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THE REPRESENTATION OF
MIGRATION TO THE GULF
IN ARABIC NOVELS

BY
NOHA M. RADWAN

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The Representation of Migration to the Gulf in Arabic Novels

Thesis Proposal for the Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
for the Master of Arts Degree

Noha M. Radwan

Center for Arabic Studies/ Literature

Fall 1993

"It takes a great deal of history to produce a little literature"

Henry James, *The Life Of Nathaniel Hawthorne*

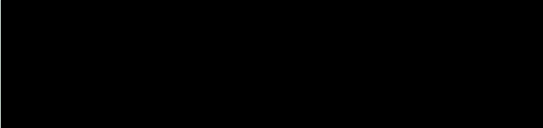
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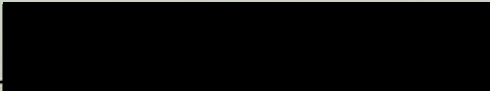
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Introduction

History and Fiction

"It takes a great deal of history

to produce a little literature"

Henry James: *The Life of Nathaniel Hawthorne*

Note

The MESA System of Arabic transliteration has been used when Arabic words, names and titles, were included in this thesis except when they were taken from published translations. In the case of quoting translations, I have kept the transliteration in the form which was used in the quoted text.

Introduction

History and Fiction

"It takes a great deal of history
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The novel was once seen as "la manière dont une société se parle".¹ This view of the novel as the voice of society is the basis of this thesis, which will attempt to explore the phenomenon of migration to the oil-rich Arab nations through a reading of a select number of novels in which this migration has been the common and most dominant theme. In this attempt, it will be assumed that the novel, despite its intrinsic quality as the product of an act of imagination, can sometimes be both a product and a reflection of societies and social change. This assumption is by no means new or unacceptable to many literary critics. In her book, *What's in the Novel*, the American critic, Helen Haines, states that "the novel emerges as an offspring of a social movement, and... reflects the activities, complexities, the human, social and moral problems, the satisfactions and inquietudes of the modern world with a more pervasive radiation than any other form of writing."² Inherent in Haines' statement is the conviction that the novel is not only an expression of the ideas, feelings and experiences of its author as an individual, but also his expression of these ideas, feelings and expressions as part of a society, as influenced by social, cultural and economic factors. This conviction is what renders the Arabic novels on the experience of migration to the

¹ Phillippe Sollers, quoted in Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1975, p.189.

² Helen E. Haines, *What's in A Novel*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1942. p. 3.

oil-rich Arab states an expression, a manifestation, of the migration as a social phenomenon.

By way of introduction to the thesis, I will provide a brief account of the social phenomenon of migration to the oil-rich Arab nations (to which I will sometimes refer as the Gulf). Then I will give a review of the Arabic novels in which this migration has been the main theme, and the theoretical basis for my view of them as indicative of the nature of the movement and its effects on Arab societies, and hence their literature. At the end of this introduction I will summarize the four novels which have been chosen for study.

Migration to the oil-rich nations in the Arab world started near the end of the 1950's, when oil became a major source of revenue for many of the Arab nations. Saudi Arabia, the Gulf countries, and Libya became distinctly wealthier than the rest of the Arab world. These oil-rich nations attracted natives of the poorer Arab countries. With the initiation of new projects and development schemes, these oil-rich nations demanded more labour, both skilled and unskilled. Many Arab intellectuals, professionals, and labourers therefore immigrated to these countries driven by their search for better job opportunities. These migration movements were substantial, and continued to increase over the three decades which followed. The Palestinians were among the earliest immigrants, due to their situation after the 1948 war, when they lost much of their homeland to the Israeli occupation. The historian, Albert Hourani, asserts that until the early sixties, most of the immigrants to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf were Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese.³

³ Albert Hourani, *The History of Arab Peoples*, Faber and Faber, London 1991. p.410.

In the seventies, Egyptians became the largest group of immigrants working in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the Gulf states. The total number of workers or the number of immigrants out of every country are not accurately known, but Hourani suggests that by the end of the seventies, the number may have been three million, and that about a third of the workers were Egyptian.⁴ The Egyptian migration movement was enhanced by the slow economic growth in Egypt, and the government's encouragement of it during the period of *infitāh*.

Migrant Arab labour was not limited to any skill or profession. Many were unskilled labourers, but there was a substantial number of highly skilled professionals and intellectuals who took jobs in both the civil service and private institutions. In all cases, the immigrants were always subservient to native superiors. Their position was always precarious and insecure. The situation became worse when the Arab migrants were later joined by migrant workers from South East Asia as well as India and Pakistan.

The migrant workers in the oil producing countries might earn more than they could hope to in their own countries, but they had no security and no possibility of improving their position by concentrated action. They could be removed at will, and there were others waiting to take their places. By the end of the 1970's they were even more vulnerable, since many of them no longer came from Arab countries, but were brought in temporarily and on contract from further east - from South Asia, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines or Korea.⁵

These migration movements proved to be one of the most important developments in the history of the Middle East. They have affected the societies in both the homelands of the migrants, and the countries to which they travelled. In Egypt, remittances of migrant labour became a major source of income for many families, and a major source of foreign currency for the government.

⁴ Ibid. p.426.

⁵ Ibid. p. 438.

Accounts of these migration movements and their effects became an inseparable part of any book on the modern history or politics of the region. The migration movements also became the subject of economic, sociological and political research, and the result was a substantial literature on the phenomenon, its nature, causes and effects.

Many literary works on the subject of this migration - novels, stories, poetry and plays - have been written by a large number of Arab writers, and are a significant indicator of the impact of the migration on the whole Arab world. Writers have expressed the social change through their discourse. Discourse in this context, as basically defined by Mikhail Bakhtin, is language as an utterance which is the product of not only its linguistic ingredients but also its historical, social and cultural context⁶. So defined, discourse is necessarily seen as a means of communicating thoughts and meaning which is not determined by its producer as an isolated individual, but also by the social, cultural and economic background of this individual. If we add the definition of the British critic, Terry Eagleton, to that of Bakhtin, that discourse is language used by a writer or speaker to convey meaning to a reader or a listener,⁷ we arrive at the conclusion that the language used by any writer is not an individual act. It is a social act influenced by its historical context. An analysis of this discourse will, therefore be not only an analysis of the thoughts of single writers, but an analysis of the expression of these thoughts, that is the novels, in its historical context. This thesis will be an analytical reading of this discourse in a selection of novels inspired by the migration movement.

⁶ Quoted in *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*, by Tveztan Todorov, translated by Wlad Godzich, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1984. p.26.

⁷ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1983. p.115.

Quite a few novels have dealt with the subject. Some were concerned with the life of the migrant workers in the Gulf, like *Bay' Nafs Bashariya* by Muḥammad al-Mansī Qandīl, *Najrān Taḥt as-Sifr* by Yaḥya Yakhluf, and Ibrāhīm 'Abd al-Majīd's *al-Balda al-Ukhrā*. Other novels have chosen to focus on the effect of the migration on the homeland societies of the émigrés. Both *Waga' al-Bi'ād* and *Balad al-Maḥbūb* by Yusuf al-Qa'īd are examples of novels that focus on the effect of the Egyptian emigration to the Gulf on the Egyptian society. A third group of novelists chose to focus on the effects of the migration on the individual migrant himself. 'Alā' ad-Dīb is an example of this third kind. His novel *Atfāl Bila Dumū'* is about the crisis of an Egyptian intellectual employed as a professor in a Saudi University, who discovers that after living in the Saudi city, Dalūk, for ten years, he has lost his sense of belonging to either Cairo, his home village or Dalūk. This categorization does not mean that any of the novels has been limited to a certain aspect of the migration movement. It just means that while all the novels touched on the movement in its totality, each chose to highlight certain aspects of it.

This thesis is based on the conviction that these works are indispensable for the understanding of the phenomenon of migration to the Arab oil-rich nations. This conviction is in turn based on the belief that novels can be social manifestations which inform the readers of many aspects of life, a belief which has been adopted by many writers and critics. The novelist and critic, Halim Barakat argues that "the novel is conceived of as a social product or manifestation which lends itself to analytical study like any other object in society. In this sense, it reflects reality, emerges out of reality, and constitutes an object of study."⁸ This is not to say that any of these works is an objective presentation of

⁸ Halim Barakat, *Visions of Social Reality in the Contemporary Arab Novel*, Papers in Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, January 1977. p.1

reality, but to say that neither is any other narrative, even when it claims to be a "historical narrative".

Historical narratives are narratives written within the domain of historiography with "history" as their content. Examples of such narratives in the Arab world are the writings of 'Abd al-Rahmān ar-Rāfi'ī on the history of the Egyptian nationalist movement from the turn of this century until 1951, as well as the writings of Dr. Rif'at as-Sa'īd on the Egyptian communist movement, and those of Aḥmad Ḥamrūsh about the 1952 revolution and many others.⁹ Such writings are narratives in the sense that they are accounts of successions of events in the form of stories. The events in historical narratives are, indeed, for the most part real, and can be proven to have happened. However, they share a few fundamental characteristics with many fictional narratives. This is especially true if those fictional narratives are of the type with which this thesis is concerned, that is, if they are inspired by the author's personal experience, an experience inevitably located in its historical context, and presented in the form of "realistic" novels.

All narrative forms are what the philosopher Louis O. Mink calls "cognitive instruments", "a form of human comprehension that is productive of meaning by its imposition of a certain formal coherence on a virtual chaos of events".¹⁰ In this aspect, both historical and fictional narratives are alike and

⁹ See

'Abd al-Rahmān ar-Rāfi'ī. *Tārīkh al-ḥaraka al-qawmiyya wa taṭawwur niẓām al-ḥukm fi Miṣr*, Cairo, 1929-51.

Aḥmad Ḥamrūsh, *Qiṣṣat thawrat thalatha wa 'ishrīn yuliyū*, Beirut 1974.

Dr. Rif'at as-Sa'īd, *Tārīkh al-ḥaraka ash-shyū'iya fi Miṣr*, Dār al-Thaqāfa al-Jadīda, Cairo, 1975.

¹⁰ Louis O. Mink, "Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument," in *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding*, ed. Robert H. Canary and Henry Kozicki (Madison, Wisconsin, 1978) p.132.

should lead us to reflect on the nature of that "meaning" which they produce. First, if we should assume that both historians and authors of fiction produce their texts, not while the events they describe take place, but later, then we should be aware that these texts are the construction of their memories, influenced, unconsciously, by the memory's tendency to reproduce comprehensible information from the primary messages that it has received. This cognitive function of the memory, which is the first step by which reality is set apart from any narration of it, can be further aided by the narrator's attempt to organize these constructions of the memory through selection, re-arrangement, and the insertion of causal and other relations between the parts of the construction. Even the historian's choice as to when to stop endows his or her narrative with an unreal factor, simply because the historian here invents a sequence to the events by which they come to an end, whereas the real sequence goes on.¹¹

This second step towards the narrativization of reality is always influenced, in varying degrees by the narrator's ideology. Two examples of how this happens are given by both Mink and the historian, Hayden White. Mink, not presuming any ulterior motives on the part of the historian, argues that the "deliverances of memory" are characterized by discontinuity and the presence of wide gaps between their parts, as well as lack of organization, coherence, and a meaningful closure. All of these characteristics are treated by historians, who rearrange the "deliverances of memory", fill in the gaps and culminate the sequence in a meaningful end. "But that requires the institution of a 'central subject'

¹¹ See Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Presentation of Reality" *Critical Inquiry* 7 (Autumn 1980) 5-27.

because otherwise there is no way of identifying what is a gap and what is not".¹² That choice of central subject is inevitably influenced by the ideology of the narrator.

White, on the other hand, does not vindicate historical narrative from being intrinsically and directly linked with ideology. He argues that "all knowledge produced in the human and social sciences lends itself to use by some ideology better than it does to some others. This is especially true of historical knowledge of the conceptually undetermined sort that appears in the form of the conventional narrative."¹³ He even admits to the impossibility of any "objective" interpretation of history, adding that the call for such objectivity often "emanates from centres of established political power and social authority and that this kind of tolerance is a kind of luxury which only devotees of dominant groups can afford. For subordinate, emerging or resisting social groups, this recommendation ... can only appear as another aspect of the ideology they are indentured to oppose."¹⁴

Whether the subjectivity of historical narrative is a political act or an inevitable part of the form, or both, is not within the scope of this thesis to judge. However, it is important to note that this subjectivity narrows the gap between historical and fictional narrative.

Another distinction which has been drawn between historical and fictional narrative is that the first narrates real events while the second narrates imagined events. Historians have argued that "history, unlike fiction, is

¹² Louis O. Mink, "Every Man His or Her own Annalist" *Critical Inquiry* 7 (Summer 1981) pp. 779, 780.

¹³ Hayden White, "The Politics of Historical Interpretation: Discipline and De-Sublimation" *Critical Inquiry* 9 (September 1982) p.136.

¹⁴ Ibid. p.137

supposed to represent real events, and therefore contribute to knowledge of the real world".¹⁵ White challenges the reality of the "real" events in history by bringing up the fact that historians are often required to "enter sympathetically into the minds or consciousnesses of human agents [who are the characters of earlier times] long dead to empathize with the[ir] intentions and motivations".¹⁶ He argues that this is an act of imagination on the part of historians, and that even though it is always subordinated to the "rules of evidence which require that whatever is imagined be consistent with what the evidence permits one to assert as a matter of fact", it is still "imagination precisely in the sense in which it is used to characterize the activity of the poet or novelist".¹⁷

Besides the "unreality" or fictionality of historical narrative discourse, that is, the part of it which is not dependent on the real events per se, one should also note the "reality" of fictional discourse, that part of it which is subordinated to facts. In his article, "The Writer as Remembrancer", the critic, George Steiner states that the relation between actuality and imagination has been changing since the French revolution:

The pressures of 'the real' have increased drastically. It is this pressure which underwrites the theory and practice of modern realism, the belief, largely unexamined from the close of the eighteenth century to Zola and Gorky, that all the acts of fiction, of *poiesis*, are finally accountable to documented truths of historical, economic and social experience. In Balzac's vaunt that future historians would require no more than the *Comedie Humaine* in order to be able to reconstruct a complete record of life in France from the close of the *ancien regime* to the 1830's, there is active... the new response of the writer to the claims of factual authenticity.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 123.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ George Steiner, "The Writer as Remembrancer: A Note on Poetics, 9 " *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* 22, (1973), Indiana University, p.52.

Balzac's "vaunt" here needs to be qualified. The *Comedie Humaine* cannot be more than a record of life in France during this period, seen from the perspective of the author, and marred by all the problems, which we have discussed earlier, that set narratives apart from the reality on which they are based. It remains however that his "fictional" narrative is comparable to many "historical" narratives on the same period.

Literary works, therefore, can actually help us understand "reality" as much as historical narratives. It is important at this point to note that "reality" is neither a definite entity nor is one perspective of it exclusive of another, even if they prove to be completely different, and that no narrative text can provide an objective reproduction of it. The impossibility of such a reproduction is asserted by the critic, Samia Mehrez, as she points out that:

Indeed, it is important to remember that every representation (whether historical or literary) is a distortion; that "reality" is always constructed by both the historian and the writer. The difference between the historiographical and the literary texts does not lie in which of the two is more "real". Rather, the difference lies in how the "real" is constructed and transformed within each text.¹⁹

Literary works, therefore, provide their recipients with their authors' perspective of reality, or a representation of his or her consciousness of it.

In his book on the sociology of the novel, the French philosopher Lucien Goldmann further suggests that gifted individuals are capable of presenting not only their consciousness of reality, but also of expressing the "collective consciousness" of a particular social group. Goldman suggests that the narrative

¹⁹ Samia Mehrez, "Re-writing History: 'The Day The Leader Was Killed' By Naguib Mahfouz", *Egyptian Writers between History and Fiction: Essays on Naguib Mahfouz, Son'allah Ibrahim and Gamal al-Ghitani*, The American University in Cairo Press, 1994.

work may correspond to the "mental structure" of a particular social group, and that the writer is "capable of carrying it to a very high degree of coherence, and transposing it on the level of imaginary creation."²⁰

Such a view of literature becomes very important in nations under authoritarian governments, where the official "history" is bound to be a reflection of the ideology of the dominant group. The writer here is entitled to provide the counter-narrative to the historical narrative produced by the state. George Steiner, for example believes that:

Drastically, where totalitarian regimes are concerned, but more subtly in other forms of society also, the historian has been forced to relinquish his obligation of impartial remembrance. The history textbook, the encyclopedia have been enlisted in the specifically inhuman design of obliteration. Through their lies or omissions, individuals, peoples, historical moments are exiled from reality. This condition makes of the writer an underground historian, a remembrancer against official dogma.²¹

Nothing describes the condition of the contemporary Arab world better than this quotation. Arab intellectuals today find themselves assigned with the writing of a counter-narrative to the official history of the state, or, in case of Palestine, of the colonial institutions.

If we have come to regard the literary works that will be read in the following chapters as a counter-narrative of the official historical narrative, it should be asserted that they should not be reduced to a depiction of any outside "reality". To put it in the words of Roland Barthes, we should remind ourselves that "narrative does not show, does not imitate...Its function is not to represent, it

²⁰ Lucien Goldman, *Pour une sociologie du roman* Editions Gallimard, Paris 1964, translated into English as *Towards a Sociology of the Novel* by Alan Sheridan, Tavistock Publications, London, 1975. p. 9.

²¹ George Steiner. "The Writer as Remembrancer: A Note on Poetics 9" *Yearbook of General and Comparative Literature* 22 (1977) Indiana University. p.51.

is to constitute a spectacle."²² Our reading will, therefore, be based on the understanding that the "constructions" in the narratives may not be real, that they may not be identical to anything outside the narrative, but that they are true in the sense that they bear the truth perceived by the writers.

This thesis will be limited to a reading of four novels, all of which were written by writers who had to go to either Saudi Arabia or one of the other Gulf countries at some point in their lives. The novels were chosen as a representative sample, which is in no way comprehensive of the novels about the experience of Arab migration to the oil-rich states. The first of these novels, *Rijāl fi 'ash-Shams* was chosen because of its focus on the Palestinian migration, a movement which has its own specificity within the general migration movement. The novel was first published in 1963. Its author, Ghassān Kanafānī, (1936-1972) was born in Acre. After the 1948 Israeli occupation, his family was forced to move to Damascus where he completed his studies and worked as an art teacher. Kanafānī went to Kuwait in 1956, where he worked as a journalist for three years, before moving on to Beirut in 1960. He was killed when a bomb planted in his car exploded in July 1972. Kanafānī's published literary works include five novels, two of which are incomplete, five collections of short stories, and two plays. Kanafānī was also an active member, and the spokesman, of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. *Rijāl fi ash-shams* was described as "his finest work, and one of the subtlest, and most powerful of modern novellas [in Arabic literature]."²³

²² Roland Barthes. "The discourse of History" translated by Stephen Bann in *Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook*, Cambridge, 1981. p.16.

²³ Said, Edward. Introduction to *Days of Dust*, The Medina University Press International, Illinois, 1974. p. xk5

Rijāl fi ash-Shams is the story of the Palestinians in their desperate search for a way out of their miserable existence in exile from their occupied homeland. Abu Qais, Asaad, and Marwan are three Palestinian refugees in Basra. They all dream of going to Kuwait in an attempt to escape the desolation of their life in exile. They hope to regain some of what they lost when they were forced to leave Palestine. Each of them separately meets Abul Khaizuran, a Palestinian, who was injured by a bomb explosion while taking part in an armed operation by the Freedom Fighters in Palestine ten years earlier. Abul Khaizuran offers to smuggle the refugees to Kuwait for ten dinars. They agree to his plan of taking them inside the empty water tanker, which he is licensed to drive. Their plan requires them to stay inside the tank "five minutes from the frontier, and fifty metres beyond...[and to] repeat the performance for another five minutes at Mutlaa on the Kuwait border."²⁴ However, when the tanker drives into Mutlaa, the border guards delay Abul Khaizuran for a few minutes which are enough for the three refugees to suffocate inside the tank. Abul Khaizuran then takes the bodies out of the tank, and throws them near a garbage dump. *Rijāl fi ash-Shams* offers a good introduction to the fictional literature on the migration to the oil-rich nations. It reflects the desolation of the life of displaced Palestinians, and their projections on the nature of their future in Kuwait. The refugees expect that their dreams of land and prosperity will be realized in Kuwait, and suffocate inside the tank because they refuse to give up their dream of getting to the Kuwait of their dreams.

The second novel, *Atfāl Bilā Dumū‘* was written by ‘Alā’ ad-Dīb, an Egyptian writer and critic, more than twenty years after Kanafānī's novel. However, it provides an interesting foil for *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*. Whereas Kanafānī's

²⁴ Kanafānī, Ghassān. *Men in the Sun*, translated by Hilary Kilpatrick, The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 1978. p.34.

protagonists die, because they could not reach their destination, ad-Dīb's protagonist dies, in a moral sense, precisely because he does. *Atfāl Bilā Dumūʿ*²⁵ is an account by Dr. Munīr ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Fakkār of his vacation spent between Cairo and Alexandria. Dr. Fakkār is a professor of Arabic literature at al-Maṭṭal University in Dalūk, which is a city in Saudi Arabia. He has been working there for ten years. The story opens with Dr. Fakkār in Cairo during his three months' annual vacation. Through his narrative we learn of his background, family and colleagues as well as his present situation. The narrative also highlights Dr. Fakkār's sense of alienation, and exile, which leads him to regard his personal relations and his work with a sense of absurdity. He has turned into a mere money hoarder, obsessed with the idea of making, and saving it. The novel ends at the point of his departure back to Saudi Arabia, having demonstrated his failure to repatriate himself in either Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Although ad-Dīb lived in Saudi Arabia for two months in the early eighties, he says that "the novel was mostly based on the experiences of the many relatives, friends and colleagues who had to work in Saudi Arabia or any of the Gulf countries."²⁵ *Atfāl Bilā Dumūʿ* is the author's fourth novel, and he is presently working on a second part to it.

Both *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*, and *Atfāl Bilā Dumūʿ*, therefore construct a perspective of the migration experience by providing close-up pictures of their protagonists before and after the experience. In *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*, the stories of Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan represent the story of the desperate exiled Palestinians, who are lured into their fatal experience by false expectations of a good life in an oil-rich country. In *Atfāl Bilā Dumūʿ* ad-Dīb focusses on the effects of the experience on the migrant himself, who has become obsessed with

²⁵ Personal interview with the author, September 1993.

money, but has lost any sense of meaning in his life. However, the details of the migration experience itself remain obscure in both novels. *Misk al-Ghazāl* and *al-Balda al-Ukhrā*, on the other hand, both contain an exposé of these details, but from different perspectives.

Misk al-Ghazāl was first published in 1988. Al-Shaykh's literary works include four other novels and a collection of short stories. She is a Lebanese who was born in Beirut, and is currently living in London. Al-Shaykh has lived in Saudi Arabia for a year with her husband prior to the writing of *Misk al-Ghazāl*. The novel provides a unique perspective on the migration phenomenon because of its specificity as the construction of a female immigrant to the region.

Misk al-Ghazāl narrates the stories of four women living in the "desert", the term which al-Shaykh uses to designate an unnamed city in Saudi Arabia. The stories are consecutively narrated by the women. The first is Suha, a Lebanese who goes to the desert to accompany her husband during his employment there. Suha is a university graduate who finds it difficult to accommodate herself to life in the "desert"; the segregation; the harsh environment, and the "torpor that envelope[s] this place."²⁶ She contrives to get a job at a stationary store, but the tension of working illegally makes her give up the job shortly afterwards. Suha then works at a language institute as a teacher of English. Suha meets the three other main characters in the novel, Nur, Suzanne, and Tamr, during her stay in the desert. Nur is a spoilt rich Saudi woman, living separately from her husband. Nur is bisexual. She starts a sexual affair with Suha, which becomes one of the major reasons for Suha's final decision to leave the "desert".

²⁶ Hanān al-Shaykh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, translated by Catherine Cobham, Quartet Books, London, 1989. p13

Suzanne is an American housewife from Texas. She arrives to the "desert" to accompany her husband, who is working there. Unlike Suha, she likes being in the desert where she has discovered that she can be the "Marilyn Monroe of the desert". Suzanne has an affair with Maaz, a native who is a married man himself. Maaz showers Suzanne with compliments and presents until she once approaches him sexually when he does not feel like. Her sexual advance makes him see her as "unnatural". He tries to avoid her and goes on a trip to Sri Lanka where he contracts a venereal disease. Suzanne's story comes to a close after she has learnt that her husband's company was declared bankrupt, and the employees have been instructed to leave the company. She desperately seeks the help of Maaz in order for her to continue living in the "desert"

Tamr is the second native of the "desert", a Saudi aristocrat, whose mother came from Turkey, and married a Sultan. Tamr is a bright and strong woman. After her divorce from a husband for whom she did not care, she goes on to learn English. She meets Suha at the language institute. Tamr also insists on going through the difficulties of opening her own business. In the end, she succeeds in opening a dressmaking and ladies' hairdresser's business.

Al-Balda al-Ukhrā is the most recently published of the discussed novels, but the author, Ibrāhīm ‘Abd al-Majīd says that it was actually written before the end of 1988. It provides a different perspective of life in Saudi Arabia from that of al-Shaykh. ‘Abd al-Majīd's characters are the working class. Al-Shaykh's working class characters are hardly noticeable; Suha's Egyptian driver, Said, and Ringo, Suzanne's Asian servant are given nothing in the novel but their names, nationality and job. ‘Abd al-Majīd, on the other hand focusses on the story of a working class Egyptian, and places it against a wide-angle view of the stories of many other working class migrants. ‘Abd al-Majīd's earlier works include a

large number of short stories, and five novels. He worked in Saudi Arabia for a year, as a personnel manager, six years before writing *al-Balda al-Ukhrā*. 'Abd al-Majīd says that the novel was "a form of catharsis following the experience of being in Saudi Arabia."²⁷

The novel is a first person account by Ismā'īl Khidr Mūsā, an Egyptian from Alexandria who goes to work as a personnel manager in a Saudi company. The novel portrays his relations to the place, a small city called Tabūk, and to the other people he meets during his stay. In Tabūk, Ismā'īl shares a house with two other Egyptians, a doctor and a teacher. At work his superior is a Saudi Shaykh, whom everyone calls "ʿAm ʿAbdallah". ʿAm ʿAbdallah's secretary is an Egyptian, who also handles the company's financial matters. During his employment at the company Ismā'īl meets other migrant workers: Nabīl, an Egyptian who runs the cafeteria, Mundhir, a Jordanian- Palestinian, Philip, a Sri Lankan, Arshad, a Pakistani, as well as a Yemeni truck driver. The narrative does not develop any of these characters in much depth. They are only presented through the eyes of Ismā'īl. The aggregation of their stories, however, provides a wide-angle perspective of the lives of migrant labourers in Tabūk. Another side of the story is revealed to Ismā'īl when he meets Larry, an American senior employee, who manages to embezzle three million Riyals. Ismā'īl also meets a few of the natives, including Manṣūr, an arrogant associate of ʿAm ʿAbdallah, and Wāḍḥa, a teenage girl whom he first sees being publicly denounced for adultery at the market place and later tutors in English. Ismā'īl finds himself falling in love with Wāḍḥa, but their romance is doomed to a quick abrupt end. Ismā'īl also has a futile romance with an Egyptian nurse who is working in Saudi Arabia to support her sisters and brothers. Through these short-lived relations,

²⁷ Personal interview with the author, June 1993.

Ismā'īl gets a chance to reflect on his personality, his desires and his inability to pursue them. During a business trip to Cairo, and a brief visit to Alexandria, Ismā'īl also realizes that he has become a permanent exile, alienated from both his homeland, Alexandria, and Tabūk. This crisis leads him to reflect on the futility of his life. The narrative ends with Ismā'īl's final departure from Tabūk. Thus, *Al-Balda al-Ukhrā* is a narrative about the crisis of a representative Egyptian whose frustration with life at home forces him to emigrate, and whose travel only increases his frustration and augments his crisis. The backdrop to Ismā'īl's story is an assortment of quick glimpses of the crises of many others with comparable plights.

An analytical reading of these four novels will be the subject of the rest of this thesis. It will be concerned with analyzing the narratives, their style, their imagery, and the constructions of characters, places and events created in them, in order to understand the representation of the experience of migration to the Gulf rendered in them. The reading will be divided among the next four chapters. The first chapter will be an analysis of two elements of structure which play a significant role in conveying the themes of these novels. The first of these elements is the "order" of the narratives. Narrative 'order' refers to the relationship between the succession in which events are narrated and the chronological order of their occurrence. In the novels under study this relationship is one of discordance. The narrative constantly shifts between events which are not chronologically successive. In doing so it reflects the protagonists' sense of their lack of direction, the futility of the migration experience and its failure to bring about any real progress into the migrant's lives. The second element of structure which will be analyzed in the first chapter will be the perspective of narration. In each of the four novels the story is

narrated from the protagonist's perspective. Consequently, each of the narratives can be seen as the discourse of a migrant on his own migration experience. This definition of the narrative discourse in the four novels as the discourse of the migrant protagonists is the key to understanding the significance of the constructions in the novels, and hence understanding the meanings of these novels.

The subject of the second, third and fourth chapters will be an analysis of three major constructions in each of the novels, the constructions of the 'place', the 'self' and the 'other'. The second chapter will analyze the representations of the places in which the narratives are set. The analysis will be based on the assumption that these representations reflect the moods and feelings of the protagonists and their relationships to these places. In the third chapter we shall analyze the construction of the 'self', the image which the protagonist creates of himself through his own discourse whether consciously or unconsciously. Chapter four will analyze the other side of this coin, the construction of the 'other', or the terms in which the protagonists represent the other characters populating their narratives. The constructions of the 'self' and the 'other' are indispensable steps towards the definition of the migrant's relationship to the others around him inside and outside his homeland, whether this relationship is one of affinity, detachment, agreement or antagonism.

The choice of the subjects of the second, third and fourth chapters is based on the conviction that the migrant's perception of his migration experience is essentially a perception of his relationships with the places he moves between and with the people around him. I will conclude with a summary of the narrative structures and themes which prevail in the four novels under study,

and an investigation of what they represent of the experience of migration to the Gulf.

What is in the Narration?

By definition, narratives are
requires a story and a story-teller.

Walter D. Mignolo, *The Nature of Narration*

We have said in the introduction that narratives tell a story, and that the act of narration itself affects how the recipients of the narrative perceive its content. In this chapter we will try to analyse two dimensions of narrative style which have a special importance for the four novels selected for this study. We will also try to explain the effect of these dimensions on the reception of the content of the narratives. The first of these dimensions is 'order', defined by the French critic Gerard Genette as the relationship between the order of the events, or the succession of their occurrence, and the order in which they are narrated. The second characteristic is perspective or point of view.

Genette suggests that the order in which fictional events are narrated does not necessarily correspond to the order in which they occur. He refers to the order of events as they appear in the narrative as opposed to their chronological order as the 'narrative order', which may take one of three forms: 'analepsis', 'prolepsis' and 'anastrophe'. 'Analepsis' is the order in which the events are narrated before their occurrence. 'Anastrophe' on the other hand, is the order in which the narrative begins at a point at the end of a

Chapter One

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Scholes and Kellog, *The Nature of Narrative*

We have said in the introduction that narratives tell a story, and that the act of narration itself affects how the recipients of the narrative perceive its content, that is, the events of the story. In this chapter we will try to analyze two characteristics of narrative style which have a special importance in the four novels selected for this thesis. We will also try to explain the effect of these style characteristics on the reception of the content of the narratives. The first of these characteristics is "order", defined by the French critic Gerard Genette as the relationship between the order of the events, or the succession of their occurrence, and the time order of the diegesis, the succession in which these events are told.¹ The second characteristic is perspective, or point of view.

Genette suggests that the order in which fictional events are narrated does not necessarily correspond to the order in which they occur. He refers to the order of events as they appear in the narrative (as opposed to their chronological order) as the "narrative order," which may take one of three forms: "prolepsis", "analepsis" and "anachrony". Prolepsis is the order in which the narrative anticipates the events before their occurrence. Analepsis, on the other hand, is the order in which the narrative begins at a point at the end of a

¹ Gerard Genette, *Figures*, volume III, Editions Du Seuil, Paris, 1972. p.77.

succession of events, and then returns to the starting point to narrate the events in a flashback. Anachrony, the third type of order, refers to the narratives characterized by repeated shifts along the time line of events. Events in anachronic narratives are represented in a pattern which continually shifts between the earlier and the later ones.²

When analyzing the order of the four novels, we notice that, for the most part, the narration is anachronic, based on repeated transitions between the present and the past. The transitions are more pronounced in both *Rijāl fi ash-Shams* and *Atfāl Bilā Dumū*² where the narrative order creates an impression that the characters are locked between their past and present with no real future. *Misk al-Ghazāl* employs narrative anachrony at times to create a similar effect of the insignificance of the passage of time in an environment of stagnation and torpor. However the order of the novel is also affected by the use of multi-voice narratives and is used to pronounce the narrative of a single narrator, Suha, as more dominant than the others. *Al-Balda al-Ukhrā*, on the other hand is narrated in a more linear order for the most part, despite a few flashbacks used by the narrator. The events in *al-Balda al-Ukhrā* are narrated in the order in which they are experienced by the narrator, Mūsā. The end, however, manages to create an effect of circularity. The end reveals the narrator's impression that his life had not changed from what it was at the opening of the novel. It does not allow for a sense of real progress.

The first narrative, *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*, opens with Abu Qais stretched on the ground on the Shatt al-Arab. Then it drifts with his recollections to a narration of his past. His recollections focus around his life in his village, and

² Ibid p.78-79.

his forced departure from it ten years before the moment of opening, the moment of his lying on the ground on the Shatt al-Arab. Abu Qais then returns briefly to the immediate details of the present moment:

The roar of the Shatt, the sailors shouting to each other, the sky blazing, and the black bird circling aimlessly.³

This return to the present is again interrupted by another recollection of a conversation between Abu Qais, his wife, and his friend Saad who has emigrated to Kuwait. Saad informs Abu Qais of his chance to get to Kuwait, after travelling to the Shatt, and urges him to take it. The narrative then moves from the time of the conversation to the time of Abu Qais' decision to go to one of the smugglers. This shift almost merges the two events:

He tried to say something, but he was unable to. A choking lump was tearing his throat. A lump just like the one he felt when he arrived in Basra and went to the shop belonging to the fat man whose job was smuggling people from Basra to Kuwait.⁴

This transition is an example of how the narrative uses frequent shifts along the time-line of the events which Abu Qais has experienced since the 1948 war to the moment at which the text opens. Such an order of narration creates the feeling that Abu Qais is himself "circling aimlessly" like the bird he sees while he is lying on the Shatt. This anachronic order of narration is repeated with the introduction of both Assad and Marwan into the text. Assad's appearance is set in the office of the Basran smuggler. But no sooner have the negotiations started between them, than Assad's thoughts return to the time of his trip from Amman to Baghdad, when another smuggler had promised to take him to Baghdad, but left him on the road instead:

³ *Men in the Sun*, p.13.

⁴ *Ibid.* p.15.

The horizon was a collection of straight orange lines, but he had taken a firm decision to go forward, doggedly. Even when the earth turned into sheets of yellow paper, he did not slow down.

The narrative then shifts forward again, to the point when Assad is still at the office of the Basran smuggler. Again the past and present are merged in the shift:

Suddenly the yellow sheets began to fly about, and he began to gather them up. "Thanks. Thanks. This damned fan makes the papers fly about in front of me, but I can't breathe without it. Ha! What have you decided?"⁵

The narration of Assad's loss in the desert is immediately followed by a narration of what happens in the smuggler's office, at a later time, where the papers begin to fly about. This type of rapid transition in time is repeated when the smuggler's talk of the price of his service reminds Assad of the time he took money from his uncle. Also at the end of Assad's negotiation with the smuggler when the smuggler asks where Assad is staying. Assad names his hotel, and the smuggler says, "Ah, the rats hotel." The mention of rats immediately takes the narration back to Assad's recollections of his trip, and his loss in the desert. In other words, the narrative does not relate the events in a linear order, an order which corresponds to that of their succession. Instead it shifts along the time-line of their occurrence in a way which reflects the way that the character's thoughts keep drifting back to events which happened to them in the past. The drift is usually motivated by something common to both the earlier and the later experience of the character. Abu Qais, for example, is motivated by the lump which he remembers feeling in his throat, during his conversation with Saad, to shift to a narration of his visit to the smuggler, during which he feels a similar

⁵ Ibid. p. 18.

lump in his throat. Similarly, the haggle over the price and the mention of the rats are the pivots on which the narrative turns from present to past, between the narration of Assad's visit to the smuggler, and that of earlier events which happened to him.

Marwan too first appears at the smuggler's office where they haggle over the price, and the smuggler slaps him. Humiliated, he leaves the office, and runs into Abul Khaizuran, who offers to smuggle him to Kuwait. While talking to Abul Khaizuran, Marwan suddenly falls silent, stands still, and slips into the past, and the narrative shifts to an account of a letter which he wrote to his mother earlier that morning. The letter introduces Marwan's past, and the problems of his family. His brother who has been working in Kuwait, stopped sending them money, and his father married a woman, who had lost her leg during the bombardment of Jaffa. Marwan is then jolted out of his memories when Abul Khaizuran asks him, "Do you want to stand here for ever?"⁶ When Abul Khaizuran leaves him, Marwan drifts back into his memories of his father and the father's new wife until the end of the chapter.

The narrative therefore, while introducing the characters, Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan, moves in an order which does not coincide with the chronological order of events. This technique gives the impression that the three refugees are locked within their present and their past, that the passage of time has lost its significance to them. The narrative then unfolds the details of their deal with Abul Khaizuran, and the start of their trip across the desert. The anachrony, however, does not end. During the drive, Abul Khaizuran's past and present

⁶ Ibid. p.26.

merge again when Assad's question about why he did not get married evokes Abul Khaizuran's memory of his injury which resulted in his castration.

Abul Khaizuran shook his head, then he narrowed his eyes to meet the sunlight which had suddenly struck the windscreen. But he felt a terrible pain coiled between his thighs.⁷

These two sentences merge an event of the present with an event of ten years earlier. The sunlight shining in the eyes of Abul Khaizuran motivates the shift in time, because it resembles the light which was shining in his eyes as he laid on the operation table, and was emasculated. Ironically enough, this pattern of narration only stops during the times when the refugees are inside the tank. Only then does the narration proceed forwards in concordance with the natural passage of time to lead to the end, the death of Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan inside the tank.

The result of this anachronic order of the narrative, is a feeling of the non-linearity of time. Because time normally moves from the past to the present to the future, the continuous disruption of this order in the narrative does not allow it to be taken for granted. Readers are led to doubt that the protagonists of *Rijāl fi ash-Shams* ever left their past behind to move on to their present. Readers are also led to doubt the existence of a future for the protagonists, a doubt which indeed proves to be valid. The order of the narrative, therefore, reinforces the idea that the Palestinian refugees have been locked in the past, specifically in a time before the 1948 war. Their existence since then has been, to put it in the

⁷ Ibid. p. 37

words of Edward Said, "by no means a given or a reality for them."⁸ Their present, is unstable, an effect of their past, which they can not transcend.

Another important element in the narrative style of *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*, is the use of the scene as the unit of narration. Edward Said notes that the narration in *Rijāl fi ash-Shams* is divided into scenes, similar to those used in film or drama. Each scene complements the preceding one(s), but is not necessarily attached to it chronologically. Said points to an important effect of this style:

The scene is itself the very problem of Arabic literature and writing after the disaster of 1948: the scene does not merely reflect the crisis, or historical duration, or the paradox of the present. Rather, the scene is contemporaneity in its most problematic and rarified form.⁹

In other words, the use of scenes as the units of narration does not imply progression. It does not require any of the events to lose their "contemporaneity" when they are followed by other events narrated later in the text.

The narrative order of *Atfal Bilā Dumu*⁶ follows a similar pattern. Again we are presented with a protagonist for whom the present is unstable and empty. He does not seem to have "progressed" since a point in the past, the point at which his frustrations forced him out of his country. Ad-Dib, not unlike Kanafāni employs both narrative scenes and anachrony to convey this idea. The idea is also expressed directly by the narrator when he says that the passage of time has become meaningless to him:

I ask myself if the days of my vacation here pass quickly, or if they pass slowly like the days of my exile there in my loneliness, away from this light, these streets, these noisy people, and the images in their

⁸ Edward Said, Introduction to *Days of Dust*, by Halim Barakat, The Medinah University Press, Illinois, 1974. p.xxiii.

⁹ Ibid. p.xxi.

assault and retreat. I ask myself, and I do not know an answer. For the days have come to have a single strange taste.¹⁰

This feeling that the days have come to have a single taste is what renders the passage of time meaningless to Dr. Fakkār. The narrative reflects this meaninglessness through its order. It is divided into scenes which cannot be chronologically attached to each other, but are like parts of a picture, linked by their content rather than the date of their occurrence. The scenes start at non-consecutive points in time. Whereas the first chapter starts with a childhood memory, the second and third start at different points during Dr. Fakkār's vacation. The fourth chapter starts with, "[y]es, my mother died at the beginning of the second year of my migration".¹¹ This passage causes the narration to recede to a point nine years before the events of the vacation with which the preceding chapter ends.

Such an anachronic order of the narrative reflects the inability of the narrator, Dr. Fakkar, to focus on the present or organize his train of thoughts in a chronological manner. Narrative time shifts with the thoughts of Dr. Fakkār during his vacation in Egypt. For example, the narrative opening in a recollection of a childhood memory before moving to the present time is a reflection of how this memory takes hold of his thoughts while he is recounting the events of his vacation in Cairo. The narrative's end with Dr. Fakkār's departure to Saudi Arabia also indicates his sense of entrapment between two equally alien worlds where time loses significance, because of its failure to bring about any change in Dr. Fakkār's empty life.

¹⁰ 'Alaa ad-Dib, *Atfāl Bilā Dumūʿ*, Dar al Hilal, Cairo, 1989. p.83.

¹¹ Ibid. p.56.

The narrative order in *Misk al-Ghazāl* also employs anachrony to create a similar impression of the insignificance of the passage of time. Suha, like Dr. Fakkar, feels that her days in exile are indistinguishable. Rather, they are redundant and meaningless. She sees time in the "desert" as a "swamp, whose waters never grew deeper but never completely dried up",¹² adding that she has stopped following the news, and occupied herself with trivial activities, merely to pass the time of her stay which she refers too as "sterile...unnatural".¹³ Her narrative therefore continually shifts between events which have happened since her arrival to the "desert" without following their chronological order. The order of her narration does not follow the order of the occurrence of events, and makes it difficult to arrange these events on a time-line.

However, the use of the multi-voice style of narration in *Misk al-Ghazāl* adds a different dimension to its anachronic order. In *Misk al-Ghazāl* the narration is taken up by four consecutive voices: Suha, Nur, Suzanne, and Tamr. The anachronic narrative order is used by all the narrators to different degrees. The narratives of Nur, Tamr and Suzanne are similar to Suha's in their free movement between events, without following their chronological order.

There is, however a difference in the effect of this anachronic order of narration used by the four narrators. Both Nur and Tamr end their narratives at a point in the past, that is, with the narration of an event which took place before other events which have already been narrated. Such an ending does not allow the completion of these narratives to coincide with the end of the story.

¹² Hanan al-Shaykh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, translated by Catherine Cobham, Quartet Books, London, 1989. p.5.

¹³ Ibid. p. 12.

Suzanne's narrative is left with an open end, following the narration of an account of her visit to Maaz, together with Suha. Suha's narrative, however ends with her departure. This event, is the one which must be placed after all those narrated by the other narrators. Hence, it lends itself to be the end of the story as a whole. The anachronic order of the narratives, therefore allows Suha's narrative to be the one which begins the novel and yet contains the end of the story. Suha's voice, therefore, frames the novel and becomes the dominant narrative voice. Such an effect becomes even more evident in the English translation, where Suha's narration is divided into a section at the beginning of the text, and an epilogue in the end in which she gives her account of her decision to leave, her preparations, and finally her drive to the airport. Here Suha's narrative more explicitly frames the text, and hence allows her point of view to be the most dominant throughout the text as a whole.

In contrast to Suha's narration which reflects her sense of the stagnation of her life by the discrepancy between the narration, and the chronological order of events, Musa's narration reflects the passage of time as he proceeds to discover the different aspects of life in Tabuk. Although *al-Balda al-Ukhra'*'s order of narration is anachronic at times, the passage of narrative time is linear for the most part, and the events are narrated in the order of the narrator's perception of them. The result is a stronger sense of the passage of time during the narrator's experience. The end, however is similar to that of *Atfal Bila Dumu'*. *Al-Balda al-Ukhra'* ends with the departure of the narrator to Cairo. The departure signifies the narrator's realization of the trip's futility. It has not managed to change his lack of enthusiasm for anything, "has not shaken the torpor of [his] life"¹⁴ as he had hoped it would. In fact, he ends up without any real attachment to either his

¹⁴ Ibrahim 'Abd al-Majīd, *Al-Balda al-Ukhra'*, p.20

life in Tabūk, or his life in Egypt. His decision to leave Tabūk for good is made within less than two days after he receives a letter from his brother informing him of his mother's death. The speed with which he makes the decision, and his disinterest in making any special arrangements for his departure, including reporting to the company manager that the departure is not for a few days as the manager himself believes, but for good, reveals his indifference towards his life and work in Tabūk. Yet it does not indicate a strong attachment to his life and family in Alexandria. At several points after he has received the letter, he says that he fails to visualize his mother's face, and that he feels as numb as a stone. At the airport he is distracted by what goes on around him to where he almost forgets about the death of his mother. The description of the departure almost brings the narrative to a complete circle through the repetition of the sentence, "I felt that the ground, the space and I were all one, all hot and empty,"¹⁵ which also appeared in the opening paragraph.

In conclusion, the reading of the four novels reveals their use of narrative order as an important literary element. In both *Rijāl fi-ash-Shams* and *Atfāl Bilā Dumū*^c the discordance between the order in which the events occur, and the order in which they are told creates an effect of inertia in a moral sense. The presence of the protagonists is a mere extension of their past, a past which they cannot traverse and progress towards any valuable accomplishments, or even ambitions. In *Misk al-Ghazāl*, a similar narrative order is used, partially to create a similar impression, and also to help establish the dominance of Suha's discourse over that of the other narrators. *Al-Balda al-Ukhrā*, in employing a more linear order of narration creates a sense of progress, which is later eliminated

¹⁵ Ibid. p.9 and p.383.

with the end that is indicative of the lack of any real progress since the beginning of the novel.

The second element of narrative style which will be analyzed in this chapter is point of view, sometimes referred to as perspective or mode. "Point of view signifies the way a story gets told, the mode or perspective established by an author by means of which the reader is presented with the characters, actions, setting and events which constitute the narrative in a work of fiction."¹⁶ The author's choice of perspective is highly influential on the narrative, because it affects the final meaning it conveys to the reader. This effect was recognized by writers and critics as early as Plato who in *The Republic*, book three, distinguishes between poets who speak in the person of others, thus assimilating their style to that of these other persons, and poets who choose to let their poetry be simple narration. Modern critics have referred to the point of view as the "controlling medium" through which the author reveals the meaning of the narrative. It is important, therefore, to notice the author's choice of the point of view through which his narrative unfolds, in order to understand its meaning.

An analysis of the narratives of the four selected novels will show that they are narrated from the point of view of the protagonist, that is, the person whose actions, feelings and thoughts are the focal point in the novel. Such a conclusion is immediately obvious in both *Atfal Bila Dumū*¹⁶ and *al-Balda al-Ukhrā*, which are written in the first person, and in which the narrator is the main character. The conclusion, however, requires further qualification in both *Rijal fi ash-Shams* and *Misk al-Ghazāl*. Kanafani's novel is written in from the

¹⁶ M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, fourth edition, Holt, Reinhalt and Winston, New York, 1981. p.142-143.

perspective of a third person limited, while al-Shaykh's novel is a polyphonic narrative made up of four first person narratives.

The narrator of *Atfāl Bilā Dumū*^c is Dr. Fakkār. The whole narrative is filtered through his consciousness before its representation to the reader. All the other characters, his wife, his relatives and colleagues are only represented through his construction of them, his recollection of their actions and attitudes. They are never given a chance for an independent appearance through their own words. *Al-Balda al-Ukhrā*'s protagonist is also the narrator who dominates the discourse of the narrative. Isma'īl Khidr Mūsā is the protagonist-narrator, and indeed his actions, thoughts and feelings are the focus of the novel. He controls the choice of descriptions, pertaining to both places and people, as well as controlling the choice of narrated events, and the order of their narration. He is given free reign to express his own views on any of them. Although Mūsā, unlike Dr. Fakkār, frequently allows the other characters in the novel to take shape through their own words and actions, he ultimately controls this shape through his selectivity in the reproduction of these words and actions in his discourse. People like 'Abid, Nabīl, and Manṣūr are therefore allowed to reveal part of their personalities through their actions, and their talk, but are nevertheless prevented from using them towards a characterization which does not resemble Mūsā's perception of them. Both novels, therefore, immediately qualify as first-person narratives which are not about an objective reproduction of any reality outside that of the experiences of the narrators.

The narration of *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*, on the other hand, is not conducted through any of the characters in the novel, but through an omniscient narrator. However, the vantage point remains identical to that of the characters by employing the style known as the third person limited, the third person

subjective, or selective omniscience. This style of narration depends on a narrator who is not a character in the novel, but one who limits the narrative discourse to the exposition of the thoughts and feelings of a certain character. Here the "story comes directly through the minds of the characters as it leaves its mark there."¹⁷

This style is therefore similar to the first person narrative in that it limits the perspective to that of the character. But Kanafani delves into the minds of all his main characters consecutively. Does this make *Rijal fi ash-Shams* closer in narrative style to the form known as multi-voice narrative, where more than one of the characters are allowed to narrate in the first person? I would argue that the answer is no. Kanafani's characters do not convey any incompatible ideas through their represented discourse. In fact the plights of Abu Qais, Assad, Marwan and Abul Khaizuran are very similar. They have all been deprived of an essential part of their lives, through the loss of their land, income, house or manhood, and all because of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. They are all exiles who have fixed their dreams on finding an alternative in Kuwait to the desolation of their present lives. The narrative therefore does not allow for any dialogue, any significant diversity between their discourses, or any disparity between their constructions. Rather, the four narratives complement each other, and together form a narrative conducted from the view point of the Palestinian exiles as a single entity.

The absence of any disparities, the lack of dialogue, between the perspectives of the characters through which the story is narrated in *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*, therefore, leads us to regard it as a single-perspective narrative despite the

¹⁷ Norman Freidman, *Form and Meaning in Fiction*, The University of Georgia Press, Athens, 1975. p.153.

plurality of these characters. *Misk al-Ghazāl* also fails to qualify as a multi-voice narrative. The British critic, Roger Fowles, asserts that "the multiplicity of voices needs to be interpreted in terms of the author's ideology. A plurality of voices does not in itself mean a non-authoritarian narrative stance."¹⁸ In this light, *Misk al Ghazāl* can be regarded as a narrative conducted through the point of view of the first narrator, Suha. Suha's voice is made to dominate the narrative through its order, discussed in the earlier part of this chapter, and the similarity of the four narrators' constructions, discussed in the later chapters. As we shall demonstrate in the later chapters. Suha's constructions of the place where the events take place, of herself and of the other characters in the novel, are not challenged by the constructions expressed by the three other narrators.

So the four novels, despite the variety of the actual narrative voices in which they are conducted, are ultimately representations of the migration to the Gulf from the perspectives of the migrant protagonists. In other words, the narratives render themselves to be read as a discourse of the migrants on the migration experience from their own perspective. Whatever constructions, statements or ideas represented in them should therefore be taken, not as an objective representation, or even one of an ambivalent narrator, but as the discourse in which the migrants narrate their own experience, with all its partiality and prejudice.

It is therefore obvious that the meaning of a narrative is not just a function of its contents: characters, places and events. It is also a function of how it is narrated; from which perspective and in what order. It is also obvious that in the novels selected for reading in this thesis, the narratives tend to be anachronic

¹⁸ Roger Fowles, "Polyphony in Hard Times" in *Language, Discourse and Literature*, edited by Roland Carter and Paul Simpson, Unwin Hyman, London, 1989. p.79.

and conducted from a perspective which not only foregrounds the experiences and views of the protagonists, the migrants, but also eliminates the possibility of producing any representations of anything which falls outside their experience. Such narrative style significantly affects the meanings of the narratives. The anachronic order conveys a sense of futility, a feeling that the protagonists are entrapped in their present which may be an extension of the past, but is not an extension into the future. It is a present existence which does not promise any future progress. The subjectivity of the narratives to the perspectives of the protagonists asserts the fact that the novels are not meant to represent an objective reproduction of reality outside the experience of the migrants. They are not concerned with representing the society of their homeland or that of the countries to which they travelled. Rather, they are the reflection of the experience of their protagonists, the experience of forced migration to the oil-rich Arab nations. The representation therefore rightfully retains all its subjectivity, and bias.

Chapter Two

The Place

The mind is its own place, and in it self
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

The use of Place in fiction is an important literary element, as has been recognized by many writers as well as literary critics. In his book, *The Role of Place in Literature*, the American critic, Leonard Lutwack, observes that novelists are free to decide on the amount of emphasis they put upon place in their novels. They may choose to use the "barest suggestions" of the site of their action or the "most detailed description, from geographical verisimilitude to symbolic reference."¹ Lutwack then suggests that this choice affects the overall meaning of the narrative and its effect on its recipient. He argues that a given description of the setting for characters and events in a novel serves another important function in addition to the mere orientation of these characters and events. The description of Place often sheds light on the nature of the characters themselves, and therefore affects our understanding of their actions,

Spatial dimensions and climatic conditions, for example, do not in themselves stimulate a constant emotional response; rather the qualities of places are determined by the subjective responses of people.²

The Place in the narratives dealt with in this thesis should be seen in this light. Place is more than just a back-drop or a spatial set for events. In fact, with

¹Leonard Lutwack, *The Role of Place in Literature*, Syracuse University Press, New York, 1984. p.18.

²Ibid. p.35

the migration experience as their theme, the Place becomes a pivotal part of these narratives since migration is essentially a movement from one place to another. The authors present places characterized with a personality of their own. Therefore, Place actively affects the protagonist, and establishes a relationship with him or her. Description of the Place, or its construction, in such narratives is often a reflection of the protagonist's construction of the self, and of his or her relationship with the surroundings, in terms of their physical, cultural and social constituents. This description is what Genette calls "explanatory and symbolic", since it is used to "reveal and at the same time justify the psychology of the characters."³

The protagonists of the four novels, *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*, *Atfal Bila Dumu'*, *Misk al-Ghazāl* and *al-Balda al-Ukhrā*, can be regarded as exiles, forced out of their homelands by political or economic forces. The definition of 'the exile' as someone "who sees his or her displacement as compulsory and temporary"⁴ readily applies to them. They are forced to move from one place, their homeland, to another, their land of exile. Moreover, the definition of the exile as "someone who inhabits one place and remembers or projects the reality of another"⁵ further describes the nature of their experience. Place, therefore, is a vital part of this experience, and their relationship to it is bound to be a reflection of their feelings about their migration. Consequently, Place, and the characters'

³ Gerard Genette, *Figures of Literary Discourse* Columbia University Press, New York, 1982.
p. 135

⁴ Paul Tabouri, *The Anatomy of Exile: A Semantic and Historical Study*, London, 1972. p.27.

⁵ Ibid..

perception of it, is a fundamental literary element in narratives representing the experience of migration and exile.

The description of these places, the homelands and the lands of exile, is given a prominent place in the four novels, not only by being the immediate subject of the opening paragraph of each narrative, but also by the recurrence of this description throughout the course of the narrative, and the relationship maintained between Place and the characters and the plot. The opening paragraph of each novel reveals the protagonist's first tie with a place, and forms an interesting point of comparison and contrast with later descriptions of the same and other places, and the protagonist's feelings about them. *Rijāl fi ash-Shams* opens with Abu Qais, a Palestinian refugee standing on the Shatt al-Arab:

Abu Qais rested his chest on the damp ground, and the earth began to throb under him, with tired heartbeats, which trembled through the grains of sand and penetrated the cells of his body. Every time he threw himself down with his chest to the ground he sensed that throbbing, as if the heart of the earth has been pushing its difficult way towards the light from the utmost depths of hell, ever since the first time he had lain there. Once when he said that to his neighbour, with whom he shared the field in the land ten years ago: the man answered mockingly: It is the sound of your own heart... Every time he breathed the scent of the earth, as he lay on it, he imagined that he was sniffing his wife's hair when she had just walked out of the bathroom, after washing with cold water ⁶

Here, we are presented with the relationship between Abu Qais and the earth as soon as the narrative starts, and prior to any elaboration on the special characteristics of Abu Qais or his relationship to any other "character".

The opening of *Rijāl fi ash-Shams* immediately reminds us of the opening of Steinbeck's *To a God Unknown* :

⁶ Ghassan Kanafani, *Men in the Sun*, translated by Hilary Kilpatrick, The American University in Cairo Press, 1978. p.9.

He flung himself face downward on the grass and pressed his cheek against the wet stems. His fingers gripped the wet grass and tore it out. His thighs beat heavily on the earth... For a moment the land had been his wife."⁷

With strikingly similar imagery, both Steinbeck and Kanafani use land as a metaphor for the wife, a metaphor which emphasizes the strength of the emotional tie between the character and the land. But what land? It is the land from which the character is exiled. Abu Qais is exiled from his Palestinian village by the Israeli occupation, and when he rests on the earth, his thoughts are immediately transferred to the land of his village, where he lived before the occupation. Hence, the merging of his thoughts on the Shatt al-Arab with his memories of Palestine. When Abu Qais thinks of "every time he threw himself down with his chest on the ground," he is not only thinking of the times when he did that on the Shatt al-Arab, but of when he did it in Palestine. This is further revealed by his thought of the "first time he had lain there," since "there" in this context refers to his land in Palestine. The transfer of his thoughts to Palestine lasts as long as he continues to lie on the ground. Consequently, he thinks that the dampness of the earth may be due to the rain. At this point, he is reminded of his displacement:

No, yesterday it had not rained. The sky now could rain nothing but scorching heat and dust. Have you forgotten where you are? Have you forgotten?⁸

The comparison between the homeland and the wife is suggested again with another character, Abul Khaizuran, who "lost his manhood", when he lost his land. Abul Khaizuran is another refugee in Iraq, who was injured during the

⁷ John Steinbeck, *To a God Unknown*, Bantam Book, New York, 1969. p. 9.

⁸ Ghassan Kanafani, p. 9

1948 war, and had to be castrated as a result of his injury. In reflecting upon the incident, he thinks: "Ten years had passed since they took his manhood from him."⁹ By "they", he means the Israelis, who have occupied his land. By summing up what they have done to him as taking his manhood, he merges his emasculation, which does not allow him to have a wife, and his exile which does not allow him to live in his homeland. He, therefore links the homeland with fertility and procreation as opposed to the land of exile which is associated with impotence, and sterility. Abul Khaizuran's thoughts echo and reinforce the comparison between the homeland and the wife made by Abu Qais. This analogy endows the homeland with fertility and the land of exile with sterility and desolation, a common theme in many of the narratives on the experience of migration to the Gulf, and reappears in the other novels studied here. It also signifies the Palestinian refugees' despair of regaining their land. Both the land and Abul Khaizuran's "manhood" are irretrievable. Such an analogy even confirms the meaning inherent in the end of the story of *Rijal fi ash-Shams*. The refugees die precisely because their despair of regaining their homeland causes them to insist on getting to Kuwait. In their insistence, they refuse to knock on the walls of the tank, and therefore die inside it.

This unattainable homeland, to which the characters' projections and dreams are attached, is contrasted throughout the narrative with the land of exile. When the refugees decide to go to Kuwait, in search of a substitute for their lost homeland, a way out of the miserable existence in exile, Kuwait is endowed with the qualities of the homeland, and the desert which must be crossed towards Kuwait becomes the representation of exile in its most intensified form. Abu Qais imagines that, in Kuwait, "there must be lanes and

⁹Ibid., p.37

trees, men and women and children running between the trees."¹⁰ Assad believes that "[a] man can collect money in the twinkling of an eye in Kuwait."¹¹ These constructions further stress the cruelty of the construction of the land of exile, represented in the narrative by the desert which the refugees attempt to cross. This desert is repeatedly described by the refugees as being mercilessly hot:

The sun blazed brightly, and the wind was hot, and carried a fine dust like flour.¹²

The sun hung high above their heads, round, blazing, and blindingly bright.¹³

The desert, the symbolic land of exile, is also perceived as an imprisonment, a suffocating entrapment, both literally, in the case of the refugees' entrapment and death inside the tank, but also metaphorically at various points in the narrative. When Assad remembers being lost during an earlier attempt to be smuggled into Kuwait, his memory of the desert is a memory of imprisonment and isolation:

The sun was pouring flame down on his head, and as he climbed down the yellow slopes, he felt he was alone in the world....If they had taken me to the desert prison, Al-Jafr at H4, I wonder if life would have been kinder than it is now. Pointless, pointless. The desert was everywhere.¹⁴

This construction of the desert as an isolating vacuum, and its association with futility and pointlessness, is one of the most common constructions in fictional

¹⁰Ghassan Kanafani, p. 13.

¹¹Ibid. p.19

¹²Ibid. p.43.

¹³Ibid. p.46.

¹⁴Ibid. p.18.

narratives on the experience of migration to the Gulf. Much of the same imagery recurs in the other three novels selected for this thesis.

A similar relationship between the protagonist and his homeland, and the land of his exile is also present in *Atfāl Bilā Dumū*¹⁵. The protagonist, Dr. Fakkār leaves his village Kafr Shawq to study at Cairo University, then he leaves Egypt to Dalūk, a city in Saudi Arabia, to work at al-Mattal University. After ten years in Daluk, Dr. Fakkār realizes that he feels like an exile there, in Cairo, and even in present-day Kafr Shawq. The novel opens with a recollection of a place :

The spectacle appears of its own accord, and disappears of its own accord. I fail whenever I try to dismiss it myself. An old bridge made of iron and wood. At the southern end of the station's platform. Rising particles of dust. Shadows of an aging tree resisting the fading daylight. For forty years, the image has been coming to my head, mysterious, burning and incomplete.¹⁵

This recollection is a childhood memory of his village. It is incomplete because parts of the memory have been lost with the passage of time. These parts are irretrievable, because the village, as he constructs it in his memory, exists only there. Yet, despite the gaps of his memory, or maybe because of them, Dr. Fakkār comes to romanticize the village of his childhood. He remembers the tree with the mix of light and shadows surrounding it:

My major picture, and only scene returns to my head. Kafr Shawq train station, a frequented side, and a deserted barren side. On the deserted side, there are railroad ties and tracks, like a deserted temple of extinct tribes. On the other side there is the ticket window, and the tree around and under which the daylight is dappled.¹⁶

¹⁵ 'Alaa ad-Dib, *Atfal Bila Dumu*, Dar al-Hilal, Cairo, 1989. p.17.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.61.

Dr. Fakkār's memory, thus visualized with the interplay of light and shadow, almost suggests the romantic lighting of a Rembrandt painting. It is also symbolic of his state of mind, one side is barren and deserted while the other is fertile and pleasant.

The contrast between the village of Dr. Fakkār's memory and Cairo, Dalūk, and the present village is therefore a contrast between identification and alienation, reality and falsehood. Whereas Dr. Fakkār knows the village of his memory well, misses it, and is deeply moved by his recollection of it, he describes Cairo as being alien and psychologically distant:

Behind these windows and doors is a silly mass of people, which neither concerns nor scares me. I despise it. I would be lost if I got to know it. I would like to be like it, but cannot. I run away from it and spy on it. I see it as mannequins made of that light material which is synthesized from petroleum.¹⁷

Dalūk is described as being fake, a sham:

Dalūk city, my pretty exile of choice. Full of money, glass corners, the smell of sand and oil. The place where the men are canned in clean white galabiyyas... Everything there looks unreal, temporary...lands which have been levelled, effaced by the sands, money and oil.¹⁸

The description of present-day Kafr Shawq implies more than just dissatisfaction.

It implies hostility:

Kafr Shawq does not exist except in my imagination. They have all changed to mouths there, extended hands, loitering bodies. They are lazy. They do not want to do anything. Some of them are rude, and

¹⁷Ibid.. p.18

¹⁸Ibid. p. 21.

label me with lunacy to my face. I almost know what they say about me when I am away.¹⁹

Dr. Fakkār, therefore feels alienated and exiled from all three places, Cairo, Daluk and Kafr Shawq, at the same time. His homeland has ceased to exist, except as a memory which haunts him and intensifies his estrangement. He senses hostility towards him, and is intimidated by it. He also has a sense of imprisonment. It is represented in the fears which he has, when struck by an asthma, during his vacation in Cairo:

Here it returns, and I cannot get rid of it, a little before one-thirty. Suddenly I feel it coming, The walls moving in and suffocating me, my new heart attack. The most important gifts of my trip, my bags and things, scattered in the room. I cannot hold them or put them back in their places. The glass door of my hotel room reveals a mysterious light in the distance. I cannot go out. No one will come in.²⁰

This asthma is never explained. It has been a recurrent event since it first struck him during his stay in Dalūk, and can actually be regarded as a manifestation of his feelings of entrapment and isolation.

Both *Rijāl fi ash-Shams* and *Atfal Bilā Dumū*²¹, therefore, open with a memory of the homeland, which recurs later, and is contrasted with the land of exile. The homeland is symbolically linked with security, fertility, and is irretrievable. The land of exile is not only filled with physical hardships, such as heat and dust, but also with a sense of imprisonment and hopelessness. These first two narratives lead the reader from an initial glimpse of the romanticized homeland, deeper into the alienation of exile.

¹⁹Ibid. p. 32.

²⁰Ibid. p.18.

Misk al-Ghazāl and *al-Balda al-Uhkrā*, on the other hand, open with a description of the land of exile as perceived by the migrant protagonists. The homeland is constructed later in the narrative. However, the contrast remains one of fertility and barrenness. The sense of captivity and isolation also remains a major theme in the migrants' construction of their land of exile. *Misk al-Ghazāl*, opens with the first narrator, Suha, expressing her feelings upon returning to her house in Saudi Arabia:

I looked at the pale curtains the colour of apricots, and at the glass tops of the little tables, and at the water-colours on the walls, and wished I could stay in the house all the time, just me and the canary. Everything in my house was soothing to look at, not like the furniture in the institute or any of the other houses I went into, and such a change from the dusty streets, the colourless buildings, and the sand strewn with ruins.²¹

This opening immediately reveals the narrator's dissatisfaction with her surroundings, her aversion to everything outside her own house. It is the first indication of a theme which becomes more obvious as the narrative progresses: Suha's perception of the place of her stay as a waste land, and of herself as a captive in it. Her identification with the canary is the reflection of her sense of being cooped up inside her house, and prohibited from enjoying life outside. She continuously refers to the place as the "desert" without any further discrimination. This "desert" she repeatedly describes as hot with "clammy air", sand and dust everywhere, and the "sun burning down". Her construction of the place does not change even at the very end of the narrative, when she is about to leave:

I craned my neck, looking down. I could see the high walls around the town protecting it from the horrors of the sand. The desert

²¹Hanan al-Sheikh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, p. 3.

came into view, looking as it had done the first time I saw it: sand and palm trees [.]²²

This construction of the land of exile is the exact opposite of Suha's construct of her homeland, Beirut. Beirut is constructed as an ideal, in a manner similar to the construction of Palestine in *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*. Suha endows Beirut with the features which she misses most in exile:

I chose [to visit] Ingrid because of her garden. The plants in it reminded me of Beirut: the blanket of lilac, the sunflowers, and a third flower, orange with a strong perfume.²³

Such a construction of the homeland as an ideal, a verdant fertile place and its juxtaposition against the construct of the arid land of exile, therefore, is an important literary element by which Suha expresses her frustration with her exile.

The narrative however fails to vary this construction of the Place convincingly with the change of narrative voice. The result of this shortcoming is that the narrative voices of Nur, Suzanne and Tamr all fail to become distinctive from Suha's voice. (Other aspects of this failure have been discussed in Chapter One). Tamr never complains of the heat or the dust in the desert, but she fails to construct an alternative to the image Suha's narration has constructed. Even when she tells Suha of her love for the desert she still uses the same monotonous construction saying that when she is abroad she misses "the humidity and the dust and the heat" ²⁴ Nur shares Suha's hatred of the desert.

²²Ibid. p.280.

²³ Ibid. p. 16

²⁴Ibid. p.96.

Suha says that Nur has told her: "When they brought me back here, and I saw the desert from the plane I screamed".²⁵ Her narrative reflects her own captivity, since it does not include any description of a place beyond the borders of her own immediate lodgings whether they are her house, a flat or a hotel room.

Suzanne, the fourth narrator, is a house-wife from Texas who comes to the region with her husband. Suzanne, like Suha, is an outsider. However, unlike Suha, Suzanne is not in the least frustrated by her life in the desert:

I didn't think of visiting the other women here, and I didn't find things to complain about like they did, because unlike them I didn't mind the voice of the muezzin in the early hours of the morning or the fact that the shops closed during the daytime prayers.²⁶

She revels in the luxurious life she can afford there:

I was a woman living in luxury, and could ask the driver to bring me as trivial a thing as a box of matches, and Ringo to wash even my hairbrush. Foodstuffs were delivered, clothes from the dry-cleaner's, money from the bank. I no longer even had to sit down and write cheques to the news agent, or cheques to pay for the electricity and the phone. I didn't drive my son to school every morning, or wait in the afternoon with other women, our lips turning blue with cold.²⁷

²⁵Ibid. p. 57.

²⁶Ibid. p.181.

²⁷Ibid. p.201.

Consequently, we see a different construction of the place when she says: "The sun shone brightly all the time; even the cold weather in the desert was like spring time".²⁸

Suzanne however sees Suha's desert as soon as she faces trouble. When she describes an unpleasant experience with an engineer whom she went to meet at his work place, she describes the journey as "long with nothing to see except black crows against the changing hues of the great expanses of sand."²⁹ Her meeting with the engineer, having been an unpleasant experience, also causes her to associate her frustration with thirst, heat, and sweat in her description of it. Suzanne therefore is brought to see Suha's desert, a fact which immediately renders her earlier construction of the Place transient. This transience reduces its strength as a counter construction of the Place to the one already given by the first narrator.

The construction of Place in *Misk al-Ghazāl* therefore, not unlike the same construction in *Rijāl fi ash-Shams* and *Atfal Bila' Dumū'*, is a reflection of a migrant's state of mind which is fixed on the idealization of the homeland, as a romanticized, verdant and fertile place and the representation of the land to which the migrants are forced to emigrate as its complete opposite, an alien waste land, in which she is imprisoned and constrained. However, in *Misk al-Ghazāl*, the homeland is not perceived as irretreivable. In fact, Suha, when she decides to return to Beirut, believes that she will indeed return to the land endowed with all the qualities which she hated about the desert.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.. p.217.

The construction of Place in *Al-Balda al-Ukhrā* is quite different. The novel's opening is similar to that of *Misk al-Ghazāl*, in that it opens with Isma'il Khidr Musa's impression of his land of exile, and like the other protagonists, Musa is also a migrant who has been forced by his own frustrations at home to travel to Saudi Arabia. However, he never develops an ideal image of his homeland. His perception of his land of exile, Tabūk is not fixed. It varies during his stay there, and even though it continues to be an alien territory, he manages to familiarize himself with some parts of it, like his house. This relationship of mere familiarity is as deep as his relationship to any place can get.

Mūsā travels to Tabūk in an attempt to escape the "stagnation of his soul", which has caused him to lose his ambitions, and ability to dream. This stagnation leaves him detached from Alexandria, his own city, and makes it easier for him to leave. When he arrives in Tabūk, however, he is intimidated by the city. The novel opens with his first impression:

The door of the aeroplane opened, and I saw the silence...

No sooner had I left the small ladder, and my feet touched the ground, that I felt that I, the ground, and the space were one. Hot and empty.³⁰

As soon as he comes out of the aeroplane, he is awed by a sense of loneliness and isolation, not unlike the exiles in all the novels discussed earlier. He is also scared by his sense of captivity in a hostile atmosphere. This fear is reflected in the description of his drive home from work with 'Ābid at the end of his first work day:

³⁰Ibrahim Abd al-Majid, *al-Balda al-Ukhra*, Riad al-Rayyess Books, London, 1991. p.9.

A sand storm started blowing ... We were surrounded by dust, and had to close all the car's windows. "Abid was forced to slow the car and turn on the head lights. I watched the dust particles swimming in the air, in the two strands of light.

"This is 'Al 'Ag', sand storms which hit the town at irregular times. Sometimes it blows twice on the same day, and sometimes it disappears for quite a few days." It seemed like the storm was not going to end and we almost suffocated... The sound of sand hitting the car started to scare me.³¹

Here Mūsā feels trapped by the harshness of an unpredictable environment. This feeling, his fear of the climate, symbolizes his sense of the vulnerability and insecurity of his life, a feeling he shares with the other migrants who populate the novel. His house in Tabuk also gives him a feeling of captivity:

I did not particularly like the house: two rooms on each side, separated by an unroofed hallway, and the bathroom and kitchen on the far end. Faruq said that it was built in the Arabian style. I found it to be nothing more than concrete blocks. The rooms were small, and their windows overlooked the hallway, not the street. The windows were also as small as those of prison cells.³²

The house, therefore, further intensifies his imprisonment and isolation, with its small rooms, concrete walls and narrow windows, which do not even overlook the street. When Mūsā first goes to the market, he finds it strikingly unfamiliar, almost exotic. He imagines "dancers from *The Arabian Nights* handing passers-by cups full of a heavy drink, and Shahriyar passing in a parade".

Such feelings of fear, dislike and estrangement later mellow into a feeling of mild contentment, the contentment of both familiarity and indifference. On a later visit to the market, it reminds him of a similar one in Alexandria:

³¹ Ibid., p.28.

³² Ibid. p. 16.

Now I see the market better than I did the first time... I do not feel any strangeness. Was the market scene really strange the first time?.. Now I do not see my surroundings as very different from the "Manshya" market in Alexandria."³³

Mūsā, after having been in Tabūk for a while, also says that he has begun to like his house, that he now looks forward to getting home. However, his relationship to it, and to his room-mates does not lose its superficiality. It never becomes more intimate than a casual, relaxed relationship to a place and people with which he has become familiar.

Here too is another kind of silence in the house which I liked, to which I liked to return, and where I liked to spend the longest period of time possible. I can see that our life has a fixed pattern, that we only share our sense of being strangers. We laugh a lot at the stories which we tell about other people. None of us has had a personal conversation with the other. We play backgammon to focus our thoughts on winning the game, and watch television to compare it with the Egyptian television... The fact that we shall return[to our countries] some day detaches from all our surroundings...What kind of life is this that seems as tedious as a Grammar lesson. Everything around me is cold.³⁴

This is how he describes his relationship to the house, and his room-mates, despite his repeated remarks about how every day at noon, he starts looking forward to going home at the end of the work day, and how he enjoys his evenings there. It is obvious, therefore, that he has ceased to even aspire to an intimate relationship to a place, a home. In this sense, he resembles Dr. Fakkār for whom the whole world has become the land of exile. Both are permanent exiles. Dr. Fakkār at least retains a memory of his homeland, a sort of snap-shot which he compares to the hostile world around him. Mūsā does not even enjoy

³³ Ibid. p.73.

³⁴ Ibid. p.71-72.

this small comfort; his experiences have alienated him to such an extent, that he cannot even imagine an alternative to the land of exile.

Having thus looked at the construction of Place in the narratives of the four novels, we may conclude that their authors have employed 'descriptions' of places as a device to describe the feelings and frustrations of the characters in the novels. Such a use of Place is not unfamiliar to many novelists who have realized that "the human will and imagination go the longest way in making the places what they are for human beings, and the mood of a person has much to do with determining the qualities of the place he is in."³⁵ In other words, we may say that many novelists have used the description of places to reflect certain feelings of the characters in their novels. This use assumes special importance in narratives, like the ones we are analyzing, which represent experiences of migration. Movement from one place to another, and the construction of these places, are fundamental elements of the experience of migration. The descriptions of the road between Basra and Kuwait, Dalūk, al-Shaykh's "desert", and Tabuk are not only about a climate. Rather, they are a description of the migrants' deep sense of helplessness, exile and alienation.

In each of the novels there is a contrast between a homeland and a land of exile. However each novel approaches the contrast in a different way. *Rijāl fi ash-Shams* and *Atfāl Bilā' Dumū'* open with descriptions of the homeland, and later lead into descriptions of the land of exile. In *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*, the protagonists, having lost their first homeland, Palestine, transpose their dreams to Kuwait, their new, artificial land of dreams, while the desert which they must cross to reach it becomes the merciless land of exile. Dr. Fakkār, in *Atfāl Bilā'*

³⁵ Leonard Lutwack. *The Role of Place in Literature*, , Syracuse University Press, New York, 1984. p.35.

Dumūʿ, has lost his homeland, the village of his memory, and Dalūk, Cairo, his present-day village - indeed, the whole world - has been transformed into a land of exile. In both of these novels, the homeland is described in romantic terms of greenery and fertility, starkly contrasted with sterile, prison-like lands of exile, and in both novels, the homeland is irretrievable.

Misk al-Ghazāl and *Al-Balda al-Ukhrā* begin with sudden, threatening descriptions of the desert, concentrating more on the land of exile than recollections of the homeland. Suha, the primary protagonist of *Misk al-Ghazāl*, whose voice dominates the narrative, romanticizes the greenery and comfort of her native Lebanon, and, like the protagonists of the other novels, feels hopelessly trapped. *Al-Balda al-Ukhra* offers the bleakest vision of all. Unable to even conceive of an alternative to his surroundings, Mūsā is an exile who lives without any hope for a homeland. Yet so subjective is his construction of his land of exile, that even without the contrast of homeland and land of exile, Musa's sense of desolation and imprisonment are clear.

In all four novels, the construction of Place plays an important role in establishing the mood of the narratives, and the emotions of the protagonists. Through descriptions of Place, we come to sense the despair, the imprisonment, and the brief flickers of hope, which run through the minds of the characters. We come to understand that exile, both physical and psychological, entails alienation and hopelessness. As we will see in the chapters which follow, this basic theme in novels on migration to the Gulf reccurs in different forms in the narrative constructions of the Self and the Other.

Chapter Three

The Self

In the previous chapter, we have analyzed the protagonist's perceptions of 'place,' in each of the four novels under study, as a means of inferring their relationships with their homelands and their lands of exile. This relationship, as we have demonstrated, is not only determined by their view of these places, but is inextricably bound with their own personalities. It is the objective of this chapter, therefore, to explore the nature of these personalities, a pursuit which will further enhance our understanding of their migration experience as represented in the novels.

The representation of the 'self' assumes special importance in the narratives dealt with in this thesis because of the migration theme which dominates them. In the migration experience, the nature of the migrant's personality as well as his or her self-image is a crucial factor in determining his or her relationship with the other people encountered on the trip, whether it is one of assimilation, co-existence or hostility. By defining the 'self', the migrant takes the first fundamental step towards locating the areas of sympathy and antipathy between him or herself and the others he or she meets on the trip. Consequently, the migrant's perception of him or herself is also an important factor determining the perception of the migration experience, and its impact on him or her.

Each of the four novels of our study, being narrated from the prespective of the protagonist, allows his or her construction of the 'self' to be exclusively

represented. In *Atfāl Bilā Dumūʿ*, *Misk al-Ghazāl*, and *al-Balda al-Ukhrā*, the protagonists narrate their own stories in the first person, and hence portray their image of themselves in their own discourse. In *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*, a similar effect is achieved by using the third person limited form of narration in which the "writer limits himself to the thoughts of the central character, mentioning nothing not directly present in the character's mind."¹ The discourse of *Rijāl fi ash-Shams* can, therefore, be seen as that of its protagonists. Consequently their characterization is, like the characterization of the protagonists in the other novels, a representation of the 'self' in its own discourse. It is precisely this representation that will be the subject of analysis in this chapter.

Therefore, for purposes of analyzing the 'self' in this chapter, it will be defined as the representation of the protagonists rendered by their narrative discourse in the novels. This image includes both the personality and state of mind of each character as well as their relationship to the character's economic, social and cultural background which was influential in shaping them. I shall not be limited to the way in which the protagonists consciously view themselves. Rather, I will use the contents of their narrative discourse as a whole as the subject of my analysis. I will, therefore use their images of themselves as well as their thoughts, emotions and actions to arrive at an interpretation of the representation of their personalities in the four novels. The American critic Laura Tracy compares such an analysis of literary texts to that employed by psychoanalysts. She suggests that this "interpretative method is, of course, shared by psychoanalysis in theory and practice, for the analyst's interpretations are designed to enable the patient to reach a self-definition by reconstructing the

¹ John Gardner, *The Art of Fiction*, Vintage Books, New York, 1983. p.91.

narrative of his or her own past history."² Indeed this method of interpretation is commonly used by literary critics who have been influenced by the psychoanalytic methods first used by Sigmund Freud. Unlike Freud, however, I will base my analysis on the assumption that personalities do not develop outside their economic, social, and cultural environments. The aim of this chapter, then, will be to reach a delineate the construction of the 'self' of each of the protagonists in the novels through their "narratives of [their] own past history."

By analyzing the migrants' representation of themselves in all the novels under study, we see that their alienation and isolation are dominant features. They never assimilate with those around them, nor do they develop any sort of attachment to their environment, their companions, or the style of their lives. In addition, they all sense the futility and desolation of their life in exile. Feelings of oppression and imprisonment are also salient themes in their discourse.

In *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*, the migrant protagonist is not a single person. In fact, the protagonist is the four main characters in the novel: Abu Qais, Assad, Marwan, and Abul Khaizuran. These four persons can be seen to represent a single self. They are the representation of a single group, the Palestinians displaced by the 1948 occupation of Palestine, who choose individual means of gaining material security as an escape out of the misery of their life in exile. The conclusion that Abu Qais, Assad, Marwan and Abul Khaizuran can be seen as a representation of a single self is verified by the representation of these characters in the novel. Their similarities are far more significant than their differences.

² Laura Tracy, *Catching the Drift: Authority, Gender and Narrative Strategy in Fiction*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick and London, 1988. p. 106.

More importantly, these similarities are much more crucial to the meaning and the course of events in the novel than the differences.

All four characters are refugees who have been displaced from their homeland by the 1948 occupation of Palestine. They have all lost something precious due to the occupation: Abu Qais has lost his land, Assad has lost his ability to earn a living, Marwan has lost his home, and consequently his father, and Abul Khaizuran has lost his "manhood" when he was injured and had to be emasculated as a result. The desire of Abu Qais, Assad, and Marwan to be smuggled into Kuwait, and Abul Khaizuran's agreement to smuggle them in his water tank, establishes another point of similarity among the four of them. They have all chosen individual solutions to their problems and are all seeking nothing more than material security in the trip to Kuwait. When Abul Khaizuran is driving his lorry with the other three refugees, Kanafani almost represents them as a single entity:

The huge lorry was carrying them along the road, together with their dreams, their families, their hopes and ambitions, their misery and their despair, their strength and weakness, their past and present, as if it were pushing through an immense door to a new, unknown destiny, and all eyes were fixed on the door's surface, as if bound to it by invisible threads.³

Here the refugees are perceived as a homogeneous group, and the similarity of their situation and their reaction to it is what binds them and leads them to a common destiny. In fact, throughout the narrative, Kanafani overlooks the specific attributes of each character, and focusses on their common tragedy, which finally leads to their death. Were it not for their common misery, their unanimous despair and insistence on getting to Kuwait, they would not have

³ Ghassan Kanafani, *Men in the Sun*, translated by Hilary Kilpatrick, The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 1978. p.46.

suffocated inside the tank. If any one of them had knocked on the walls of the tank, they would all have been saved. In refraining from knocking on the walls of the tank they all act in a single mind, thus bringing about their common death.

The four protagonists of *Rijal fi ash-Shams*, then, can be seen as representative of a single 'self.' But how is this self represented? It is alone, isolated, exhausted, and desperate. The loneliness, and isolation of the characters is repeatedly emphasized in the novel. As soon as Abu Qais regains awareness of his presence on the Shatt al-Arab, after having been lost in his memories of his Palestinian village while lying on the ground, he looks up at the sky and sees "one black bird circling high up, alone and aimless."⁴ The bird is analogical to Abu Qais himself who is also alone, and aimless. Abu Qais dwells on this situation further as he gets up and stands on the Shatt. He thinks that "more than any other time in his past, he felt alien and insignificant."⁵

The second character in the novel, Assad, shares these feelings of loneliness and insignificance. Assad first appears at the office of the Basran smuggler where, as soon as they start haggling over the fee for smuggling Assad to Kuwait, the smuggler tells him: "if you don't like our conditions, you can turn around, take three steps, and find yourself in the road."⁶ The road to Assad represents the ultimate void in which he is utterly isolated. "They all talked about roads", he thinks, remembering his earlier experience with the smuggler who promised to bring him from Jordan to Basra, but left him on the road. He remembers that the "sun was pouring flame down on his head, and as he climbed the yellow slopes, he felt he was alone in the whole world."⁷ Assad therefore

⁴ Ghassan Kanafani, *Men in the Sun* . p.9.

⁵ Ibid. p.13.

⁶ Ibid. p.16.

⁷ Ibid. p.18.

sees himself as lonely and deserted. He also sees himself as insignificant, as part of an absurd existence. He brings this thought up when a foreign tourist takes him in his car on the road to Basra. The tourist's wife sees the rats on the road and asks what they eat. Assad answers, "Rats smaller than them." In his answer he uses the rats as an analogy for himself, a small rat eaten by those who are trying to exploit the misery of his exile.

Similar feelings are expressed by Marwan, who also appears in the smuggler's office, and, after fruitless negotiations, is slapped on the face by the smuggler. Humiliated, Marwan walks out of the office and thinks that "it was the first time in his life that he had found himself alone and a stranger in a throng of people like this."⁸ It is indeed his first time to be away from his mother, to whom he is deeply attached. Marwan's plight is intensified by the fact that he is young. He is less than eighteen years old, as shown by his conversation with Abu Qais in which the first says that people of Marwan's age are still in school. "I was at school two months ago"⁹, Marwan replies.

Even Abul Khaizuran, who smuggles the others across the border, is himself a lonely, aimless refugee. He envies Abu Qais because Abu Qais is married, and has a family of his own, while he has been emasculated, and can never settle down with a wife. He has no ambitions beyond a minimal level of material security and comfort. During the drive, he tells Assad:

Do you see this miserable being which is me? I have some money. In two years I'll leave everything and settle down. I want to relax to stretch out, to rest in the shade, thinking or not thinking I don't want to make a single movement."¹⁰

⁸ Ibid. p.23.

⁹ Ibid. p.27.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 40.

This desolation of Abul Khaizuran's life, reflected by the modesty of his dreams, is what unites him with the three other refugees. All four of them are displaced, alienated, and aimless. They are oppressed by the others, be those others the smugglers who exploit their situation, the Arab governments who restrict their travel, or the guard officials who mock Abul Khaizuran, and, by delaying him at the Mutlaa post, cause Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan to suffocate inside the tank.

The protagonist of *Atfal Bilā Dumu*¹¹, Dr. Fakkār, expresses similar feelings to those of the refugees in *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*. Dr. Fakkār, too, is alienated, lonely and aimless. His isolation often scares him and causes him to feel imprisoned and oppressed. His first description of his face depicts "a sprouting beard and terrified eyes."¹¹ This terror is presently combined with his sense of imprisonment, and the futility of his life:

Every time I see the broken elevator on the third floor, I think that I am in it, imprisoned, covered like its glass, wood and ropes with dust and cobwebs.

I stride in the streets, chasing my distraction, I stumble into the ends of the streets. They swallow me, spit me out, ends, unending.

I enter a café, a restaurant, a grocer's, I buy a bottle of liquor, a bit of hashish, escape from nobody, climb stairs, descend to arid gardens, return to the hotel room. I see my face in the old mirror; a sprouting beard and terrified eyes, an old fear, a barren soul, empty and arid, falling idols, a trail between rams, successive and ridiculous.¹²

This passage is the earliest key to Dr. Fakkār's characterization of himself in the novel, and its appearance on the first page indicates the importance of this characterization to the meaning of the narrative. In fact, Dr. Fakkār's own feelings and self image are indeed the key to understanding his discourse about everything else: the setting, events, and other characters in the novel. In this

¹¹ 'Alaa ad-Dib, *Atfal Bila Dumu*, Dar al-Hilal, Cairo, 1989. p.17.

¹² Ibid.

passage, Dr. Fakkār reveals his fear of isolation and imprisonment, his aimlessness, and his paranoia.

Dr. Fakkār's fear of being imprisoned, left out, is reflected in his fear of being trapped in the elevator. He expresses the same fear when he later experiences a heart attack. He feels that the walls of his room are closing in on him, that he cannot go out of the room, and that nobody will come in even though they are all there.¹³ He continually uses imagery which reinforces his fear of being deserted and left to face death all alone:

When I laid on the bed watching the shutters of the hotel room, penetrated by the bright noon sunlight, I felt certain that I had advanced into the desert of loneliness, and that I would undoubtedly die of thirst. And that all the things which I own and possess would float around me while I alone sink in quicksand and all whom I have known in my life, men and women are gathered in a circle in the distance, secretly laughing at me.¹⁴

The fear of sinking into quicksand here is another expression of his fear of being trapped. It is similar to his fear of being stuck in the elevator or being closed in by the walls of his room. There is also a recurrence of Dr. Fakkār's fear that nobody will help him. He feels isolated and alien. His isolation reinforces the sense of captivity in him and leads him to speculate on the death which he would face in his "desert of loneliness".

The opening passage also reveals Dr. Fakkār's loss of direction, his impression that everything he does is meaningless. This feeling is again expressed when he compares himself to a stray cat:

You have become a lonely stranger, Dr., Dr. Munīr 'Abd al-Hamīd Fakkār, professor of Arabic literature at al-Mattal University in Dalūk

¹³ Ibid. p.18.

¹⁴ Ibid. p.40.

city. You are nothing, a stray cat running at night in the streets of downtown Cairo, dragging a bag of money in its mouth. Run...Run...¹⁵

Here he emphasizes his sense of insignificance, and the uselessness of his life. He has become a worthless person with no more than a large amount of savings, and an ability to make more. The bag of money is an important part of the analogy in this passage, because he indeed thinks that money is the cause of his aimlessness, alienation and imprisonment all at once:

The real amount of my money, my wealth, I do not know it myself. I do not want to know it. I have answered tens of silly questions asked by prying fools with tens of answers, all of which bear no relation to the truth. My wealth has become distinct from me, a creature to which I am not related. I neither like it, nor hate it. An alien cactus planted in the middle of a fertile Egyptian field. My money is what counts me, follows me, weighs me down sometimes, and at other times makes me fly in the air, cruel, frightening. It has its own logic and its own law.¹⁶

Here Dr. Fakkār imparts his alienation from his own money. He sees it as his oppressor, a "cruel frightening" creature which controls his life. He also compares it to a "cactus planted in the middle of a fertile Egyptian field", an analogy which indicates both his alienation from his money, and his image of himself as an essentially good person. By comparing himself to a fertile Egyptian field he expresses his belief that the bad side of his personality can be attributed to the fact that he has been trapped in the circle of making money, and accumulating wealth.

Dr. Fakkār's idea that he is neither all good nor all bad is also revealed through his visualization of the village of his childhood memories, Kafr Shawq of the old days. He returns to this memory frequently throughout the narrative,

¹⁵ Ibid. p.19.

¹⁶ Ibid. p.32.

and it always causes him to visualize the platform of the village's train station.

On one occasion he describes this platform as:

a frequented side, and a deserted barren side. On the deserted side, there are railroad ties and tracks, like a deserted temple of extinct tribes. On the other side there is the ticket window, and the tree around and under which the daylight is dappled.¹⁷

"A frequented side and a barren side": this is how he also sees himself. He does not see himself as completely barren, but at the same time, he knows that, to some extent, he has lost his ability to produce anything of real worth. His self image is wrapped up with his writing. He knows that he can still write, but he also knows that he has ignored "real writing" for a long time. By "real writing", he means the kind of writing that he did before his travel to Dalūk, the writing which requires "purity.... and faith".¹⁸ In fact, Dr. Fakkār repeatedly tries to write a story which he describes as a form of catharsis to his soul, and even though he does not manage to write, he never gives up his dream of doing so.

Another part of the recurrent memory which haunts Dr. Fakkār is the story which he heard as a child from Ragab, a street vendor. The story is about a cave full of treasures which can only be opened by a Moroccan Bedouin who offers a stick of incense to the person who wishes to enter the cave. This person can collect all the treasures he wants from inside the cave, but must leave before the incense burns down completely or else the cave closes, and the person is trapped inside. The story is evidently symbolic of Dr. Fakkār's situation. He has not always been a greedy person. In fact, he was quite idealistic and romantic before he left for Dalūk and got trapped in the money-making circle. His romanticism and idealism are revealed only in passing. Dr. Fakkār reminisces

¹⁷ Ibid. p.61.

¹⁸ Ibid. p.19.

about his college years when he was poor, but happy with a romantic love affair. He remembers that in those days he felt the sadness of the poetry of Salah 'Abd as-Sabur, and lived with the dreams of President Naṣṣir. In those days, he felt that everything was possible.¹⁹

It was not until Dr. Fakkār became frustrated with his life in Egypt that he left to Dalūk. On this, he says that "it seemed like a conspiracy against [him]"²⁰ It was in the wake of the 1967 defeat, and his romance had left him broken hearted. Besides this, he was only making a little money which never lasted for more than the first few days of the month. He had to write in different publications or resort to borrowing in order to get a few extra "humiliating pennies" which made him feel both worthless and hopeless.

Dr. Fakkār, therefore, is not very different from the Palestinian refugees in *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*. Like them, he has been forced into a life in exile, in which he feels imprisoned, lonely and alienated. However, unlike the protagonists of *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*, who die because they fail to cross the border and get to Kuwait, Dr. Fakkār dies, at least in a moral sense, precisely because he gets to Dalūk, the equivalent of Kuwait for him. In Dalūk, he starts to feel worthless, constrained, and to lose all affiliation with others around him.

Dr. Fakkār also shares a few characteristics with Musa, the protagonist of the third novel, *Al-Balda al-Ukhrā*. Mūsā, too, is a lower middle-class Egyptian who loses direction in life, when he is forced to forsake his interests in order to make money. Musa is an English teacher from Alexandria, who goes to work as a personnel manager in Tabūk, a small city in Saudi Arabia. Like Dr. Fakkār, Musa was once an idealist, a romantic, prone to identifying with the romantic

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 44.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 85.

characters in the novels he read. He used to read a lot of novels, and even wrote some stories himself. He identified with the protagonist of Amīn Haddād's novel, *Laysa fi Rasīf al-Azhār Man Yugīb*, who kills himself in the end, and with Ahmad 'Akif, the protagonist of Najīb Maḥfūz's, *Khān al-Khālīl*, who gives up the woman he loves for his brother's sake. Mūsā was also fond of the cinema. When he finds himself at the house of Sāliḥ, a Saudi teenager, as Sāliḥ's friends are trying to pick a movie to watch on video, they go through a number of old American movies, including one called "The Caretaker". Musa thinks:

I have seen these movies in the cinemas of Alexandria. I saw "The Caretaker" about ten years ago. [...] I liked Derrick Bogard. I always saw a deep shade of sadness on his face. I had read about Harold Pinter as one of the vanguard playwrights in England, and I saw his name on the poster as the film's writer. My God! I used to read in those days. It has really been a long time since then.²¹

The boys bring more videos, and Mūsā picks "Moby Dick" but they do not want to watch it. Again Mūsā thinks:

They ruined my happiness with the movie [Moby Dick] which I had not seen, and wished to see. I have not read *Moby Dick*, but I read about the melancholy of Herman Melville. I have always wanted to read it, but have never come across it in a bookstore. So be it. Why am I reminding myself of these griefs. What is reading which fell between my feet, and which I left behind in the midst of the crowd of responsibilities which my father destined for me as best he could? What would writing be if I had written? There is no meaning to anything which I have forgotten about. You only really lose what you do not really want.²²

Musa, therefore, is a romantic intellectual, who has had to drop his creative writing and readings in literature, because of his responsibilities towards his family, which fell to him after his father's death. After his graduation, he took

²¹ Ibrāhīm 'Abd al- Majīd, *Al- Balda al-Ukhrā*, Dār Riād ar-Rayyes, London, 1991. p. 155.

²² Ibid.

a job in Alexandria as an English teacher. He also had to drop his love for a college friend, because he knew that it would be a very long time before he could afford to marry her. Musa never really got over this experience. Hence his identification with 'Akif, the character in *Khān al-Khalīlī*. Years after the end of his love affair, he thinks to himself:

My old wound has not healed yet. I still wish I were able to get out of my self, punish, kill it. She asked me why I read this novel a lot. I said that I liked Aḥmad 'Akif. She said laughingly that she did not know anyone of that name. I told her to take it [the novel]. She came laughing and asked: Who was Aḥmad 'Akif in the novel? We laughed and remained silent. I said: I would like to go the Antoniades garden. It is spring and there is a flower festival there now. She said: I did not know that you liked flowers. You like love and want to go because we first spoke of our love there.[...] I told her frankly that I only knew the love which ended in marriage, and that I would not marry then, or ever. [...] She did not know that I was the big fool in this world, completing the mission of a man who lived for more than sixty-five years and without completing it.²³

When Mūsā, therefore, decides to travel to Tabūk, he does so after he has already given up his interests and his love. In fact, he says that he has even lost his ambitions and his ability to dream:

I am thirty, I have not achieved anything, and I do not dream. My fellow teachers in Egypt often talked of their dreams, and their inability to interpret them. Most of them, like me, had not accomplished anything worthwhile, but they had dreams, and they talked of their dreams. I used to ask myself why I did not have dreams like they did. I wondered about this until I concluded that I was content with the way I am. Content to the utmost, unable to see a goal to my life other than caring for my mother and sisters, now that my father is dead. I had often thought that maybe I have lost my desire for life.²⁴

It is precisely this last thought which causes him to travel to Tabūk. He does not have any ambitions of his own, and does not expect to accomplish much by his

²³ Ibid. p. 234-235.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 20.

trip. In fact all he really wants is to "shake the torpor off [his] soul"²⁵, to put an end to his indifferent contentment, his detachment from the events of his life.

So how does Mūsā's background and his attitude affect his perception of his migration experience, and how does the experience affect him? From the very first paragraph of the novel, Musa conveys his relationship with Tabuk. As soon as he leaves the aeroplane, he remarks: "I felt that I and the ground and the space were one: hot and empty."²⁶ This statement is the first indication of what becomes more obvious later. Mūsā is "empty", in the sense that he does not have any emotions towards his trip. He does not have any set ideas about Tabūk, what it is like, and what he expects from it. He is not pre-disposed to either like or dislike it. He, therefore, allows himself to discover and judge things, places and people as they come along. Sometimes these judgments change with time. For example when he first gets to his house, he says that he does not like it. He feels constrained by it:

I did not particularly like the house: two rooms on each side, separated by an unroofed hallway, and the bathroom and kitchen on the far end. Faruq said that it was built in the Arabian style. I found it to be nothing more than concrete blocks. The rooms were small, and their windows overlooked the hallway, not the street. The windows were also as small as those of prison cells.²⁷

Later, as he gets used to the place, he says that he has come to like the house, that he looks forward to getting there after work, and he enjoys his evenings there.²⁸ However, he never really develops a strong tie with it. His relationship with his roommates, Sa'īd and Wagīh remains superficial. Mūsā feels that what "attaches [them] is that [they] are all strangers " and that their relationship will not last

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid. p.9.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 16.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 37.

after they separate.²⁹ He even moves to a different house alone after Sa'id has to return to Egypt without giving it a second thought.

As for the people around him, Mūsā also takes them individually, and seems to take an interest in everyone he meets. This interest, however remains at a superficial level of curiosity. He does not get involved with, or closely attached to, any body. He says that he has promised himself to "remain a shiny mirror on which the rain drops slide."³⁰

Nevertheless, his decision to stay detached from everyone he meets does not keep him from being pleasant with everyone around him or from forming an opinion about the people he meets. He resents both his Saudi manager and the manager's secretary, 'Ābid, who is an Egyptian, and has been working in Tabūk for several years. On the other hand, he sympathizes with the poorer workers in the company: Philip the Sri Lankan, Mundhir the Palestinian, Arshad the Pakistani, Aaron the Philippino, and Nabīl, the Egyptian who runs the company cafeteria. They all talk to him about their dreams and their concerns, and occasionally some of them ask him to talk to 'Abid on their behalf. His relationship with them, however, never develops beyond the level of sympathy and pleasant fellowship. For example, when Aaron is caught brewing liquor, and is forced to leave Saudi Arabia, Mūsā shows some concern, asking him why he did that, and what he would do after his deportation. When Aaron says that he plans to work in Iran, Musa warns him against the political turmoil there. Yet, in the end, Musa thinks: "It is useless to talk about it. Aaron will leave, and I will forget about him just as he will forget about me."³¹

²⁹ Ibid. p. 71.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 70.

³¹ Ibid. p. 142.

Wādḥa seems to be the only one with whom he almost gets involved. She is a teenage girl whom he sees for the first time when she is being denounced at the market place for having been caught with another man from the town. Mūsā later tutors Wādḥa in English, and he thinks that he is falling in love with her. However, when she declares her wish to marry him and go with him to Egypt, he retreats. He regrets having gotten involved with her:

A girl destined to die, Wādḥa, and I should never have crossed her path and stirred in myself the grief which I had buried and covered with earth."³²

It becomes obvious that Mūsā cannot yet gather enough courage to commit himself to a meaningful relationship with Wadha, or anyone else for that matter.

Mūsā therefore does not hate his trip to Tabūk. He also never romanticizes his homeland in contrast. He does not really yearn for his return, because in both places he stays the same: detached, isolated, more of an outsider than a real participant in what goes on around him. This sense of his alienation is further evoked in the narrative by his recurrent remarks about the dog which he sees on his first day in Tabūk:

I went on looking at a white dog, far away between the scattered sand dunes. A huge dog which looked like a stray donkey. Fārūq must have noticed it too, for he said: ' Here they kill dogs. They think that they are unclean . This dog knows that too and dares not approach the populated areas.' ³³

Mūsā takes notice of this dog repeatedly throughout his stay in Tabūk, and constantly describes himself as "stray", an aimless person, an outsider who will never assimilate.

³² Ibid. p.269-270.

³³ Ibid. p.12-13.

Mūsā's discourse as the narrator of *Al-Baldā al-Ukhrā*, presents a romantic middle-class Egyptian, who has had to give up his interests in reading, writing, and watching movies, as well as his love affair, in order to take care of his family after his father's death. His responsibilities towards the family take all his time, and he gradually loses interest in life, becomes alien and remote from all its events, and from those around him. His travel to Tabūk does not change his attitude. During the trip, he sympathizes with the poorer guest workers around him, but retains his position as a remote observer of everything around him. Consequently, at the end, he decides to go back. The decision is an easy one for him to make, since he has never really developed an attachment to the place or the people, and has never regained his ability to foster any ambitions or dreams which he could wish to realize by working in Saudi Arabia.

In contrast to the Palestinian refugees, Dr. Fakkār, and Mūsā, whose exile seems to have become their irreversible destiny, Suha's narrative in *Misk al-Ghazal* insists on the temporary nature of her situation. Suha is an upper class Lebanese who is forced to leave Beirut with her husband, because of the civil war, and accompanies him to Saudi Arabia when he gets a job there. She repeatedly maintains that her stay in the desert is the source of all her problems, her alienation and her sense of imprisonment. She completely refuses to assimilate with, and, except for a few female acquaintances, even to relate to those around her. She contrasts her life in the desert with her former life in Beirut in a manner which portrays her life in exile as wasteful and abnormal. She does not admit to having any problems apart from her stay in the desert. Even when she is faced with a problem which questions her self image, her own sexuality, she completely refuses to deal with it.

Suha's narrative immediately opens with an event which is tied up with her frustration with her life in the desert, an account of men who force their way into the language institute, where she teaches, to inspect it. The incident shocks her:

I froze. Then I began to tremble. One of them said to me, 'Cover yourself up woman'... I didn't breathe again until I heard their receding footsteps[.]³⁴

This incident also leads her to resign from the institute. This is the second job she quits. Her first job was at a stationary store, and had been illegal. She had to be smuggled to the back of the store every day inside a cardboard box, and finally quit when she could not take the "anguish" and "tension" of keeping the job any longer. Following these two attempts, she gives in to her stay out of work, and consequently feels that she is leading "such a sterile, unnatural existence."³⁵

Suha's self esteem is so bound with her education and her ability to have a job that no other occupation can keep her satisfied. "I had a degree in Management Studies from the American University in Beirut," ³⁶she says early on in her narrative, maintaining that while the simplest tasks at her jobs make her feel important, any other occupation seem worthless to her :

When Amer, [the owner of the store where she worked], began to entrust me with correspondence and making out orders, my feeling of importance knew no bounds[.]³⁷

Such feeling of importance is not evoked in her when she undertakes other activities :

³⁴ Hanān al-Shaykh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh* translated by Catherine Cobham, Quartet Books, London & New York, 1989. p.3.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 12.

³⁶ Ibid. p.5.

³⁷ Ibid. p.4.

I began to amuse myself making curtains and cushions, hanging pictures, tidying cupboards. I borrowed seeds and planted the garden [...]and joined an exercise class at Maryam's house[...]and another for baking and decorating cakes, and a literary discussion group[...] However I knew deep inside me that the way I was handling my life was doomed to failure; I was scared of the enormous disgust that I felt because I was leading such a sterile unnatural existence."³⁸

Suha's inability to hold a job, therefore, is among the major problems of her life in exile, not because she needs the money, but because a job seems to be the only occupation which can allow to see her life as productive and worthwhile. Her description of her life in Saudi Arabia as "unnatural" in the above quoted passage is also the first indication of another theme which dominates her construction of herself in the narrative. Suha asserts that she is "normal" and that so was her life in Beirut, to distance herself from her experience in exile. (In the original Arabic text the word "unnatural", "ghayr tabi'ya" could have also been translated as 'abnormal'). This assertion assumes special importance when Suha is involved in a sexual affair with Nur, because although Suha experiences the pleasures of the affair, she refuses to acknowledge the implications of these pleasures, that she is bisexual. In describing the first time she and Nur have sex, she says:

The warmth spread over my neck, dropping down into my body at the same time. Shutting out everything else, I said to myself, 'Nur is kissing me' and I didn't think as I did in *real life* A kiss is between a man and a woman', but just wanted more. Every point in my body that Nur reached she aroused and left in a state of agitation.³⁹

By using the word "real" in this passage, she immediately maintains the unreality of her feelings. She dismisses her arousal as alien to her real self before she goes on to narrate her enjoyment of the sexual experience:

³⁸ Ibid. p. 11-12.

³⁹ Ibid. P.50. my italics.

My muscles didn't stay tensed up and as they relaxed I found myself lying back on the bed then a rhythmic movement started up which made me dizzy from the different sensation of pleasure it produced in me. It was a beautiful purely instinctual rhythm, which seemed to take off and fly like the wisps of steam still floating about the room.⁴⁰

Soon afterwards, Suha once more states that she is normal, in a context equating normality with heterosexuality :

I am Suha.[...] I am not bent like Sahar, although I have laughed and exchanged gestures about men with other girls like me. I'm normal. I saw myself on a bed in the cold of the mountain with Suhail.⁴¹ (The word "bent" here is a translation of the word "*shatha*" which can also be translated as homosexual or abnormal).

By emphasizing that she is normal, therefore, Suha distances herself from her lesbian tendencies which are revealed in the course of her affair with Nur, assuring herself that these tendencies are not part of her "real" self, and that they will vanish with her departure from Saudi Arabia.

In a manner similar to the way Suha manages to forge a distance between herself and her lesbian emotions, she also manages to create a similar distance between herself and the other people she meets on her trip: " I always felt that I was different from my neighbours,"⁴² she says, even though she has mentioned that these neighbours are, like herself, wives of immigrants and that they were Arabs and foreigners mixed. A few of them are even Lebanese, like Umm Kairouz and Sitt Wafa.

Suha, therefore, alienates herself from the other women around her, and is left isolated from life around her. Her isolation intensifies her sense of imprisonment, a feeling which she has initially had due to her frustration with

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 52.

⁴² Ibid. p.9.

her failure to have access to work or to move freely around the town. Throughout the narrative she complains of the "high walls" which surround the houses, and of her inability to "walk about the place." Her image of herself as cooped up is further enhanced by her repeated mention of her canary which appears in the very first line of her narrative: "I dropped on the couch and the canary landed on my shoulder".⁴³ In the end of her stay in Saudi Arabia, she sets the canary free, an act symbolizing her own break away from captivity.

This sense of captivity is perhaps the common part of the migration experience which Suha shares with the migrants in the other novels under study. However, hers is the least painful. It is temporary. Suha believes that she is ultimately free:

I was suddenly conscious that I wasn't from here, [Saudi Arabia] that I could travel and go where I pleased.⁴⁴

It is precisely this consciousness, therefore, which distinguishes her from the other migrant protagonists represented in the other novels.

In conclusion, the four novels under study present migrant protagonists who are constructed in their own discourse as both alienated and constrained. Except for Suha, the situation of these migrants is worsened by its irreversibility. The implications of these facts on the migrations experience are quite fundamental. In *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*, the feelings of isolation, aimlessness, oppression, and despair are precisely what lead them to their common insistence on getting to Kuwait. This desperate insistence on staying inside the tank until they cross the Kuwaiti borders, is what leads to their death. Similarly, in *Atfal Bilā Dumū*⁴⁵ it is Dr. Fakkār's internalization of his alienation from the others in

⁴³ Ibid. p.3.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 45.

Dalūk, Cairo and present day Kafr Shawq all at once which brings him to return to Dalūk, and continue to live as an exile. In *al-Balda al-Ukhrā*, Musa's inability to "shake the torpor of his soul" leads him to an indifference towards both Alexandria and Dalūk, so that he goes to Dalūk with no real motivation to realize any specific ambitions by going there, remains an outsider throughout the trip, and with the same ease and indifference that characterized his decision to go to Tabuk, he decides to leave it in the end. In contrast to Mūsā's indifference comes Suha's attitude in *Misk al-Ghazāl*. She idealizes her life in Beirut, and refuses to see her life in Saudi Arabia as anything but temporary and abnormal. Consequently, she fights for her departure, and looks forward to it with a certainty that it will put an end to all her problems.

In the next chapter we shall explore another construction which is complementary to the construction of the self in the novels of our study. We shall explore the protagonists' construction of the others around them. This construction at once affects and is affected by the protagonists' construction of themselves, and is equally fundamental to the impact of the migration experience on the migrant protagonists in the novels.

Chapter Four

The Other

"L'enfer c'est les autres"

Jean-Paul Sartre *Notre Chère*

In the previous chapter we have provided an analysis of the protagonist's representation of themselves based on their first person narration, third person narrative in *Bill & Ben Shanon* in the novels. In this chapter we will analyze the other side of the coin: their representation of the other. The 'other' here is defined by the characters who populate each narrative, aside from the protagonist. The construction of the 'other' is often an inseparable part of defining the self, since it determines whether the protagonist belongs or does not belong with the others he or she is constructing. This construction is especially important in the novels analyzed in this chapter, because of the situation these which prevails in them. In the migration experience, definition of the other becomes a fundamental requirement for defining the protagonist's relationship and position in the new place to which he immigrates. The relationship with the other people in the new place to which he immigrates is often in the foreground upon the migration experience. Only by defining the 'other' immigrant, to one's own identity, is it possible to establish what the protagonist's relationship to his or her new destination will be one of assimilation and adaptation, or non-assimilation and alienation.

The representation of the 'other' is often multi-faceted, including such features as the definition of the other's physical features, the culture, language,

Chapter Four

The Other

"L'enfer c'est les autres"
Jean-Paul Sartre *Huis Clos*

In the previous chapter we have provided an analysis of the protagonists' representation of themselves based on their first person narration, (third person subjective in *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*) in the novels. In this chapter we will analyze the other side of the coin: their representation of the 'other'. The 'other' here is rendered by the characters who populate each narrative, aside from the protagonist. The construction of the 'other' is often an inseparable part of defining the 'self', since it determines whether the protagonist belongs or does not belong with the others he or she is constructing. This construction is especially important in the novels analyzed in this thesis, because of the migration theme which prevails in them. In the migration experience, definition of the other becomes a fundamental requirement for defining the protagonist's own relationship with the other people in the new place to which he immigrates, and often in the homeland upon the migrant's return to it. Only by defining the 'other' in relation to one's own identity, is it possible to establish whether the migrant's relationship to his or her new destination will be one of affiliation and assimilation, or non-affiliation and alienation.

The representation of the 'other' is often multi-faceted, including such elements as the delineation of the other's physical features, his culture, language,

norms, and customs. Such representation is not an objective matter. Subjectivity alone determines how the 'other' is represented, and whether the representation will focus on the points of similarity with the 'self', or difference from it. Objectively, such similarities and differences are essentially present between every person and the other, even if the similarity is limited to the fact that they are both human. The definition, or representation of the other characters in the four novels under study is, therefore, yet another construction -similar to those of the 'place' and the 'self' - which does not reflect the qualities of these other characters as much as it reflects the protagonist's relationships with them. In other words through his representations, the protagonist constructs an 'other' who would fit into the formulae of the 'self' and the 'other' given the nature of their relationship.

We shall, therefore, analyze the construction of the 'other' in the novels under study as it is conducted from the protagonists' perspectives in order to see how it reflects their relationships to those around them. The analysis will be based on such elements as their choice to flesh out some characters and not others, and the terms in which these characters are described. In other words, we shall analyze the terms in which the protagonists represent other characters as well as their selectivity regarding the individualization of some characters while others are left as 'flat characters', given no more than a name or a single designating feature. as well as analyzing the terms in which these characters are represented.

The construction of the 'other' varies largely between the four novels. Yet it remains bound by the protagonist's plight and his location vis-a-vis this 'other'. In *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*, the 'other' is almost non-existent, since the plight of the Palestinian refugees is, for the most part, not related to their relationships or

interactions with individuals, but to larger entities, such as the Israeli occupation, and the Arab governments. Their struggle to survive the desolation of their life as displaced refugees is represented in the novel by their struggle to survive the fatal sun and heat of the desert. The few other characters which appear in the narrative are sparsely represented, and are left as one-sided agents who further drive the refugees towards the lethal desert.

The protagonists of *Rijāl fi ash-Shams* are Palestinian refugees united by the misery of their exile which they have suffered since the 1948 crisis. They are deserted and left to a lonely and desolate existence. This fact is revealed in the narrative by the scarcity of other people populating it. By repeatedly representing the image of the refugees in an empty space, a land devoid of people, the narrative emphasizes their isolation, their loneliness, that they indeed are "men in the sun". Through the use of sentences like:

The sun was pouring flame down on his [Assad's] head, and as he climbed the yellow slopes, he felt that he was alone in the whole world."¹

and

he [Marwan] leaned against the wall. Crowds of people walked past without paying him any attention. Perhaps it was the first time in his life that he had felt all alone and a stranger in a throng of people like this.²

the narrative reflects the refugees' sense of abandonment, that the others have decided to "walk past", and ignore their plight. Later, when they attempt to travel across the desert (in Abul Khaizuran's truck) to Kuwait, their trip is still described as a solitary endeavour:

¹Ghassan Kanafāni, *Men in the Sun*, translated by Hilary Kilpatrick, The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo. 1978. p.18.

² Ibid. p. 23.

The lorry, a small world, black as night, made its way across the desert like a heavy drop of oil on a burning sheet of tin.³

Again the image is of a solitary truck moving in a vast empty space. The recurrence of this image of solitude is, therefore, a fundamental element by which the narrative reflects one of its main themes, that of the refugees' despair of getting anyone to even pay heed to their plight.

Moreover, the few other characters who appear in the narrative serve only to exploit the Palestinian refugees, forcing them further towards the desert with its "blazing", "merciless" sun. These characters remain flat characters, portrayed in a single dimension as malignant and parasitic. The first of these characters is the Basran smuggler with whom they all negotiate whether he would smuggle them to Kuwait (before they meet Abul Khaizuran). He is left unnamed, described repeatedly as "the fat man".⁴

This description becomes more meaningful in the light of his role in the novel. He not only haggles with the three refugees, Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan over his fees for smuggling them into Kuwait, but also humiliates and insults them. When Abu Qais tries to persuade him to accept a ten dinars fee, he says :

We are not playing games here. Didn't your friend tell you that the price is fixed here? We are risking the guide's life for your sake.'
'We too are risking our lives.'
'I didn't force you to.' ⁵

Such callousness and rudeness are again demonstrated in his talk with Assad, who asks to pay the fees upon his arrival to Kuwait and not before:

³ Ibid. p.46.

⁴ Ibid. p.p. 15, 16, 17, 22 & 23.

⁵ Ibid. p. 15.

Folding some yellow papers in front of him, the man said reproachfully: 'I am not forcing you to do anything, I'm not forcing you.'

'What do you mean?'

'I mean that if you don't like our conditions you can turn round, take three steps, and find yourself on the road.'⁶

Once more, the smuggler shows his complete oblivion to the suffering and desolation of the Palestinians trying to cross the Kuwaiti borders. Worse still is the fat man's meeting with Marwan where the latter tries to bargain for a five dinars fee. Marwan threatens to denounce him to the police. The fat man slaps him on the face while calling him names in a voice "hoarse with anger".⁷

The Basran smuggler is, therefore, given a single side to his character, that of an unfeeling person who is oblivious to the misery of the Palestinian refugees, and can only think about exploiting them as much as possible. In answer to a question about how the rats survive in the desert, and what they eat, Assad replies: "Rats smaller than them."⁸ His reply is metaphorical of the relationship between Palestinian refugees, like himself, and their exploiters, represented by this fat man who only wants to 'eat' them.

Another character who appears in the narrative is Abu Baqir, the guard official at Mutlaa, another "fat man" whose spiteful chatter with Abu Qais, in spite of the latter's pleas for him to sign the papers for him quickly and let him move on, results in the death of the three refugees inside the tank:

'Now, Abu Baqir, I've no time for jokes. Please...'

⁶ Ibid. p. 16.

⁷ Ibid. p.23.

⁸ Ibid. p. 21.

Stretching out his hand, he [Abul Khaizuran] moved the papers closer in front of the official, but again Abu Baqir pushed them away to the edge of the desk, folded his arms and smiled wickedly.

'Haj Rida asked about you six times.'

'I told you the lorry was not working. And Haj Rida and I can come to an understanding when we meet. Please sign the papers. I'm in a hurry.'

He slid the papers close again, but once more Abu Baqir pushed them away.

'Your lorry wasn't working?'

The three officials looked at one another, and gave a knowing laugh. The desk of one of them was completely bare except for a small glass of tea; the other had stopped working to follow what was happening.

The fat man called Abu Baqir said, belching:

'Now, be sensible Abul Khaizuran. Why do you hurry your journey in terrible weather like this? The room here is cool, and I'll order you a glass of tea. So enjoy the comfort.'⁹

It is obvious from the above passage that Abul Khaizuran is pleading with Abu Baqir to sign the papers for him to cross the borders, and that Abu Baqir and the other officials enjoy tormenting him with the delay. While Abul Khaizuran almost begs Abu Baqir to sign the papers quickly, the latter is laughing and "belching". Later they all tease Abul Khaizuran about a rumour that he has been seeing a dancer in Basra. Their teasing, all the more painful to Abul Khaizuran because of his emasculation, ultimately delays him enough for the other refugees to suffocate while waiting inside the tank.

Rijāl fi ash-Shams therefore portrays the Palestinian refugees all alone, struggling against the misery of their exile in the wake of the 1948 war. The absence of any other fully fleshed characters is one of the literary elements which reflect their loneliness and isolation. The few other characters in the novel remain one-dimensional, and only serve as agents who exacerbate their suffering and push them further towards their doom.

⁹ Ibid. p. 50.

The 'others' in *Atfāl Bilā' Dumū'* remain similarly one-dimensional, often represented in Dr. Fakkār's narrative discourse as an indiscriminate mass. However, Dr. Fakkār's suffering is more related to his perception of this 'other' than is the suffering of the Palestinian refugees. It is precisely because of his view of the others around him that he is an exile in Cairo, Dalūk and Kafr Shawq at once. This perception is, therefore, a key element in the narrative. It is important here to note that it is Dr. Fakkār's construction of the others around him, and of their relationships to him, is extremely subjective and fragmented, but that it is precisely this subjective construction which is relevant to the narrative. In *'Atfāl Bila Dumū'* all the characters other than the protagonist are included in the narrative chiefly to demonstrate Dr. Fakkār's relationships with the people around him, and consequently explain his feeling of permanent alienation.

The first of Dr. Fakkār's constructions is of the people of Cairo:

Behind these windows and doors is a silly mass of people, which neither concerns nor scares me. I despise it. I would be lost if I got to know it. I would like to be like it, but cannot. I run away from it and spy on it. I see it as mannequins made of that light material which is synthesized from petroleum.¹⁰

In this construction, the people of Cairo are depicted as a "mass", a depiction which implies Dr. Fakkār's complete alienation from them. In seeing them as an indiscriminate mass he does not allow himself to establish any human emotions between himself and any one of them. They are all silly and meaningless. His only relationship to them is one of curiosity. They are a mere spectacle, something for him to "spy on" at a distance.

¹⁰ 'Alaa ad-Dib, *Atfāl Bila Dumū'*, Dar al-Hilal, Cairo 1989. p. 18.

His construction of the people of Dalūk is quite similar. He describes them as: "The canned men, moulded in clean white galabiyas,"¹¹ hence dehumanizing them as he did with the people of Cairo, and asserting the impossibility of developing any form of human relationship with them. His construction of the people of his village, however, does not dehumanize them but depicts them as hostile to him. They are not as distant, and dehumanized as they are hateful to him :

They have all changed to mouths there, extended hands, loitering bodies. They are lazy. They do not want to do anything. Some of them are rude, and label me with lunacy to my face. I almost know what they say about me when I am away.¹²

Here Dr. Fakkār not only expresses his contempt for the people of Kafr Shawq, but also his belief that they despise him in return. He believes that they only want to exploit him, like an " inexhaustible oil field," because he has given them all the gifts and loans he could, but they were never grateful, and always demanded more.¹³

Dr. Fakkār, therefore, manages to obstruct the development of any benevolent human feelings between himself and the others around him through his constructions of them as meaningless and silly or as malicious and hostile. Even when he singles out these individuals who are closer to him, he still constructs them in a way which does not allow him to share any meaningful and kindly feelings with them. Um ʿIssam is a woman whom he goes to see in Alexandria, and they spend a few days together. Dr. Fakkār enjoys being with Um Issam, sees it as a form of salvation from his distress. Yet his discourse implies that he only sees her as a pleasure object:

¹¹ Ibid. p. 21.

¹² Ibid. p. 32.

¹³ Ibid. p. 57.

Um'Issam, in the glow of her white flesh, I drown my soul and my vacant night. She and my psychiatrist are the most important of what is left here for me. After one hour, she prepares the apartment[...] The time does not matter, for she likes the empty days with me, and appreciates my calculated generosity. I appreciate her greedy gratitude which is never satisfied. Her mouth, thighs and breasts are full, as if she breast feeds me white stupidity.¹⁴

Dr. Fakkār only sees Um'Issam as a readily available companion for passing time. He is only interested in having sex with her, but not in developing their relationship on any other level. In the end of his stay with her, he leaves her some money, and takes off unannounced, while she is still asleep.

Dr. Fakkār also constructs his ex-wife as a hateful person. He tries to construct her as a spoilt mindless woman. Interestingly, however, his construction of her is at times so evidently biased that it reveals the fact that she is probably not quite the character he perceives. In fact Dr. Fakkār's ex-wife, Dr. Sana' Farag, is the foil for his character. It becomes apparent from the discourse of Dr. Fakkār that the qualities which he hates in her are only hateful to him, because they are the alternative to the qualities of his own character. Dr. Sana' Farag, therefore is the proof that Dr. Fakkār's development into a man who is incapable of anything other than making money was not inevitable.

Dr. Fakkār first describes his ex-wife as useless and spoilt, calling her: "the girl of al-Korba, [an upper-class neighbourhood in Cairo] the girl of the club, the powder, and the photographs stuck in the album."¹⁴ Then, at a later point contradicts this image of the frivolous woman when he says that she has a doctorate degree in Business Administration.¹⁵ Furthermore, his narration of the arguments they used to have while they were married and living together in

¹⁴ Ibid. p.23,

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 22 & 62.

Daluk reflects his prejudice, and the lack of any justification for his scorn of his ex-wife:

She used to receive her salary and simply toss it into her purse, and go on spending it until it evaporates. She buys tens of toys for the children. Things which I neither like nor understand.¹⁶

Here, he indicates the first difference between him and his ex-wife. She spends her earnings, while he is obsessed with saving it, "leaving it to its beautiful accumulation".¹⁷ "She always made me feel that we should return [to Egypt] tomorrow,"¹⁸ continues Dr. Fakkār, revealing another point of disagreement between him and his ex-wife. Whereas she saw their stay in Dalūk as temporary and felt that it should end as soon as they had made a reasonable amount of money, he had become hooked to the vicious money-making cycle, and had lost any attachment to his homeland and his people.

In fact, the more Dr. Fakkār narrates the arguments he and his ex-wife had, the more it becomes obvious that he has taken a prejudiced stand against her because he realizes that their points of difference only prove that the development of his character into what it is now (empty, insignificant, isolated) was not inevitable:

When I asked Dr. Sana' Farag to get veiled, or cover her head, she said that she would not change her skin for the money of Qarun. This was not necessary but it was indicative of the[her] goals and intentions. Everyone around us was doing it for a variety of reasons. At first, I did not think it was necessary. But her obstinance and the talk of the colleagues around me made me bring up the issue with her. She ignored me and did not reply. Furthermore, she busied herself with styling her hair, and choosing among the brands of cosmetics. [...] I wanted her with me, a part of the conspiracy. She used to spend a long time reading books which she borrowed from the library, books

¹⁶ Ibid. p.96.

¹⁷ Ibid. p.97.

¹⁸ Ibid.

of literature and history. She refused to translate the short articles which were offered to us every day with increasing financial rewards for translation. She busied herself with the lectures, and with discussing the problems of the students until she gave me a headache from [discussing] insoluble social issues.¹⁹

Here he says that he has asked her to wear the veil when he did not uphold the religious convictions which call for it. By saying that it was his colleagues who pressured him into talking to her about it, he reveals that he, himself, could see that it was a hypocritical act on his part. He uses his friends' pressures as an excuse for his own hypocrisy and "change of skin". Then he denounces her for reading literature and history and getting involved in the social issues when he himself was once quite an intellectual, fond of poetry, and carried away with the dreams of President Nassir. Dr. Fakkār, as it is revealed by his construction of her, has instilled in himself a false scorn for his ex-wife, Dr. Sana', because of the many qualities of her character which he feels have been lacking in his own.

The 'other' in *Atfāl Bilā Dumū'* is therefore represented as Dr. Fakkār's impressions of those around him. Those impressions, or constructions, however detached from any objective reality about the people themselves, remain the most relevant to the novel, because, other than Dr. Fakkār, the characters in the novel only serve to explain Dr. Fakkār's relationships with the people around him, and consequently explain his feeling of being an exile.

The third novel under study, *Al-Balda al-Ukhrā'*, is populated with many characters other than the protagonist, Ismā'īl Khidr Mūsā. Unlike the characters in *Atfal Bila Dumu'*, these characters are not only brought in to demonstrate Musa's relationship with the people he meets. They are also part of the wide-angle picture which the narrative attempts to represent, a picture of life in

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 99-100.

Tabuk, a small Saudi town populated by a majority of immigrants. Although the construction of the characters whom Mūsā meets in Tabūk is inevitably influenced by his position as narrator, it is still less so than the construction of Dr. Fakkār in *Atfāl Bilā Dumū*²⁰. For one thing, unlike Dr. Fakkār's, Mūsā's construction includes such elements as the characters' own dialogue and specific actions.

The numerous characters populating Tabuk in *Al-Balda al-Ukhra* seem at first subjected to Musa's classification of them into natives and immigrants. He emphasizes the 'otherness' of the natives early on, and in contrast, describes many of the immigrants in a manner which endows them with an air of familiarity. As soon as Mūsā arrives in Tabūk, he is met by an airport officer who urges him to move on by saying: "move on boy."²⁰ The word 'boy' (in Arabic, *walad*) immediately points out the difference of the Arabic spoken by Saudis from that spoken by Egyptians, and hence by Mūsā. Whereas the word *walad* sounds demeaning to Egyptians, it is completely free of such connotations for Saudis. Only a few minutes later, Musa encounters a customs inspector who confiscates an Egyptian monthly magazine which Mūsā had in his luggage. The inspector then wonders why "Egyptians" like reading so much.²¹ Once again his use of the word "Egyptians" emphasizes the Saudi-Egyptian distinction which Musa feels.

A similar effect is repeatedly created throughout the novel. Mūsā uses Saudi vocabulary unfamiliar to Egyptians in his narration of what he hears from the Saudi characters, namely the Saudi company manager and his associates, and recounts their reference to him as "the Egyptian." In this way, he emphasizes a

²⁰ Ibrahim 'Abd al-Majid, *Al-Balda al-Ukhra*, Dar Riad ar-Rayyes, London, 1991. p.10.

²¹ Ibid.

mutual perception of their distinction from him. For example, he recounts that 'Abid informed him that he should address the manager as "‘Am ‘Abdallah": "He [‘Abid] said that the best way to address the manager was to call him ‘Am ‘Abdallah. ‘Abdallah is his name, and 'Am is used instead of Ustāz which we use in Egypt."²² The term ‘Am, though commonly used in Saudi society, sounds awkward to Egyptians who only use it for elderly people. Musa also recounts how one of the people who phoned for the manager left him a message saying that "‘Am Salih *zahir* ‘alayh"²³ the message, which translates into "Am Salih sends him his regards," is completely unfamiliar phrase to Egyptians.

When Mansūr, a Saudi friend of ‘Abid first sees Mūsā at the company, he says:

'Are you the new Egyptian?'
 'Yes.'
 'Shu Ismak ?'
 'Isma‘īl.'²⁴

Mansūr not only uses the phrase *Shu Ismak*, (which translates into 'what is your name?'), which is alien to Egyptians, but he also refers to Mūsā as "the Egyptian", emphasizing the distinction between Mūsā and himself.

Besides the emphasis on the mutually recognized difference between Mūsā, as an Egyptian, and the Saudi manager and his associates, Mūsā's characterization of the Saudi characters in the novel, ‘Am ‘Abdallah, Mansūr and Salih ath-Thaqīfī is unfriendly. ‘Am ‘Abdallah is characterized as the rich and arrogant manger. The more personal side of his character is never represented in the narrative. When Mūsā first meets the manager in his luxurious office where

²² Ibid. p. 24.

²³ Ibid. p.34. my italics.

²⁴ Ibid. p.27. my italics.

"the floor is covered with wall-to-wall dark green carpeting" and "the walls are covered with silver white wall paper", their meeting is very abrupt. The manager does not invite Mūsā to sit down, but, sitting behind his "large oval desk," he asks him about his skills:

Can you type?

No.

Can you drive?

No. This time I said 'no' in a low voice which I wished hadn't come out.

He talked to 'Abid:

Tell Arshad to teach him how to drive and get him a driving license.²⁵

Not only is the manager quite abrupt, but he also talks about Musa as if he were not present. This same rudeness is continually described in the narrative:

We [Mūsā and Nabīl] heard 'Am 'Abdallah coming out of his office and talking to 'Abid: 'Sit here and don't move. And tell this - certainly referring to me - not to leave his place.²⁶

Again he refers to Mūsā in his presence as 'this' demonstrating his rudeness, and lack of courtesy.

Mansur, too, is shown to be a strange character, always carrying a monkey whose balls are painted blue. Musa does not say much about Manşūr, but the latter frequently comes to the company, and gives him sly and hostile looks.

Besides the manager and Manşūr, Saliḥ ath-Thaqīfī is the third Saudi character in the novel. He is the son of the landlord who owns the house in which Mūsā and his room-mates live. Mūsā goes to tutor Saliḥ at his home only to discover that Saliḥ does not need to be tutored but wants Mūsā to join him and

²⁵ Ibid. p. 22.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 58.

his friends in watching videos of foreign films. Salih tells Mūsā that he will be paid just for spending a good time with him:

My father is a donkey. He brings me a tutor every month, and I kick him out. I liked you, and I will ask him to give you a better salary on the condition that you don't teach me. Sit and let's talk about anything except the lesson.²⁷

Mūsā refuses to go along with Salih, who then takes revenge by ratting on Mūsā and his roommates while they were drinking non-alcoholic beer to which added a few drops of alcohol on New Year's Eve. As a result of this, Sa'īd, one of Mūsā's roommates loses his job and is forced to leave Saudi Arabia. Sa'īd then tells Mūsā that Salih "bribes all his teachers of all nationalities. Nobody refuses his bribe or his gifts. You refused to let him have the upper hand."²⁸

Wādha is the only Saudi whom Mūsā describes favourably. She is a teenage girl whom he goes to tutor in English. He falls in love with her, but does not dare allow their romance to develop for fear of its discovery, and because of his own reluctance to commit himself to a personal relationship. He describes her as very pretty with "thick black hair" cascading on her back. He also portrays her as sweet, romantic and as "small as a bird". Yet Wadha can not be seen as a positive example of Saudis in the novel. Musa repeatedly mentions that her grandfather is Egyptian so that it becomes obvious that he attributes her pleasant nature to her Egyptian ancestry. He also identifies with her as another oppressed person suffering the strict rules of social obligations.

Mūsā, therefore, emphasizes the mutual feelings of difference between himself and the Saudis in the narrative. Except for Wādha, he also describes all the Saudi characters negatively. They are all rich and insensitive, sometimes rude, sometimes unjustifiably spiteful.

²⁷ Ibid. p.178.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 250.

In contrast, Mūsā devotes a large part of his narrative to favourably develop the characters of most of the immigrant workers he meets in the company. He develops a friendly relationship with many of the foreign workers in the company, and in his narrative reveals their own plights, concerns and ambitions. His general impression of them is pleasant :

Sabah al-khayr.

Good morning.

As-Salām 'alaykum.

Three phrases I hear every morning, and in the afternoon when they [the immigrant workers] come to sign before leaving they only say 'as-salam 'alaykum. They speak as fast as rabbits eat, and I always smile to them, because they are always smiling.²⁹

In turn Mūsā introduces these workers as individuals with very human lives, problems and ambitions. Nabīl, the Egyptian who runs the cafeteria for example is first introduced as interesting and kindly:

I was smiling and shaking hands with Nabil who said to me, "welcome to your own country." I was comforted by seeing Nabīl, a really interesting face; a wide nose, thick lips and two very small eyes. The disharmony of his features did not bother me. I sensed kindness and spontaneity in them.

"Are you brother Ismail?" he asked.

"Yes"³⁰

Nabīl immediately calls him brother, and Mūsā's first impression of him that he is a simple and kindly person. Later the narratives reveals how Nabīl comes from a poor family in Cairo. He is rather simple minded, but very outgoing and frank. He opens up to Mūsā and tells him that he is working in Tabūk to save some money for his marriage. He has been sending his earnings to his mother

²⁹ Ibid. p.47.

³⁰ Ibid. p.25.

and to his fiancé. Nabīl constantly consults Mūsā about his problems and concerns.

In a similarly friendly and sympathetic manner, Musa characterizes the Pakistani driver Arshad. Arshad seems a bit reluctant about talking to Musa at first, Musa finally wins him over and they start chatting:

I wanted him to talk a lot and he did. He said that he is a graduate of a higher institute for arts, that he is a plastic artist, and that he has small paintings which he has painted in his room, but that he doesn't show it to anybody...[...] Arshad said that he was married and had a beautiful daughter named Zeinab, whom he always paints in his room. He said that he was from Peshawar. And what does Peshawar mean Arshad? Isn't it a town like all others? No, Mr. Isma'īl. Peshawar is the poorest of towns. Almost all the cleaning workers here are from Peshawar.³¹

Here, Arshad's human side is portrayed, his inability to pursue his interest in the arts, his love for his daughter and his poverty all characterize him as a friendly, sympathetic character.

The rest of the workers are portrayed with the same sympathy, Philip the elderly Sri Lankan who converts to Islam in order to extend his stay in Saudi Arabia, Aaron, the Phillipino whose ultimate dream is to buy a house in Bangkok and Mundhir, the Palestinian who fears that the Saudi authorities would learn about his past involvement with the Palestinian feda'iyin and deport him.

Mūsā, however, singles out two of the immigrants and portrays them negatively. The first of these is 'Abid, the Egyptian secretary to the manager, and Larry an American employee at the same company. Despite the fact that 'Abid is Egyptian, he and Mūsā never become friendly. In fact, Mūsā says that from the first time he saw 'Abid on their flight to Tabūk, he did not like him. 'Abid is constantly shown to have identified too closely with the local community and with the company's management. The first indication of this is shown while he

³¹ Ibid. p. 88-89.

and Mūsā are driving through the market place, and they see Wādḥa being publicly denounced for going out with a Yemeni. Whereas Mūsā feels sorry for the girl, 'Abid yells; "Whore", and goes on insulting both her and the Yemeni.³²

Later, 'Abid also shows that he "only does what pleases 'Am 'Abdallah," as Arshad puts it. Through several incidents, 'Abid proves that he always sides with the management against the workers in the company, as when he argues with Arshad over the cost of spices which the company provides for its Asian workers to use in their food:

At the beginning, Arshad looks nice, speaking English and carefully choosing his words so for them to be easy and clear to 'Abid who does not know much English. And he always adds a few Arabic words. But soon his facial expressions change, and he reddens with surprise and disapproval. Arshad always looks serious, and 'Abid talks to him disinterestedly, exactly as one would throw a paper in a trash basket. 'Abid says: 'Much *kammūn* [cumin] and shakes his shoulders. So Arshad says: 'Yes, much *kammūn*, Mr. Arshad. *Kammūn* is necessary.' And so goes a long argument about the amount of spices which Arshad requires. Spices are among the cheapest thing in the kingdom, but Arshad enjoys being difficult.³³

Here, Mūsā not only narrates an incident which in itself shows that 'Abid is a petty follower of the manager, stingy with the company's expenses on the most minor needs of its employees. He also points out that while Arshad starts out trying to be polite and pleasant, 'Abid is rude and insensitive.

Larry, an American employee in the company, is the other immigrant whom Musa portrays unfavourably in the novel. Larry and his wife Rose live in the company housing unit which is provided exclusively for the American employees. Larry proves to be a crook. When he is commissioned by the company to buy one million pounds worth of equipment from the U.S., he

³² Ibid. p.30.

³³ Ibid. p.55.

arranges for a forged Lufthansa receipt which proves that the equipment has been shipped from San Francisco and pockets most of the million pounds. However, Larry's incrimination in the narrative does not stem only from this theft. He is also depicted as a contriving and provocative character throughout the narrative. When Larry and his wife first invite Mūsā to visit them at their house, he immediately senses their class difference from himself and most of those he knows:

We sat in a large hall where, in one corner, there was a book case with books, records, cassette tapes, a television set, a video player, a record player, and a stereo. In another corner, there was a wide and short elegant glass case, with a few small nicknacks on top of it. The third corner had a simple shiny black table with four chairs, and in the last corner was the living rooms seats where we were sitting.³⁴

During the visit, Larry constantly provokes Mūsā, first talking about the Jews returning to Egypt after the Camp David Treaty, and then about the difference between drinking the wine in its home country and drinking it after it has been shipped outside of it. His talk about the peace treaty is meant to provoke Musa, while the remark about the wine is meant to boast how much of a wine connoisseur Larry is.³⁵

Mūsā, therefore, singles out two of the immigrants to be portrayed unfavourably, 'Abid and Larry. Both of them are also higher class employees than the other immigrants populating the narrative including Mūsā himself. This fact points out to the real bias which Mūsā manifests in the narration. Not only does he emphasize the 'otherness' of the natives, their difference from himself, and depicts them unfavourably while he portrays the immigrant workers in more favourable and human terms. He also chooses to side with the

³⁴ Ibid. p.254.

³⁵ Ibid. p.256-258.

poorer working class immigrants, and depicts the two immigrants who do not fit in with this group in the same unfavourable terms he uses to characterize the Saudis in the novel. This selective representation suggests that he, being of a lower middle class himself, identifies more with the other workers, who are like himself subject to the oppression of life in Tabūk, not those who have adjusted, like 'Abid, or those who are there to reap huge benefits, like Larry.

Al-Balda Al-Ukhrā, therefore is populated with numerous characters other than the protagonist narrator, Musa. Unlike the characters in *Rijal fi ash-Shams* and *Atfal Bilā Dumū*², these characters serve a function which is not as directly related to the plight of the protagonist. Despite the inevitable bias of the narrator, the characters he represents in his narrative constitute the parts of a more comprehensive, a wider-angle picture of the lives of immigrant workers in a Saudi town.

In analyzing the construction of the 'other' in the fourth novel under study, *Misk al-Ghazāl*, we shall remain limited to Suha's narrative, since the subject of our analysis in this chapter has been defined as the protagonist's characterization of the other in his or her own discourse. As we have already mentioned in the first and second chapter, Suha's narrative dominates the whole text of *Misk al-Ghazāl*, which lacks any dialogic element, that is, it does not offer opposite perspectives despite the change of narrative voice between Suha, Nur, Suzanne and Tamr. Suha's construction of the three other narrators, therefore, remains quite similar to their construction of themselves in their own narratives. Her construction, however, includes the additional element of her statements about the nature of her relationships to them.

Besides the three other narrators, Suha's characterization of the others around her is one-dimensional, at times even cynical and sarcastic. It only serves to demonstrate her own dissatisfaction with the community with which she has to live, and her alienation from it. The narrative opens with an incident of her clash with the local authority, inspectors breaking into the institute where she teaches:

When the men had come in I had been sitting in the rest-room, drinking the lemonade that I'd brought from home in a little thermos flask. I froze, then began to tremble. One of them said to me, 'cover yourself up, woman.'³⁶

The event, which serves as the first indication of how oppressive life is for Suha in the "desert", is also a significant indicator of how culturally different Suha is from the local society, a difference which is signified by her use of the word *hurma* in her narration of what the inspector tells her.³⁷ The word *hurma* is commonly used in Saudi Arabia, but is considered abusive in other Arab countries, including Lebanon. By using the word "hurma" Suha therefore reveals her aggravated indignation at the incident, which is partially the result of the difference in the spoken Arabic.

Besides Tamr, Suha never really introduces Saudi characters in her narrative. As for the immigrant community, she introduces a few of the women who, like herself have come to accompany their husbands. Suha, however,

³⁶ Hanan al-Shaykh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, translated by Catherine Cobham, Quartet Books, London, New York, 1989. p.3.

³⁷ The word *hurma* appears in the Arabic text, *Misk al Ghazāl*, Dār al-Adāb, Beirut, 1988. p. 5. and is what has been translated into "woman" in the English translation.

keeps those immigrants as 'card-board characters. She portrays them as silly and absurd:

Should I go and see Suzanne, Maryam, Umm Kairouz? Suzanne, Hind, Reem, Stephanie, Laila? Suzanne, Umm Kairouz, Tahani? Suzanne, Amal or Maryam? Suzanne? Shahnaz? Khulud, Raja, Dalal or Sabah? Suzanne? When I'd put Suzanne out of my mind, I pictured the other women's houses and imagined the sounds of their voices, and knew exactly what lay in wait for me.

Sabah: an analysis of marital relationships, her self-respect, the children. Shahnaz: the house and the furniture, the house and the furniture, her very very successful son [...] Stephanie: it was the chance of the lifetime being here in the desert and there was no time to be depressed. She imported everything from her home country, Sweden, and sold it here. She pricked out seedlings and planted them in pots and when they grew into blossoming branches she sold them.[...] Umm Kairouz: 'O Lord, may the ones who drove us out be driven out themselves one day. God damn the lot of them! Lebanon, Lebanon! Poor, poor Lebanon! [...] Reem in the daytime: 'The housework does not give me a minute to relax. That's what it's like with children to look after.' Reem at night, laughing: I can't change the way I laugh. My husband tells me off about it. When I asked a friend of his if his mustache were real, he said, 'See for Yourself'. I pulled it and it was real.³⁸

In this long passage where Suha gives a quick survey of the immigrant women she knows, her depiction of each of them is mostly a caricature, making them seem ridiculous, silly, and ultimately very different, from Suha herself. She does not distinguish between the Arabs and the Westerners. Both are equally absurd, and unable to provide Suha with interesting company. Even Umm Kairouz, who is a Lebanese is not spared the caricature. Suha makes her sound idiotic, with nothing to talk about other than lamenting the war in Lebanon. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that Suha explicitly says: "I always felt that I was different from my neighbours."³⁹ This perceived difference is one of the main reasons for Suha's frustration with her life in exile. She feels lonely and isolated, because she

³⁸ *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, p. 6-7.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p.9.

can not find enough in common between herself and any of the other women that could enable them to share a meaningful friendship.

Suha does not perceive anything in common between herself and any of the other main characters as well. Suha first introduces Suzanne whom she meets at the stationary store. She characterizes her as stupid, and pathetic. Suha relates how Suzanne has told her of her relationship with Maaz, and asked her to write a letter for him:

The words she told me to put were naive, sentimental, cheap. Reading between the lines I could guess what sort of relationship they had.⁴⁰

Suha never really takes Suzanne seriously. All she sees in her is amusing company, a pastime. She only wants to amuse herself with Suzanne's "passionate stories about Maaz [...] her outlandish reports of violent scenes and fake suicide attempts."⁴¹

Suha also introduces Tamr, and unlike all the other characters, Tamr is represented as sophisticated and pleasant. She is a native, but she is also Suha's student at the institute. She, therefore, speaks some English. She takes Suha on a trip to her father's house in a nearby oasis. On the trip Tamr demonstrates her knowledge and pride of her local cultural heritage:

I[Suha] said to my student Tamr, 'If it hadn't been for you, I wouldn't have believed that there really were oases or springs in the desert like the ones in the books.' Tamr laughed proudly. That morning she had taken me from her father's house, [...] When we were at her father's house she'd shown me the carvings on the walls and ceilings, and the roof still made of palm leaves.[...] Tamr pointed to some glass-plated buildings and said, 'The camel market used to be here and the gold market still exists.'⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid. p.20.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid. p. 28.

But despite this obvious pride in the traditional local culture, Tamr also shows her sophistication and tolerance of the difference between herself and Suha. She even tries to help Suha evade the locals' anger at Suha's dress at the oasis market by pretending that Suha is a Westerner, and shouting at them, "She's foreign. Isn't she. They have their religion, we have ours."⁴³ Suha, however does not construct Tamr's character any further, and she never says that she ever saw Tamr as an equal or as a close friend.

In fact, Tamr's own narrative further reveals that the two women do not see each other as equals or friends, but as teacher and student. Tamr sees Suha as her role model:

what I [Tamr] was really grateful to her [Suha] for was introducing me to another way of life in the desert which I'd known nothing of, starting with colours and furnishings and ending up with civilization. I thanked God that I had gone to the Institute, had Suha as my teacher, eaten a slice of cake on that white plate with flowers on it, drunk tea with honey in it instead of sugar which according to Suha was 'white poison'.⁴⁴

Here, it becomes obvious that Tamr has idolized Suha and her life style to the minutest details. To Tamr, Suha represents "civilization", and this is precisely why Suha likes Tamr and portrays her sympathetically. Tamr's perception of Suha coincides with Suha's perception of herself as the lone 'civilized' in the 'desert'.

Nur is the third and last of the main characters introduced in Suha's narrative. They meet at the swimming pool and Nur invites Suha to her house. Suha first dwells on how rich and spoilt Nur is. She also insists on her thought

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p.97.

that she can never be friends with Nur, but is merely intrigued by her and her life style:

Nur reawakened my curiosity, but only for a short time. Her house was like a peep-show where servants and nannies of different races milled around with the children, gazelles and saluki dogs. A delicate perfume floated to meet me whenever I went through the door, and Arab and foreign music reverberated through the spacious rooms. Beautiful clothes, high fashion, the latest of everything- including the furniture and the chocolate offered me, like Godiva from Belgium and Chantilly from Lebanon-mangoes and pineapples from the Philippines.⁴⁵

Besides dwelling on Nur's excessively luxurious and vacant life-style, Suha also repeatedly asserts that she constantly tries to end her relationship with Nur, even before it develops into a sexual affair. She says that Nur would not accept any of her excuses for not visiting and that she has come to "feel annoyed by her and her persistence. This assertion seems to be Suha's attempt to free herself from her guilt over her later sexual involvement with Nur. Suha also tries to relieve herself of her guilt through the demonstration of Nur's unlimited desire for sex, which was "like food and drink to her."⁴⁶ Suha therefore narrates how Nur used her [Suha's] house as a place for sleeping with different men and how when Suha's house was being painted, Nur could not live without sex for a few days, but instead thought of new tricks for Suha to bring in men to Nur's house, pretending they were doctors and that Nur was ill.

Suha's characterization of the others around her, therefore, reflects her alienation from them all. She feels different from everyone around her. She depicts her neighbours as boring and silly, and insists that she is merely amused by Suzanne, but never takes her seriously. Consequently, Suzanne comes out as

⁴⁵ Ibid. p.39-40.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p.46.

frivolous and immature. Suha also describes Nur as spoilt, demanding and most importantly, a sex maniac. This description seems to be Suha's apology for her own involvement with Nur.

Through her construction of the other characters who populate the community in which she lives in exile, Suha sheds more light on her view of herself as alienated and bored, her impression that her life in the "desert" is a waste, and her pressing desire to leave the place. Her constructions also constitute parts of her own depiction of life in a small Saudi city. When contrasted with that of Musa in *al-Balda al-Ukhra* it immediately indicates the different prejudices of the two narrators. For, while Musa sympathetically portrays the plights of the working class immigrants, they are almost absent from Suha's narrative. People like Said, Suha's Yemeni driver and Ringo, Suzanne's Sri Lankan servant only appear in the narratives as mentioned only in passing and remain without any description other than their names and jobs. On the other hand, the repression of women and the sexual deviance in the society which is barely touched upon in *al-Balda al-Ukhra* is a basic theme in *Misk al-Ghazāl*.

In conclusion, we have demonstrated that the construction of the 'other' by the protagonists in the four novels under study is inevitably subjective. The prejudice of any construction of the 'other' is demonstrated both in the choice to flesh out some characters and not others, and in the terms in which each character is depicted. In the narratives under study, the depiction of the 'other' has proven to be both a cause for and an effect of the protagonists' constructions of themselves and of their migration experience. In other words, the

protagonists' view of the people around them is affected by and contributes to their perception of their identity, its nature and affiliations, and hence their relationships with the people they meet during their migration, whether this relationship is one of equality, superiority or inferiority. These relations are a crucial factor in the perception of the migration experience itself, because they determine the degree to which the migrant sees him or herself as able to assimilate with those around him or doomed to exile, isolation or oppression.

We have also shown that in the narratives we have studied, the constructions of the 'other' varied in accordance with the protagonists' perception of their migration. In *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*, for example, the characters other than the protagonists were few and represented in a single dimension as cause for the exacerbation of the protagonists' plight. The scarcity of characters in the novel asserts the protagonists' view of themselves as lonely and abandoned. On the other hand, in *Atfal Bilā Dumū*⁶ the isolation of Dr. Fakkar is not demonstrated in the scarcity of other characters represented in his narrative but in his constructions of these characters which do not allow for him to develop any sort of benevolent relationship with any of them. He repeatedly describes the others around him in terms which show them as either malicious and spiteful or meaningless and silly.

In both *al-Balda al-Ukhrā* and *Misk al-Ghazāl*, the narrative allows for the appearance of numerous characters, many of whom do not directly affect the protagonists' migration experience. Yet in the representation of these characters and hence the portrayal of the societies in which the protagonists are living, the subjective choice of characters and of the terms in which they are represented still reflects each protagonist's affiliations and view of the nature of his or her own migration. The absence of working-class characters from Suha's narrative for example, reflects her own class affiliations and her view of herself as superior

to all the others around her, emphasizing her sense of exile. Musa's affiliation with the working class immigrants, in contrast, is shown by his human and sympathetic portrayal of them in his narrative. It is not because of them that he feels exiled and isolated, but because of his own lack of enthusiasm, his own failure to develop meaningful relationships with the people he meets.

Conclusion

In conclusion to this study, I would first like to re-affirm the idea presented in the introduction that the four novels we have analyzed, together with many other novels with the same theme, form a distinct discourse about the experience of migration to the oil-rich Arab nations in the Gulf. Then I will move on to review the nature of this discourse as it has been delineated in the course of analyzing these four novels in the preceding chapters.

The four novels discussed in this thesis have all been written by authors who have themselves migrated to the Gulf at some point in their lives. The conditions of their migration have been essentially similar to the conditions of the migration undertaken by the protagonists in the novels, namely, they have all been unwilling migrants who have seen the experience as necessary and undesirable but, hopefully, temporary.

These protagonists may, therefore, be regarded as representative of real migrants, and the novels narrated from the perspective of these protagonists, as the discourse of these migrants on the experience of migration. This is not to say that the novels are auto-biographical,¹ but to say that they, even assuming that the characters and events in these novels are fictional, are based on the real experience of their authors and are meant to convey their consciousness of it. In other words, these novels "reflect reality, emerge out of reality,"² in so far as they construct the migration experience as perceived by authors who have indeed

¹ Such an argument could be made, but is outside the scope of this thesis.

² Halim Barakat, *Visions of Social Reality in the Contemporary Arab Novel*, Georgetown University, Center for Contemporary Arabic Studies, 1977. p. 5.

experienced it. While none of the constructions, of the place, the self and the others, discussed earlier in this thesis need be a reproduction of any reality outside the novels, taken together they convey a consciousness of a real experience, that is, the experience of their authors.

So what is the nature of this discourse? Does it have prevalent characteristics and themes which are common in the narrative discourse of the four novels? Our analysis has demonstrated that certain themes indeed prevail in the four novels. Moreover, this analysis has also shown that these common themes are often expressed by common structures and constructions used in the texts. The most remarkably dominant characteristic of the discourse of the four novels is the use of subjective narration confined entirely to the protagonist's perspective, as well as its anachronic order. Dominant themes include the sense of exile and isolation as well as the futility of the migration experience.

As we have earlier shown, the novels are all conducted from the perspective of the migrant. In *Atfal Bilā Dumū*^c and *al-Balda al-Ukhrā*, this is done through the assignment of the migrant as the first person narrator. In *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*, the same effect is achieved through the use of the third person subjective point of view, which again, allows the narrator to relate only what is part of the consciousness of the protagonists. In *Misk al-Ghazāl*, the protagonist's perspective also prevails in the text, despite the semblance of polyphony.

Besides the subjective narration confined to the protagonist's point of view, we have also demonstrated that in the case of *Rijāl fi-ash-Shams* and *Atfal Bila Dumū*^c the narrative is so closely focussed on the protagonist that all the other constructions of people and places are barely rendered and only in so far as they bear on the protagonists and their experience. The narration of *Misk al-*

Ghazāl and *al-Balda al-Ukhrā*, on the other hand, are further distanced from the protagonist to allow for a 'wider lens' perspective on the others around him or her. Yet the constructions included in both novels retain their inevitable subjectivity, being still limited to the perspectives of the two protagonists, which are ultimately influenced by the different social positions of Suha and Mūsā.

The anachronic order of narration is another important structure which is used in the discussed novels, (although to a lesser extent in *al-Balda al-Ukhra*). Hence, the narratives repeatedly shift between events which are not chronologically successive to convey the migrants' impression of the lack of any real progress and their sense of imprisonment between their past and their present without any real future. In *Misk al-Ghazāl*, the anachronic narrative order also allows Suha's narrative to frame the text, and, hence, to dominate it.

In all four novels, the protagonists are displaced, exiled and isolated. However, the nature and causes of their exile vary. The protagonists of *Rijal fi ash-Shams* suffer the most direct form of exile. They have been driven out of their homelands and forced into a desolate life of exile by the Israeli occupation of Palestine in 1948. Both Musa and Dr. Fakkār have been forced by their need to make money to forsake their dreams and intellectual interests. Their economic deprivation is what ultimately leads to their exile. Dr. Fakkār's departure to Daluk leads him to a futile life in which he feels as isolated as a "stray cat running with a bag of money in its mouth." Mūsā's travel to Tabūk, however is not the beginning of his exile. By the time he goes there, he has already lost all his ambitions and dreams, his detachment to his homeland and his ability to form meaningful relationships with those around him. His travel, therefore, only perpetuates his detachment and alienation. In contrast, Suha's alienation in Saudi Arabia is temporary and, for the most part, tied up with her perception of

her travel. She sets herself apart from all the others around her in the desert, and believes that her alienation can only end with her return to Beirut.

The constructions of the homeland, the land of exile and the people inhabiting them rendered by the protagonists of each of the four novels are closely bound up with the specificities of their migration experiences. The Palestinian refugees, therefore, construct an idealist image of both the homeland, of which they have been usurped, and of Kuwait, which they have never seen, but perceive as their only way out of their miserable condition. In contrast to their construction of Kuwait, comes Suha's construction of the "desert", as she refers to the town where she resides in Saudi Arabia. Suha is an upper class Lebanese who still cherishes her ability to return to Beirut, despite her temporary emigration to Saudi Arabia. Consequently, she constructs her land of exile as arid, dusty and harsh, the exact opposite of her construction of Beirut. She also renders an invariably contemptuous construction of the others around her in Saudi Arabia, be them natives or other foreigners. She sees them all as different from herself, even when the distinctions she draws between them and herself prove to be unreal. Suha, therefore, suffers a temporary psychological exile in an environment which she conceives as harsh and alien. To her, Beirut remains the attainable ideal for which she does not need to construct an equal.

Both Dr. Fakkār and Mūsā suffer a different kind of exile from that of both Suha and the Palestinian refugees. They suffer an isolation which is independent of their place of residence. Both Dr. Fakkār and Mūsā are romantic idealists who have been forced into the money making circle, and consequently lost their idealism, their earlier intellectual interests, their ambitions, and ultimately their sense of any real meaning to their lives. But whereas Dr. Fakkār's alienation leads him to become hostile to those around him in both Egypt and Dalūk, a

hostility represented in his constructions of them, Mūsā remains friendly to those around him in both Egypt and Tabūk. Mūsā remains detached from all the people he meets, but nevertheless retains his ability to see them as individuals and represent them in variable, and more human tones than those used by Dr. Fakkār.

The futility of the migration experience is another dominant theme which runs through the four novels under study. In *Rijāl fi ash-Shams*, the Palestinian refugees, deserted and forced to seek out immigration to Kuwait as the only way out of their desolate life in exile, fail to reach their destination, and are left to suffocate inside the tank. In *Atfal Bilā Dumūʿ*, we find that Dr. Fakkār's life has been meaningless since the beginning of his migration to the Gulf and that he cannot extricate himself from the vicious circle of money making into which he has been drawn. Mūsā, the protagonist of *al-Balda al-Ukhra*, has also been missing a fundamental element in his life since he was drawn into the same money-making circle following the death of his father. He has lost his dreams and ambitions as well as his ability to engage in a meaningful relationship with any of the people around him. He travels to Tabūk in the hope of changing this situation, but in the end returns when the trip has failed to bring about any of this desired change. In *Misk al-Ghazāl*, we find that Suha, unlike the protagonists of the other novels does not represent herself as suffering from any problem apart from her presence in the "desert". Therefore, she sees the migration experience as a temporary "waste", and believes that by returning to Beirut she will resume her productive and desirable life.

The ends of the four novels further signify the futility of the migration undertaken by their protagonists. This is most pronounced in *Rijāl fi ash-Shams* where the refugees die in their attempt to cross the borders. Both Mūsā and

Suha leave Saudi Arabia. While Musa lacks Suha's conviction that his separation from home is his only problem, he still leaves Tabuk, having given up on any good coming out of his stay there. Only Dr. Fakkār returns to Daluk at the end of *Atfāl Bilā Dumū*⁶. However, his return only affirms the viciousness of his migration. He cannot disengage himself from the circle into which he has been drawn. He has become a permanent exile with no hope of return to a real homeland.

We have, therefore, demonstrated that the migration experiences of the protagonists of the four novels under study have not been identical, and that the specific attributes of each experience has affected the constructions which they have rendered in their narratives. Yet it remains true that the common features of the migration as experienced by the protagonists of these novels have been the futility of the trip and its traumatic effect on the migrants.

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المقدمة

٢٤ قبل نقطة الحدود فى صفوان بخمسين متراً، ساقف على الحدود أقل من خمس دقائق، بعد الحدود بخمسين متراً ستصعدون إلى فوق ... وفى المطلاع على حدود الكويت سنكرر المسرحية لخمس دقائق أخرى، ص ٩٧-٩٨.

٢٦ الركود الذى يكتنف هذا المكان. ص ٧.

الفصل الأول

٣ صوت الشط يهدر، والبحارة يتصايحون، والسماء تتوهج والطنائر الأسود مازال يحوم على غير هدى. ص ٤٥.

٤ حاول أن يقول شيئاً، ولكنه لم يستطع، كانت غصة دامعة تمزق حلقه .. غصة ذاق مثلاً تماماً حين وصل إلى البصرة ووصل إلى دكان الرجل السمين الذى يعمل فى تهريب الناس من البصرة إلى الكويت. ص ٤٩.

٥ كان الأفق مجموعة من الخطوط المستقيمة البرتقالية، ولكنه كان قد عقد عزمه على المسير بجد وحتى عندما انقلب التراب إلى صفائح لامعة من ورق أصفر، لم يتباطأ.. وفجأة بدأت الأوراق الصفراء تتطاير فانحتى يلمها:
- شكراً شكراً ... إن هذه المروحة الملعونه تطير الأوراق من أمامى، ولكنى دونها ليس بوسعى أن أتنفس .. ها! ماذا قررت؟ ص ٥٩.

٦ أتريد أن تبقى واقفاً هنا إلى الأبد ؟ ص ٨٠.

٧ هز أبو الخيزران رأسه ثم ضيق جفنيه كى يتلافى ضوء الشمس الذى انصب فجأة، فوق زجاج الواجهة .. كان الضوء ساطعاً بحدة حتى أنه لم يستطع، بادئ الأمر، أن يرى شيئاً .. إلا أنه أحس بآلم فظيع يتلوى بين فخذه. ص ١٠٦.

١٠ أسأل نفسى هل تنقضى أيام الأجازة هنا بسرعة، أم أنها تمر بطيئة ثقيلة كأيام غربتى هناك فى وحدتى، بعيداً عن هذا الضوء، وهذه الشوارع، وكل الأشخاص الصاخبة، والخيالات المقتحمه والمنسحبة، أسأل نفسى ولا أعرف إجابة، فقد صار للأيام طعم واحد غريب. ص ٨٣.

١١ نعم، فى أول السنة الثانية من الإعارة ماتت أُمى.

١٢ المستنقع الذى لايجف ولا تزيد مياهه ص ٧

١٣ قاحلة .. وغير طبيعية ص ١٢

١٤ ساهز الركود عن روى

١٥ أحسست أنى والأرض والفضاء شئ واحد، ساخن وفارغ ص ٩، ٣٨٣.

الفصل الثانى

٦ أراح أبو قيس صدره فوق التراب الندى، فبدأت الأرض تخفق من تحته : ضربات قلب متعب تطوف فى ذرات الرمل مرتجة ثم تعبر إلى خلاياه ... كلما تنفس رائحة الأرض وهو مستلق فوقها خيل إليه أنه يتنسم شعر روجته حين تخرج من الحمام وقد اغتسلت بالماء البارد ص ٣٧.

٩ مرت عشر سنوات على اليوم الذى اقتتلعوا فيه رجولته منه. ص ١٠٩

١٠ لابد أن ثمة أزقة وشوارع ورجالا ونساء وصغاراً يركضون بين الأشجار ص ٤٦.

١١ هناك فى الكويت يستطيع المرء أن يجمع نقوداً فى مثل لمح البصر ص ٦١.

١٢ كانت الشمس ساطعة متوهجة وكان الهواء ساخناً مشبعاً بغبار دقيق كأنه الطحين. ص ١٢٠

١٣ كانت الشمس ترتفع فوق رؤوسهم مستديرة متوهجة براقه ص ١٢٩.

١٤ كانت الشمس تصب لهبا فوق رأسه، وأحس فيما كان يرتقى الوهاد الصفرة أنه وحيد فى كل هذا العالم ... تراهم لو حملونى إلى معتقل الجفر الصحراوى .. هل سيكون الأمر أرحم مما هو الآن؟ عبث .. الصحراء موجوده فى كل مكان. ص ٥٩.

١٥ المنظر يأتى وحده وينصرف وحده، أفشل فى كل مرة أريد أن أصرفه بارادتى واختيارى، كوبرى عتيق من حديد وخشب، فى آخر رصيف المحطة فى الناحية القبليه، ذرات غبار متصاعد، ظلال شجرة عجوز تقاوم ضوء النهار المتكسر، أربعون عاما يأتى المكان إلى رأسى حارقاً لا يكتمل. ص ١٧.

١٦ تعود إلى ذهني صورتى الأساسية ومنظرى الوحيد، محطة كفر شوق، جانب منها مطروق والآخر أجرد مهجور، على الجانب المهجور فلنكات وقضبان كأنها معبد قديم لقبائل منقرضة، وعلى الجانب الآخر شبك التذاكر، والشجرة التى يتكسر عندها وتحتها ضوء النهار ص ٦١.

١٧ وراء هذه النوافذ والأبواب المغلقة كتلة حمقاء من البشر لاتعنينى ولا تخيفنى أحتقرها، أضيع لو عرفتها، أحب أن أكون مثلها ولا أستطيع، أهرب منها وأتلصص عليها، أراها دميأ مصنوعة من ذلك الحشو البترولى الخفيف ص ١٨.

١٨ مدينة دلوک .. وطنى الثانى ومنفاى الاختيارى الجميل، الملى بالنقود والزوايا الزجاجية ورائحة الرمل والنفط والرجال المعلبين المصبوبين فى جلايب بيضاء نظيفة .. كل الأشياء هناك تبدو غير حقيقية، مؤقتة ... بلاد درست وطمستها الرمال والنقود والنفط ص ٢١.

١٩ كفر شوق لم يعد له وجود إلا فى خيالى، تحولوا جميعاً هناك إلى أفواه، وأيد ممدودة، جثث ملقاة لكسالى، لا يريدون أن يفعلوا شيئاً بعضهم يتناول ويتهمنى بالجنون فى وجهى، أكاد اعرف مايقولونه عنى فى غيابى. ص ٣٢.

٢٠ هاهى تعود ولا أستطيع أن اصرفها، قبل الواحدة والنصف بقليل، كنت أنتظر عرض آخر الأنباء فى إذاعة القاهرة. فجأة أحسست أنها قادمة، الجدران تتحرك تجاهى خائفة، أزمى القلبية الجديدة، أهم هدايا رحلة الاعارة الأخيرة، حقائبى واشيائى تتناثر فى الحجرة لا أستطيع أن أمسكها باب غرفة البنسيون الزجاجى يشف عن ضوء غامض بعيد، لا أستطيع أنا أن أخرج، لن يدخل أحد ص ١٨.

٢١ نظرت إلى الستائر الفاتحة بلون المشمش وإلى زجاج الطاولات، وإلى اللوحات المائية، وفكرت لو أبقى فى هذا البيت ليل نهار، مع هذا الكتاب. كل ما فى بيتى يريح النظر، بعكس أثاث الجمعية، وكل البيوت التى أدخلها، وعلى خلاف الشوارع المغبرة والأبنية التى لا ألوان لها والرمل وبقايا البناء. ص ٥.

٢٢ مددت رأسى، أنظر إلى الأسفل، أرى سورا شاهقا يحيط البلاد. تحفظها من الرمال المحيطة. تراءت الصحرا، كما رأيتهأ أول مرة، رمالاً ونخيلاً. ص ٨٢.

٢٣ اخترت [أن أزور] أنغريد، بسبب حديقتهأ. تذكرنى غرساتها ببירות : السجادة الليلىكية، وميال الشمس، وغرسة ثالثة برتقالية ذات رائحة. ص ١٦.

٢٤ اشتقت للرطوبة وللغبرة وللحر ص ١٩٧ ..

٢٥ لما رجعوني هنا وشففت الصحراء من شباك الطائرة صرخت، ص ٥٣ .

٢٦ وماكنت أفكر بزيارة النساء هنا، ماكنت أجد ما اشتكى منه أسوة بهن، فأنا لا أتطابق كغيري من صوت المؤذن عند الساعات الأولى من الصباح، ولا إقفال الأسواق على عدد مرات الصلاة. ص ١٣٦ .

٢٧ فأنا الآن امرأة مترفة، أسأل السائق أن يأتى لى حتى بعلبة كبريت، ومن رينغو، أن يغسل فراشي الشعر. المأكولات تأتيني، كذلك الملابس من التنظيف، والنقود بدلا من الذهاب إلى البنك. حتى أنى لم أعد أجلس أكتب الشيكات لبائع الصحف، للكهرباء، للهاتف. لا أقود ابني إلى المدرسة في الصباح الباكر. ولا أنتظر بعد الظهر مع باقى الأمهات وشفاهنا قد أزرقت من البرد ص ١٥٥ .

٢٨ الشمس هنا ساطعة طوال الوقت، حتى البرد في الصحراء كأنه الربيع. ص ١٥٥ .

٢٩ كانت الرحلة طويلة استغرقت ساعتين في جوف الصحراء. لا أرى إلا غرباناً سوداء على امتداد الرمال التي تبدل لونها ص ١٦٩ .

٣٠ ماكدت أفارق السلم الصغير، وتلامس قدمي الأرض، حتى أحسست أنى والأرض والفضاء شئ واحد، ساخن وفارغ. ص ٩ .

٣١ «هذا هو العج ربح متربة تهب على البلدة بلا موعد ربما كل يوم ربما أكثر من مرة في اليوم الواحد. وكثيراً ماتختفى لأيام طويلة». .. وبدأ أن العاصفة لن تهدأ، وكدنا نخفق .. وسمعنا صوت ارتطام ذرات الغبار بجسم السيارة، وبدأ أخاف. ص ٢٨ .

٣٢ لم أرتح للبيت شكل عام. حجرتان في كل ناحية، بينهما ردهة واسعة غير مسقوفة، وفي الطرف البعيد دورة المياه والمطبخ. قال فاروق إنه بيت على الطراز العربى، لكنى وجدته مجرد مكعبات من الأسمنت حجرات ضيقة تطل نوافذها على الردهة، لا على الشارع، والنوافذ أيضاً ضيقة كأنها كوى سجن. ص ١٦ .

٣٣ الآن أرى السوق أفضل مما رأيته أول مرة لكنى لا أشعر بأى غرابه . هل كان مشهد السوق غريباً أول مرة حقاً ؟ الآن لا أرى ماحولى يختلف كثيراً عن سوق المنشية بالاسكندرية. ص ٧٣ .

٣٤ هنا أيضا نوع من الصمت فى البيت الذى أحببته وأحببت العودة إليه والبقاء فيه أطول وقت. بأن لى أن حياتنا تمشى على ايقاع ثابت. أنه لاشئ يربط بيننا غير أننا غرباء. نضحك كثيراً لكن على حكايات نحكيها عن غيرنا. لم يحدث أن خاض واحد منا فى أمر خاص أمام زميليه. نلعب الطاولة فيكون جهدنا فى الفوز. نتفرج على التليفزيون فنقارن بينه وبين التليفزيون المصرى ... حقيقة اننا سنعود يوماً، لابد أن تفعل فعلها وتسد بيننا وبين ماحولنا أى حياة هذه التى تبدو نظيمة مثل درس فى قواعد اللغة. كل شئ حولى بارد. ص ٧١-٧٢.

الفصل الثالث

٣ كانت السيارة الضخمة تشق الطريق بهم وبأحلامهم وعائلاتهم ومطامحهم وأمالهم وبؤسهم ويأسهم وقوتهم وضعفهم وماضيهم ومستقبلهم .. كما لو أنها أخذة فى نطح باب جبار لقدر جديد مجهول .. وكان العيون كلها معلقة فوق صفحة ذلك الباب كأنها مشدودة إليه بحبال غير مرئية. ص ١٢٩.

٤ طائر أسود يخلق عالياً وحيداً على غير هدى. ص ٣٨.

٥ أحس أكثر من أى وقت مضى أنه غريب وصغير. ص ٤٥.

٦ إذا لم تعجبك شروطنا فبوسعك أن تستدير وتخطو ثلاث خطوات، وستجد نفسك فى الطريق. ص ٥٣.

٧ كانت الشمس تصب لهباً فوق رأسه، وأحس فيما كان يرتقى الوهاد الصفر، أنه وحيد فى هذا العالم .. ص ٥٩.

٨ ربما يحدث هذا للمرة الأولى فى حياته : أن يكون منفرداً وغريباً فى مثل هذا الحشد من البشر. ص ٧٣.

٩ لقد كنت فى المدرسة قبل شهرين. ص ٨٣.

١٠ أترى هذا المخلوق الحقيق الذى هو أنا ؟ إننى أمتلك بعض المال ! .. وبعد عامين سأترك كل شئ وأستقر .. أريد أن استريح .. أتمدد .. استلقى فى الظل وأفكر أو لا أفكر .. لا أريد أن أتحرك قط. ص ١١٤.

١١ ذقن نابذة وعينان مرعوبتان ص ١٧.

١٢ كلما ألمح المصعد المعطل، قبل الدور الثالث، أفكر اننى فيه، أنا فى داخله محبوس، يغطىنى كما يغطى زجاجه وخشبة وحباله تراب ودلايات من خيوط العنكبوت. أهول فى الشوارع، أطارد شرودى، اصطدم بنهايات الشوارع، تبتلعنى تلفظنى، نهايات بلا نهايات.

أدخل مقهى، مطعمًا، دكان بقال. أشتري زجاجة خمر، قرش حشيش، أهرب منى لا أحد، اصعد شوارع، سلالم، أنزل إلى حدائق جرداء، أعود إلى غرفة البنسيون، أرى وجهى فى المرأة القديمة، ذقن نابت عيان مرعوبتان خوف قديم، نفس قاحلة خاوية جرداء، أصنام متهاوية طريق كباش متتالية حمقاء ص ١٧.

١٣ هاهى تعود ولا أستطيع أن اصرفها، قبل الواحدة والنصف بقليل، كنت انتظر عرض آخر الأنباء من اذاعة القاهرة. فجأة أحسست انها قادمة، الجدران تتحرك تجاهى خائفة، أزمى القلبية الجديدة. ص ١٨.

١٤ عندما رقدت على السرير أراقب شيش البنسيون، وضوء الظهر العالى يخترقه، تأكد لى أننى أوغلت كثيراً فى صحراء الوحدة، وأننى ملاق مصرعى عطشا لامحالة. وأن كل أشياء التى أملكها وأقتنيها سوف تطفو حولى وأنا اغرق وحدى فى رمال ناعمة بينما كل من عرفت فى حياتى من رجال ونساء يتحلقون فى حلقة بعيدة ويضحكون على فى أكامهم. ص ٤٠.

١٥ صرت غريباً وحيداً يادكتور، دكتور منير عبد الحميد فكار أستاذ الأدب العربى فى جامعة المطل بمدينة دلو. أنت لا شئ قطة ضالة تجرى ليلاً فى شوارع وسط القاهرة ساحبة فى فمها كيساً كبيراً به نقود، أجرى .. أجرى. ص ١٩.

١٦ الرقم الحقيقى لنقودى لثروتى، لا أعرفه أنا نفسى، لا أحب أن أعرفه، لقد زجبت عن عشرات الأسئلة السخيفة التى سألها متطفلون حمقى بعشرات الإجابات، كلها لاتمت للحقيقة بصلة. ثروتى صارت شيئاً مختلفاً غيرى، كأننا ليس لى به علاقة، لا أحبه ولا أكرهه، شجرة صبار مزروعة فى وسط حقل مصرى خصيب، نقودى هى التى تحصينى، تتبعنى، تثقلنى فى بعض الأحيان، وأحياناً تجعلنى أطيّر فى الهواء، قاسية، مرعبة، لها منطقها ولها قانون. ص ٣٢.

١٧ جانب منها مطروق والآخر أجرد مهجور، على الجانب المهجور فلنكات وقضبان، كأنها معقبد قديم لقبائل منقرضة، وعلى الجانب الآخر شبك التذاكر، والشجرة التى يتكسر عندها وتحتها ضوء النهار ص ٦١.

١٨ طهارة .. يقين ص ١٩

١٩ أيامها .. كانت أيام حزن الشاعر صلاح عبد الصبور، حزنه الشفاف المستورد الانيق وأيامها .. كانت زحلام عبد الناصر التي صنع كل منا لنفسه منها ثياباً. ص ٤٤.

٢٠ بدا الأمر وكأنه مؤامرة خاصة صغيرة ص ٨٥

٢١ رأيت أيضاً هذه الأفلام فى سينمات الاسكندرية، ورأيت «الخادم» منذ حوالى عشر سنوات ... كنت زحبا ديرك بوجارد. أرى فى وجهه دائماً مسحة حزن عميق، وكنت قرأت عن هارولد بنتر كأحد كتاب المسرح الطليعيين فى انكلترا ورأيت اسمه فى الأفيش ككاتب للفيلم يا إلهى! هذه الأيام كنت أقرأ. مضى وقت طويل على ذلك حقاً. ص ١٥٥.

٢٢ وأدوا فرحتى بالفيلم [موبى ديك] الذي لم أشاهده وكنت أحب لو رأيته. لم أقرأ موبى ديك أبداً وإن كنت قرأت عن تعاسة هرمان ميلفيل. أحببت دائماً أن أقرأها ولم أقابلها فى مكتبة ليكن. مامعنى أن أثير فى نفسى كوامن الشجن. مال القراءة التى سقطت بين قدمى وخلفتها ورائى فى زجمة الأعباء اليء قدرها لى أبى أحسن تقدير؟ وما الكتابة لو كنت كتبت، لامعنى لآى شئ نسيته. لا يضيع منك حقاً إلا ما ليس لك رغبة فيه. ص ١٥٥.

٢٣ لم يلتئم جرحى القديم بعد. لازلت أود لو أخرج من نفسى أعاقبها اقتلها . سألتنى لماذا تقرأ هذه الرواية كثيراً. قلت أنا أحب أحمد عاكف قالت ضاحكة. أنا لا أعرف أحداً بهذا الاسم. قلت خذوها وجاءت تضحك وتقول من هو أحمد عاكف فى الرواية، وضحكنا وسكتنا وقلت أود الذهاب إلى حديقة انطونيادس. الدنيا ربيع وهناك مهرجان للزهور الآن. قالت لم أعرف عنك أنك تحب الورد. انت تحب الحب وتريد أن نذهب، لأنه هناك بحنا بالحب فى يومنا الأولى.. قلت أنا لا أعرف الحب إلا للزواج وأنا لن أتزوج الآن ولن أتزوج أبداً .. لم تعرف انى أنا الغبى الكبير فى هذا العالم اكمل رسالة رجل تجاوز الخامسة والستين ولم يتمها. ص ٢٣٤-٢٣٥.

٢٤ أنا فى الثلاثين ولم أحقق شيئاً ولا أحلم زملائى المدرسون والمدرسات فى مصر كانوا كثيراً ما يتحدثون عن أحلامهم وحيرتهم فى تفسيرها. معظمهم مثلى لم يحقق شيئاً ذا قيمة، ولكنهم يحلمون ويتحدثون عن أحلامهم. كنت دائماً أقول لنفسى: لماذا لا أحلم حقاً مثلهم؟ وأتساءل حتى وصلت إلى أننى شخص راضى بما أنا فيه. راض شديد الرضا لا أرى للحياة بعدا غير رعاية أمى واخوتى بعد موت أبى كثيراً ما فكرت أنى ربما صرت شخصاً غير راغب فى الحياة. ص ٢٠.

٢٥ شعرت أنى والأرض والفضاء شئ واحد ساخن وفارغ. ص ٩.

٢٧ لم أرتح للبيت بشكل عام. حجرتان فى كل ناحية، بينهما ردهة واسعة غير مسقوفة، وفى الطرف البعيد دورة المياه والمطبخ. قال فاروق أنه بيت على الطراز العربى ، لكنى وجدته مجرد مكعبات من الأسمنت حجرات ضيقة تطل نوافذها على الردهة، لا على الشارع، والنوافذ أيضا ضيقة كأنها كوى سجن ص ٢٠.

٢٨ صرت احب البيت ... البيت حقا جميل ... ردهة البيت جميله حقا بالمساء ص ٣٧.

٢٩ لا يبدو لى أن علاقتنا يمكن أن تمتد بعد أن نفترق. سنفترق. ص ٧١.

٣٠ أن لا أكون مشاركا فى شئ، وأن أظل مرآة لامعة تنزلق من فوقها حبات المطر. ص ٧٠.

٣١ لاجدوى من الكلام. سوف يرحل أرون وأنساه كما سينسانى. ص ١٤٢.

٣٢ فتاة نذرت للموت واضحة ماكان لى أن أخطو على دربها خطوة فاحرك فى نفسي أسي كنت دفنته وأهلت فوقه التراب.

٣٣ لكنى رحت أنظر إلى كلب أبيض بعيد بين الكثبات الرملية المتناثرة. كلب ضخم بدا لى مثل حمار شارد. لابد أن فاروق لمحّه أيضا لأنه قال:

- هنا يقتلون الكلاب. يعتبرونها نجسه هذا الكلب يعرف ذلك ويستطيع الاقتراب من العمران. ص ١٢-١٣

٣٤ جمدت ثم ارتجفت. قال لى أحدهم : «تستري يا حرمه» ... لم أتنفس إلا عندما اختفت خطواتهم. ص ٥.

٣٥ حياة قاحلة وغير طبيعية ص ١٢

٣٦ فأننا خريجة قسم أعمال إدارية فى الجامعة الأمريكية ببيروت.

٣٧ عدا شعورى بالأهمية، إذ كان صاحب المخزن، عامر، أوكلنى بالمراسلات، وكتابة طلبات البضائع. ص ٦.

٣٨ أخذت أتسلى بخياطة الستائر والوسائد، وبتعليق اللوحات، وترتيب الخزائن. استعرت كتباً عن الحدائق. وأخذت أنكش الحديقة، أزرع الحب، انتظر من يوم إلى آخر أن يطل اللون الأخضر... انضمت إلى صف التمارين الرياضية عند مريم ... وإلى صف تحضير الكعك

وتزيينه، وإلى مجموعة تقرأ الكتب وتناقشها... كنت أعرف فى قرارة نفسى أن تعاملنى مع الحياة شبيه بتسلق الأودية والنحدر فى الجبال. خفت من مقتى الشديد لكونى أعيش حياة قاحلة وغير طبيعية. ص ١٢.

٣٩ داهمت السخونة رقبتى، هبطت فى أن واحد إلى جسمى، متجاهلة كل شئ. قلت فى نفسى، نور تقبلنى، ومافكرت كما فى الواقع أن القبل هى بين الرجل والمرأة. بل تمنيت المزيد، وكانت نور كلما وصلت نقطة فى جسدى أيقظتها وتركتها قلقة. ص ٤٧.

٤٠ ماعدت العضلات منقبضة، تفككت لدرجه وجدت نفسى أستلقى على ظهري. ثم ابتدأ ايقاع قبل أن أصاب بدوار من لذة مختلفة، ايقاع جميل لاتعرفه إلا الغريزة، طائر كأنه بخار هذه الغرفة ص ٤٧.

٤١ أنا سهى .. لست شاذة كسحر. رغم أنى مع سواى من البنات كنت أضحك وأتسلى واتغامز على الشباب. طبيعى. رأيت نفسى على سرير فى برد الجبل. وسهيل صديق عايدة فى الوسط. ص ٤٩.

٤٢ كنت أعرف أنى مختلفة عن جارأتى. ص ١٠.

٤٣ تهالكت على الكنبه. جاء الكنار يقف على كتفى مفرداً ص ٥.

٤٤ وعيت فجأة أنى لست من هنا [السعودية] وأنى استطيع السفر من هنا والسير كما يحلو لى وبمفردى. ص ٤٣.

الفصل الرابع

١ كانت الشمس تصب لهباً فوق رأسه، وأحس فيما كان يرتقى الوهاد الصفر، أنه وحيد فى كل هذا العالم. ص ٥٩.

٢ اتكأ [مروان] على الحائط. كمانت جموع الناس تعبر حواليه دون أن تلتفت إليه، ربما يحدث هذا للمرة الأولى فى حياته : أن يكون منفرداً وغريباً فى مثل هذا الحشد من البشر. ص ٧٣.

٣ شق العالم الصغير الموهن طريقه فى الصحراء مثل قطرة زيت ثقيلة فوق صفيحة قصدير متوهجة ص ١٢٩.

٤ الرجل السمين.

٥ - «إننا لانتلعب .. ألم يقل لك صديقك أن السعر موحد هنا ؟ إننا نضحى بحياة الدليل من أجلكم.

- «ونحن أيضا نضحى بحياتنا

- «اننى لا أجبرك على هذا» ص ٥٠.

٦ طوى الرجل أوراقا صفراء أمامه وقال بلؤم

. أنا لا أجبرك على شئ. أنا لا أجبرك.

- ماذا تعنى ؟

- أعنى أنه إذا لم تعجبك شروطنا فبوسعك أن تستدير، وتخطو ثلاث خطوات وستجد نفسك فى الطريق. ص ٥٣.

٧ مبجوحاً بالغضب ص ٧٢

٨ جزذانا أصغر منها ص ٦٧.

٩ والآن يا أبو باقر .. لاوقت لدى للمزاح .. أرجوك.

مد [أبو الخيزران] يده فقرب الأوراق إلى أمامه، إلا أن أبا باقر عاد فنحى الأوراق إلى طرف الطاولة وكتب ذراعية من جديد وهو يبتسم ابتسامه خبيثة:

- سأل عنك الحاج رضا ست مرات.

- قلت لك كانت السيارة معطلة .. ثم أننى والحاج رضا نستطيع أن نتفاهم حين نلتقى .. وقع الأوراق رجاء، إننى على عجل.

- قرب الأوراق من جديد إلا أن أبا باقر نحاهما مرة أخرى.

- كانت سيارتك معطلة.

- نعم .. أرجوك إننى مستعجل.

نظر الموظفون الثلاثة إلى بعضهم وضحكوا بخبث - ولكن بصوت خفيض - كانت طاولة

أحدهم فارغة تماماً إلا من كأس شاي زجاجى صغير، وكان الآخر قد كف عن عمله وأخذ يتابع ما يحدث. قال الرجل السمين المسمى أبو باقر وهو يتجشأ:

- والآن .. كن عاقلاً يا أبو خيزرانه .. لماذا تتعجل السفر فى مثل هذا الطقس الرهيب؟ الغرفة هنا باردة وسوف اطلب لك استكانه شاي فتمتع بالنعم. ص ١٣٦.

١٠ وراء هذه النوافذ والأبواب المغلفة كتلة حمقاء من البشر لاتعنينى ولاتخيفنى، احتقرها، أضيع لو عرفتها، أحب أن أكون مثلها ولا أستطيع أهرب منها وألتصص عليها، أراها دمياً مصنوعة من ذلك الحشو البترولى الخفيف. ص ١٨.

١١ الرجال المعليين المصبوبين فى جلاب بيضاء نظيفة. ص ٢١.

١٢ تحولوا جميعاً هناك إلى أفواه وأيد ممدودة، جثث ملقاء، حسالى، لا يريدون أن يفعلوا شيئاً، بعضهم يتناول ويتهمى بالجنون فى وجهى، وأكاد أعرف مايقولته عنى فى غيابى ص ٣٢.

١٣ كلهم طمعوا فى وضعى الجديد الذى صرت إليه، ولم يفكر فى شئونى أحد، أخوه وأخوات انشبوا أظافرهم فى لحمى، وتصورا أننى بئر بترول لاتنضب ص ٥٧.

١٤ أم عصام فى ضياء لحمها الأبيض اغرق صبحى ولىلى الفارغ هى وطبيبى النفسى أهم مابقى لى هنا. بعد ساعة تعد الشقه .. لايهم الوقت فهى تحب الأيام الخالية معى وتقدر كرمى المحسوب وأقدر امتنانهم النهم الذى لايشبع فمها وأردافها واثداؤها مترعة كأنها ترضعنى غباء أبيض. ص ٢٣.

١٥ يابنت الكورية فى مصر الجديدة. يابنت النادى ، والبودة والصور الملصقه فى الألبوم ص ٢٢. دكتورته هى فى ادارة الأعمال ص ٦٢.

١٦ كانت تتناول مرتبها فى بساطه وتلقى به فى حقيبة يدها، وتظل تنفقه حتى يتبخر. تشتري عشرات اللعب للأولاد أشياء لا أحبها ولا أفهمها. ص ٩٦.

١٧ أن نترك النقود فى تراكمها البديع. ص ٩٧.

١٨ وهى الأخرى لم تكن تفهم « بعد أن نعود » كانت تشعرنى دائماً أننا يجب أن نعود غداً. ص ٩٧.

١٩ عندما طلبت من الدكتورته سناء فرج أن تتحجب، أو تغطى رأسها قالت، أنها لن تغير جلدها

من أجل مال قارون. لم يكن هذا امراً ضروريا ولكنه كاشف عن المقاصد والنوايا. الجميع يفعلون ذلك حولنا لأسباب مختلفة. لم أكن أحسب زن هذا ضروريا في البداية. ولكن عنادها وأصوات الزملاء حولي جعلون أفاتها في الموضوع. لم ترد على وتجاهلتني، بل وتشاغل بتصفيف شعرها واختيار نوع المكياج .. كنت أريدها معي، في مشروعي طرفا في المؤامرة. كانت تغيب في قراءة كتب تستعيرها من المكتبة كتب أدب وتاريخ. ترفض أن تعمل في ترجمة المقالات الصغيرة التي تنهال علينا وتتضاعف أجورها يوماً بعد يوم. تنشغل بالمحاضرات، وبمناقشة مشاكل الطالبات حتى تصدع رأسي بقضايا اجتماعية لاحت لها، ص ٩٩-١٠٠.

١٢. تقدم يا ولد ص ١٠

٢١ يا أخى ما للمصريين يحبون القراءة ص ١٠

٢٣ أخبره أن الشيخ صالح «زهم» عليه ص ٣٤.

٢٤ - أنت المصرى الجديد !

-أجل

- شو أسمك ؟

- اسماعيل، ص ٢٧.

٢٥ - تعرف الكتابة على الآلة ؟

- لا

- بان الامتعاض على وجهه

- تعرف القيادة

- لا

- قلت لاهذه المرة بصوت وددت لو لم يخرج. تأملنى قليلاً وخاطب عابد:

- قل لارشد يعلمه القيادة ويسوى له رخصة. ص ٢٢

٢٦ وسمعنا صوت عم عبد الله وهو خارج من المكتب يقول لعابد:

- اجلس هنا ولا تتحرك. وقل لهذا - يقصدنى بالتاكيد - أن لا يترك مكانه. ص ٥٨.

٢٧ أبى رجل حمار يأتى لى كل شهر بمدرس فاطرده. أنت أحببتك وسأطلب من أبى أن يعطيك راتبا اكبر بشرط أن لاتدرس لى يا أستاذ. اجلس نتحدث فى أى شئ إلا الدرس. ص ١٧٨

٢٨ رفضت أنت أن تكون له اليد العليا.

٢٩ صباح الخير

غود مورننغ

السلام عليكم

جمل ثلاث أسمعها كل صباح، وفى الظهيرة حين يعودون للتوقيع فى دفتر الانصراف يقولون فقط «السلام عليكم» يتحدثون بسرعة كما تأكل الأرانب، وابتسم فى وجوههم لأنهم دائما يبتسمون. ص ٤٧.

٣٠ كنت أنا أبتسم مصافحاً نبيل الذى قال وهو يبتسم بدوره:

- أهلا بك فى بلدك.

أحسست بالارتياح لوجه نبيل. وجه مثير بحق. أنف عريض وشفتان غليظتان وعينان صغيرتان جداً. ولم يضايقتنى هذا التنافر احسست بالطيبة والعفوية خلفه... وسألنى:
- حضرتك الأخ اسماعيل ص ٢٥.

٣١ كنت أريده أن يتحدث كثيراً وتحدث. قال إنه متخرج من معهد عال للفنون وأنه فنان تشكيلي لديه لوحات صغيره يرسمها فى غرفته فى الكامب. لكن لا يطلع أحد عليها... وقال أرشد أنه متزوج ولديه طفلة جميلة اسمها زينب. يرسمها دائما فى غرفته وقال أنه من بيشاور. وماذا تعنى بيشاور يا أرشد؟ أليست بلدة مثل سائر البلدان؟ لا. مستر اسماعيل بيشاور اكثر البلدان فقرا. كل العاملين هنا من عمال النظافة تقريبا من بيشاور. ص ٨٨-٨٩.

٣٢- فاجرة

هتف عابد وهو يعض على أسنانه ... عابد صار يتكلم كالمجنون يسب الفتاة واليمنى ص ٣٠.

٣٣ يبدو أرشد فى البداية لطيفا، وهو يتكلم بانكليزية يختار ألفاظها بعناية، لتكون واضحة وسهلة لعابد الذى لايعرف الكثير منها، ودائما يطعم حديثه بكلمات عربية، لكن سرعان ماتخلط ملامح وجهه، وترتفع فيها حمرة الدهشة والاستنكار. أرشد يبدو دائما جادا وعابد يحادثه بغير اهتمام، بالضبط كما يلقي الواحد بورقه فى سلة مهملات. يقول عابد: «ماتشى كمون!» ويهز كتفه فيقول أرشد: يبيس ماتش كمون مستر عابد. كمون اذ نيسيسرى» ويطول الجدل دائما حول كمية التوابل التى يطلبها أرشد. التوابل من أرخص الأشياء

بالمملكة إلا أن عابداً يحلو له أن يقف عندها ويتعنت. ص ٥٥.

٣٤ جلسنا فى صالة واسعة فى ركن منها مكتبه بها كتب واسطوانات وشرائط كاسيت وتليفزيون وفيديو وبيك أب وستريو فى ركن آخر دولا ب زجاجى أنيق عريض وقصير به وفوقه تحف صغيرة، وفى الركن الثالث منضدة سوداء لامعة بسيطة حولها أربعة مقاعد يقابلها فى الركن الأخير الانتريه الذى نجلس فوق مقاعده. ص ٢٥٤.

٣٥ ص ٢٥٥ - ٢٥٨.

٣٦ حين دخل الرجال كنت أجلس فى غرفة الاستراحة اشرب الليمونادة التى آتى بها من البيت فى ترمس صغير جمدت ثم ارتجفت. قال لى أحدهم: «تستري يا حرمة». ص ٥.

٣٨ هل أذهب إلى سوزان، مريم، إلى أم كيروز، إلى سوزان إلى هند إلى ريم، إلى استيفانيا، إلى ليلى، سوزان؟ أو إلى أم كيروز؟ إلى تهانى، سوزان ؟ لما أبعدت سوزان عن فكرى، تصورت بيوت الباقيات، ثم سمعت أصواتهن، عرفت ماتخبئه الزيارة ...

صباح : تحليل العلاقات الزوجية، الكرامة الاطفال. شاهناز: البيت والآثاث ثم البيت والآثاث وابنها الناجح جداً .. استيفانى فرصه العمر فى الصحراء لا وقت للضجر تستورد كل شئ من بلادها السويد وتبيعه .. أم كيروز: الله يشنطت الى شنطتنا. الله يقصف عمر اللى كان السبب، يا حرام يا حرام يا لبنان. ص ٧-٨.

٣٩ كنت أعرف أنى مختلفه عن جاراتى. ص ١٠.

٤٠ كانت الكلمات ساذجة، عاطفية، رخيصة. شممت ما بينهما من خلال السطور ص ١٩.

٤١ اسمع إلى قصصها مع معاذ المشوقه. كلما خف حماسى لزيارتها عادت أخبارها غير العاديه تجذبنى من مشاهد العنف إلى مشهد مزيف لمحاولة انتحارها. ص ١٩.

٤٢ أقول لتمر: لولاك ما صدقت أنوفى الصحراء واحة، مثل ما قرأنا بالكتب، ضحكت تمر بفخر. فهى منذ الصباح، تنتقل بى من بيت والدها فى المنطقة الأخرى إلى الينابيع الجوفيه ... ترينى الرسوم المنقوشة على الجدران وعلى السقف، بينما السطح مازال من سعف النخل تشير تمر إلى بنايات زجاجيه الواجهات تقول: «سوق الجمال كان هنا» ص ٢٨

٤٣ ماهى أجنبية ولهم دينهم ولنا ديننا يا شيبية.

٤٤ كنت ممتنه لأنى تعرفت من خلالها على الحياة الأخرى فى الصحراء والتى كنت أجهلها ابتداء بالألوان والأثاث وانتهاء بالحضاره. شكرت الله لأنى ذهبت إلى الجمعية، ولأن سهى كانت معلمتى، ولأنى أكل قطعه كاتوه فى هذا الصحن الأبيض وعليه رسوم الزهور، وأشرب الشاي وأضيف إليه العسل بدل السكر، والذي على حد قول سهى: «السم الأبيض». ص ١٩٨.

٤٥ أشعلت نور فى الفضول من جديد ولكنى لوقت قصير. بيتها كان كصندوق فرجة، فيه الخدم والمربيات من مختلف الجنسيات، يختلطن بالأولاد والغزلان والكلاب السلوقية. رائحة العطر خفيفة تتسلل إلى كلما دخلت بابه. كانت الموسيقى العربية والأجنبية تصدح فى قسماته. ملابس جميله، موضة، تقاليع، حتى فى الأثاث وما تقدمه لى من شوكلاته، غوديفا من باريس، وشانتى من لبنان ومانجا وأناناس من الفلبين. ص ٣٨.

٤٦ كالطعام والشراب بالنسبة لها. ص ٤٣.

