

Human- Nature Collaborative Relationship: A Critical Posthumanist Analysis of Ismail Fahd Ismail's *The Old Woman and the River*^(*)

Dr. Asmaa Mansour Ahmed Abdelmonem

Department of English, Faculty of Arts,

Zagazig University, Zagazig, Egypt.

Department of English, College of Arts,

King Faisal University, Hofuf, KSA.

Abstract

This article explores the relationship between nature and the human in Ismail Fahd Ismail's *The Old Woman and the River* (2019) within the context of posthumanism. It also seeks to re-define human- nature relationship by drawing the attention to the necessity of respecting nature's needs and rights. Furthermore, the article shows, through a detailed analysis of the novel, that human- nature collaboration is rewarded. This aim can be attained by decentering the human, which is seen as the main tenet of contemporary posthumanist thought. By providing a critique of man's centrality and exceptionalism, the article offers a better understanding of man's place in the universe. Ismail's *The Old Woman and the River* is considered an unconventional tale of war. Rather than presenting a stereotypical narrative of destruction, suffering, and loss, Ismail manages to present a tale of hope. Through his lines, he manages to promote an awareness of the ethical responsibility of the soldiers toward nature during the bloody war between Iraq and Iran. Remarkably, this awareness is ignited by a physically weak but strong-willed old woman. She is able to re-connect man to nature even at a time of war. The article's core argument here is to show how posthumanism blurs the boundary between human and nature to reinforce a collaborative relationship. Interrogating the work of many leading posthumanist critics, the gap between human and nature is increasingly bridged. Ismail portrays this unconventional tale of war to give us a new vision of war, life, and existence.

Key Words:

Anthropocene- Critical Posthumanism- Humanism- Nature- Human

^(*) **Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts Volume 85 July 2025**

العلاقة التعاونية بين الانسان والطبيعة: تحليل نقدي من منظور مابعد الانسانيه لروايه المرأه العجوز والنهر لإسماعيل فهد إسماعيل

الملخص

تسعي هذه الورقة البحثية لبحث العلاقة بين الانسان والطبيعة ودراستها من خلال تطبيق نظرية مابعد الانسانية علي رواية السبيليات لاسماعيل فهد اسماعيل والتي ترجمت الي الانجليزيه تحت عنوان المرأه العجوز والنهر. تقوم الدراسة باعاده تعريف هذه العلاقة عن طريق لقاء الضوء علي أهمية احترام احتياجات وحقوق الطبيعة ونتائج العلاقة التعاونية بينهم. علاوة علي ذلك ، فان هذه الورقة البحثية توضح كيفية ان هذا السلوك يؤدي الي تعزيز العلاقات بين البشر وبعضهم. كما تهدف الدراسة الي لقاء الضوء حول الفرضية المتنباه من الحركة الانسانية والتي تدور حول مركزية الانسان وذلك لتوضيح الفكر المعاصر لحركة مابعد الانسانية. اختار اسماعيل الحرب بين العراق وايران والتي بدأت عام ١٩٨٠ ودامت لثمان سنوات كسياق تاريخي لروايته. لقد قام بتقديم رواية تختلف عن الروايات التقليدية التي تتخذ من الحرب خلفية لها بما فيها من صور للفقد والألم والمعاناة، حيث قام بتقديم صورة بديعه عن الأمل في غد أفضل عندما يري الانسان الطبيعة من منظور مختلف حتي أثناء وقت الحرب. من خلال سطور الرواية يرسم اسماعيل علاقة رائعة واستثنائية بين امرأه عجوز وجنود عراقيون في قرية السبيليات وهو مكان نشأتها. لقد تحدثت هذه المرأة كل الظروف التي تمنع تواجدها في هذا المكان الخطر والمحظور علي المدنيين التواجد فيه لكي تغير نظرة الانسان في كل ماينبض بالحياة حوله حتي في أقسى الظروف. لقد قامت هذه المرأة الضعيفه جسمانيا والقوية روحانيا بربط الانسان بالطبيعة بشكل متناغم أتي ثماره بتعزيز العلاقة بين بعضهم البعض. لقد قام اسماعيل بتصوير الحرب بشكل غير تقليدي ليعرض رؤية جديده لمعاني الحياه 'الحرب' والوجود وتم توضيح ذلك من خلال تطبيق نظرية مابعد الانسانية علي الرواية.

Posthumanism has gained ground in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Tracing the beginning of posthumanism, Cary Wolfe mentions that "the term 'posthumanism' itself seems to have worked its way into contemporary critical discourse in the humanities and social sciences during the mid-1990s" (2010, XII). In fact, the first academic publications that dealt with the theory of posthumanism and the posthuman appeared in the late 1990s and early 2000s in books and articles by Neil Badmington, Rosi Braidotti, Stephan Herbrechter, Elaine L. Graham, N. Katherine Hayles, Cary Wolfe and others.

This article focuses mainly on posthumanism as a discursive object, examining how Ismail Fahd Ismail's *The Old Woman and the River*

engages in critiquing the overlap between the posthuman and nature by blurring the lines between humans and nature that were most evident in Humanism. Hence, posthumanism is analyzed as a social discourse. The article supports this position with the argument that approaching posthumanism from this perspective will allow “the humanities and sciences to create new encounters and test new hypotheses that may lead to greater political and ethical awareness of the place of the human, the non-human and their environments” (Herbrechter 2018, 96). In other words, providing a posthumanist reading of *The Old Woman and the River* can promote an awareness of the ethical responsibility toward nature. It can also lead to a better understanding of the novel.

As maintained by Carolyn Lau, “posthuman literary criticism engages strands of critical inquiry in New Humanities as a response to the interconnected global challenges of ecological crises, gender and racial inequality” (2018, p.348). Lau adds, “moreover, it studies fictional works that explore the ethics of interaction between humans and non-human others” (2018, p. 348). This article, therefore, will provide an application of posthumanism on Ismail’s *The Old Woman and the River*. The heroine is an old woman who can be regarded as a posthuman figure facing the destruction of nature by humans.

In Southern Iraq, on the banks of Shatt al-Arab River, Ismail has portrayed the tormenting images of a place that witnessed the Iran- Iraq war which lasted from 1980 to 1988. The novel is set in 1980 when territorial disputes led to the invasion of Iran. A brief historical background to this phase can lead to a better understanding of the context of the novel.

According to Rawabet Center for Research and Strategic Studies (2021), the problem of the border demarcation between Iran and Iraq- particularly in the Shatt al Arab River- has long been a main source of conflict between the two countries. This led to many disputes and confrontations that led to a fierce war lasted for eight years. The Shatt al- Arab River is formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates in Iraq. The final fifty miles of the River, that continues to flow into the Arabian Gulf, form the border between Iran and Iraq. Shatt al- Arab

River holds a strategic importance for Iraq's export activities due to the fact that it is Iraq's only access point to the Gulf. Due to the arid and humid climate in this part of the Middle East, the river's water is vital for agriculture. Additionally, its importance for Iran lies in the fact that a significant amount of Iran's crude oil is transported through it. On September 17, 1980, Saddam Hussein annulled the Algiers Agreement calling for the restoration of full Iraqi sovereignty over the entire River. Iran considered this a declaration of war.

In Ismail's *The Old Woman and the River* Um Qasem, an old lady who lives with her family in the small village of Sabiliyat which lies beside Shatt al- Arab river, is evacuated from her village. By a military order, she is forced to move with her family to Najaf. During this journey, her husband, Bu Qasem, dies suddenly so his sons have to bury him where he died and move on. The family resettle in Najaf but two years later the old woman is overwhelmed by a feeling of longing for her village as well as being troubled by the feeling of burying the body of her husband away from it. Although her grown children are satisfied with living in Najaf, she makes the daring decision to return home with the remains of her husband's body on the back of Good Omen, her donkey. In the morning, without telling her sons or grandchildren about this decision, she sets out on her road towards Sabiliyat.

On getting closer to her village, Um Qasem discovers that, instead of the flowing rivers, "the ponds and creeks had run dry" (Ismail, 2019, p.22). The war's impact is clearly represented by Ismail as being most evident in the change in the natural environment. The place where the troops are stationed has been completely transformed. The narrator describes:

The sky over Basra no longer looked the way it used to. There was a dullness about it that made her spirit clench. She knew it was a time of war, but she couldn't see why they had to destroy everything that blooms by making the rivers run dry. (2019, p. 24)

Um Qasem manages to persuade the soldiers at Sabiliyat to allow her to temporarily stay and care for what was destroyed because of the war. Guided by her belief in the spiritual presence of her husband, whom she

buries in the garden of her house, she manages to accomplish her task. She works to revive the village that has been destroyed by the war. She also cooks for the troops and gradually she becomes a source of life for the soldiers and the land. She even draws the troops' attention to nature, its needs and bounties which include not only giving food supplies but creating a great bonding experience between humans. This is exemplified at the end of the novel when one of the injured soldiers decides to go back to Sabiliyat, although it has never occurred before for a soldier to have the chance not to return without seizing it. Similarly, Adel Al- Zahrani (2020) wonders how an uneducated woman decides to clean the houses, open the closed dams, rebuild the walls of the houses that have been destroyed by the Iranian shells. He illustrates that war means death, which is a meaning she, a source of life, cannot believe in. Instead, she wonders how war can mean the destruction of the village and all its sources of life.

The Old Woman and the River is an unconventional tale about war. Usually, a tale about war describes how much people are tormented by the consequences of war, how many beloved ones are lost, and how ordinary daily needs become a wish. Ismail, however, was able to present a tale about the suffering experienced not by the inhabitants nor even by soldiers, but by nature. He portrays how much nature, as a living being, can suffer in a way that is understood only by Ismail's main character. Um Qasem elucidates in a very simple and ironic way what makes nations worth fighting for. Ironically, it is the same thing which is destroyed by the decision to wage a war. The fight between Iran and Iraq was for Shatt al Arab River, the source of life for the nation, which because of military orders no longer provides life for many territories. Um Qasem decides to defy the rules of the troops which prohibit being close to this territory. She decides to destroy the dams- constructed for military reasons- to allow the river to revive and irrigate the thirsty land. Hence, the river cannot be regarded as merely a source of water but as a living being that should not be deprived of its right of living, nurturing, and providing life to all that surrounds it. Thus, the main concern of this article is to present critiques and challenges of posthumanism in relation to nature. Drawing on many

reflections by Arab and Western critics, the article proceeds to a point that no critic so far seems to have discussed.

Ismail Fahd Ismail is a Kuwaiti novelist, short story writer, and literary critic. He was born in 1940 in Basra and died in 2018. *Sabiliyat*, his novel which was translated and given the title of *The Old Woman and the River*, was shortlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction 2018. He wrote 27 novels and many short stories, and is considered the founder of the art of novel in Kuwait. *Sabiliyat*, as indicated in the novel's foreword, is basically his place of birth as his mother is a Kuwaiti woman. *Sabiliyat* is also the setting for his novel. According to its foreword, the novel is based on a true story.

The year 1988 witnessed the end of the war between Iran and Iraq. During that time Ismail received a phone call from a journalist who had been invited by the Iraqi authorities to visit the places that were most affected by the war. When the journalist was flying over the coastal strip to the west of Shatt al- Arab, he was surprised to see that everything turned yellow except for "a strip of land bursting with green" (Ismail, p.1). This astonishing scene urged the journalist to ask, "why just this bit of land?" (p.1). Upon learning that Ismail is from this place, he gave him a phone call to find an answer. This call led to the writing of this novel.

Major questions that led to this study are: How does the novel present the human as part of a larger context rather than a dominant species? How can posthumanism redefine human- nature relationship? To what extent can nature bring about transformation in a human being? All these questions revolve around a central one: How can posthumanism present a new visualization of the concepts of war, life, and existence?

The Meaning of *Critical Posthumanism*

In *Dis-Locating Posthumanism*, Ivan Callus et al. (2014) define posthumanism as the "discourse that more or less critically investigates the figure of the posthuman" (p. 112). It seeks to answer the questions of "what it means to be human and the nature of the relationship

between humans and non-human others” (p.112). This article is restricted to investigating the relationship between the human and nature as manifested in Ismail’s *The Old Woman and the River*. Furthermore, Jeff Wallace argues that the critical work of Donna Haraway is in accordance with Bart Simon’s sense that “the best current work in critical posthumanism offers itself neither as a transcendence nor as a rejection of humanism, but as part of an ongoing critique of ‘what it means to be human’” (2010, p. 697).

In *Posthumanism*, Pramod. K. Nayar in a brief opening section maintains that “humans are essentially self-aware beings whose moral autonomy, rationality and self-consciousness distinguish them from all non-human forms of life” (2014, p.5). For Nayar, human’s reason and ability to act in autonomous manner places him in a superior position than other living creatures. This point of view is supported by Nicholas Walter (1997) who defines humanism as “any system of thought or action which is concerned with merely human interests. Humanism in its more recent manifestations places humans at the centre of all concerns” (p.320). According to Braidotti, this point of view is in contrast with posthumanism. Braidotti (2013) maintains that the rise of posthumanism depends on the decline of humanism. In the sense that, Posthumanism provides a different conceptualization of the human (p.37).

Posthumanism is related to the process of decentring man in relation to ecological and technological frameworks. Cary Wolfe states that, “when we talk about posthumanism, we are not just talking about a thematic of the decentring of the human in relation to either evolutionary, ecological, or technological coordinates” (2010, p.16). Herbrechter clarifies that posthumanism can be approached from different perspectives. “Critical Posthumanism differentiates between the figure of the ‘posthuman’ and ‘posthumanism’ as the social discourse.” This term implies an explanation of what it means to be human at a time of great changes like climate change (2018, p.94).

An understanding of the meaning of *Critical Posthumanism* is closely related to defining the adjective *critical*. As illustrated by Stephan Herbrechter, it “signifies a philosophical and reflective approach that investigates the current postanthropocentric desire” (2018, p.95). Hence, this article reconceptualizes the relationship between the human and nature from a post anthropocentric lens. As stated by Pronami Bhattacharyya (2024), posthumanism “intersects” with Post- Anthropocentrism in a way that challenges the position of the human as the dominant species in the “nature-culture milieu.” (2). Furthermore, Braidotti offers an account of moving toward accepting the idea that man is neither the sole source of value and control in this universe, nor its main character; therefore, this article will deal extensively with some of Braidotti’s books which approach various terms that are proliferating currently in the field.

As the name suggests, posthumanism pictures life beyond humanism and its implications. Katherine Hayles for example indicates that, “the posthuman does not really mean the end of humanity. It signals the end of a certain conception of the human.” This conception is related to humans who possess the means that allow them to conceptualize themselves as “autonomous beings.” This vision enables them to exercise their “individual agency and choice” (1999, p.286). The essence of Hayles’ argument is that posthumanism entails the ending of perceiving the human as the sole figure controlling and subjugating other living creatures including nature. The same point of view is supported by Herbrechter who explains that “humans and their humanity are historical and cultural constructs rather than transcendental concepts free from ideology and they therefore have to be placed within larger contexts like ecosystems, technics or evolution” (2013, p.16). The human is part of a larger context.

Additionally, Karen Barad provides an insightful definition to the meaning of posthumanism. It “critiques the limitations of humanist thinking, by unsettling binaries, de-centering the human” and critiquing the notion of human exceptionalism (2007, p.98). Posthumanism shows the deficiencies in Humanism as a theory that believes in the

exceptionality of the human figure. Michel de Montaigne's opinion, moreover, is in accordance with Barad's. Standing against human exceptionalism, he describes man as "the most vulnerable and frail of all creatures..., and at the same time the most arrogant" (1957, p.330). Hence, both of them agree with Braidotti's posthumanist perception of the human. The human is regarded as a living creature similar to the other creatures in relation to the responsibility to others.

The Anthropocene

This section provides an explanation of the meaning of the Anthropocene as a new geological epoch with the aim of constructing a deeper understanding of the concept of posthumanism. The conceptualization of the Anthropocene as "an unprecedented global state in which human activity has now become the determining factor influencing the climate and the environment" as defined by Zahi Zalloua, (2019, p. 310) has significantly influenced the contemporary literary production. "The Anthropocene, having begun in the middle of the 20th century, reveals humans "as a potent environmental force." It refutes the idea that the human can "be independent of the world, exempt from the ruined ecologies or exceptional to those we are acting/being/dying in relation with" (Malone & Murriss, 2022, p.68). This idea has been used by Ismail in *The Old Woman and the River* to suggest that it is imperative for the human to change his attitude towards nature. In fact, this has led scholars and critics to analyze human exceptionalism and centrality presented in the literary production in general, paving the way for new ideas, such as relationship between the human and the non-human.

Undoubtedly, there is a collaborative relationship between human and nature. Braidotti clarifies the meaning of posthumanism in relation to nature stating that, "posthuman theory is a generative tool to help us re-think the basic unit of reference for the human in the bio-genetic age known as 'anthropocene.'" It can also help humans reconsider their relationship to the non- human (2013, p.5). Hence, it is essential to reformulate the nature of the relationship between the human and the environment. The human has a great influence on nature and he is also

greatly influenced by it. Braidotti adds that “becoming earth-dimension” drives us towards caring for the environment, focusing mainly on ecology and climate change (2013, p. 67).

Since illustrating the meaning of post anthropocentrism and humanism is essential to an understanding of this article, it is imperative to refer to Braidotti’s analysis (2018 a). She argues that “posthuman critical theory unfolds at the intersection between post-humanism on the one hand and post- anthropocentrism on the other.” Braidotti adds that post-humanism “proposes the philosophical critique of the Western Humanist ideal of ‘Man’ as the allegedly universal measure of all things, whereas post-anthropocentrism rests on the rejection of species hierarchy and human exceptionalism” (p. 339). Moreover, a study of Briadotti’s *Posthuman Knowledge* (2019) shows that she has not merely been concerned with presenting a critique of the conception of the human during the Enlightenment but she has also been concerned with the term Anthropocene. In fact, posthumanism aims at “de-centering the human and problematising and displacing historical notions of human exceptionalism” (2015, p. 98). Posthumanist thinking is based on rejecting the notions of human exceptionality and human centrality. Highlighting the serious consequences of human centrality, the Anthropocene gave rise to posthumanism as a critical theory advocating an ethical responsibility toward nature and the non-human world. Hence, it can be argued that posthumanism has emerged as a response to the Anthropocene.

The Evolution of the Concept of the Human

Referring to the Enlightenment period can further clarify the meaning of posthumanism and its implications. During the Enlightenment period man was perceived as an exceptional figure. Simone Bignall and Rosi Braidotti (2018) explicate the meaning of posthumanism by referring to the Enlightenment movement. They maintain that, “posthumanism more specifically engages a critique of the humanist ideal of ‘Man’, and the political and philosophical programmes of progressive Enlightenment that rest upon this ideal” (p.9). The human, according to posthumanism, is no longer the ideal

figure who controls other species. He cannot be regarded as a living being in a superior position that entails controlling other species. Additionally, Luc Ferry (1992) holds a comparison between Romanticism and the Enlightenment in relation to the position and importance of the human among other species. He notes that “in the conflict between Romanticism and the Enlightenment, two concepts of culture and history are at odds” (p.9). In fact, for the Romantics, a man can only feel his humanity when he is able to value nature, and to see it as a source of life. Hence, we find common ground between posthumanism and Romanticism. The two movements value the importance of nature and its effects. The two movements perceive the relationship between nature and man as collaborative.

In a very moving part of *The Old Woman and the River*, Um Qasem recounts the horrible changes that have befallen Sabiliyat. She says:

Before the evacuation Sabiliyat had pulsed with life, it was able to survive off its own resources. ... In those days Sabiliyat was bursting with life...Now it's not only empty of people but life has gone out of the orchards as well...Military orders had arrived demanding that they block up the entrances of all rivers leading out of the Shatt... “Why deprive the orchards of water?” (Ismail, 2019, pp.40- 41).

As this lengthy quotation indicates, war has greatly influenced nature in Sabiliyat. Braidotti (2013) maintains that “environmental theory stresses the link between the humanistic emphasis on Man as the measure of all things and the domination and exploitation of nature and condemns the abuses of science and technology” (p.48). Hence, there is a close relationship between Environmental theory and posthumanism. Braidotti adds that the influence of the human extends to affect not only the human subject, but also “all non-anthropomorphic elements” (2013, p. 60). This is a significant claim, on which many critical analyses of posthumanism rely at present.

The Old Woman and the River presents an old woman's endeavor to revive the land. The story shows an old woman's determination to fight against the consequences of war that didn't affect only humans but

expanded to greatly harm nature. Um Qasem decides to start planting the place in spite of everything. When asked by Lieutenant Sadeq, “what’s the point of planting them unless someone can take care of them?”, she encourages the soldiers to help, in a way to connect them to the land. Karen Malone and Vivienne Bozalek argue that “challenging the entrenched habits of modern western humanist thought, which are so adept at dividing humans from nature, namely anthropocentrism, requires persistence, vigilance, and being prepared to take risks” (96). In fact, Um Qasem embodies this statement. She shows persistence, vigilance, and readiness to take risks by choosing to stay in a dangerous place.

The Relationship Between Posthumanism and Eco-Feminism

Relating posthumanism to eco-feminism can further illuminate human-nature relationship. The ecofeminist Carol Christ (1990) states that “we have lost the sense that this Earth is our true home” (p. 58). She also condemns man’s inability to recognize “his profound connection with all beings in the web of life” (p. 58). She calls for a reconceptualization of human-nature relationship. Moreover, this view is supported by the American ecofeminist Starhawk (1990). She believes that women’s “deepest experiences are experiences of connection with the Earth and with the world” (p. 73). From this vantage point, choosing a female protagonist emerges as a deliberate and meaningful act in *The Old Woman and River*. Um Qasem’s deep intimacy with the river, the birds, the animals, and every living being in her hometown is depicted as a life force that enable her to positively act to revive what was murdered by war. Starhawk reaffirms that Earth is a living-being. Hence, eco-feminists agree on associating women with nature. Furthermore, Susan Griffin intimately connects women to nature. She states, “we are air, we are flame, we are women and nature” (1989, p. 1). In fact, many feminists reaffirmed the relationship between women and nature, which has contributed to eco-feminism. Apparently, the emergence of posthumanist thinking was influenced by eco-feminism.

Posthumanism and Nature

Since one of the main preoccupations of this article is to realize the collaborative relationship between the main character of *The Old Woman and the River*, Um Qasem, and nature, it is important to cite Braidotti's insights illuminating the relationship between humans and nature. She states that "an altogether different and powerful source of inspiration for contemporary re-configurations of critical posthumanism is ecology and environmentalism." (2013, p.47). Critical posthumanism is directly related to the conceptualization of the value of nature and its influence. Hence, this article's main concern is the relationship between man and nature, and the rewards gained from their interaction.

A posthuman ontological thought supports what Braidotti states that there is an "intricate web of interrelations that mark the contemporary subjects' relationship to their multiple ecologies" (2013, p. 98). The human is the most effective part of the Universe, he can affect nature both positively and negatively. Nature, in return, can react. Hence, posthumanism can be seen as promoting mutual interdependence. A study of *The Old Woman and the River*, from a posthumanist perspective, proves that this relationship is not merely a one-way relationship, but rather a collaborative one. Nature endows those who respect it with many of its rewards. In *The Old Woman and the River*, Um Qasem clearly sees this relationship. She regards reviving the land as a way to bring about reconciliation between man and land exemplified in her hometown. Regarding the land as a living creature that has been greatly harmed by the human, she decides to revive it.

Human and Nature in *The Old Woman and the River*

An understanding of the relationship between the human and nature can be further illustrated through an analysis of Um Qasem's attitude towards nature. On her way home, Um Qasem describes how nature protests at what has befallen it as a result of the indifferent attitude to its value: "after an hour's travel, the leaves of the palm trees changed color. They were now yellow, as far as the eye could see. She noticed

saw-grass growing everywhere, a sign of neglect” (Ismail, 2019, p. 21). Felix Guattari, the French psychoanalyst and political philosopher, has a prominent influence on understanding what it means to think ecologically. Guattari(2000) argues that, “the increasing deterioration of human relations with the socius, the psyche and 'nature', is due not only to environmental and objective pollution but is also the result of a certain incomprehension and fatalistic passivity towards these issues as a whole” (p. 41). This idea is clarified when Um Qasem investigates the destruction done to nature for no apparent reason. The narrator describes:

After an hour they reached another trench. It was Muhaijran River. If only she knew how they'd managed to make these large rivers dry up. It was another half hour before they reached a third trench, Hamdan River. Her dismay deepened as she passed along an orchard that used to be planted with fruit trees. Twisted dry stalks were turning a brownish black...there were only bare ashen sticks. ... She gazed up at the dull yellow leaves of the date palm trees. (Ismail, 2019, p. 24)

Apparently, Um Qasem can notice the terrible changes that took place because of the war: rivers became dry and orchards were deprived of blooming trees and fruits. Further, when reaching Sabiliyat, Um Qasem has a conversation with Lieutenant Sadeq who confirms to her that Sabiliyat was “a place bursting with green” (2019, p.41), he adds that, “military orders had arrived demanding that they block up the entrances of all rivers leading out of the Shatt” (2019, p.41). These two extracts show on the one hand man's indifference to nature as exemplified by the military orders, and on the other hand it shows Um Qasem's amazement at this attitude.

Throughout the novel, the reader notices the close bond between Um Qasem and nature, also the relationship between her psyche and Sabiliyat. This has been narrated at the very beginning of the novel:

Children and grandchildren busily get on with their lives. Um Qasem's sense of time

begins to follow a different rhythm...Time almost grinds to a halt. And this constant feeling presses down on her ribs, the feeling she's gasping for air every breath she takes. Longing for the place she was before, her mind perpetually crowded with memories. (Ismail, 2019, p. 4)

Although accompanied by her sons and grandsons, Um Qasem still longs for going back home. Everything is still engraved in her memory. This relationship is illustrated by Erick Heroux. He identifies the three ecologies, they are: "nature, society, and psyche. Their interactive interdependence forms a triplex discourse and material effects" (2009, p.177). The effect of this relationship between Um Qasem and Sabiliyat has been manifested at the ending of the novel when she decides to replant the place of her birth, the place that has been destroyed by war. Although being an old woman, the feeling of pleasure she gets when being at her place of memories gives her power to revive it.

Commenting on the destruction done to nature by the irresponsible behavior of the human, James Williams (2018) maintains that "the Posthuman invites us to move out into an ecosphere where the human no longer exists as a secure reference point" (p.108). On her journey to Sabiliyat, Um Qasem recounts how man has drastically misshapen the place she used to see; she describes, "the farm workers' huts that used to stand in the vicinity had vanished without a trace" (Ismail, 2019, p. 25). Williams attributes all the immoral and unethical practices to "human- centered actions" (p.108). These practices cause terrible effects not only to humans but to animals and plants as well in her village. Approaching Sabiliyat, Um Qasem hears only silence that "meant land that's barren" (Ismail, 2019, p.29). The intervention of the human in nature's harmony causes deformation in the place. This harmful intervention was made because of a dispute over Shatt- al Arab River- a dispute that resulted in depriving land of water, its source of life. In *The Old Woman and the River*, Eleni Zaras (2020) argues that, the value of water surpasses basic human needs and is at the heart of the idea of the homeland" (p. 68).

The Significance of Memory for Posthumanists

In fact, Um Qasem is a link between the past, present, and future. Her past is embodied in her memories which are always alive in her mind while living in the present. "She remembers the main street, the side alleys, the people bustling about, the children playing and shouting" (Ismail, 2019, p.59). Additionally, she plants for coming generations. She will not benefit herself from planting the trees; however, she embodies a kind of connection between the past and future. Bhattacharyya maintains that posthumanism "develops as a study of the past and present oriented towards the future (2024.p.2). The land thus informs the present and the future. Our understanding of the past and future is deeply rooted in the land. She symbolizes human's ability to give life to all that surrounds her. In that sense, she tries to bring about a kind of reconciliation between the past and the present, between man's ability to destroy nature and his ability to hear nature's crying out for revival. She is hopeful that the revival of the land will bring about this kind of reconciliation. Hence, the novel confirms that man cannot act in isolation from all the other creatures living around him. He should know that the planet belongs not solely to him. The narrator says:

The most precious moments of her day were when she was sitting before Bu Qasem's grave talking with him and when she was standing before the Shatt, that living being, which rolled out evenly into infinity, relatively still from the outside but on the inside teeming with countless forms of life. (Ismail, 2019, p. 101).

Braidotti (2018 a) argues that "creativity- the working of the imagination- cannot be disconnected from memory (p.19). Um Qasem describes Sabiliyat as having places which "carried their own meaning, bringing back events from the past and faces of people belonging to a bygone time" (Ismail, 2019, p.59). Thus, it can be argued that Um Qasem's memories and attachment to the place motivate her to act positively toward nature. This shows one of the effect of nature on the human

Redefining Human- Nature Relationship

Haraway (2004 a) argues that “we must find another relationship to nature besides reification, possession, appropriation and nostalgia” (p.126). Haraway demands replacing the stereotyped image of nature. She clarifies that “Nature is not a physical place to which one can go... It is not the *other* who offers origin, replenishment, and service. Neither mother, nurse, nor slave” (2004 b, p.295). Relating nature to memory, Haraway (2004 b) argues, “Nature is, strictly, a commonplace. We turn to this topic to order our discourse, to compose our memory” (p.296). Hence, nature according to Haraway is the setting of our memories, it is what embodies our memories, our relationship to the past, which connects us to the present and the future. Isamil asserts this argument in his novel when Um Qasem admits that, “there was nothing without memory. Humans, animals, plants, water, even the walls of houses had a special memory of their own” (95). Endowing Shatt Al Arab River with life, Ismail describes Um Qasem’s special times. The narrator recounts:

The most precious moments of her day were when she was sitting before Bu Qasem’s grave talking with him and when she was standing before the Shatt, that living being, which rolled out evenly into infinity, relatively still from the outside but on the inside teeming with countless forms of life. (Ismail, 2019, p.102)

As a living being that acts and reacts in return, nature, according to Haraway (2004 a) may “appear speechless in the human sense; but nature is highly articulate” (p.324). A human may be unable to hear it, but nature can use multiple ways of communication. Reviving memories is one of them. This capacity of speech-free communication is manifested in *The Old Woman and the River*. Um Qasem wonders, “why this smell of dry stalks everywhere ... It seemed that plants had their own way of declaring the fact that they were surrendering to death” (Ismail, 2019, p. 48). As a living being, the trees seek to survive, however, at a certain point they surrender to the sentence of death passed by humans.

Um Qasem feels a kind of responsible relationship between human and nature, this relationship is manifested in her attempt to regain the beauty of the place even before war ends. “She’d go around the houses that had recently been hit to inspect the damage ... Private Jasem volunteered to accompany her on these inspection missions and help her carry out her repair work” (Ismail, 2019, p.109). A very enlightening extract provided by Rosi Braidotti (2013) can illuminate the previous part of the novel. Braidotti states that there is a “global sense of inter-connection between the human and the non-human environment in the face of common threats” (2013, p. 60). Um Qasem plants many kinds of seeds. She fixes the houses of those who left. When she arrives, she realizes that the soldiers have built a dam in an effort to be protected from any amphibious attacks by Iranian divers, an action that dried out the area around the village. Responding to her suggestions, the soldiers put pipes to help irrigate the land. In addition to her feeling of responsibility towards nature, Um Qasem feels an obligation towards the other humans to draw their attention to their collaborative relationship with nature. This argument is supported by Matthew Chovanec (2020), who has approached the *Old Woman and the River* as part of his research on bioregional literature. In his article he interprets Um Qasem’s actions as actions of a person “deeply rooted in and responsible to a specific place.” He describes her as a woman “re- inhabiting” her village. She chooses not to ignore the consequences of war, but to take an action.

Thus, Ismail suggests that nature can form a way of bonding humans together. He presents the ability of the land to bond humans together, ultimately allowing them to have a special kind of relationship. A deeper connection to the beauty and wisdom of nature has been ignited in the hearts of the soldiers by Um Qasem. One of the soldiers wonders, “if you tried ploughing this orchard all on your own, it would take you six months to finish.” She answers, “God bless your helping hands.” Then the narrator goes on, “working together under Private Jasem’s directions, ten soldiers set about shovelling through the soil of Um Al-Barhee orchard. Then they smoothed the ground over and traced out a grid of parallel rectangles” (Ismail, 2019, p.107). In fact, nature unites

them. "What would you like to plant first?" Private Jasem asks her. A sense of excitement overcame her. "Everything!" A week later the green shoots of okra, sunflowers, and corn began to break through the top of the soil" (2019, p.107). Um Qasem draws the soldiers' attention to their obligation towards the land. Reviving the land gives them a great bonding experience.

Private Jasem has always been the one who helps Um Qasem planting the land in Sabiliyat. She discovers that, "Jasem's love for the land rivalled hers" (p. 109). These words show how Jasem loves the land; this love will force him to come back even when he knows that his injury will exempt him from military service. Sharing love for nature makes Um Qasem and Jasem feel a kind of affinity. For example, Jasem is sitting beside her, when he says to her that he finds it difficult to call her Um Qasem. She exclaims "why?", in answer he replies, "I feel I'd like to say Mother." Her eyes sparkled with pleasure. "I have three sons, you're now my fourth," she answers (Ismail, 2019, p.110). Later Private Jasem is injured by a shell which landed where his tent was pitched, resulting in the loss of his left hand. He is stunned to see that he has lost his hand. Then when he begins to regain consciousness, he asks, "Where is she?" (2019, p.111), referring to Um Qasem. Apparently, nature seems to be connecting people. Also, he refuses to allow his exemption to be an excuse not to return to Sabiliyat. "He fumbled for a few moments while he fitted the hook onto the stub of his arm. Then he asked, "How are things with our syrup press?" She didn't need to think long. "We were waiting for you to come back." She sprung to her feet. "Now we can get back to work" (Ismail, 2019, p.125). This quotation serves mainly to bolster Francis Fukuyama's argument of human nature.

In fact, Private Jasem's return to Sabiliyat proves a deep intimacy to the people there- an intimacy created by reviving the land. This bond can be explained through an analysis of human nature provided by Fukuyama. He argues that "human nature is the source of all moral values, rights and duties, and that biotechnology poses a grave threat to the world because it could change human nature" (2003, p.101). Human

nature is defined by him as “the sum of the behavior and characteristics that are typical of the human species, arising from genetic rather than environmental factors” (p.130). Nature, as presented in *The Old Woman and the River*, is capable of nourishing human nature.

Additionally, Astrida Neimanis provides some insightful remarks that can be related to the novel. She investigates the fact that the human body is mostly formed of water. This fact suggests a relationship between the human and other bodies (2017, p. 2). Considering this view, this article argues that this relationship can justify the bond between Um Qasem and the river. This bond drives her to destroy the dams preventing its water from irrigating the land. She helps it regain its function as a source of life. Neimanis further explains how viewing the humans as “bodies of water” connects the human to nature. She adds that this is a call to “consider our ethical responsibility” towards other living creatures of water (4). In fact, assuming responsibility towards nature is one of the posthuman ethics (p.17). Neimanis invites the reader to reconceptualize embodiment. The human is no longer an isolated creature, but rather connected to the water systems. This perspective challenges the long-held view adopted by Humanims. Um Qasem symbolizes this sense of responsibility toward the river, nature, and humans.

Um Qasem suffers a lot to reach Sabiliyat to fulfill her husband’s wish to be buried in Sabiliyat and to live where her memories reside. One of the lieutenants wonders, “Nobody wants to live in a danger zone. Why are you so keen to stay?” She answers, “The request of my husband, Bu Qasem” then she adds, “this is not only about Bu Qasem, I can’t go on living away from here” (Ismail, 2019, p.43). When realizing the barren state of Sabiliyat, her desire to stay becomes a desire to replant and revive her place of birth and memories. This tendency to risk her life for reviving her hometown can be interpreted through an understanding of the relationship between virtue and happiness as illustrated in *Nicomachean Ethics* by Aristotle. He maintains that, “virtues are concerned with actions and passions” and every passion and every action is accompanied by pleasure and pain” (2009, p. 4).

Apparently, Um Qasem feels happy when accomplishing anything useful related to her homeland. Aristotle states that those “who do acts for their pleasantness and nobility do them with pleasure” (2009, p. 31). What drives Um Qasem to risk her life for reviving the land is the feeling of pleasure she gets from this action. Additionally, she encourages the soldiers to work with her to share this feeling of pleasure. This feeling will be culminated when realizing human- nature collaborative relationship.

Luc Ferry (1992) notes that “while virtue, as Aristotle believes, is the realization, for each being, of that which constitutes his telos, simultaneously his essence and his end, its actualization coincides far more with happiness than not” (p.15). Hence, one of elements driving Um Qasem to stay in Sabiliyat even at the time of war is the feeling of happiness attained by being united to nature. This feeling of happiness can also be attributed to her positive attitude towards nature. Barbara Herrnstein Smith (2006) provides an insightful explanation. She points out that the “myriad factors motivating someone to appeal for responsibility toward one group and not as much a question about socialization, political leanings and individual temperament as it is about being persuaded by an ethical cause” (p.153). Smith’s analysis here sums up Um Qasem’s motivations for acting responsibly towards nature. Um Qasem is eager to fight against all the rules set by the military troops in order to unite man to nature, and to draw the attention of the soldiers to how nature, which has been severely harmed by them, can still give. Hence, Um Qasem is motivated by a feeling of responsibility towards humans and nature. The collaborative relationship brings her deep happiness. The main focus of this article has been presented, but it is important to briefly allude to some previous studies conducted in Arabic and English on the novel.

Regarding previous studies on Ismail’s *The Old Woman and the River*, they centered on Arabic articles dealing with some of its themes in addition to some reviews written in English. The reviews published in English include a short article entitled “*A wartime novel that’s tender, charming, and donkeyphilic*” by L. Qualey (2019) which centers

on a general overview of the plot. It briefly presents the novel as a narrative of war combined with folktale elements. Additionally, Riyadh Review of Books focuses on a brief analysis of the protagonist as embodying “the resilience of the human spirit.” In the sense that, it celebrates “human capacity for renewal and rejuvenation”(online source). Approaching the novel from a posthumanist perspective elaborates on this statement in an academic way. Additionally, the novel has been interestingly discussed by Eleni Zaras (2020) as a novel that challenges the nationalistic narratives justifying and glorifying the Iran- Iraq war, celebrating the victims as martyrs. Zaras also focuses briefly on referring to the notion of heroism as presented by Um Qasem. Referring to some of the Arabic studies to the reader can also offer a broader vision of the novel.

Review of Some of the Arabic Studies on *The Old Woman and the River*

Saadi Saleh (2023) has presented an analytical study of the element of place in *Al Sabiliyat*. In this article Saadi reveals the meaning of conflict in life through an investigation of the significance of place and time in the novel by adopting the descriptive- analytical approach. In another article by Nagwa Jumaa (2020), she studies the narrator and the narratee as two major factors of the narrative discourse. This point is also investigated by Adel Khamis (2020) who also comments on how Ismail masters the narrative discourse. Furthermore, Khalil Al-Jizawi (2022) sheds light on the journey of self-knowledge and reclaiming the biography of the place. He presents the devastation and destruction caused by the war. Additionally, the rhetoric of telepathy has been explored by Mahmoud Farghali (2019). He illustrates how telepathy moves the narrative forward and constructs its significance. This is accomplished through Um Qasem’s journey back home. Although she has been accompanied only by the remains of her husband and her donkey, her journey is a journey of rebirth, and appreciation of the value of life. He discusses how the real presence is embodied in the remains of her husband. His presence in her dreams guides her and becomes a

narrative force. In fact, investigating the narratives that break the gap between the human, non-human, and the supernatural has been done by other writers such as Pronami Bhattacharyya. In her study of Easterine Kire's *When the River Sleeps* (2014), Bhattacharyya presents a posthumanist analysis. Thus, the researcher seeks to focus on nature and the posthuman as represented in the figure of Um Qasem, rather than the supernatural element in the novel. One of the main aims of this article has been to illuminate how *The Old Woman and the River* embodies many of the principles of posthumanism. Many of these principles have been discussed through the body of this research.

Conclusion

Most of the works dealing with war depict the horrors witnessed by survivors, the tragedies of those who lost their homes, families, and lives, and the sorrowful events that befall the main character. Ismail, however, managed to present a different story- a story of hope. It is also a story about nature and its lasting effect on humans. In *The Old Woman and the River*, an old woman is deployed as the protagonist of this novel. This physically weak woman challenges everything around her, in the sense that the will of the weak person can alter the consequences of the inhumane actions of the strong and oppressive powers. She is used by Ismail as a weapon against all that can demolish the pure human instinct- the instinct that guarantees living a peaceful and harmonious life. She values the plants, animals, rivers, and every source of life. She reminds the soldiers, as well as readers, with things that have been buried under the orders of those who decide to wage a war. Ismail challenges the stereotypical narratives of war: firstly, by presenting this physically weak but strong-willed woman as the protagonist that drives the action forward. Secondly, he manages to draw a picture of a harmonious relationship between human and nature out of the destructive effects of a long bloody war.

This article investigates posthuman critical theory as clarified through an analysis of Ismail's *The Old Woman and the River*. By directing a qualitative study, the article surveys recent scholarly production in the field. It has been an attempt to answer four major questions that have been presented in the introduction. Regarding the first one, the article offers an understanding of man's place in the universe by providing a

critique of man's exceptionalism adopted by Humanism. It also rejects man's centrality. Additionally, it shows that man can never be exempt from the consequences of destroying nature, a principle related to the "Anthropocene," a concept that was approached in this article.

As for the second research question, the article provides a redefinition of man's relationship to nature, by showing his obligation to respect nature and its needs. It also highlights a critical understanding of *The Old Woman and the River* by showing what exactly it does mean to be human according to Ismail. Um Qasem's attitude towards nature reinforces human-nature collaborative relationship. She, as a posthuman figure, helps the soldiers reconsider a reconciliation with nature after destroying it for military reasons. This reconciliation redefines human-nature relationship. Man can no longer decide ending its life or destroying it, instead; he should see this relationship as a collaborative one.

The third question is answered through providing an analysis of the novel. Apparently, nature's rewards highlight its ability to change the attitude of soldiers, from destroying it to reviving it. Nature strips away man's belief in his superiority, obliging him to show his respect by replanting it. In Ismail's novel, Um Qasem becomes the spokesperson for nature. Caring for the place that was destroyed by war prompts the soldiers to co-operate, creating a feeling of attachment to nature. This feeling compels soldier Jasem to go back to Sabiliyat after being injured. He chooses to help nature regaining its life back, while nature helps him enjoy a feeling of satisfaction, achievement, and nice bonding moments with other humans. The ending offers a vision that, even during the time of war, such attainment is possible.

Ismail portrays this unconventional tale of war not to tell us about who is victorious, but rather to give us a new vision of war, life, and existence. War, for Ismail as presented in this novel, is a war against man's feeling of superiority over the other living beings. It is a war against his arrogance that blinds him to see other living beings as his partners on earth. In the novel, the soldiers, at the beginning, made all the procedures to maintain control over the river and to make sure no intruders get close. This entails depriving the river and the lands of the means of life, a fact they were inattentive to. Ismail concludes that war means fighting for what binds us to the other living beings. Um Qasem takes the lead by drawing the attention of the soldiers to nature as a living being. Life, for

Um Qasem, means giving life to the river, the plants, and the land, even if this entails leaving her children, enduring traveling a long distance, and defying the military orders. She feels alive only when she unites the soldiers to nature. To her, life is worth living only when humans manage to transcend the feeling of superiority imposed upon other living beings. The notion of existence, for her, means being in a place where she can reconnect man to nature. Hence, analyzing the novel from a posthumanist perspective explains Ismail's vision of war, life, and existence.

References

- Al-Jizawi, K. (2022, January). *The search for identity and the recovery of place in the novel Al-Sabilyat, or the biography of Umm Qasim by Ismail Fahd Ismail*. Al-Bayan Journal, (618), 78-86.
- Al-Zahrani, A. K. (2020, December 10). *Sabilyat Fahd Ismail: The miracle of Umm Qasim and her donkey*. Al-Madina Newspaper. <https://www.al-madina.com/article/710899>
- Aristotle. (2009). *Nicomachean ethics* (D. Ross, Trans.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. North Carolina: Duke University Press.
- Bhattacharyya, P. (2024). Ecology of the 'Other': A Posthumanist Study of Easterine Kire's *When the River Sleeps* (2014). *Humanities*, 13(1), 19.
- Braidotti, R. (2018 a). Posthuman critical theory. In R. Braidotti & M. Hlavajova (Eds.), *Posthuman glossary* (pp. 339-342). New York: Bloomsbury.
- Braidotti, R. (2018 b). A theoretical framework for the critical posthumanities. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 35(1), 1-31. <https://journals.sagepub.com/home/tcs>
- Braidotti, R. (2019). *Posthuman knowledge*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Braidotti, R. (2013). *The posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Braidotti, R., & Bignall, S. (2018). Posthuman systems. In R. Braidotti & Simone Bignall (Eds.), *Posthuman ecologies: Complexity and process after Deleuze* (pp. 1-16). New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Callus, I., et al. (2014). Introduction: Dis/locating posthumanism in European literary and critical traditions. *European Journal of English Studies*, 18(2), 103-120.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13825577.2014.916999>.

Chovanec, M. (2020, December 10). *Bioregional Imaginings in Two Recent Mesopotamian Novels*. Jadaliyya. Retrieved from <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/42094/Bioregional-Imagining-in-Two-Recent-Mesopotamian-Novels>

Christ, C. P. (1990). Rethinking theology and nature. In I. Diamond & G. F. Orenstein (Eds.), *Reweaving the world: The emergence of ecofeminism* (pp. 59–69). New York: Sierra Club

Books.

De Montaigne, M. (1957). *The complete essays of Montaigne* (D. F. Donald, Trans.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Farghali, M. (2019, February). *The rhetoric of telepathy in the novel Al-Sabilyat by Ismail Fahd Ismail*. Al-Arabi Magazine, (723). <http://alarabi.nccal.gov.kw/Home/Article/17423>

Ferry, L. (1992). *The new ecological order* (C. Volk, Trans.). London: The University of Chicago Press.

Fukuyama, F. (2003). *Our posthuman future: Consequences of the biotechnology revolution*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Griffin, S. (1989). Split culture. In J. Plant (Ed.), *Healing the wounds: The promise of ecofeminism* (pp. 7–17). London: Green Print.

Guattari, F. (2000). *The three ecologies* (I. Pindar & P. Sutton, Trans.). New Jersey: The Athlone Press.

Haraway, D. (2004 a). Otherworldly conversations; Terran topics; Local terms. In *The Haraway reader* (pp. 115-151). London: Taylor & Francis.

Haraway, D. (2004 b). The promises of monsters: A regenerative politics for inappropriate/d others. In *The Haraway reader* (pp. 290-324). London: Taylor & Francis.

- Hayles, N. K. (1999). *How we became posthuman: Virtual bodies in cybernetics, literature, and informatics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Herbrechter, S. (2018). Critical posthumanism. In R. Braidotti & M. Hlavajova (Eds.), *Posthuman glossary* (pp. 94-97) New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Herbrechter, S. (2013). *Posthumanism: A critical analysis*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Heroux, E. (2009). Guattari's triplex discourses of ecology. In B. Herzogenrath (Ed.), *An [un] likely alliance: Thinking environment [s] with Deleuze/Guattari* (pp. 176-195). New Castle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Ismail, F. (2019). *The old woman and the river* (S. Vasalou, Trans.). Northampton: Interlink Books.
- Jumaa, N. M. (2020). *Transmission and reception in the novel Al-Sabilyat by Ismail Fahd Ismail*. Basra Studies Journal, (37), 149–174. <http://www.iasj.net/iasj/article/202712>
- Lau, C. (2018). Posthuman literature and criticism. In R. Braidotti & M. Hlavajova (Eds.), *Posthuman glossary* (pp. 347-349). New York: Bloomsbury.
- Malone, K., & Murris, K. (2022). Human exceptionalism. In K. Murris (Ed.), *A glossary for doing postqualitative, new materialist, and critical posthumanist research across disciplines* (pp. 68-70). New York: Routledge.
- Malone, K., & Bozalek, V. (2022). Post-anthropocentrism. In K. Murris (Ed.), *A glossary for doing postqualitative, new materialist, and critical posthumanist research across disciplines* (pp. 96-98). New York: Routledge.
- Neimanis, A. (2017). *Bodies of water: Posthuman feminist phenomenology*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Nayar, K. P. (2014). *Posthumanism*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Qualey, M. L. (2019, October 28). *A wartime novel that's tender*,

charming, and donkeyphilic.
 ArabLit.<https://arablit.org/2019/10/28/a-wartime-novel-thats-tender-charming-and-donkeyphilic/>

Rawabet Center for Research and Strategic Studies. (2021, March 6). *Treaties and agreements in the roots of the Shatt al-Arab conflict between Iraq and Iran to this day* [Translated from

Arabic by the author]. <https://rawabetcenter.com/archives/128399>

Riyadh Review of Books. (n.d.). *The Old Woman and the River*. Retrieved June 3, 2025, from <https://riyadhrb.com/book/the-old-woman-and-the-river/>

Saleh, M. S. (2023). *Place in the novel Al-Sabilyat by Ismail Fahd Ismail: An aesthetic analytical study*. Journal of the Babylon Center for Humanities Studies, 13(4), 371–388. <http://doi.org/10.33843/1152-013-004-018>

Smith, B. H. (2006). *Scandalous knowledge: Science, truth, and the human*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Starhawk. (1990). Power, authority, and mystery: Ecofeminism and earth-based spirituality. In I. Diamond & G. F. Orenstein (Eds.), *Reweaving the world: The emergence of ecofeminism* (pp. 73–85). New York: Sierra Club Books.

Wallace, J. (2010). Literature and posthumanism. *Literature Compass*, 7(8), 692-701. Blackwell Publishing.

Walter, N. (1997). *Humanism: What's in the word*. London: Rationalist Press Association.

Williams, J. (2018). Time and the posthuman: Rosi Braidotti and A. W. Moore on the posthuman and anthropocentrism after Deleuze's philosophy of time. In R. Braidotti & S. Bignall (Eds.), *Posthuman ecologies: Complexity and process after Deleuze* (pp.105-123). New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Wolfe, C. (2010). *What is posthumanism?* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- Zalloua, Z. (2019). Posthumanism. In J. R. D. Leo (Ed.), *The Bloomsbury handbook of literary and cultural theory* (pp. 310-323). London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Zaras, E. (2020, May). *The Old Woman and the River*. *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, 39(3), 67–68.