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## **“We Carry These Conflicts, These Ruptures of History:” the Hybridity of the Self in the Conflict between Tradition and Modernity in Laleh Khadivi’s the Age of Orphans**

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HYBRIDITY OF THE SELF IN THE CONFLICT BETWEEN TRADITION AND  
MODERNITY IN LALEH KHADIVI’S *THE AGE OF ORPHANS***

A Master’s Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate College of

Missouri State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts, English

By

Karwan Karim Abdalrahman

May 2019

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**ABSTRACT**

This study presents a postcolonial reading of Laleh Khadivi’s *The Age of Orphans* based on the theories of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. The project offers specific answers to several questions: can this novel be read through the lens of Bhabha’s theory of hybridity, and, if so, what does such a reading reveal about culture and identity in *The Age of Orphans*? The hybrid self is an experience wherein the postcolonial self holds the shades of two identities and cultures, namely the colonizer and the colonized. In other words, the protagonist Reza lives in a space that represents the shadows of both traditional culture and modern culture. Reza’s inner tension comes from mixed cultural identity that is represented in his conflicting imaginings, feelings, thoughts, and behaviors towards the Kurds and his wife, Meena. The present study demonstrates that Reza has a hybrid identity. The modern Kurdish postcolonial self is a mixed one whereby it cannot return to a purely original and traditional cultural perception.

**KEYWORDS:** Laleh Khadivi, othering, tradition, modernity, mimicry, deculturalization, hybridity, plight of belonging, the Kurdish postcolonial self

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In the interest of academic freedom and the principle of free speech, approval of this thesis indicates the format is acceptable and meets the academic criteria for the discipline as determined by the faculty that constitute the thesis committee. The content and views expressed in this thesis are those of the student-scholar and are not endorsed by Missouri State University, its Graduate College, or its employees.

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## INTRODUCTION

Postcolonial theory proposes diverse definitions for the postcolonial self, as selfhood is seen as a product of cultural discourse. Some postcolonial theorists consider the human self to be the product of a static discourse, but the others think of it as the product of a flexible one. These two visions provide us with two ways to perceive the idea of culture. First, those who believe that culture is static see the capacity of any culture as limited to a specific geography and historical narrative. This limitation preserves the customs and rituals of the culture, and it also resists as unwanted the change that the second group considers to result from the dialogue between different cultures as they both acquire inter-cultural growth. This second group believes that culture is a flexible model that can be updated. Accordingly, the dynamism of culture creates an environment for cultural openness. Of course, the first view looks at any culture as binarily opposed to others. This perception conceives a culture as a unique entity. On the other hand, the second perspective views culture as a model of mobility intertwines with cultural progress. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a conception of the self within Kurdish culture emerged from the psychological and intellectual impacts of other cultures' influence. Even now, Kurdish identity is in transition or tension between tradition and modernity. The notion of tradition denotes a whole and static culture for the Kurds, but modernity implies the idea of cultural dynamism and evolution due to internal and external forces that have reshaped their cultural identity.

This identity crisis between two selves arises from the discrimination of the Kurds in Iran as a minority ethnic group. Since the 1920s, the Kurdish have experienced dehumanizing violence, marginalizing of indigenous ideals and practices, devaluing of minority groups, and spiritual and intellectual uncertainty. This ethnic segregation has resulted in a dilemma between



Kurds' traditional image of their culture becoming an outmoded one, and a modern post-traditional picture. The conflict within the minds of the colonized Kurds results in reactions, violent and non-violent, from the Kurds, and violent responses from others that ultimately dehumanize the indigenous peoples. To avoid violence, the natives may start to yield to the pressures, psychological and political, that seek to change their worldviews, and their resulting marginalization leaves spiritual scars for them. For example, one may begin to see this situation, where the culture of the minority racial and ethnic groups have been deformed, devalued, and ignored, and another one has been assigned for them, as their best option.

Edward Said's description of "othering" helps to explain this phenomenon on the level of identity, especially as identity is constructed around power hierarchies. Said is a postcolonial theorist who describes the colonial discourse with a distinction between the self and the "other" in his *Orientalism*. He employs Foucault's term of "discourse" to draw a binary opposition between the colonized and the colonizer in the nineteenth century. That binary relationship is still relevant in the contemporary political context where it produces acts of differentiation, which are then used to justify the hierarchies of power and authority imposed by the "superior" over the "inferior" during colonization. In fact, the formation of binary relationships between the strong and the weak is based on exaggerating the differences. According to Said, "the relationship between the Occident and the Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (5). Cultural hegemony proves the hierarchy of political power that ends with an ideology of differentiation between the dominant colonizer and the "other." Othering is a form of discourse manipulation, an explicit political mechanism that justifies the invasion of one group by the other because the constructed and exaggerated dichotomy authorizes the power imbalance between them.

Othering is a necessary tool for asserting and maintaining political power: by othering, the power hierarchy is internalized by the oppressed group. The colonizers – historically Europeans and Americans – see themselves as the “self,” but they see the orient as the “other.” Said states that “the Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different’; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal’” (40). This ideology of othering limits the actions and thoughts of the group deemed to be the “other” because they are shaped by the political, cultural, and religious backgrounds of the dominating group. And the “other” is necessarily inferior – a differentiation which superficially justifies the “superior” group’s subjugation and control of the “inferior” group. This dichotomy allows the colonizers to view the colonial project as ethically defensible; they believe they have a responsibility to use their power to improve the lives of the colonized by replacing cultural practices, spiritual values, and modes of thought which have been deemed inferior to their own. Colonized peoples submitting to this power will enact the vision of the colonists by abandoning their original culture and imitating the newly imposed modern cultural ideals and experiences of the colonizers. The ambition of the colonists is to control both the geographical and cultural borders of the colonized by decentralizing them from traditional and cultural perceptions and recentralizing them to the new emerging ideology of the colonists, even within their own minds. The emotional and intellectual tensions literally distort the psychological and cultural structures of the colonized, making it more difficult for them to fight against the pressures of the colonizers.

The othering of minorities leads them into practicing a cultural phenomenon that the Anglo-Indian postcolonial scholar, critic, and theorist Homi Bhabha calls “mimicry.” When the colonized submit to the control mechanisms of “othering,” they are pressured into practicing the foreign culture of the colonizer. Bhabha calls mimicry “one of the most elusive and effective

strategies of colonial power and knowledge” (122). When the colonized practice mimicry, they imitate the values and practices of the colonizers in terms of dress, behavior, language, and gesture. Through such imitation, the colonized support the ambitions and actions of the colonizers instead of resisting them. Invaded indigenous people adopt the discourse of the colonists in order to avoid the hostility and terror of the colonizer’s gaze. In this context, the colonizer’s project of intellectual and spiritual brainwashing is regarded as the process of deculturalization. It, inherent in mimicry, works as a replacement mechanism in which the traditional language and culture of the native people are replaced by the modern language and culture of the colonists. Therefore, the distinction between the old and the new inevitably arises as the othering process defines the colonized peoples as primitive, outdated, and wild.

Deculturization completes the otherness of the “other” by the formation of a mixed cultural identity within the colonized world.

The qualities of the postcolonial plight in the clash between two discourses speak at the heart of Laleh Khadivi’s trilogy of novels. Khadivi is part of the Kurdish literary tradition. She is Kurdish as well as Iranian and American. Her trilogy of novels includes *The Age of Orphans*, *The Walking*, and *A Good Country*. In this thesis, I will examine the first novel’s representation of the Kurdish postcolonial identity crisis in the conflict between tradition and modernity. The identity problem that arises in the minds of Kurds comes from the traditional, known self being forced into new ways of knowing and being. The modern Kurdish novel is a setting for identity reconstruction after the culturally and psychologically violent colonization of the Kurds in Iran, and other parts of the region. Until now, there has been only one unpublished academic dissertation on Khadivi’s novels, likely because Khadivi is a new writer, publishing her first novel in 2009. As an early scholar of Laleh Khadivi’s work, my contribution lies in delving into

the dilemma of the Kurdish self as she represents the clash between a static traditional Kurdish worldview and the new ideology of the colonists.

This problem is evident in Laleh Khadivi's *The Age of Orphans* where the two opposing spiritual and intellectual perspectives fragment the static discourse that has constructed the protagonist's cultural identity. Her novel focuses on the character of Reza Khourdi who lives in a turbulent period of history, an era set into motion by the formation of a national identity for Iranian communities manifested in a united nation state. The novel explores the complex interplay between the large-scale political events of colonization in Iran, and the postcolonial effects of these events on the minds of the colonized Kurds. As these experiences are explored in the novel, the conflict between the traditional Kurdish self and the modern postcolonial self becomes an insoluble predicament for Reza. The Kurdish novel's protagonist gives voice to traumas, mourns over losses, and reveals the tragic events that have dismembered the Kurdish motherland and construes how all these have resulted in the fragmentation of the Kurdish individual in Iran and other parts of the region who share identical experiences concerning their ethnic identity.

In *The Age of Orphans*, I will analyze the inner experience of having a mixed identity and culture, and the clash within the protagonist's mind as the two cultural identities externalize their inward reality. The argument reflects that the two opposing discourses share distinctive ontological and epistemological characteristics. These qualities shape Reza's imaginations, feelings, thoughts, and behaviors towards the traditional Kurds and the new Postcolonial Kurdish, and also the modern Persian people. In the novel, Khadivi depicts the conflict between them as it is centered around two selves, using two different terms to display the different characteristics of the two cultural identities. She acknowledges that Reza's whole identity is

divided into “the shadow self” and “the soldier self,” and their division leads to an interior struggle to control his traditional perspectives and change his old ways of perceiving himself. The inner turmoil for submission and subjugation results in an intra-psychic conflict when he cannot process the psychology behind the enforced perceptions of the colonist’s culture. And the problem between the two irreconcilable cultural identities in Reza’s mind leaves a dehumanizing and detaching presence on his character where he construes his own identity through two different mirrors, the native and the foreign. The experience of cultural division and psychological distortion disorients his central vision, leading him down a troubled road as he attempts to reclaim a map for the original home. But the crushing forces of internal colonialism having left no shards from the traditional mirror to collect, and the postcolonial crisis of identity has destroyed all his hopes to return to the pre-colonial identity. The protagonist there feels the anxiety of being exiled at home because of the prejudice, hostility, and violence of the Persian discourse that have introduced a hatred against the Kurds. The Kurdish protagonist’s tension between two selves in *The Age of Orphans* causes suffering in a variety of ways. Reza’s mixed ontological and epistemological ways of knowing and being is the embodiment of these internal and external cultural collisions.

### **The Socio-Political History of the Kurds in Iran**

The socio-political history of the Kurds in post-World War I is one of struggle and tragic history. The period is marked by a radical change and an enduring violence that have influenced the current political and cultural state of affairs of the Kurdish people in Iran ever since the 1920s. It was a time of building the new nation states in the region. The politics of Persian nationalism were behind the state policing that drastically transformed the shape of the country

and the destiny of the minority racial and ethnic groups such as the Kurds. These groups were the subject to different forms of deculturalization. As a result, they found themselves in an impossible situation, and would not be able to find a way to ease the inward and outward tensions due to the presence of multiple conflicting cultural identities. From the denial of their language and culture, the Kurds of Iran have witnessed ethnic strife, the dehumanizing effects of racism, and the psychological scars of one superior ethnic group policing.

On a global scale, the Kurds had integration with their own self-administration before World War I, especially in the state of Kurdistan. But the Western colonizers divided Kurdistan during World War I when the Kurds were relocated into four different places, namely, northern Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey. And the relocated Kurds were forced into accepting the values and norms of these various states. All these states enforced cultural assimilation to integrate the Kurds into their own states. They used different methods of deculturing, especially education. For example, the above-mentioned states opened Persian, Arabic, and Turkish schools in the Kurdish areas. This functioned to change the epistemological world of the colonized Kurds by the specific paradigms of the Persians, Arabs, and Turks' epistemology. In this regard, the imposition of the foreign education was always a problem for the colonized Kurds within these states. Accordingly, the Kurdish problem in these areas, by and large, was to have Kurdish schools. The enforced education was not solely about the cultural assimilation, but it also included the obliteration of the native Kurdish language. The Persian, the Arab, and the Turkish colonizers viewed the Kurdish language as an obsolete language, a mountainous one. In response, they wanted the Kurdish people to use the official language of the restrictive states, namely Persian, Arabic, and Turkish. Other political and cultural tools were also used as long-

term policies to detach the Kurds from the idea of an independent motherland and to disrupt the low-status sense of collective attachment that might form a new map in the region.

Ethnic strife starts to emerge among the Kurds from the 1930s onward as a national struggle. In the Middle East, nationalism initially proved to be a failure because those who surrounded the Kurds were multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-religious, and multi-cultural. But this new political method of unifying all the different groups into one eliminated each minority racial and ethnic group's authority over their language and culture. Value and significance were given to the language and culture of the superior and strong group. The minority people were forced into accepting their new ways of knowing and being. For instance, the modern state of Iran in post-World War I practiced harsh physical and psychological methods to silence the Kurds and to vindicate its modern culture. If the Kurds, or other ethnic groups, raised their voice to question, they would face enduring political persecutions. Rejecting this cultural vindication, the reactions of the Kurds, and the subsequent responses from the state, germinated a terrorizing environment for the weak. The enforcement of state regulations drove the Kurds into despair, and this is when the suppressive and oppressive rules left no way for the Kurds to express themselves in the ways things used to be. Those who questioned the new policies of the state would be denied and ignored.

Combined to create a terrorizing environment, the politics of group enforcement of Iran specifically dehumanized the Kurds where they reveal a form of internal colonialism. As the powerful cultural group has restructured the new nation ever since 1921, they have utilized forcibly the application of all physical, psychological, political, cultural, and intellectual processes to centralize their power and authority over the different ethnic areas within the new structured country. In the Kurdish areas, one may argue that colonialism is still an ongoing

procedure in one form or another. Scholar, editor, and critic Nicholas Birns explains that, “many argued that colonialism was not yet over. Even the emancipated former colonies were still economically dependent on the former colonizer” (239). Although Kurds are living in a postcolonial time, the internal colonialism and postcolonial situation still overlap as the modern political agenda strives to make them into interdependent beings, not independent. The recentralization of all the areas has resulted in a cultural hostility towards the one deemed to be the weak and inferior. The strongest ethnic group, namely Persian, idealized their own cultural foundations as the best. This new mode of thought reordered the political structure within modern Iran that has constructed a new cultural order for the minority communities. According to this cultural hegemony, the Persians defined the Kurds as primitive, outdated, and violent, and introduced them as an obstacle in the progress of the unified nation. In certain areas, the Kurds resisted the instrumental and structural pressures as a response to the new policies, but the state saw that resistance as rebellious and even terroristic. Therefore, they re-presented the Kurds as a serious threat in the formation of the new modern Iran. In consequence, the new regime of Iran, that rose to power in the 1920s, used enforced cultural assimilation to avoid the political reactions of the Kurds and to erase their slogans about the pre-state socio-political reality, and they also displaced potentially terroristic sub-groups who had continuous resistance against the regime.

The racist gaze of the Persians has left enduring psychological inflictions for the Kurds from 1921 to the current time. The Kurdish pain is due to the vulnerability of their identity because they are surrounded by strangers who view them as unwanted people, as unwelcome in their own ordinary areas. The Persian state used different forms of violence against the indigenous Kurds. The practice of such power is to forcibly change the Kurdish traditional



worldview and make them to accept the new modern lifestyles at the expense of abandoning their traditional views and practices. Cultural change is a natural phenomenon, but an enforced change is a brutal political act. It has nothing to do with modernity and progress. This is simply a process of policing the inward reality and removing the privacy of the self so as to adjust them with the new political and cultural circumstances. Any violent change wounds the weak and the historical wounds will leave psychological devastations and cultural disorientations. On a spiritual level, these tensions cause a crisis of belongingness when two cultural selves are at conflict within the Kurdish mind.

Since the 1920s when the new regime of Reza shah decided to centralize all the other ethnic areas within the nation state, he wanted to melt them in the Persian pot. The importance of this political strategy was to destroy the sense of their ethnic and racial identity. From a political perspective, it was to end their resistance and stabilize the insecure areas. The Kurds struggled to reclaim the self-rule in a place that was no longer a valid option for them in modern Iran. Before World War I, Kurds had their own independent emirates. But the policy of building the nation state removed their autonomy, and the Kurds were subjected to the state. Hashem Ahmadzadeh and Gareth Stansfield explain the Kurds' destiny when the new nation state was established in the post-World War I Iran. They explain that

A key element of this policy was to promote the centralization of authority and administrative organization at the expense of the autonomy built up by groups living in provincial areas. As a result, the semi-independent Kurdish emirates were practically eliminated as meaningful entities. (12)

In 1921, Reza shah, the king of Iran, formally requested full centralization all over the country. To centralize the semi-independent rule of the other ethnic groups, one strategy that was used is to open Persian schools in the Kurdish areas through which they brainwashed Kurdish children. In such a new situation, the colonized Kurds experienced the emergence of a new mode of self

that added another dimension of being. This is where there existed two opposing forms of perceiving their emotional and intellectual reality. That is the psychology behind the Kurdish traditions of political, cultural, and educational worldviews in contrast with the Persians. When the Kurds were forced into accepting new cultural perceptions, these have displayed various psycho-cultural and political clashes with the state.

The current cultural world that Khadivi is writing about is a mixed culture and identity for the Kurds in Iran. There are still clashes and conflicts in certain areas, but the long-term politics of cultural assimilation, inter-cultural marriages, and the demographic change have been reshaping the Kurdish traditional worldview into adopting the modern post-national identity as replacement for their traditional one as the original Kurdish traditional self disappears.

Resistance is no longer an option for the Kurds, for even if they resist, they will face oppressive and suppressive mechanisms of the state. From this current perspective, they must adjust to the new political reality that continuously transforms the Kurdish areas and the ways in which the transformations redefine their cultural identity.

The older generation in the 1920s and onward were more skeptical about change and more sensitive about spiritual and intellectual Kurdish traditions than the younger generation. The people who witnessed these violent conflicts were more affected by the changes and more hurt consciously by the sudden changes. This was due to the fact that they experienced a division in their cultural worldview into two opposing cultural selves. Another reason was that many did not know the Persian language, which caused many miscommunications while interacting with the colonizers. The older people saw the state as the internal colonist unlike the new generation who feel the new Iran to be a multicultural haven. They have learnt the Persian language at

schools and they are more familiar with their place and role in modern Iran. Thus, they face less difficulty than the older generation.

The Kurdish culture in western Iran is changing increasingly. The Kurds are taking the shades of the Persian culture and their traditional culture is gradually deteriorating because of the mass media, new curriculum, and enduring assimilation, and also their detachment from the Kurds of the other parts. Kurdish culture in Iran is no longer a static discourse: the modern culture of the Kurdish people in Iran is open, flexible, and dynamic. The first Kurdish generation who witnessed these changes saw themselves as strangers in home, the legacy of internal colonialism turns the traditional Kurdish self into something unwelcomed and unwanted.

### **The World of Kurdish Postcolonial Literature**

Modern Kurdish literature explores identity reconstruction after the psychological and cultural divisions of Kurdish traditional identity experienced by Kurds encountering the neighboring nation states during and after the early 1920s. The Kurds endured a lot of pain and struggled against the brutal policies of these states. The Kurdish novel is an active medium in narrating these traumatic experiences and cultural changes that have reshaped the Kurdish cultural self. The world of the Kurdish novel from its beginning depicts stunningly their tragic downfall, especially when they struggled to reclaim their pre-state self-rule. The Kurdish novel participates in the narration of the political and cultural situations including the nation's wounds and the agonies of the Kurdish people, while shedding light on the postcolonial problems of identity and culture.

What is the role of literature in a colonized world? Laleh Khadivi and Erika Abrahamian's "Inside Iran: Introduction," reveals the voice of the oppressed and suppressed

people in a multi-ethnic and multi-racial community like Iran. This voice speaks its truth as smaller ethnic groups are forcibly melted into the state pot. The two authors insert a poem that represents the new generation of Iran after the results of the 2009 election. The tone of this melancholic inspiration speaks about the socio-political reality of the former generations, too:

You're just riffraff, lower than dirt.  
I am the aching lover, blazing and lit.  
You're the black halo, oppressive and blind.  
I am the brave hero and this land is mine. ("Inside Iran: Introduction")

This short poem shows the binary opposition of the indigenous people with the brutal policies of the state. Many contemporary Middle Eastern novels tackle similar issues of the native people's ambivalence, being homeless in their own homeland. The inward manifestation is when Kurdish characters' feelings and thoughts are shaped by the shades of the traditional and modern perceptions as competing identity markers. The mixed self in transition between tradition and modernity manifests itself as a recurrent theme in many Middle Eastern novels. Though academic scholarship on the Kurdish postcolonial novel is almost nonexistent, the world of the Kurdish novel has been working as the best representative voice to present the existential reality of the Kurdish nation.

The first attempt to explore Kurdish postcolonial identity through literature was made by Kamuran Bedir Khan in 1937 in his *Der Adler* (Eagle). Michael Gunter, a historical researcher who conducts his research on the Kurdish struggle in Iraq and Turkey, mentions that, "Bedir Khan attempted to forge an imagined Kurdish nation that illustrated its heroism, patriotism, reverence for the land, identification with the mountains, pride in the language and heritage, beauty of the folk tales and songs, strong and patriotic women, and overall Kurdish solidarity" (39). This is the first literary attempt to talk about the Kurdish traditional values. Its purpose was to form a Kurdish national identity and to imbue a Kurdish voice with a distinct culture. Khan

wants to introduce the dismembered cultural body of the Kurds and heal their wounds by forging a voice based on unifying the cultural traits. He implicitly tries to resolve the socio-political crises of the Kurds.

Later literary attempts try to tackle the themes relating to the trauma and displacement of identity and culture. In Iraqi Kurdistan, the prominent contemporary Kurdish novelist and essayist Bachtyar Ali explores the experience of inner homelessness, while observing two selves, in many of his novels. For example, in *My Uncle Jamshid Khan: Whom the Wind Was Always Taking*, Ali delves into the theme of being an outcast and a stranger in homeland to reveal the suffering of the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan and other parts of the region. In Ali's novel, the imagery of the wind represents a threat to the protagonist's identity. The character is unbearably light under the psychological and cultural pressures of the wind, and it changes his directions as he is relocated with a different state each time. The wind takes him to Iraq, the Arabic part, then to Iran, and finally to Turkey, and he is easily controlled. This is because his identity is so vulnerable. The colonizers deculture Khan due to their cultural hostility against the Kurds. They also familiarize him with their political and cultural agenda. These processes change his ways of knowing and being as he is treated like the savage "other." The events that happen to Jamshid Khan demonstrate the political and cultural reality of the Kurds before the 1990s. Ali's novel presents a vivid image of Kurdish nationalism from the early 1960s to the 1990s as the Kurds were in a continuous war against the neighboring colonizers for domination and submission.

Fazil Qaradaghi's *The BIGS and The LITTLES* is a representative picture of the Iraqi Kurds in the post-1990s. Qaradaghi is a Kurdish scholar, essayist, novelist, and political analyst, and his novel depicts a Kurdish colonizing experience under the rule of the semi-independent administration in Iraq. The Kurdish people see policies of modern administration as a colonial

project. Although Kurds are living in the postcolonial era, the internal colonialism and postcolonial effects are pressuring the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan. The internal government though also Kurdish, is pictured as the local colonizer, and the colonized Kurds who seek to maintain traditional ethnic identity resist its oppressive politics. This novel's depiction of the political and cultural reality shows how the main characters lives are thrown into turmoil when they experience the deterioration of the traditional Kurdish values and practices. The internal colonization is when the modern postcolonial practice of political power becomes the main mechanism to colonize people there. This colonization puts an end to their protests and strengthens the strong group's power that depends on economic monopolization, and political exploitation. The main characters bitter cries show their difficulty in a cultural world where the traditional Kurdish self is in a transitional stage to become a mixed self. A traditional version of the self is how they perceive their cultural identity, and the modern practice of power destroys the protagonist's traditional perception of values when he sees political corruption, hypocrisy, and monopolization from the internal Kurdish rule. The administrators work to establish a line of differentiation so as to disregard those who raise their voice against the local policies. As a result, the Kurdish citizens in Iraqi Kurdistan come to realize their cultural mobility towards a spiritual and intellectual uncertainty that manifests in inward tension.

Media technologies have helped the Kurds to introduce themselves as the largest nation without a state of their own. National representation of large Kurds has motivated the other Kurds in Iran, Syria, and Turkey to voice their national identity, and attach themselves to the Kurds in all the other parts. Printing and visual cultures have shaped a unified realization about the idea of being a Kurd and belonging to Kurdistan. For example, print culture has helped the Kurds to access the experience of the Kurdish people in the different parts of the same region. It

also has helped the widespread development of the Kurdish novel. The Kurdish novels written in other parts, namely, Iran, Syria, and Turkey, are available for the Iraqi Kurds. The same phenomenon is true for visual culture and the internet. These tools have gathered the Kurds to know a unified voice, and to form a more cohesive identity in the midst of cultural upheaval. The Kurds capitalize on these tools to raise the global consciousness about their national identity. This growing awareness has resulted in gatherings of the Kurds from around the world, allowing Kurds to reconstruct their identity and preserve their cultural traditions in many places. Gunter explains that “a Kurdish civil society began to emerge with dozens of newspapers, magazines, and television and radio stations using the Kurdish language and representing a broad spectrum of opinion” (42). For decades, Kurds were forgotten people, but they have been working to redefine their national identity and assert it to the world by utilizing the modern media more precisely.

All these changes in the Kurdish character provided a new direction in the content and form of the Kurdish novel. The Kurdish novel is still a developing genre. The experience of the novel is new to the Kurds due to their political situations before the 1990s. Before then, the Kurdish access to the media technologies was confined to broadcasts of tragic events and national struggles. The Kurdish novel did not develop much because of the political conditions and the Kurds lack of access to print and visual media. Thus, the development in the content and form of the Kurdish novels written in the pre-1990s is very limited. On the other hand, there are obvious changes in the content of the Kurdish novel after the 1990s. These thematic changes are due to new political and cultural situations of the Kurds in the region. The Kurdish scholar and essayist Hashem Ahmadzadeh writes about the Kurdish novel after the 1990s to pursue his primary aim of understanding the thematic development of the Kurdish novel. He states that

Following the takeover of Iraqi Kurdistan by the two main Kurdish political parties, namely, the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, in 1991, the Kurds have been experiencing a more or less autonomous self rule. Kurdish self-rule results in changes to the themes chosen for Kurdish novels. If earlier the protagonists of the Kurdish novels in the first instance were facing the tyrant regimes which governed the Kurds, now the Kurds' own administration was the subject of confrontation for them. (Ahmadzadeh, "Stylistic and thematic changes in the Kurdish novel" 232)

In the pre-1990s period, the protagonist is in conflict with the colonizers, namely, Persians, Turks, and Arabs. The protagonist resists in order to preserve the ancestral traditional and original heritage. The Kurds fight against the internal colonizers to protect the border of motherland, the homeland as a symbol of emotional nourishment and dignity. The themes of these novels are about the national struggle of the Kurds as in Ali's *My Uncle Jamshid Khan: Whom the Wind Was Always Taking*, about Kurdish nationalism. And Khadivi's *The Age of Orphans*' events also take place before the 1990s. On the other hand, the conflict of the protagonist in the post-1990s period is with the Kurds' administration, if we consider the novels written in Iraqi Kurdistan and other parts of the world. The themes of the novels written in this era are about corruption, exploitation, monopolization, and deterioration of the personal values and traditional practices. For instance, Qaradaghi's *The BIGS and the LITTLES* sheds light on these political and cultural conflicts. The content of the Kurdish novel has changed in these two different periods. This proves how the new political situations of the Kurds change the psychological and cultural circumstances of people, and how these influence the novel as a new developing genre to reflect them. The Kurdish novel thus reflects the ontological and epistemological changes of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The political changes after the 1990s mirror in some ways the changes in Kurdish novels, as these new styles may resemble the freedom and self-rule of the Kurds. According to Ahmadzadeh, "During the 1990s and later on, new literary styles and modes, for example magic



realism, the metanovel, surrealism, stream of consciousness, and fantastic novels, enter the domain of Kurdish novel writing” (“Stylistic and Thematic Changes in the Kurdish Novel” 237). The new novelistic forms may signify the border of the Kurdish new political order, and the epistemological ramifications, in the aftermath of the Kurdish uprising in northern Iraq in 1991, that functioned as a break from the earlier cultural and political discourse of the colonists. The form, the internal design, of the Kurdish novel reflects the spiritual and intellectual boundaries of the Kurds. Thus, the change in the content and form of the Kurdish novel shows that the Kurdish novel is developing based on their political and cultural progress.

The rupture from the colonizer’s discourse was a vital point for Kurdish women. After 1991, a new reality has emerged for Kurdish women due to the emergence of new political and cultural ideologies that strengthen the role and place of women in the Kurdish society. The preceding order of the Kurdish society was patriarchal. In such a brutal discourse, Kurdish women were “othered” by the dominant male discourse. For example, women were regarded as weak and fragile, needing to be kept under patriarchal domestication. On the other hand, in this new period, Kurdish women start writing from their own perspectives to raise their voice about issues related to Kurdish women and their experience of psychological, cultural, educational, economic, political, sexual, and other considerations. There are some factors behind the rise of Kurdish female novelists: one is the effect of globalization. As Kurds became exposed to the phenomenon of cultural openness via cultural globalization, Kurdish women have seen the experience of women in the other cultures. In the globalized world, the Kurdish worldview is not static and confined anymore. In this regard, the female novelists who live in diaspora have a better access to educational institutions and have more opportunities than those who live in a confined place like Kurdistan. In Ahmadzadeh’s view, he tells that

Cultural situation of Kurdistan has been far from a suitable environment for the production of literary discourse by women. The late rise of novels written by Kurdish women is contrary to western traditions where women have had a determining role in the rise and development of novelistic discourse. (Ahmadzadeh, "The World of Kurdish Women's Novels" 735)

The Kurdish novel is growing as a literary genre to voice the wounds of losing the motherland. Kurdish novelists want to narrate the traumatic burdens of the past that have dismembered the Kurds. As a Kurdish female novelist, Laleh Khadivi is a vivid example of a Kurdish woman who lives in the United States of America, and thus has more privilege to write about Kurdish experience. Her narrative world tries to restructure the socio-political conditions of the Kurds from a Kurdish perspective. As a postcolonial Kurdish novelist, Khadivi writes to alleviate the Kurdish agonies, and re-present their new cultural identity in the imbalances of power and authority while tracing the origins of their ethnic self.

### ***Who am I? Laleh Khadivi's Quest for the Kurdish Self***

Laleh Khadivi is a short story writer, novelist, and filmmaker who was born in Esfahan Iran in 1977. She is Kurdish as well as Iranian-American. In the pre-1979 Islamic revolution, her family witnessed the incessant suppression and oppression of the Kurds as the Kurds were treated as the "other" by the dominating factions in Iran. When Ayatollah Khomeini rose to power in 1979, her family fled the country in a bid for survival. Indeed, when the cultural climate of a place drastically changes, some people will find their lives threatened. In her novels, Khadivi presents Persian nationalism as a vile form of "othering" against the native Kurds in western Iran. Her quest to delve into the roots of the Kurdish traditional self takes her to the realization that the Kurdish static self is no longer a valid cultural mode for the Kurds in the

postcolonial era. Khadivi acknowledges this when she asks the “who am I?” question to investigate the Kurdish postcolonial situation.

According to cultural psychologist Hazel Markus, identities are dual reflections, meaning that a person is not just a psychological but a cultural construction:

A person cannot really answer the “who am I?” question without thinking about what *other* people think of her. Her identity is not just her project alone; what her identity ends up being depends also on how other people identify her. Identities are, in fact, group projects, and as such, “you can’t be a self by yourself.” A person’s identity depends on who she is in relation to others.... (363)

Khadivi wants to examine how others think about Kurdish people. She writes to understand how the borders on the map of Iranian culture sketch limitations on Kurdish identity. In her characters, she explores what Bhabha calls the dynamism of cultural identity. Like the other Kurdish novelists, Khadivi searches for a voice to express the burdens of statelessness. As a Kurdish American novelist, she traces the legacies of postcolonial heritage that have reconstructed a “hybrid” self for the Kurdish character where the broken image of the Kurdish traditional self has melted to the modern postcolonial self. Her identity reconstruction is similar to the reinvention of the home that often diasporic writers have attempted to attain.

When Khadivi’s family escaped the country, she was just two years old: “She retained no memory of the exodus, and grew up a nomadic American, the daughter of an itinerant businessman, stationed first in Dallas, then Los Angeles, then Atlanta” (“A Kurdish Odyssey”). Although she is unable to remember anything about the Kurds and Iran, Khadivi is still invested in understanding her Kurdish identity. She has interviewed some of her relatives to learn more about her forgotten origins: “Indeed, on one cross-country driving trip in 2002, she’d zigzagged to Chicago and Dallas, so that she could interview four of her father’s siblings about their

coming of age deep in Iran's Zagros mountains" ("A Kurdish Odyssey"). These family interviews helped her to initiate her writing career.

*Who am I? And where am I from?* She asked herself these questions while searching for her ancestral origins. Khadivi attained her education at different institutions in the United States. She completed an MFA writing program at Mills College at Oakland, a fellowship at the University of Wisconsin, and another at the Emory University at Atlanta ("A Kurdish Odyssey"). Her fiction is located within the Iranian American diasporic fiction. Though filmmaking was her first professional career, she realized the power of fiction compared with film after reading *Anna Karenina* and *Crime and Punishment*. Initially, questions about the roots and origins of her identity stimulated a curiosity and enthusiasm in her mind to start writing fiction, which she did in 2004. In 2008, she won the \$50,000 *Whiting Award* given to a talented writer each year. The inspiration opens an unlimited world for her.

One dimension of Khadivi's works is that her stories and novels are not informed by the family experiences heard from the tales of the relatives. Sociologist and civil activist Bill Donahue writes that, "Laleh insists that her books are not based on the family tales she heard on her cross-country ramble" ("A Kurdish Odyssey"). Her novels are her imagings inspired by the historical research she has conducted on the Kurds. This creativity allows her to reflect the widespread trauma and displacement of the Kurds, including her family members implicitly, as they came of age in Iran as members of the Kurdish diaspora.

Speaking with interviewer Alpana Shore, Khadivi says that it is through her mother that she experiences the anxieties of being homeless, and the absence of home ("Newslaundry"). She feels the presence of homelessness and the absence of home which is why she seeks belonging. Khadivi confirms this when she declares that "For all my life, I've wanted to belong to

something, and now I am creating that connection. I am easing out of that discontent: Even among the dead, I have company” (“A Kurdish Odyssey”). She wants to be attached to the Kurdish groups where ancestral love will link her to heritage and cultural values. In Khadivi’s mind, literary writing is the best medium to shed light on these cultural and political issues.

Khadivi envisions a pluralistic home where one feels a sense of being accepted without limitations and labels. In such a place, the other is accepted without being dehumanized. In a word, she believes that this pluralism existed in the pre-nation state era, especially for the Kurds in western Iran. Khadivi tells Shore, “in the pre-state, there was the innocence before a flag was assigned. Before the lines are drawn. There was a way that people had to deal with each other. Sometimes it was through warfare, sometimes through trade. They allowed the difference to live among them” (“Newslaundry”). Correspondingly, Khadivi explores the interrelation between home and identity in the post-nationalism era. She reveals in her writings the divided self of the Kurds due to the conflict between tradition and modernity when the map of the motherland is blurred. This blurred vision of the Kurds from their homeland shows a tension and change in their cultural identity as these people fail to belong to the pre-nation state identity. As a result, the destiny of the Kurdish self is a mixture of Kurdish pre-colonized ontological and epistemological backgrounds with the colonized modern postcolonial self.

Khadivi’s writings center on the theme of belongingness and the postcolonial dilemma in the psychology of Kurdish people. She rejects the ideology of nationalism because it is a form of “othering”. Khadivi informs the poet and editor Persis Karim that she wants to find out the different perceptions regarding the sense of identity and belonging in her trilogy.

Yes, I was indeed drawn to the idea of writing a trilogy because I wanted to track the inheritance as well as tribal belonging, national belonging, and postnational belonging for my characters. I wanted to trace over three generations of men how they inherit a sense of place, a sense of belonging. How do you know who you are and what you represent? For

example, are you Iranian first, Christian second? Or Kurdish first, Iranian second? Muslim first, Iranian second? In which order do these identities fall? What happens? As part of the diaspora, we are inheritors of this history; we carry these conflicts, these ruptures of history. We live here because we decided, or our parents decided, that the national identity of Iranians in Iran wouldn't work. So then we come here and we have to decide what our children's identity is. Are we Iranian or American? That's all the stuff I wanted to figure out in my novels. ("We Carry Home Within")

For her, home feels like home when people feel a "sense of belonging." In this vein, belonging to a home provides emotional nurturing and growth. Khadivi believes that "there is always going to be that desire for the tribe. This sensation is part of our humanity" ("Into the Hornet's Nest"). According to Khadivi, nationalism kills that sense of "desire" and "sensation" when the Kurds, or the minor ethnic groups who have been othered, attempt to "inherit" a sense of belonging. People who are being othered by the ideology of nationalism, are mistreated by the cultural prejudice of racist people.

Talking with the interviewer Alpana Shore about *The Age of Orphans*, Khadivi affirms her critique of the idea of nationalism. She believes that nationalism comes when the internal colonists impose a philosophy and ideology of statehood that is a false line, map, and home, for the Kurds. Such people lose their central traditional vision of identity and culture. When a new regime rises to take power and authority, the new regime will replace the old mythologies with their own ("Newslaundry"). Khadivi elucidates the difference between identity and belonging to Kirin Khan, especially, when political power shifts from one group to another. Her explanation is in a manner in which it clarifies the Kurdish dilemma better:

If identity is a way we announce our grouping or stature, then belonging is something that happens to you. You belong to a family, a people, belong to land, time in history and so on—it happens without your consent.... I am interested in what happens to our sense of belonging as our lives change—what happens in migration when we flee places to which we swore allegiance? How do you notice yourself belonging as an immigrant? ("Into the Hornet's Nest")

Khadiwi's trilogy tells the story of three generations of Kurdish men, and their plight of belonging when the motherland is dismembered. *The Age of Orphans* is about the idea of nationalism, which Khadiwi portrays in a negative light because it draws no border on the map for the Kurdish culture and so relocates an imposed homeland for them. *The Walking*, the second novel, is about the act of imagination and curiosity. Khadiwi says that in the novel, she tells "the story of a journey of a boy who is on a journey to go and find a self that he has not yet met. That is going to be the future him" ("Laleh Khadiwi on *The Walking*"). *A Good Country*, the third novel, is about the act of conversion. Khadiwi explains the meaning of conversion when she states, "you begin as something and end as something else" (*NPR*). The destiny of the Kurdish character is shrouded in mystery since they are the largest nation without a state of their own.

### **Theorizing the Kurdish Postcolonial Plight**

The Kurdish postcolonial plight is in their struggle for cultural and national attachment. The conflict comes from the problem of belonging where two opposing cultures have removed the sense of a stable location of culture. The relocation of the self implies a shift in the political discourse that destabilized the Kurdish socio-political world through unpredicted cultural mobility. In the post-World War I, the conception of a new set of paradigms in the world of Kurds signifies their plight of belonging and an unresolved dilemma between the native and the foreign modes of self-knowledge, especially as the Kurds lack the authority over their land as a cultural foundation.

The Othering of the Kurds in Iran has been to impose cultural hegemony since exaggeration of the difference in the Kurdish areas is a vital mechanism in the practice of power and knowledge. The colonized self is divided into the "self" and the "other." The "other" is the

shadow of the “self.” The colonized Kurds regard their traditional self as the “other” whereby the modern one is the “self.” In this regard, the modern self is superior over the inferior self because of their binary conceptions. On the one hand, the modern self is moral, good, and upright. On the other hand, the other that is categorized against the self is amoral, evil, and violent.

Cultural representation and the production of the other are the core political issues in the colonized world. The colonized people are unable to represent themselves in the unprecedented disparity of self-regarding. It’s worth explaining the cycle of culture to clarify the process of deculturing from one and acculturing to another. Anthropologically, there are residual, active, and emerging cultures. Residual culture is the obsolete one, but active culture is the one that reshapes someone’s awareness and directs their behaviors and actions. One may argue that as the traditional paradigms fall, there will be a rupture from the past to reconstruct a different future from the present. The past becomes the former self, and out of the active culture emerges a growing reality that is partly disrupted from the shades of the traditional self. In consequence, the blended culture of the Kurds in Iran forms a mixed paradigm. Out of the mixed and new discourse, there emerges a mixed cultural perception that is open to adopt the political mechanisms of deculturalization and flexible to adapt to the new politics of acculturation.

The deculturalization of the indigenous Kurds disrupts them from their traditional spiritual and intellectual paradigms. Cultural hybridity suggests the interplay between the Kurdish and Persian discourses for the construction of a new cultural self. Unlike Said, Bhabha presents a different view about the postcolonial identity. His interpretation of the postcolonial self is not based on the binary relations of the two cultures. But he believes in the dynamism and interconnection of cultures. This means that the human culture is changing, and evolving. In this regard, one should not think about a native and a foreign culture as two cultural modes, but as



one external realization of oneself. If Said believes in the binary opposition between the “self” and the “other,” then Bhabha leaves that interpretation behind in order to view them as the mixed mode of regarding the cultural self while understanding the other aspect of the self. It is due to this reason that he acknowledges the intellectual openness and dialogue among cultures where they progress in different transitional stages. Respectively, cultural progression rejects the concept of a distinct and static discourse. But mixed cultures display various forms depending on their geographical conditions and political situations of the two adherents.

For the Kurds in Iran, the mixed culture sketched another map for the Kurdish areas within the new state. As a stateless people, the Kurds are included and their self-administration should be terminated. Kurdistan, as a geographical boundary for the Kurds, is removed from the map of the region. Thus, Kurds are culturally displaced and politically assimilated to the central state, namely, the Persian nation state. As the internal colonized within the foreign state, Kurds no longer own their land; therefore, the problem of national and cultural identity arise in the Kurdish community.

Frantz Fanon, an anti-colonial thinker, describes the significance of land to the indigenous people. According to Fanon, “for a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity” (44). The land refers to the motherland for the Kurds, symbolically, because it provides a strong emotional attachment and communication among the native Kurds. In order for that inner communication to be authentic, the natives should have authority over the geography they live in, and cultural attachment to a specific place. The authenticity of self-determination and independence depend upon the centrality of one’s cultural idealizations in real life. Fanon analyzes the psychology of the colonized when they lose their authority and power

over controlling their geographical border. When the colonized think pragmatically about retaining their power over the essential geographical, psychological, cultural, political, and economic foundations, they are actually thinking about the decolonization of the mind. The process of decolonizing is to re-control the epistemological institutions in terms of cultural representation and patterns of belonging. It also means reclaiming authority over the basic institutional foundations that give a group an independent status and a role to play on the cultural map.

To decolonize the mind, the colonized need a long-term political and cultural strategy. When the colonized think of decolonizing, they want to retain their authority over the institutions that reshape their ontological and epistemological worldviews. Diasporic writers have attempted to reinvent a new present from the shards of the broken mirror of the past. Salman Rushdie is a British Indian novelist and essayist who tries to reinvent a new home for the Indians. He applies the idea of the Christian fall from the garden of Eden to understand the psychology of the exiled people. He states that

It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge – which gives rise to profound uncertainties – that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind. (Rushdie 10)

Khadiji undergoes the same reinvention of the Kurdish homeland, especially, when she feels this “sense of loss,” and this “urge to reclaim.” She is deeply aware about the profound spiritual and intellectual “uncertainties” in the Kurdish world. These doubts concerning perceiving oneself and understanding the other have created numerous political confusions among the Kurds in the postcolonial era. Thus, to reclaim the pre-colonized cultural self is an impossibility for the

Kurds. In return, Kurds can create “imaginary homelands,” or Kurdistans of the mind. The Kurdish experience that the two opposing discourses locked them in. In the same token, Rushdie believes that, “our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools” (15). The colonized Kurds feel the sense of being exiled in their motherland when they feel that they “straddle” two cultural discourses, and at other times “fall between two stools.” The presence of the mixed feelings is due to the disappearance of the border and the interconnection between the cultures. The hybrid culture of the postcolonial Kurds is detached from the boundaries of place.

Rushdie compares the idea of cultural displacement to the process of translation. In this context, the displaced people are the translated men. In such a translation, a person is conceived as partly east and partly west. He argues that, “having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained” (17). Thus, the Kurds are relocated to experience a different cultural self within the map of Iranian culture. The Kurdish people in Iran are partly Kurdish and partly Persian in this process of cultural translation where Khadivi’s novel construes the exiled Kurds. As a result of the cultural translation, a new hybrid self gains currency in the Kurdish areas. The “hybrid” self is emerging out of the conflict between the Kurdish traditional discourse and the modern Persian one, specifically when they regard and disregard each other and when the Kurdish border is erased. The Kurds are regarded as the displaced and translated people in Iran because they lack power in authorizing their ethnic institutions. The modern state of Iran is increasingly working to deauthorize the Kurdish ethnic institutions within Iran in order to remove their sense of an independent geography and history in their mind.

The deauthorization of the Kurds decentralizes them from the Kurdish traditional mode of thinking that conceptualizes their political views. Kurds try to preserve their traditions because they provide emotional peace and psychological and cultural acuity. Psychologists Baumeister and Leary confirm the strong need to be attached to a cultural group because it provides the spiritual needs for emotional satisfaction and cognitive well-being. They state that

the need to belong should therefore be found to some degree in all humans in all cultures, although naturally one would expect there to be individual differences in strength and intensity, as well as cultural and individual variations in how people express and satisfy the need. But it should prove difficult or impossible for culture to eradicate the need to belong. (499)

The “need to belong” is embedded in human nature. All people belong to certain borders within the map of human culture. Belonging to one cultural group should satisfy the human needs for health, well-being, and adjustment. Unbelonging to the desired group may cause signs of maladjustment and stress to surface, which will be explained below. The psychologists assert that

the main emotional implication of the belongingness hypothesis is that real, potential, or imagined changes in one’s belongingness status will produce emotional responses, with positive affect linked to increase in belongingness and negative affect linked to decreases in it. Also, stable or chronic conditions of high belongingness should produce a general abundance of positive affect, whereas chronic deprivation should produce a tendency toward abundant negative affect. (505)

From the author’s perspective, belongingness is regarded more as a human *need* than a *want*.

Wanting something might not fill the ontological and epistemological gaps unlike a need. Unlike unsatisfied wants, unsatisfied needs lead to emotional and cognitive maladjustment that results in medical, psychological, and behavioral problems, even “pathological consequences beyond mere temporary distress” (498). In the light of this interpretation, the problem of the colonized Kurds of Iran arises when they are deprived in creating this internal link with their ethnic fellows. This

deprivation prevents them from satisfying their basic needs. When the Kurds are not attached to their desired and preferred group, they are vulnerable and fragile in many different ways.

Many Kurds of Iran have come to devalue or ignore their traditional elements, adopting change as natural. As a result, their sense of culture has changed, from static to flexible. The aspects of the culture which have been ignored or devalued will reside in the residual culture in their psychology. Detachment among the Kurds causes certain psychological deceptions. One is the formation of a confused unconscious mind. This is especially true where there are opposing political discourses in a cultural group. The oppositions between one way of self-regarding and the other way of self-disregarding results in unbearable intellectual plights and sad spiritual experiences because they form an uneasy mentality. Feminist literary critic Lois Tyson explains the formation of the unconscious mind in connection with the psycho-cultural events on personal and interpersonal level. She states that

The unconscious is the storehouse of those painful experiences and emotions, those wounds, fears, guilty desires, and unresolved conflicts we do not want to know about because we feel we will be overwhelmed by them. The unconscious comes into being when we are very young through the *repression*, the expunging from consciousness, of these unhappy psychological events. (Tyson 12)

Tyson mentions the psychology of those who experience traumatic events. She is generally talking about the location of these disturbing events, emotions, and experiences. In the light of her analysis, the psychology of the Kurdish character is not a stable one because they are overwhelmed by the recurrent “unresolved conflicts.”

Contact with the “other” being is frightening. Tyson talks about the fear of emotional communication with another human being. According to Tyson,

fear of emotional involvement with another human being – is often an effective defense against learning about our own psychological wounds because it keeps us at an emotional distance in relationships most likely to bring those wounds to the surface: relationships with lovers, spouses, offspring, and best friends. (16)

Emotional communication with the painful past may bring the historical wounds to the surface; therefore, it can reopen the wounds. Thus, Kurds keep a distance from the shades of the shadow self. Pulling the self and pushing the other is the Kurd's catch-22 in the modern epoch.

These new paradigms of thinking about the cultural self require a change in self-regarding. The modern Kurdish paradigms are spreading terrorization because they are obligations rather rights. They force the Kurds into a new mode of being. This is the psychology behind the ideology of tradition and modernity. The binary conception of the old and new paradigms forms a mixed one that includes both rights and obligations. Since the conception of a mixed culture comes from the disruption from the other culture, the Kurdish traditional self displays inward and outward clashes between the forces of the self and the other that both exist within the mind. The unstable psychology of the postcolonial Kurds validates the idea of a dynamic self that is neither pure nor stable.

**OUTCASTS AND STRANGERS IN THEIR OWN MOTHERLAND: THE HYBRIDITY  
OF THE SELF IN THE CONFLICT BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN  
*THE AGE OF ORPHANS***

In *The Age of Orphans*, the dilemma of the postcolonial self emerges in the clash between tradition and modernity when the colonized Kurds try to preserve their inward attachment with their old traditional heritage and cultural identity. The conflict between tradition and modernity in the novel turns the Kurdish protagonist to view himself as an outcast and stranger in his own motherland. The intra-psychic clash lies within the mind of Reza Khourdi as he holds the characteristics of two different cultural discourses. The traditional culture of the Kurds, and the modern culture of the Persians divide Reza's self into the traditional identity and the modern one, and orient him towards a new cultural perception. The fragmentation of his Kurdish identity into the traditional Kurdish self and the modern Persian self in the novel transforms his inner vision into a "hybrid" self. Reza holds the shades of the two opposing cultures when they direct him into conflicting attitudes and behaviors towards the Kurds and Persians. The novel reflects the experience of this opposing selves in Reza's mind where their binary oppositions display different forms of violence and terrorization. Finally, *The Age of Orphans* shows the protagonist's emotional and cultural connection to the land. Reza's dilemma starts when the Persians centralize the Kurdish areas in western Iran.

The novel's images of circularity show that the Kurds once had a united community among themselves that tied yesterday to today and today to tomorrow. This self-image of the Kurdish people proves that they secured a distinct culture, not a mixed one. It is where the boy belonged to the land and dissolved into it, the time when Reza as a young boy had a strong

attachment with the motherland. It was where the cycle of the self is “the living self,” as the father tells his son (58). In the post-nationalism era, this belonging to the traditional group fails for him. It is where the king claims that: “my men and I are welcomed in cities with cries of thanks and praise, cheers and claps on the back, for we do the dirty work and in doing so make our glorious Persian past a modern thing, a proper thing, a thing to belong to the world of tanks and war and one-faced fear” (99). This “othering” of the Kurds brings about a political clash in the modern Iran.

The farmer in *The Age of Orphans* comments on the Kurds fate under the new regime that has centralized everything with the state. The farmer’s concern is that “the shah determines everything about my life, including my name, my occupation and the language my own children speak” (255). Thus, the political ideology of the Persians forces the Kurds not to belong to their tradition as it forcibly works to attach them to the new Iran where they will have rights as Iranian citizens and obligations as Kurds.

In *The Age of Orphans*, othering is done through physical violence. The hostile and violent attitude of the Persians against the Kurds is expressed in declaring a war against the clans, khans, and tribes. The state sees the Kurdish areas as a field of resource and as an object of inquiry to be discovered. The Kurds resist the politics of the imposed national identity and defend their areas. The young Reza’s duty is to watch for the invader and signal their appearance to the tribe. His Kurdish father tells him: “*The shah comes with tanks and armies of horses and men. Keep a careful lookout for them. They will be of a frightening size, but do not scare, run to give us warning and all will be well. This is our land and the gods of it are on our side*” (33).

The Persian come with tanks and men to deculturalize the Kurdish area with Iran.



Reza faces shattering mirror of the cultural identity when he sees violence and terror erupt. Reza's traditional discourse breaks when he witnesses a disruption from the past, and an existential change merges with his new mode of perception. The Kurdish boy is traumatized by the violent conflict of the political discourses for domination and subjugation. In the battlefield, one witnesses the disorientation of the self from the central vision when he cannot differentiate the two opposing forces. The narrator informs that, "the boy has been in a dusty dark like this before; in his disorientation he cannot help but confuse the memories of the cave with the memories of the massacre" (73). For the boy, it is a confusing moment since he loses his vision of differentiating the cave from the massacre, the cave as a symbol for tradition, and the massacre as a womb for modern reality. The conflict of the memories represents the inner turmoil brought by manipulation and change.

Reza's clash starts when he witnesses the death of his father in the war between Persians and Kurdish clans. The demise of his father ends his desire to belong to Kurdish people. As they clash, he sees they crush his father's head before his own eyes, the Persians introduce a "crack" to the psychology of the Kurd boy. The narrator comments on this tragic event where it changes his destiny.

Here opens the first crack to let in the fear and sorrow that will fissure through the whole of his life. As a soldier he will be deftly divided through the head, as a murderer cut open through the heart and as an old man split so thoroughly that one side of him dies first, unbeknownst and long before the other, damned to serve in hell as half a man. (17)

This tragedy befalling his nation splits the character's cultural self into opposing self-realizations. As a boy, "fear" and "sorrow" disturb his mind, and as a soldier he will be divided. It foreshadows him as a heartbroken man, and as a murderer. And in his old age, this splits his identity into the binary of Persian self and the Kurdish self. All these come from the destruction of the center, symbolically his father's head.

Symbolically, the death of his father means the break from traditional discourse. Khadivi describes the Persian soldiers as “part man, part machine” (64). The use of this metaphor is to show the modernization of the country by modern weapons and tanks. The Kurdish and Persian troops clash in a violent war where their hearts beat for life and death. This is when the narrator mentions the psychological reactions of the as-yet unnamed Kurdish boy, Reza.

In these short instances and insufferable spans the boy lives through a night forgotten by history, where the men of the land and soldiers of the shah take to each other with bullet, knife, curse and bludgeon to craft a single composition; the precise choreography of flesh puppets, strung to a thousand stars and pulled as sparring lovers, to and from the flame, to and from the gouge, to and from the stab and shot, their beating hearts like magnets charged to the opposite pulls of victory and death. (65)

When the Persians defeat the Kurds, Reza witnesses his father’s head becomes unrecognizable. The “crushed head” of his father is the crushed tradition as they have come with an army of men and tanks to radically change the cultural and political world of the Kurdish areas. Reza chooses to be silent while a Persian soldier is crushing his father’s head three times “boot to head, boot to head, boot to head” (66-67). Witnessing this tragic event befalling upon his father, and nation, he is traumatized to see how the “boot” shatters the skull of his father. It is the “skull” and “dream of the boots” that tears the character apart where “he can wear upon his own small feet to keep the feel and pull of the earth pushed back and away” (67). Accordingly, the boy decides not to remember the scene and pretends to be silent concerning the unrecognizable face of his father.

But instead the boy chooses to never remember, and thus never forget, and keeps the crushed face of his father secreted in a damp purgatory of forget and never-remember, to rove destitute as a ghost through the living days of a son who can never forgive. (67)

This is an indication that the traditional self of the protagonist will be a “ghost.” The Persian colonizers take the boy as a slave and conscript him to be a soldier for the success of the new nation of Iran. The conscription of the boy is a form of othering that denounces his Kurdish identity. Before that tragic event, the boy was a whole Kurd belonged to the land when he has

one father belonged to the Kurdish fathers. During his conscription, the Persians consider the Kurdish boy as the “other.” The cadets are brainwashed in a way they accept the modern self as a blessing. The baker’s son tells the Kurdish boy in the barracks: “today is the first day of your blessed existence. Befaymin! With all my heart the army of the shah of Persia, soon to be Iran, welcomes you!” (70). They want to train him to be a listening man. As a result, the boy is torn, detached; therefore, dissociates himself from the dirty Kurds. His psychological division is painful; the boy “wear the boots now” to alleviate the pain. The pain comes from the “crack” of the center that turns him into “madness” in his first days in the barracks. The Persian soldiers mistreat the mysterious and unknown Kurd boy as if he presents a threat to them.

Reza is regarded as wild, untamed, uncultured, uncivilized, amoral, filthy, and outdated. In his first days, he is treated like an animal where, “he is tied by a long rope loosely affixed to the center pole that holds up a musty, damp tent, and for those days the boy keeps to himself, shits in a corner and wets his pants” (75). The boy is hysterical and shocked; he is not aware about his fallen nation and family. He wants to return home as a Kurd in his hallucinations. But a soldier slaps him as a warning sign of not turning back and moving forward. He must leave the past behind and look forward to reinvent his future self.

The nightmare and dreams of the ghost self is a “shadow” that disturbs the boy’s conscience. These dreams torture the boy and leave painful memories behind. In his dreams, he sees monsters destroy his village and kill the people. In his longing for the home, the boy is confused between the prevailing dreams and the nature of his emerging reality as a displaced self.

The boy wakes to an insanity in which he is unable to separate dream from actual day. He rushes about the camp, set and determined like a maniac, to serve the soldiers whatever they ask, to take their insults and demands and keep them calm to spare his village and its

women, youngest cousins and oldest aunts and maman alike. They are the long-lost faces of a home he can only conjure now in tortured dreams. (84)

“Pushes out of the skin” foreshadows his new identity, creation, and reinvention as a “soldier self.” During his conscription, the Persians give him a new name, “Reza Khourdi,” as a new citizen in the new nation, and the attaché gives him the third name “Pejman” that means “heartbroken” (86-87). As a result of this renaming, he is reinvented as a new person that belongs to modern Iran. He adapts to his new self, and disowns the memories of his childhood behind to become a shadow like “these ghosts of his last life” (87). The opposing cultural identities burst in shadowy conflict between the “soldier self” and the “shadow self,” where the character holds the specific characteristics associated with the Persian colonizer and the Kurdish colonized, respectively.

Reza’s psychology becomes a two-way actualization of both colonizer and the colonized. As a colonizer, he views the Kurds like the Persians do. He is aggressive and violent against the Kurds. His hostile attitudes and behaviors towards the indigenous Kurds explores the projection of what he hates in his “shadow self.” He learns to be a “soldier self” while training to be a soldier. But before that he has learnt the art of differentiation between “the self” and “the other.” The dichotomy between the city cadets and the tribal cadets creates a distance between them. Each has its own border of definitions. The city boys are portrayed as civilized and cultured unlike the tribe boys who are dirty and uncultured. The narrator explains the difference: “so starts the segregation: them and us; the other and the I; the sophisticate and the savage; civilized and ingrate; the good and the undesired” (97). As a Kurdish cadet in the barracks, Reza is othered by the city boys “dirty Kurd, Khourdi is a dirty Kurd” (101). He learns earlier the art of “segregation” between the desired people and the undesired ones. The desired are the

sophisticated, the civilized, and the good. In contrast, the undesired are those who are the untamed and wild.

Othering is internalized in the psychology of Reza. This is especially where a rope of push and pull are orienting his shadow and the soldier self. That is to suggest the more he accepts the modern identity, the more he forgets the traditional identity, and vice versa. This is a vivid experience where, “he is all the while deaf and distracted from the colonel and the captain and their questions and he loads and fires and loads and fires and forgets everything he has remembered: his father, the barracks boy (who are now awake and wondering), the land and the shah, the cries and harp, the hoots of the owls, now silent, maybe now shot” (107). Reza forgets about the traditional Kurds as he is drawn into the world of boots and guns. It’s worth re-stating that the othering of the Kurds, and the hostility against them is due to the political differences between them, not the cultural ones. The Kurds seek political autonomy and self-rule that is refused by Persian nationalism. The Persians believe that it is “the blasphemous Kurdish quest for independence that weakens our great nation! Leave us humiliated! Susceptible to invasion and attack!” (117). The same political understanding can be applied to the psychology of Reza Khourdi. The soldier self in his mind suggests that his former Kurdish self weakens the value of his modern self and it humiliates him in the eyes of the other self. Reza is in pain when one part disregards the other constantly as a cycle of shame and guilt.

In Saqqez, Reza is afraid of cultural confrontation and emotional communication with the Kurds because they are the reflection of his shadow self. When the Persian soldiers march towards Saqqez to end the resistance of Simko and Dizli, two Kurdish revolutionary leaders, Reza’s shadow self returns to haunt him. Each day in the city expands the shadow self in his mind. When the shadow returns as the other part of his psyche, he perceives that he cannot

ignore the dark side of his nature that is doomed to be the inferior. Therefore, he needs to feed the two selves together. Reza eats the mulberries in Saqqez, and the other cadets tease him because they say that they are for children. He cannot hear their teasing words because as a divided Kurd he must feed both the soldier self and the shadow self. All he hears is: "I am a child, a hungry bird boy a shadow that feasts on these favorites, favorites for the famished bird boy, and I am today a bird and a boy, ravenous for fruit and seed" (129). The growth of the two selves reveal that the return of the shadow self is inevitable.

As a would-be-colonizer, Reza is othering the Kurds in Saqqez. This is where he treats them like wild and uncivilized creatures. Reza sees the old woman through the lens of his soldier self "with her dirty hair and dirty feet and dirty hands, she is seen by Reza as the shah must see her: a being just above the line of animal" (130). He does not feel remorse to take what he lacks from these filthy people. But both of his selves need food. The shadow self needs love that attaches him to the maman and baba. On the other hand, the soldier self wants to be sated by the desire of devouring milk.

The imagery of the food demonstrates the core of Reza's conflict. When the three city cadets and Reza search for food in Saqqez to fill their empty stomachs, "and terror and alarm to fill their hearts" (131). They entered a house to take rice, tea leaves, and fresh butter. In the house, a Kurdish woman was feeding her child. The Kurdish woman sees these soldiers as "apparitions" and "waking nightmares." Reza is a torn man in front of the woman because she can feed both of his unsated children metaphorically, the shadow self and the soldier self.

Reza stands in the doorway, immobile, caught hosting not one but two selves: the shadow self that craves to suckle at this all-mother's teat and the soldier self that determines this to be dirty loot, for the taking but not at all valuable. Nevertheless, the two demons are this morning bosom buddies who take each other by the hand to dance in joy at the sight of a mother and her milk. (131-132)

Reza is aggressive and violent against the Kurdish woman who feeds her children. He approaches the woman and slaps her because he assumes that she has not shown proper respect for the soldier self in him. The gesture suggests that he is projecting what he hates in his other side. The psychological projection shows his inward violence and hostility towards the shadow self. In fact, this is his emotional ambivalence in the dichotomy of the two cultural selves. He suffers from the disparity of meaning that is love for one side, but hatred for the other. These two emotional needs clash in his mind, and externalize their outputs in his behaviors and actions towards the others. Later, this can be realized better in his cultural contact and spiritual communication with his soul-mate Meena. The two voices in his mind dance in pain and pleasure.

In Reza the shadow self and the soldier self dance in delight as the desire to love oneself and hate oneself is now well fed and Reza is allowed to punish and caress all at once. He sucks and slaps and thinks with certainty that he *is* Reza Pejman Khourdi, and he *is* the son of a yet undefined nation of Iran, and the babe's scream *is* music and he *does* today and *will* tomorrow seek out its *sound*. (132)

Reza is violent against his shadow self. Reza, as a would be colonizer, tries to rape a Kurdish woman. The Kurdish woman knows that he has a familiar face. He cannot invade the body of the young woman because she resembles his mother and belongs to his baba (137). The scream of the girl finally awakens his dead conscience while he tries to rape her. The narrator comments on that as if: "it is a noise free of despair, anger or pain; a clean sound, sharp as a blade that cuts the air of the orange canyon into shards" (138). Reza is frustrated after the noise because he is filled with shame and guilt. His unescapable shadow self is touched by the noisy sound. It awakens the old self and opens his eyes to shock him inwardly: "nothing suffocates his heart like the blanket of her scream" (138). The bitter scream reopens his historical wounds and traumas associated with the crush of his father's head. The rise of his wounds redirect his vision toward the fate of

the bleeding orphan. When the cadets leave the woman behind, Reza searches in the village to silent the noisy voices of the shadow self.

The village is empty. All life – fire, hens, bazaar sounds and mangy dogs – has disappeared, and Reza walks foolishly door to door to find the mother and her newborn, desperate for the milk, the comfort after the crime. But they gone and Reza has no recourse, no way to straighten himself in the aftermath; his legs are made of liquid and his vision is blurred with sweat and his ears bleed and bleed.

Every glance of the bloody barrel of the gun is a scream.

The sight of the empty coffeehouse: ten screams.

The madrassa: a hundred screams.

The blue tile fountain in the center of the meydan: a thousand clean screams.

The shadow of his Kurdish self is no longer silent. It screams the song of sirens, sung by women that he left behind – his maman, aunts and girl cousins, the woman from the afternoon, the girl herself – who rush forth now in deafening daggers of sound to punish and scold their miscreant son with their fanatical wails. The cadets walk down to the garrison but he cannot follow. His ears bleed and his heart hurts and he tries to hide himself in the pen, bury himself under the hay and pray for silence.

The merry cadets call.

Hurry, Khourdi! Come quick. We have to tell the captains about your victory with the Kurd women... and we all wagered that you'd break in the face of your people. But no! You are stronger! What a story... come on, Khourdi, get out of that pen, today's hero doesn't hide! (138-139)

Reza cannot fight against the shadows of his former self. Indeed, the event shows the return of the traditional voices. He cannot repress them any longer. Previously, he preferred to disown them but when they return “his ears bleed and his heart hurts,” because they are the secret voices that he desperately joins to belong. Up to this point of his dilemma, the discourse of the modern culture has dominated the psychology of Reza. He keeps an emotional distance from the shadow self where it is reflected on his hostile attitudes and violent behaviors against the Kurds. The character of Reza imbues us with the idea that people find peace only in the place where they find a collective attachment. The ambivalent feelings of the Kurdish character reveal the split of their identity in the borders of cultural attachment. What the modern self pushes, the traditional self pulls. If the soldier self pushes hatred towards the Kurds, then the shadow self pulls love back.



Reza and Meena are the dual reflection of tradition and modernity on the personal and interpersonal level. Their marriage demonstrates another version of his internal clash of the shadow self and the soldier one. In Tehran unlike Saqqez, Reza finds the women to suit the spirit of his modern self. He completely reinvents himself where he has “no history” and “no family,” as a backdrop against the Kurds of Saqqez. The Agha tells Reza that the women in Tehran are “among the most sophisticated. French educated, uncovered, lovely...” (160). These modern women are compatible with his soldier self. In fact, “Reza recognizes them as replicas of his new self: the modern woman to match his modern man, with similar uniforms of pressed wool and sharp lines, clean necks and faces held up to the sun” (161). Meena is an educated, sophisticated, and lovely Tehrani woman who adores what the French and the English do. She is the complete model of the half self of Reza, the soldier self. She dreams about the modernization of the whole country, and she is proud that through her marriage she is planting the seed. The cultural differences between the shadow self and the soldier self presents an emotional gap for Reza. Their marriage together cannot satisfy their emotional needs. The presence of Meena will not guarantee any psychological comfort because Reza lacks love. In the presence of Meena, Reza cannot express the shadow self since she increasingly suffocates his traditional self. The narrator pictures the core of his withering heart and claims that he lacks,

What the orphan suffers: a life without love.

Love as it is in the nest of mother and father, where there is careful holding and crafting of the infant, toddler and child heart and great care is taken to ensure it is not dropped or dirtied or left aside accidentally as food for snakes and wolves. On those cast out, such love is easily lost.

What the orphan lives: a life where he must hold his own heart in one hand or two and there is no time to caress or cherish it as it slips and slides and all energy is spent just keeping it from falling through his fingers and onto a ground that may or may not belong to him. In his time Reza’s own orphan heart grows full with lies, heavier and more slippery each day. Even each night he visits his unloved sisters in the whorehouse (where together, orphan and whore, they throw their un-kept hearts about the room in a friendly

or viscous volley until exhausted and isolated, heartless and spent) but still has to leave the room with the bloody thing in his hand.

What the orphan craves: a place to put his heart, a way to love. (184-185)

In her presence, Reza is unable to confess his sentiments about the Kurdish traditional self.

Meena is racist and hates the Kurds. Her cultural prejudice is strong enough to regard him as a dirty man. In the bath, she washes her husband where the new self comes out. This “washing” is

to clean his former self but it cannot wash his sins. She knows that he is a Kurd; therefore,

Khadiwi depicts the washing scene as the Persian baptism of him, implicitly. When he is

cleaned, he will no longer be the dirty and sinner Kurd for her. Meena “takes the empty basin

and the wet cloth with today’s skin and soap and leaves behind the new man, her husband, in the

damp and smoke, to suffer the infliction of desire’s clean ache” (189-190). Reza perceives this

“infliction” as transmittable to his children. In the fifth month of their marriage when she is

pregnant, he thinks about the baby that includes half of his shadow self. In such as moment, Reza

is “preoccupied instead with thoughts of the budding half of himself that grows inside her,

unborn and already ill at ease” (191). His children will be ill because they will go through the

same fears and sorrows of exile that he has experienced as a Kurd in Iran.

*The Age of Orphans* vividly depicts the psychological and social effects of parental conflict into their children. When the father and mother have conflicting views regarding the education of their children, this confuses the mind of their children. It is the same old dilemma whether to belong to the tradition or modernity. Reza wants his children to be whole Kurds, not half Kurds like him suffering from holding the sins and secrets. On the contrary, Meena disregards the Kurds because they are “dirty” creatures; she avoids any contact with them. Her behaviors can turn the children to disregard their father.

Their children are also torn in the clash between tradition and modernity. Meena wants her children to dress like the French and the English. The child narrates that, “our maman said, Now this is how the little boys and girls in England dress, you should be proud, they are very smart” (231). Her attitudes show her hatred towards the Kurds. Such conflicting views in the family lead to domestic violence. The violence within the family says more about the conflict between the traditional discourse and the modern one. How do the shadow self and the soldier self clash inside and outside of Reza? The domestic violence is a form of cultural hostility that destroys the sense of family as a cultural unit. The child says during the parade’s mornings, our baba used to shout to maman to wash the kids. Our maman yelled back: “I can’t wash the Kurd out of them! They’ll never be clean!” (233). The child explains that the father was not silent in those occasions, and someone got beaten in the fight. This crisis within the family destroys the children’s sense of belonging. It is where they experience ambivalent feelings regarding their parents.

This ambivalence is explained from the point of view of Reza’s children. It is where a child of Reza says that, “I realized that was a big difference between being a whole Kurd and a half Kurd like us; the whole Kurds didn’t know about anyone or anything outside of the mountains” (235). The binary oppositions turn the Kurds in Iran to hold partly the Kurdish discourse and partly the Persian. One half is realized as the “self” while the other is regarded as the “other” being.

When Reza thinks about his children, he predicts the same destiny as his own. Their mother will not allow them to belong to the Kurdish land, “And so they are damned to remain as homeless as he” (251). Being homeless in his motherland, Reza tastes the bitterness of his detachment. The failure displays itself in their children when they eat the fruits of that hatred and

enmity. Their marriage fails where “they are a marriage separated by six children, nation and king, and he watches her grow against the land while he dissolves into it...” (248). Allegorically, it is the marriage between the shadow self and the soldier self in one mind. Reza gives his children what his soldier self has offered him, but he cannot give them “the freedom to travel the borderless land or the stable sensation of home” (250). The “stable sensation of home” is the attachment with the motherland that provides love and belonging. The soldier self has locked Reza in chains where he cannot express his Kurdish self to his children.

Reza finally thinks about resisting the pressures of the soldier self. He poisons his wife, Meena. Symbolically, the image of the poison represents his decolonization from the soldier self and rejection of the modern self as the dominant cultural identity. It ends the veil of the imposed borders upon his tradition. He is happy “not to belong to a people locked in by the invisible boundaries of nation or state or law” (262). Reza refuses the soldier self as it is an enforced way of being. He cannot avoid the contact and attachment with either tradition or modernity; therefore, his new cultural perception in the midst of tradition and modernity is not only a mixed one, but always mixed with prejudice, hostility, violence and tragedy.

## CONCLUSION

Laleh Khadivi's narrative shows its readers the dehumanizing effects of being torn between two different discourses. Khadivi represents the othering of the native Kurds and their homelessness in the homeland. In such a crisis, the characters go through an inner clash between their own cultural discourse, and the discourse of the colonizers. *The Age of Orphans* demonstrates that the conflict between tradition and modernity is the practice of power for domination as the dominating discourse practices their knowledge on the other. The control and subjugation of the "other" by the self is present in the mind of the Kurdish protagonist.

The clash in the psychology of Reza, between the shadow self and the soldier self, suggests that the intra-psychic dilemma is an insoluble crisis. It is a terrible and terrifying psychological and cultural experience where the Kurdish character realizes his presence as an outcast and stranger in his own motherland. This is where the attachment of the Kurdish self with the homeland disappears, and he experiences ruptures within. The experience in the aftermath of such a conflict reveals that the created destiny of the Kurds are shrouded in a hidden veil of mystery when the invisible forces of internal colonialism, and the visible forms of postcolonialism transform them into unknown locations. The clash between one way of knowing and being and the other has formed mixed paradigms for the Kurdish in modern Iran. Khadivi's novel works to construct a literary tradition for the Kurdish character where it contemplates this painful journey of Reza Khourdi.

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