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Falih Mahdi Jabur Al-Zamili

**IN THE MIRROR OF COMPARATIVE
LITERATURE:
TONI MORRISON AND INAAM KACHACHI**



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The book of Falih Mahdi Jabur Al-Zamili is a contribution to the study of comparative literature in Arab countries and addresses an Arab and non-Arab readership, not just specialists but also students, and anyone interested in a possible comparison between two seemingly different writers. This explains the inclusion of more general background information and sometimes more detailed footnotes as well as the need to add names and notions in Arabic as well as full quotes in Arabic from Inaam Kachachi's novel originally written in Arabic and then translated into English. The method used by the author is contextual and comparative with references to the principles of feminist theory which allow him to place the two writers in the socio-political context of each individual and to identify those particular elements that distinguish feminist thinking in the cultural space of multicultural society American and Arab world.

Emil Sîrbulescu
University of Craiova, Romania

The present volume written by Falih Mahdi Jabur Al-Zamili is dedicated to the relationship established in literature between memory and imagination, with the distinct distinction between passive memory and active recollection. Here is a good opportunity to associate in a comparative analysis two novels very similar by the trauma experienced and remembered by the main heroines: it is, on the one hand, „Beloved” – the African-American novel written by Toni Morrison in 1987, and awarded the Pulitzer Prize – and, on the other hand, the novel „The American Granddaughter” (2008) by the Iraqi writer Inaam Kachachi. With the use of research in the field of comparatism, postcolonial and feminist criticism, the author does not fail to refer to the contributions made by Arab researchers to the field of Arab comparative literature. It is a particularly important issue for our Western world, more than often so far, unfortunately, from what is happening in Arab culture and criticism.

Pia Brînzeu
The West University of Timișoara, Romania

Falih Mahdi Jabur Al-Zamili builds a complex discourse addressing literature as a written manifestation of social thoughts and traditions and, moreover, focuses on two writers coming from different cultural areas. The emphasis falls on the extent to

which links between literary works created by two writers from different geographical areas and, implicitly, from completely different cultural environments can be established (the precarious condition of women in a society dominated by racial and ethnic stereotypes, as impressed by Toni Morrison, and the impact of the uprooting, relocation and possible return of the exiled woman into the native community to Inaam Kachachi). The author aims to find out if the theoretical principles of feminism can provide the key to a correct understanding of the two writers, in whose works we can identify elements that highlight different degrees in which their female characters are confronted with their „alterity”: with Toni Morrison, it is largely about an alterity of the African-American population in a predominantly white America, and with Inaam Kachachi it is about the alterity of exile and, subsequently, the return to the home community as a naturalized person.

Valentina Stîngă
University of Pitești, Romania

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

سورة الرحمان

الرَّحْمٰنُ

عَلَّمَ الْقُرْءَانَ

خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ

عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ

*In the name of Allah, Most Gracious,
Most Merciful*

The Most Merciful

Taught the Qur'an

Created man

[And] taught him eloquence.

(Surat Al-Rahman 1-4)

Dedication

To the soul my father

**To My Family with
Love, Gratitude and Respect**

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

I come from the Republic of Iraq (جُمْهُورِيَّةُ الْعِرَاقِ), the Mesopotamia of old, a country with a rich, millennial history, the cradle of ancient civilizations of mankind – Akkad, Sumer, Babylonia and Assyria. The first alphabet was invented in Sumer, and the first influential Law (legislation) was given by Hammurabi and it is known as the Code of Hammurabi. Unfortunately, my country ravaged by wars during the last decades of the twentieth century, culminating with the fall of Saddam Hussein and the multinational invasion and the subsequent American occupation of 2003. The social and political unrest that followed triggered a phenomenon of massive emigration to Jordan, Syria, the Gulf countries, and Western Europe, which added to the previous waves of migration from the Arab countries following World War II. All these emigrants took with them the memories of the past. To cite Inaam Kachachi, "...it's not me that still lives in Iraq. Iraq still lives in me. The Iraq that lives in me is the real and civilized Iraq. The Iraq that we see on TV today is not the one I was raised in and lived in. It's like Noah's Ark. The millions who left, not only for political reasons but in order to have freedom, took a little bit of Iraq with them and preserved it."

This volume is based on my PhD dissertation, successfully defended at the University of Craiova (Romania) as *The Feminist Novelistic Movement in Multicultural Societies: A Comparative Study of the Cultural Content and Intellectual Vision in Tony Morrison's and Inaam Kachachi's Novels*. It is a contribution to the study of comparative literature in the Arab countries and addresses an Arab and non-Arab readership, not only the specialists but also students of literature, and all those interested in the possible comparison between two apparently different writers. It explains the inclusion of more general background information and sometimes more detailed endnotes, and the necessity of adding the original Arabic of some names and notions, as well as full quotations in Arabic from Inaam Kachachi's novel, originally written in Arabic.

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The writing of this thesis was very challenging and exciting at the same time. First and foremost I initially and always thank Allah, My Lord, for his guidance and blessings all through my life. Then I would like to thank some of those who have had their impact on my life, and those who have helped me or participated in any way to let my work see the light.

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I should not forget the hospitality, full cooperation and support of Dr. Domna Pastourmatzi, and all the professors and staff of the Department of American Literature and Culture, School of English of Aristotle University in Thessaloniki (Greece), who offered me unlimited access to the library, to the classes and all the other activities organized during my stay there. Thank you all!

During these three years, I spent long hours, reading and writing at the Library of the University of Craiova, and at the American Corner of the Biblioteca Județeană “Alexandru și Aristia Aman” in Craiova. Most sincere thanks to the staff of both institutions for their patience and continuous guidance and cooperation.

A very special thank you to my good friends: Hussein Nasser, Muhammad Nasser, Saif Al-Ssafi, Haider Mohammed, Qassim Hassan, Mejbil Aziz and Muhammed Taher who generously helped, gave advice, read and commented on various parts of the dissertation. I feel very fortunate to have had such a wonderful cohort of colleagues and friends at the University of Craiova.

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Spiritually, my family has been my mainstay all along these years. They have always been there with confidence and support. Special thanks go to my dear mother for her unbelievable support and continual understanding. Also, thanks to my wife, sons and daughters, who have always been by my side. Finally I would like to thank my dear cousin, Dr. Jalal Al-Zamily, who has been like a brother to me all my life.

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*Mistress of the divine, resplendent light,
Woman of radiance, righteous and beloved
Of An and Urac – Heaven’s Mistress! – breasts
Bejeweled; cherishing the headdress of your priestess –
She who grasps the seven sacred powers!
Goddess, protector of the powers, and giver –
Behold your necklaced hand and fingers. Yours,
The gathering of the powers and yours to clasp
Against your breast. In foreign lands your breath
Is like the dragon’s venom. When like Ickur
The earth receives your roar, neither leaf nor wood
Withstand you. You are as a mighty flood
To foreign lands, the might of earth and heaven, you
Are their Inana.*

~ Enheduanna, (2285–2250 B.C.), Mesopotamia ~

(The Shakespeare of Sumerian literature)

INTRODUCTION

*I think the job of the
comparatist is to invent new
relations among literary works
(and relations with things that
have not been previously
classed among literary works)*

Haun Saussy

The relationship between remembrance and literary imagination permeates Toni Morrison's writing. The experience of slavery, through spatial mutation and temporal discontinuity, led to an absence in the Black-American. This absence results not only in a crisis of memory, but also in a deculturation. Toni Morrison exposes the mechanisms of this cultural alienation by recourse to memory. In his book *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004), Paul Ricoeur distinguishes between the memory that passively appears to the mind on the one hand and the memory as the object of a quest usually called a reminder on the other hand:

...The history of the notions and the words is instructive in this regard: the Greeks had two words *mnēmē* and *anamnēsis* to designate, on the one hand, memory as appearing, ultimately passively, to the point of characterizing as an affection—*pathos*—the popping into mind of a memory; and, on the other, the memory as an object of a search ordinarily named recall, recollection. (Ricoeur 2004: 4)

Toni Morrison uses these two levels of remembrance in the composition of her works. Anxious to compensate for the silence of the official History on the Black experience in the United States, the African-American writer uses authentic facts, which she presents in a precise way by the imagination, and in doing so, gives meaning to another type of reality. Drawing from her