

American University in Cairo

AUC Knowledge Fountain

Archived Theses and Dissertations

4-1-2001

A comparative study of desert novels of Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī and ‘Abd al-Rahmān Munīf

Hala Mohammed Hassan Hassan El Ganayni
The American University in Cairo AUC

Follow this and additional works at: https://fount.aucegypt.edu/retro_etds



Part of the [Arabic Language and Literature Commons](#), [Arabic Studies Commons](#), and the [Comparative Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

APA Citation

El Ganayni, H. (2001). *A comparative study of desert novels of Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī and ‘Abd al-Rahmān Munīf* [Thesis, the American University in Cairo]. AUC Knowledge Fountain.

https://fount.aucegypt.edu/retro_etds/1510

MLA Citation

El Ganayni, Hala Mohammed Hassan Hassan. *A comparative study of desert novels of Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī and ‘Abd al-Rahmān Munīf*. 2001. American University in Cairo, Thesis. *AUC Knowledge Fountain*.

https://fount.aucegypt.edu/retro_etds/1510

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by AUC Knowledge Fountain. It has been accepted for inclusion in Archived Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of AUC Knowledge Fountain. For more information, please contact fountadmin@aucegypt.edu.

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY
OF DESERT NOVELS OF
IBRAHIM AL-KUNI &
ABD AL-RAHMAN MUNIF**

**HALA MOHAMMED
EL GANAYNI**

2001

Thesis
2001/61

The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

A Comparative Study of Desert Novels of
Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī and ʿAbd al-Raḥman Munīf

A Thesis Submitted to
The Department of Arabic Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree of Master of Arts

by

Hala Mohammed Hassan Hassan El Ganayni

2001

Thesis
2001/61

The American University in Cairo

A Comparative Study of Desert Novels of
Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī and 'Abd al-Raḥman Munīf

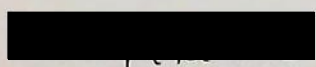
A Thesis Submitted by Hala El Ganayni
To The Department of Arabic Studies
2001

in Partial Fulfillment of The Requirements For
The Degree of Master of Arts
has been approved by


Dr. Hamdi El Sakkut
Thesis Committee Chair/Adviser
Department of Arabic Studies, A.U.C.

Dr. Samia Mehrez
Thesis Committee Reader/Examiner
Department of Arabic Studies, A.U.C.

Dr. Mohamed Birairi
Thesis Committee Reader/Examiner
Faculty of Arts, Beni Sweif University


Department Chair

4 | 9 | 2001
Date


Dean

Sept. 4, 2001
Date

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement

Dedicated to:

Introduction

CHAPTER ONE My husband, Nasr

And al-Nahdha Mawla

1. Al-Nahdha

2. Mawla al-Nahdha Yusuf

Al-Ta Hussein

Mahmoud

CHAPTER TWO

Iskandar al-Khalid

and My parents

1. Nasir al-Hajar

2. al-Majma' (PART I AND II)

CHAPTER THREE

Comparison Between

Mawla's and al-Khalid's Novels

Conclusion

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement

Introduction	1-6
--------------	-----

CHAPTER ONE

‘Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf

1. <i>Al-Nihāyāt</i>	7-43
2. <i>Mudun al-milḥ</i> <i>Al-Tih</i>	

CHAPTER TWO

Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī

1. <i>Nazīf al Ḥajar</i>	44-94
2. <i>al-Majūs</i> (PART I AND II)	

CHAPTER THREE

Comparasion Between Munīf's and al-Kūnī's Novels	95-108
---	--------

Conclusion	109-112
------------	---------

BIBLIOGRAPHY	113-120
--------------	---------

Acknowledgement

My thanks and appreciation go to Dr. Hamdi El Sakkut, who encouraged me to complete my study under his valuable supervision throughout my graduate work. I am also grateful to Dr. Samia Mehrez, for her effective instruction and her valuable help to finish this study. My Thanks and indebtedness to Dr. Mohamed Birairi for his help and his valuable comments.

Special thanks to Dr. Nadia Badran and Wafaa Mohammed Hassan for their help during my graduate study. I also extend my thanks to Madlyne Wissa Abdel Malek and Lucy Mikhail Karim. My thanks go to Ms. Maha Saleh who helped me a lot to revise my thesis.

My appreciateion to all people who helped me and offered their help, especially, Ms. Aleya Serour who always encouraged me, Ms. Tawhida Sherif, as well as Ms. Laila Ghali. I am also deeply grateful to Mr. Mark Linz, AUC Press Director, for his kindness in allowing me to attend courses.

All my thanks and appreciation go to my family for their help especailly my parents and my sisters.

Finally, all my love and thanks go to my husband Nasr, who helped me a great deal during my studies and it is difficult to find words to express my feelings. I just thank him very much. And my sincere gratitude to my children, Yusuf, Hussein and Mahmoud, who were patient and kind with me and allowed me to finish this study.

INTRODUCTION

Even though there is a variety of novels who appreciate the desert in their novels, Mansi's and al-Khori's works have been particularly chosen for this book. The main reason for this choice is that these two authors, through their novels, have the power to connect the desert to the modern world. They depict desert life, geographical features, traditions, values, and social life in general through the eyes of the latter's own people. In other words, the desert world in their novels is to be the real protagonist, rather than characters.

This is a comparative study of the desert novels by two of the Arab World's most distinguished writers: the Saudi Arabian °Abd al-Raḥman Munīf (1933) and the Lybian Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī (1948). It will present a critical analysis of their respective views of the desert and their interest in it. Both Munīf and al-Kūnī have presented their readers with a vibrant picture of life in the desert, though they differ in their style and focus. The following novels by Munīf will be examined: *al-Nihāyāt* (1979); *Mudun al-milḥ*, part one (*al-Tīh*, 1983). Al-Kūnī's novels that have been chosen for the study are: *al-Majūs*, two parts (1991), and *Nazīf al-Ḥajar* (1992).

Even though there is a variety of novelists who approached desert life in their novels¹, Munīf's and al-Kūnī's works have been particularly chosen for this thesis. The main reason for this choice is that these previously mentioned novels are set entirely in the desert. Moreover, they depict desert life: geographical features, traditions, values, and social life in general through the eyes of the desert's own people. In other words, the desert seems in these novels, to be the real protagonist, rather than characters.

¹ *al-Balda al-Ukhara* by Ibrahim Abdel Megid, *al-Khiba'* by Miral al-Tahawi, *Rigāl fīl Shams*, *Mā tabaqa lakum* by Ghassān Kanafanī and *Fasād al-amkina* by Sabrī Mūsa.

As for most other desert novels, their authors tend to use the desert as a location for the events, and sometimes they make use of its distinctive geographical and social structure in manifesting the implications of their works. One of these novels is, *Mā tabaqā lakum*² by which explores the problems of the Arab, particularly the Palestinian, and his struggle to attain freedom, while simultaneously treating his feelings of loss and anxiety as he attempts to free himself from his pain and failure and return to the past.

Another novel that handles life in the desert, occupying an elevated artistic place, is *Fasād al-amkina*³ by where the desert is presented through the eyes of a stranger. Nikola, the main character in Ṣabrī's novel, is a Russian mining engineer who goes to al-Darhib Mountain near the Sudanese borders with the ambition of turning the area into an industrial kingdom, based on the business of talc mining. However, terrible events take place resulting in the dramatic death of his only daughter under a collapsing mine and in making him, by body and soul, a prisoner of the desert.

² See Ghassān Kanafanī, *All That's Left to You, (Mā tabaqā lakum)* a Novella and Others Stories. Translated by May Jayyuse and Jeremy Reed. Introduction by Roger Allen. The American University in Cairo Press, 1992.

³ See Ṣabrī Mūsā, *Fasād al-amkina*. al Kitab al dhahabī. Rosal Yousef Bookshop, 1973. The novel won a state prize (Ja'izat al-Dawla al Tashjiyya) in 1974.

What really makes Munīf and al-Kūnī distinguished as desert novel writers is the fact that both of them wrote many works handling the theme of the desert unlike other writers who approached the desert in one or maybe two works only. Concerning Munīf, he has presented a vivid picture of desert life beginning with his novel *al-Nihāyāt* in 1978, and continuing through his magnum opus *Mudun al-milḥ* (1983-1989) in which he covered, through five volumes, the development in the Arabian Peninsula and its transformation from a Bedouin to a modern society. Speaking about his experience with writing, Munīf states: "I began approaching the desert as a theme in *al-Nihāyāt*. Then, as a specialist in the oil industry, I realized that it is possible to use the theme of oil to penetrate this huge area and handle it in the form of a novel. That is how I wrote *Mudun al Milḥ*... The desert in recent years has become material through which we can learn and achieve a better understanding of our surroundings"⁴.

As for Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī, he has devoted all his novels to the desert, exploring its myths, rituals, topography and flora and fauna, making himself a specialist on the desert novel. His novels have followed closely upon one another since the end of the eighties.

⁴ See *al-khalij al Thaqāfi* newspaper, vol. 7211, Damascus, 1999.

It is no exaggeration, therefore, to claim that the desert for both Munīf and al-Kūnī is not just a casual theme. Rather, it is almost an obsession that seems to haunt both of them. In an attempt to understand the reason behind the authors' interest in the desert, we will have a review of their biographies. As we will see their biographies reflect their belonging and yearning to their homeland, as they feel alienated in their long travels.

°Abd al-Raḥman Munīf was born in Jordan in 1933; of a Saʿudi father and an Iraqi mother. He enrolled in the Faculty of Law at Baghdad University in 1952, but he was expelled for political reasons. He continued his studies at Cairo University. In 1958, he traveled to Yugoslavia and obtained his doctorate in the economics of petroleum from the University of Belgrade. He was the editor of the Iraqi journal *Petroleum and Development*, and he lived for some time in France. He later moved to Damascus, where he lives today. In 1981, he began devoting himself solely to writing novels. His most important works include *Sharq al-mutawasit*, *Sibāq al-masāfāt al-ṭawīla*, *Mudun al-milḥ*, and *al-Nihāyāt*.

As for Al-Kūnī's biography, he was born in Libya in 1948. He has studied world literature at Gorky Institute in Moscow's Faculty of

Literature, and in the early 1970 he worked in Moscow as a foreign correspondent for the Libyan news agency. He has also acted as a representative of the Soviet-Libyan Friendship Association, as well as the editor of *al-Ṣadāqa* journal. He was the cultural attache of the Libyan embassy in Poland. He currently works as a press attaché in the Libyan embassy in Switzerland. He has a number of works, including the quadrilogy *al-Khusūf* and *al-Ṣaḥarā*.

It strikes the reader that both Munīf and al-Kūnī live in exile. Munīf's exile, however, is obligatory for political reasons, while al-Kūnī's is, at least seemingly, a personal choice. This leads us to assume that Munīf's works lie outside the boundaries of the present conservative political systems in control of the Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia, while al-Kūnī's works are politically acceptable inside the framework of the present government in Libya. Regardless of the reasons, living in exile seems to intensify the two writers' feelings towards their home lands, and, to a great extent, results in an atmosphere of nostalgia that spreads throughout their works.

This study is based on the assumption that both Munīf and al-Kūnī presented the desert as a living creature with a peculiar entity in their works. However, the desert is portrayed differently in their novels

as a result of the different approaches they adopt. Munīf's works reflect his socio-political opinions whereas al-Kūnī's works adopt more of an anthropological approach revealing his unique vision of man and the universe.

The thesis is composed of an introduction and three chapters and a conclusion of the study. The first chapter takes up an analysis of Munīf's novels, while the second chapter deals with the novels of al-Kūnī. The novels are analyzed using the following elements:

1. The desert and its aesthetics.
2. The protagonist or the main character (s).
3. The narrative techniques and the narrator.
4. The use of legends.
5. The use of old heritage (social and literary)

The third chapter embarks on a critical comparison between Munīf and al-Kūnī concerning the way each author has presented his material.

As indicated before, Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf is an Arab writer who treated the political and social problems of Arab society in general. As a result of the absence of freedom of speech in Arab countries, many writers developed a tendency to adopt a symbolic style of writing. This is how Munīf moved from political to history writing.

CHAPTER ONE

°Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf

1. *Al-Nihāyāt*

2. *Mudun al-milḥ*

Al-Tīh

"Munīf came from a political background with a mission to show the Arab people the extent of their oppression and to express their desire for freedom, one of the most important conditions for the development of Arab society."

In this chapter we approach Munīf's political world and try to know his writer capacities as revealed through his works.

¹ Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf, *Al-Nihāyāt*, p. 1.
² The reader of Munīf's *Al-Nihāyāt*, p. 1.

As indicated before,⁵ **ʿAbd al-Raḥman Munīf** is an Arab writer who handled the political and social problems of Arab society in general. As a result of the absence of freedom of speech in Arab countries, many writers developed a tendency to adapt a symbolic style of writing. That is how Munīf moved from political to literary writing.

“When the area of freedom of speech kept shrinking some writers of political researches changed to literary writing. On top of those is ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Munīf who began his novelistic writing in 1971.”⁵

Munīf, then resorted to novel writing in order to convey his socio-political ideas. As his roots go back to the desert, specifically the Arab peninsula, Munīf chose the desert to be the location for his works and the background against which he presents his socio-political reflections.

“Munīf came from a political background with a national ideology. He has many political concerns that he wants to express them through his works; one of the most important concerns is that of political freedom...”⁶

In this chapter we approach Munīf’s novelistic world and try to access his artistic capacities as revealed through his works.

⁵ See Shāker al Nābulṣī, *Midrār alṢaḥrāʾ*, p. 25

⁶ See Shāker al Nābulṣī, *Mabāhig al Hurriya*, p. 62

°Abd al-Raḥman Munīf 's desert works are represented most clearly in: *al-Nihāyāt* and *al-Tīh*, the first volume of his quintet *Mudun al-milḥ*, where he was able to present a vivid picture of life in the desert. He deals with the harsh conditions faced by desert inhabitants, whether resulting from natural forces, such as drought and famine as in *al-Nihāyāt*, or human forces, like the government corruption and oppression as we see in *al-Tīh* (*Mudun al-milḥ*).

The events in *al-Nihāyāt*⁷ revolve around the village of *al Ṭiba* and the difficulties its inhabitants face due to drought and famine. It also deals with the anxiety and confusion these conditions create among the village inhabitants. The village has a hope that a dam will be built as the government has promised. Yet, those in authority, as the novel later makes clear, are not concerned with the sufferings of the people and their inability to find the basic necessities of life. We are also introduced to the village and its people through the main character of °Assāf al-Fahd, who seems to be a personification of the world of the desert, especially with his profound love and loyalty to the desert, its animals, and, in fact, all inhabitants.

⁷See °Abd al-Raḥman Munīf, *Endings, al-Nihāyāt* translated by Roger Allen. Quartet Books, 1988. All the quotations from this novel have been taken from this translation.

Life in al-Ṭība is based on agriculture and, when the rain is late, and it often is, on hunting. Meanwhile, the villagers wait for the government to fulfill its promises of building a dam to protect them from famine. One time when the village was facing the drought, four guests came to visit it in the company of villagers currently residing in the city. The village welcomed the guests with its customary generosity, and they were taken on a hunting expedition led by ʿAssāf al-Fahd, the most knowledgeable about hunting. During the expedition, a sandstorm stroke, leaving the visitors on the verge of death. They, however, are rescued, while ʿAssāf's corpse is found, covered by his dog, who was attempting to shelter him from the vultures. ʿAssāf's corpse is carried to the house of the village mayor, where the villagers spend the night sitting around it relating various tales of animals. In the morning, the villagers and residents of neighboring villages bring the corpse out to conduct the funeral procession. The novel ends with the villagers on their way to the city to demand the dam.

The important role that the desert plays in this novel is evident. According to Roger Allen the translator of *al-Nihāyāt*:

"The one major aspect which sets *Endings* apart from most other novels is the role which place plays in the structuring and impact of the entire work..."⁸

Another critic considers *al-Nihāyāt* to be the real beginning of *Mudun al-Milh*:

"... *al-Nihāyāt* is the novelistic gate leading to *Mudun al-Milh*...".⁹

As for *Mudun al-milh*¹⁰, Munīf's magnum opus, it portrays the period in which the life of the Bedouin went from simplicity and ease to the complications of civilization and wealth. The novel deals with the values and principles embraced by both periods through the portrayal of a whole society filled with characters and dramatic events. Of the five parts of *Mudun al-milh*, *al-Tih*¹¹ is the one that devotes the most attention to a description of people and places in the desert environment; and that is why it was chosen for this study.

One critic stated that:

⁸ See Roger Allen, the Introduction to *Endings, al-Nihayat*, p. vii

⁹ See Shāker al Nābulī, *Mabāhig al Hurriya*, p. 74

¹⁰ See Abd al Raḥman Munīf, *Cities of Salt, Mudun al-milh* translated by Peter Theroux. Vintage International 1989.

¹¹ See Abd al Raḥman Munīf, *Cities of Salt, Mudun al-milh, al-Tih* translated by Peter Theroux. Vintage International 1989. All the quotations from this part have taken from this translation.

"*al-Tih* is a truly remarkable novel, with its own peculiar, almost magical atmosphere, so different from anything else in Arabic fiction..."¹²

Munīf begins this part of the novel, with the village of Wādī al-^ʿUyūn, where we live the simple Bedouin life and see it destroyed and turned into a barren desert filled with oil-drilling machinery. Then, we move to Ḥarrān and Mūrān, a more civilized environment with all the negative and positive events that take place accordingly.

Some critics believe that the importance of this novel stems from the fact that it depicts one of the most important themes related to the Arabic existence, and that is the discovery of oil in the Arab countries:

Its main theme is the psychological dislocation and distortion which mark the impact of the discovery of oil and development of oil interests on the individual, social, cultural and environmental life of the author's native country, Saudi Arabia."¹³

Al-Tih handles the era that began with search for oil till the completion of the project. It begins in Wadi al-^ʿuyūn where people live a simple life in harmony with nature and in close attachment to their inherited values and traditions. This community of pride and dignity is symbolized by the character of Mut^ʿab al Hadhdhāl, one of the wādī's

¹² See M.M. Badawī, "Two novelists from Iraq," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 1992, pp140-154, Oxford

¹³ See *op. cit.*, p. 142

inhabitants who refuse the interference of the Americans in people's lives.

Munīf chose to depict the desert as a remote area full of life, even though it is away from civilized life. At the same time he encourages his reader to look back at the desert's past presented through its old Arab heritage, and to be aware of the changes that took place in this desert with the introduction of modern civilization.

Munīf focused on the desert in his works by depicting the movement of people:

"The place without motion is just an empty area. Motion is what really gives life to the place".¹⁴

Both al-Ṭība in *al-Nihāyāt* and Wādī al-ʿUyūn in *al-Tīh* are one and the same thing. They are both "liminal" villages: located on the edge of the desert¹⁵ and they both live the same simple natural life.

"It is not unexpected then that man develops a strong relationship with nature in this isolated community. It is not strange also that man's belief in his land and in himself is what creates different features of life there."¹⁶

¹⁴ See Nabulsi, *Midrār al Ṣaḥarā*, p. 232

¹⁵ See Roger Allen, the Introduction to *Endings*, p. viii

¹⁶ See al-Ḥamīdī, *al Baṭal al Malḥamī*, p. 36

It is as if the two villages are living creatures that feel breathe, and grow! They develop these humanistic features through unification with their inhabitants, at least some of them.

“... that is how al Ṭība becomes a creature of flesh and blood, roaring with anger and cruelty ... and at the same time overfilled with love, transparency and honesty.”¹⁷

The plot in *al-Nihāyāt* revolves around the struggle between the villagers and the government which doesn't keep its promise to build the dam. However, the main theme in “*al-Ṭih*” is the struggle between the inhabitants on the one hand and all those who look forward to transforming the Wādī to a big industrial oil field. In other words, the problems in al-Ṭība and Wādī al-ʿUyūn are public problems that concern the society as a whole; hence, the author focuses on the description of the place and of people in their relationship with the place and with each other.

Munīf begins his novels with describing the place, the desert. *Al Nihāyāt* begins as follows:

“Drought. Drought again! When drought seasons come, things begin to change life and objects change. Humans change too, and no more so than in their moods!” p. 1

¹⁷ See *op. cit.*, p. 39

The narrator also describes al-Ṭība as a human being saying:

"The village of al-Tiba was no different. It too had its own particular life-style, its graveyard and weddings..."p. 6

Accordingly Roger Allen assumes that:

"Al-Ṭība thus becomes a symbol for any and all villages of its type, a paradigm for communities facing the wrath of nature unaided by modern technology."¹⁸

The novelist then goes on describing the village's topography:

"To the East are the orchards, the spring and then the market place. ...Bit by bit it changes. By the horizon it has turned into sand dunes, and then desert itself stars."p. 10

Moreover the novelist manages to bestow certain strength on al-Ṭība so as to be able to unite people in one solid entity.

"In al-Tiba on the hand droughts and other miseries only brought people closer together; the whole community becomes a single family, one body united." p. 36

This solidarity is probably what enables al-Ṭība to overcome its problems:

"... Al-Tiba will survive. There have been many bad years like this one before people have made it through and carried on with their lives. Al-Tiba's still here." p. 40

¹⁸ See Roger Allen, the Introduction to *Endings*, p. vii

Despite its dry and harsh appearance, the village has a hidden ability to produce beauty, and greenery:

“When the climate is good, al-Tiba is verdant and bursts into bloom on all sides. At the beginning of spring it is a riot of roses and other plants of all shapes and colours. Even the south side which seems so cruel and forbidding towards the end of summer manages to produce its own treasures from the bowels of the earth.” p. 10

As for people in al-Ṭiba, Munīf speaks of them as one entity, stressing their distinctive features, with the exception of the character of ‘Assāf which will be discussed later in the study:

“People in al-Tiba have a particular way of talking.” p.7

And again:

“The people of al-Tiba know how to turn a story in that incredible way which makes everything seem to be of primary importance... Everyone who was born in al-Tiba, young or old, is a good listener.” p. 8

The author stresses the love al-Ṭiba’s people feel towards their own village, even after they move to other places. They are used to sending their own children to spend some time in al-Ṭiba. When they are overwhelmed by their feelings of nostalgia, they go to al-Ṭiba

themselves, accompanied by some friends, where they keep talking about al-Ṭiba as a peculiar place:

"In al-Tiba the sky seems very close, they would say, "and it's as clear as can be. The nights bring their own thrill with them, something you can't watch anywhere else in the whole world... all this and lots more besides; there's just nothing like the way they are in al-Tiba." p. 13

Munīf also uses reminiscences by the old villagers to present a slice of al-Ṭiba's past and its lost topography:

"Many years ago,' they (old villagers) would start, 'the mountains around al-Ṭiba were as green as orchards. But then the Turks started building the railway and running trains through. They did not leave a single tree standing. They needed the timber and did not care where it came from. When the time came for them to leave, they burned down trees in the inaccessible spots on the tops of mountains simply because they could not get at them to cut them down. Those mountains, which, as you can see, are stripped bare all the way out from the city to al-Tiba, used to be green when we were youngsters." p. 14

As the drought strikes everything changes: the place, the people and even the animals and birds. For example farmers, shepherds and vendors who used to go to the market to sell their products, come if they do, in completely different shapes:

"... they would all look strangely different. Their clothing would be torn and have an odd colouring. They used to look anxious and sad. The powerful voices they would

normally use to advertise their wares seemed by now to have slithered backdown their throats; in their place all you heard were garbled sounds." p. 2.

As mentioned before, the effects of the famine are not limited to people, but extend to animals and birds as well. The animals that had previously wandered around al-Ṭība, living peacefully and calmly, soon turn into wild creatures. When they become sick and emaciated, their owners slaughter them, or sell them in fear of their death. The same is true of the birds that filled the skies of al-Ṭība; they quickly fly far away as they go search elsewhere for sustenance.

As in *al-Nihāyāt*, Munīf begins *al-Tīh* by describing the village of Wādī al-ʿUyūn as follows:

"WADI AL-UYOUN : AN OUTPOURING OF GREEN amid the harsh, obdurate desert, as if it had burst from within the earth or fallen from the sky."p.1

He also gives a geographical description of the place:

"The wadi stretches for about three miles or perhaps a little more..." p. 3

The author stresses the distinction of the wādī making it such a miraculous place:

"...Wadi al-Uyoun was a phenomenon, something of a miracle, unbelievable to those who saw it for the first time and unforgettable forever after." p. 2

The author's interest in the wādī also extends to propel, as he describes their distinctive nature, their way of dealing with others, and their eternal dream of traveling:

"There was not a single man in the wadi who had not at some time been seduced by the urge to travel,..." p. 5

"The wadi's people were known for their strange mixture of gentleness and obsession..." p.6

As mentioned before, in *al-Nihāyāt*, with the drought everything changes: "...which is what most years were - the people of wadi al-Uyoun behaved differently..." p. 4

The author summarizes the relationship between man and his surroundings in the words of the bakery owner:

"one of the most incredible features of this world is the relationship between mankind and his surroundings: animals and trees, houses and rivers, even the desert which is never very far from al-Ṭiba. In a whole variety of circumstances man has connections with them all because they are his salvation. If it weren't for that, 'Assāf would have never gone there." p. 75

The characters in Munīf's novels constitute a small space in relevance to the portrayal of the entire community. Instead of being fully developed characters, the heroes are in each of Munīf's novels drawn to mirror the community itself:

"The principle character is the community as a whole. The actions of individuals are portrayed, but their import is seen within the frame work of the larger picture, namely the village as a unit".¹⁹

The word village doesn't only mean the people who live in it, but also all natural creatures that settle there:

"Earth, trees, animals and birds, all these are to be found in his novels, and they give them vigor, energy, and a particular flavor. They seem to be as important as the characters themselves, and in fact, the characters sometimes become truly rounded only through the mediation of the nature around them, they seem to extensions of it."²⁰

Despite the important role place plays in these novels, man is still the source for the development of events. For example, °Assāf al Fahd in *al-Nihāyāt* is where the values and traditions of the village are embodied. He is aware that hunting is fundamental for life in al-Ṭība:

"Hunting had been one of his main interests ever since he was a boy. Year by year as he grew older..." p. 20

¹⁹ See Roger Allen, "Modern Arabic Literature," *A library of literary criticism*, 1987, p. 227,

²⁰ See *op. cit.*, p. 227

Not only does he manage to learn the techniques of hunting, but he also tries to improve them, so as to give the village better chances of survival. It is notable however that his very attempts to help the village overcome its problems result in his being regarded as an eccentric person:

“He was forever trying to devise new hunting techniques as a result he acquired some habits which made him seem somewhat eccentric..... he would behave in the most incredible fashion,... for example, when his shoes wore out and he had to buy a new pair, he would not put them on immediately,... he used to cut the leather, put the shoes in water.... He used to rip his trousers in several places and then sew a number of colourful patches over the holes;...”pp. 21-22

This eccentricity of his seems in a way, to be an expression of his longing to relate to nature:

“He spent long periods contemplating the realms of nature, human beings and the animals all around him...” p. 21

Moreover, he expresses his wish, almost a prophecy, that:

“He [°Assāf] kept saying in front of every one that he wanted to die in the desert, on a hunt, with his dog by his side and his rifle either on shoulder or in his hand! p. 131

According to al-Mukhtār: “...[°Assāf was] the one who knew all about animals and birds. You lived your life for al-Tiba.” p. 129

In other words, he is inseparable from al-Ṭība both during his life and after his death! “‘Assāf’s death was not natural. He died for al-Tiba.”p. 131

Through ‘Assāf’s character, Munīf presents many of the problems faced by people living in this environment. ‘Assāf is a lonely person, whose private life is hardly known. Even when he tries to remember events in his life, he is able to recall very little. He is sympathetic to the poor and the miserable people, keeping hardly anything he hunts for himself:

“He would leave just one bird for himself; on occasions there would be none left...” p. 30

Preferring to give it to those who need it more, he would with every shot invariably say before the bird fell, “You’re for Umm Ṣabrī, or You’re for Dāwūd the blind” . He has a strong connection with the people of his village, although he always lives in the wilderness. He is contemplative and aware of what might happen to the village if it does not preserve its birds and animals. As a typically knowledgeable and true lover of the desert life, he warns the villagers of excessive hunting so that the birds may not disappear from this village as they have from others.

"Listen, you people; he yelled testily, if these birds disappear and use get a year of drought, and if the government keeps telling us a pack of lies year after year and not building that dam, you can be sure that the people of al-Tiba are going to die..." p. 32

The author also portrays ʿAssāf's love of his village even in dreams, depicting the fowl, trees and greenery that once filled the village. He would dream of a thousand images of how al-Ṭība was and how it is now. All these details help make the character of ʿAssāf take off its human nature and become more of a spirit than a common human being. In the last part of the novel, the author manages to turn ʿAssāf into a martyr as villagers of al-Ṭība and neighboring villages turn out for a dignified funeral, showing the extent of their love for ʿAssāf.

"Many people maintain that they saw it [ʿAssāf's corpse] fly through the air and that no one could keep hold of it or even touch it."p. 137

Just like ʿAssāf al Fahd in *al-Nihāyāt*, Mutʿab al-Hadhdhāl in *al-Ṭīh* represents the conscience of the village, with his love for the wādī, and the special relations that tie him to it and the extent to which he is ready to defend the wādī.

“There was a special relationship, a rare passion between Mut‘ab al-Hadhdhāl and Wadi al-Uyoun.” p. 3

It is notable that the close, and strong relationship that connects ‘Assāf to al-Ṭība in *al-Nihāyāt*, is easily detected relating Mut‘ab to Wādī al-‘Uyūn in *al-Tīh*. Concerning Mut‘ab, we feel his anxiety at the coming of strangers and the hospitality given to them by Ibn al-Rāshed, as a result of the prince’s interest in them. The guests begin to move around everywhere, increasing Mut‘ab’s fear, which he tries to convey to people, so that they may stand by his side. Mut‘ab tries to explain to Ibn al Rāshed and the Prince his worries about the real intentions of those strangers who claimed their aim to be the modernization of life in the wādī, but to no avail.

The strangers begin urging the people to leave from the wādī, and some of them do either willingly or not, while Mut‘ab disappears. The wādī is then transformed into a work camp and a center for oil excavation. Some of those who left the wādī settle down in Ḥarrān, which turns into a developing and populous urban center and it is where the rest of events take place.

With Mut‘ab’s comments, the author, makes the reader aware that an old simple society is being destroyed so as to be replaced by a new

materialistic world that lives at the expense of nature. This phase of the wādī's development is expressed by Mut'ab as follows:

"It was the end of the world, or perhaps the end of one of the long ages in the life of this distant, forgotten desert." p. 10

Among the characters that must be mentioned is Mufḍī al-Jad'ān, the people's doctor in Ḥarrān, who gives his help to all who need it. His character is filled with strength and courage, and he endures much for the sake of his beliefs. He is a consistently responds to people's needs: carrying water to homes and helping hunters gather herbs. He goes for hunting rabbits and mountain goats, distributing what he catches to others with a good heart, ending up with hardly anything for himself. Although he stayed in Ḥarrān for many years, he neither married nor owned a home. Out of sympathy and love for people, he becomes a native of Ḥarrān. Yet, he is very secretive about his previous life.

It is so easy now to see the similarities between Mufḍī and 'Assāf of *al-Nihāyāt*: their love for people to the extent of giving them all what they hunt, and their obscure and lonely lives and their secretive past.

Many types of people come searching for wealth. The character of Doctor Şubhî al-Maḥmaljî appears in sharp contrast with Mufdî. The author depicts the character of al-Maḥmaljî and his eccentric way of thinking. A cold mind is what guides the doctor; thus, he has no friends in the true meaning of the word. Through the characters of Mufdî and Şubhî, the author manages to present the contrast between traditional and modern medicine as an example of the contrast between the simple natural environment and the materialistic new approaches which only consider money and power.

Mufdî is also a daring character. He stands up to al-Maḥmaljî, proclaiming his anger for the people. As a result of his terrible insults to Maḥmaljî, he is accused of robbing a store and is therefore imprisoned. The narrator describes Mufdî as he contemplates people and their circumstances:

“Mufdî al-Jadʿān said to himself in the dark cubicle under the stairs, “Glory to God, it is a strange world, stranger than any man knows. Everything in it changes, and nothing changes more than man himself.” ... “Nothing changes a man more than money and a uniform...” p. 557

Approximately six months after his release on bail Mufdî al-Jadʿān is forced to accept either to work in al-Maḥjar (the quarry) or leave Ḥarrān. He stays in the house of Ibn Nafāʿ his friend who bailed

him. Only days later he begins treating a large number of patients with primitive methods after they despaired of treatment by Ṣubḥī al-Maḥmaljī. At the end of the week, Muḍī goes out to the market; it's as if he walks through Ḥarrān only to see most of its inhabitants. When he is late coming home. Rushing out to look for him, Ibn Nafā^c finds him near a water tank, moaning and bleeding on the ground. He bleeds to death as Dr. al-Maḥmaljī did not come to see him, claiming that he was in surgery. Muḍī's death causes great sadness among the city's residents who gather and tell stories about Muḍī and their memories of him.

Just as ʿAssāf's death in *al-Nihāyāt* changes people's life, Muḍī's death affects people's life in Wādī al-ʿUyūn. That becomes evident when the American company fires twenty-three workers because it no longer needs them. They revolt and begin screaming and cursing the fate that has befallen them. Ḥarrān opens its doors to take in the discharged workers. Not only are the people saddened by the death of Muḍī, but they also fear that what happened to him might happen to them. As for the workers, they remember the false promises that were given to them when they came from ʿAjra and other places, and they remember as well the fear and bad treatment they have received from

foreigners. Before long, they stage a demonstration, hoping to liberate themselves from the oppression and injustice with which they are treated. They demand only two things: an investigation into the murder of Mufḍī and the return of the discharged workers to their jobs. At the end of the work, the prince orders the implementation of their two requests.

The character of Mufḍī al-Jadʿān is the extension of Mutʿab al-Hadhdhāl. Mutʿab tries to stand up against corruption, but he does not fight. Instead he leaves his people and his home, while Mufḍī persists in attacking corruption. He takes no heed of torture and beatings. Although he is an old man, he does not heed the warnings of Khazna al-Ḥasan, who works with him in treating the sick. She fears for him and warns him not to challenge or insult those who are stronger. The death of Mufḍī; however, does not mean an end to righteousness, but the beginning of rebellion against oppression and injustice.

Among the characters that remain throughout the entire novel is Ibn al-Rāshed, the prince's viceroy in the wādī. The novel depicts the torture suffered by the villagers at his hands in Ḥarrān, as he becomes one of the contractors who procure large numbers of workers to labor there. Through the attitudes of people like Ibn al Rashed a certain social

change takes place in Harrān. Different social classes appear in Harrān, as the city is split between the Harrān of the Americans, with private air-conditioned buildings and all the modern comforts, and the Harrān of the Arabs, which suffers from lack of attention to its people and buildings. It is as if the Americans are the true natives who deserve all the prince's attention.

We are also introduced to Waḍḥa al-Ḥamad, Mut'ab's wise and aged wife. We see her patience and forbearance, exemplified in her journey from Wādī al-°Uyūn to Ḥadra:

"Waḍḥa, who had been strong and composed all the way from Wadi al-Uyoun to Ajra, now seemed like an old camel." p.124

Stressing the similarity between Waḍḥa and an old camel, manifests her capacity to face difficulties in order to help her family survive. Waḍḥa is in fact a symbol for endurance and continuity.

We, readers, also get acquainted with Mut'ab's children, his friends, and his neighbors. Yet it is in fact, impossible to discuss all characters as the novel is filled with them, and all of them play a role in plot development. Once the novel's setting moves to Harrān, the characters become even more plentiful due to the diversity of the city's

inhabitants, which include foreigners and locals: workers, and merchants.

Other details and subplots are introduced to the novel's main plot, among them is the death of Akoūb, the driver of Noah's Ark, as the prince calls it. The ark comes laden with fabrics, letters, and many new things. Akoūb also drives travellers from Ḥarrān to ʿAjra and vice-versa:

"Akoūb's importance to Ḥarran increased daily as he constantly made new friends." p. 469

This importance is manifested when he dies and the workers participate in his funeral. Akoūb is an example of characters who do not belong to the desert, yet, they manage to play such a positive role in the Bedouin's life, gaining their love and respect.

"... hundreds of workers marched out of the camp, fearlessly ... and without permission. They simply informed the personnel office that one of their colleagues had passed away, and they had to attend his funeral. Everyone of the other workers did what they could to express their love and respect for Akoūb." p. 502

The narrator highlights the distinction between Akoūb, as a Christian, and Ibn al-Rāshed, as a Muslim, through the attitude of Ibn Nafā^c, who buries Akoūb and prays over him, calling him Ya^cqūb ibn

Faṭīma. Although he, in the beginning, fears Akoūb and calls him an unbeliever, his relationship with him improves when he learns that the latter deals with people with honesty and integrity., Ibn Nafā^c says:

“... Ibn Rashed had died the moment he placed his hand in those of the Americans, that God had given him a brief respite and not neglected him, but since he paid no heed he died an infidel.”p. 418

Apparently, the author presents the reader with a variety of characters which may not be fully developed in themselves; yet, they together constitute a fully detailed living picture of life in Wādī al-‘Uyūn, including people’s joys, grief, and problems. He portrays this life depicting two contrasting civilizations: a simple life full of love, sympathy and cooperation and a materialistic life filled with conflicts and problems.

It is obvious from the above that, the hero in Munīf’s works plays an important role in directing the events, as he sacrifices himself for the principle he believes in. In *al-Nihāyāt* ‘Assāf dies for al-Ṭība, being an incentive for it to give up its negative attitude and begin to strive to achieve its goal, the building of the dam. In *al-Tīh*, even though al-Hadhdhāl keeps appearing and disappearing, he presents a native for the people to try to change their life. Lastly Mufḍī al-Jad^cān stands up

against injustice giving a good example for the people of Harrān to stand up for their rights.

People in Munīf's novels seem to have a collective identity rather than a private one.

"...There is almost no concern with the portrayal of individual characters, whether through dialogue or description."²¹

"Al-Ṭība and Wādī al-ʿUyūn are one and the same thing. This thing has been there for thousands of years and will have to be there for years to come, with no change, as change might in fact mean death. Maybe al-Hadhdhāl's death and repeated resurrection has the same implication of ʿAssāf's repeated disappearance in the desert."²²

Munīf managed to unveil the problems which accompanied the discovery of oil in the Arab society; that is why the Saʿudi government banned his works in its territory. However, no one could prevent his ideas from spreading to other Arab countries. At the same time, through his works, Munīf, gave a portrayal of the balanced relation between man and nature, and what might happen as a result of the interference in this balance. According to Badawī:

²¹ See Roger Allen, the Introduction to *Endings*, p. viii

²² See Nābulī, *Midrār al Ṣaḥarā*, p. 38

"Alike on the realistic and symbolical level *Endings* is a significant work which not only treats a fresh subject of the uneasy relation between town and country/desert, but also hints at the primordial balance and near mystical affinity between man and nature."²³

Moving to the narrative technique used by Munīf, we notice that he uses the one of the omniscient narrator who knows everybody and everything in the novel. This omniscient narrator is therefore the one who introduces the characters and the events leaving no chance, and in fact no need, for the characters to express themselves neither through monologues or dialogues. The omniscient narrator describes for the reader the problems that face al-Ṭība and Wādī al 'Uyūn, such as poverty, hunger, drought and injustice.

Not only does the author concentrate on the people's collective identity, rather than their distinctive personalities, but he also doesn't give any specification of when and where exactly the events take place. This means that the author wants to stress the applicability of the events to many villages in different Arab Countries.

Using an omniscient narrator helps the reader to have a detailed view of how life is and how people think in al-Ṭība that is because through the narrative the narrator tries to introduce different points of

²³ See Badawi, *op. cit.*, p. 149

view and different explanations of various events according to Roger Allen:

"The narrator is continually providing different possibilities to explain the phenomena described and presenting a variety of points of view on an item of contention... the narrator will suggest that one of the versions is more plausible than the others... a number of differing aspects and perspective draws the reader into the narrative in a creative way."²⁴

Dialogues are however sometimes used to stress the different approaches people have towards certain issues. For example, through the novel's events we get to know some of the opinions of those who had left the village and then came back for regular visits, the author concerning the influence of the city on the villagers who reside there and on their points of view.

One of those people, a young man who studied abroad, said:

"People don't behave the way you people do here. They convert words into power; organized, aggressive power. We've got to do the same, something really urgent, before death gobbles us all up." "One of the older people curled his lips into a disapproving leer. 'And what do you suggest we do?' he asked, looking up at the sky and then down at the ground. 'You should realize,' he went on before the young man had the slightest chance of replying, 'no one can stand up to the government. We have to make use of our common sense and figure out what we can do.'"p. 40

²⁴ See Roger Allen the Introduction to *Endings*, p. ix

In general, the omniscient narrator is able to depict the village of al-Ṭība in its simple life, and as an example of many third-world societies that depend on rain, and how they face the drought and famine if there is none. No one cares for the village, as no one gives its inhabitants their rights, fooling them instead with government promises that are never kept. Through his skillful portrayal of characters and events, Munīf realistically depicts how the inhabitants of al-Ṭība cope with poverty and hunger, showing that man is capable of overcoming difficult times with a spirit of unity and cooperation, making obstacles seem less overwhelming and consequently easier to overcome.

The narrator also devotes much time to a description of the natural landscape, which plays an important role in revealing the beauties of the desert: night and day, mountains and valleys, changes in the land and the air. He also describes in detail the link between the desert and the sea, highlighting common characteristics, such as their never-ending nature, and differences, such as how each one looks at sunset.

The narrator makes it clear to the reader that, what really needs to be changed is man:

“The thing which needs, to change is man himself.” p. 75

The titles of the novels have important implications. The title "*al-Nihayat*" indicates the destination that awaits the societies that adopt the same negative approach of al-Ṭība. In short "*Endings*" symbolize the ends which will face the Arab World...".²⁵

As for the title of *Mudun al-Mīlh*,

"it stands as a symbol for the societies that have such feeble foundations that they might fall very easily, just as easy as salt melts in water...".²⁶

The first volume of *Mudun al-Mīlh* is entitled *al-Tīh* to indicate the anarchy that spreads through society when it is controlled by foreign powers.²⁷

Despite the despair implied by the titles of the novel, the author gives us some hope by encouraging the people of al-Ṭība to fight in order to obtain what they want. This is shown clearly in the mayor's determination to go to the city to ask the government to build the dam. He will return either with a bulldozer, or carrying weapon, so that al-Ṭība can begin to understand the meaning of life, rather than this death they are living every day. As well as in *al-Tīh*, Ibn Nafā^c said: "Hope for the best. No one can read the future. p. 627

²⁵ See al-Nābulī, *Midrār al Ṣaḥarā*. p. 58

²⁶ See *op. cit.* p. 59

²⁷ See al-Ḥamīdī, *op. cit.*, p. 47

Through the omniscient narrator of *al-Nihāyāt*, Munīf introduces a small number of characters, whereas a larger number of characters is introduced by the narrator in *al-Tih*. That is probably because of the immensity of the change that took place in Wādī al-ʿUyūn, and the great number of people that had to move to the Wādī as a result of this change.

Being primitive societies, legends play an important role in both al-Ṭība and Wādī al-ʿUyūn. First of all, people in such societies tend to believe that there is a hidden power that takes care of them: "and felt protected by some blessed power that made their lives easy." p. 1

This power, accompanied with natural phenomena, make their life full of a magical power. This is presented in "the stories of the strange night", which handles many themes such as hunting birds and animals, manifesting the relationship between man and nature.

Also, in primitive societies people use legends to explain obscure phenomena instead of giving logical or scientific explanations.²⁸ For example, when Waḍḥa al-Ḥamd loses her ability to speak, the old people in the village claim that the reason behind this is that a black Jini has penetrated here body. p. 131 (*al-Tih*)

²⁸ See al Ḥamīdī. *op. cit.*, p. 47

The mythical atmosphere is most apparent in the novels in the characters, specifically those who sacrificed their lives for their beliefs. for example ʿAssāf is transformed from a common character to a legend. The narrator in *al-Nihāyāt* states that:

“All those who witnessed the spectacle [ʿAssāf’s funeral] confirm that he was not really carried, but rather that he flew.” p. 135

One critic comments on this scene saying:

“...ʿAssaf’s funeral procession, during which he is transfigured from an almost social outcast to a mythical hero...”²⁹

This mythical atmosphere extends to include both Muʿab al-Hadhdhāl and Muḍī al-Jadʿān in *al-Tīh*. The narrator claims that:

“Those who arrived at the compound late said that they had seen from far a man on a white camel pursuing the soldiers and firing at them and attacking the main gate of the compound, and many of them said that the man was Mutaʿb al Hadhdhāl.”p. 153

Muḍī al-Jadʿan also is transformed to a mythical entity, here is the narrator claiming that:

²⁹ See Badawi. *op. cit.*, p. 149

"...Still others swore with absolute certainty that they saw a phantom shaped like a man flying above their heads, and it looked exactly like Mūfdī al-Jada°n. p. 616 *al-Tīh*

We can therefore say that °Assāf, Mut°ab and Mufdī are real and symbolic characters at the same time. Through the development of the events they turned into myths with huge effect on people's minds.

Not only did Munīf follow the old Arabic tradition of using the desert as a theme and a location of his novels, but he also made use of many other social and literary traditions that belong to the Arabic heritage. "*Endings* indicated the novel's being a container of Arabic traditional values. He states:

"The reader is presented with a contemporary celebration of many of the traditional values which have survived the passage of time and the events of history, at least up till now."³⁰

Oral transmission is an important aspect in Arabic literary heritage. Just like inhabitants of any village in the old Arab peninsula, people of al-Ṭība have a special talent in story-telling. According to the narrator: "The people in al-Tiba know how to turn a story in that incredible way..." p. 8

He adds:

³⁰ See Roger Allen, The Introduction to *Endings*, p. viii

"Conversation in the evening would start quite spontaneously and without any pre-arrangement... Things would always start with forests, trees, springs and so on."
p.15

The description of nature and animals, and the search for water are traditional themes of classical Arabic literature. Munīf in his novels clearly gives great importance to these themes. He is clearly interested in animals in his novels, giving us several examples of the strong relationship between them and human beings. 'Assāf's dog, for example, guards his body from the vultures who want to devour it.

According to the narrator:

"The dog was crouched over his head, and it was almost completely buried too. And yet in a peculiar way it formed a kind of enclosure around cAssāf's body and particularly his head, it seemed almost to be embracing him ... when the dog had seen cAssāf fall, it had stood on top of him. No doubt it had tried to save him somehow, but the storm had been too powerful for the two of them." pp. 73-74

This strong relationship between 'Assāf and his dog was noticed even before their death. Here is one of the villagers commenting on the similarity between them:

"Heaven help us! Perhaps they are actually siblings! After all, they do look exactly alike, don't they? p. 24

As a matter of fact, ʿAssāf is known for his special relation with animals.

His keen observation of animals makes him say, for example:

“Gazelles cry... as they’re dying, they always cry; it doesn’t matter how they’re dying, they always do it.” p. 133

As a result, ʿAssāf never hunts gazelles.

ʿAssāf’s own love of hunting does not grow out of a desire to kill; rather, he hunts out of necessity only:

“ʿAssāf has spent his entire life in the desert and yet even in good seasons he has only hunted just enough to fill his dog’s stomach and his own. When dry seasons come, it’s fair enough to hunt so that people won’t die on the streets.” p. 47

The author presents a great number of birds in the area of al-Ṭība, such as the wild goose and the sandgrouse. In addition, the narrator describes immigrating birds, and how they learn to adapt themselves to their new environment.

“At the beginning of the season the birds would not be worried about their own safety and would come in close. But they soon become scared and started looking for other feedings-ground... In a word, the birds learned to adjust their life-style.” p. 35

When ʿAssāf dies, the author uses the great number of people gathered around him to relate many strange stories about desert animals and their habits, in a section called "stories of the strange night".

In this section the narrator clearly uses old literary traditions, as he presents different relationships between man and animals and other creatures in general. Here is Roger Allen stressing this point:

"This [the description of animals] is found most notably in the series of stories which accompany ʿAssaf's wake, but the descriptions of his dog and of the variety of birds and other creatures which share the harsh life of the community also contribute to the unusual atmosphere conveyed by the work."³¹

Besides two anecdote taken directly from al-Jahiz's *Kitab al-ḥayawan*³² (The Book of Animals). The narrator discusses various aspects of the desert environment in this chapter, such as floods, wells and desert animals.

Story-telling is vastly used in this section as a narrative technique, stressing the importance of oral culture in al-Ṭība, which is a typical old village of the Arab Peninsula. Moreover, these stories about animals are:

³¹ See Roger Allen, the introduction to *Endings*, p. viii
³² See Sakut, *The Arabic Novel*, p. 178

“... pointing out to the need to maintain the balance and harmony between man and animals in his environment and showing an exquisite sensitivity and affection in describing animal and bird behaviour”³³

Not only does Munīf use old literary themes and techniques, but he also manages to portray some social traditions as well. Generosity, for example. When al-Ṭība has some guests, it receives them with the hospitality expected from a traditional Arabic village, even at the time of drought. As. Badawī indicates:

“A group of visitors from the city descend upon the village for pleasure hunting and, despite the growing scarcity of wild life, are welcomed by all local people according to the traditional rules of hospitality.”³⁴

People of Wādī al-‘Uyūn are as generous as those of al-Ṭība, maybe even more! They are so generous that:

“Their generosity would reach the point of extravagance, leading some travelers to consider them silly and rash people...” p. 4 (*al-Ṭih*)

Another important social value in the desert is man's strong relationship with his homeland. This value is stressed for example through the character of Muṭ‘ab al Hadhdhāl who follows the habit of

³³ See Badawi, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-149

³⁴ See *op. cit.* p. 148

cultivating a palm tree for every child he has, aiming at establishing a strong eternal relationship between his children and their land, p. 49 (*al Tih*).

CHAPTER TWO

History of Kan

1. North of Hajer

2. al-Majlis

PART I AND II

As the desert was the platform for the events in Abd al Raḥman Munīf's novels, it unequivocally played the same role in Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī's novels. Whereas Munīf's works took place in the desert through the concern about the socio-political issues of the Arab society in general and the Arab peninsula in particular, al-Kūnī's works handled in the desert environment in its entirety, making it the orbit around which his novels rotate, exemplifying his interest in the unity of the universe.

"Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī, a desert intellectual, is preoccupied with the human crisis. Yet since he lives in a certain era, the man of that era is his subject; since he is coming from the deep Ṣaḥarā where everything is unchangeable as left by nature thousands of years ago, he possesses such a unique vision which puts all the events of history and all that is called 'culture' on one time level."³⁵

Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī managed to make the desert a distinguished world in his novels:

"Since the writer did not want to or could not be an 'anthropologist' in his tribe and he turned to novel writing which allows him to present a new form to his society and his world in which he lives through his knowledge of his mother culture and the other cultures which he contacted, thus his works were distinguished and proliferating without losing distinctiveness and difference for being a unique creative feat."³⁶

³⁵See Shukrī 'Ayyād, "Maḥama Ṣaḥrawīyya," *al-Hilāl Magazine*, 1996, pp.21-22

³⁶See Mo'jab al-zaharānī, "Tamthīlat al-Jasad fī namādhj min al-riwāya al-ʿarabiyya," *Fusul magazine* p. 82

In general terms, al-Kūnī's works are not merely different in title and form but there is distinctiveness in his choice of a certain environment that is remote from urbanity. The reader is therefore carried to an unusual world, with its own traditions, principles and concepts. We will deal with these works from the same aspects which we have previously employed while discussing Munīf's works.

In this section we look at two of Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī's novels, which represent good examples of life in the desert portraying life in the depths of the desert in general in which realism and fantasy come together. In *Nazīf al-Ḥajar* and *al-Majūs*, al-Kūnī has presented a detailed picture of the desert landscape, the different types of animals that live therein, their natures and their relationship with man, as well as cave drawings and the legends that surround them.

Before delving into the desert realm of al-Kūnī, we begin with a short review of the events of the two novels.

*Nazīf al-Ḥajar*³⁷ describes the life of a man, Assūf, who lives in the depths of the desert. Assūf belongs to a tribe, which used to abandon

³⁷ See Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī, *Nazīf al-Ḥajar*. Dar al-ṭanwīr lil ṭibā'a wil nashr, 1992. All the quotation in this section have been taken from this edition.

life in the city, preferring to live in isolation in the desert*. He is bound by strong relationship with animals leading him to sympathize with them, take great interest in them, and even venerate them, especially the waddān, the wild mountain goat. The novel tells the story of how his life ends at the hands of man, due to his belief in and fear for the desert animals.

While °Assāf al-Fahd in *al-Nihāyāt* resembles Assūf in *Nazīf al-Hajar* concerning their love to birds and animals and their environment, they differ from each other. °Assāf lives with the inhabitants of his village which is situated at the threshold of desert, as he is among a group of people interacting with the desert. °Assāf further represents his village though his perception and thought toward problems are different from his people's. On the contrary, the life of Assūf is the environment that envelops him. Animals and all the creatures are his family, as he flees from people to live in isolation, in depths of the desert.

The novel *al-Majūs*³⁸ depicts the tragedy of man and the conflict he faces between his materialistic and spiritual needs. The events of the

* According to Herodotus as mentioned at the beginning of the chapters, called "The Little daughter" "In the South Libya in the Nasamonean uplands live the Garamantes (a group of libyan tribes) in the land abounding in wild animals. The people of these tribes actually run away from outsiders, as they are afraid to talk to them. They do not use weapons nor do they know how to defend themselves." See Sākkūt, *al-Riwāya al-°arabiyya*. p. 236.

³⁸ See Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī, *al-Majūs* (2 vols, 3rd edition) al-Dār al-Jamāhīriyya lil nashr wal tawzi' wal I'lān. 1990. All the quotation in this section have been taken from this edition.

novel take place in Almoravid, the first Islamic state established in black Africa, where idol worship was previously prevalent*. When a drought spreads in the country, the power of the Almoravids wanes and trade is affected as well, leading to the return of idol worship, as represented in the novel by the god Amanāy.

The narrator portrays the materialistic characters in the novel by the merchants, while the ideal men by the shepherds and the nomadic people of the desert, who are searching for the lost Waw, or paradise. The desert people believe that there are three Waws in the desert: the first is the paradise from which Adam was expelled; the second is the paradise that man desires to live in on earth, with a plethora of everything he needs; the third is the lost paradise of the desert, the one which nobody stumbles across except those who are lost and on the verge of death. The latter always appears to give them hope. He who enters it comes out carrying treasures, but he who looks for it does not find it. It is the dream which all people strive for.

The novel, with its two volumes, tells the story of Wādī Ayr, and the people who had to leave it to Wādī Azgar. Wādī Ayr contained a

* Almoravid: a dynasty of Berber origin which ruled in north Africa and then Spain during the second half on the 5th/11th century and the first half of the 6th/12th. Known in Arabic as al Murābiṭūn. For further information, see Encyclopedia of Islam. New edition. V. VII pp. 583-591.

number of modern cities, established by Khatamān, the Moravid ruler, who set down laws and built mosques. Although he was busy building the city of Tīmīktū as a center of commerce, he did not neglect the desert, going there every spring. In addition, he instituted a law for the nobles, ordering them to send their sons to the desert to learn archery, horseback riding, and more important, and wisdom from the wise men of the desert. The state had been ruled by a succession of twelve rulers who abide by Khatamān's way. The Sulṭān had been always succeeded by his sister's son, but the last Sulṭān, Hama, diverted from the path and appointed his brother's son, Awrāgh, because his sister had no son. Rumors said that Awrāgh, had made a pact with the witches to force his uncle to leave the throne to him. Awrāgh, was a merchant who lusted after gold, he rules the Wādī Ayr, which was on the edge of the desert, and he had one daughter Tīnīrī. He agreed with the black Africans in the years of the drought that they return to the worshipping of idols, represented in Amnāy, who had been ignored for so long time that he was angered and he demanded that a virgin from a noble family be brought before him. The black Africans, in turn, promised to give Awrāgh gold to revitalize the trade:

The famine knocked at the doors of Tīmīktū for the first time in its history. vol .1, p. 83

The drought spreads and the desert is burnt by fire. vol. 1,
p. 84

Awrāgh feared for his daughter, so he sent her with one of his half brothers, Anāy, from Wādī Ayr to Wādī Azjar, where most of the events of the novel take place. In Wādī Azjar, man and jinn live in peace according to a pact stipulating that the mountains and gold are left to the jinn, while people live in peace far from civilization. Anāy takes residence in Wādī Azjar. After he got permission from the leader Adah, to begin building a new city in the heart of the desert, imbuing it with life after it had suffered from weakness and drought. The novel ends with the destruction of this city, Tīmbaktū al-Ṣoghra, at the hands of three enemies: the black Africans, animals, and the jinn, who join forces to do away with Anāy.

Al-Kūnī starts *Nazīf al-Ḥajar* with the words of the narrator describing two goats butting before a man praying. There is no extensive description of the place as was the case with Munif's novels where a number of pages were dedicated to the description of the place regardless to the event. For al- Kūnī the description of the place is interwoven within the events of the novel. He introduces the events by saying,

"The goats are pleased to butt before his face only when he starts to pray." *Nazif al-Hajar*, p. 7

He further points out to the place of prayer when he says it is in front of the most important rock in Mītakhendosh Valley. The narrator describes the location of the rock with its drawing,

The great rock, bordering the cave chain, stands at the end like a cornerstone is embellished with the most wonderful drawings in the entire Sahara made by man of pre-history." p.8

The narrator then introduces the praying person, Assūf, through him we see the drawings that decorate the mountains and caves where once was dwelled by the jinn. In the desert the sound is deceiving, as the narration goes on,

"The proximity of the sound of the engine in the desert does not mean the nearness of the car. Sounds in the desert are misleading and illusive." p.13

The living beings in that place, the desert, were portrayed in a way interweaving them to the sunshades and the jinn. The narrator describes the sun by saying,

The sun encroached behind the mountains facing the vertical rocks, thus the shades prevail in the opposite plain like a row of jinni soldiers" p. 22

Living in such an atmosphere, one is informed that the plain is for the gazelles and the mountain for the waddān:

"The mountain for the gazelles is a trap and the plain for the waddān is a trap." p.25

From the sequence of events we realize that there is a mountainous desert (Masāk Şatfet) is resided by the waddān whereas the sandy one (Masāk Malt) is inhabited by the gazelles. Our vision of life in this place is deepened when we know the difference between the sandy desert and the mountainous one:

"The plain ends and the Masāk Şatfet begins to declare for itself. The heights stretch out, covered with huge black rocks burnt with the eternal sun fire. Accompanied with humans, the clarity of the extensive plain sandy desert is over, whereas the hindrances of the angry mountainous desert begin." pp. 86-87.

The narrator embodies the desert making it escape from the human assault through the movement of the gazelles:

"When they move in their collective flight, the plain moves, the desert moves as well, as if the desert itself is moving and fleeing to run away from the human assault."
p.96

Despite this life isolated from the humans, the narrator gives us an idea on how the news spreads in this desert,

"The wind continued to disseminate to them the news of the raiders in the north as it always conveyed to the tribes of the desert rumors concerning marriage, divorce, scandals, new births and deaths. Nothing is concealed in the desert, irrespective of its seclusion whatsoever." p.32

The novel is a one being in which all creatures are interrelated to engender one image, namely, the environment, where its living beings live in harmony and balance with nature. The novel attempts to unify the world in this place. According to the narrator, "All Ṣaḥarā from Ghadāmes to Tīmaktū and from Nafosa Mountain to Aghādis." p. 47

A critic comments on this by saying,

"The novel presents the entire world as one entity with spirits that are mysterious and conflicting for realistic, mythical and metaphysical reasons at the same time." ³⁹

Like *Nazīf al-Ḥajar* which started the event within the place, *al-Majūs*, started with the narrator's depiction of the mountains air which endows life to people. From the highest mountain peaks, the narrator describes through the character of Awdād the scenery of the caravan coming from a distance, as they appeared like toys that provoke laughing:

³⁹See Mojab al-Zahrānī, *op. cit.*, p. 83

"He would never taste the flavor of life, the one who does not breathe the air of the mountains. Here on the bared peaks, he approaches to God" p. 7.

The desert is divided into southern desert, the tribal power (the wind) and the northern desert a region of the rains' power. The place as a whole is a living being that feels, breathes and moves with events, moving from one location to another. This place enfolds all the contradictions and dichotomies; it includes everything as well as it includes nothing except for the broad empty space. The narrator says, "In the desert, there is nothing and there is everything." p.68

In this place, a new city is being constructed (Tīmāktū the minor) in which life is changing to be a semi-materialistic, because it could not change all people. There are those who stick to the desert traditions in spite of the pleasures of life. Such a new city became a center of caravans.

"Back and forth travels the caravan did not stop so the new Tinibkto became a station for caravans." p. 99

With the change of place people differ as was case for Munīf when Wādī al-ʿUyūn changed to a place of work and its inhabitants were expelled.

"This revolt in the desert 'Azjar', which once in the past was characterized by an eternal silence, made the leader call it the fantastic city 'Wāw al-ḍa'i'a" p.99

In this place we meet the new cities, roads, mountainous peaks, valleys, wells, hills, animals and jinn. In this place the wind plays an essential role not only in conveying news, as we mentioned before, but also it wipes away the traces of whoever wants to conceal in it, so nobody will be able to know where he is. In this place the people of the valley are waiting for the advent of the rains, which is the source of life. The narrator tells us that "The breaths of the rains arrived so the plain heaved a sigh, and the heavenly fire (sun) retreated." *al-Majūs*, vol. 1, p.88.

Going through the pages of the novel, one realizes how a tribe is distinguished from another in this desert. It is the well.

"The well in this place is the secret of potency for the tribe. The well too is its point of weakness." *al-Majūs*, vol 1, p.304

While the place moves with humans and events, it is full of quietness. The desert carries the meaning of contradictions.

"Quietness prevails The quietness of the desert whose loftiness increases whenever you prolongs listening to it." *al-Majūs*, vol. 1, p.309

And again:

"Silence in the desert is transparent, sensitive like the tenderness of a flower wounded by a bee and bled by a sting." *al-Majūs*, vol 1, p. 310

The narration draws us to live in the desert feeling that the jinn and human beings are the same in this place but each have their own dwelling. "The jinni cities in the desert are more than those of the humans." *al-Majūs*, vol. 1, p.340

Moving along to another place with the tribe which suffers hunger and drought, the narrator recounts:

"In these years they moved with the tribe in the desert suffering hunger and the harshness of drought, but they did not stop moving and questing for pasture." *al-Majūs*, vol. 2, p.10

The novel ends while making the mountain like a man saying adieu to his friend in this extensive desert. It reads:

"Driven across the plain, deviating rightward to eschew passing by the ruins beside him northward (Aydinān) stopped as if he wants to tell him goodbye. He halted to contemplate him for a long while. Then he continued his way before him in the expansive empty space like the endlessness." *al-Majūs*, vol. 2, p.428.

After reviewing al-Kūnī's novels, one can say that al-Kūnī's community is different from that of ʿAbd al-Raḥman Munīf. Roger Allen remarks that:

"The village community like that of al-Ṭība in Abd el Raḥman Munīf novel. Although it is isolated and menaced by the encroaching desert, such a community, in comparison to the harsh volatile environment in al-Kūnī's novel, exemplifies a community resembling 'civilization'. al-Kūnī's created a unique and renewed mixture of what is traditional and what is modern at the same time."⁴⁰

Nazīf al Ḥajar, presents Assūf's life in the desert. Through memories and flashbacks, we get to know a number of characters that play important roles in the novel among them Assūf's father, who influences Assūf not only as a father, but also as a mentor. He teaches him verses from the Qur'ān (al-Fatīḥa and al-Ikhlās), and how to shoot with a rifle. Assūf also learns from his father that the most important thing for life in the desert is patience, as it is man's main supply in this environment. Water and bullets are the foundation of life, as necessary as air; without water, one dies of thirst, and without bullets, one dies at the hand of an enemy. Assūf's father used to say:

⁴⁰ See Roger Allen, *al-riwāya al-ʿarabīyya*, p.323

"I'm willing to be a neighbor to jinn, but not a neighbor to people." p.24

For him, the desert, despite its harshness, is a paradise for whoever wants to retreat from humans and their problems.

Also among lessons that Assūf's father teaches him is that the heart is not only the way by which one understands people, but it is also the light by which one is guided. It is the star that guides the lost soul in the desert:

"For those who do not live among people, the heart is the way to understand them. The heart is like fire in the desert: it guides the Bedouin just like the lost soul is led in the wasteland by the stars." p.23

As mentioned before, Assūf is greatly fond of animals, his father taught him how to herd wild camels, at the age of ten, and how to hunt gazelles, at fifteen. Even though he taught him how to hunt the waddān, he never let him do it. The reason for this, according to Assūf's mother is that this animal once saved his father's life. However, when the years of drought came and the family was faced with destruction, his father had to try to hunt a large waddān. This attempt failed as the waddān killed himself to escape from his hunter. Hence, his father felt regret and decided not to let his son hunt this animal in the future.

The narrator here shows how man is the one who can preserve nature. Similar to °Assāf in *al-Nihāyāt* who tried to make the inhabitants of his village, al-Ṭība, preserve and protect animals and birds so that their village will not starve, we find Assūf's father teaching him how to care for the animals that live with them believing that preserving them is the continuation of life in such a natural environment. Yet, it is further revealed that the animals themselves fear human assault, thus preferring to kill themselves than to fall in the hands of man. Here is Assūf's father describing the waddān's suicide:

"It climbed the rocks in quick movements, it jumped down to earth breaking its neck. The blood flowed from its nostrils. It died with a strange look in its open eyes: a combination of misery, rancor, and impotence." p. 26

After his father's death, Assūf assumes responsibility for herding the flocks, tending the camels, and gathering firewood. The novel tells us of Assūf's unfamiliarity with people and their ways due to his isolation, which makes him fear them. As a matter of fact his father never taught him how to meet men, and that is why he is angry from his father.

Assūf's father tried to hunt a waddān but the nature punished him so he died at its hands. Ignoring his father's instructions, Assūf once

decides to hunt a waddān. He chases a waddān over the rocks, throwing a rope around his horns. The waddān sets off running over the hardest boulders of the mountain, tearing Assūf's clothes and his body. Nature also punished Assūf by exposing him to ruin and death, but saved him for his patience which he has fostered and his hard heart which he has clung to for his survival. According to the narrator, the survival is not only for the human being but also for the animal. At the same time his rescue comes at the hand of the same animal, waddān, which he tried to kill. Thus the author makes the animal like the human being who forgives and forgets.

Here the narrator describes Assūf's severe pain and his feelings of numbness as he is so close to death:

"He dragged him along the earth, ... The waddān continued to drag him across the fierce fangs of the wādī floor. ... The waddān started to climb the most jagging rocks, and Assūf closed his eyes so that he would not see the terror of the rocks and their enormity. In a flash he was on his feet, tied to his victim, his flogger. He jumped behind him, throwing his ripped body to the rear. Assūf ran behind the waddān for a few wide steps, bumping into the rocks. The waddān ran along the edge of the frightening summit for a short distance, then ... The waddān jumped into thin air at the most frightful point, and Assūf heard the crash of the horns of this wild bull against the rock. A moment later, in the blink of an eye, Assūf found himself hanging on a projecting rock at the peak of the mountain, his legs dangling in the never-ending abyss. ... The real battle began now above the chasm, in the heart of the stillness. If

he gave in to pain, he would be lost, but what could he do with the thirst? He would rest his right hand a moment, then return it to the outcrop and rest his left. He would not leave the outcrop, he would not rest his fingers. Patience.”
pp.60-70

The novel surprises us by saving Assūf. He feels something rough rubbing against his fingers; after discerning in the darkness, he discovers that it is the waddān that he tried to capture. With the coming of the dawn, he sees his father in the eyes of the waddān and passes out. It is this event that turns Assūf into a vegetarian.

Assūf's end comes at the hands of Qābīl Adam, who has loved eating meat since his childhood, and who brings bad luck to everyone around him: his father died by the knife, his mother was bitten by a snake and his aunt and her husband, who took over his upbringing, died of thirst. When Qābīl grew up, he became one of the most famous hunters in al-Ḥamāda al-Ḥamrā' Desert, especially as he was equipped with an inherited Ottoman rifle, and a landrover which facilitated for him chasing gazelles.

The rifle and the landrover were always the evil source for hunting gazelles and animals in general. This is typical to what has happened in al-Ṭība when 'Assāf went with his guest to hunt. As a consequence, the nature punished the village guests with a sandy storm,

as ʿAssāf was the victim to become the sacrifice in order for the nature to be pleased with the inhabitants of the village, al-Ṭība. As a result, the remaining gazelles fled to Mountain al-Ḥasāwna to escape from the deathly raids.

Qābīl comes to Assūf with a friend called Masʿūd al-Dabāshī hoping that Assūf might lead them to the hunting grounds of the waddān, but Assūf refuses to guide them. Qābīl then ties his hands and feet, upon which Assūf repeats the words of his father: "The sons of Adam will not be sated except by death." p.107

When Qābīl loses his patience, he drags Assūf on the ground towards a high boulder and crucifies him. The novel ends with Assūf's slaughter and Qābīl throwing his head into the mountains:

"The murderer threw his head on a stony ledge on the face of the rock. Assūf's lips still moved, as the severed head mumbled, The sons of Adam will not be sated except by death." p. 146

It is easy to see Assūf as a symbol of good on earth as he lives with all beings in love, and Qābīl as the symbol of evil on earth, as he kills the animals of the desert just because he owns a car and bullets. The name Qābīl (Cain) is usually used to symbolize evil since the beginning of time.

The narrator managed to link the story of Cain and Abel, early ancestors, with the relation of Assūf and Qābīl in this artistic work. Assūf embodies the good and Qābīl represents the evil, who killed Assūf the good, but the nature remains with its goodness and charity represented by the living beings particularly waddān which Assūf sacrificed with his life in return to its preservation.

Another important character in the novel is Assūf's mother. She is the opposite of his father: she wants to live with people. The reason, it seems, is that she is from a different tribe than her husband, who had preferred solitude and did not know how to speak with people or defend himself against them. She, in contrast, sets a great store on the concept of shame and the opinions of people. In addition, the difficult life she lives in the depth of the desert makes her feel lonely, and cares about having neighbors.

The mother here is a sign of persistence and continuation of life. For her, abandoning people and isolation mean extinction and vanishing. Thus his mother was opposite to his father.

Even though, she used to call him "the little daughter," referring to his fear of people, Assūf, loved his mother so much. When he was on the edge of death he missed no body but her.

Assūf later loses his mother in a tragic way. The floods drown the valleys beds of the desert, swept his mother out of her cave and torn her into many parts scattered about. As Assūf tries to gather the pieces of his mother, we are introduced to a third state of existence between death and life, just like that of the goat that keeps on breathing after it has been slaughtered, or the headless waddān that runs for a long distance before dying. The narrator indicates that Assūf's mother passed through this stage between life and death, existence and non-existence:

“The body torn off from the arm, which still grasped a bunch of thorn, the thorn of deliverance, the thorn of life. It was that state, the third state between life and death, existence and non-existence, the earth and the sky, it is the same thing he had seen in slaughtered animals. He lived it that day, as he was crawling in the wādī searching for a drop of water between life and death, a distance that could return a human being to life, or take him over to death, walking towards nothingness and darkness.” p. 78

With the floods at this time of year, the valleys are filled with greenery and plants. Assūf sees trees which he has never seen before growing quickly and flowering. After this flood comes the drought, during which the herd is decimated, and Assūf leaves the southern desert of Massāk (the desert of the south, the mountainous desert).

Among the characters of the novel is the American officer John Parker. His importance stems from the fact that he bears a great

responsibility in the decimation of animals in the desert. Despite his interest in philosophies of the Orient, and his wide readings in many faiths, including Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Islamic Sufism, he does not mind to supply Qābīl with the landrover and bullets necessary to chase and hunt animals. Captain Parker is an example of a cultured man who destroys life instead of promoting it.

Supplying Qābīl Adam's with the rifle and landrover to kill nature as exemplified in the annihilation of its animals; such weapons threatened the gazelles and the whole environment,

"... and compelled the rest of the species to emigrate to the end of the world not to search for pastures but rather to seek survival and save the progeny from loss." p. 101

Al-Majūs contains a large number of characters, most of which play an important role in the plot and through their behaviors and fates throw bright light on the various aspects of the desert life. The most important of those characters, are Awdād, Adah, the leader of Wādī Azjar, al-Darwīsh, the sultān, Awkhā, Tinnīrī, the soothsayer, the harbinger and Tāfāwt. There are also a number of sly characters who exploit the naivete of the desert dwellers and appear before them in the garb of ascetics and learned men, although their true goal is to pillage the desert.

Awdād, lives with the mountain animals, particularly the waddān and the bird of paradise, which accompanies his singing with the most pleasant melodies. The author depicts Awdād as an eccentric character who cannot easily live in reality; indeed, he lives in the summit of the mountains, much like the waddān. He loves Tīnnīrī, the princess who comes from Ayr, and wants to marry her. For the sake of this love, he accepts to goad Awkha into climbing the mountain. Whoever succeeds in this task will marry Princess Tīnnīrī. Awdād manages to climb the mountain but he is unable to make his way down again. During his journey up to the mountain, he discovers skulls and bones dating back thousands of years. He also encounters a waddān, to whom he tells his story and then asks the waddān to keep the jinn from terrorizing him by causing earthquakes and sending snakes and owls. The novel then proceeds to his ascent to the peak of the mountain:

“The chain of Akokas and the peaks of al-Qarīyn al-Maghdūr disappeared, as if escaping in to the desert . . . The traces of living beings stopped . . . On the walls of the caves ancestors engraved the symbols of al-Tifīnāgh. They drew on the hard walls inscriptions and manuscripts covered by a layer of dust and clay.” *al-Majūs*, vol 2 , p. 262

Awdād never comes back from his journey.

Awkhā, is one of the tribal nobles, who vies for the love of Princess Tīnnīrī with Awdād, thus he takes the imam's advice to goad Awdād into climbing the mountain. Awkhā's life ends in a tragic way. Not knowing that Awdād is unable to descend down the mountain, he decides to kill himself. He first asks his friend Akhmād to help him strangle himself, but when his friend fails, Awkhā commits suicide by throwing himself in a well.

The third person, in this tragic love story is Princess Tīnnīrī. She loves Awdād for his songs and his heart, and at the same time loves Awkha for his pride and his intellect. She is bright and pretty and has learned many of the lessons of life from her nanny, Aya. Tīnnīrī is happy when Awdād scales the mountain; however she learns of Awkhā's death at the same time that she learns that Awdād will not descend the mountain. Despairingly, the princess throws herself in a well. As for the leader Adah, he spends most of his life roaming the desert, but he is unable to know it:

“The desert dweller spends his entire life looking for it, even though it's within his grasp. This is the desert world of which he never recognizes a beginning or an end, neither in his childhood, nor after spending tens of years wandering in it!” *al-Majūs*, vol 2, p. 11.

Through the plot, we come to know Adah's love for his grandmother, to whom he used to run when he fought with his mother. We see the grandmother relating exciting stories about the giants and their fear of jinn and ghosts. She is always kind to him and allows him to stay with her. She tells him many legends about the cities of the jinn and how wormwood is medicine against them.

The woman plays the role of a tutor. Through the tales and myths that she tells, she bestows knowledge, a chain linking the past to the present. The grandmother spells out to her grandson the stories of the past to inform him and makes him learn the lessons and advices that will benefit him.

Adah is an ascetic who usually fasts and stays far from people:

"Adah wandered in al-Ḥamada, alone, mixing with no one but the camels, the jinn, and the beast of the desert. He would fast for weeks, breaking his fast with desert greens and the fruits of wild trees." *al-Majūs*, vol 1, p.68

He falls in love many times, but every time he fails to marry his beloved. Even when he marries a suitable girl, he leaves her! In fact, he abandons women and prefers to live alone for the rest of his life. However, being one of the few people who survived after the

decimation of the tribe, Adah is obliged to get married, so that he can establish new family, a new tribe.

Al-Darwīsh's parents died when he was young and he was raised by a black woman. The people believe that he is the offspring of the Almoravids. However, the only thing he cared about was that he was half human and half wolf, a state that goes back to his grandfather who had been raised with the wolves after being lost as a small child in the desert. A she-wolf took pity on him and nursed him. He learned the language of the beasts: he laughed and howled to show hunger and whimpered to show he was full. He eventually fell in love with a beautiful woman and left his wolf tribe to go to live with people. When his mother felt that he was going to leave her, she told him that he would live torn between man and beast. When al-Darwīsh feels that he can love a woman, as did his grandfather, he tries to commit suicide, but he is rescued, treated and traveled with a caravan to the leader's house.

The author tries through the personality of al-Darwīsh to merge the human being and the animal into one being. While man is the teacher who attempts to understand the animal's language, the animal here is not only a teacher but also man's parents. How he learned the

animal language concerning hunger and satisfaction unless he turned to be a member of such herd.

Al-Darwīsh, has a kind sympathetic heart with the different creatures in the desert. The novel depicts the extent of al-Darwīsh's love and sympathy for the acacia tree:

"He went around to all the houses and gathered whatever linen and leftover scraps of material he could. Then he went to his wādī, and soon the shepherds came back with a tale. They said that he had dressed all the trees. He had made them clothes to protect them from the heat of the sun and the hot summer wind and against the evil of the cold coastal wind in the winter." *al-Majūs*, vol.1, pp. 180-181

The novel also describes his wanderings among animals and birds. He befriends Awdād for his love to live in the wilderness with animals, far from humans. Out of his love for animals, he prohibits himself from hunting rabbits and eating meat. This character reminds the reader of other previously mentioned characters who have great sympathy with animals. Of these characters are 'Assāf al Fahd who would hunt birds or animals only out of necessity, and Assūf who became a vegetarian after his dramatic experience with the waddan. This similarity leads us to realize that al-Darwīsh is a character which embodies the old values and traditions of preserving the desert environment.

When the death of the soothsayer Timiṭ is known, whom al-Darwīsh is accused of murdering, in order to rescue his life, the Nadhīr finds himself obliged to give his testimony against the real murderer; even though, this testimony results in deflating any hope of regaining his eye sight, which he had lost 40 years ago. Through this episode we learn about the life of the blind Nadhīr and live his pain and sadness. We see the severity of the judge in dealing with al-Darwīsh and his refusal to listen to the Nadhīr (harbinger), who begs him to wait for forty days so that the proof of al-Darwīsh's innocence may be given. Instead, al-Darwīsh is judged before the people and sentenced to be beheaded.

Anāy , who came to wādī Azjar with his niece Tīnnīrī, was permitted a part of the wādī, the city he begins to build starts to encompass the whole wādī! Anāy's trade experience, helps the simple wādī to be transformed into a growing city in the heart of the desert, becoming a small Tīmbaktū, which later encompasses the whole wādī. After getting the wādī, Anāy makes two offers to the leader, Adah, in order to satisfy him. The first is to keep the western gate of the wall open all day and to close it at night. The second is that any family of the tribe is welcome to pass through at any time and should be treated as

a resident of the city. Anāy also agrees to pay a fee for using the well and the land.

As seen above Anāy is a man who dreams of paradise in the desert. He builds new Tīmbaktū, the beautiful city, in which life flourishes as merchants use it as a stop over the hard roads of the desert. However, he gains the enmity of many creatures, specifically those who did not like the changes he made in wādī Azjar. The destruction of the new city occurs at the hands of some of those enemies, the Jinn, the black Africans, and the Jackals. Moreover, the soothsayer, Aydakrān, tells them that Anāy's weakness point is ropes. Although Anāy tries to fight against the ropes with which they tied him up, they overcome and kill him. Anāy, the sulṭān, then, falls somewhere in between good and evil. Though he combines love for money with asceticism; he is a wise man who knows a lot but says very little.

We also get to know Tāmaghārt, Awdād's mother, who is his teacher, and read her words on extinct animals and the meanings of symbols and words. She takes Awdād to see the desert and the caves, and relates to him stories about animals and man that are recorded on the walls of the cave. In order to bring him into the plains and keep him away from the mountain, she marries him to his cousin Tāfāwt. This

marital relationship lasts only for three days, as Awdād leaves his wife, heading for the mountain. Tāfāwt's character lasts from the beginning through the end of the novel, when life begins again after the tribe is decimated. Its real importance is that she is the one who marries Adah at the end of the novel, forming a seed for a new tribe.

The soothsayer Aydakrān, comes from Tīmbaktū, but his forefathers immigrated to Kanū after it became the gold capital. The narrator said that his grandfather did not leave Tīmbaktū willingly, but was expelled by Khatāmān. Hence the spirit of the grandfather dwells in his grandson, who bears hatred for Anāy and later causes his death as we pointed out before. Aydakrān chases Anāy to Tīmbaktū from Ayr looking for the princess Tīnnīrī to be a sacrifice for the god Amanāy, even though he loves her. He goes crazy at the end of the novel upon seeing the princess as skin and bones in the bottom of the well after she was the beauty of the wādī.

The novel also includes much talk about black Africans. They are said to be more evil than the jinn, rivaling the Jackals (known for their craftiness) in slaughtering, brigandry, and in camel rustling. The worst thing done by them was poisoning the water well, leading to the death of the shepherd and livestock. The novel also mentions some of the

most important wells in the desert, including the Well of al-ʿaṭshān, and we read of legends and desert traditions that sanctify water, lending it more importance than a gold treasure.

The novel ends tragically, with most of the characters coming to their end in the battle that does away with the city and the tribe:

“As for the tribe, it received a lesser punishment, despite the men’s ferocious fighting during the invasion. According to those lovers of the desert, the oasis of the Majus was destroyed because of the jinn who ruled over it. But the wise men say that there is a secret in the invasion, just as in any legend, a secret that remains for future generations to search for its convincing explanation.” *al-Majūs*, vol 2, p. 403

Nevertheless, the narrator leaves a sliver of hope for the renewal of life through the marriage of the leader and Tāfāwt, Awdād’s ex-wife. Thus the tribe will continue on through this union. The reader cannot understand the events in a profound way without pondering the symbols, legends, for the different unfamiliar terrain contained therein.

The events of the novel in general mirror the dichotomy between the ancient and the modern, or in other words between the materialistic and the moral aspects by presenting a society divided into two groups. One searches for gold, sacrificing everything in order to obtain it. It believes that gold is the only thing able to build cities. The other group

is not interested in gold, realizing that water is much more precious than gold! Despite the differences between the two parties, there is one force with which they both must reckon, namely, the southern winds, which is usually catastrophic; it burns trees and grass, it causes the extinction of the herds, the spread of famine, and the burying of wells. It becomes evident that no matter how strong and great man may be, in the end, he will need nothing but a trivial thing. That is a shroud, just like the one found by the leader and al-Darwīsh in sul an Anāy's box.

The novel also depicts many traditions, beliefs and ways of living of the desert dwellers. Among many other things we see, for example, that the appropriate introduction to any topic is a discourse on the weather. We realize that the desert dweller must be patient; we learn that sudden death in the desert is not only caused by snakes and scorpions, but also by a blow from an evil spirit, and that the winds bring news and events to the desert dweller, as it is difficult for one to live in the desert and not know the news of the other tribes. We also see the wisdom and the shrewdness of the ancestors in their search for what preserves life and not for gold! Under such circumstances, desert is a living being with all that it embraces of creatures and beings.

Just as the well-informed narrator is dominant in Munif's novels, so to he governs the sequence of events in al-Kūnī's novels. Both Munīf and al- Kūnī choose the omniscient narrator to express their ideas and dreams. Such a narrator is aware of the past and coming occurrences, thereby he might be called "the godlike narrator".

The previously presented interesting events and characters of *Nazīf al-Ḥajar* were narrated in an equally interesting narrative technique. First of all, the author, as mentioned, does not limit himself to the chronological narration of events; rather, he starts the novel near the end of the events with Assūf, in his old age. Then the narrator opens up Assūf's life to us through flashbacks, a technique that provides a condensed portrayal of the events in a short period.

The reader is thus taken to Assūf's childhood in the arms of his parents, when he would run behind the herd, fleeing from the sun in the caves where he saw the drawings, which go back to pre history:

"It was decorated with the most exceptional drawings of prehistoric man in the whole of the great desert." p.8

The novelist's skillful use of flashbacks lends a special distinguishable method of narration to the novel. He does not reveal all the details of the hero's life, but gives short glimpses, filled with

information that clarifies the action at hand. Flashback is also used in this chapter as Assūf remembers his father and what he had taught him: that life does not go right except with patience and subtleness in the face of difficult situations:

“Patience is the secret word in the desert.” and “Strength is in a man’s heart, not in his body,” p. 65

This precious advice is in fact what gives him the necessary strength to hang on to the rock until the waddān comes for his rescue:

“He heard footsteps above his head, was it a delusion of death? The dying man sees what others do not, and hears what others do not. Slow steps, cautious and hesitant, even if they were a delusion, they planted hope in his heart. He closed and opened his eyes several times before he was able to concentrate . . . He saw features. My God! It was . . . the waddān.” pp. 69-70

The author also uses the technique of internal monologue. One of the best examples of this utilization is presented in the chapter in which Assūf spent the entire night hanging on the rock until he was eventually rescued by the waddān.

In this night Assūf experiences the state of despair as he is closer to death than he is to life. He spends these terrible hours contemplating about his previous life and thinking of what might happen to his mother after his death: he expresses his fear for her from the wolves. Out of

desperation, he attempts to conjure jinn to help him, but to no avail. The expected death of his mother and his inability to see the desert again are the real reasons for Assūf's grief and anxiety in this night.

"The grip of his right hand on the outcrop began to slip. Soon everything would end: the pain, the thirst and the feelings of grief upon the fate of his lonely mother. The never-ending desert would disappear. He would not see a gazelle again, nor the dancing of the mirage on the horizon. How cruel that is! How could he bear the departure of the desert? The worst thing after the torture of his mother was that he wouldn't see the desert ever again..." p.69

The precise description plays an important role in the novel, especially that of the desert heritage, exemplified in the drawings on the cave walls, along with its legends, valleys, and mountains.

The novel portrays many natural landscapes in desert areas that have not yet been touched by the hand of progress or civilization. These are areas unfamiliar to the Arab reader, as if from another world. Al-Kūnī makes us live in a realistic world on one hand, and that of legends and myth, on the other. The author, also focuses on the meat of the story and concentrates on giving precise descriptions of the relevant parts. In addition, the condensed language used in depicting the events gives the work strength and depth which other desert novels can hardly match.

"The narration is characterized by a proliferation, blending realism with history and legends. It takes a mythical tinge describing the human struggle ending with the triumph of the will of life in extremely harsh circumstances in remote times as if it is the beginning of creation"⁴¹

The narrative technique is employed in *al-Majūs* in the same way as in *Nazīf al-Ḥajar*. From the outset, the novelist's ability to convey an exciting and vivid description of every thing in the desert life stands out. The novel (*al-Majūs*) begins with a description of the caravan from the summit of the mountain, in a way that delineates the details of the scene including: people, animals, luggages and even landscapes. The view from the top is peculiar:

"The mares look like rats, and the veiled men, puffed up like peacocks, look like dolls, provoking grief and laughter at the same time." vol. 1, p. 8

Al Kūnī doesn't adopt direct chronological narration of events. Rather, he deftly weaves in details to explain events that were previously obscure, adding the missing pieces of the puzzle in later chapters, thus preserving the reader's interest for suspense in many chapters. As mentioned above, the novel (*al-Majūs*) begins with the caravan of Anāy coming to Wādī Azjar. Then we proceed with the

⁴¹ See I'tidāl Othmān, "Qirā'a Istaṭlā'iyya fil A'māl Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī," *Fusul Magazine*, p. 227

events that take place after the arrival of that caravan, while at the same time, the reader is introduced, starting from chapter six p.75, through flashbacks, to the background of this caravan: where it comes from and why.

The novel also contains precise descriptions of caves, their painted walls, their colors, sizes, and dimensions. It also, is full of poetic images which the reader enjoys in every chapters:

"The tears dried in the eyes of the sky, and the drought reigned over the desert. The highest executioner [the sun] got his chance and beat the earth with fire throughout the seven years. Herds died; famine spread; the tribe dispersed." vol. 2, pp 26-27

The omniscient narrator is utterly familiar with the desert and its various species. He recounts the events and myths representing the heritage of the past as a part of the current incidents taking place in the novel, a matter that reinforces the work and makes it require concentration to be understood. The author implicitly utilized the well-informed narrator, who is the author himself:

"The narrator who presents the events with their innocent truthfulness from the perspective of the group and the novel characters is himself the implicit author who

confronts everything in his novelist world with its opposites and contradictions."⁴²

While the narrator resorts to flashbacks and memories to render old and historic texts in an overlapping way, such narrator is equal to a number of characters through which everything in the desert utters. For instance, the mountain speaks, the paradise bird sings, and the scarab tries to take revenge from the snake.

This work combines many standpoints together with diversified facts along time. In addition, al-Kūnī employs the style of flashbacks in narration in his novels in order to establish and embed the legends and stories in the novels. Likewise, we see the overlapping of events through such distinguished narration, opening the chance to tell various tales and stories in a short time.

In *Nazīf al-Ḥajar* we are introduced to a rich imaginative world where we meet not only speaking animals but also elements of nature, such as mountains and sand that are personified. For example, we know of the eternal struggle between the mountains and the plains that led to the punishment of both. According to Assūf's father:

"The mountainous desert was long ago engaged in an interminable war with the sandy desert. The god of the sky

⁴² See, *op. cit.* p. 229

would descend to earth with the rains, separating the two comrades." p.26

The war ended when the sand crept into the soul of the gazelle, and the mountain occupied that of the waddān. From that point on, the waddan has been possessed by the mountain's soul, and the gazelle has been possessed by the sand.

Among the legends is that of Qābīl Adam's and his gluttony for eating meat. His maternal Aunt gave him to drink gazelle blood to protect him and his family from misfortune which eradicates whoever it pursues as well as those accompanying him.

"His Aunt inherited the responsibility of rearing him. She gave him to drink the blood of gazelle in one of the journeys in al-Ḥamāda following the advice of a jurisprudent." p.91

As in *Nazīf al-Ḥajar*, legends play a prominent role in *al-Majūs*. An example of such legends is that of the sacred scarab, which reveals its secret to the Nadhīr (harbinger), and promises to get his sight back to him if he listens to its tale with the snake; it made a deal with the snake that the latter would give its arms and legs to the scarab, taking its eyes in return. The scarab held up its part of the bargain, but the snake did

not. From that moment on, the snake became the prime enemy of the scarab as it caused the scarab and its progeny to lose their sight.

Legends, like the one mentioned above play an important role in the novel. They are not only used as tales throughout the novel, but the novelist also utilizes them as parts of the structure of the plot. One good example is the legend of the old ancestor father whom the Sulṭān admired and married him to his eldest daughter. The daughter urged her husband into the forbidden garden, angering the Sulṭān who expelled him outside its walls, where he and his progeny were lost. It could be that the author uses the father to symbolize Adam, who was expelled from Paradise after disobeying his Creator's will.

It is apparent that the novelist is able to integrate legends into the novel, using them even to give acceptable explanations to the terrain of the desert. In addition, the novel is imbued with nostalgia for the past and the simple, pleasant life, with its values that do not exist in urban life. The narrator unified all the living beings. Animals advise and sacrifice, the mountains speak and are getting along with jinn, and the humans make an agreement with the jinn and both live in peace. Such unification between the different creatures is crystallized in al-Kūnī's

works. That's to say that humans, jinn, animals, birds, and plants all are one thing in this universe.

The legends in *Nazīf al-Hajar* extends further to include other beings in *al Majūs*. For example al Kūnī depicts a conversation between the mountain and the jinn, in which the mountain sold itself to the jinn in return for protecting their lives against the southern winds:

“... He [the mountain] faced north, crowned by the greatest castle that the desert had ever seen on the top of a mountain. He had barely begun crossing the plains when the king of the jinn blocked his way saying: “We, [the jinn] too, decided to settle down on the earth and build for our scattered numbers a homeland. We’re tired of wandering around in the open spaces and we’ve suffered from the oppression of the accursed humans Will you sell us yourself, and in return we will protect you from the wind and the sand?” Idinān [the mountain] thought long and hard about the deal, then he asked: “But is there a power which can stand up to the southern wind?” The king of the jinn replied: Yes, the only power is that of the jinn Idinān the mighty scratched his noble head and asked sarcastically: “What makes you look for a refuge if you do not fear fate?” The wise jinn laughed until he bent over, then he answered, “there is no creature on earth or in heavens who can claim that he has not a weak point..”
vol.1, pp 55-56

Idinān, eventually sells his spirit to the jinn and the winds are forbidden to draw near to him.

As previously mentioned Munīf made a link between the past and the present. The primitive society relies on the storytelling and oral

narration to convey news on life in this environment. Munīf chose al-Jahiz in spelling out his stories in al-Lila al-^ʿjiba, as referred to before, to make it the connection and sign between the old and the modern. At the same time, he employs the book of animals in particular for its suitability to the events in his novel.

Similarly, the link between the past and the present is extended in al-Kūnī's novels more explicitly and profoundly. He combined between several cultures in his novels. In addition to historic, social and Ṣufī aspects.

"... al-Kūnī's texts also display a vision of a highly cultured intellectual, The wide diversifications of the viewpoints to which the quotations resort to have philosophical implications from East and West, from the Arab and international heritage and literature throughout the ages and along the disparity of cultures. The adjacency of these quotations serves the writer's plot and the human knowledge."⁴³

Since among the living beings animals constitute certain importance in the heritage, al-Kūnī gave animals due attention by embodying and personifying them so as to endow them with strength and different vision. His writing on animals augments to our knowledge the different natures of animals. Furthermore, his Ṣufī theme enabled

⁴³See Iʿtidāl ʿUthmān, *op. cit.*, p. 233

the reader to see the unity of the universe in all the creatures, thus realizing that the human being is merely a member among such creatures living in this world as a distinguished unit away from injustice and devastation.

Animals in *Nazīf al-Ḥajar* are no less important than humans. Their importance is clear as they are characters who perform human deeds, such as speaking, sacrificing, and giving advice. Man and animal merge in the character of Assūf's father, then Assūf himself. Even prior to this, the author gives us much information about the nature and character of animals. As a matter of fact, we know a lot about animal's life through Assūf's father. For example, he tells us that every animal has an appropriate place where it lives free from enemy assaults:

"His father said to him as he spoke about the gazelle and the waddān, what does the gazelle say to itself when it sees the enemy of all beings? It says, the plains. What does the waddān say when it is exposed to the same danger? It says, the mountains. The mountain is a trap for the gazelle, as the plains are the trap for the waddān." pp.24-25

His father is simply bursting with love for animals, embodied in his piebald camel, to whom he speaks day and night. When he senses that his son makes light of his feelings for the camel, he asks him:

"Do you think that animals do not understand simply because they cannot speak like you? Animals are more loyal than people." "Assfī's father urges him to take care of his pony: If you don't love it, it won't love you. If you don't understand it, it won't understand you, and it won't save you when you most need it." p.55

His father's love for animals is transferred to Assūf. His father is the friend with whom he shares his worries about the harshness of the desert, and his sadness and fear of human beings. This love is also exchanged between Assūf and animals. Assūf also has a loving relationship with animals. The herd comes to him and contemplates him with loving eyes that speak a thousand languages without a voice. His father used to tell him stories about the loyalty of animals, among them the story of the camel who sacrificed himself to save his owner from his enemies.

As a matter of fact, animals in *Nazīf al-Ḥajar* are capable of performing human deeds, not only do they comment on the events but rather make them happen. In the chapter entitled "The Pact" comes a scene that is one of the most stunning of the entire novel. There, gazelles exhibit refined feelings, transparency, and a sense of sacrifice that one often does not find in man. This is represented in a gazelle giving up its life for the sake of a human. After gazelles have fled the Ḥammāda Desert looking for respite from Qābīl's rifle, a gazelle

remains with its mother around Mount al-Ḥasāwana. When the mother gazelle sees its child's fear, she tells it the story related by her mother about her grandmother: the gazelles had found a family with a small male child that needed water, the great gazelle offered herself as a sacrifice for him, but the mother gazelle jumped up and said she would sacrifice herself rather than the leader, who was the guiding force of the herd. She added that this sacrifice would be the beginning of a pact between humans and gazelles. In this dialogue between the gazelles, we see the gazelle approach its youngster and comfort it:

"My mother approached me and kissed me. She stroked my neck and whispered in my ear; I am doing this for you. A human will never touch you after today. Then she went and gave herself to the broken human, whose face lay in the dirt beneath a ratim tree. I didn't understand what was happening, and I didn't sense the danger until I saw the Knife's gleaming in the man's hand beneath the sun . . . Oh my young one, if you knew the pain that tore my heart at that moment. I felt that a poisoned arrow had pierced my heart. I screamed and attacked the great mother, poking her with my budding antlers. I called her an old witch . . . I complained to the sky about all creatures: man, and gazelle and the great mother, and I asked the heavens to curse them all for the pain they had caused me"pp. 112-113

This warm description of the gazelle feelings transforms the gazelle into a human who speaks and feels. In short, throughout the novel, animals occupy a prominent place.

As mentioned above, Abd al-Rahman Munīf's novels elucidated his sympathy, love and understanding of the feelings of gazelles. For example, in *al-Nihāyāt* 'Assāf explains how the gazelles weep while dying no matter the way of death, so he could not afterwards hunt any gazelle. Munīf's sentiments are strongly expressed in *Mudun al-Malḥ*, when Muḍī al-Jad'ān died and the gazelles mourned him and died in the same day. There is an emotion but it is silent.

Such a relationship between the human being and the animal takes a more positive form in al-Kūnī's work, as he makes such union bloody. The gazelle sacrifices herself to make a relation with man; a relation confirms the unity of man and animal. In the connection between waddān and Assūf's father, and afterwards between Assūf and waddān, al-Kūnī further asserts familiarity and coherence of this universe.

"... that comes from the similarity, link and unity of the human being and animals."⁴⁴

As in *Nazīf al-Ḥajar*, animals play an important part in *al Majūs*. The author portrays them in vivid pictures. The novel presents us with the speech of a she wolf, making it clear that animals think and plan

⁴⁴ See Ferial Ghazoul, *Alif*, 1997, vol. 17

things out like a human being. Its speech with al-Darwīsh summarizes all the corruption and destruction that man has brought on earth in comparison to animals:

“She said harshly and plainly, 'Who has planted evil in our desert, whose beauty the creator has not surpassed: man or wolf? Who exterminated the gazelles and did away with the waddān: man or wolf? Who exhausted the water in wells and ruined the springs: man or wolf? Who has plucked the desert trees up from their roots, burned plants, and destroyed the grass: man or wolf? Who has been so bold as to kill birds who serve a purpose, ravens and cranes and little sparrows: man or wolf? Who has raised his hand to kill his mother and brother and father: man or wolf? And now, who is the beast among us: man or wolf? You flee from the loving tribe looking only for a small meal once a month, so that its members do not die of hunger? You seek refuge with the tribe, which eats when it is not hungry, consumes water without end, destroys without need and killing without reason.’” vol. 1, pp 356-357

This connection is represented also in al-Darwīsh's relation and care for his wolf family; he even leaves the human world to live with animals.

This legendary world in which man, animals and nature have such an integrated, or even unified, existence leads us to the aspect of the unity of existence: the Sufi principle. This symbolic reference to Sufism becomes even clearer in the chapter entitled “al Hawīya”^{*}.

^{*} al-Kūnī hints that al-Hawīyya is introduced as a sufi symbol of purification, al-Hawīyya refers to a lower stage of sufi training according to Imam al-Ghazālī. See al-Kūnī, *Nazīf al-Hajar*, p. 53.

"The novel *Nazīf al-Hajar* seeks like many Sufi's to unify the different religions and creeds by reaching the spiritual root (of religions)"⁴⁶

In this chapter *Assūf* spends the night on the verge of death, hanging on to the rock. During this peculiar night he keeps remembering his father and his contemplations about life. By the end of that night, when he sees his father's picture in the eyes of the *waddān* as it was saving his life, *Assūf* realizes the internal hidden relationship that relates all elements of the universe.

In "*al-Hawiya*" the narrator was able to make this site a symbol for salvation and purgation of human sins through his affliction and pain. In such a place as symbolized by the mountain, *Assūf* spent a period of despair and hope until he was transformed and unified with the *waddān*. That was the moment when a union between the two is revealed. The narrator reflects on the shortness of life and the nearness of death to man.

"Is death easy to that extent? Is It near to that extent to which a flash of fatigue when his fingers slacken so he falls in the abyss? Is life short to that extent? ... It is the strength of heart and patience that helped him endure suffering, for there is a latent force in his heart ... Had it not been for Allah in his heart, he would have fell long time ago in the

⁴⁶ See, Ferial Ghazoul, *op. cit.*, p. 23

abyss of darkness which drags his legs to the bottom." p. 68

He is in a struggle between the earth and the heavens but he triumphs with his ascending to the abyss. In the moment of transformation he sees his father in the eyes of the waddān.

"He saw his father in the eyes of the patient great waddān. He fled to the desert choosing to die lonely in the mountains than to return back to them." p. 70

"The father was dissolved in the waddan, and the waddān dissolved in him. He, the deceased and the great waddān are now one thing. Nothing separates them." p.75

In contrast to the revealing presentation of Sufī concepts, the novelist portrays some practices related to Sufism in the desert. For example, he depicts the captain's acquaintance with Sheikh Jalūlī, a Ṣufī who follows the Qadirīyya path, established by ʿAbd al-Qādir al Jilānī in the twelfth century. The sect is one of the most famous in the desert, but its practitioners are prejudiced. To some extent, the author implies that Sufism in this remote area of the desert has been malpracticed, although many are still influenced by it.

Al Kūnī in *al-Majūs* portrays a vivid picture of a world in which all elements are involved in an interrelated action, in a way which

indicates the unity of existence, the same Sufi principle referred to in *Nazīf al-Ḥajar*. Comments on Sufism and its followers are given through out the novel, accompanying the difficulties that Awdād faces in order to reach the peak of the mountain which symbolizes his arrival to the divine path.

This makes it clear that his journey into the mountain symbolizes that of a Ṣufī, fighting his inner self. The novel indicates that Awdād reaches the edge of life, after which begins the eternity interval that leads him to heavens. His arrival at the peak is the arrival at peacefulness, whereupon he is done with life on earth.

The act of climbing the mountains and the hindrances confronted by Awdād in his journey is the transitional stage before ascending to the upper world where man leaves everything related to the earth. This is typical to what happened in *Nazīf al-Ḥajar* when Assūf grasped at the outcrop, thus was pended between the sky and the earth. Likewise, in *al-Majūs*, Awdād went through several stages to reach the eternal isthmus,

"The isthmus which leads to the heavens. It is now the isthmus in the stubborn edge which is brutal and wild overlooking success and freedom" p. 266.

As the waddān saved Assūf from death, he saved Awdād from descending. Sufi views are interwoven in the two novels.

Al-Kūnī focuses on the divergences of the Sufi sects and how they create innovation while they appeared disguised in the ascetic attire. "Look at al-Tījanī's atheists how they create innovations who offend Sufism and Islam." *Nazīf al-Ḥajar*, p.117. Also indicates the differences between true Sufism and the behavior of those who pretend to be ascetics. They come from the cities, and are:

"... the most dangerous thieves in the history of the desert [they] come disguised in the garb of ascetics, coming from Marrakech, Fez, and Miknas. They wear the rough Sufi robe, which resembles sacks in its coarseness and severity. They gain the trust of people, who give them a tent in which to train young boys, and occasionally girls, the Qur'ān and the fundamentals of religion, without occurring to anyone that these tricksters have come looking for treasure with maps tucked in their belts. vol. 2, pp 72-102

The narrator shows the unity of the inspired and old religions through Assūf, he says,

"He often asked himself about the secret behind the Christian's interest in the old drawings. He found that the Christians go to pilgrimage to Mitkhendosh idols because they embrace the old religion. The Christians stand before the ulterior Giant like the Muslims do before the Hands of Allah. Yet his father said that the grandfather is the ulterior jinn too." p.15.

Going into more details, Assūf's father is described as combining between reading the Qur'an and carrying amulets,

"He moves toward the frightening peaks only after reciting the verses that he memorizes from the Qur'an and saying the talismans of the black magic with the Haūsa language (the language of the Haūsa tribe of North Nīgeriā) and he hangs in his neck the protective amulets made of the snake leather." p. 31

CHAPTER THREE

Conspiration Between

Mumf's and al-Kūf's Natives

CHAPTER THREE

Comparasion Between

Munīf's and al-Kūnī's Novles

This section is a comparison between Abd al-Raḥman Munīf's and Ibrahīm al-Kūnī's works, which have been discussed above, through a review of the differences and similarities of their respective views and depiction of life in the desert.

Both of them are Arabic writers who care for man and his problems. However, each of them expresses his ideas in a different way and in a different context.

As mentioned before, each novelist has his own way in dealing with the desert in his works. Munīf uses the desert as a background through which he can introduce his socio-political views, and also he is concerned about the inhabitants of the villages on the edge of the desert, such as al-Ṭiba, in *al-Nihāyāt* and Ḥarran in *al-Tih*. On the contrary, al-Kūnī's desert is an end in itself; with its dwellers and its landscape; its legendary history and its controversial future.

The desert, however, is the real protagonist in the works of both novelists. The two authors use an omiscient narrator who knows everything about his village and his people, leaving very little to be known through dialogues. Yet, al-Kūnī's narrator tends to use more flashbacks, making his narrative more interesting and vivid.

Both novelists managed to make a link between the past, traditions, and the present stressing on the view that the present is just an extension to the past. It is notable however that while Munīf included only Arabic traditions, social and literary, Al-Kūnī succeeded in including human heritage of several origins, Arabic and Greek for example.

Gazelles, wolves, jin, mountains and valleys, play an important role in al-Kūnī's works, for his interest in animals differs sharply from that of Munīf. It is true that animals in Munīf's works occasionally sacrifice themselves for the sake of a human and are affected by their death, as we saw in *al-Nihāyāt*, when Assāf's dog protects him from the predatory vultures by sacrificing its life. In the same work, the author sets aside a chapter for a discussion of animals. Similarly, in *Mudun al-milh*, mention is made of gazelles and their influence over humans; they feel and experience events, as was the case with the gazelle that grieved over Mufḍi al-Jad^cān when he died. However, animals in al-Kūnī's works are of a different nature. He puts them at the same level as human beings in their understanding and awareness, and their ability to advise and warn, as when the gazelle sacrifices itself for the sake of a human being, as we have seen. Similar to this is the story of the

waddān, its rescue of a human that tried to kill it, and the divine spirit that inhabits it. The novelist's description of the chase between the hero of *Nazīf al-Hajar* and the waddān literally brings the words to life before us. His description also includes a large number of animals in addition to the gazelle and waddān, such as the camel, the wolf, and the jackal. Indeed, he draws a parallel between the fate of man and animal in a number of characters in his novels, the most prominent being Assūf in *Nazīf al-Hajar*, and al-Darwīsh and Awdād in *al-Majūs*.

Inanimate beings occupy a leading place in al-Kūnī's novels. See, as an example, the conversation between the mountain and the jinn, and the thoughts that the novelist put into the mouth of the mountain. Both animals and inanimate beings, in al Kūnī's works are portrayed as elements of a mythical world, in which all beings are parts of a larger whole. Legends in these works are not just tales, they are in fact used to reflect al-Kūnī's profound insight about life. According to this insight, for example, wolves are not necessarily worse than human beings and mountains and valleys might be useful or harmful... etc. This insight manifests the concept of oneness of the universe. This in turn leads us to point out to al Kūnī's interest in Sufism.

Indeed, the ideas of Sufism spread through the novels of al-Kūnī and is exemplified in the author's discussion of the various Sufi brotherhoods, both true and false, and their differences within themselves and with other Islamic sects. The novelist indicates his reaction to practiced Sufism, citing the words of a French author on Sufism in North Africa:

"The Maghrib is where Sufism descended from the lofty throne of philosophy down to the ground of daily life. In these countries, in contrast to the Levant, one cannot distinguish between a wise sheikh and a darwish, an idiot and a true saint, because they all resemble vagabond beggars."p.115-121

As remarked before, Assūf, the hero of *Nazīf al-ḥajar*, is a sufi symbol.

Compared to Munīf's works, al-Kūnī's novels portray a richer and much more sophisticated mythical world. Moreover, the Sufi vision that is constructed in al-Kūnī's works is almost completely absent in Munīf's novels

Both al-Kūnī and Munīf chose symbolic suggestive titles for their novels, giving the reader clues to grasp the ideas and implications revealed in the novels. In *al-Nihāyāt* (Endings), Munīf has chosen this title and made it plural to give the impression of the end of many

things, such as the state of submission that used to spread among people of al Ṭiba. The title increases the reader's sense of the novel's events, which show the extent of the negative attitude of some societies, where people wait for what the days bring while apathetically doing anything until a disaster strikes, and at the same time manifests the need to change such an attitude. Similarly, his choice of *Mudun al-milh* (Cities of Salt) implies that the cities that are established in the novel as a result of oil money are ephemeral and easily destroyed, just as salt can be quickly dissolved.

Al-Kūnī takes the title of *Nazīf al-Ḥajar* (The Bleeding of the Rock) to make the reader see the ugliness of man and his harsh treatment of his brother. We imagine that the rock bleeds, grieving for man, although in this case, the rock does not bleed: it is Assūf's blood that flows over it when he is slaughtered on the rock. The title suggests that the rock feel and sense things, contrary to some people presented in the novel, such as Assūf's murderer, Qābīl Adam. In *al-Majūs*, the author chose this title perhaps to attract the attention of the reader to fire-worship. Yet the intent here is the worship of gold and the forsaking of values and principles in order to obtain it. Despite the

spread of Islam, this doctrine still exists among desert inhabitants who look for gold and riches, particularly city dwellers and merchants.

It is also noteworthy that al-Kūnī refers to places with their real names, something one does not find in Munīf's works as the latter uses symbolic names which are the products of his own imagination. This is perhaps due to the fact that Munīf is interested more in politics and people rather than the desert itself. At the same time he is chronicling a specific period of time, whose main players are still alive today, making it difficult for the author to refer to them directly.

Having a look at the two comparatively long novels, *Mudun al-milḥ* by Munīf and *al-Majūs* by al-Kūnī we find that both of them record many integrated events, filled with details, treating the simple life of the Bedouins and their customs, traditions, and value systems. Both also deal with the disappearance of this world and the appearance of a material world in which the love of riches, money, and gold is born. Nevertheless, the theme is treated differently in the two novels. Munīf in *Mudun al-milḥ* tells the history of life in Wādī al-ʿUūyn, which used to lead a simple life until it was transformed into massive cities after the coming of the Americans and, with them, machines for

drilling oil. With this transformation, the desert becomes only a place in which the events take place.

Al-Kūnī, on the other hand, leads the reader into the depths of the desert, which is for him an end in itself as mentioned before, showing him or her the transformation of Wādī Azjar into a city filled with merchants and caravans. In order to preserve the natural environment, he brings about the defeat of the new city and its destruction, so that life returns as it was before, far from human greed.

Although the two writers give primary importance to the locations of their novels, they proceed in different ways to introduce these locations. Munīf begins *al-Nihāyāt* with a portrayal of the place during drought and the influence it has on people, while he starts off *Mudun al-milḥ* with a description of Wādī al-^cUyūn and then moves on to describe its inhabitants. In short, he begins his novels with general view of the place, and then goes on to introduce his characters, staging the events of the novel in a normal or traditional progression.

Al-Kūnī, on the other hand, starts off *Nazīf al-Ḥajar* near the chronological end of the story with a portrayal of the life of the novel's hero, and through flashbacks and memories we understand the plot. Because it is not chronologically ordered, it maintains the reader's

attention as he or she searches for the missing parts of the story. As for *al-Majūs*, it begins approximately in the middle of the story with the coming of a caravan; the novelist then introduces the spectacle of the caravan as if we were viewing it from the top of the mountain. In other words, the novel adopts two lines of narration; one depends on flashbacks and memories while the other one depicts the events in their normal order starting with the arrival of the caravan to the end of the novel. As the plot proceeds, we learn the reason why the caravan has come and the story of its members, following the sequence of events ensued until the end of the story.

With this difference in the proceeding of events in the works of the two novelists, it is expected that the technique of flashback plays a more important role in al Kūnī's works. Munīf uses flashbacks to introduce some past events to the reader; while al-Kūnī, employs flashback as the main narrative technique to build up the structure of his novels.

The ends of the works of both authors are more or less similar. Munīf's heroes sacrifice their lives for the sake of their beliefs; despite their deaths, their principles remain among the people, urging them to take action, as there is often hope that man can be changed for the

better. The hero in his novels is society as a whole, and there is often a conflict between the poor classes and the rich ones. The novelist sympathizes with the poor, and he motivates them to resist injustice. At the same time, they achieve neither total victory, nor total defeat. As for al-Kūnī's novels, in *Nazīf al-Ḥajar* the hero lives isolated from the developed world, far from human society; as a result, he dies for the sake of the animal that he venerates, sacrificing himself for the principles on which he was raised. In *al-Majūs*, the wādī is decimated, but two characters survive (the leader and Tāfāwt) so that life, too, may continue. The desert is revitalized by characters who venerate it.

The characters in Munīf's novels are abundant, so that the reader may only remember those who leave a clear imprint on the novel. Also the meticulous of details, lends the novel a sluggish pace, which at times becomes boring or repetitive.

Some critics may find this repetitive style of Munīf acceptable⁴⁷ However, repetitiveness sometimes lead the reader into skimming long pages of narrative looking for interesting events. In other words the element of suspense is hardly present in Munīf's narrative.

⁴⁷ See Roger Allen, the Introduction to *Endings*, p. ix

In contrast, al-Kūnī's characters are limited, and the details of the novel portrays their precise characteristics. Each character (whether human, animal, jinn, or inanimate being) has a role which contributes to the novel as a whole and is easily remembered by the reader. *Al-Majūs*, for example, is filled with characters, both main and secondary but they all are well developed by details which are carefully chosen in for this purpose. Al-Kūnī, as pointed out before, presents his characters through flashbacks, memories and glimpses into the future, using the technique of anastrophe (taqdīm wa ta'khīr) and controlling the amount of details he provides, whether to portray a character or an event. As a result, the reader is always surprised when a mystery is solved, in a way that gives the work an element of suspense.

Precise description of natural landscapes, dunes, rivers, and valley's is present in the works of both novelists, but in al-Kūnī's works, it is remarkably richer and more profound.

The events in al-Kūnī's novels are structured by careful weaving of all the elements of the universe into one thread. His novels are divided into chapters, with each given a title that symbolizes its events. Al-Kūnī does not focus on a defined village, but is interested in the general environment of the desert. As the plot proceeds, we realize that,

the context setting is far from civilization and is located in the depths of the desert. He is also able to depict a clear image of areas and landscapes that are in most cases unfamiliar to the reader, and he skillfully combines the elements of the desert: sandy and rocky mountains, dunes, and winds enhancing them with a hidden supernatural power. Al-Kūnī also manages to keep a fast pace to his novels. Even though a new city is established in the desert in *al-Majūs*, bringing along new additions to the society, al-Kūnī is not tempted to be distracted by all these changes and the people they affect; rather, he maintains the main course of action.

Both novelists feel a special longing for nature and a desire to return to simple life, and both believe that man is the cause of the problems of life. In *al-Nihāyāt*, Munīf believes that man is the one that needs to be changed. Similarly, in *al-Majūs*, the wolf, declares that man is the origin of all disasters. In addition, both authors explain their view that modern technology, has not only destroyed the natural environment, but has impinged on human traditions as well. Both authors, then, call for change. However, each of them has his own perception of change. Munīf on the one hand, adopts a political approach, urging man to struggle against injustice, whereas al-Kūnī, on

the other hand, is more profound in calling for the reunion between man and nature.

Both writers tackle the subject of foreign invasion and the changes it brings for the desert inhabitants. In al-Kūnī's works, for example, this is represented in the introduction of cars and rifles that came with the oil company and are used to decimate animals especially the gazell and waddān.

"The Landrovers and machine guns have not yet entered the desert's inner sanctum. The beastly cars came with the entrance of those companies looking for oil and mineral riches; only a few years passed before the invention of that devilish weapon used to invade the Ḥamada Desert and decimate the herds". Nazīf al-ḥajar, p. 96

This same invasion is the main theme of *al-Nihāyāt* and *al-Ṭīh*, part one of *Mudun al-milḥ*, and therefore it is more forceful here as it irrevocably changes the people and the way they live forever. The place that used to be filled with trees and simple life is transformed to one filled with oil rigs drilling for black gold, its trees turned into cement pillars. The change that occurs in people and natural environment is fundamental.

Both Munīf and al-Kūnī create a new world that mixes the traditional with the modern. Munīf points to the difference between

modern medicine, represented in the character of Ṣubḥī al-Maḥmaljī, and traditional medicine, represented by Muḥḍī al-Jad^cān. At the end of *al-Tih*, the latter proves itself more efficient than modern medicine, as the people begin going to Muḥḍī for treatment rather than Dr. al-Maḥmaljī. Al Kūnī points to the difference between the simple life in wādī Azjar and the modern life in wādī Ayr. And how at the end the simple life overcomes the modern one and starts again from the beginning.

In terms of language, Munīf uses simple Arabic, considered easier and more accessible for the reader:

“Sha^clān planted himself in Wādī al- Uyoun, not like the palm trees that had filled the wadi in times gone by, but like one of the iron columns that now stood everywhere.
”*al-Tih*, p. 134

Al-Kūnī's language, on the other hand, is richer, condensed and full of poetic images and eloquent expressions with shadows and connotations.

He describes the sun in the desert as follows:

“The eternal flogger came out of his heavenly shelter and sat on his throne in the heart of the sky. He ordered his soldiers to flog the naked body of the desert with whips of fire, carrying out the rituals of an everlasting punishment,

written by fate on the forehead of the desert 50,000 years ago." *al-Majūs*, vol. 1, 198

In general, his language successfully reflect the harsh, yet mythical environment of the desert.

In conclusion, it is clear from the above that the two novelists have their different approaches in treating the theme of the desert. Munīf, on the one hand, shows his concern about people in the villages on the verge of the desert, such as al Ṭība and Ḥarrān, integrating socio-political implications throughout his works. Al Kūnī on the other hand, deals with the desert as an end in itself. Therefore, through his poetic images and subtle connotations, he is more successfully able to depict the desert as a peculiar world with its distinguished and rich existence.

CONCLUSION

The desert is a rich environment which writers use in their novels. Yet, it is possible to know the desert characteristics only through understanding the details which each author presents, bringing together reality and fantasy.

Both ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Munīf and Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī present a literary view of the desert environment. Through their works the desert is being portrayed as a vividly living creature; however, each novelist expresses his view in a different way, Munīf's desert is the beginning of the desert, at the edge of the plains area, while al-Kūnī dives into the depths of the desert aloof from human civilization. Al-Kūnī's desert is therefore less influenced by modern life than that of Munīf. Moreover, Al-Kūnī is able to engage us with his novelistic desert from the beginning to the end of the novel, as opposed to Munīf, who in general uses the desert as merely a location where the events take place.

Each of the two novelists has invented his own style that enables him to describe the desert and its inhabitants in detail. In the novels of both writers, we sense the author's nostalgia for the bygone days before man invaded the desert with modern technology. Munīf, in *al-Tih*, mourns the disappearance of traditional customs and the way of life that vanished with the arrival of technology. Al-Kūnī shows the reader how

the desert lived in peace before people of the city came and turned it into a trade center. He also uses legends to depict the unity among all beings, whether man, animal, or stone.

The novels of al-Kūnī and Munīf differ in the way they begin and end. Al-Kūnī begins his works close to the end of the story; then, he uses flashbacks to recall past events. Although the novel is filled with mystery from the beginning, the events soon expose the mystery to the reader. Munīf, in contrast, begins his novels with a place or with linear events, with no element of mystery. His novel's structure therefore is more traditional, focussing for the most part on the narration of the events.

We cannot prefer one novelist over another, as each has a high artistic skill. Nevertheless, we see in al-Kūnī's novels a different style, characterized by the use of a mythical structure, which makes us see the world in a fresh way. In this world, all beings are equal, including stones and other inanimate objects. He invites us to this natural environment which we hear and smell from the outset of the novel until the very end.

In conclusion, we can say that according to the importance the desert is given in Munif's works, we, and in fact many critics, consider

him a pioneer in writing desert novels, starting with *al-Nihāyāt*, and going on through *Mudun al-milḥ*. Al-Kūnī, on the other hand, being almost an artistic extension to Munif, has been able to penetrate the desert deeply in all his writings, its landscapes, legends, animals, and inanimate objects. He takes the reader into a rich natural environment whose inhabitants live according to their inherited traditions and customs. As he puts the reader into an unknown world, his novels require more than one reading to enable the reader to hold together the novel's threads which are interwoven to portray a unique world in which animals are bound to birds and man.

Indicating the Sufi atmosphere in al-Kuni's works, Ferial Ghazoul comments on *Nazif al-Hajar* saying:

"Al-Kūnī's novel, then, draws in the reader with its style, structure, and mythic proportions, taking the reader to dangerous heights, much like the waddān itself, where he can take in the view from an unfamiliar perspective. In this world, nature is a temple where all beings live in harmony. In his attempts to control nature, with its gazelles and waddāns, man becomes the accursed devil; however, deliverance comes on the hand of a merciful human who intermingles with this nature and its stray animals, and who sacrifices his blood in an act of martyrdom."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ See Ferial Ghazoul, "The Sufi Novel in the Maghreb: *Nazif al-hajar*," *Alif, Comparative Poetics*, 1997. p. 36 no. 17.

Munif's pioneering efforts has granted him the first prize of the first conference on the Arab novel, held in Cairo in February 1998:

"Expectations wavered between Munif and al-Kuni at the Cairo conference for novelistic creation, debating the type of novel that should be honored. The prize went to Munif, due to his experiments, which were perhaps brought to fruition when al-Kuni began his efforts. Al-Kuni must wait for the coming years"⁴⁹

However, this thesis concludes that Ibrahim al-Kuni, who has devoted all his novels to the desert, exploring its myths, rituals, topography and flora and fauna, has made himself a specialist on the desert novel, through his novels which have followed closely upon one another since the end of the eighties. He has become a distinguished desert novelist who offers the most profound treatment of the desert. Al-Kuni's efforts have given an affirmative answer to the query laid out by Roger Allen:

"Only coming years will decide whether the primary production of al-Kuni, which is as huge as that of Munif, is an indication of the birth of an authentic novelistic voice in the field of Arabic novel, in its continuous search for new ways of expressing change, and diversity"⁵⁰

⁴⁹ See Fatma al-Muhsen, "al-bidāyāt wal nihāyāt fi asī'lit al-riwāya al-ʿarabiyya," *al-Hayyā newspaper*, 1998.

⁵⁰ See Roger Allen, *al-riwāya al-ʿarabiyya*. 1997.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bibliography

1. Primary sources:

Al-Kūnī, Ibrāhīm. (1991). *al-Majūs*. 2 vols. Morocco al-Dār al-Jamāhīrīya lil-Nashr wal-Tawzī' wal-I'lān and Dār al-Afāq al-Jadīda.

_____. (1992). *Nazīf al-Ḥajar*. Beirut: Dār al-Tanwīr lil-Ṭibā'a wal-Nashr.

Munīf, 'Abd al-Raḥman. (1978). *al-Nihāyāt*. (Endings) Beirut: Dar al-Adāb.

_____. (1983). *al-Tīh*. Vol. 1 of *Mudun al-milḥ*. Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabīya lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr.

2. Secondary Sources:

'Abd al-Ghanī, Muṣṭafa. (1993). *al-Khurūj Min al-Tarīkh*. Cairo: General Book Organization.

'Abd al Ḥamīd, Bandar. (1984). *al ṭāḥūna al ṣawdā "*. Damascus: Manshūrāt Iṭḥad al Kuttāb Al'arab.

°Abd al Meguid, Ibrahim. (1997). *al Balda al Ukhara* (The Other Place). Translated by Farouk Abdel Wahab. Cairo. The American University in Cairo Press. ✓

°Abd al-Qādir, Fārūq. (1990). *Awraq Ukhra min al-Ramād wal-Jamr: matbu'āt misrīyya wa °arabīyya 1986-1989*. Cairo: Mu'assasat al-°Uruba lil-Ṭiba'a wal-Nashr.

Abrams, Meyer Howard. (1981). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Abū Ḥamdān, Samīr. (1990). *Dirāsa fil-Riwāya: al-Naṣ al-Marṣūd*. Beirut: al- Mu'assasa al-Jāmi'īyya lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr wal-Tawzī'.

°Alī, Muḥsin Jāssim. (1983). "The Socio-Aesthetics of Contemporary Arabic Fiction: An Introduction." *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 14.

Al-°Alim, Maḥmūd Amīn. (1986). *al-Riwāya al-°arabīyya bayn al-wāqi' wal- idiolojiyya*. Syria: Dar al-Ḥiwar lil-Nashr wal-Tawzī'.

_____. (1994). *Arbaʿūn ʿāman min al-naqd al-taṭbīqī: al-binya wal-dalāla fī al-qissa wal-riwāya al-ʿarabiyya al-muʿaṣira*. Cairo: Dar al-Mustaqbal al-ʿArabī.

Allen, Roger. (1992). "The Mature Arabic Novel Outside Egypt." *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*, 4. Edited by M. M. Badawi. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____. (1997). *al-Riwāya al-ʿArabīyya*. Translated by Ḥaṣa Ibrāhīm al-Munīf. Cairo: al-Majlis al-aʿlā lil-Thaqāfa,

_____. (1995). *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*. Syracuse: New York University Press.

ʿAyyād, Shukrī Mohamed. (1996). *Malḥama Ṣaḥrāwiyya*. Cairo. al-Hilāl Magazine.

_____. (1996). *Al Janna al Ḍāʿiʿa wal Janna al ʿArḍiyya*. Cairo. al Hilāl Magazine.

_____. (1996). *Al ʿishq fil Ṣaḥarāʾ*. Cairo. al Hilāl Magazine.

_____. (1996). *ʿālam al Khafāʾ*. Cairo. al Hilāl Magazine.

Badawī, M. Muṣṭafa. (1993). *A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- _____. (1992). Two Novelists from Iraq: Jabra and Munif: *Journal of Arabic Literature*. XXIII. Oxford.
- Al-[°]Eid, Yumna. (1990). *Taqniyyāt al-sard al-riwa'ī fi daw' al-manhaj al-binyawī*. Beirut: Dār al-Farabī.
- El-[°]Enāny, R. M. (1986). "Cities of Salt: A Literary View, Theme of Oil and Change in the Gulf." *Arabia and the Gulf: From Traditional Society to Modern States: Essays in Honor of M. A. Sha[°]bān's Sixtieth Birthday*. Edited by I. R. Wetton. London: Croom Helm.
- Ghazoul J.Ferial. (1997). The Ṣūfī Novel in the Maghreb: Nazīf al-ḥajar: Al Riwāya al Ṣūfiyya al Tūṭamiyya. Literature and Anthropology in Africa. *Alif, Comparative Poetics*, 17. Cairo. The American University in Cairo Press.
- Ḥamarneh, Walīd. (1992). "Some Narrators and Narrative Modes in the Contemporary Arabic Novel." *The Arab Novel Since 1950: Critical Essays, Interviews, and Bibliography*. Cambridge: Dār al-Mahjar.
- Al-Ḥamīdī, Ahmad Jāsīm. (1987). *al-Baṭal al-malḥamī fi riwāyāt 'Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf*. Damascus: al-Ahalī lil-Ṭibā[°]a wal-Nashr wal-Tawzī[°],

Helsā, Ghālib. (1980). *Zinūg wa baduw wa fallahūn* . Beirut: Dār al masīr lil ṭibaʿa wil nashr.

_____. (1975). *Al Khamāsīn* . Cairo: Dār al thaqāfa al Jadīda.

Ibrāhīm, Gabrā. (1978). *al baḥth ʿan walīd masʿūd*. Beirut: Manshūrāt Dār al Adab.

Kanafānī, Ghassān. (1966). *Mā tabaqqa lakum*. Beirut: Manshūrāt Dar *Deserts* al-Taliʿa.

_____. (1979). *Rigāl fil Shams*, (Men in the Sun).

Translated by Hilary Kilpatrick. Cairo. The American University in Cairo Press.

Al Khalīl, Ibrāhīm. (1980). *Ḥārit al baduw* , 1st ed. Beirut: Dār al Tanwīr lil Ṭibaʿa wal Nashr.

Le Gassick, Trevor. (1992). "The Arabic Novel in English Translation." *The Arab Novel Since 1950: Critical Essays, Interviews, and Bibliography*. Cambridge: Dar al-Mahjar,

Al-Muḥsen, Faṭma. (1998). *al-bidāyāt wal nihāyāt fī asilat al-riwāya al-ʿarabiyya*. Cairo: al-Ḥayyā newspaper.

Musa, Ṣabrī. (1973). *Fasād al-Amkina*. Cairo: Muʿassasat Rūz al-Yūsif. *Deserts*

Al-Mūsawī, Muḥsin Jāsim. (1986). *al-Riwāya al-ʿarabiyya: al-nashʿa wal- taḥawwūl*. Baghdad: Manshūrāt Maktabit al-Taḥrīr.

Al-Nābulṣī, Shakir. (1991). *Midrār al-Ṣaḥarā'*: *Dirāsa fī Adab ʿAbd al-Raḥman Munīf*. Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-ʿArabīyya lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr.

_____. (1992). *Mabāhig al-Ḥurriyya fī al-riwāya al-ʿArabīya*. Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-ʿArabīya lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr wal-Tawzīʿ.

Naṣrallah, Ibrāhīm. (1985). *Barārī al ḥima*. Beirut: Mu'assasit al abḥāth al ʿarabīyya.

Al-Nassāj, Sayyid Ḥāmid. (1980). *Pānūrāmā al-Riwāya al-ʿArabīyya al-Ḥadītha*. Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif.

Nūr al-Dīn, Ṣādiq. (1991). *Mudun al-milḥ: al-Tīh, Ta'āluf al-Ikhtilāf*. Damascus: al-Mawqif al-Adabī.

Qāsem, Sīzā, (1984). *Binā' al riwāya: dirāsa muqārna lithulāthiyyit Najuib Mahfouz*. Cairo: GEBO.

_____. (1986). *Mushkilat al Mākan al fanny. The Potics of place. Alif. Comparative Magazine, 6*. Cairo.

Al-Raʿī, ʿAlī. (1990). *al-Riwāya fil-waṭan al-ʿarabī*. Cairo: Dar al-Mustaqbal al- ʿArabī.

- Al-Sakkūt, Ḥamdī. (2000). *al-Riwāya al-ʿArabīyya al-Ḥadītha: bibliografiyā wa madkhal naqdī*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.
- Ṣāliḥ, Ṣalāḥ. (1996). *al-Riwāya al-ʿarabāyya wal-ṣaḥrāʾ*. Damascus: Manshūrāt Wazārat al-Thaqāfa.
- Sulaymān, Nabīl. *al-Faḍāʾ wal-Zamān fī Mudun al-Milḥ*. Damascus: al-Mawqif al-Adabī, 1992.
- Al-Taʿān, Ṣubḥī. (1995). *ʿĀlam ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Munīf al-Riwaʾī*. Damascus: Dār Kanʿān lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr.
- Al-Taftāzānī, Abu al Wafā al Ghoneimī. *Muḥāḍarāt fil taṣawwf al islamī*. Cairo. Dār al Itihād al ʿArabī lil Ṭibāʿa. 1980.
- Al-Tahawy, Miral. (2000), *Al-Khibaʾ* (The Tent) translated by Anthony Calderbank. Cairo. The American University in Cairo Press.
- Al Ṭukhī, Abdalla. (1978). *Fajr al zaman al qādim*. Cairo: Dār al Thaqāfa al Jadīda.
- ʿUthmān, Iʿtidāl. (1998). Qirāʾa Istaṭlaʿiyya fī Aʿmal Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī. *Majallat al naqd al-adabi, Fusūl: Khusūsiyyat al-riwāya al ʿarabiyya*. 2nd part, 16. no. 4. Cairo.
- Yakhluf, Yehya. (1985). *Nagrān taḥt al ṣifr*. Syria: Dār al Ḥiwār lil Nashr wal Tawzīʿ.

al-Zahrānī, Mu^ʿjab. (1998). Tamthīlāt al Jasad fī namādhj min al riwāya
al ʿarabiyya. *Majallat al naqd al-adabi, Fusūl: Khusūsiyyat al-
riwāya al ʿarabiyya*. 2nd part, 16. no. 4. Cairo,

