including *Beyond Love*, in which she never refers to Saddam by his name, using the word "president" instead, indicating that, even for those who have not experienced violence first hand, living in such a society inevitably breeds fear and leaves people psychologically affected by "imagined violence". Despite their uprising against Saddam which is an important event in her novel, Hussein never mentions the Shiites by this name because this word "was almost taboo" during Saddam's time (Bengio 1998, 99). She does not mention the Sunnis either probably because she wanted to avoid direct reference to sectarian issues, now was living in Jordan, where Sunni Islam is the dominant religion. It is a kind of "self-censorship", which is "based on fear of a system that frightens people into remaining on the side of the rulers", as Hussein described it (Qualey, "Interview", 2012, n.p.). To avoid the regime's censorship, Hadiya Husayn, like many other Iraqi writers, started to use "parables that employ elements of fantasy" and "magic realism" (Mustafa 2008, xvi). She uses magic realism in her third novel, *On the Way to Them*, in which "the heroes are the people who died already" (Hamblin 2007**)**. In *Beyond Love*, while feeling nostalgic in Amman, Huda travels in her imagination to Baghdad and visits the holy shrine of Al-Imamain Al-Kadhmain.

Hutcheon believes that "women are no longer to be 'absented' from history and cultural process" (1989, 166). Hutcheon also states that the "fictionalization" or the "imaginative reconstruction" of the process of examining and analysing "the records and survivals of the past" is called "historiography" (Hutcheon 1989, 93, 92). Thus, Hussein's novel can also be seen as historiographical metafiction because it asserts what Hutcheon says that "both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs" (1989, 93).

Hussein, who started her career as a radio presenter and then a journalist, does not believe that written history reflects the reality of the events being recorded because "it is written by those in power", as she says (Qualey, "Interview", 2012, n.p.). Thus, Hussein tries to reflect reality in her novels, but primarily through testimony: she prefers to listen to the stories of people around her and that she writes her "novels and stories from [memory's] never-ending source" (Qualey, "Interview", 2012, n.p.). She says that she does research and study real incidents and take "a small part of that and build [her] novels around it" (Qualey, "Interview", 2012, n.p.). In *Beyond Love*, Hussein built her story on the inner torment of the Iraqi women during and after the wars. In this way, Hussein's methodology is quite similar to Drabble's: both novels have female protagonists, and both consider the impact of violence and conflict not only on these characters but on society more widely. It seems to me that Hussein was not influenced by the official government's propaganda machine, focusing instead on Iraq's unique and painful realities, as experienced and described from the perspective of her female characters.

Similarly, in *The Radiant Way*, Drabble tried "to cover a period of time, to be seen through the eyes of three principal women characters", as she says (Kenyon 1980, 33). She is "renowned for chronicling the lives of women as they adapt in Britain's changing social landscape" (Johnson 2011). She became preoccupied from the middle seventies onwards with representing and explaining in her novels the increasing troubles and problems faced by the people, especially women, in Britain. From her novel, *The Ice Age* in 1977, Drabble began to question the ability of the past to explain the present and the adequacy of the traditional novel to portray and understand the "state of the nation", which she tries to revive in her fiction. In her subsequent novels, Drabble tried to reject the traditional plotted narrative in favour of a more nonlinear conception of narrative as a means of representation. In her trilogy, known as "state of the nation" novels, Drabble represents multiple perspectives, such as in *The Radiant* Way, whose three protagonists take different approaches to the task of explaining

and making sense of events (Harper 2014, 235). These protagonists are quite different from each other: Esther Breuer is an Austrian-Jewish single intellectual woman and a freelance art historian; Liz Headleand is a London psychotherapist, twice married, and now a mother of a large family, including two daughters and three stepsons; and Alix Bowen, a lifelong Liberal, widowed and now happily remarried, is an English instructor, a committed social worker and part-time teacher in a women's prison. These three characters represent aesthetic, psychological and socio-historical perspectives. In spite of their differences, the narrator warns us: "One cannot, really, wholly differentiate these three women", adding, "after more than half-a-lifetime of association, they share characteristics, impressions, memories, even speech patterns", emphasising the influence of social context and environment on character and identity (TRW 106).

In *Beyond Love*, the female protagonists share the same characteristics of being traumatized and haunted by the nightmarish history of their home country: "The past that we buried has left us with no present through which to reach another life", Nadia tells Huda when she meets her in Amman (BL 18). She also tells her that "we're eager to torture ourselves and whip our souls" with memories and recollections, "for reasons we don't understand" (BL 18). But Hussein seems to understand these reasons: "those women seem to be affected psychologically by the events of war", Hussein tells her interviewer, Laura Hamblin, "it's the inner feelings of the psychology of the women, due to wars" (2007). In fact, the Iraqi women experienced the war and its horrible repercussions more or less equally with Iraqi men, as Miriam Cooke argues in her discussion of "the gendering of the military" in *Women and the War Story* (1996), who holds that "along with the rest of the world's subalterns, [Iraqi] women are beginning to speak out as survivors" (295-96).

Both novels highlight contemporary history from women's perspectives. In Hussein's novel, we find references to real events, such as the Iraq-Iran War, the First Gulf War, years of international sanctions, the Iraqi presidential referendum and the Shiite uprising in the Iraqi southern provinces. It is worth mentioning that in *The Radiant Way*, the narrator talks about the Iraq-Iran War in the 1980s, saying, "during these years, war continued to rage between Iraq and Iran, but the West did not pay much attention" (TRW 218). Drabble's notion that the West was ignoring what was going on in the East seems now very ironic because the West, particularly Britain and the US, did pay much attention by "arming both sides", which "helped to prolong the war", something which the public was not aware of because "international involvement and contributions to

the war" were not focused on by the media in the 1980s and "largely ignored within contemporary analysis" (Hersh 1992, n.p.; Fayazmanesh 2008, 2; "Arming Saddam" 2002; Ismael & Haddad 2004, 3). There is another reference to the war in Iraq in *The Radiant Way* in the character of the Iraqi student, Mujid, from Drabble's earlier novel, *The Middle Ground*: "Kate Armstrong's one-time lodger, Mujid, was injured by a shell, but not seriously" (TRW 218). And here again we discern Drabble's characteristically allusive irony, since this brush with mortality can epitomise the superficial and minimal knowledge that Westerners tend to have about the vast scale of the horrors inflicted on the Iraqi people in recent times. Another irony can be found in the metatextual nature of this reference, since it reinforces the sense that autobiographical aspects are surreptitiously inculcated into the broadly fictive depictions of broad realist contexts, perhaps hinting at an element of scepticism on Drabble's part regarding authorial objectivity, a sense which becomes more prominent in her later novels.

Both Hussein and Drabble also play with the concepts of genre which they adopt. For instance, both writers include a male serial killer in their novels, who is clearly based on a real person. In *Beyond Love*, this character strongly resembles an individual from the 1970s, Abu Tubar, or the Axe Man, who used to break into certain houses in Baghdad in order to violently murder the occupants (BL 12). Hussein is playing with the concept of realism and metafiction by including real elements. The serial killer was also a thief, who "robbed people's tranquillity and security" (BL 12). Later on, people realized that he was "nothing more than a creature of the regime… killing those families who opposed it" (BL 12). Huda compares Abu Tubar's crimes with "the major atrocities" committed in the 1990s by criminals linked to the regime, whose confessions were broadcast by the TV channel run by Saddam's son, Uday, to further terrify the people (BL 12). Likewise, the "Yorkshire Ripper" is mentioned in *The Radiant Way* (TRW 30). By choosing Jilly Fox from that bourgeois class and turning her into criminal and then a victim of a serial killer, Drabble wants to question the idea of the existence of "smart life among the powerful and wealthy bourgeoisie in the south and dull working-class life in the north" (Schäffner 2007, 80).

Another way that Drabble plays with the idea of metafiction is to introduce material which is ambiguous in terms of whether such material is autobiographical. Thus, in a highly controversial passage, discussed further later in this chapter, Liz is described remembering how "she had sat upon her father's knee […] and rubbed herself like a kitten up and

down […] damp between her infant legs" (TRW 360). The conscious eroticism here emphasises the fictive nature of the event, yet the fact that Drabble describes how, when she saw her father at the end of WWII, aged around 6, "he had to win me over", which he did by sitting her on his knee and reading the primer *The Radiant Way*, exactly as is described in the passage in which Liz is sexually aroused by her father, is, as a narrative trick, seems to tease the reader (Drabble, "He spoke", 2008, n.p.). In a sense, where Hussein's characters mirror the sufferings of living individuals, and she draws empathy for them as a result, Drabble negotiates the boundary between fiction and reality, but never allows us to feel entirely comfortable as readers, placed in a similar situation. Moreover, by overtly associating language acquisition with sexual desire, she may well be putting Lacanian Theory in the same uncomfortable position, as part of the way she plays with ideas.

Class War and Biopolitics in Drabble and Hussein

This section will consider the depiction of class politics in the two focal novels, how capitalism is shown to distribute wealth, power and opportunity unequally amongst populations and whether the novels offer any solutions to the inequalities and contradictions capitalism produces. It considers the classical Marxist model of historical development and whether this is applicable to the circumstances presented in these novels, and considers whether more recent models of history and social structuring based on Marxist Theory, such as Foucault's concept of biopolitics and concepts of intersectionality can add to this critique when seen in relation to these fictional narratives.

As mentioned in the introduction, both writers use prolepsis to compare and contrast two distinct periods in the recent history of the countries in which each is set, both approximately 15 years apart in the recent past, and this technique tends to highlight the fictive rather than documentary aspect of the novels. However, Gerard Genette, in *Narrative Discourse* (1972), relates prolepsis or the flash-forward to a narration or an evocation "in advance of an event that will take place later" (40). When linked with violence, prolepsis turns out to be related to "socially sanctioned terror, preserving community under duress" as well as "the subjugation of women and their interests to male-defined notions of fidelity, desire, and community" (Saldivar 2006, 307). Proleptic violence in this sense is used in both novels. This anticipation of violence can be thought of as the obverse of pre- and post-traumatic stress disorder, which at least is