

Change as Impossible Necessity: Change for the Worse as Depicted in Wajdi Alahdal's *A Crime at Restaurant Street*

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Abstract This study explores the psychological effects of social and political stress on the common man and the role of corruption in committing crimes as depicted in *A Crime at Restaurant Street*. It traces the playwright's prediction of social change to worse, suggesting that socio-political corruption creates pressure and deep trauma, which lead to psychological disorder and change the hero to worse. This study is a qualitative study that uses the psychoanalytical theory as well as trauma critical theory. Findings indicate that the play is a reminder that corruption and injustice are still major problems in Yemen during the reign of Saleh and after, and that the struggle for justice is far-fetched. The destructive nature of corruption leads to psychological consequences and the trauma experienced by the protagonist leads to post-traumatic stress disorder that makes him end up in terrorism. The study concludes that the playwright thus portrays both the necessity of a complete social transformation, and an utter lack of belief that such a transformation would take place.

Keywords social change; corruption; psychological consequences; terrorist; conflict

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Introduction

Change is usually for the better, whether on a personal or social level. Nevertheless,

Wajdi Alahdal, a Yemeni playwright, challenges this postulation. Alahdal's play, *A Crime at Restaurant Street*, depicts the change that happened to the hero for the worse, and it, in itself, expresses the change that Yemeni society aspires to in light of the difficult and compelling circumstances. The play premiered in Sana'a in 2009. It is an example of contemporary Yemeni drama and the first play translated into English by Katherine Hennessey in 2016. The playwright predicts a radical change in Yemen before it occurs due to many factors, primarily financial and administrative corruption, the confiscation of rights and freedoms, the corruption of the judicial system, and the absence of state agencies and laws that protect citizens from the many violations committed by the masses of corruption. However, the writer predicts that this change would be reversed, which happened some years after the play was released. Many events and conflicts worsened the change, leading to what the country is like today regarding the civil war with militias everywhere in the country.

In studying Alahdal's play, *A Crime at Restaurant Street*, two important terminologies need clarification. First, the term social change is defined by Akujobi as a result of the expediency needed in providing solutions to specific social problems faced in a society (Akujobi 491-526). While Form in Britannica notes that social change, in sociology, is the alteration of mechanisms within the social structure, characterized by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behavior, social organizations, or value systems (Form). Second, corruption is defined by Ting Gong and Sunny Yang (2019), in Oxford Research Encyclopedia, as a complex social phenomenon. It refers to the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. While Encyclopedia in *Political Corruption* by Montinola gives Aristotle's definition of political corruption. It is the practice of leaders who rule with a view to their private advantage rather than the pursuit of the public interest (Montinola).

The main objective of this study is to explore the psychological effects of social and political stress on ordinary individuals in Alahdal's play, *A Crime at Restaurant Street*. It investigates the role of corruption in committing crimes and traces the playwright's prediction of social change for the worse. This study is mainly devoted to the issues of change in Yemen as portrayed by this play under study. The study set out to answer some questions. Does socio-political corruption lead to social crimes? Does corruption lead to change for the worse on personal and social levels? Do the press and disappointment lead to the fragmentation of the hero's character in the play? In search of his rights and self-formation, does the hero end up becoming a killer?

This qualitative study uses a dual theoretical analysis; one of which is Freud's

Psychoanalytical Theory and the other is Trauma Critical Theory. Encyclopedia, in *Psychoanalytic Theory* by Hanley, defines Psychoanalytic Theory as a framework for understanding the impact of the unconscious on thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Freud posited that most of what motivates individuals lies outside of their immediate awareness (Hanley). The suitable psychoanalytical approach is to analyze the thematic content of the play especially the motives of the playwright and the main hero of the play.

The playwright, Alahdal, is renowned for his harsh criticism of the Yemeni government and he was forced to leave the country. He could only return to Yemen without fear of prosecution because of Gunter Grass, a German literary figure and a Noble Prize winner, and other human Associations intervention. The case of analyzing the hero's change and his violent behavior at the end as a killer is often referred to the violent and abusive ways he has been treated in Yemen. He turns out to be a tragic figure of an innocent killer. The psychoanalytic approach aims to understand how the unconscious mind controls conscious behavior in ways that affect psychological well-being (Nash). Tragic events are offensive; they cause disunity and reveal discontent. Tragic events bring the unconscious into public view. It makes us unsure about our identities, feelings, and what happened to us (Bennett, et al 106). Thus, the psychoanalytical critical theory is much more suitable for this study.

The trauma critical theory can also be used effectively in analysing the play. Trauma is defined by Irene Visser as a condition in which unconscious processes impact a person's health and well-being (Visser 115). Herman also defines trauma as an individual's response to events so intense that they impair emotional or cognitive functioning and may bring lasting psychological disruption. Traumatic events that shape the hero's past affect areas of functioning, including social interaction and behavior (Herman 42-47). People who experience trauma are at increased risk for hostility, anger, and other emotional problems, which are portrayed in the character of Abdullatif, the hero.

Historical and Theoretical Background

There are few studies on the works of Alahdal, especially his play *A Crime at Restaurant Street*. However, there are several reports by many national and international organizations about the general overview of Yemen taking in consideration serious social, political, and economic issues. These reports give a historical overview that reflects the sufferings of the fragmented Yemeni nation. Literary writers are effective members in society, so they take the duty of portraying

those sufferings in their writings as a matter of social responsibility; one of them is Alahdal. Therefore, the researcher prefers to trace studies of some literary productions in Yemen, including Alahdal's play in focus.

The context here is divided into two approaches. One of which is the national and international organizations' reports and the other goes for the Yemeni literary writers. Regarding the national and international stand, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) issued a report by Robinson E. in 2006 about the grand corruption in the country. It states that over the past few decades, a system of grand corruption has grown, thriving on the combination of weakened state institutions and a fragmented elite structure. The report predicts that in the case of failing to make a reform for economic growth for basic needs and services to be met and for the state to be sustainable in the near term, significant political instability may be on the horizon. However, effective reform would threaten elite corruption (Robinson 9).

A report by Hill and others from Chatham House (2013) reflects the situation in Yemen two years after youth revolution in 2011 Spring. The report focuses on elite's corruption. It declares that Yemen faces significant dangers of political unrest and a projected resource shortage because of the quick depletion of the reserves of oil that support the government's budget (Hill et al).

The Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies (2018) states that the political economy of Yemen is heavily ingrained with corruption, which is the abuse of power for personal benefit. In Yemen, low-level bribery and favoritism have also become ubiquitous; they are now a part of daily life. Likewise, European Commission (2022), UN in Yemen (2023), UNICEF (2023), and World Bank (2023) reports state that after over 8 years of war, Yemen remains one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. The national socioeconomic systems of Yemen remain on the edge of total collapse. Millions of children lack access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene services.

International Rescue Committee (2020) declares that a long-running conflict has resulted in 3.65 million internally displaced persons since 2015. The UN in Yemen report (2023) also shortlists remarks about Yemen situation. Yemen was already the most impoverished country in the Arab world before the most recent conflict, with low levels of human development, rapid population growth, frequent local conflicts, ongoing food shortages, and a fragile governmental transition.

Hennessey wrote of the drama of Yemen's Arab Spring, discussing real reflections of Yemeni drama before, during and after Arab Spring in Yemen. Hennessey declares that modern Yemeni plays depict the idea of revolution in a

multifaceted and complex way, not just as the movement from one governmental system to another but also as a fundamental transformation in the relationships between the young and the elderly, between women and men, and the individual and society. The four plays analyzed by Hennessey feature Yemenis' own voices expressing why they want extensive sociopolitical and economic transformation as well as to what extent they think such reform is attainable (Hennessey 6). Yemeni society was depicted as being horribly corrupt in the 2009 play *A Crime at Restaurant Street*.

In terms of local literary writers, some are worthwhile citing here. Alareqi, in a study entitled *Yemeni Narrative in Postcolonial World*, demonstrates Yemenis looking for better change. He discusses Dammaj's *The Hostage*. The study concludes that the hostages' lives are miserable inside the palace, and they have no chance to improve because the men and women running the place deliberately change hostage's identity to make them submissive to their illegitimate demands (Alareqi 102). Numerous aspects of the hostage's personality have been changed negatively and indefinitely. He escapes this life for an unknown future. This uncertain future would not be worse than the corrupt and absurd life of the palace.

Likewise, Al-Rubaidi, in his article *Liberation and Enlightenment Narratives: Reading into the Literary Thought of Wajdi Alahdal*, clarifies the philosophical principles of Alahdal as a contemporary Yemeni writer. In an interview with Alahdal, he summarizes his principles of writing literature in four points; literature as an understanding of existence, literature to awaken the reader, literature for speaker of the language and not for translation and fame, and literature as an interpretation of life (Al-Rubaidi, Liberation 6).

Similarly, Al-Rubaidi, in his overview of Alahdal's novels, conveys that the most important social background of his work is modern Yemen, in the geographical, political and cultural sense of the word. He also states that during the last two decades, the Arab region has witnessed political and social traumas that have affected the consciousness of the region's inhabitants. In the aftermath of these traumas, they have come to question the reality of their perceptions of religion, politics, history, and their relationship to the other. Al-Rubaidi highlights that Alahdal has published novels and short story collections that tackle social hypocrisy, false religiosity, the situation of women, and the disastrous political failure of successive governments in Yemen since unification in 1990. He concludes that Alahdal's last novel, *Breaking Dualities*, offers different views on the right to live. It also reveals miserable awareness of Yemen's existential crisis to which everyone has contributed. The most important contributors to the crisis are the intellectuals

and the opinion shapers who betrayed their people and despised them instead of defending them and their right to decent lives. In Yemen, a country plagued by war, hunger, disease and illiteracy, Alahdal and his fellow novelists, journalists and poets, write for salvation.

In a related paper, Abdulqawi Alyasery wrote the *Yemeni Theatre Performance and its Socio-political Impact on Yemeni People*. In the paper, Al-Janad Theatrical Company addressed several socio-political issues, such as a repressive political system, government corruption, and issues from the social side, such as poverty, retaliation, early marriage, expensive marriage, women's education, and price increases. In truth, the theater has significantly contributed to Yemeni society's culturalization and elevation of consciousness and knowledge (Alyasery 3).

Also, Altwaiji, in *Yemeni Narrative and Society: Socio-political Issues in Dammaj's The Hostage*, asserts the need for political change. He finds that the novel *The Hostage* by Zayd Dammaj serves as both a national agent for political change and a personal tool for achieving equality, a new identity, and a satisfying social standing. It is a chronicle of clashes between societal consciousness and the long-living power agents. *The Hostage* is a thoughtful examination of social absurdity and individual emptiness in addition to being an album about the abuses committed by the tyrant. It makes the claim that sociopolitical realities exist and provides an alternate, fantastical image of peace and togetherness. Altwaiji also declares that the new generation of both male and female novelists has contributed enormously to the development of novel. These writers and their growing readership have a strong tendency to regard political narratives more highly than narratives of entertainment. Examples of these novels are Mohammed Amran's *The Revolutionist* (2014), Nadia Alkawabani's *Just Love* (2006), Bushra Almaqtari's *Behind the Sun* (2012), Safa'a Alhabal's *My Destiny is a Butterfly* (2014), Marwan Ghafory's *Sa'ada's Braids* (2014) and Samir Abdulfattah's *Adjacency: Another Life* (2013) (Altwaiji 317-324).

Other recent studies include Thabit (2020), Al-Rubaidi (2021), and Sheikh et al (2023). Thabit builds a panoramic review of Yemeni novel. He traces many novels and finds that in an effort to address the political, social, and cultural changes in Yemen, a Yemeni novel portrays the events, turning moments, and transitions by blending reality with fiction. The narrative explores political and social violence that is only symbolic (Thabit). Al-Rubaidi, in *Reading between the Lines: Political Solutions in Yemeni Fiction Writing*, states that from the decades that followed the 1930s through the union of the North and South in 1990 to the country's 2011 revolt, intellectuals, poets, and creative thinkers have formed the core of Yemen's major political and social movements. Yemeni writers consider how ideology influences

the powerful to commit crimes against humanity in an effort to comprehend the leaders of the nation. To summarize Al-Rubaidi's views about political solutions portrayed by literary figures, he declares that since the start of the armed struggle in 2015 and the failed attempt to implement democratic elections, Yemen's production of novels and short tales has grown significantly (Al-Rubaidi Reading 5).

Fiction writing was proven to be a valuable medium for Yemeni authors to discuss politics. The well-known Yemeni author Wajdi Alahdal's *Saghira's Laws* is an example of this literary genre. In this short fiction, a different course for Yemen after the political unrest of 2011 is described. It investigates that Yemen adopted a democratic political structure based on human rights. In the end, Saghira, the woman who becomes president, improves Yemen's reputation internationally via wise leadership. Sheikh finds that Fekriah Shahrah's novel *The Smile Owner* portrayed the horrible effects of the civil war as well as destroying the love of the lovers; Wahid and Afra, Ammar and Samah, and Wahid and his family. The relationships among Yemeni people were destroyed and people killed each other on the basis of their identity, political, and geographical affiliation (Sheikh).

In summary, although the works of Yemeni playwright Wajdi Alahdal, a working example, have been analyzed by local and international writers and agencies, there is still more to explore with reference to one of his plays translated into English. Alahdal is considered one of the pioneers of Yemeni literature and has many literary works translated into multiple languages, hence, analytical studies of his literary works must be done. The current study dives into one of his plays that has attained international attention but has yet to be analyzed thoroughly in search of how he treats socio-political change issues in Yemen. The fact that Alahdal's literary works have been affected by the problems of society and how he perceives social issues, the importance of the current study comes from the importance of the subject that it deals with; it identifies social change issues in light of a wave of corruption, oppression, and deteriorating social, political, and economic conditions.

Analysis

A Crime at Restaurant Street was originally written as a short story, then adapted for the stage, and translated into English by Katherine Hennessey. It was performed in April 2009 as a dark comedy that explores the themes of corruption, hypocrisy, and the struggle for justice in Yemen. One notable aspect of the play is Alahdal's ability to capture the essence of everyday life in Yemen. Through the setting of Restaurant Street, he creates a microcosm of society, allowing the audience to witness the challenges different characters face. Wiswas says, "On Restaurant Street, you find all

kinds, sir” (Alahdal 6). This setting serves as a backdrop to explore themes such as poverty and corruption. It means that the once vibrant and bustling Restaurant Street symbolises society’s decay and decline.

The play opens at a café on Restaurant Street, near Tahrir Square in Sana’a. It is so named for its restaurants and teahouses. The café brings together various characters representing all facets of Yemeni society. Murshid, the cultured one, Yasir, the journalist, Hurrayb, the waiter, Jamīla, the penniless orphan girl of nineteen who begs from the customers in order to support her young brothers and sisters, Wiswas, the Bank Officer, and the Bank Manager, a shadowy, disembodied character known to the audience only through his voice. Later on, Abdullatif, the protagonist, appears as a distinguished poor man who is mainly an artistic decorator and a symbolic character.

The analysis in this section concentrates on different dimensions. The role of corruption in raising social crimes in societies, the psychological effects of social and political stress on the common man, and the playwright’s predictions of change for the worst in Yemen are all analysed in details.

Endemic Corruption

A Crime at Restaurant Street is a compelling play that offers a glimpse into the complexities of Yemeni society. Through its well-crafted characters and engaging narrative, it raises important questions about social justice, power dynamics, and the impact of corruption on individuals. The characters who suffer corruption become corrupt in one way or another. Sociopolitical corruption is clearly shown through the portrayal of the characters and their roles in the play despite the differences in their level of education, professions, and sex. The play explores how the characters and their lives have been negatively impacted by various factors. It highlights the struggles of individuals who find themselves trapped in a cycle of poverty, corruption, and exploitation.

The endemic corruption in the country leads to disastrous impacts, one of which is poverty that is portrayed by all the characters in the play except the peak of the corrupt elite, the Bank Manager. Jamila, a symbol of poverty, begs from people who sit in restaurants and teahouses. She asks Yasir, the journalist, to give her some money but he seems penniless as well: “Forgive him, dear child, he is a journalist and belongs to the Jinn” (Alahdal 5). Murshed makes comments on Yasir as a journalist who has nothing to give. Then she continues disclosing other characters’ economic situation. She asks Murshed, the cultured man, to give her some money to support her family but in an ironic representation, he says, “A man of culture does

not give alms, [...] I can give [...] Science and knowledge” (Alahdal 5). He tells her that he gives knowledge and science instead of money.

The Bank Manager who represents Saleh, the president of the country at the time, was recognized for his shrewd patronage tactics and his capacity to turn different elite factions in Yemen against one another through a complex network of threats and bribes. To collect data about Abdullatif, he starts with Murshed to give his statement about the artist, then Jameela, and then Abdullatif himself through an interview conducted by the journalist, Yasir. The Bank Manager gives bribe to Murshed and Yasir but not to Jameela for their testimonies about his victim, the artist. He tells Wiswas about Murshed, “To kick-start his tongue, offer him twenty thousand riyals in advance, and an equal sum when he departs from us” (Alahdal 7).

Murshed gives a mistaken statement about Abdullatif except his economic situation, “He eats lunch late. [...] slinking off to a restaurant owned by one of his acquaintances [...] and eats whatever’s left” (Alahdal 9). Corruption leads to the current case of Abdullatif who comes from abroad with a huge amount of money because he is an internal designer but the Bank Manager freezes his bank account to oblige him to do what they want and to change for the worse instead. A serious characterization gives to Abdullatif by Murshed:

I personally think he’s like a giant octopus who’s crept into our world unnoticed, out of a drain whose pipes run to the sea. He seems to have studied abroad—[.....], impressed by the freedom they feel it offers. Then when they return to Yemen, they can’t re-acclimatize to their own society and its customs and traditions. It’s like they’re [...], unable to integrate, as though a delicate veil separates them from everything around them. They have an exaggerated sense of their own importance. (Alahdal 9)

Here, Murshed portrays the character of Abdullatif according to what the Manager wants him to be even though it is not true. He declares that people who come back home from abroad are not able to integrate to their society. These claims are launched by the elites of the regime against everyone who calls for rights, freedom and equality and calls for the development of the country in the field of education, health and various services, as the rest of the regimes in the world do towards their people, out of a sense of responsibility.

Murshed also describes Abdullatif as “not deigning to speak with those of lower stature [...] He accords himself an inflated importance, based on his subconscious delusions.” But this is in contradiction to what Jameela gives in her state-

ment. She states that Abdullatif “he’s the only man who has ever paid attention to me. [...]. He’s very modest, though he’s wise and cultured as a philosopher” (Alahdal 12). Murshid’s testimony, like Jamila’s that comes after it, presents a distorted image of Abdullatif; each character’s representation of him is influenced by his or her own concerns, needs, and desires. Instead of acting as an objective observer, Murshid, overtly or theatrically, acts out his statement for the advantage of the Bank Manager. He is also highly committed, emotionally and psychologically, in persuading his audience to accept the picture he is painting.

Jameela, through her overall situation, is an example of the real corrupt society. Her case can be analysed on the basis of the difficult economic circumstances from one side and the exploitation of children and women in Yemen as mentioned in many national and international reports from the other side. Jameela is a victim of social corruption as she is obliged to consider begging as a profession. She declares that:

My older brother always drives me home at least an hour before sunset—that’s because one time I was late, and in the dark a gang of street kids attacked me and stole everything I’d earned that day. And when I got home, I was beaten black and blue for not bringing any money back. (Alahdal 11)

This means that she is obliged by her family to beg as a kind of financial income for the family.

The Bank Manager then asks Wiswas to organize an interview with Abdullatif to talk about himself. The journalist Yasir who will be given bribe will conduct this interview. This is the triangular method of collecting data about a man completely deprived from his human rights and now becomes subjected to high authority inspection.

Alahdal’s writing style is vivid and engaging. He effectively uses dialogue to convey the complex emotions and motivations of his characters. Abdullatif, in the interview, describes his crisis and expresses his sorrow for other people’s crises in confiscating their financial rights under flimsy pretexts and requests to implement corruption orders. He states clearly the rotten situation of corrupted elites in the country:

They’re trying to destroy me, to turn me into a criminal who’ll do their dirty work. [...] I defy you to find one of them who has earned his money by the sweat of his brow. I defy you to find one of them who has lived honorably.

Certainly, I'm not the only one in this country who has had his financial rights taken away—[...] they've all been robbed of their financial rights. [...] Filthy rotten criminals have turned this country into a bottomless garbage can, a market where everything has a price. (Alahdal 13)

The play, hence, touches upon the loss of hope and optimism in the face of these critical conditions. Characters are disillusioned and resigned to their fate, feeling powerless to bring about any meaningful change. This sense of hopelessness is a recurring motif, emphasizing the bleakness and despair that permeate the play.

The Bank Manager chooses Abdullatif to apply his scientific theory on; a theory, which is clarified later on by Wiswas as to be a good citizen, commit violent crimes; be a terrorist. He sends Wiswas to Abdullatif to make a deal with him that he will receive his money but after fulfilling one condition. Wiswas says, "We require that you commit a crime. A single crime. Become a terrorist, and then you can come to the bank and take your eight hundred thousand dollars" (Alahdal 15). He could not believe what he hears until Wiswas hands him a blue paper with a list of crimes to choose one of them. In a traumatic response, he refuses the deal shouting in intense fury and says, "You want to turn me into a terrorist. May God curse you and all the banks in the world!" (Alahdal 15). Then Wiswas creates a quarrel with Abdullatif claiming that he will kill him. Immediately, policemen come to the spot as the matter is prepared with them earlier. Abdullatif is taken to jail. Wiswas visits him to jail and informs him that his file is burned but the Bank Manager can release him in a single phone call. Wiswas also declares that they have money and they can buy the truth they want. Abdullatif mistake is that he does not commit a crime and kill innocent people.

These scenes portray the spread of the endemic and depict the sociopolitical corruption on a wide range including elites, legal and judicial systems, police, and the common man. Furthermore, the play's exploration of power dynamics and corruption is particularly noteworthy. The playwright delves into how those in positions of authority exploit their power, while also highlighting the resilience and resourcefulness of individuals who navigate these challenges.

According to the Manager's Theory of Ethics, "people will engage in criminal behavior if this is the only way to attain what they deserve, materially and spiritually, within society—like predators in the jungle. And the axiomatic reward for committing such crimes is being considered an upstanding citizen" (Alahdal 17). Abdullatif becomes unable to resist and asks for the blue paper to choose one of the listed crimes. Alahdal effectively portrays the erosion of moral values and the rise of

corruption within the play. Characters who were once honest and decent are forced to compromise their principles to survive or achieve their goals. This theme of moral degradation is exemplified through the actions and motivations of the protagonist Abdullatif, illustrating the devastating effects of the worsening conditions.

By the end, Abdullatif accepts to commit a crime and be a terrorist to survive and get his rights. The theme of sociopolitical corruption leading to social crimes is explored in a compelling and thought-provoking manner. The play highlights how the pervasive corruption within society creates an environment where individuals are driven to commit crimes as a means of survival or personal gain.

Psychological Effects of Social and Political Stress

The above corruption scenario analysis intense the social and political stress which resulted in a series of psychological effects on the protagonist, the representation of the Yemeni common man. The Freudian psychoanalytic approach is to understand how the unconscious mind controls conscious thoughts, feelings, and behavior in ways that affect psychological well-being of either the writer or the characters he draws (Kamil 160). Here are some psychological impacts of the social and political stress on the protagonist and its connection to his wellbeing.

Living in a society plagued by social and political stress can lead to feelings of depression and hopelessness. Jameela hears Abdullatif speaking with some children saying, "When the Earth ceases to spin madly around her axis, then people will relax, and stop racing after their daily bread" (Alahdal 12). These psychological ailments of deep depression and hopelessness also are shown through inquiries he poses about what crime he has committed against the Manager and why the Manager wants to turn him into a terrorist. This indicates the lack of control over his own life and the bleak outlook for the future can contribute to the development of depression and a sense of hopelessness.

Social and political stress can create a sense of uncertainty and instability, leading to increased anxiety and fear. Abdullatif says, "My psychological state worsened when the civil war exploded in 1994" (Alahdal 13). He develops an unknown disease and has unconscious responses to the events happened like the Lebanon and Israel war and Yemen civil war in 1994. The constant threat of violence, oppression, or loss of basic rights can leave individuals feeling constantly on edge and anxious about their safety and future. Abdullatif fears all around him. He declares, "They're trying to destroy me, to turn me into a criminal [...] They just want to be rid of me, and they don't care how" (Alahdal 13).

Cynicism and loss of trust are also impacts of social and political stress that

can erode trust in institutions and fellow citizens. Abdullatif defies if any one of the governmental elites has earned his money through his own hard work or lived honorably. The common man may become cynical and skeptical, viewing others with suspicion and assuming the worst intentions. He says also, “Certainly I’m not the only one in this country who has had his financial rights taken away” (Alahdal 14). Wiswas meets Abdullatif and tells him that the Manager will solve his problem and will give him his money back but Abdullatif looks Wiswas up and down with contempt and starts to leave the coffee shop unbelieving and paying no attention to him. This loss of trust can further contribute to feelings of isolation and psychological distress.

Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are critical and serious impacts of sociopolitical stress and corruption. Abdullatif gives a frightening traumatic representation of the injustice and social crimes he witnessed. He says,

Oppression and injustice and crime used to be things I heard about but didn’t really know. To me they were just words that existed in dictionaries, or that you heard in Hollywood films, but since I’ve returned to this street, I’ve found them in flesh and blood reality. (Alahdal 14)

Wiswas hands Abdullatif a blue paper containing a list of seventeen crimes to choose one of them in order to be a good citizen. Abdullatif tears the paper and shouts, “You want to turn me into a terrorist. May God curse you and all the banks in the world!” (Alahdal 15). The last bloody scene of the play is when Abdullatif accepts to be a terrorist. Experiencing or witnessing traumatic events, such as violence or human rights abuses, can lead to the development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The common man may be exposed to such events in a society characterized by social and political stress, which can result in intrusive memories, nightmares, and heightened arousal. As the play progresses, the audience witnesses the protagonist’s gradual descent into desperation and despair. The pressures of poverty, corruption, and the loss of hope push him to the breaking point.

Fear, anxiety, loss of trust, depression, hopelessness, alienation, frustration, and trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are all at the core of the character’s wellbeing which is the subject matter of the psychoanalytical criticism theory.

The Playwright’s Predictions of Change for the Worse in Yemen

In the play “*A Crime at Restaurant Street*,” there are several predictions of change

for the worse in Yemen. The play serves as a reflection of the social, political, and economic difficulties Yemeni society is now facing and provides insights into the possible consequences of these problems. The civil war in Yemen comes to its ninth year leading to a horrible humanitarian crisis.

One prediction of change for the worse is that social corruption will increase. Alahdal depicts a system in which persons in positions of power exploit their authority for personal gain, causing a breakdown in trust and a decline in values in society. Wiswas visits Abdullatif in his prison and declares that his Manager can release Abdullatif in one call in addition to his ability to buy the truth as a product; he says, "What you need to understand is that truth is directly connected to our wallets" (Alahdal 17). This corruption is shown to be widespread and deeply rooted, implying that it will only become worse in the future. The recent national and international reports by human organizations and associations prove this fact showing the deep roots of corruption even in the international aids for refugees that lead to people's suffering, torture, and even bad shelters' conditions.

The continuation of inequality and poverty is a further prediction. The play examines the hardships of those who are caught in a cycle of poverty and are unable to break free because of the lack of opportunity and structural inequalities. The Manager gives a bribe to Murshed and Yasir but not to Jameela as she is a girl and belongs to beggars. The unseen Manager gives himself a label of the only scientist in Restaurant Street area. Furthermore, Houthi Militia strongly maintains their ideological system of inequality based on race and gender. According to this description and what actually happens in Yemen, the gap between the wealthy and the poor will continue to grow, leading to further social unrest and despair.

The play also makes reference to the ongoing nature of violence and conflict. The depiction of the effects of oppression on people and community hints that the cycle of violence will continue, causing more misery and devastation. The Manager's theory that he wants to apply on Abdullatif is based on bloodshed to get one's financial rights that a lot of people lost so they will look for their rights through such conflict and killing. Wiswas says,

According to this theory, people will engage in criminal behavior if this is the only way to attain what they deserve, materially and spiritually, within society—like predators in the jungle. And the axiomatic reward for committing such crimes is being considered an upstanding citizen. (Alahdal 17)

When Abdullatif kills innocent people, Wiswas applauds feverishly as if he is now

a good citizen. This prognosis is in line with the actual situation in Yemen, where protracted conflict has terrible effects on people everywhere.

The play implies a loss of hope and a decay in moral standards as well. Characters are depicted as having to abandon their morals and do desperate deeds in order to survive or accomplish their goals. This moral decay prognosis means that the social fabric of Yemeni society will continue to deteriorate, resulting in a sense of disappointment and hopelessness.

Thus, the play assures the need for complete social change. Still, at the same time, it gives indications like the increase of socio-political corruption, continuation of inequality and poverty, ongoing violence and conflict, and loss of hope and moral values. These indications make it clear that if change is bound to occur, it is going to be for the worse, which contradicts the consequences of change in prior research studies (Akujobi et al 491; Debuire 10). With the play in question, Alahdal contributes to shaping the concepts of the present in light of past reflections, and his contributions are considered an expression of his personal and general experiences in an attempt to form a comprehensive picture of the prevailing social and political conditions in Yemen. He is exposed to many social, political, cultural and economic issues that may exist within society, and tries to crystallize them in his theatrical texts.

Conclusion

The play emphasizes the extent to which corruption in society creates an environment in which individuals are driven to commit crimes for survival or personal gain. In the play, Abdullatif, the protagonist, has agreed to commit a crime and become a terrorist in order to survive and obtain his rights. The play is ultimately a story about the struggle for justice. It shows how difficult it is to get justice in Yemen, and how the legal system is used to silence dissent and to protect the guilty. So, it is a reminder that corruption and injustice are still major problems in Yemen, and that the struggle for justice is far from over.

On the whole, fear, anxiety, betrayal, loss of trust, sadness, hopelessness, alienation, frustration, trauma, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are some psychological impacts of the social and political stress on the protagonist and all are crucial to his well-being. Anyone can be traumatized through living in an unstable or unsafe environment. By highlighting the connection between sociopolitical corruption and social crimes, Alahdal raises important questions about the responsibility of those in power and the impact their actions have on the lives of ordinary people. The play serves as a commentary on the destructive nature of

corruption and its far-reaching consequences.

The play affirms the necessity for social reforms and indicates the rise of socio-political corruption, the persistence of inequality and poverty, the continual nature of conflict and violence, and the loss of hope and moral values. These predictions indicate that if there is a change, it will be for the worse as the plot of the play explores the character's transition from an apparently unremarkable person to someone who commits a horrible crime while yet claiming a sense of good citizenship. This is a complex and intriguing aspect of the narrative, as it challenges our understanding of what it means to be a good citizen. The severe trauma experienced by Abdullatif leads to post-traumatic stress disorder that makes him end up a terrorist.

Therefore, the current study explicates how corruption (personal, social, and political) leads to change (personal and social) for the worse. It suggests that socio-political corruption creates pressure and deep trauma, which lead to psychological disorders. The Yemeni common man suffers a lot by losing human rights in a severe wave of corruption in all governmental sectors. To illustrate this message, Alahdal portrays the protagonist as a victim of his circumstances, forced to make difficult choices in order to survive or seek justice. The play prompts the Yemenis to question the boundaries of right and wrong, and the extent to which social conditions can affect an individual's choices. The playwright thus portrays both the absolute necessity of a complete social transformation, and an utter lack of belief that such a transformation will ever take place. The study illustrates a pessimistic conviction that no change, except for the worse, is possible. It has a critical social relevance because the results of the study may lead to a reconsideration of directing playwrights to pay attention to issues of personal and social change and the issues of Yemeni society in light of the wars and dispersion that afflicted society. Unfolding the current situation of change in Yemen as dramatized in Alahdal's play may inspire other researchers to conduct some other studies on Alahdal's works to explore the failed transition and its aftermath effects on people.

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