

A Psychoanalytical Study of Dehumanization in Bakhtyar Ali's *Bandar Fayli*

Esmail Barwasi¹ 

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The Baath regime portrayed Fayli Kurds as the fifth column of the enemy and the remnants of the Magus generation. It dehumanized them through grading and redefined their identity as beings lower than animals and insects, presenting a demonic image of them. It provided the grounds for genocide and their rejection, resulting in eradication of this ethnic group in Iraq. Bandar Fayli was a child born to a Fayli woman and a victim of the xenophobic policy of the Baath regime, who was imprisoned from birth to adolescence as the sole Fayli Kurd left in Iraq. As a lifelong prisoner under the Baathists' control, he was stripped of all human rights. His soul and body became tools for advancing the mechanisms of dehumanization and plasticity, reducing him to a mechanical and animal-like existence, far removed from the human concept. The result of this long process of captivity was the loss of Bandar's personality and human dignity. As a result of the demonization ideology, he became incapable of understanding concepts and emotions due to dementalization and rejection during solitary confinement. In this study, we explore the specific manifestation of dehumanization in the novel "Bandar Fayli." Given that no independent research has yet investigated this phenomenon in the novel, our goal is to examine it and address the following questions:

1. What factors contribute to the appearance of dehumanization in "Bandar Fayli"?
2. How does dehumanization impact the novel, and in what forms and images does it manifest?

2. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The overarching framework of this research involves the psychological analysis of dehumanization in the novel "Bandar Fayli." Throughout the text of this novel, dehumanization is a recurring theme. In this essay, the author employs a descriptive-analytical method and a psychological approach to investigate dehumanization

¹PhD in Arabic Language and Literature, Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran
ebarwasi@gmail.com

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within “Bandar Fayli.” To achieve this, specific sections of the novel that focus on dehumanization and its appearance, as well as contributing factors, have been analyzed. The time range examined in the novel spans from **1980 to 2003**, covering the period from the genocide of the Fayli Kurds by the Baath regime to the regime’s overthrow by the American government. By drawing upon theories from scholars such as Haslam, Harris, Fiske, David Livingston, and Demolin, various forms of dehumanization are explored through conceptual and theoretical definitions within a robust theoretical framework.

3. Discussion

As previously mentioned, Bandar Fayli and the Fayli Kurds living in Iraq fell victim to the xenophobia and anti-otherism propagated by the Baath regime. These incompatible interactions with non-Arab races led to the portrayal of these groups as inferior and subhuman. The Baathist strategy of dehumanizing foreign races, including the Fayli Kurds, resulted in various outcomes:

1. **Assimilation:** A significant portion of the Fayli Kurds were assimilated through cultural melting. Those who accepted the Arabic language and culture, as well as the absolute power of the Baathist regime, became part of this assimilation process.
2. **Elimination and Displacement:** Those who resisted assimilation faced dire consequences. Some were completely eliminated during the genocide and cleansing process. Others were forcibly displaced to other lands.
3. **Destruction of Dignity and Humanity:** For those like Bandar Fayli, who resisted assimilation and Baathist ideology, imprisonment became their fate. In the novel “Bandar Fayli,” Bakhtiar Ali vividly portrays this human crisis and excruciating suffering. Bandar’s character embodies the trampled humanity and the torn personality of someone deprived of citizenship rights and a life with dignity under the shadow of a totalitarian system during the Baath regime.

The novel weaves together these elements of dehumanization, creating a tragic narrative that reflects the harsh realities faced by the Fayli Kurds during that tumultuous period.

4. Findings and Conclusion

Racial and ethnic dehumanization served as a justification for the Baath regime’s ideological stance during a period marked by xenophobia, genocide, and the rejection of non-Arab races, including the Fayli Kurds. Within this context, the Fayli Kurds were stigmatized and portrayed as an inferior minority. Tragically, this led to the killing and ethnic cleansing of Fayli people, marking the beginning of the dehumanization process for individuals like Israa Malekshahi and Bandar.

The rejection of Bandar from warm and intimate social relationships stemmed from a dual dehumanization. First, there was a perception of Bandar’s incompetence, positioning him outside the circle of warm social connections. Second, he was denied

entry into social domains based on respect and dignity. Instead, he became a figure associated with hatred and disgust, necessitating rejection and neglect.

The Baath regime employed a strategy of animalization against the Faili Kurds, including Esra Malekshahi. By portraying them as inferior and less than human, the regime aimed to strip them of their human qualities, relegating them to the category of animals. This dehumanization served to justify the denial of their human rights, treating them as outsiders and alien fire-worshipping magi. Subsequently, violence, rape, and genocide were used to subjugate this out-group, effectively excluding them from the in-group circuit.

Using Bandar's prodigious talent as a printing machine and producing artistic pictures and using him as a tool for the purpose of amassing wealth by the prison chief, was the manifestation of the mechanical dehumanization of Bandar Fayli in the process of achieving maximum efficiency and thus, the reduction of his human qualities to machine qualities and his objectification in the process of becoming a means of production.

The demonization of Bandar, labeling him as a descendant of genies possessed by evil and magical powers, further emphasized his association with destruction, disease, and mental turmoil. In essence, this denial of his human qualities stigmatized him and shaped societal attitudes. The unconscious bias of Arab people towards the Kurds facilitated his exclusion from the social environment, ultimately leading to his isolation in a solitary cell. This isolation served as a preventive measure against perceived demonic activity and the control of malevolent forces.

The consequences of Bandar's prolonged solitary confinement in absolute darkness are profound. Large portions of his memories, past experiences, and acquired knowledge have been erased due to the separation from the present and gradual forgetting. His mental perception, including feelings and agency, has diminished significantly. In more precise terms, he has been de-mentalized, losing consciousness, personality, pride, self-control, and connection to real life.

Keywords: Political literature, Dehumanization, Xenophobia, Kurdish literature, Bakhtiar Ali, Bandar Fayli

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