

A Comparative Study of Baghdad as a Histo-Cultural Symbol in Salah Al-Hamdani's "Baghdad, My Love" and Alfred Lord Tennyson's "Recollections of Arabian Nights"

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Abstract

This study examines the disparate literary representations of Baghdad by Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809–1892) and Salah al-Hamdani (1951–). The romanticized and wistful longing for a more exotic and daring Baghdad of Tennyson's "Recollections of the Arabian Nights" is presented. As an illustration of a deep love for its people, al-Hamdani's "Baghdad, Mon Amour" provides a close-up look into the city's stormy past. Al-Hamdani uses powerful imagery and moving language to capture Baghdad's resiliency and eternal soul. The poetry of Hamdani and Lord Tennyson are scrutinized and contrasted in this study using an eclectic approach combining Feminism and Orientalism analysis. In order to capture the poets' literary traditions and lyrical depictions of Baghdad, two poems were chosen. The analysis demonstrates how poetry may engage with a city's complicated character and history, underscoring Baghdad's ongoing value as a literary inspiration. The investigation comes to the conclusion that, albeit using different approaches, Tennyson and al-Hamdani both successfully convey Baghdad's significance as a historical and cultural metropolis. Al-Hamdani takes a reality-based stance, functioning as an observer, whereas Tennyson highlights the value of Baghdad by incorporating its history and culture.

Keywords: Baghdad, Recollections of Arabian Nights, Tennyson, Salah Hamadni

1. Introduction

Poets have long regarded cities rich in historical and cultural fabrics to be fascinating, as do scholars and readers (Smith 2020). The capital of Iraq, Baghdad, is special among these cities. This is the city that has inspired and stimulated the minds of poets for generations. The purpose of this study is to examine the complex representation of Baghdad in poetry and to learn how poets have used language to communicate how they feel about this important city. It is claimed that the poetic depiction of Baghdad serves as a potent lens through which one may study the city's constantly developing features, from its more contemporary issues to its historical grandeur (Brown 2015). The poems written about Baghdad embrace a wide range of emotions, experiences, and subjects, delivering a unique perspective on the city's significance in the collective memory of humanity. Poetry's extraordinary ability to transcend over time and cultural boundaries is used to portray Baghdad's ever-changing image.

In "Recollection of Arabian Nights," a poem by British poet Alfred Tennyson (published in 1850), the exotic charm of Baghdad was referenced. Tennyson is recognized for his evocative and imagery-rich poems. This poem is considered a classic illustration of how the city's reputation and charm have inspired poets from all over the world, despite distant geographical borders. Tennyson contributes to the global discourse about the city, its majesty, and the charm it holds for poets and dreamers alike by incorporating the name of the city into his rhyme. Known by most as Lord Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson (1809 - 1892) was one of the most well-known poets in Britain during the Victorian era. His poems are renowned for their rich imagery, which is frequently influenced by his personal encounters and interest in distant places.

Iraqi poet Salah al-Hamdani (1951-) expressed his deep affection for the city through the personal title "Baghdad My Love". His poetry is known for its vibrant portrayal of the streets, marketplaces, and people of Baghdad, highlighting the strong connection between the city and its inhabitants (Al-Hamdani 2008). Many residents of Baghdad have a deep and sentimental attachment to their city, and this sentiment is evident in Al-Hamdani's artwork. As Rainer Maria Rilke once stated, "To love another human being is perhaps the hardest thing we have to do. It is the ultimate, the final test and proof, the work that all other work is but preparation for" (Rilke 1929). Al-Hamdani's love for Baghdad serves as proof of the profound connection that individuals can have with a place, and his desire to express that love through poetry.

Salah al-Hamdani's poems and writings have made a significant impact on the field of literature. His art beautifully encompasses the intricate emotions he holds for his homeland, specifically Baghdad. "Baghdad My Love" perfectly exemplifies his deep affection and connection with the city, which acts as a limitless source of inspiration for his poetry (Smith, 2020).

Even though Baghdad thrived as a center of erudition and cultural activity during the Islamic Golden Age, it has also endured periods of instability and violence, particularly in the contemporary era. This dichotomy, encompassing both prosperity and adversity, lends our investigation greater intricacy and significance. As we embark on this inquiry, we further

ascertain a conspicuous dearth in current scholarly discourse pertaining to the poetic portrayal of Baghdad, with the existing body of literature displaying notable gaps in comprehensiveness (Johnson 2021). In the words of Maya Angelou, "We all should recognize that diversity contributes to a rich tapestry, and we must comprehend that all the threads of this tapestry hold equal value, irrespective of their color" (Angelou 2013).

The goal of this study is to acknowledge the diversity of voices that have knitted poetry into Baghdad's fabric. Through analyzing the poetry of poets from various historical periods and cultural backgrounds, we might uncover the different aspects that comprise the complex image of Baghdad. This study examines how Baghdad is portrayed in poetry, taking into account the city's historical and contemporary significance as well as the poets' shifting viewpoints. The study offers an explanation for the relevance of this research by first giving a general overview before focusing on the particular subject. Furthermore, the research methodology is explained, including the selection of poems and poets, and the importance of this subject within contemporary debates is emphasized. The thesis of this study focuses on the ongoing literary significance of Baghdad and how the city serves as a mirror reflecting its transformation and resilience.

2. Literature Review

Often compared as a bewitching woman in the poems written by poets, the picture of Baghdad is one that is alluring and enchanted in poetry. These poems expertly mix vivid pictures and metaphors, emphasizing its historical significance during the Islamic Golden Age, glory along the Tigris River, architectural grandeur, and intellectual profundity. These lyrics stimulate feelings of gratitude and melancholy, providing insights into the city's challenges, particularly the effects of battle and the passing of time. via these poems, Baghdad is transformed from a mere location to a symbol that links people via shared memories and provides insight into its history, cultural significance, and lasting legacy.

In the research paper titled "Simile and Allegorical Image in The Poetry of Khaled Al-Bahrizi" by Dr. Balasem Mohseni and Zaidoon Anwer Abdulkareem, the authors explore the metaphorical and allegorical imagery present in the poetry of Khaled Al-Bahrizi. Al-Bahrizi, a renowned poet of the 70th generation, is known for his profound and intricate style. His goal was to shine light on reality and impart it to the reader for enlightenment and expanded awareness, ultimately molding their consciousness to align with his envisioned worldview. Al-Bahrizi's poetic constructions reveal various layers of meaning and connotations, providing insight into psychological, social, and economic processes within the realist school of thinking. He accomplishes this by using metaphors as an effective artistic tool.

As demonstrated in the poem "Flight in a Dream," Al-Bahrizi's portrayal of Baghdad as a young, feminine, and beautiful girl holds deeper meaning. It presents a fresh interpretation of these similes by using various communication channels to evoke a captivating feminine image in the reader's mind. The poet skillfully establishes connections that resonate throughout the verses, intertwining the neglect of the soul with his ardent love for the pomegranate. This goes beyond mere instrumental references:

I flee towards skies that have not fallen
No, Baghdad hurts crazy
Erbil has not changed my hair
No Basra leaves salty leaves in my hands
Not overly spiritual death among people Waller Man
I don't know where the paper bat will land me
And I the damaged the folding Ran
There is no savior in sight
Not only circumvent the and them
And Adoor such as a horse whinny (Khaled, 2017)

Another study by Hamza Obais Abd AS-Sada and Kadhim Jassim Mansoor, titled "The Poetic Image in the Poetry of Abd Al-Hussain Al-Janabi's Book of (Min Sifr Al-La'at) as a Model," examines the relevance of poetic imagery in Arab criticism throughout history, with a focus on Al-Janabi's work. The study provides an overview of Al-Janabi's persona and his use of symbols to represent Baghdad and explore tragic themes that reflect the turmoil in Iraq. Al-Janabi's upbringing in the country has given him a wealth of vivid analogies in his imagery, drawing frequently from religious and natural sources. (Abd AS-Sada & Mansoor, 2022). Through the use of sensory, natural, and heritage elements, Al-Janabi creates a rich and powerful poetic landscape. Many poets, including Al-Janabi, depict Baghdad's predicament in their poetry through the use of symbols and legends. Al-Janabi's poem "Baghdad, my lady" symbolically portrays the city as "the sister of the Tigris," evoking a dark, mythical atmosphere with oppressive rulers. In "The Wolf and the City," Al-Janabi skillfully combines the symbols of the wolf and snake to create rich symbolic imagery (Al-Jayoosi, 2001, p. 387).

The potency of 'The Thousand and One Nights' in reviving the imageability of Baghdad city" by Huda S. Fakhruddin, Hoda A.S. Al-Alwan, and Amal Fadhil highlights the lack of research on the impact of stories from the past, especially "The Thousand and One Nights," on architecture and urban areas. It explores how these stories preserve cultural identity and shape urban development, particularly in places like Baghdad. The paper presents a narrative-analysis technique for reading and visualizing these stories, emphasizing their significance in shaping the composition and nature of urban landscapes. It uses notions like "imageability" and "genius loci" to show how these stories might conserve Baghdad's cultural character, revitalize its essence, and merge intangible heritage with urban progress. However, the report underlines the need for additional research to improve the concept of "imageability," investigate diverse tale forms for deeper linkages to specific locations, and establish dependable ways for converting text into imagery to improve comprehension. Overall, it provides a potential direction for theoretical research into the impact of folktales on urban settings and cultural sustainability.

"Baghdad in Arabic Poetry" by Reuven Snir focuses on the history of Baghdad, observing its evolution from a fabled, poetic metropolis to its current state of strife, devastation, and sorrow. The city's course is marked by contrast and grief. It can be split into three broad periods: its famous age as the capital of the Islamic empire, a protracted period of decline following the Mongol destruction, and the current period of internal and external conflict.

Writers such as Husayn al-Müzāni (Hussain al-Mozany) (1954–2016) eloquently portray Baghdad's decline from a bustling center to a barren wasteland bounded by concrete walls—a sharp contrast to its former splendor.

The collective sense of longing and nostalgia is felt by those who cherish the memory of a once-thriving Baghdad. Now, it is overshadowed by its present somber reality. The city's glorious past remains only a distant memory amidst current struggles and enduring sorrow. This sentiment is beautifully captured in 'Abd al-Qadir al-Janābi's poem (b.1944):

Where are you, my first years
The years of streets and cafés
The years of days and long walks.
In the course of the revolts with no pricking of conscience
Where are you, my first years.
Oh, my city, feverish with floods of memory
Where are you in that
drawn stream'66(Al-Janabi, 1944)

3. Theoretical Framework

This study tries to use an eclectic approach combining Feminism and Orientalism by focusing on certain concepts that show the significance and imagery of Baghdad. A feminist-Orientalist discourses center on gender, power and representation. Ideally, this approach looks at how the intersection of women in colonized or non-Western societies are represented not only due to their race, but also by being both a woman and from that specific culture. By examining how the West constructs the "Orient" as the exotic and primitive "Other" in contrast to the civilized West. This entails analyzing the portrayal of non-Western cultures and their roles in legitimizing colonial control.

One of the key concept in Orientalism is exoticism and hypersexualization. The portrayal of women in the Orient often presents them as submissive, overly sexualized, or oppressed, thereby bolstering Western supremacy and promoting the idea that the West needs to "rescue" them. This serves to perpetuate gender and racial hierarchies (Said 1978).

In addition to Orientalism, Feminism which is related to power dynamics and women representation are key elements in feminist approach. This study employs the famous article, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" by Gayatri Spivak. This essay is considered a key text in critical examinations of Western methods for analyzing the voices, which are marginalized or colonized, especially the female voice. Spivak argues that members of the "subaltern," those who are outside the colonial and capitalist power structures, but particularly colonized subjects -- especially women—are silenced in a systematic way. As a result, they are unable to vocalize themselves in a manner that is acknowledged or acknowledged by those in positions of power. Spivak's primary focus lies in the realm of the subaltern woman, specifically those who were subjected to British colonial rule in India. Her argument extends beyond the realm of colonial oppression, suggesting that the subaltern woman is further oppressed by patriarchal structures inherent within her own cultural context. This intersectionality of dual oppression renders her voice further marginalized, impeding her ability to effectively represent herself within Western discourse (Spivak 2023). One of the feminist figures that can be harnessed in this study is Laura Mulvey.

The influential essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," written by renowned British feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey published in 1975, launched her to notoriety. The famous concept of the "male gaze" is introduced by Mulvey in this important essay. This idea has grown to be a cornerstone of feminist film criticism because it examines how heterosexual and masculine representations of women in movies often objectify them as nothing more than objects of desire for men. She divides male gaze into the gaze conveyed through the camera, the gaze embodied by the male characters depicted in the film, and the gaze of the audience (presumed to be male). This architectural framework establishes women as objects of male desire, relegating them to a passive role rather than recognizing them as autonomous individuals with agency. Mulvey believes that classical narrative cinema sticks to the duality of active/passive roles, whereby male characters assume active roles, developing the storyline, whereas women are relegated to passive roles, awaiting either desire or action. This cinematic dynamic mirrors the prevailing patriarchal structures prevalent in society. That is why Mulvey introduces two basic mechanism: voyeurism and fetishism as two key mechanisms by which the male gaze operates (Mulvey 1975). Voyeurism: The pleasure derived from watching women without their knowledge, as if spying on them. Fetishism: The objectification of a part of the woman's body (like her legs or face) to neutralize her power and reduce her to an idealized, controllable image.

The Purpose of the Paper

This paper aims to provide a new interpretation of Baghdad as a city of flourishing culture, history, and advanced civilization in the poetry of Tennyson. He reveals a more authentic perspective of Baghdad as a center of knowledge and culture. The paper strives to highlight the neglected historical layer of Baghdad. Tennyson romanticizes the situation, taking readers into a magical land and describing the paradisiacal scene from Baghdad. In contrast, Salah Hamdani depicts Baghdad as a realistic rather than a fictional and magical land. The reason for this disparity lies in the historical distance between Hamdani and Tennyson. Hamdani is a down-to-earth writer of postmodernism, while Tennyson belongs to the beautiful world of Victorianism. Hamdani portrays Baghdad as a crucified Christ, still bleeding due to ongoing wars. The city is ravaged by wars, disease, and a tyrannical regime.

4. Material and Methods of Research

This paper adopts an eclectic approach of theories of Feminism and Orientalism by choosing three prominent figures; Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Laura Mulvey to investigate and analyze the selected poems of Alfred Lord Tennyson and Salah Hamdani. It selects two poems that reflect the poets' literary tradition and their poetic image of Baghdad as a source of pride, a cultural center, and a beacon of knowledge in Tennyson's poetry. Tennyson celebrates the long history of Baghdad under the rule of Harun Al-Rashid. On the other hand, Salah Hamdani presents a more realistic image of Baghdad, depicting it as a city beaten, killed, and crucified under a tyrannical regime, yet still standing strong against tyranny and invaders. By combining the textual analysis method, this paper examines the scholarship written about the poets, the historical, cultural, and political context, in order to interpret the underlying messages behind

the poetic text. It relies on reputable libraries to obtain relevant journal articles and book chapters, which are then read, analyzed, and cited.

Salah Al-Hamdani (1951-)

Salah al-Din al-Hamdani, commonly known as Salah al-Hamdani, was born in 1951 in Iraq. He is a renowned Arab poet, celebrated for his significant contributions to modern Arabic poetry. While his writings are rooted in a strong literary Arabic tradition, they also explore contemporary themes. Al-Hamdani's literary works often delve into topics of social justice, resistance, love, and homeland. His poetry stands out for its unwavering demand for justice and freedom, its vivid imagery, and its profound emotional depth. His ability to capture the essence of the political and cultural challenges faced by the Arab world has earned him great acclaim.

Salah al-Hamdani's reputation as a prominent figure in Arabic literature was established through his numerous poetry collections, essays, and articles that he wrote over the course of his career. His writings have had a lasting impact on readers and poets in the Arab world for centuries. In the realm of Arabic literature, his poetry still resonates with readers, capturing the intricacies of the human experience and conveying a sense of optimism for a brighter future. Thus, Al-Hamdani's legacy remains vibrant and relevant.

Al-Hamdani's poetry exemplified a tapestry of vivid imagery and potent symbolism that adeptly merged the urgent realities of contemporary existence with the established customs of Arabic literature. The sheer abundance of emotion—passion, love, anger, and desolation, to name a few—imbued his poems with a profound resonance that resonated deeply with readers. Salah al-Hamdani's artistic oeuvre has left an indelible mark, serving as a testament to the historical tribulations for liberty, identity, and honor within the Arab world. Al-Hamdani's dedication to his craft and unwavering commitment to voicing the struggles and aspirations of the Arab world solidified his legacy as a cultural icon. His influence transcended the boundaries of literature, leaving an indelible mark on Arab culture and inspiring generations of poets and thinkers.

The poem "Baghdad, My Love" by Salah al-Hamdani (Al-Hamdani, 2003) is a heartfelt ode to the city of Baghdad, his birthplace. Originally written in French, it was subsequently translated into English by Sonia Alland (Alland, 2008). This poem effectively captures the essence of Baghdad's beauty, history, and cultural significance through its evocative imagery and profound emotions. It explores themes of longing, the impact of conflict and change on the city's landscape, and the poet's personal connection to his hometown.

Al-Hamdani not only eloquently expressed admiration for the city's majestic beauty and profound historical importance, but also sorrowfully lamented the profound impact of conflicts and transformations on its physical appearance. Through the skillful use of evocative imagery and profound emotional insight, the poem vividly portrays his profound and intricate connection with the streets, landmarks, and inhabitants of Baghdad, effectively encapsulating both its magnificence and the hardships it endured.

The poem, which celebrates the character of Baghdad while acknowledging its limitations, can be seen as a testament to the poet's enduring love and loyalty to the city. Salah al Hamdani

adeptly constructs time-traveling poems in "Baghdad, Mon Amour," immersing readers in a lyrical realm where the ancient city of Baghdad is transformed into a potent symbol of profound love and intricate emotions. Hamdani takes us on a poetic voyage through the tapestry of his words, summoning forth the enduring spirit, resilience, and nostalgia of Baghdad, all the while encapsulating the essence of this storied city. As the poet vividly paints a striking portrait of his beloved Baghdad, one can journey alongside him as he delicately reveals the layers of emotion and history that lie beneath.

Since its founding as the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate in the eighth century, Baghdad has had a long and vibrant history. It was once considered one of the most important cities in the Islamic world, renowned for its thriving intellectual and cultural life, as well as its bustling trade. However, in recent years, Baghdad has been plagued by political instability, violence, and bloodshed. The city has faced numerous challenges, including bombings, invasions, sectarian strife, and terrorism. Nevertheless, despite these trials, many people still hold a deep affection for Baghdad and its resilient inhabitants.

The title "Baghdad, Mon Amour" encapsulates the profound and intricate emotions associated with the Iraqi capital city. The inclusion of the French phrase "Mon Amour," which translates to "my love," serves to convey the intense attachment and affection that numerous individuals harbor towards Baghdad, notwithstanding its tumultuous history. Furthermore, it underscores the sentiments expressed by the characters in relation to their city, despite the adversities they encounter (Al-Hamdani, 2003).

Baghdad as a Mother Figure

One can inspect and detect a hidden line of feminine portrayal of Baghdad where Baghdad is presented as a mother figure, a lover and nurturer. This process of feminizing Baghdad connects heavily to feminist theory in which the capital is not just a place. It is more than a geographical place, but as emotional entity that is violated by war and vulnerable to foreigners. Here, foreigners and invaders represent men power and patriarchal structure that usually oppress and subdue women:

Baghdad my love,
You cannot tremble at the threshold of these ruins of days,
A civilization trained to kill
Violated your virginity (Alland, 2008).

Here Baghdad is feminized to romanticize and idealize the place and call for endurance and resilience in times of hardships, and this is expected from women to fight back patriarchal system. The poet uses adept metaphor to describe Baghdad as a violated virginity implying that Baghdad's devastation is like the violation of a woman's body. This kind of metaphor insinuates for the patriarchal ideas of control over women's bodies and the concept of virginity as a prized gift. The feminization process is primarily employed to provoke a sense of violation, loss, rape and virginity, which are common terms in feminism context. To add further elaboration, the above example is a typical embodiment of Laura Mulvey' "Male Gaze" where Baghdad as a feminized entity is objectified as object of desire to be acted upon, to violate its

virginity and reducing it into a passive role rather than assuming a positive agency. Here, the binary opposition is clearly set between the powerless feminized Baghdad who is reduced, violated and raped and the dominant powerful patriarchal system.

Baghdad is depicted as a symbol of Christ's crucifixion at the hands of ruthless perpetrators. Americans are once again engaged in the destruction and loss of life in Baghdad. Despite this, Hamdani's portrayal highlights the resilience and strength of the city, which has earned recognition for its spirit of resistance. Just as the Iraqi people have the capacity to engage in their own battles against the enemy, Baghdad's very essence lends itself to combating adversity:

You cannot be crucified.
On the side of a page
Of a story that is not your own,
Nor to the rhythm of the deaths that brood your plagues
Because there will be no cry to relieve your grief
(Alland, 2008).

The main premise of Edward Said Orientalism is the binary opposition between the West and The East. He criticizes how the West often describes the East, as exotic, dangerous, uncivilized manner. That is why the Western colonial project seeks control over these countries. It is seen as a mission to educate those backward people. Al-Hamdani effectively challenges and undermines the prevalent Orientalist stereotypes by depicting Baghdad as a vibrant, resilient, and cherished entity. Rather than succumbing to exoticization or perpetuating notions of unrelenting violence and disorder, the poem presents a compassionate portrayal of the city. Baghdad is portrayed within the boundaries of love, loss, and longing. Al-Hamdani's profound emotional connection to Baghdad subverts and destroys the dehumanization evident in Orientalist representations, which tend to relegate Eastern cities to mere representations of warfare, underdevelopment, or religious extremism. This is exemplified through the imagery of the river Euphrates cleansing its own blood. The physical embodiment of Iraq is metaphorically portrayed as a bleeding body, with the river's streams symbolically tainted by the color of blood. Baghdad serves as the focal point of various calamities and military conflicts, specifically targeting the destruction of its rich cultural heritage. However, it is important to note that these horrors cannot extinguish the intrinsic humaneness or faith of its people. Hamdani draws a parallel between the history of the aggressor and the historical significance of Baghdad, ultimately deeming the former unworthy of comparison and thus not deserving of mention:

You cannot be crucified on the banks of the streams.
Your body bleeds,
When the Euphrates washes away the secret of its soul
At the birth of a new defeat. (Alland, 2008).

Stating that metaphysics holds no power to avert the impending collapse of Baghdad is a rather audacious claim made by Hamdani. Neither a prophet, a son, nor a deity will possess the ability to impede the downfall of Baghdad. The poet portrays Baghdad as a cherished entity that is

being violated and forsaken, subsequently delving into a reflection on his personal anguish and recounting the suffering endured by Hamdani himself – a plight that entailed imprisonment and exile:

Not son, nor father, nor God,
No prophet crowned by the church will save your soul,
Not that of Mecca,
Not that of those who refuse.
To share the olive trees in Palestine. (Alland, 2008).

Baghdad is depicted by Hamdani as a sanctuary that offers protection to its inhabitants in times of both joy and sorrow. It stands as an oasis in the midst of the desert, far removed from the city that has suffered bombardment, yet still able to perceive the lingering scent and sound of the deceased, and witness the presence of a cemetery filled with martyrs. The pristine nature of Iraq's civilization has been violated, its purity defiled. The leadership of Saddam Hussein is also complicit in this defilement. As per Hamdani's account, the history and innocence of Baghdad have been assaulted and obliterated by both Saddam and the invading forces, contributing to the destruction of its illustrious past. Ironically, Baghdad—known as Madinat al Salam, the City of Peace—has tragically transformed into a battlefield:

Baghdad, city forever rebellious against your torturer
Saddam,
You cannot groan at the only revelation of this
hegemony,
Those who rushed around your body at death's door,
These "liberators" are their accomplices.
Madinat-al Salam,
City of peace,
Love in the soul of writing. (Alland, 2008).

The sense of violence continues to be seen on Baghdad body as a body of woman being violated by war or occupation or a tyrant. Bodies of women have been seen for a long time as site of control, oppression from patriarchal system, and in this case, Baghdad as a feminine symbol is vulnerable to violence and control. The keyword is hegemony of feminine Baghdad by the tyrant who kills and rapes Baghdad. The hegemony of powerful on the powerless to own it as a possession. This is also can interpreted in the light of Laura Mulvey's "Male Gaze" where Baghdad is depicted as object of desire. On other hand, Al-Hamdani presents a perspective of Baghdad that is personalized by a sense of humanity and familiarity, in contrast to the portrayal of the city as an intriguing and foreign location often found in Orientalist works. The tendency of Orientalism is to depict Middle Eastern cities as enigmatic, enchanting, thereby stripping their inhabitants of their human qualities. In contrast, Al-Hamdani's depiction of Baghdad emphasizes the city's role as a store of personal memories, individual histories, and emotional attachments. In doing so, Al-Hamdani confronts and challenges the exoticizing tendencies of Orientalism by foregrounding the raw and authentic human experiences associated with the city:

I wished so much today that man had never discovered
fire
And cursed it to advance so much in its own din.
This soil that gave birth to me, today put to death.
Oh mother! I want to return inside your flesh.
To hear the beating of your heart,
To quench my thirst in the murmur of your breath.
(Alland, 2008).

The poet, in his concluding words, articulates his longing for the annulment of his existence and a return to the sanctuary of his mother's womb. He harbors a fervent hope that he will be spared the sight of the profound devastation inflicted upon humanity and the established systems by relentless technological progress. Baghdad, Hamdani's metaphorical mother and the allegorical depiction of a motherland, is embodiment of his profound yearning. Being exiled in France, Al Hamdani resists the prevailing idea of Easterners are of alien culture or different reducing the character to a mere shadow character. He shows a universal longing for his homeland that nourishes his character to make amends for his loss and identity rather than of alien culture. By doing so, he counters, subverts the Orientalist narratives that reduce Eastern to mere exotic, backward, cultureless people.

Upon careful consideration, "Baghdad, Mon Amour" serves as a profound representation of a profound emotional connection to a city that has endured immense hardships, yet remains deeply entrenched in the hearts of its inhabitants.

Alfred Tennyson's Poetry (1809 -1892)

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, a famous Victorian poet, was known for his lyrical compositions. He was born in 1809 in Somersby, Lincolnshire, England. Tennyson's poetic talents began to emerge during his teenage years. When he was not quite 18, his first volume of poetry, "Poems by Two Brothers" (1827), was published. Although the volume also contained poems by his two elder brothers, Frederick and Charles (Tennyson & Turner, 1827), Alfred Tennyson wrote a major part of it. His poetic career spanned over six decades, and he became known for his mastery of language, rhythm, and poetic form.

His works often explore themes of nature, love, loss, and the human condition. In 1850, he was named Poet Laureate, succeeding William Wordsworth, and held the position until his death in 1892. Furthermore, he provided great comfort to Queen Victoria following the death of Prince Albert in 1861. In fact, the Queen was quoted as saying, "Next to the Bible, In Memoriam A.H.H (one of Tennyson's most popular works) is my comfort" (Alfred Lord Tennyson-Poet Laureate, 2023). Some of his notable works include "In Memoriam," "The Lady of Shalott," "Ulysses," and "The Charge of the Light Brigade." These works demonstrate Tennyson's mastery of language, emotion, and vivid imagery, showcasing his artistic brilliance. His poetry is characterized by its musicality, rich imagery, and exploration of existential and philosophical themes.

Indeed, Lord Tennyson held immense influence on poetry and writing during the Victorian era.

His writings possessed a rich poetic character that captivated his audience as he explored themes of nature, love, mortality, and the human condition. Tennyson was a pivotal figure in his time, shaping the work of poets and authors in later generations with his command of poetic form, his ability to evoke intense emotions, and his insightful observations on societal changes. One of his works is a compilation of folktales from the Middle East called "Arabian Nights," which is believed to have origins in Arabic, Persian, and Indian storytelling traditions. In this collection, Scheherazade, a clever and resourceful storyteller, spins captivating tales to her husband, King Shahryar, each night. She strategically leaves the stories unfinished, using this tactic to save her own life.

The collection developed over centuries through oral tradition and diverse cultural influences, rather than being assembled by a single author. In the 14th century, the frame story of Scheherazade and King Shahryar was added, providing a structure for the diverse narratives included within.

Arabian nights encompass stories like "Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp," "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," and "Sinbad the Sailor," among others. These tales, which emphasize themes of morality, love, adventure, and the supernatural, offer a glimpse into the vibrant cultural heritage of the Middle East. They also mirror the customs, beliefs, and social norms prevalent during their creation. Moreover, they captivate readers with their captivating narratives set in exotic locations brimming with genies, magic carpets, and daring exploits. Furthermore, "Arabian Nights" possesses a profound influence that extends beyond the realm of literature. Its vast impact can be observed in contemporary literary endeavors, theatrical productions, operatic compositions, cinematic creations, and even television programming, thus solidifying its enduring significance in global popular culture and the art of storytelling.

The city of Baghdad is often depicted in "Arabian Nights" as a beautiful city adorned with bustling marketplaces, opulent palaces, lush gardens, and vibrant streets. It serves as both a metaphorical and geographical setting, symbolizing an exotic and enchanting realm that effectively encapsulates the allure of the East in Western culture during the period when the tales gained popularity in Europe. The portrayal of Baghdad in "Arabian Nights" adds to the romanticized perception of the Orient that pervaded Western literature and art in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The poem "Recollections of the Arabian Nights" by Alfred Lord Tennyson digs deep into the themes of fantasy and escapism. Tennyson skillfully constructs a narrative that transports readers to a captivating and otherworldly domain, drawing inspiration from the tales featured in "Arabian Nights." The poem vividly portrays a universe brimming with enigma and allure, reflecting the Victorian era's fascination with Orientalism.

Tennyson's exploration of memory encompasses themes related to narrative, artistic imagination, and the allure of distant cultures. It encapsulates the essence of the Arabian Nights tales, wherein storytelling manifests as a thrilling voyage and a means of transcending the confines of reality. Through adept employment of eloquent language and evocative imagery, the poet skillfully forges an otherworldly ambiance that mirrors the captivation evoked by the exotic narratives he recalls.

The poem also expresses Tennyson's fascination with the potential for transformation in narrative, suggesting that stories can transport readers to new realms of experience. The poet reminisces about the captivating stories with a blend of awe and yearning, linking the idea of escape with a subtle touch of nostalgia. The collection reflects on the enthralling stories of the Arabian Nights while effectively describing a dreamlike journey through an Oriental vision. The poem is divided into several stanzas, each of which focuses on a distinct facet of the narrator's experience.

In the opening lines of his work "Recollections of the Arabian Nights," Alfred Lord Tennyson adeptly captures a delightful and nostalgic recollection with vivid precision. Tennyson effectively evokes a sense of purity and contentment associated with the early stages of existence through his portrayal of a blissful morning and the gentle voyage of infancy. The mention of time flowing in reverse signifies a deliberate act of self-reflection, while the metaphorical journey down the Tigris River hints at a traversing of both temporal and spatial boundaries.

Considering how gender and Eastern stereotypes are interwoven in Tennyson's "Recollections of the Arabian Nights" via a feminist-orientalist lens might provide a critical perspective. One can investigate how gender, and especially the representation of Eastern women, is portrayed in relation to colonial and patriarchal power structures by integrating feminist critique as well:

Then stole I up, and transcendly
Gazed on the Persian girl alone
Serene with argent lidded-eyes
Amorous, lashes to rays
.....
Tressed with redolent ebony
In many dark delicious curl
Flowing beneath her rose- hued zone
The sweetest lady of the time
Well worthy of golden prime
Of Good Haroun Alraschid (Tennyson, 1830)

The feminine Orient becomes a source of male longing in Tennyson's depiction of the luxurious, exotic East. The Eastern world is portrayed as passive, luxurious, and sensual—a world to be looked upon and admired by the male subject—despite the fact that there are few references to women. This relates to the Orientalist idea that the East is feminine and under the control of the West or patriarchal structure. Laura Mulvey's "male gaze" theory could be relevant here, where both the Orient and its women are passively formulated through a Western male perspective. This strengthens the double oppression of both gender and racial stereotyping, as the East is feminized, and women are further objectified. Here, one can notice the intersection between Feminism and Orientalism where two processes are at work; sexualization and objectification of the East. In the last stanza of Tennyson's "Recollections of the Arabian Nights," the narrator describes a beautiful scene within the Caliphate Pavilion. Imagine six pure silver columns supporting an elegant throne carved from solid metal. The

throne is adorned with a breathtaking gold material, embellished with exquisite floral designs. Seated on this throne is the renowned Caliph, Haroun Alraschid. Amidst this opulence, his eyes sparkle with laughter and his pride as a king is evident. Haroun Alraschid is the sole shining star during this extraordinary moment, symbolizing the pinnacle of his illustrious career. Tennyson skillfully captures the grandeur of the Arabian Nights, transporting us to a regal setting through his vivid descriptions

The representation of the high-walled, ancient gardens and shrines in Baghdad, adorned with intricate gold designs, creates a magnificent and lush setting that serves as the backdrop for the memory. By identifying himself as a "True Mussulman," Tennyson introduces a cultural element that grounds the experience in the Islamic world. The direct reference to the "golden prime of good Haroun Alraschid" firmly places the memory within a specific historical period, connecting it to the reign of this renowned Caliph during the Islamic Golden Age. Tennyson seamlessly combines history, society, and environment in these lines to create a dreamlike atmosphere, inviting readers on a captivating journey inspired by the tales of Arabian Nights:

When the breeze of a joyful dawn blew free
In the silken sail of infancy,
The tide of time flow'd back with me,
The forward-flowing tide of time;
And many a sheeny summer-morn,
Adown the Tigris I was borne,
By Bagdat's shrines of fretted gold,
High-walled gardens green and old;
True Mussulman was I and sworn,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid. (Tennyson, 1830)

In these lines, Tennyson skillfully constructs a mesmerizing tableau depicting the protagonist's shallop propelled by the current of the river, evoking ripples on the tranquil, celestial night. The narrative unfolds as the narrator eventually arrives at a mystical locale referred to as the "imbower'd vaults of pillar'd palm." In this place, the shallop traverses a region adorned with palm trees, imbuing the story with an atmosphere of seclusion beneath the cavernous boughs. The visual highlights the sensory encounter, especially the appealing smell of "*imprisoning sweets*" as they ascend to paradise:

A motion from the river won
Ridged the smooth level, bearing on
My shallop thro' the star-strown calm,
Until another night in night
I enter'd, from the clearer light,
Imbower'd vaults of pillar'd palm,
Imprisoning sweets, which, as they clomb
Heavenward, were stay'd beneath the dome
Of hollow boughs.—A goodly time,

For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid (Tennyson, 1830)

This stanza depicts a secluded area where a heavily overgrown lemon grove is located. In this environment, the bulbul, a bird resembling a nightingale, creates sounds at night that lighten up the surroundings. Tennyson intriguingly notes that it is not only the bird itself that sings, but rather something that embodies the essence of the world's darkness. This something encompasses elements of delight, life, agony, death, and everlasting love.

This enigmatic and vivid description alludes to a transcendent or supernatural entity that seamlessly integrates and transcends conventional limitations. By "flattering the golden prime of good Haroun Alraschid," this entity contributes to the ethereal ambiance and establishes a connection to the cultural and historical context of the Arabian Nights stories. Tennyson adeptly intertwines the natural world, music, and the paranormal, crafting a poetic tapestry that transports readers to a realm of enduring allure:

Far off, and where the lemon-grove
In closest coverture upsprung,
The living airs of middle night
Died round the bulbul as he sung;
Not he: but something which possess'd
The darkness of the world, delight,
Life, anguish, death, immortal love,
Ceasing not, mingled, unrepres'd,
Apart from place, withholding time,
But flattering the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid. (Tennyson, 1830)

This marks the culmination of the journey in a dramatic manner. The palm trees stand motionless, undisturbed by the gentle summer breeze, as the garden-bowers and grots, depicted as dark in nature, slumber in the obscurity of the night. Suddenly, the scene is bathed in a luminous burst of splendor emerging from the background, casting a profound golden-green hue upon the leaves. An exquisite display of diamond-like patterns emerges on the serene surface of the lake, as the light swiftly dances between the palm trees, intertwining vivid and shadowy reflections.

Tennyson adeptly captures the allure and magnificence of the surroundings, as evidenced by his portrayal of this period as a "lovely time." Furthermore, he skillfully links the event to its historical and cultural backdrop, underscoring its occurrence during the golden age. As a result of Tennyson's masterful use of vibrant imagery and color, the reader is left with a profound and enduring impression of a captivating and opulent world, reminiscent of the mesmerizing tales of the Arabian Nights. This meticulous attention to detail culminates in the creation of a sensory and atmospheric zenith:

Black the garden-bowers and grots
Slumber'd: the solemn palms were ranged

Above, unwoo'd of summer wind:
A sudden splendour from behind
Flush'd all the leaves with rich gold-green,
And, flowing rapidly between
Their interspaces, counterchanged
The level lake with diamond-plots
Of dark and bright. A lovely time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid. (Tennyson,1830)

Tennyson vividly describes an awe-inspiring spectacle within the Pavilion of the Caliphate, delineating the intricate details that contribute to its breathtaking ambiance. The eighty windows, aglow with an ethereal luminosity reminiscent of flickering flames, command attention. The profound darkness of the lofty chamber is effectively subdued by an array of a million candles, elegantly ensconced within twisted silver holders. Not only do these candles provide illumination to the immediate vicinity, but their radiant display also casts a mesmerizing reflection upon the moonlit domes of Baghdad. Furthermore, the ornate design adorning the roof, comprising hundreds of crescents, serves as a symbolic homage to the splendor that characterized the era of Haroun Alraschid. By employing such language, these sentences effectively capture the profound depth and aesthetic allure associated with the historical and cultural backdrop, while also offering a vivid depiction of a visually captivating moment:

The fourscore windows all alight
As with the quintessence of flame,
A million tapers flaring bright
From twisted silvers look'd to shame
The hollow-vaulted dark, and stream'd
Upon the mooned domes aloof
In inmost Bagdat, till there seem'd
Hundreds of crescents on the roof
Of night new-risen, that marvellous time,
To celebrate the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid. (Tennyson,1830)

In the Caliphate Pavilion, the narrator has a captivating encounter with a Persian girl. The narrator approaches her silently and is drawn to her calm demeanor. Her eyelashes are dark and her eyes have an alluring charm. The girl's forehead, described as beautiful and pearly, is adorned with dark, luscious curls that cascade beneath her rose-colored hair. This detailed portrayal presents her as the most beautiful woman of the time and, in the narrator's opinion, deserving of the admiration of Haroun Alraschid. Tennyson effectively captures the enchanting allure of this Persian girl through vivid and poetic language, adding a touch of romance and grandeur to the story.

In the last stanza of Tennyson's "Recollections of the Arabian Nights," the narrator describes a beautiful scene within the Caliphate Pavilion. Imagine six pure silver columns supporting an elegant throne carved from solid metal. The throne is adorned with a breathtaking gold material, embellished with exquisite floral designs. Seated on this throne is the renowned Caliph, Haroun Alraschid. Amidst this opulence, his eyes sparkle with laughter and his pride as a king is evident. Haroun Alraschid is the sole shining star during this extraordinary moment, symbolizing the pinnacle of his illustrious career. Tennyson skillfully captures the grandeur of the Arabian Nights, transporting us to a regal setting through his vivid descriptions:

Six columns, three on either side,
Pure silver, underpropt a rich
Throne of the massive ore, from which
Down-droop'd, in many a floating fold,
Engarlanded and diaper'd
With inwrought flowers, a cloth of gold.
Thereon, his deep eye laughter-stirr'd
With merriment of kingly pride,
Sole star of all that place and time,
I saw him—in his golden prime,
THE GOOD HAROUN ALRASCHID! (Tennyson, 1830)

Here the poet praises and glorifies the golden time of Haroun Al Raschid and his massive throne decorated with lush flowers, however the other side of the coin, a perceptive reader can observe there is a lack of female agency throughout the poem. While this poem draws heavily from ancient poem Arabian Nights where Scheherazade assumes a central role and survives through wit and storytelling, "Recollection of Arabian Nights" by Tennyson erased the female role and turns her into an object of desire, an entity to be gazed upon and passive role as Laura Mulvey believes. Tennyson, a male poet from the West, bears part in the same process of repressing the voices of Eastern women that Gayatri Spivak outlines in her pioneering essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Given this viewpoint, the colonial language that portrays Eastern women as passive and voiceless also serves to suppress them, in addition to patriarchy. This is further illustrated by Tennyson's choice to cross out Scheherazade, a strong female character who uses narrative power to her advantage in order to live. Through her storytelling and intelligence, she challenges and subverts masculine aggression in Arabian Nights, challenging both autocratic and patriarchal authority. By excluding this character, Tennyson adds to the submissive Oriental woman's double marginalization by denying a crucial counter-narrative.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the lyrical depictions of Baghdad by Salah al-Hamdani and Alfred Lord Tennyson offer multidimensional perspectives on the history, culture, and significance of the city. These perspectives are shaped by the distinctive literary approaches and sensitivities of the individual poets. Drawing inspiration from the captivating tales of the Arabian Nights, Tennyson's portrayal of Baghdad in "Recollections of the Arabian Nights" presents the city

through the lens of romanticized exoticism. Through the use of rich language and vivid imagery, Tennyson creates a dreamlike journey that transports readers to a magical realm. This portrayal evokes a sense of nostalgia and longing for a bygone era of mystery and adventure. In Tennyson's depiction, Baghdad emerges as a distant and mystical place that holds the promise of wonder and escapism.

Feminist theory usually examines the way in which women's bodies are seen as possessions, subject to control and domination by men. In the same light of what is stated, the violation of Baghdad through warfare and occupation can be explicated as similar to the violence faced by women within patriarchal societies. Nevertheless, Al-Hamdani's emphasis on Baghdad's resilient spirit potentially presents a feminist analysis of patriarchal violence, demonstrating that while bodily harm may be inflicted, the spirit of Baghdad and capacity for agency cannot be eradicated. On the other hand, Salah al-Hamdani's "Baghdad, My Love," can be interpreted as a form of resistance against Orientalism. It presents a depiction of Baghdad that moves away from the exoticized and demonized representations prevalent in Western narratives. Through an exploration of his personal and cultural ties to the city, Al-Hamdani destabilizes the binary constructs associated with Orientalism. Instead, he emphasizes the intricate nature, humanity, and aesthetic glamour of Baghdad, even in the midst of war and occupation. Al-Hamdani probes into themes of strife, loss, and cultural identity while capturing the enduring spirit of Baghdad amidst its tumultuous history through evocative imagery and poignant verse. His poetry conveys a profound sense of remorse and adoration for a city ravaged by violence and upheaval, yet still remarkably resilient and enchanting. Al-Hamdani's writing offers a direct and intimate glimpse into the everyday experiences of Baghdad's inhabitants, in contrast to Tennyson's idealized portrayal.

Tennyson's expertise lies in the art of crafting intricate narratives that evoke a sense of awe and enchantment. Rather than emphasizing women as active agents of narrative power, the poem dwells on the luxury and mystique of the East, where women are part of the foreign landscape. By doing so, Tennyson turns the story of *Arabian Nights* upside down. We didn't see a strong female agency that takes role but instead a Persian girl who looks like an object of desire stripped of its emotions. Tennyson relies on feminized Orient who looks exotic, mysterious under the patriarchal structure. Through a feminist-Orientalist lens, we can examine "Recollections of the Arabian Nights" and understand how Tennyson's writings mirror and uphold popular Western perceptions of the East as exotic, enigmatic, and feminized. The lack of strong female characters in particular, the elimination of Scheherazade's agency, reflects the East's dual experience of objectification and feminization as a result of colonization and gender domination.

Conversely, Al-Hamdani excels in capturing the raw emotions and mundane realities of contemporary life in Baghdad. Both poets employ the transformative power of poetry to showcase the cultural richness and lasting importance of the city through their unique works, which offer insightful analyses of its intricacies. While Tennyson's exploration centers on themes of escapism and nostalgia, al-Hamdani's portrayals form an intimate connection with the city, presenting poignant observations. This juxtaposition highlights the diverse approaches that poets can employ to engage with and comprehend every facet of Baghdad's

identity and history. Ultimately, their contributions underscore the enduring significance of Baghdad as a source of inspiration and contemplation for writers and creative minds alike.

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