

Negotiating the Image of Yemeni Women in Wajdi al-Ahdal's *A Land without Jasmine* (2012)

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Abstract

Arab women in general and Yemeni women in particular have been frequently presented with a negative and tarnished image, whether in media or literature. Arguably, women are perceived to be deterred by various factors such as high illiteracy rate in their midst. They are usually reported to be suffering from low socioeconomic standing in the society. Besides, women are usually assumed and/or supposed to be living under the constant grip of social customs and traditions. Therefore, women are mostly depicted in the writings of many with a negative image. They are portrayed with stereotypical images as being fragile, passively compliant, and submissive. Besides, women have usually been depicted as victims of and/or sex objects for men. The current research paper is thus intended to negotiate and explore the nature of women's image(s) presented in Wajdi al-Ahdal's *A Land without Jasmine*. In addition to mapping out the image of women presented in the novel, the present research is going to examine the particular impact of such perpetuated stereotyping images in bettering or worsening the status of women.

Key Words: Women, Yemeni Women, Image, Stereotypes, Perpetuate, Negative

ملخص

غالبا ما تم تقديم المرأة العربية عموما واليمنية على وجه الخصوص بصورة سلبية ومشوهة سواء في الاعلام او الكتابات الادبية، ويمكن القول جدلا ان وضع المرأة محاط بالعديد من المعوقات مثل ارتفاع نسبة الامية في اوساطهن، بالإضافة الى المعاناة الاجتماعية والاقتصادية، كما ان انه ينظر الى ان المرأة تعيش تحت القبضة القوية والدائمة للعادات والتقاليد. ولهذا وغيره من الاسباب فان الحديث عن وتصوير المرأة في الكثير من الكتابات يكون سلبيا، حيث يتم تصوير النساء بأشكال نمطية سلبية كالضعف والخنوع والانقياد، كما انه يتم تصوير النساء كضحايا للرجال وادوات للجنس. واخذا بعين الاعتبار كل ما ذكر انفا فان هذه الورقة البحثية تنوي التحقيق والبحث في الصور التي تم تقديمها عن المرأة في رواية وجدي الاهدل (ارض بلا سماء)، كما ستقوم هذه الدراسة البحثية بالإضافة الى دراسة صورة المرأة بمناقشة وتحقيق الاثر الذي تتركه ادامة مثل هذه الصور النمطية السلبية عن المرأة وعن فيما اذا كانت ستسهم سلبا ام ايجابا في احداث تغيير في حياة المرأة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المرأة، المرأة اليمنية، الصورة، الصور النمطية، ديمومة، سلبية

Introduction

It could be assumed that stereotyping women, Arab and Yemeni, has usually been a frequent practice by writers, literary and otherwise. Such writings, arguably though, demonstrate a sort of ignorance, lack of understanding, or at best cases a misconception of women's status and context of living. They as well tend to turn a blind eye to, or locate in the margins the progress women have made and the roles they have recently been playing in different walks of life such as academia, politics, and within society itself. The image of women such writings perpetuate would usually observably be that of temptation, sex, and repression.

Besides, most literary writings would typically refer to women as baggy packages in body and soul that are totally covered in black shrouds. While such image would possibly—in a very limited perspective though—be detected as a reality, it in fact communicates a distorted and an immobile reality that follows the principle of a generalizing oversimplification. It leaves no room for exceptions, does not consider local peculiarities, nor does it deliberate upon the inescapability of time-changing factors and inevitabilities of progress and transformation.

It, therefore, corresponds to a perpetually stereotypical, yet inadequate, image of women. In view of that, those writings help maintain an image of women as voiceless, having no identity, and are created for the sole purpose of pleasing men.

In addition, Arab women in general and Yemeni women in particular have been frequently presented with a negative and tarnished image, whether in media or literature. Arguably, women are perceived to be deterred by various factors such as

high illiteracy rate in their midst. They are usually reported to be suffering from low socioeconomic standing in the society. Besides, women are usually assumed and/or supposed to be living under the constant grip of social customs and traditions. Therefore, women are mostly depicted in the writings of many with a negative image. They are portrayed with stereotypical images as being fragile, passively compliant, and submissive. Besides, women have usually been depicted as victims of and/or sex objects for men.

In a different respect, there have been great commendable efforts in the last five to six decades implemented in the Arab world, including the Yemeni region, for the purpose of bettering and improving the condition of women and empowering them at the social, educational, and even political level. Women have recently occupied a considerable space in the public life and have produced positive models of female teachers, doctors, professionals, politicians, and the like.

Nonetheless, in widely diverse portrayals of Arab women in general, they are still never depicted "in the work place, functioning as doctors, computer specialists, school teachers, print and broadcast journalists, or as successful well-rounded electric or domestic engineers," (Shaheen 14). Women's efforts are seemingly ignored in terms of the huge strides made in the field of public life, education, and their participation and/or representation in political circles. With relation to the right to vote, women in certain Arab regions preceded even European women in their political participation. In Yemen, for example, Women had the right to vote since the establishment of the Republic of Yemen in 1990:

Women using their right of voting and participating in political life as Syria and Egypt gave women the right to vote as early as Europe did—and much earlier than Switzerland. Today, women make up nearly one-third of the Egyptian parliament. You would never guess from what is been written in the books or portrayed in films that Arab women are as diverse and talented as any others. (Shaheen 14)

In its intense concern over sexuality and eroticism, *A Land without Jasmine* would be supposed to be following in the footsteps of, in Edward Said's words, a Flaubertian false quest for the sexually active oriental woman. Though seemingly semi-detective in mood and technique, the novel is largely centered on details and descriptions of sexual desires, thoughts, and harassments, thus generally associating women "with sex ..., and eroticism", a rhetoric that is likened to those of the orientalist that eventually lead to the establishment of "such oriental stereotypes," (Behdad 68).

The current paper is thus intended to negotiate the image of Yemeni women in Wajdi al-Ahdal's *A Land without Jasmine*. It is going to explore the image of Yemeni women presented in this novel, and examine how true such images of women are to the reality and current status of women, and whether or not such writings reveal the whole picture, or follow to a great extent a traditional stereotypical presentation that might still be valid, partially though. In addition, the current research paper plans to discuss the different possibilities and diverse messages that such writings perpetuate and convey about women. The paper will investigate whether such writings, consciously or unconsciously, help perpetuate such a negative image and

low status of women, whether or not they ignore or turn a blind eye to the positive strides made in this concern, and whether or not they contribute to changing the perception of this negative image, and to the betterment of women's status in society, or the other way round.

A Land without Jasmine and the Image of Yemeni Women

Women in the novel are lent three paradoxically different images, yet all communicate a negative perception of them. According to Jasmine, the main character and heroine of the novel, she has long held the idea that having sex or even thinking about it violates the state of purity and true virtue. As a child, she loathes sex and cannot entertain the idea that any virtuous woman could have sex. In order to maintain her chastity, she attempts to end her life with a kitchen knife: "When I was seven I thought of killing myself by plunging the kitchen knife into my belly. Then I could die an innocent child without sin and enter paradise immediately," (al-Ahdal 6). Jasmine states that she has been immensely discomfited by the idea that grown-ups should always have sex. Such atmosphere of sexual fever in the grownups' world, "used to keep [her] awake at night," (6). Jasmine thus finds no escape from this despicably "inevitable sexual destiny", but through death; therefore, she "went into the kitchen and stuck the knife into [her] belly as [she] wept hot, bitter tear," (6).

As a child, Jasmine continues to hold a pejorative perception of sex. She used to think that having sex is a disgustingly 'vile' activity even between legally married spouses, and thus "it should be forbidden," (6). On that basis, Jasmine used to harbor abhorring feelings and hostile attitudes towards her parents. She "knew that

their relationship wasn't pure and that they did things in secret that weren't innocent," (6). According to Jasmine, this disapproving of sex in all its forms has shaped her background of the matter as a child because she "adopted moral views that were quite prim and didn't tolerate human desires," (6). It is, however, not directly stated in the novel who has influenced Jasmine to adopt such position that "the ideal world would lack any and all forms of sexual attraction," (6-7). Nonetheless, Jasmine as a child begins to change, and killing herself to avoid the assumingly undesirable fate of growing up and thus having sex "has receded," (6). Besides, by the time she grows up, Jasmine comes to better understand life and learn "to tolerate conjugal sex", realizing that "it's necessary so that progeny will continue to be produced," (7).

In view of that, it could assumingly be accepted, at least in theory, that this early stage in a child's life might as well entail the entertaining of some sexual drives and fantasies, which are mostly unconscious, undirected, and unplanned according to Freud in his concepts of Oedipal complex for a boy child and Electra complex for a girl child. However, it would greatly encroach upon the laws of nature, habit, and reason to assume that a seven-year-old girl is so obsessively haunted by sex thoughts and abominates it to the degree that she thinks of killing herself as the only way out of this miserably predetermined sexual fate. Children at this age would most assuredly entertain a wide range of diverse interests, hobbies, and concerns that are way too distant and too alienated from sex and sexual fixations. This assumption still does not rule out the feasibility of them entertaining certain sporadic and in nature very peripheral sexual

fascinations; yet, it does not require an expert or a certified specialist to determine that the life of a seven-year-old child would be more preoccupied by other childish stuff rather than sex.

Hence, though Freud recognizes childhood and even infancy stages to be of 'intense sexual experience'; nonetheless, he looks at such sexual experience as a feature of development, growth, recognition, and discovery, not of desire and satisfaction. He, therefore, divides such a stage into three phases: "the first phase is called the oral phase, because it is characterized by sucking, ..., the second is the anal stage", which has primarily to do with 'recognition', and "the phallic stage", which is a stage germane to discovery, in which "the child discovers the pleasure of genital stimulation, connected, of course, to reproduction," (Dobie 58). He further argues that such stages need to be met and negotiated successfully at an early age of a child; otherwise, the child when becoming a grownup will suffer because "the mature person may become fixated on a behavior that serves to fulfil what was not satisfied at an early age," (ibid 58). A statement that would eventually hover a questioning over the source of sexual fixation in the novel: where does it come from and originate?

In the case of adults, Freud argues in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* that sexual desires are mainly linked to the instinct of living asserting that the opposition of these two primitive instincts is what makes us experience the phenomenon of life as we understand it. Debating over "the duality of life instinct and the death drive", Freud pairs "Eros with Thanatos: the desire to live, embodied by the sexual instinct, with libidinal sublimation, i.e., death," (Freud 69).

A different image, negative still, the novel perpetuates about

women is that it compares young women to famous and well-known people, but with relation to sex as well: "in Yemen all young women are considered celebrities!", for the reason that any young girl in the street can notice that all men are "staring at her," (al-Ahdal 2). Just like celebrities, once a young girl goes out to the street she seizes public attention. However, this attention is wholly sensual and is intended to lead to a sole end; to having sex. That is, a young girl outside the house could easily observe that "everybody is staring at her," (2).

According to the novel, every young woman is subjected to sexual harassment once in public as she is the target of each and every man's sensual attention and the ultimate object of their sex satisfaction: "On the street most men look at me lecherously and all of them want to screw me. If they weren't also watching each other id be raped on the pavement at least twenty times a day," (3). Surprisingly though, there are girls who welcome such sexual attitudes with pleasure. Jasmine states that "perhaps some girls feel good when men look lustfully at them," (2). As for Jasmine still, even the mere act of staring at her by men is perceived as "a noxious type of male violence, ..., exerts psychological pressure, tightens [her] chest and makes it hard [for her] to breathe," (2,3).

Moreover, sensually gazing at a young girl while she is out does not suffice men's desires anymore. Hungry for more as they always are, they crave for more than that and thus go beyond this non-physical, non-violent kind of sexual harassment to a next level that involves a more disturbing attitude like shouting and even a physical contact like touching, for instance. Jasmine relates a relevant incident while she was going by a construction site of a building, workers, or rather one of

them, not only stare at her with sexual hankering, but also start throwing insinuating comments at her:

It happened as I walked past a construction site where laborers were carrying bags of cement on their backs into a new building. A worker with rippling muscles caught sight of me, heaved the bag of cement off his back and began to yell right in my face: 'Have mercy on me, Lord of the White Bag ... have mercy! I froze in alarm and nearly wet my knickers I was so terrified by his hungry look! (al-Ahdal 4)

Therefore, it is highly advisable according to Jasmine and the novel's narrative that a young woman refrains from carrying a white handbag should she intend to go out for whatever reason so that she may escape or at least abate men's sexual advances and comments because "this color attracts men's' attention in a weird way," (4).

However, men, the novel carries on, seem to persist on harassing women while being out in the public domain, with or without white handbags. With generalizing confidence, men are presented, regardless of their age and class and with no distinction to inclination and willingness, to be more earnestly intent on soliciting sex than on pursuing any other life task like making a living, for example. Therefore, they spare no trick up their sleeves to declare their intentions and pursue their goals.

One way to propagate their intents would be, for instance, publically urinating. Jasmine asserts: "In our city it's not considered wrong to pee in the street. In fact, it's an everyday event! (5). In contrast, Jasmine goes even further to argue that men exercise this activity with a sense of pride perceiving and thus exhibiting it as an act of "displaying their masculine virility," (5). She herself has

reportedly been coming across "a lot of men", who "urinate standing up," (5). Besides, she also observes that "the vicious ones deliberately display their hosepipes when a pretty young girl passes nearby, pretending they are peeing" (5). Yet, she out of curiosity sometimes snatches a stealthy peek at their fountains, but is disgustingly repulsed by their bitterly smelly scent that runs a cold chill down her 'entire body'.

Accordingly, a woman would most probably fall a victim to men's sexual harassment while participating in public life regardless of how she looks, what she is wearing, or how precautious she might be. A woman in public life would be "harassed many times a day," (5). That is to say, men in their indiscriminate collectivity would always make sure to persist on harassing women while outdoors, or even possibly indoors, too. Not only passersby, workers, grocery store owners, but also neighbors, bus-drivers, classmates, and college doctors, all take part in their seemingly favorite activity of harassing women.

The grocery store owner, for example—Hajj Sultan—is an old and religiously committed man; yet, he persistently harasses Jasmine while she opens her bedroom windows. According to the novel, he is no different from the rest of men. Neither his age nor his religiosity has curbed his craving for women or cultivated his attitude towards them, nor has his desire to stalk them been curtailed:

This man, even though he's made the pilgrimage to Mecca, when he sees me peek out of the window, stands there smiling idiotically and makes an obscene gesture. He puts his large store key in his ear, moving it in and out while his eyes flash fiendishly. Then I can't resist running to the bathroom to fetch a slipper to brandish him. (al-Ahdal 1)

To affirm the supposition that Hajj Sultan embraces such an attitude with all intents and purposes, he is presented as not getting "angry and indignant", when Jasmine waves her slipper to his face. In the contrary, he "winks at [her]", and she could as well "see him nod his head cheerfully as confident he'll get [her] some day!" (2).

Likewise, her neighbor's teenage son, Ali, keeps following her when she goes to college stalking her all the way to his school on a daily basis. Ali lives in a flat that is opposite to Jasmine's. Every day after he gets ready for school, he stands behind his flat's door, looking through its "peephole, ..., in wait for [Jasmine]" to leave for college, (2). When Ali sees Jasmine leaves her house, he begins his stalking pursuit following her 'like her shadow'. For a ten-minute-walk—which is the distance to Jasmine's college—Ali "doesn't say a word and doesn't even hum a tune," but he never takes off his sight of Jasmine, (2). He is so steadfast and absorbed in his pursuit that Jasmine could "sense that his ardent glances are devouring [her] buttocks," (2).

Living in a vacant flat on his own, doctor Aklan is similarly reported to be taking advantage of his position as a university professor and sexually exploiting his students. He is said to purposely fail some of his students, then "inveigles his victims, both male and female students, into coming to his flat, and then exploits them sexually," (al-Ahdal 23). When Jasmine is reportedly missing, many students in college and even the cafeteria owner Nasir al-Otomi, all pinpoint to doctor Aklan accusing him of kidnapping her. According to the conclusion of the novel nevertheless, doctor Aklan neither pleads guilty nor gets vindicated of Jasmine's case.

In that order, just like Jasmine, a young woman going out would assumingly be subjected to frequent and pestering harassing. Despite being carefully vigilant at establishing her own "personal space," keeping a distance from men and not coming closer to them, Jasmine avers that men "never cease touching [her] body," and that "if it weren't for [her] disgust over the experiences [she's had] [she'd] recount them in detail," (6). The bus driver, for instance, always makes sure while Jasmine hands him his fare to "deliberately push his talons between [her] fingers and only take[s] the fare after having enjoyed touching [her]," (5). As inevitable as it seems, Jasmine "used to ignore these fleeting touches, thinking them a kind of tax exacted from every girl who ventures out on our repressed streets," (5).

A third image the novel perpetuates of women is that of adult women who are not only the target of men's sexual advances, but also who welcome those advances with pleasure. Through Jasmine's neighbor, Umm Ali, the novel celebrates yet another negative stereotyping image of adult women. It, on one hand, assumes that adult women are the target of a more irritating type of sexual harassment; the type that involves physical contact. On the other hand, this representation of women assumes that adult women are pleased to receive such sexual advances and lustful physical touching by men:

One incident that has stuck in my memory and that still elicits my intense disgust is the time I went to the market with our neighbor Umm Ali. She was leaning over to inspect some night shirts that an itinerant vendor had spread out on the sidewalk when a man, whose moustache covered half his face, passed behind her with his thumb raised. I watched what happened next with astonishment. He

continued on his way, not blinking, his features immobile, while she straightened up with the coquetry of a young filly and turned toward him laughing. (al-Ahdal 6)

In addition, the novel throughout its main character does not establish the slightest clarification or distinction that the attitude of Umm Ali is a rarity. In the contrary, the novel insinuatingly suggests that Umm Ali's attitude is what every adult woman assumingly does. Jasmine further confirms such generally stereotyping assumption that the life of all adult men and women alike is wholly centered around sex and no other concern: "the world of grownups used to keep me awake at night, especially the feverish sexual atmosphere in which they lived," (6). Therefore, the novel shows Jasmine reflecting over the gloominess of such prospect, asking herself: "Will I share her feelings when I'm her age? Will I laugh at a man who flirts with me in this crude way? (6).

Furthermore, *A Land without Jasmine* is arguably detected to be greatly corresponding in its presentation of women with the negative image usually promoted by Arab media of Arab women in general. Jasmine as a young girl and her neighbor Umm Ali are shown to attract men's attention whenever they are out. There is an involvement of the body in Umm Ali's case, which corresponds to yet another traditionally stereotyping image of women: "The usage of women's bodies as sexual commodities or a vehicle of sexual arousal was found to be the main negative image used in the Arab media, followed by an image of women who are in some way immoral," (Allam 3).

In addition, the novel depicts Umm Ali as an immoral woman who reacts to a man's sexual harassment

with a consenting sexual playfulness. A portrayal that, by extension, would apply to all adult women. The progression of such assumption is built upon the novel's adoption of such social issues, which is deemed to be demonstrating "a social act, implicating the whole community," (Mahmood 4). Therefore, the writing about or "discussions of love and sexuality in modern Arabic literature are intricately connected with ideas about society and the individual's place in it," (ibid 4).

Moreover, Jasmine cannot escape males' harassment even inside her own house and in the midst of her family members. Her relationship to her eldest brother is, too, directed by sex impulses, and sex fears. That is, her eldest brother does not trust her as a young girl. He assumes that his sister must have a secret affair with some particular man. Therefore, he persists in his "covert attempts to read [her] diary" suspecting that "love might have found its way into [her] heart," (7). While it would seem normal that an elder brother is protective and worried about his younger sister's honor and chastity, an elder brother should also be caring, supportive, and loving towards his sister as well. Yet, the novel does not touch upon any such quality of Jasmine's brother. Perhaps, the novel has intentionally excluded that possibility and directed all its focus to Jasmine's brother's determination to keep "searching [her] papers for [her] hypothetical boyfriend" ever since she has enrolled in college, (7).

Similarly, Jasmine's relationship with her father has turned into enmity since she "became a young woman and [her] breasts developed," (7). Jasmine's father "believes that women's wiles are formidable," (7). According to the novel, the father-daughter relationship turns into

antagonism on the ground of sex. Jasmine's father, too, shows no passion, neither love, nor any kind of friendly attitude towards his daughter. He is solely concerned with the state of Jasmine's maturity as a female because he believes that "the mature female searches for a mate!" (7). On the light of that assumption presented in the novel, Jasmine's father even turns 'prejudiced' against and 'apprehensive' of his daughter. His fears and worries grow over Jasmine's sexual maturity fearing that she might "sully his honor, disgrace him and besmirch his reputation," (7). Jasmine has not done anything that would rouse his doubts and distrust; nevertheless, he keeps a close watch over her with the assumption that she could be behaving badly behind his back:

Whenever he enters or leaves our building he always stares at my window. He feels qualms about my conduct and suspects me of standing behind the windowpane to flirt with young men. I have explained to him repeatedly that, during the day, passersby really can't see through the glass, but he doesn't believe me at all. (al-Ahdal 7)

As a consequence, Jasmine's father "has become [her] adversary and is openly hostile to [her] because [she hasn't] married and still live[s] in his home," (7). His misgivings of and constant surveillance over his daughter not only convey the lack of trust, contact and understanding between a father and his daughter, but also indicate his failure to raise her rightly. An assumption the novel advances that would challengingly question the moral foundations of all Yemeni families. In Jasmine's words, her father "considers [her] a landmine that will explode beneath his feet at any moment if he neglects to supervise [her]," (7).

In a similar respect, even Jasmine's mother "who is the one person in the world closest to [her] heart" broods doubts over Jasmine's moral attitudes. Her mother receives her with a hug when she comes back from college so that "she can smell [her] clothing and make sure [she doesn't] bear the scent of any unknown billy-goat," (8). As soon as Jasmine sets foot in the house, her mother showers her with a barrage of interrogating questions and enquiries about her "relationships with male professors and classmates in the faculty," (8). Thus, Jasmine, and by extension all young girls, leads a life of persecution and torment. Once a young girl is out, she is victimized by the constant predating and lustfully sex-hungry men. While in the, which is supposed to be a young girl's safe heaven, Jasmine is also subjected to relentless supervision, suspicion, and questioning by her family members. Her eldest brother, her father, and her mother—let alone male strangers—neither think nor care about Jasmine's—thus about any young girl's—dreams and ambitions in life. Everybody in such a society diminishingly reduces a young girl into a sex doll, so to speak, that is craved and perpetually harassed by men outside the house, and is persistently supervised and shadowed with distrust and suspicions inside the house:

My life is a nonstop suffering on account of the stares directed at me all the time, both inside our house and out. I'm under supervision night and day. No one thinks about me, about my feelings, dreams and ambitions, or concedes that I have a right to live at ease without anyone troubling me with his inquisitive gaze and repressed desires, and a right to a happy life that a father should poison with his suspicions or fantasies or a mother by poking her nose into my private affairs.

I feel that I'm under siege, that my society assails me from every direction and that I must have committed some unknown crime against them thousands of years ago, a crime no one bothered to record, even though it still reverberates in their unconscious. When a girl matures she certainly counts as society's number one enemy! (al-Ahdal 8)

According to such rhetoric, everything that links a woman to and controls her relationship to and contact with men is entirely sexually-oriented. There is no margin for any other possible prospects. Men in their totality are nothing more than sex maniacs, and women in their entirety are nothing more than sex objects. A young girl thus lives under and in the midst of a constant haunting of sex and its collaterals. Even a young woman's relationship to her family is also revolving around sex, as they always throw doubts and suspicions on her on account of her sexual desires, guiles, and possible adventures with males.

Whether a child, a young girl, or an adult woman; a woman would always be both the target of men's harassment and sexual advances outside the house, and the object of men's distrust, suspicions, and adversity inside the house. While Jasmine has reached college level in her educational life, her neighbor Umm Ali apparently has no educational background. Nevertheless, the novel neither celebrates women's access to education, nor does it indicate that education contributes, even slightly, to the upward mobility of women's status in society, or help empower them against possible hardships and exploitation, especially from men.

In that order, a woman will always be victimized incurring upon herself men's persistent harassment and persecution at both ends (in and

outside the house) as long as she leaves the house for whatever purpose. Therefore, this particular presentation of women by the novel is assumed to arguably suggest that it is in a woman's best interest to remain locked in her house. Such implicit assumption perpetuates the negative image of women as fragile and inferior, and does not encourage or motivate their participation in public life. It would thus be proposed that such an image of women corresponds largely to what Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's criticized in *The Madwoman in the Attic* 1979. In their book, they contested an anti-feminist traditional stand that supposes that the woman's one and only fitting task in life is to take care of her house, husband, and children thus becoming the angel in the house; and if not, the alternative is an opposing image of her being the madwoman in the attic.

Consequently, the novel by limiting the portrayal of women to sexual harassment and sex desires would seem to be more interested in popularity than in any other matter. This is so because there is certainly a reading public in the society who would be entertained by such writing that does not accord with neither the values of Islam nor the traditions of the society itself. What is more, through the various negative images of women in the novel, it is argued that people would be encouraged to embrace particular behaviors with, take on certain attitudes towards, and construct images of a stereotypical nature about women; a prospect that will bring about a change in their "actions and contact with women in real life situations," (*qtd. in*. Allam Int.).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the novel has been discerned to have presented negative stereotyping images of

Yemeni women. Such images have also created a considerable gap between its fictional world and the real one. The image of women the novel presents is typically negative and attends solely to the sexual aspect of a woman's life. It is thus concluded that like all stereotypes, this stereotyping image of women in the novel is off beam, abusive, and absurd. It lacks strong foundation, greatly contradicts reality, and helps perpetuate a wrongly negative image of women.

The current research paper has shown in its argument that Yemeni women have been associated with negatively stereotyping images in the novel. Their life seems to have revolved entirely around sex as the novel depicts them. At an early stage, Jasmine is presented to be so obsessively loathsome of sex that she decides to kill herself to escape such despicable destiny. At the stage of youth, Jasmine, with symbolic reference to all young women, is the target of men's harassment and sexual advances. Umm Ali, however, epitomizes the category of adult women whom the novel presents as sexually playful and pleasingly accommodating towards men's advances. With no distinction to age, educational background, or materialistic position; a woman is unendingly harassed and persecuted by men as long as she goes out the house. The novel thus contributes to perpetuating such stereotyping negative images of women and discourage their attempts at public participation.

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