

The Moon in Ancient Iraqi Culture: A Rereading of Diana Abu Jaber's *Crescent* and Inaam Kachachi's *Tashari*

Asst. Prof. Isra Hashim Taher, Ph.D.

Department of English, College of Arts, University of Baghdad

Email: israhtaher@gmail.com

Received:8/12/2018

Accepted:20/3/2019

Abstract

Man used to attribute good and evil in his life to celestial bodies. Therefore, ancient civilizations paid much attention to astronomy which had a lasting impact on mythology and religion. In ancient Iraqi mythology, sad and happy events like war and peace, death and fertility, flood and famine, were attributed to the appearance and disappearance of the moon.

Among the post-modern writers who wrote novels about Iraq are the Arab-American Diana Abu Jaber (1959 -) and the Paris-based Iraqi Inaam Kachachi (1952 -). Abu Jaber's *Crescent* (2003) tells a love story between an Iraqi professor and an Iraqi-American girl. The crescent of the title has to do with the Islamic ritual of marking the beginning of a lunar month like Ramadhan. As the novel suggests it has to do with patience and the unknown as represented by the sudden and unexpected reappearance of the protagonist (Hanif) after a long time of absence. Whereas Kachachi's *Tashari* (2013) details the scattering of Iraqis in different parts of the world after the-2003 events. It attributes this tragedy to the Pope's refusal to visit the city of Ur, the birthplace of Prophet Abraham which also used to be the residence of Nana, the moon god of the ancient Sumerians. While apparently both novels deal in part with the religious beliefs and practices related to the moon in Islam and Christianity, they, however, make no direct reference to ancient Iraqi myths. Although Abu Jaber expressed the wish of writing about "the legacy of Iraq", "the cradle of civilization" and Kachachi wrote mainly about Iraq and its "good old days", but rarely they made a direct reference to the moon and its significance in ancient Iraqi culture. Nevertheless, both novels implicitly abound in references to the moon that can be analyzed in terms of its status and the lasting impact it had on ancient Iraqi culture, which will be the focus of this paper.

Key words: moon, Iraq, Abu Jaber, *Crescent*, , Kachachi, *Tahsari*

Beginning of the Moon Cult

Ever since man's creation on earth, he thought of the universe around him and meditated on its natural phenomena. He felt weak and powerless because he could not control them and he thought they controlled his life positively and negatively. Therefore, he thought of getting closer to them to withhold the evil and invest the good they were capable of. He worshipped the sun, the moon, mercury and other planets. The moon was among the most glorified celestial bodies he worshipped. The darkness of the night scared him that is why he looked upon the moon which removed this darkness as the master of night and a god worthy to be worshiped (Ishtiya, 2017).¹ Unlike the sun which rises every day from the same place and sets in another definite place in a systemized movement, the moon differs daily, for it appears today from one place and tomorrow from another. It also has different levels. It starts as a slim crescent and then becomes full moon then disappears at the end of the month. Ancient Iraqis believed that its light, which is neither deadly nor merciless like the sun, led the trading caravans. This explains why they paid much attention to astronomy and took the moon as a god (Ishtiya, 2017) .

The Sumerians worshipped "Nanna" and considered him the moon god and one of the Sumerian trio: Inana, goddess of love and fertility which is equal to Ishtar, the goddess of the moon for the Babylonians, Utu, the god of the sun which was born for a criminal after he raped Enlil, the air god. The moon god took a distinguished shape. In their writings the Sumerians depicted him sitting on a throne with a long beard reaching his chest, carrying in his hands an axe and a scepter as a symbol of royalty. Also he wore a turban with four pairs of horns, on top of which was inscribed a crescent symbol of the moon. The moon god , Nanna, was symbolized by a crescent and in its center there was a star of twelve rays. The symbolic number of god Nanna is thirty indicating days of the month which was measured by the moon's monthly cycle. The moon became a measure for the Sumerian calendar. In the Babylonian legend of genesis , after god "Marduk"²killed the great mother, he confirmed his control of the moon and ordered it to remain a measure of time:

Appear every month non-stop and be decorated with a crown

¹ Translation mine

²Marduk was a god from ancient Mesopotamia and main deity of Babylon. During the eighteenth century B.C. E. Marduk rose to the head of the Babylonian pantheon. Also he was called "Bel" meaning "Lord" ("Marduk" , 2014). At the top of the Mesopotamian family tree stand gods Tiamat (the Dragon Mother) and Apsu who have many young gods, of which Marduk was one. By time the young gods grew so irritating especially to Apsu who thought of killing them till he himself was killed by one of them. Tiamat thought of revenge and assembled eleven monsters to battle the younger gods. But in a single combat Marduk killed the Dragon Mother and became the highest god (Mark,2016).

At the beginning of the month when you shine on all areas
You will appear with two horns, two eyes, on the sixth day.
On the seventh day half of your crown is complete.
And at every mid-month you turn full-moon at the heart of heaven (Ishtiya, 2017, p.6-7)

So the moon was glorified and worshipped as the master of time and seasons which were a result of its monthly cycle. Therefore special temples like Ur were built to observe special rituals and celebrations, especially the holy days like the first day of the lunar month, the time of the moon's birth (Ishtiya, 2017) .

Like the Sumerians, the Babylonians also worshipped the moon and called it "Sin". The royal care of king Sargon for the moon gave him a special religious dimension and more popularity. The Babylonians also believed that he was responsible for breathing life into dry seeds, sending rain, distributing dew, and starting spring water. They also believed in his capability to choose kings and control heaven and earth (Ishtiya, 2017) .

In early Babylon the moon-cult was the national religion and there were special clerks known as Chaldeans who were dedicated to the service of that god. The name means 'moon-worshippers'. In the Bible Ur is referred to as Ur of the Chaldeans. The name Sin means lord of knowledge. The Mesopotamians ascribed very great importance to him. "It was he who governed the passing of the months through his waxing and waning. ... The unvarying lunar cycle gave Sin a special connection with order and wisdom and with immortality"(*The Origin of Sin*, 2017, Yerah - The Moon God of Canaan Section, para.4).

One of the missions of "Sin" was the protection of the city of Ur. People were keen to satisfy him by offering sacrifices and presents. The Babylonians attributed evil and good, happiness and sadness in their life, to the group of celestial gods: Sin, Shamash, and Ishtar. Wars, invasions, death or illness of the prince, famine and flood, all were attributed to the moon god. They reflected in their arts the relation between the moon and fertility. Many drawings showed him united with a tree, the symbol of fertility. They related the power of virility of the bull to the power of the moon. They saw power of reproduction in the horns of the crescent which resembled those of the bull (Ishtiya, 2017). Ur-Nammu, the founder of the great Third Dynasty of Ur, was said to have a female familiar spirit (shekina) who helped him offer libations to the Tree of Life, before both Nanna and Ningal, the male and female gods of the moon, to preserve the fertility of the garden. This was a central ritual in founding the great

ziggurat of Ur. On one of the stones (Stele of Ur-Namu) there is a scene of sacrifice in which a priest slaughters a bull "so as to read the omens on its liver; and a scene of sacrifice in which it is possible that the king himself is figured as a god" (*The Origin of Sin*, 2017, Nannar and Ningal: The Moon Deities of Ur Section, para.4).

One of the symbols found that represented the relation between Ishtar, the daughter of the moon god, and the moon were the horns of cows and those of the crescent. In ancient paintings Ishtar appeared having crescent-shaped horns on her head. Her relation with the moon was one of the reasons that gave her a religious dimension in Babylon. This connection had a lasting impact on Babylonians' life. For example, they believed that the moon's different phases determined good and evil. In the first phase of the moon, when the crescent moon rises above the eastern horizon till it becomes full, Ishtar turns her face towards the bright world, bringing life, love and fertility. When the moon starts to diminish heading towards the western horizon, she turns her other side, bringing diseases, storms, and death (Ishtiya, 2017).

Moon as a deity is in its ancient form male, the male nature complementing the natural moon-related cycle of female fertility. The association of the bull's horns with fertility expresses in one image the virility of the bull and the moon-driven rebirth of human fertility in the blood flow of the menses. This association has later come to be represented by the blood of sacrifice, for it was perceived that out of blood came new life. In this parallel truth of the fertilized soil came endless cycles of animal and human sacrifice to the fertility gods so that the harvest would spring forth anew and nourish the lands. This explains why the moon is associated with the agricultural sacrificial cycle and the resurrection on the third day of the new moon (*The Origin of Sin*, 2017).

Diana Abu Jaber's *Crescent*

Abu Jaber opens her novel *Crescent* (2013) with the description of the thirty-nine year old protagonist, Sirine, who is closely associated with the moon. In a prophecy like that of clerks of the moon temple in Ur, the Lebanese Um Nadiain whose Californian café Sirine is expected to work as a chef, was sure Sirine would make a good chef following the signs she read in the coffee ground. Sirine had: "sharp knife, quick hands, white apron." Then Um Nadia recommends darkness for good food, "great food needs darkness. It requires letting the dough inhale the very early morning...and on occasions-it requires stuffing the small birds, squabs, pigeons, and other sweet, wild game under the round moon" (p.57). The

reference to the wild game under the round moon suggests sacrifices made to the moon god to ensure rebirth. This suggests a new chapter in Sirine's life after she lost her parents in a mission to Africa as part of the American Red Cross Emergency care personnel. Also when the writer describes Sirine's sleeping habits, there is also some affinity with the moon. "Sirine goes to bed so early sometimes there's still a gray scrim of light in the sky, then she rises before morning light...She still wakes too early, to grind and salt the lamb by hand, to fan the parsley over the chopping block" (p.57). A few pages later Nathan, one of her American customers and friends, who is also a photographer, tells her that she will photograph nicely because of her ravishing beauty, " There's something about you that stops the eye. It's a rare quality. People look at you and forget about things" (p.59).That is why she is described as "Sea nymph" by her Iraqi friend Han which is basically one of the meanings of her name in Arabic. Another meaning of her name in Arabic is a beautiful woman (Ahmed, 2018).However, the name of Sirine might be a short form of Sin, the moon god for the Sumerians.

A direct reference to the moon appears at the end of the novel represented by the holy month of Ramadan. The appearance of the moon marks the end of a lunar month, (Ramadan), and the beginning of a new one, (Shawwal), announcing the time of festivals and celebrations, (Eid al-Fitr) after the end of the month of fasting. But, symbolically it has made its appearance early in the narrative represented by the main character, Hanif, or Han shortly. From the very beginning he is identified with Oryx, the bull, which is related to the moon and fertility. From the very beginning the writer, through the mouth of the nameless narrator, Sirine's uncle, decides that the frame narrative will be "the story of how to love"(Abu Jaber, 2013, p.17). He tells his niece about the story of his "favorite cousin: " Abdelrahman Salahadin which ends happily by the reunion of Abdelrahman Salahadin with his mother after a long journey of her own to different parts of the world in search of her lost son. The reader will ultimately discover that by and large this will be applicable to the main story, for the main purpose of the frame narrative is to be an analogy of the main story. This is indicated by the reference to the moon in the first pages. The novel opens with the description of a night in Baghdad. The moon is missing but the whiteness of rockets has enlightened the sky of Baghdad. This is the 1980s and Iraq is in war with Iran. "The pool is the round moon above Baghdad", this line is repeated twice in the same paragraph implying hope and a new life as opposed to war and death. As early as the first Chapter the writer tells us something about Hanif's life back in Iraq before

he left to the States. An American diplomat fell in love with Hanif and offered to help him getting out of Iraq by sending him to finish his education in Egypt to escape war and persecution.

In the first half of the novel an early analogy is made between Han and the Oryx when Um Nadia says that sweets bring wild animals home. Han agrees and lists a group of Arab animals like " the *jemel* [camel] and *asfoori* [sparrow] and the *ghazal*." Known as Oryx in English, " the ghazal is always wandering, looking for his lost love, and they say he has to go away before he can find his way home again" (Abu Jaber, 2013, p.44). After falling in love with Sirine, Han decides to go back to Baghdad years following his escape from the persecution of Saddam Hussein's regime, which killed both his brother and sister for the charge of treason. But surprisingly at the end he reappears years after his disappearance. This connection between the moon and the bull is emphasized earlier when Han tells Sirine that he is no longer a believer in God, " I don't believe in a specific notion of God. But I do believe in social constructions, notions of allegiance, cultural identity..."(p.182). His cultural identity as an Arab and Iraqi is explained when Han draws Sirine's attention to the "Arab crescent moon" and says "it's a good omen" (p.51), meaning it is a good sign for their love but then their love is eclipsed by some misunderstanding anticipated by a reference to an evil eye, which is one of the beliefs of ancient Iraq.³

Evil eye starts when, a friend of Han, the Syrian poet Aziz, brings the tainted meat (bad sacrifices are not accepted by the gods and evil is not lifted soon but takes a long time) from the butcher's shop to a party given by Sirine and her uncle. It is then when Sirine lost the scarf Han gave her as a souvenir offered to him by his sister before her death. Immediately after that things got worse between Han and Sirine and ended with Han's decision to go back to Iraq. Sirine lost connection with Han after he went back home, she was afraid he might got persecuted by Saddam's regime. Only when she received Han's "blue prayer's beads", did she feel relief and realize that he was safe. The crescent moon of the title appears at the end of the novel when Sirine's

³The evil eye is a look given to inflict harm, suffering, or some form of bad luck on the person that it is cast upon. Belief in evil eye has its ancient roots in Mesopotamia. That belief was mostly related to women who were expected to bear children as part of their traditional role of mothers so they used amulets against evil eye that prevented them from assuming such a role. One of the universal signs of protection, the image of the open right hand is seen in Mesopotamian artifacts in the amulets of the Qātlštar / Inana which is blue and sometimes red. Later on it came to mean for the Muslims the Hand of Fatima, the daughter of Prophet Mohammed. Known as Hamsa (الخمسة), her palm indicates the Cloth under which sat her father Prophet (Mohammed), husband (Ali) and her two sons (Hassan) and (Hussein) and she herself. Christians took the hamsa for the palm of Virgin Mary and Jews for the palm of Moses's sister, Miriam(" Hand of Fatima", 2014).

uncle concludes the frame narrative. He explains the meaning of the crescent moon which indicates happiness, i.e., the survival of Han:

Habeebti, here is something you have to understand about stories: they can point you in the right direction but they cannot take you all the way there. Stories are crescent moons; they glimmer in the night sky, but they are most exquisite in their incomplete state. Because people crave the beauty of not-knowing, the excitement of suggestion, and the sweet tragedy of mystery. (Abu Jaber, 2013, p.385)

There are other indications of a happy ending like chapter numbers and the image in the frame narrative of the phoenix, a legendary bird which is reborn from its ashes. In the frame narrative the narrator's cousin, Abdelrahman, is described as "a man who has drowned and returned a thousand times a thousand" (Abu Jaber, 2013, p.101) and is reborn like a phoenix. Though this rebirth is so much in tune with the magic realism atmosphere (Abdeen, 2014) of the frame narrative, in particular, and the whole novel, in general, however, it also foreshadows a happy ending to the main love story of Sirine and Han. The reference to the *Arabian Nights*, thousand Nights and a Night, is also clear. The number of chapters in the whole novel is thirty-two, meaning thirty plus two. Thirty is the symbol of the moon and two means the early days of the lunar month, which ultimately indicates a happy ending. Even the structure of the novel conspires to give a sense of hope. It is not circular. It is a crescent-like form, an upside down pyramid, a beginning, middle, and end. It opens with Han's appearance in Sirine's life and ends with a promise of their reunion after a two-year separation.

Inaam Kachachi

The novel gives the illusionary feeling that it is a biography of the Christian doctor Wardiya Iskandar from the time her family left Mosul to settle in Baghdad in 1931 then the time she went to Al-Diwaniya in 1955 to practise medicine and finally her migration to France around 2011. But in fact it deals with the history of Iraq for eighty years. The Pope's inability to visit Iraq stands at the center of that history:

It is a central event on which all other events of the novel are built. It is an ideological-cultural position towards life and reality. The writer intentionally connects all the events with the sacred rather than the disgraceful. The loss of homeland,

the absence of children and relatives took place because the sacred man has deserted us. (Hameed, 2017, p.10)

This indicates that the moon is metaphorically missing because the Pope, figuratively the clerk of the Ur temple in ancient Iraqi mythology, has refused to visit Ur, the temple of the moon god.

The novel opens with Dr. Wardiya in the Élysée Palace meeting the French President Sarkozy and Pope Benedict who are to meet the Iraqi Christian refugees following the sectarian events in post-2003-US invasion of Iraq. Though she greets the Pope with awe she, however, is not practically attached to such a religious figure since the previous Pope John Paul II, refused to visit Ur, the birthplace of Prophet Abraham after he came all the way from the Vatican:

Dr. Wardiya sat near a number of Iraqi Christian refugees for whom the front seats were reserved. They were told that they were Sarkozy's guests and they believed that story. A year after they came as refugees to that country, they entered the historical palace, which millions of Frenchmen have not reached. The protocol officer has received them with respect and led them to the places of honor guests near important people...and in front of the small bench where the president and Pope Benedict would sit. What was his name? Benedict? Wardiya forgets his name because she has not got used to it. She used to love the former Pope John Paul. She used to love him till the day he refused to visit Ur, the birthplace of Abraham . She has not forgiven him that he reached the doors of Iraq and then drew back and returned from where he came and left them to their ordeal. (Kachachi , 2013,p.13-14)⁴

The same idea of the forsaken city of Ur is repeated in chapter five. The writer compares the Pope's inability to visit Iraq to Jesus Christ's visit to Eboli, Italy, and his refusal to visit nearby poor villages.

As Christ stopped in Eboli and refused to go further to the poor villages in Italy. John Paul II reached the Umaid mosque in Damascus and did not continue his journey to Ur, the birthplace of our father Abraham. Only then my aunt Wardiya felt that things in the country got complicated like a stillbirth. All the revolutions, upheavals, wars she lived were not enough

⁴Translation mine.

to convince her that it was a country tucked between the jaws of the devil. It was like that in history and it would remain like that, a thorn hard to swallow. It cuts and is cut. It is enough that people wake up and hear from the radio the song: "Allah is above the malice of the aggressor... blood blood blood" till they shout: ilkat (things got worse). (Kachachi, 2013,p.35)

Christ Stopped at Eboli is a memoir by Carlo Levi (1902-1975), published in 1945, giving an account of his exile as a political prisoner during the Abyssinian war in the Italian village of Lucania which is known today as Basilicata. The title of the book comes from an expression by the people in southern Italy, meaning that "they are "not Christian", uncivilized forgotten, and deprived" (Duffin, 2014, para.1). Obviously, the narrator, Wardiya's unnamed niece who has migrated to France a few years ago, is aware of the plight of her country thinking that the curse has taken place because Iraq has been forsaken like Eboli by Christ and his representative, the Pope. "we are not Christians", the narrator, agrees with Levi. But she thinks it is hard to convince her aunt of this. She thinks how could the Pope, who was following the steps of Abraham, the father of prophets, have possibly left without passing by his birthplace, Iraq. The Pope's journey should have started from Ur because it is the head and everything else is nothing:

Who could explain it to me. How could his excellency , come here from the Vatican and could almost reach the threshold of Prophet Abraham and then turn around and get back before he could say hi?

Its name in history was the UR of Kaldeans, the holy city of moon goddess, Nana, a circular city which lies on the mouth of Euphrates where maids are buried in their clothes and jewelry with their king. A well is dug in each grave and a ziggurat is erected above it, a pyramid of rectangular castles varying in area like a wedding cake. Then the name faded and fossilized and became from the ashes of the past: an archaeological site visited by school and university students and foreign travellers.(Kachachi, 2013,p.36)

At the time of the Pope's promised visit to Ur in the 1990s, the time of economic sanctions, people in Ur, Christians and Muslims, got ready for the big event. Unfortunately, they were disappointed when he could not come because Saddam's government did not authorize his visit. Here it

seems the narrator agrees with her aunt that all sources of evil that happened to Iraq had to do with this cancelled visit of the Pope. It is one of the bad omens in the novel.

Another bad omen which appears early in the text is the reference to (al-yabadeed bird) which is quite related to the title, *Tashari*. As the novel explains, the yabadeed bird is a legendary bird which scatters people in different directions. Exactly like the meaning of the word tashari. In an interview on February 2, 2014, Kachachi explains the meaning of the title:

Tashari is a local word for a hunting rifle that scatters buckshot in several directions. Despite the strangeness of the word and its difficulty for the non-Iraqi reader, I didn't find a more suitable title for a text that talks about the dispersal of a single family across every country and continent for several generations. (qtd. In Marin, 2017, para.7)

The first interrelation between title and symbol appears in chapter two when Wardiya, while in France, thinks of her four children who are scattered all over the globe:

Now it's 7:am in Paris

9 in Baghdad

10 in Dubai

They were still last night in Manitoba

It's midnight in Haiti

As if a butcher has got its axe and decided that her body be separated in all these places.

.....

The butcher disappears and from the cartoon film appears an evil witch holding the separation stick. She lifts it up in the air and then hits a piece of land which used to be fertile...guarded by two rivers, populated by millions of palm trees, soaked in black gold, settled on the mouth of a gulf...the witch hits and dismisses the people of this land to the four directions of this world. It scatters them among maps, leaving them lost and not knowing what is happening to them. It laughs and sends the yabadid bird to fly over their heads.

Who knows the yabadid bird which comes out of the legend books? The one which hovers on the roofs of secure houses to scatter the loved ones and split them in the countries.

(Kachachi, 2013, p.17-18)

The novel depicts various revolutions, upheavals and wars in Iraq's history. There is much blood. There are many animal and even human

sacrifices. However, Iraq continued to be the country of "thousand plights and a plight" in a direct reference to *Arabian Nights*. Like goddess Ishtar, Dr. Wardiya is associated with birth and death. As a gynecologist, Wardiya presided over the birth of hundreds of babies the same way she witnessed the death of hundreds of Iraqis as a result of the many upheavals and wars Iraq has gone through in her life time. But while in France she inspired the birth of a virtual cemetery made by her grandson, Iskandar, to electronically reunite the dead Iraqis who were scattered all over the countries and continents (طشارنا ماله والي) in a family cemetery with the accompaniment of music and decoration of flowers. This further explains the meaning of the title.

[Iskandar's] screen extended and became a perfect haven to transient fears, a temporary temple for multi-direction death. It was enough for Iskandar to touch the key board so that small computer would turn into a compass indicating the place of our dear dead ones distributed there and gathered here. Whenever a new inhabitant came carrying his skeleton on his shoulder and wrapped with grief, his dead relatives and loved ones hurried from their graves and surrounded him dancing and shouting words of welcome.

The new comer from Colon sleeps near his wife whose bones were brought from EinKawa.⁵ Their sons distributed between Erbil, Oakland, and Jaramana⁶ to the cemetery site wherever they are and the whenever they want to pray for their souls. (Kachachi, 2013,p.238-9)

The number of chapters in the whole novel is forty, which is the total of thirty plus one (30+10). Thirty is the symbol of the moon and ten means the early days of the lunar month, where the moon is approaching to be full, and ultimately indicates a happy ending. But ironically the moon is eclipsed here because the Pope has refused to visit Ur, the temple of the moon god.

Unlike *Crescent*, *Tashari* is circular in shape (Al-Saeedi, 2017). It opens with Dr. Wardiya in the Élysée Palace and ends with her in France praying that the fountains of blood in Iraq may stop. She changes the wording of the prayer to suit the status quo. The novel also ends with a reference (the third one) to the Pope. There is also a prayer, blood and sacrifice, and grass but no fertility. There is only a curse of discord and

⁵EinKawa is an area in Erbil province to the north of Iraq where mostly Christians live.

⁶Jaramana is an area in Syria populated by Iraqis.

fragmentation and heaven does not listen to her daily prayers as if all the blood is not enough to lift the curse:

Sarkozy is gone and another one comes just like the Pope is gone and another one comes. The conditions of hospitality followed with all the refugees have not changed: cheap housing, health insurance and a grant that covers meager living. Give us this day our daily bread. She watches TV in her apartment and follows up Turkish series. She changes the channel and she sees the ongoing film there: death dances on gardens' grass and sucks the dates honey and gets drunk in Abu Noas⁷ bars. She sees in the bulletins daily horror which has become familiar. Give us this day our daily blood. A glorious country hit by the separation curse and turned into a monster. She prays for it and heaven does not respond, her kind and good heaven which never once turned her down. Haven't they had enough blood? (Kachachi, 2013, p.215)

Inaam Kachachi and Diana Abu Jaber could be seen as the two-sides of goddess Ishtar. In *Crescent* Ishtar has turned her face towards light bringing happiness to the Iraqi couple, Sirine and Han. In *Tahsari*, she has turned her other side away from light bringing war, instability, and fragmentation to Iraq.

References

- Abdeen, Layla F.(2014).A gaze on postmodernism in Diana Abu Jaber's *crescent* and Ahdaf Soueif's *The map of love*. *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*, 02(04), 557-562. Retrieved from <https://ajouronline.com/index.php/AJHSS/article/viewFile/1408/800>
- Abu Jaber, Diana. (2003).*Crescent*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Ahmed, Kareem. (2018). Ma'naa ism Sirine [Meaning of Sirine's name]. Retrieved from <https://mawdoo3.com/>.
- Al-Sa'eedi, Mohammed Rasheed. (2017).Al-binaa al-zamani in *tashari* [Time structure in *tashari*]. Retrieved from <http://www.iraqicparchives.com/index.php/sections/literature/31226-2015-07-27-20-04-23>

⁷Abu Noas is a place situated on the bank of Tigris in Baghdad.

- Duffin, Jacalyn. (2017). *Christ stopped at Eboli*. Retrieved from <http://medhum.med.nyu.edu/view/12020>.
- Hameed, Ahmed.(2017). Al-haddath fi riwaya Inaam Kachaci *tashari* [Events in Inaam Kachachi's *tashari*]. *The Iraqi Observer*, Retrieved from <http://www.almuraqeb-aliraqi.org/2015/08/04/22934/>.
- Ishtiya, Fouad Yousif. (2010). Al-qamaar fil shier al-jahili [The moon in pre-islamic poetry] (Unpublished master's thesis). Al-Najah National University. Retrieved from https://scholar.najah.edu/sites/default/files/all-thesis/moon_pre_islamic_poetry.pdf
- Kachaci, Inaam. (2013). *Tashari*. Beirut: Aljadeed,.
- Marduk. (2014).In *New world encyclopedia*. Retrieved from <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Marduk>.
- Marin, Max. (2017).Inaam Kachachi on '*tashari*' and the Iraq she carries with her. Retrieved from <https://arablit.org/2014/02/04/inaam-kachachi-on-tashari-and-the-iraq-that-she-carries-with-her/>.
- Mark, Joshua J. Marduk. (2016). In *Ancient history encyclopedia*. Retrieved from <https://www.ancient.eu/Marduk/>.
- Origin of Sin and the queen of heaven*. (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.dhushara.com/book/orsin/origsin.htm>.

القمر في الثقافة العراقية القديمة: اعادة قراءة لرواية "الهلال" لديانا ابو جابر و"طشاري"

لأنعام كججي

ا.م. د. اسراء هاشم طاهر

قسم اللغة الانكليزية/كلية الآداب/ جامعة بغداد

البريد الالكتروني: israhtaher@gmail.com

المخلص

اعتاد الانسان ان ينسب الخير والشر في حياته الى الاجرام السماوية ولذلك اولت الحضارات القديمة اهتماما بالغاً بعلم الفلك الذي كان له تأثيراً كبيراً على علم الاساطير واللاهوت. وفي الميثولوجيا العراقية القديمة نسبت الاحداث الحزينة والسعيدة مثل الحرب والسلام الموت والخصوبة والفيضان والمجاعة الى ظهور واختفاء القمر.

ومن ضمن كتاب ما بعد الحداثة الذين كتبوا روايات عن العراق الكاتبة الامريكية من اصل عربي: ديانا ابو جابر (١٩٥٩-) و الكاتبة العراقية المقيمة في باريس انعام كججي (١٩٥٢-). تروي رواية الهلال (٢٠٠٣) لابي جابر قصة حب بين استاذ عراقي و فتاة عراقية من اصل امريكي حيث يكون للهلال المرتبط بالعنوان علاقة بالطقس الاسلامي بتحديد بداية الشهر القمري وبالأخص شهر رمضان. وكما تبين الرواية فان الهلال يرتبط بالصبر والمجهول وذلك من خلال الظهور المفاجئ، وبعد غياب طويل، للبطل حنيف في النهاية. بينما تروي رواية كججي طشاري (٢٠١٣) بالتفصيل تشظي العراقيين في مختلف انحاء العالم بعد احداث ٢٠٠٣. وتعزو الرواية هذه المأساة الى رفض البابا زيارة مدينة اور، مسقط راس النبي ابراهيم، وهي في نفس الوقت بيت الاله نانا اله القمر لدى السومريين القدامى. وعلى الرغم من تناول جزء من الروايتين المعتقدات والطقوس الدينية المرتبطة بالقمر في الاسلام والمسيحية الا انهما لا تشيران بشكل مباشر الى الاساطير العراقية القديمة. فأبي جابر التي عبرت عن رغبتها الكتابة عن "ارث العراق" و"مهد الحضارة" و كججي التي كتبت بشكل رئيسي عن العراق و "ايام الزمن الجميل"، نادرا ما اشارتا مباشرة الى القمر واهميته في الثقافة العراقية القديمة. ولكن مع ذلك تزخر كلتا الروايتين بإشارات ضمنية الى القمر يمكن تحليلها بضوء مكانته وتأثيره الكبير على الثقافة العراقية القديمة والذي سيكون هدف هذا البحث.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القمر، العراق، ابو جابر، الهلال، كججي، طشاري