

The Self in Feminist Writing

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Abstract

This study examines the psychological dimensions of the self in Haifa Bitar's *A Woman of Two Storeys* through a reading centred on the heroine Nazik. It explores how the novel represents the inner life of women under the pressure of patriarchal authority, religious discipline, and social restriction. The analysis focuses on a range of intertwined emotional and psychological states, including anxiety, fear, anger, hatred, sadness, jealousy, desire, and conflict between the body and soul. Through Nazik's fragmented consciousness, the novel reveals a profound struggle between instinct and restraint, longing and prohibition, self-assertion and guilt. The text thus offers a powerful representation of female suffering and of the divided self in feminist writing.

Keywords: feminist writing; selfhood; psychological conflict; Haifa Bitar; *A Woman of Two Storeys*

Introduction

Many Arab women novelists begin the production of their works from their sense of injustice and oppression within a domineering patriarchal society filled with pressures from several directions. Thus, the woman writer has come to possess a subjective cause through which she moves from reality to narration so that her novel is saturated with women's issues in their various dimensions, addressing new themes and meanings (love, the body, constraints, injustice, divorce, etc.). The novel we have studied, entitled *A Woman of Two Storeys*, by the novelist Haifa Bitar, proceeds on this basis. Through this work, she sought to identify the secrets of women's psychological aspects and to understand what effects they carry in reality. Her narration of the novel came through the voice of a woman whose condition speaks and embodies her aim of affirming her self-hood. This psychological issue, and the sadness, hatred, and loss that resulted from it, are brought to the fore for us. Hence, we undertake an analytical psychological reading of *A Woman of Two Storeys* by Haifa Bitar.

Anxiety and Fear

Anxiety is generally defined, according to the researcher Ahmad al-Zabadi, as "an unpleasant emotional experience suffered by the individual when he feels fear or threat from something that he is unable to identify clearly and precisely; this state is often accompanied by

physiological changes such as an increased heartbeat, high blood pressure, loss of appetite, an accelerated rate of breathing, and a feeling of suffocation. . .”¹

This condition is embodied in the novel *A Woman of Two Storeys* through the heroine Nazik, who desires fame and lives in anxious anticipation, waiting for someone to help her publish her novel and bring it to light. This is what we find in the following passage: “I wondered in great anxiety how these novels would come to light. Who would undertake them? Who would help me? Publishing costs more than I can afford. Might the country's famous writer extend a helping hand to me? Is it not his duty to help me and take me under his care, just as many helped him?”²

Nazik's acquaintance with the country's writer and her attachment to him stem from her hope that he would acknowledge her writing to elevate her to the rank of the great celebrities, as she says in expressing this: “I knew that we knew that we lived in an age in which a person cannot, by himself, prove his talent and compel others to hear his voice, unless he is supported by a powerful party.”³

In the novel, anxiety develops to the point of frustration because Nazik does not feel at ease with the routine that has come to dominate her life and deprived her of the pleasure of living. This is made clear in her words: “It is a frustration centuries old; I must also treat the rust of the deadly routine that weaves the days of my life into tightly interlaced and contiguous threads, tightening their grip around my neck and leaving me in a state of severe breathlessness without, however, killing me.”⁴

Frustration was compounded for the heroine by the cultured men whom she had known and approached in the hope of attaining fame; their sole concern, once they became acquainted with an intellectual woman possessed of thought, was to sleep with her. She says in this context, “I used to be struck by violent frustrations because of the behavior of certain intellectuals, leaders of important cultural forums.”⁵

The feeling of anxiety intensified to the point of self-reproach and pangs of conscience because she had opposed and transgressed the norms of society. She called herself to account for everything she had done: “Is anxiety not the mirror of the torment of conscience? This is what I kept thinking about throughout the days after the dinner at the writer's house. Was I not myself? I was a troubled and confused woman, plunging into vague thoughts that refused to become clear to me, while a continual feeling of disgust clung to me. I knew that its source was the evening spent with the country's writer and his clique.”⁶

The sense of guilt that would seize the heroine as a result of anxiety was expressed through the reaction of weeping as an act of atonement for her sins at the moment she went to meet the priest: “One o'clock in the afternoon was her appointment with the priest. Since the morning, a strong desire to weep had assailed her. She resisted it fiercely, imploring her eyes to postpone

¹ Saadia Abdelaoui, *Psychological and Behavioural Problems among Children in the First Three Years of Primary School and Their Relationship to Academic Achievement* (master's thesis, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Psychology, Mouloud Mammeri University, Tizi Ouzou, 2012), 31.

² Haifa Bitar, *A Woman of Two Storeys* (Lebanon: Arab Scientific Publishers, n.d.), 16.

³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴ Bitar, *A Woman of Two Storeys*, 22.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

the shedding of tears until the appointment with the priest. Her tears would reinforce her suffering; he would know how tormented and lost she was. However, her eyes continued to trickle what they had been sipping slowly throughout the hours of the day until the time of her appointment with the priest arrived.”⁷

Her tears also flowed from the intensity of her remorse over loving a young Muslim man and violating the teachings of her Christian religion, as the novelist says: “Tears of remorse streamed from her eyes. He rose and embraced her, saying to her, ‘Nazik, my child, do not torment yourself with remorse. All human beings make mistakes. I shall pray for you every day so that your soul may find peace.’”⁸

Fear is “the affective state of the instinct to flee, considered as a primary emotion resulting from a dangerous stimulus, with flight as its tendency.”⁹ A person feels fear when they sense a threat, and it is a reaction. It falls within the psychological and behavioural aspects that were manifested with complete clarity in the novel through the disturbances experienced by Nazik because of her fear of religion. Since she came from an Orthodox Christian family, she was obliged to follow its teachings. However, the lessons she was receiving only increased her fear of God: “She was afraid to confess before her parents that she felt the burden of fear and anxiety because of these lessons, which made her feel that God was lying in wait for her at every moment, recording her sins in a great ledger in order to call her to account for them on the day of resection.”¹⁰

The heroine fell into a crisis of fear over discussing matters of the body because the religion in which she had been raised subjugated the body and held it in contempt. The spiritual instructors used to efface the subject of the body in their meetings: “Throughout her adolescent years, she felt, against her will, the baseness of the body and the loftiness of the soul. Not once were sexual matters of life discussed with the adolescents in whose bodies desires were erupting.”¹¹ The same was true of the word “divorce,” whose impact on Nazik’s psyche was so severe that it plunged her into a state of fear and terror over family talk and the scandal of society: “She collapsed onto the sofa, wondering what the solution might be. She reread the scrap of paper, and her gaze halted at the sentence: ‘For my part, I cannot continue in what they have planned for me?!’ What could he mean? Divorce!! The harshest forms of terror were embodied for her in the word “divia”. She flung the cup of Nescafé far away, scattering it, while saying through clenched teeth: ‘What an overwhelming scandal!’¹²

In another passage, it is said, “She summoned their images into the prison of her soul in Paris and heard them all saying: beware of scandal; what matters above all is concealment.”¹³

⁷ Bitar, *A Woman of Two Storeys*, 80.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁹ Faraj Abd al-Qadir Taha et al., *Dictionary of Psychology and Psychoanalysis*, 190.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹¹ Bitar, *A Woman of Two Storeys*, 30.

¹² *Ibid.*, 114.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 116.

Anger and Hatred:

“It is an emotional arousal manifested in intense fervour, whether through verbal or physical expression or through an aggressive tendency that is sometimes difficult to restrain and control. The body is regarded as the site of observable physiological and nervous exchanges.”¹⁴

The emotion of anger arises from a person’s exposure to frustration and feelings of hatred and hostility. The novelist Haifa Bitar portrayed this in Nazik's anger at the conduct of the writer, who attempted to molest her when he offered to drive her home in his car: “No sooner had I sat beside him in his car than his hand shot straight towards me, with an extraordinary lust and craving. I gasped in terror and pushed his hand away, but it returned insistently towards its intended aim. . . and I screamed, threatening that I would open the car door and throw myself out. . . I screamed to the point that I no longer recognised my own voice; it was closer to a bray: 'Enough, you animal! Who do you think I am? How can you behave like this?!'”¹⁵ This behavior led her to feel that the man regarded women with contempt, and she, in turn, responded to him in kind.

Proceeding from this idea, the heroine’s hatred toward the man intensified to the point of contempt. She says, “At many moments, I felt an unlimited hatred for the famous writer, and I grew angry with myself to the point of despising it, since I was bringing happiness to his ageing heart and conveying false warm longings that he believed and in which he rejoiced, because he was still capable of warming a woman’s feelings.”¹⁶

She also says, “I was boiling with anger because of all the ambiguities in my relationship with the writer, and more than once I was on the verge of lifting the receiver and screaming, demanding my letters and informing him that I wanted no help from him whatsoever.”¹⁷

Nazik’s anger toward her family also appeared because of their silence in the face of wrongdoing in exchange for money, position, and status for the sake of their own interest: “She exploded at her parents: Why did you not sever relations with the cousin who married the brother of a minister?! And why did you disown the other cousin who married an ordinary Muslim young man, and why did your hearts not soften towards her despite the passing of years and despite your hearing that her seven-year-old son had died of a malignant illness?”¹⁸

Her hatred for her family increased because they controlled her life and made decisions according to their own mentality: “She rose from her bed and walked through the haze of darkness, having seen her family, in her mind’s eye, floating on the surface of sleep. She looked at them with a coldness veiled in hatred. She hated their rigidity, which governed her life, and the domination of their ideas over it.”¹⁹

Her anger was also embodied in her reaction to the stance and words of the country’s writer behind her back to the publisher so that he would not help her or publish her writing, for fear that she might take his place and fame through the quality of what she had written. Nazik says, “She burst out angrily: how astonishing, how spiteful and selfish he is. However, anyone

¹⁴ Saadia Abdelaoui, *Psychological and Behavioural Problems among Children in the First Three Years of Primary School and Their Relationship to Academic Achievement*, 37.

¹⁵ Bitar, *A Woman of Two Storeys*, 45.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁷ Bitar, *A Woman of Two Storeys*, 75.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

watching how he indulged me during lunch would say: what a marvellous human being, what a great writer who takes a budding woman writer under his care.”²⁰

A storm of anger also rose in Nazik against her husband after she had grown weary and distressed by their situation: “One evening, he was taking her home after they had lunched together, and she found herself, as although possessed, erupting into insults and abuse in front of him, threatening to expose his affair before his family and hers, telling him that he must commit himself to her and leave the French whore.”²¹

Sadness:

Sadness is a natural state through which every human being passes. It consists of psychological pain that lasts for a temporary period and is accompanied by weeping, a sense of dissatisfaction, and a great deal of negative energy.

Husayn Manasirah says, “Such is the image of contemporary women’s literature, overshadowed by a dark cloud of sadness and pain. Sadness engulfs its leading figures, and life appears before them faltering and disturbed, marked by the struggle of death, the struggle of cowives, or the struggle of civilisation, and by the crises of the self between marriage, love, motherhood fulfilled, and motherhood denied. . .”²²

The novel clearly conveys a sense of sadness through the character of Nazik, who is overtaken by it in several situations. She felt sorrow because she was regarded as being at fault and guilty, even though she knew that she had done nothing: “She felt a heavy sadness as she sensed the great oppression descending upon her. She was the guilty one who had committed no wrong. Every morning and evening, she had to stand in reverence, recite Lord's Prayer, and ask God's forgiveness for her sins. ”²³

Haifa Bitar portrays the heroine as sad, frustrated, and exhausted because she had not entered employment and was suffering under the spectre of unemployment that had settled over her life: “Every day, I would spend long hours with a withered, grim face, as although it had never smiled. In many instances, I was afraid to look in the mirror lest I see the horror of the sadness sedimented in my eyes and draped across the features of my face. The outcome of everything was exhaustion, that destructive feeling created by unemployment.”²⁴

Sadness continues in Nazik’s heart because of her sense of defeat under the weight of family and religion, after engaging in faltering mental journeys and posing philosophical questions upon her return to reality: “She would suddenly stop and ask herself sorrowfully, feeling how utterly defeated she was: Who am I?”²⁵

That which increased Nazik’s suffering and intensified her feeling of sadness was the pain of separation, estrangement, and longing for الوطن, since she was living in a country she did not know, especially after she discovered her husband's betrayal when they went to live in Paris. She says, “After two months of harsh endurance of his continual absence on the pretext of hospital duty, I discovered, purely by chance, the great deception of her marriage. . . Hardly

²⁰ Ibid., 182.

²¹ Bitar, *A Woman of Two Storeys*, 132.

²² Hocine Manasirah, *Feminism in Culture and Creativity*, 114.

²³ Bitar, *A Woman of Two Storeys*, 27.

²⁴ Ibid., 22.

²⁵ Ibid., 101.

had she entered the small flat when the shock rooted her to the spot: her husband was completely naked with a woman who tried to conceal her nakedness with a sofa cushion. A mere gasp rose from the depths of a wound that split her in two; she turned into a statue... writhing in pain at the ugliness of the betrayal." Here, the novelist conveys the extent of the heroine's suffering in a homeland that was not her own, where she was lost and alone, with a husband who lacked even the minimum conditions of a life partner.

Similarly, the suffering of her only son, Habib, through illness after he was afflicted with a high fever and fell into a coma caused her to grieve for his condition and to suffer for the sake of his recovery and comfort: "In the emergency room, they took him away from her, stripped him of his clothes, then tested his reflexes with a small hammer, disinfected his lower back with iodine and alcohol, and inserted a long needle into his back. She cried out: What is this? Why are they torturing him? She felt as although tunnels of shadows were opening their mouths wide to swallow her. . . She began to touch his head and wring her hands." She feels intense sorrow and that her heart is swollen and wrung with pain; such is the condition of motherhood. In the character of Nazik, there is also embodied an emotion of sorrow and acute pain over the loss of her son through death and her longing for him, as expressed in her words: "I was howling in pain, and my entrails were making a rattling sound as although they were being torn apart. Yes, Habib, intense pain rends the entrails. I imagined that you had stirred and opened your eyes. Ah, Habib, how I longed for your eyes."

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²⁶ Bitar, *A Woman of Two Storeys*, 110.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 156–57.

apart. Yes, Habib, intense pain rends the entrails. I imagined that you had stirred and opened your eyes. Ah, Habib, how I longed for your eyes.”²⁸

Thus, the expressions of pain, howling, and tearing apart all fall within the context of sorrow and suffering. The writer addressed the theme of sadness by devoting an entire chapter to it, entitled “What Nazik Wrote after the Death of Her Little One.” Here, sadness appears with complete clarity, for she depicted in it painful and sorrowful scenes, all marked by anguish and gloom. She says, “Ah, Habib, a mere dot kills me from one shore to the other. Place a dot over the ha and it becomes 'akh.' I wrote beside your coffin like a slaughtered hen, saying 'akh, akh,' while you replied, 'ah, ah, Mama, Mama.' Ah, I shall never hear this word again, for the mother died after her son.”²⁹ The loss suffered by the mother, Nazik, of the dearest thing she possessed, namely, her son Habib, was tantamount to a sentence of death upon her. After she had found in him her object of fulfilment, her selfhood, and her hope, and after he had served as her purification from the defilement in which she had been living, she was transformed into a gloomy and sorrowful human being by the enormity of the calamity that had befallen her, especially in the words: “You did not die; it is I who am saturated with death at every moment.”³⁰

Nazik’s psychological condition, over which sadness and the circumstances to which she had come were wholly dominant, also clearly appears. The novelist says, “Sadness assailed her as she recalled how she had plunged into the abyss after having been pure as light. She abandoned Safwan, underwent an operation to restore her virginity, contracted a church marriage with a man she did not love, who in turn did not love her, and travelled to Paris. . . Tears overflowed as she asked herself: how had my life become so disfigured in so short a time?”³¹

Jealousy:

It is the emotion of anger, resentment, and vexation and is often accompanied by feelings of deficiency. It arises when the individual feels neglected or disregarded because jealousy grows out of the social situation and is always directed toward a person or people. Jealousy appears in children and adults alike in indirect ways, in the form of quarrelling and the spread of rumours, and in other indirect ways, such as daydreaming, sarcasm, and mockery.³² Jealousy is therefore an inwards emotion accompanied outwardly by manifestations associated with fear and anger.

Nazik's jealousy manifests when she challenges the writer and attempts to diminish his talent. She was jealous of him because he had attained fame and a position in society that he did not deserve. She desired to compete with him to attain them herself: “I would enter into a game of challenge with the famous writer, and through a series of unsponsored letters, which I deliberately intended to be literary texts of a high standard, I wanted to challenge him, to struggle with him, and to defeat him by means of my talent, which surpassed his. I wanted to hem him in with my renewed and wide-ranging culture and to place him face to face the senility

²⁸ Ibid., 160.

²⁹ Bitar, *A Woman of Two Storeys*, 164.

³⁰ Ibid., 163.

³¹ Ibid., 115.

³² Talat Mansour et al., *Foundations of General Psychology* (Egypt: Anglo Egyptian Bookshop, 2003), 154–55.

of his ideas, the withering of his talent, and the futility of most of his later works, which he issued book after book, so that one scarcely felt any difference between one book and another.

"³³ The heroine then goes on to admit this quite explicitly because of the intensity of her jealousy towards him, saying: "I fought him with my youth and my genuine talent, which had not yet made its way, but I do not hesitate to confess openly that I was jealous of him because he had lived for seventy-five years, during which he had reaped fame and wealth, and fortune had favoured him greatly, whereas I do not possess even half the years of his life."³⁴

Complexes of jealousy are also unconsciously planted in Nazik's psyche and become apparent when she telephones her beloved, Safwan, after her separation from him, when an American girl answers his telephone. At that moment, her latent love for him became evident: "A frenzy to telephone seized her. She repeated the attempt a third time, and then the shock struck her: a woman's voice saying in flawless English, 'Hello, hello'. . . She went mad with jealousy and anguish. She could not in any way accept that Safwan might love another woman besides her. He had adored her to such an extent that she had believed she would remain the queen of his heart for ever."³⁵ She had never imagined that her beloved could have another woman in his life who might take her place or whom he might treat as he had treated her.

Desire and Lust:

We may define desire, as it appears in the *Dictionary of Psychology*, as follows: "Desire refers to that conscious or unconscious drive to attain a certain goal; it is the individual's sense that something will satisfy his need or cause him satisfaction and comfort, such as the hungry person's desire to eat."³⁶

In the text of the novel, desire and lust are associated with the body, which occupies a prominent place in the discourse surrounding it. Lust emerges through Nazik's acquaintance with her friend's younger brother, with whom she has sexual relations and to whom she gives her body while their friends are chanting religious hymns, out of a desire to discover the body's longing: "When he bent down to kiss his sister and place the things on the ground, the opening of his shirt revealed a wide expanse of his captivating chest, covered with soft black hair. A burning arrow pierced her and split her in two. Was it the arrow of lust? And when he bent down, half kneeling, to greet her, her eyes enveloped him with the radiance of her longing for the man. She felt that the message had reached him completely because she sensed the hidden tremor that shook his being: his body had responded to the call of her body."³⁷

She also says, expressing the same theme: "She could abduct an adolescent and seduce him under the moonlight, eager to discover his body and to discover her own body through his."³⁸

We also find that she lived and experienced love when her desire and lust came together with Safwan in his flat and that she was always longing for him and desiring his scent: "She does

³³ Bitar, *A Woman of Two Storeys*, 18.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁵ Bitar, *A Woman of Two Storeys*, 135.

³⁶ Faraj Abd al-Qadir Taha et al., *Dictionary of Psychology and Psychoanalysis*, 214–15.

³⁷ Bitar, *A Woman of Two Storeys*, 38.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

not deny that she feels an irresistible attraction towards him; she longs for his kisses, his scent, and his looks, and lingers long in her bed while dreaming of him taking her in his arms.”³⁹

That emotional coldness, which Nazik experienced with her husband, Maher, when she discovered his betrayal and his abandonment of her alone in the house for several months, she compensated for through her relationship with her Tunisian colleague, Kamoun, to satisfy her desire, since he restored to her the femininity she had lost. This is evident through the novelist Haifa Bitar's narration of her psychological state during this relationship: “She set out towards him, feeling that beautiful absence of self generated within her by the speed of the métro, and when he opened the door to her, lust pierced her like a flash of lightning or an arrow of fire.”⁴⁰ We find that Nazik reveals the desire that had accompanied her since her youth when, upon reading the first novel of the country’s famous writer, she dreamed of entering into a relationship with him. She said, “I remembered that distant day, the day when his first novel captivated me, the one he wrote with sincerity, delicate feeling, and clear, pure ideas. At that time, he was poor and a man of principles. On that day, like thousands of adolescent girls, I dreamed that I would come to know the writer and that a love story would arise between us.”⁴¹ The heroine, Nazik, stirred all her desires and lusts and continued to gratify her passion, giving her body wholly to the man, especially to Safwan, whom she loved, and to the country’s writer, whom she hoped would be her path to fame.

Conflict between the Soul and the Body:

Upon reading the novel, we feel that the heroine, Nazik, displays a split personality through dialogue between her mind and her heart, as she struggles with herself when her husband asks her to return to him and open a new page in their life together. This is what Haifa Bitar indicates when she says: “Stormy emotions surged in her soul, rebuking her harshly: ‘You truly have no dignity. He returned to you only after the Frenchwoman cast him off. Who are you that he should do with you as he pleases, cast you aside for months, and then return to you? Have you forgotten that the most important quality a human being possesses is dignity? . . . Where has your dignity gone?’

“She shifted uneasily in her seat and said to the torrent of indignant words pouring out from her inflamed soul: ‘Wait, I have not yet decided. Did you not hear that I asked him to give me a week?’ She ventured on and added, ‘However, I have the right to consider his proposal. Perhaps we can begin anew. Both of us are defeated and lost. . . .’

“The harsh voice said mockingly: ‘Do you mean love?’

“She replied, ‘Perhaps, but I mean life. The threads of our two lives may become intertwined, and we may begin on a new basis.’

“The mocking voice burst into a gloating laugh: ‘How pitiable you are. It is they who are speaking through your throat. How successfully they have fashioned you, Nazik. You are nothing but a monstrosity.’

“She cried out in pain: ‘Enough, enough, be silent.’

³⁹ Ibid., 87.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 133.

⁴¹ Bitar, *A Woman of Two Storeys*, 61.

“She rushed away, fleeing from herself and from the room.”⁴²

Nazik also experienced what is known as the conflict between body and soul, as a verbal debate took place between two women within a single personality; that is, she split into two separate, contradictory women: the superego (the true self), which represented the Christian young woman accustomed to attending church meetings to learn spiritual life, and the ego (the false self), spiritually sinful. This means that the heroine became subject to two discordant calls or to a conflict between two forces, each striving against and colliding with the other: the woman of the lower floor, who represents the instincts and sanctifies lust, and the woman of the upper floor, who inclines towards reason and talent, regarding life as thought and art, a woman who despises and recoils from that lust.

Each of them compelled her to do a particular thing. This conflict is embodied in her expression of herself: “I feel that I am dividing into two women: the woman of the upper floor and the woman of the lower floor. I listened to the dialogue between them while lying on the broad bed, almost paralyzed.

“The woman on the lower floor said, ‘Why do you not yield to him? He is an attractive man, although he is in his sixties; however, his body is firm and beautiful. By God, my soul has withered from emotional deprivation, and my body has cracked from sexual deprivation. . .’

“The woman of the upper floor said with contempt: ‘Longing for a man! Say rather a bestial lust for a man, for you care for nothing but the wringing out of pleasure.’

“The woman on the lower floor replied, ‘And why not? Lust is something sacred. It is the only fire that does not die out, for if it were extinguished, life itself would perish. Lust is life.’

“The woman on the upper floor said, ‘You truly provoke my disgust. Life is nobler than those bestial lusts of yours.’

“The woman on the lower floor answered, ‘Very well. You are talent and the thinking mind, and I am lust and sex. I am the instincts that you despise, yet they will help you to be published. I am the one who will extend bridges for you. Let me out of the bottle. . .’

“The woman of the upper floor says, ‘Be silent. Your lechery arouses my revulsion. I needed many long days to purify myself from the defilement of your lust.’”⁴³

Nazik lived in a state of conflict between desires and prohibitions, and she suffered greatly from it. It was itself the conflict between the ego and the superego, and this conflict became a pathological condition that dominated her as a result of the religious upbringing she had received and the culture in which she had been raised. All these factors led her to dominate her personality and exert pressure upon her life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Haifa Bitar's *A Woman of Two Storeys* offers a profound psychological representation of the female self through the character of Nazik, whose inner world is marked by tension, fragmentation, and suffering. The novel reveals how anxiety, fear, anger, hatred, sadness, jealousy, and desire are not isolated emotional states but are interconnected manifestations of a deeply divided self shaped by patriarchal authority, religious constraints, and social expectations. Through this complex portrayal, Bitar exposes the conflict between

⁴² Bitar, *A Woman of Two Storeys*, 140–41.

⁴³ Bitar, *A Woman of Two Storeys*, 192–93.

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body and soul, instinct and morality, and personal longing and imposed restriction. The novel thus stands as an important example of feminist writing, giving voice to women's inner struggles and presenting the self as a contested space of pain, resistance, and identity search.