

The Image of the Other: Representations of East-West Encounters in Anglo-American and Arabic Novels (1991-2001)

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Abstract

The Second Gulf War (1990-1991) brought about huge transformations in the relationships between the Western and Arab world. The invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and deployment of American-led Western troops in Saudi Arabia brought the Arab world to the top of the Western agenda. The presence of mostly non-Muslim Western troops in Saudi Arabia, which is home to the holy sites of Islamic people, triggered mixed reactions among Arab people and polarised their relationships with the West. These developments left a huge impact on literature and the shaping of the imagery of the Other in fiction.

This thesis began as an attempt to study the impact of the Second Gulf War on the depiction the Image of *the Other*. The research rests on conducting an analysis of how the West-Arab encounters are being perceived in Anglo-American and Arabic fiction (1991-2001). The study considers six fictional works from the Anglo-American world: *Friends, Lovers, Enemies* (1991) by Barbara Victor, *Innocent Blood* (1997) by Christopher Dickey, *I Know Many Songs But I Cannot Sing* (1996) by Brian Kiteley, *Hideous Kinky* (1992) by Esther Freud, *Virgins of Paradise* (1993) by Barbara Wood, and *Falling for the Sheikh* by Carole Grace (2001). The study also focuses on six works from the Arab world: Bahāa Ṭāhir's (*Ḥubb fi-l-manfā*) *Love in Exile* (1995), Ibrāhīm Āḥmad's (*Ṭufl al-CNN*) *The CNN Child* (1996), Yūsuf al-Īlah's (*Ghazal al-dhākirah*) *The Memory Spinning* (2000), Āḥmad Ibrāhīm Al-Faqīh's (*al-Thulāthiya*) *Gardens of the Night* (1995), and Ḥanān al-Shaykh's (*Innahā London Yā 'Azīzī*) *Only in London* (2001) and Bahāa al-Dīn al-Ṭawd's (*al-Ba'ḍūn*) *Those Who Are Far Away*.

These writers have been studied in the belief that they demonstrate the shaping of the East-West encounters. Writers from both cultures place their cultural concerns within a national framework that they constantly negotiate. Nevertheless, the thesis challenge is to pinpoint the complex web of factors that characterised each culture. Hence, this study seeks to contribute in showing how these writers are engaged in the process of reconstructing, adjusting and even transcending the stereotypes of their cultures.

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Transliteration of Arabic Names and Titles

In transliterating Arabic names, books, studies and novels I have decided for simplified form of transliteration used at the Library of Congress, without diacritical marks.

A-Consonants

Arabic	English	Arabic	English
ء	a	ض	ḍ
ب	b	ط	ṭ
ت	t	ظ	ẓ
ث	th	ع	‘
ج	j	غ	Gh
ح	ḥ	ف	F
خ	kh	ق	Q
ر	r	ك	K
ز	z	ل	L
د	d	م	M
ذ	dh	ن	N
س	s	ه	H
ش	sh	و	W
ص	ṣ	ي	Y

B- Vowels

Arabic	English
ا	A
و	U
ي	I

C- Diphthongs

Arabic	English
اي()	Ay
او	Aw

RULES OF APPLICATION

Arabic Letters can be romanized in different ways depending on their context

1.As indicated in the table, consonants و and ي may represent:

waḡʻ	وضع
'iwaḡ	وعض
dalw	دول
yad	دي
ḡiyal	ليح
ṭahy	يھط

2. The long vowels romanized ū, ī, and ā respectively.

ūlá	أولى
ṣūrah	وصرة
dhū	ذو

Introduction

While I was preparing the proposal of this thesis, a number of insightful friends were surprised by my choice of the Second Gulf War (1990-1991) as a determining event for the research. Some of them seemed to consider that the Second Gulf War did not actually result in huge transformations. They also believed they were not on the same level with what happened in Arab countries following their liberation from Western colonial powers when the Second World War ended. Whereas others, who strongly considered the events of 9/11 as a decisive moment in Western-Arab relationships, asked “why do not you select this fateful date as a decisive point in the Western-Arab encounter?” my answer, then and now, is as follows.

The repercussions of both events were reflected on the cultural representations of Western-Arab encounters in literature and fiction, in particular. One of its main characteristics is the representation of the self and the other. The political engagement with the Middle East region following the Second Gulf War has resulted in a significant rise in novels revolving around the Western-Arab encounters and although the perspective of each side is often different in the image they draw, there are a number of links that can be established between them. While it is necessary to shed light on the new aspects that have appeared in the Western representations of the Arab world, it is also equally important to examine Arab representations of the West. It may be fair to say that the fictional works demonstrate the people’s imagination and their cultural orientation.

It is worth noting that the novels selected for analysis in this thesis are not taken as historical accounts of the political events that took place in this period as the relationship of novels with history is subjective, depending on the angle taken by each side and Western and Arab fiction give the same historical event a different interpretation. The representation of the Arab-Israeli conflict is a good example in this respect. Western fiction portrays the armed actions taken by the Palestinians against the Israelis as terrorism, while Arab fiction portrays them as resistance and struggle for freedom from the Israeli occupation.

Another example is the representation of the United States involvement in the Second Gulf War. While Christopher Dickey in his novel *Innocent Blood* describes it as a participation in a noble war for the liberation of Kuwait from Saddam's occupation, Ibrahim Ahmad in *The CNN Child* depicts it as a dirty war staged to monopolise the petroleum reserves of the Gulf Countries and wreak havoc in the Arab world. Thus, the selected novels demonstrate alternative histories that both uncover the political and cultural aspects of each side. The main aspect is to study the symbolism of the political activity and how the past and present have resulted in the shaping of its representation.

The thesis also aims to examine the mechanisms shaping the Western image of the Arabs and the Arab ways of addressing the Western challenges of representation. Moreover, the study highlights how the novels are used to assert the people's cultural identity and the ways of documenting history. Therefore, the analysis is conducted on the representation or the reflection of the political activity rather than the political activity itself. The viewpoints expressed by Western and Arabic writers are determined by a limited number of ideological parameters. In other words, the representation of the Other is an ideologically charged process over which the Western and Arab writers cannot cross boundaries. The researcher examines the selected novels as a source of knowledge, ideology, and power relations. The focus is placed on the discourse of the Western-Arab representation at a crucial era in the history of the two cultures.

In this thesis, the researcher is inspired by the approaches of two scholars: Palestinian-American Edward Said and Chinese Xiaomei Chen, Said's book *Orientalism* was a masterpiece in depicting the Western representation of Orientalism. In Said's opinion, Orientalism was "a way of coming with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience."¹ He views Orientalism as the corporate institution, which deals with the Orient by "making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it...in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."²

Said considers Orientalism a phenomenon constructed by generations of intellectuals, artists, commentators, writers and politicians through conditioning a

wide range of Orientalist assumptions and stereotypes. He believes that representation turns the East-West encounter into “a relationship of power, of domination of varying degrees of a complex hegemony,,, [A] sign of power that is exerted by the West over the Orient rather than a true discourse about the Orient.”³ Said argues that the West employs Orientalism as “a way of defining and locating Europe’s others.... [in order to] confirm the primitive, exotic, and mysterious nature oriental societies.” He adds “the Orient has helped Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.”⁴

Said points out that the West’s self-definition is envisaged by setting itself off against the Orient as a surrogate and even underground self. The dialectical East-West relationship sets the boundaries between the two cultures:

There are Westerners, and there are Orientalists. The former dominate; the latter must be dominated, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasures put at the disposal of one or another Western power...For Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, “us”) and the strange (Orient, the East, “them”).⁵

In this context, Said points out that Orientalism has shaped representations of the Arab world, which helps to rationalise the actions of the West. Hence, fiction turns into an ideological channel that maintains the cultural control of the West.

The second source of inspiration for the researcher is Xiaomi Chen in her book *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China*.⁶ In Chen’s view, the Chinese intelligentsia employs Occidentalism in their ideological engagement with the official political regime in China. Her analysis of various representations of the West in Chinese publications, including media and literature underlines two types of Occidentalist discourse: an official and an anti-official discourse. The official discourse adopted by post-Mao state authorities draws a negative picture of the West. In this perspective, the West appears as a bleak landscape where people are ruthlessly exploited and mercilessly oppressed.

Chen points out that the critics of the Chinese regime who adopt the second type of Occidentalism depict an entirely different picture from the official one: the West is celebrated as a good model of progress for China. Chen considers the second discourse as a counter-discourse of the official discourse. Consequently, Occidentalism becomes a discourse employed by the proponent or the opponents of the Chinese regime to support their political arguments and claims.

There are a few problems with the theoretical assumptions taken by both Said and Chen. To varying degrees, they claim that the shaping of the other takes place in a cultural determinism process. Moreover, Orientalism and Occidentalism are inevitably national repository's from which intellectuals cannot escape in their cultural productions. As Said states in *Orientalism*: "I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism".⁷ The generalisation becomes complicated when one adds Said's conception that Orientalism has nothing to do with the "real Orient" and it is – consciously or not – subservient to imperial interests. In other words, Orientalism does not depict the Orient, but legitimises the imperial order.

Although Chen agrees with Said about the inevitability of the Occidentalist discourse, she does not believe in the lack of correspondence between the reality of the Occident and the statements of Occidentalist discourse. I would argue that experiences collected from fictional works could reveal and highlight key stages and important cultural contributions in the development of imagery discourse. Furthermore, it is futile to be carried away by the generalising statements of determinism and overlook the understanding that can be made out of real experiences and publications. We also have to acknowledge the interplay of people's exchange of ideas and cultural engagement.

While a significant number of studies have been conducted on the representation of West-Arab encounters in Anglo-American and Arabic fiction prior to 1991, the number of studies carried out on post-1991 binaries from the next decades is comparatively very few. This situation has resulted in a shortage of academic and analytical studies that can explain the shaping issues in the key time period before

the 11th September 2001, the 9/11 era. This study is an attempt to highlight the crucial cultural interaction that appeared at such a historical juncture by examining how both sides have become involved in the representation and cultivation of the image of the other.

Chapter One

The Shaping of East-West Encounters in Anglo-American and Arabic Novels

1-1 Overview

In August 1990 the Second Gulf War initiated a new point of contact between the West and the Arab world with the deployment into Saudi Arabia of an American-led military coalition composed of many Western countries, including the traditional colonial powers of the United Kingdom and France.⁸ The mission assigned to the Western countries was intended to protect the regional oil powerhouse Saudi Arabia from invasion by Iraqi ruler Saddam Hussein's army. This mission, which later turned into one of liberating Kuwait from the invading forces, was received with mixed responses in the Arab world.⁹ Generally, the presence of non-Muslim Western troops in a country considered to be the holy place of Islamic people, provoked unprecedented pandemonium within the Arab world, separating it into two camps: pro-Western and anti-Western. For many Westerners, meanwhile, the war highlighted the Arab world as a volatile area and a hotbed of violence. The new political realignments have added new layers to the long-standing cultural encounter between these two worlds.

As a powerful tool of cultural production, fiction has become one of the main podiums for the representation of these new encounters. One major way of representing this is through the depiction of the political approaches to the shared issues. Over the course of ten years (1991-2001), both the Western and Arab worlds have produced many literary works dealing with political themes, despite the fact that their views vary in the perspectives they show. Nevertheless, both share some major themes, such as the indirect involvement of the West in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its direct engagement in the Gulf War. In other words, the texts highlight the history of this dramatic, key period in an outstanding manner. Western and Arab fiction also takes into consideration social and romantic themes, discussing the impact of these dialectical encounters on intellectuals and portraying the idiosyncrasy of each side.

I-2 Conceptual Theory

This thesis is an analysis of how the Western-Arab encounters are perceived in Anglo-American and Arabic fiction (1991-2001). In order to study the discourse of these selected novels, I have no alternative but to draw on a number of theories relating to society, ideology and power. However, the contribution of 'imagology' in portraying the image of other cultures and nations is considerably important. The discipline as an independent human science in studying literary stereotypes of national identities appeared in France and later in Germany throughout the 1950's.¹⁰ It emerged first as a sub-discipline of comparative literature to deal with the ways in which national and culture character/identity of the Self and the Other are perceived in literary texts.¹¹ In their research, the imagologists tried to observe how the image of a nation or an ethnic group is drawn and its shaping factors.

However, imagologists are not concerned with assessing the truth of an image or its accuracy. In other words, they focus on the perception of the image rather than its authenticity. The imagologist also shows interest in the textual background of image shaping. The definition made by Dutch imagologist Joep Leerssen can further illustrate the functions of the imagologist:

In studying national stereotypes and alleged 'national characters' or national reputations, an imagologist is not concerned with question whether that reputation is true, but how it has become recognizable. That interest (not in 'truthfulness' but in 'recognisability') means that images are studied, not as items of information about reality, but as properties of their context. If somewhere we read that the British are individualists, the first question we ask is not: 'is that true?' rather, the questions are all about the (con) text, e.g.; who is saying this? What audience is the author addressing? Why is it important for this author to make this point? What are the political circumstances at the time this text was written? How does the author attempt to convince the reader of the validity of his claim? How does this image of British individualism fit into the text as a whole...?¹²

The above-mentioned imagological approach is used in this thesis. However, some

aspects will be different taking into consideration that the circumstances of the thesis are different. Thus, studying the images of the Arabs in comparison to the Westerners may seem similar to studying the image of the Germans in comparison to the French. But the thesis is a comparative literature study, it has to consider the resemblances and differences between the Arabs and the Westerners and the way they think about each other.

One of the earliest and prominent works that deconstructs the ideologically charged representation of The Other is Edward Said's *Orientalism*. His contribution to pre-colonial and post-colonial fiction is based on the idea that Orientalism is a discipline that is, consciously or subconsciously, subservient to colonial interests. Said believes that "political imperialism governs an entire field of study, imagination and scholarly institutions-in such a way as to make its avoidance and intellectual and historical impossibility".¹³ This pragmatic approach produces ideologically shaped patterns of writings stating that any Western work should come within the boundaries of their dominant discourse. In other words, fiction exposes the hidden workings of Western power, knowledge and ideology.

Said's legacy introduced a large number of post-colonial studies, developed mainly in the United States, Canada, Australia and Britain, primarily to discuss the literary texts of writers from English-speaking countries from the other/periphery about the West/centre. As stipulated by the editors of *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* (1995), these studies look at postcolonial literatures as "a result of interactions between the imperial culture and the complex of indigenous cultural practices."¹⁴

The studies have been expanded to include all literature written during and after Western imperial supremacy and its effect on the cultural representation of the Self and the Other. They also involve works written by Arab writers depicting the West and the Orient's interaction with the West. They show how the Oriental/Arab employs the dominant discourse of the West in determining the cultural boundaries of the Orient and the Occident. The Orientals can therefore create their own histories "in service to forming and establishing a national identity after decolonialisation".¹⁵

Broadly speaking, the study does not seek to find Arab equivalents to the Western

stereotypes, but rather to modulate the Eurocentrism which marks the exchange between the Arab world and the West. Occidentalism is seen as the Arab attitude towards the West and its culture. Although the Occidentalism debate is loaded with issues of colonialism and its past, the researcher does not plan to adhere to the traditional representation depicting the encounter between the coloniser and the colonised. As Homi Bhabha points out any interaction produces a hybrid identity and creates a third space with new possibilities.

The theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualising an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. It is the in-between space that carries the burden of the meaning of culture, and by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves.¹⁶

I rather look at the encounter between the West and the Arab world as a dialectical process that produces a synthesis composed of interwoven elements from the two constituent cultures. The outcome is a new assumed identity that tries to espouse both Western and Arab culture.

The thesis will also include how to address similarities in the selection of political themes as well as the narration that imparts them to the reader. The study looks at fiction as a tool of nationalism in Western countries and the Arab world and at how the representations of political issues in fictional works are informed by the political and historical contexts in which they occur. The individual works are to be read first as great products of the creative and interpretative imagination, and then as part of the relationship between culture and power. The novel is read as a tool to signify the past and how writers have rendered it into cultural knowledge. The novel can also be viewed as a medium to understand the representation of a nation's collective memory of its historical situation and various human conditions.

This study will conduct a detailed examination of two theoretical concepts that have been central to imagology: the formation of the postcolonial identity and Otherness. It tries to explore how the novels in question generate and cultivate the image of the

Other within their historical developments. However, the works selected for analysis will not be considered as records or historical documents of the encounter. The linking of the past and the present made by novels is, rather, examined as a form of knowledge, ideology and power relations.¹⁷ As Mikko Lehtonen (2000) states: “context does not exist before ...the text, neither does it exist outside of [it]”.¹⁸ The thesis follows Edward Said’s contention in *Culture and Imperialism*, in which he argues that narrative is the site in which struggle takes place, where people assert their identity and the existence of their history.¹⁹

The thesis hypothesis is that fiction works as a social act and an important tool of culture and power. It emphasises that the representation of the Other cannot be defined without taking into account the relationship of power in a specific culture. Fiction articulates how both the Western and Arab worlds translate the national identity of the other side. In both Western and Arab culture, history, economic status and political systems constitute the superstructures of power, within which the cultural identities and differences interact in the action of writing.

This thesis also emphasises the approach of Fredrick Jameson and his concept of political unconscious, which rejects the view that a literary work can be written or read in isolation from its political context. Therefore, literary works evoke unconscious symbolic interpretation of events.

We never really confront a text immediately, in all its freshness as a thing-in-itself, rather, a text come before us as the always-read; we apprehend them through sedimented layers of previous interpretation.²⁰

The interpretation of a text is an allegorical “re-writing of the text in terms particular master code”.²¹ Jameson believes that the understanding of texts is conditioned by the framework of concepts inherited from the interpretive traditions of our culture. He envisages history as a single collective narrative that links the past and present and reveals the uninterrupted narrative of the events.²² The present study will deal with the actor (Western/Arab) and the object (Arab/Western) as they have a history not readily seen by the average reader. The thesis tries to articulate the philosophical and ideological aspects of a fictional work and uncover its cultural construction.

1-3 Discourse Analysis

The thesis will follow Van Dijk theory of discourse analysis with a special focus on his interpretation of the context concept. Van Dijk's theory rests on a main assumption:

There is no direct casual or conditional relationship between social characteristics (gender, class, age, roles, group membership, etc) of participant and the way they talk or write. Rather, it is the way participants as speakers (writers) and recipients relatively understand, interpret, construct or represent these social characteristics of social situations that influences their production or understanding of their talk or text.²³

Van Dijk points out when people are engaged in either a conversation or a written discourse; they create mental models, which are constructed to achieve two goals: the conversation or writing itself and the social situation. Creating these models helps people understand what is happening and organise their discourse by knowing their turns when king or writing.

Van Dijk believes the context is subjective and built on the accumulation of social situations. "Contexts are not objectively out there, but the result of personal, subjective understandings of the communicative situation. That is, contexts are personal constructs."²⁴ This renders the discourse relevant to someone or a group, but irrelevant to somebody else or some other group. People engage with certain aspects and situations, building constructs that ultimately direct to inter-subjective communication.²⁵ The agreement of a group on certain communications transforms the subjective aspects into objective ones and mental models:

After experiencing and participating in many thousands of unique communicative situations, language users tend to generalize and normalize such situations, so that also their mental models of such situations are generalized to shared, social representations of such situations. Such social representations will abstract from ad hoc, personal and other specific aspects of communicative situations, and hence reduce

the subjectivity of each context model. It is in this fundamental way that (this aspect of) the social order is reproduced, how the rules of conversations and other interactions are being acquired, and how context models may be coordinated by different participants.²⁶

People's engagement with social context is selective in terms of accepting or showing interest in certain information or aspects. They, therefore, decide on social situations and determine what is relevant or important to them. They also pick up the significant aspects that fit the relevant communications that are made. Van Dijk points out that mental models resulted from this process provides "the missing link between social situation and discourse."²⁷ The development offers a solution to two of the previous major theories: the problem of determinism, which is a major drawback in Said's theory of Orientalism and Chen's approach to Occidentalism. The solution also rules out the exclusive account of context. Furthermore, the context models are related to a great deal of shared social information, such as gender, culture, values, ideological issues and attitudes. The communicative events are shaped by these representations and they, in their turns, bring about changes in our representations.

1-4 Study Definitions

A- The Arab World

The Arab world represents a geographical region that includes 22 countries located in two continents (Asia and Africa) with the Arabic language as the lingua franca. These countries were mainly colonised by European powers, Britain and France at different periods in the 1800's and 1900's, with the exception of Libya, which was occupied by Italy in 1910.²⁸ Historians trace the rise of Arab nationalism back to the second half of the nineteenth century when most of the Arab countries were under Ottoman Rule. However, Pan-Arabism sentiments reached their pinnacle following the Second World War when Arab countries mustered up their efforts to get rid of the traditional colonial powers of Britain and France.²⁹

B-The West

Unlike the Arab world, the West—also known as the Western world and the Occidental world—is a relatively elusive term given that it is hard to define the boundaries or countries that belong to a geographical region.³⁰ However, researchers agree that the West stands for the regions that have been shaped by Christian (Catholic-Protestant) traditions, the Renaissance, and the expansion of overseas colonialism over five centuries from the 1500's to the 1900's.³¹ From a cultural perspective, the term the West means Europe and a number of former European colonies with majority European ancestral populations, such as, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada.³²

1-5 Scope of the Study

Despite the fact that the first part of the thesis title “The Image of the Other,” gives a generic term about the Other, the study will be subject to a variety of limitations. It is restricted to fiction from the Anglosphere, if we use the term coined by Neal Stephenson in his book *The Diamond Age*.³³ Anglosphere refers to the English-speaking world including Great Britain, Ireland, the United States, Canada and Australia, which share both a political and cultural heritage. This literary culture, as a whole, is a collection of initiatives that have been dominated quantitatively, by the publishing houses of London and New York and were necessarily infused with the habits, structures, commonplaces, and common experiences of their Anglo-American cultures.

Alternately, the study will also investigate the same topics in Arabic fictional works. The main focus will be on fictional works written in Arabic; which may or may not have been translated into English. The study will try to locate similar and different themes that have been developed by Arab writers in the respective period of time and the thesis will give the key characteristics shared by Arab novelists in this decade.

The study is restricted to the period of published fiction, from 1991 to 2001. There are several reasons for this' one being practicality. Given the enormous number of

texts available dealing with this field, limiting the research to this selective time frame is necessary. The selected novels should involve a contact and interaction between major Arab and Western characters. The novel should demonstrate an encounter between both a Western and an Arab character provided both play a major role. Thus, non-Arab characters from the Middle East are not included. Translated novels are not considered in the list, even if the writer is an Arab or his novel involves an Arab character. This study argues there is a qualitative difference between Arabic fiction written in Arabic and a fiction conceived and executed in a foreign language by writers of Arab background. A writer's preference of language makes a lot of difference. A novel originally written in English has another agenda, target readers and consciousness of the topical issues developing in the society in question. Consequently, novels, which are originally written by an Arab writer in English, such as, Ahdaf Soueif's *Maps of Love*, are not included.

In the process of selecting English language novels representing the Western-Arab encounters, I relied on the list of novels provided by Reeva S. Simon in her book *Spies and Holy Wars: The Middle East in 20th-Century Crime Fiction*.³⁴ I also considered Suha Sabbagh's study *Sex, Lies and Stereotypes: The Image of Arabs in American Fiction*.³⁵ The latter has integrated the list provided by Reeva Simon with fictional works dealing with social and romance themes. Similarly, I depended on the selection of the Arabic novels representing the Arab-Western encounters on Hamdi Sakkut's book *The Arabic Novel: Bibliography and Critical Introduction 1865-1995*. I also took into consideration novels that deal with the same themes of the counterparts in the second chapters in order to highlight the points of similarities and difference in their treatments of the same encounters. Other novels that involve Western - Arab encounters are included so as to underline the idiosyncrasies of the Arabic novels and literature.

After this lengthy selection process, a few novels are taken into consideration for analysis. The selected novels have been divided into separate categories. It is noteworthy that novels have not been selected for discussion solely because of their style, but also, because each provides some insight into, and a major theme on, how the Western-Arab encounter is treated in modern Anglo-American and Arabic fiction. For instance, *Hideous Kinky* (1995) by Esther Freud shows how Western writers

depict their disillusionment with the Orient, seeing it as a place of spiritual experience and wisdom. Brian Kiteley's novel *I Know Many Songs But I Cannot Sing* (1998) shows the stereotype of an Arab repressive regime and the stifling restrictions imposed over Arab society.

The thesis excludes four types of fiction that deserve study on their own: children's fiction, young adult fiction, science fiction, and graphic fiction. Although each of these may represent the Western - Arab encounter, they address the topic in a unique way and address themselves to a readership with unique expectations. For example, it may be more challenging for researchers to identify the purpose of characters created in a science fiction work and to determine the point of political reference.

The study considers six fictional works from the Anglo-American world: *Friends, Lovers, Enemies* (1991) by Barbara Victor, *Innocent Blood* (1997) by Christopher Dickey, *I Know Many Songs But I Cannot Sing* (1996) by Brian Kiteley, *Hideous Kinky* (1992) by Esther Freud, *Virgins of Paradise* (1993) by Barbara Wood, and *Falling for the Sheikh* by Carole Grace (2001).

The study will also focus on Arabic works including *Bahāa Ṭāhir's* (*Ḥubb fi-l-manfā*) *Love in Exile* (1995), Ibrāhīm Āḥmad's (*Ṭufl al-CNN*) *The CNN Child* (1996), Yūsuf al-Īlah's (*Ghazal al-dhākirah*) *The Memory Spinning* (2000), Āḥmad Ibrāhīm Al-Faqīh's (*al-Thulāthiya*) *Gardens of the Night* (1995), and Ḥanān al-Shaykh's (*Innahā London Yā 'Aīzī*) *Only in London* (2001) and Bahāa al-Dīn al-Ṭawd's (*al-Ba'īdun*) *Those Who Are Far Away*.

The works selected for analysis are deeply influenced by many of the faces of globalisation. They register and reveal the impact of travel and migration on new contact zones of encounter. These works also demonstrate how postcolonial tendencies affect the image of the other and the alternative brought forth by the colonised to reciprocate its coloniser's working.

1-6 Literature Review

A large body of literature has appeared in the last few decades analysing the Western-Arab encounter from various perspectives. However, the number of studies scrutinising the Western discourse into the East are far more than those focusing on how the East constructs the West. The relative imbalance of studies reveals a lack of academic attention on the Non-Western actor. This thesis will hopefully address the lack of academic interest by paying attention to both Arab and Anglo-American discourses and discussing the manners in which each world perceives the Other.

A- The Western Representation of the Arabs

As note above, Western studies dealing with the East attract a great deal of academic interest. Said's book *Orientalism* (1978) is considered a pioneering work in its discussion of Western discourse on the Arab world.³⁶ In this book, Said puts forward the assumption that the Orientalist representation of the East as diametrically different from the West reveals a systematic Western discourse of knowledge bent on conveying a distorted image of the East. The employment of knowledge is carried out in the service of imperial and colonial interests.

Said's approach, influenced by both the Marxist School of Antonio Gramsci and the French philosophical school of Michel Foucault, constitutes the foundations for the incessant debate about Orientalism. Both influential schools share the opinion that knowledge can never be innocent and that it is always involved in acts of power. Therefore, Orientalism always puts the West in the lead and considers it superior to the Orient in a whole series of encounters that involve it with the East.

From Gramsci, Said takes the ideas that Orientalism is a form of cultural hegemony and the interplay between political system and culture. Thus, Orientalism is imposed as the cultural norm and as a universally valid ideology that justifies the social, political and economic status quo as natural, inevitable and beneficial for everyone. In reality, it is a social construct that benefits only the West.³⁷ Gramsci argues that there is a political society and there is a civil society.³⁸ The former includes state and political institutions, for example, the army, police and the government. The latter

involves institutions with voluntary affiliations, for example, schools, families and unions. Gramsci contends the predominant cultural forms locate within the civil society and that the influence of ideas, of institutions, and of other persons works not through dominations but by consent. Moreover, Gramsci identifies the prevalent cultural forms as hegemony.³⁹

Said draws on Foucault's conception of Western discourse as a system of knowledge. Thus, Said does not consider Orientalism as products of personal reflections about the Orient. It is, rather, a communication associated with the discourse of Western knowledge and power:

Orientalism is not only airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment, continued investment made Orientalism as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same-indeed, made truly productive-the statement proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture."⁴⁰

However, Said's originality lies in conducting a large-scale analysis of literary works, autobiographies, travel writings and various documents. The analysis located a line of ideas and a system of values that have appeared in political stands, social reactions and literary phenomena.⁴¹ For Said, the West creates the East as the Other and as a space against which to define Western identity; this is done through drawing a set of comparisons with the East's patterns of power and knowledge.

Said points out that the West uses the East as a pattern of weakness, inaction and inferiority, to reflect its own superior identity.⁴² Furthermore, the West employs discourse to legitimise its supremacy over the East given that the East is shown as completely incapable of ruling itself. Consequently, the East is portrayed as in endless need of Western control and experience in order to establish itself.

Said describes Orientalism as a multi-layered discourse consisting of four major ideas, which he calls "principal dogmas of Orientalism".⁴³ The first is that the two

worlds are entirely different in terms of overall approach and orientation. The Orient is aberrant, irrational and inferior, while the Occident is developed, rational and superior. Moreover, this reduction of the East makes the West stand out as completely different and have the upper hand over other cultures. This juxtaposition creates an environment where the West is conceived as a competent guard and protector.

Said's second major idea is that Orientalism is disposed to use abstractions when it deals with non-Western cultures. Orientalists tend to appropriate the indigenous population of their distinctive features, lumping them together as one large entity and therefore ignoring their huge differences in term of religious and cultural values.⁴⁴ This oversimplification creates a fictional monolithic Orient, which does not correspond with reality. Said thinks that the West resorts to this technique in order to deprive the East of its defining identity. This marginalisation allows the West to impose its ideological conceptions onto the East.

Said presents the third dogma as the Orientalist tendency to characterise the East as timeless and incapable of defining or establishing itself. In contrast, the West is described as "scientifically objective".⁴⁵ Thus, Western vigour and power are contrasted with the stagnation of the East, a condition created as intrinsic to Eastern culture. The Orientalist is acting as writing about the East, whereas the Eastern is always written about. The writing action articulates Western discourse, whereas the East is shaped as the silent Other.

The final dogma is that the Orient is portrayed as a feared and exotic place that must be discovered and controlled.⁴⁶ This contrast is highlighted in scenery depicting Eastern regions as a place where fantasy is mixed with reality in order to suggest this static status, while the West is always portrayed in a realistic way. Therefore, the seemingly mysterious East can only be comprehended in the realistic West. Said believes that the connection between the Orient and the Occident is constructed as a discourse of domination and hegemony, and it "is hegemony...that gives Orientalism...durability and strength".⁴⁷

Edward Said and the Critics of Orientalism

Since its publication in 1978, Said's *Orientalism* has generated a great deal of critical response from specialists and scholars. The critics have hugely attacked Said and rejected his theory. They deem his work as impressionistic and eclectic rather than academic and professional. Their bitter response may be attributed to a perceived denial of their profound scholarship and years of research services in on the Orient. They also criticise Said's book as reducing this discipline of knowledge on the East, saying that he presents a simplistic and essentialist representation of the Other. Said's critics also dispute the outcomes concluded in the book.

For example, Maxime Rodinson and others have explicated that Said's hypothesis linking Orientalism with imperialism cannot always be considered valid given that the relationship between the imperialist coloniser and the Other underwent crucial changes in the twentieth century.⁴⁸ Thus, the disintegration of the German, Russian and Ottoman Empires in the first half of this century and the rise of nationalist powers in Asia and Africa in the second half not only destabilise interplay between imperial powers and colonies, but also undermine the foundations of Said's theory.⁴⁹

J.J Clark observes in his book *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter Between Asian and Western Thought* (1997) that Said's notion of the interplay between Orientalism and imperialism is exaggerated. Clark rather identifies Orientalism as "a counter-movement, a subversive entelechy, albeit not a unified or consciously organized one, which in various ways has often tended to subvert".⁵⁰ He elaborates that Said cannot find a strong ground upon which to base his belief that the current European engagement goes along one line or that Orientalists were only drawing encounters based on their own fantasies about the Orient.

Other Western specialists point out that Said overlooks many of the West's positive contributions and is uneasy with the idea that considered their scholarship to be less than objective. Mircea Eliade articulates some of these objections:

We have indeed pillaged other cultures. Fortunately, however, there have been other Westerners who have deciphered the languages, preserved

the myths, and salvaged certain Masterpieces. There have always been a few Orientalists, a few philosophers, a few poets to safeguard the meaning of certain exotic, extra-European spiritual traditions.⁵¹

Mircea Eliade believes that Orientalism is a noble discipline of knowledge that deserves appreciation instead of denigration directed launched by Said. He adds that Orientalist query was initiated out of love for the East and its philosophical profundity.

Dennis Porter pointed out that in Said's *Orientalism* the West is perceived as a hegemonic unity and a not a heterogeneous discourse. This generalization is erroneous and prevents him from understanding the contradictions that involve its interplay of ideas. The underlying assumption from this discourse also represents the East as the innocent party unable to counter the hegemony of the West. Moreover, Porter adds that Said's approach even excludes any resistance or counter-action within the Western discourse.

Porter argues that the hegemonic unity perceived by Said in Orientalist discourse blinds him to the heterogeneity of such discourse and the possibility that the discourse itself contains ideological contradiction⁵². Malcolm Kerr concurs with Porter, saying that Said's conclusions are inadequate and therefore cannot be generalized as applying to the whole of what he defines as the "Orient."⁵³ He adds that Said's view on Orientalism implies that the West is ideologically uniform.

Thinkers of Eastern origins have also waded into these heated debates; commenting that Said has misrepresented the East. Aijaz Ahmed highlights the point that Said's Orientalism concentrates on the Western discourse, but stops short of investigating the vast differences within the East itself. Therefore, this would be unable to determine the struggle and interaction within the shaping powers of the East. On his part, Ali Behdad criticises the theory embraced by Said, saying the approach of Foucauldian discursive theory by dividing historical particularities is not an apt means by which to adjudge the legacy of Orientalism.

Aijaz Ahmad says that Said's discourse on Orientalism is based on the hypothesis that the East is innocent, not only in its encounter with the West, but also in various aspects of the Orient itself.⁵⁴ Said's discourse on Orientalism demonstrates extensively how the West sees the East as the Other, but it does not show the huge differences and disagreement that continue within the East itself. Said refrains from giving details about the power struggles taking place within the Orient itself, and how these power struggles have produced a mechanism of representation that is not entirely different from that of Orientalism. These power struggles demonstrate how each side in a struggle views the rest as others. Within the Arab world, for example, countries have often engaged in struggles among themselves, and tensions and attempts at domination existing in several countries until today.

While *Orientalism* is a crucial book for understanding the interplay between the East and the West, its debates are devoted exclusively to Western representations of the East. I believe it presents only one side of the argument, which is the Western side, and has a focus on Eurocentrism. The representation of the West in cultural encounters is missing and the reader is unable to recognise the viewpoint of the Other. This imbalance turns the East into a struggle-free area and creates a simplistic Western conception of the East. The reader is in need of knowing how both sides have been engaging in constructing the Other and the shaping of the nationalist and resistance discourse.

Said's book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) is an attempt towards achieving this balanced view.⁵⁵ He investigates the Western representation of the colonies in the Imperial Age and the responses of the native people from the colonies to this imperial power, by considering resistance literature. The writer focuses on the imperial period in order to provide a contrapuntal reading to the present representation of the Other. Said held the assumption that the colonial and the colonised underwent dramatic changes after the independence of the colonies, and yet the legacy of these festering links are still wielding a great influence. Moreover, Said highlights the distinctive role of the novel in delineating these cultural binaries, saying that the novel becomes "a sort of theatre where various political and ideological causes engage one another" (p. xiv).

By exploring the works of Joseph Conrad, Jane Austen, Rudyard Kipling, Albert Camus, and many others, Said consolidates his argument in *Orientalism* by stating that the novel of the 19th and 20th centuries reveals how Western culture intentionally silences the voice of the Other and continues to show images created in the West rather than depicting the reality of the colonised place. Said implies that Western culture is unable to comprehend the culture of the Other, for instance the Islamic and Arab worlds.

In addition, Said provides an insight into the literature of decolonised people, identifying three major themes. The first theme is “the insistence on the right to see the community’s history whole, coherently, integrally, restores the imprisoned nation to itself” (p. 215). The second theme presents the idea that resistance is not only a reaction to imperialism, but also an alternative way of conceiving human history (p. 216). The third theme is “a noticeable pull away from separatist nationalism toward a more integrative view of human community and human liberation” (p. 216). However, Said concentrates on works written in English and French, due to his linguistic limitations, and this does not reflect a whole picture of the Arab world and its representations of the West.

Nevertheless, the book has triggered a number of studies that deal with this phenomenon both in the West and the Arab world. Rasha Al-Disuqi’s thesis entitled *The Muslim Image in Twentieth Century Anglo-American Literature* is one of these studies.⁵⁶ She consolidates Said’s arguments that the West deliberately misrepresents Muslims by creating a distorted image, which does not match reality. The writer points out that the misrepresentation exposes lack of scholarly evidence and an objective assessment of history and politics. However, unlike Said, who accuses Western writers of serving colonial and imperial interests, Al-Disuqi believes that Western writers utilise this misinformation about this part of the world for propaganda purposes. She maintains that Western writers aim to shape public opinion in their world against Muslim countries for the sake of political dominance.

Janice Terry also agrees with Said about the association of Western fiction with political interests in her book *Mistaken Identity: Arab Stereotypes in Popular Writing*. After analysing a number of popular novels and biographies published in the West,

Terry finds out that the image of Arabs is generally negative. Its repetition throughout a wide variety of popular writings has created a distorted reality about Arab people and countries for Westerners. She adds that the unquestionable acceptance of this reality about Arabs is transferred to the mainstream media and other organs of Western public opinion.

Mohammed Sharafuddin, in his book *Islam and Romantic Orientalism: Literary Encounters with the Orient*, traces the figure of the Western-Arab in the literature of late 18th and early 19th centuries, highlighting it as an era of convergence and positive interaction between the West and the Arab world.⁵⁷ By exploring the major literary texts of the Romantic Movement, such as those by Robert Southey, Lord George G. Byron, Thomas Moore and Walter S. Landor, the author defends romantic writers and rules out their involvement in colonial projects. Sharafuddin argues that the representation of the East as a place of mystical lands and exotic havens was made as an alternative cultural reality with its own values and has nothing to do with imperial interests.

Unlike Sharafuddin's work, Naji B. Oueijan's book, *The Progress of an Image: the East in English Literature* (1995), views the encounter between the West and Islam from a different perspective.⁵⁸ After examining the development of the image of the East in English literature from the Anglo-Saxon period to the end of the 19th century, she states that several British writers, especially Byron, misrepresent the image of the Islamic world and disseminate false conceptions about Islamic countries and their culture for political and economic purposes. Oueijan argues that anxieties about religious rivalry and foreign trade were crucial factors in shaping these representations.

Nabil Matar's book, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (1999), takes a new approach to the encounter by exploring Anglo-Islamic social and historical interactions.⁵⁹ He bases his thesis on previously unexamined English writings, such as, prison records, captives' memoirs and government documents along with Arabic chronicles and histories. The author aims to demystify a hidden part of Western life and cross-examine its views with historical and literary production. Matar concludes that Western discourse was bent on ethnocentrism and

ignored the views of the non-Western world. He adds that misinformation exemplified in these documents has stoked fanaticism and consolidates the distorted representation of the East.

Another study is made by Muḥammad al-Da'mī in his book *Orientalism: Western Response to Arab-Islamic History (al-Istishrâq: Al-Istajâbah al-Thaqâfiyah al-Gharbiyah lil-târikh al-'Arabī al-Islâmī)*, which studies the shaping of Orientalism in the West, especially British and American Orientalism.⁶⁰ The author disagrees with Said's view that Orientalism was a political tool in the service of colonial powers. The author also rejects the attitude considering Orientalism a transitory phenomenon, which emerged in the West during the colonial expansion in the 19th and 20th century. He rather sees it as an enduring cultural approach aiming to contain Islam and stop its missionary spread into Europe. However, Al-Da'mī views that the Western response was varying in its levels depending on the political and economic circumstances controlling Western countries. The author emphasises that the interest in the East during the era of the industrial revolution was a fantasy escape and a sphere in which to affirm superiority and domination.

Also relevant is Mohja Kahf's book *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman: from Termagant to Odalisque* (1999), which examines the development of the image of the Muslim woman in Western literature from the medieval period to the mid-19th century.⁶¹ Citing examples from medieval and romantic literature, she observes the changes in the representation of Muslim women from "Termagant", a woman of wanton and menacing sexuality, into "Odalisque", a veiled, secluded and oppressed woman. Kahf associates this change of views towards the Eastern gender with corresponding transformations taking place in Europe and their subsequent impact on the relationships between the West and the East.

B-The Arab Representation of the West

While a significant number of Orientalism-based studies have been conducted on the representation of the Middle East and the politics behind them, there have been far fewer studies conducted on the Arab representation of the Other. This reality does not mean that the Arab world has not engaged in such activities. Part of the problem

rests with the culture of victimisation that has spread across the Middle East, as it has catalysed several projects on the stereotyping of Arabs and Muslims, but has overlooked the other side of the formula, which is the representation of the Arab world to the West. However, a number of Arab researchers have discussed the issue. Their studies can be put into two types: the first deals with public discourse – philosophical, social and literary, the second concentrates on Arab literature.

One of the first writers to theorise the study of the West as a discipline and discourse is Egyptian thinker Ḥasan Ḥanafī in his book (*Muqadimah fī ʿilm al-Istighrâb*) *Introduction to the Science of Occidentalism* (1991).⁶² He shares Said's view that the objective of Orientalism is to control the East. Ḥanafī illustrates his viewpoint by demonstrating the historical development of human thought, highlighting the contribution of various cultures and societies. He draws human thought as an organic growth system in which all communities and races take part. Ḥanafī considers the Western discourse of political hegemony and racial supremacy as a fallacy based on unsubstantiated evidence.

In the second part of the book, the writer stresses the need to establish an objective analytical study of the West; one that analyses its main aspects in order to deconstruct the Eurocentrism and adjust the balance between the East and the West. Ḥanafī believes this research will enable the Arab-Islamic worlds to catch up with Europe and North America in modernity and recover its role in universal history.

Ḥanafī identifies two ways in which to achieve the cultural recovery of the Islamic East. The first includes drawing a new interpretation of Islamic heritage (*Turāth*) in order to reconstruct the historical consciousness and consequently the whole system of traditions. The second can be carried out by conducting objective research on the exegies (*Tafsīr*) of Quran and the prophetic traditions (*Aḥādīth Nabawīyah*). Ḥanafī points out that the Islamic East is in need of understanding and awareness of Quran rather than blind interpretation. Although Ḥanafī tries to lay out the foundation for this specialist study, he does not state the practical approach or the mechanisms to handle the main aspect of the Islamic heritage.

Another book that discusses Occidentalism as a concept is *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies* (2004) by Anglo-Dutch Sinologist Ian Buruma, and Israeli philosopher Avishai Margalit.⁶³ They defined Occidentalism as anti-Western ideology embraced by a number of ultra-radical groups or organisations, such as, Nazism, Japanese nationalism, Marxism and contemporary Islamists. Margalit and Buruma review history from Babylon up to the 9/11 bombing in order to prove that the current violence of radical Islamist movements is a revival of old and irrational animosity towards the West.

[A]nti-Americanism is sometimes the result of support of (...) say, Israel (...) or of whatever goes under the rubric of 'globalisation'. Some people are antagonistic to the United States simply because it is so powerful, (...) or resent the U.S. for helping them, or feeding them, or protecting them, in the way one resents an overbearing father. But whatever the U.S. government does or does not is often beside the point. [This process refers] not to American policies, but to the idea of America itself.⁶⁴

Although the two authors make astute observations about the links between varyingly different non-Western cultures, I agree with Martin Jacques' statement that the themes concluded in this book are "so broad as to make the book impressionistic and polemical rather than analytical and persuasive".⁶⁵

The grounds of the authors are not solid, as they have attempted to cluster irreconcilable ideologies, notably Nazism, Marxism and Islamic radicalism, into one category and the West, capitalism and urbanism into another. In other words, the authors try to select unrelated groups and events to suit their conclusion about Occidentalism and the image of the West in the eyes of others. Jacques accounts for the loosely connected assumptions of the book, saying it "is a product of post-9/11 western hubris and paranoia".⁶⁶ In other words, the book rather seems to be an impulsive response to 9/11 and the acute attitude classifying the world into pro-West and anti-West camps.

Shaobo Xie, literary theory professor at Canadian Calgary University, believes Orientalism and Occidentalism are closely and inexorably connected. However, he

contends that Eastern thinkers have not developed an independent approach to deal with the West and they focus on finding a discourse that counters Orientalism.⁶⁷ Although arguing that Xie's viewpoint is rather overstated, he is, in my view; right to claim that Orientals should bear in mind how to handle the Eurocentric discourse when they develop Orientalism counter-discourse. This reality has resulted in shaping the counter-hegemonic postcolonial research on Eurocentric patterns of knowledge.⁶⁸

The literary scholar, Wang Ning, divides contemporary non-Western Occidentalism into two types. The first has appeared in the Middle Eastern and Arab worlds and is characterised by antagonism towards the Western supremacy and its consideration of America as the epitome of Occidentalism supremacy. These salient features distinguish these types of Occidentalism from the second, which clearly manifests itself in the former colonies of the British Empire. Although decolonization centres on Anglophobia in culture and language, it also views the West in a positive light. For example, in contemporary China many consider Western culture as superior to that of the East.⁶⁹

One can conclude from the discussions above that most theoretical studies of Occidentalism deal with the Orient in general and are not concerned with the Arab world or the Middle East, in particular. However, the second type of Occidentalism discourse does not go into theoretical aspects and engage with the imagery of the West and how these images are shaped in people's mind across history. A major contribution in this field is Nassib Samir El-Husseini's study *The Imagined Occident: The Vision of the Other in Arab political Conscience*.⁷⁰ He provides a profound overview of the images and themes that Muslims and Arabs have developed in their writings about the West through the period from the Crusades up to the modern age. El-Husseini notes that the images have undergone dramatic changes according to the nature of their encounters with the West. Strictly speaking, the images of the West shifted from a "mythological West" to an "idealised West" and then to a "rejected West".

Raghad Al-Hussamy, in her thesis entitled *Image of Self and Other: The Journey to Europe in Modern Arabic Prose Narratives*, agrees with the conclusions reached by

El-Husseini.⁷¹ However, she concentrates on the development of representations of the West in 19th and the 20th century Arabic prose narratives, with specific focus on the journey to Europe texts. Al-Hussamy identifies three major images that appear in these texts. First, the Arabs tend to draw the West as a utopian place and idealise its people during the pre-colonial era. Second, the Arabs renounced their utopian vision of the West when they fell under colonial powers and instead idealised the self in a bid to resist Western supremacy. In the postcolonial era, the image varies from idealisation to rejecting the West in a dialectical manner.

One of the early works that examines the engagement of the Arab novel with the representation of the West is George Ṭarābīshī's book *East and West, Masculinity and Femininity: A Study on the Crisis of Sexuality and Culture in the Arab Novel*.⁷² Ṭarābīshī highlights Arab writers' gendered treatment of themes of cultural encounters between the West and the Arab world. Drawing on Fanon's approach of sexual violence between the coloniser and the colonised which he set out in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*; Ṭarābīshī analysed three novels engaged with East-West encounters, namely, Tawfiq al-Hakīm's *Bird from The East*, Suḥayl Īdrīs' *The Latin Quarter* and Ṭayib Ṣaliḥ's *Season of Migration to the North*. He concludes that these novels demonstrate gendered relationships that boast of Eastern masculine dominance to make up for the unequal power relations between the two cultures.⁷³

Another study that deals with the early Arabic novel is *The Image of the West in the Arabic Novel (Ṣūrat al-gharb fi-l-ṭwāyah al-'arabīyah)* by Salīm al-Ma'ūsh. In his introductory chapter, the author highlights the key stages of interaction between the West and the East, illustrating the development of the West image in Arabic writings. Al-Ma'ūsh also points out the major aspects of this image in the Arabic novel from 1840 to 1914, supporting his discussion with examples from writings of this time, such as, Rifā'a al-Ṭahtāwī's book *Takhliṣ al-Ibāz fi tālkhīṣ Bārīz* and 'Ali Mubārak's book *'Alam al-din*. After analysing selected novels from this time, including Muḥammad Haykal's novel *Zaynab* and Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān's work *Broken Wings*, the author demonstrates how the Arabic novel of this period drew the East and the West as two different worlds with their own distinctive identity and system of values. al-Ma'ūsh concludes that the Arabic novel stressed the need for the continuity of

interaction between the two worlds and how the East can benefit from the West without affecting its cultural identity. The book ends with a useful bibliography of the novels that chronicled the Arab-West encounter in the early Arab fiction.

Nabil Sulayman's book, *The Self-Conscious and the World: Studies in the Arab Novel*, studies the representation of cultural and political Arab-Western encounters in the Arabic novel following 1967 and throughout the 1970s.⁷⁴ Sulayman marks the appearance of trends in Arab novels that deal with Arab-Western encounters, such as, the emergence of the Israeli character a *de facto* Other. The author also points out that Arab writers moved the location of the encounters from European countries, for example, UK and France, into Arab countries and locations. Sulayman adds that this crucial period saw the emergence of female Arab writers who represent the Arab-Western juxtaposition between a female Arab character and a Western male.

Another study is Issa T. Boullata's book *Encounter Between East and West-A Theme in Contemporary Novel*.⁷⁵ The author sheds light on the development of the Western character in the colonial and early postcolonial Arabic novel. After analysing Yahya Haqqi's novel *The Saint's Lamp (Qandīl Umm Hashim)*, Suḥayl Idrīs' novel *The Latin Quarter (Al-Ḥayy al-Lāṭīnī)* and Ṭayib Ṣālīḥ's novel *Season of Migration to the North (Mawsim al-Hijra ila al-Shimāl)*, Boullata points out that Arab writers in this period shifted from celebrating the positive aspects in Western culture into criticising its system of values. The author also shows how the Arabic novel becomes an arena of a cultural confrontation between the Arab world and the West. Boullata concludes that the shift had paved the way for postcolonial Arabic novels, which are bent on emphasizing the increasing gap between Arab countries and Western colonisers.

The Postcolonial Arab Novel: Debating Ambivalence by Muḥsin Jāsim al-Mūsawī discusses the shaping of the Arab novel from the late 19th century to the present, shedding light on the impact of the socio-cultural scene on its narrative.⁷⁶ The author believes their themes and narrative are greatly influenced by the political changes that engulfed the region. In this way, the Arabic novel manifests a number of postcolonial themes, such as identity formation, shaping of the Other, and

nationalism. Moreover, Al-Mūsawī points out that the Arabic novel consolidated the self by outlining

Despite the profound analysis of Al-Mūsawī's book, one can observe some limitations. The book does not address the problem of language for writers from the Maghreb region, lumping those writing in Arabic and in French together, without illustrating the ideological implications for choosing the colonial language, French, or Arabic, the native language of the colonised, when writing. Secondly, he exaggerates the role and the impact of the Arabian Nights over the modern Arab novel by linking the birth of the modern Arab novel to the growing interest in this historical book.

Likewise, Rasheed El-Enany, in his book *Arab Representation of the Occident: East-West Encounters in Arab Fiction*, agrees with Al-Mūsawī on the shaping factors of Arabic novels.⁷⁷ El-Enany argues that Arab representations of the West are not always anti-Western. He explained that Arab writers' opinions about the Other are a direct result of the society they grew up in. He categorises Arab writers, in terms of their attitudes towards the West, into three groups: the relatively pro-Western, pro-Western, very anti-Western, and the third group which accepts the scientific and materialistic advances of the West, but rejects its morality.

El-Enany comes up with this assessment after giving a historical account of the development in the representation of the Western image, identifying four stages. The first stage of these images, covering the pre-colonial era the pre-colonial era, deemed the West as a source of enchantment and admiration. The second stage crystallised in the colonial era and depicted the West as an object of confrontation and antagonism. The third phase is marked by pride encounters with the West as a result of gaining independence from colonial powers. The final stage involves humbled encounters; precipitated after the 1967 War defeat.

The conclusion of El-Enany's study states: "Arab intellectuals, no matter in which period, have never demonized the European Other or regarded him in sub-human terms." This is not really substantiated if we consider the literature written following

the Second Gulf War (1990-1991) and that written after the 9/11 bombing. The scale of antagonism and rejection towards the West increased and a number of novels discussed in this study cover this. However, El-Enany has overlooked key authors from Iraq, the Palestinian territories, and the Maghreb region, and this can partly account for the misjudgement. Moreover, the book seems to stop at 1990, and only a few works after this date are discussed. As a result, El-Enany underestimates the impact of this key period on the Arab-West encounters and their reflection in fictional works.

Another issue in this book is the selection of Arab writers writing in French and English. The author never clearly explains why he provides a reading from UK-based Arab writer, Ahdaf Soueif, who is mainly known as a female writer in English and writes with a central argument developed around women. The same goes for Leila Aboulela who also writes in English. One can also raise the question of why he did not analyse Arab writers writing in French from the Maghreb region, especially in terms of the ideological implication behind selecting French or Arabic to shape in the novels that highlighted the Arab-Western encounter. Nevertheless, the book gives the reader illuminating perspectives on the representation of the West in Arab novels. With regard to the present thesis, it will be of interest to see to what extent El-Enany's postulation about the Arab novels in the 1990s corresponds with our analysis of its major fictional texts.

Noureddine Afaye, in his book *Occident Imagined: the Image of the Other in the Arab-Muslim Mind*, investigates the place of the West in Arab-Muslim thought.⁷⁸ His approach is based on the fulcrum that Arab-Muslim thought on the West can be divided into two major modes of thinking: Islamic and liberal. The Islamic thinking is based on dealing with the West from an Islamic perspective, while the liberal thinking adopts a secular approach. However, the approach to the discussion seems to be loose, especially as he does not limit himself to a certain historical period or School of thought. For example, he embraces general thought, but a large part of his discussion revolves around the writings of Muḥammad 'Abduh and Ṭaha Ḥusayn.

Unlike Afaye, Najm 'Abdāllah Kāzim sheds light on the development of image of America and American people from 1976 to 1989 in his book *Contemporary Arabic novel and the Other: Literary Comparative Studies*.⁷⁹ By investigating the way American characters are depicted and projected in a number of fictional works, the author concludes that the image has become overwhelmingly negative. He ascribes this negative image to the American pro-Israel stand on the Arab-Israeli conflict and the approach of U.S governments toward major Arab issues.⁸⁰ Kāzim concludes that the American character has become a major player in the Arabic novels portraying Arab-Western encounters.

Mansour Dhabab in his thesis *Representation of the West in Early Arabic Novels (1900-1915)* examines the image of the West in a selection of Arabic novels, which appeared in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria between 1900 and 1915.⁸¹ He selects this time period for research because he believes it marked a turning point for the shaping of the West image in the fictional works of Arab intellectuals. Dhabab highlights that Arab writers started during this period to speak about how to absorb the Western advanced aspect yet preserve Eastern identity. This trend replaced the total immersion in the West and fascination with its political, social and cultural systems which characterised Arab writings about the West in the 19th century. He emphasizes that Arab writers were also engaged with women rights by comparing the relatively good condition of Western women with the poor condition of the Arab women.

A valuable study in the field of Arab Occidentalism is Robert Woltering's book *Occidentalism in the Arab World: Ideology and Images of the West in the Egyptian Media*.⁸² The author investigates how Egyptian intellectuals, after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, have shaped their image of the West. Drawing on Van Diik' theory of context analysis, Woltering conducts an analysis of the information selected from non-fiction publications, such as journals and newspapers. He also highlights the historical developments of image shaping for Arab and Egyptian intellectuals from different ideological bearings, such as leftists, Pan-Arabists and Islamists. Woltering finds out there are two types of viewpoints shaped by Arab intellectuals on the West: secular and Islamist. While secular intellectuals tend to portray the Arab-Western

encounter in terms of a struggle of economic systems following the Cold War, Islamist intellectuals see the encounter as a clash of civilisations and values.

C-The Need for the Study

The above-mentioned studies have dealt with the subject of Western-Arab encounters in Anglo-American and Arabic fiction in various historical periods, but they do not deal with the formation of this encounter through the 1990s. Some works analyse the representation of Western-Arab encounters during the 1990s but they investigate unilaterally without giving comprehensive consideration of fictional representation in both worlds. However, the books and theses indicate that dramatic events were shaping and exerting influence on Western-Arab encounters. Consequently, this study has gone into some detail about the 1990s, which has conditioned the representation of Western-Arab encounters in fiction while explaining the interplay of power and knowledge as well as the formation of identity and the Other.

Unlike other studies, which concentrate on well-known writers, this study selects major and minor writers of significance to both English and Arabic readers. The selected works have been examined against their political, social and cultural backdrop in order to underpin their major themes and the frame of mind during the 1990s. The study aims to highlight the significance of the novels that have appeared in this period and draw the attention of researchers to undertake further studies on its main aspects. It also introduces the reader to a rich vein of information and study on the literature of the West and Arab worlds.

The prime objective of the study has been to provide a detailed case study of the intersection between literary texts, politics and the construction of the identity. My main aim has been to show how culture has mattered to specific people at particular moments. To highlight the centrality of representation is not to suggest that cultural products stand for or express their realities. Both the Western and Arab worlds examined in the thesis have their own logic and languages: they should not be reduced to reflections of each other or of some larger visible structure. Yet in their uncoordinated conjunctures, they have the knitted-together power of a discourse.

Thus, if culture is central to the world we regard as political and social, it is not only because it is part of history, but also because the field of culture is history-in-the-making.

1-7 Historical Background

A – The Arabs in the History of the Western Fiction

The encounter between the East and the West has formed a significant theme since the birth of the Western novel in the 18th century. In these fictional works, the East was depicted as a place of strange romantic adventures, weird creatures, Gothic experiences and significant occurrences. The Oriental tale became a dominant genre that dealt with the Arabs and Muslims in the eighteenth century.⁸³ Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* (1757), Frances Sheridan's *History of Nourajahad* (1767) and William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786) are all included in this category. This genre is considered the bedrock of the romantic spirit in the late 18th century and early 19th century.

The treatment of the East in these novels tends to show that it is totally different and inferior to the West. In *Vathek*, for example, the East is represented as a savage place, where rulers are oppressors who control their people by superstitions and morality consequently disappears. The character of Vathek is supposed to be based on a true historical figure of the Caliph Al-Wāthiq Bi'llah; thus it pretends to show a faithful description of the East. This romantic and highly imaginative view was further continued in subsequent Oriental tales, which gained a wide reading public, especially because they were flavoured by some of the Gothic elements that enhanced their exotic quality. The main features of these tales include:

[A] set of extended conventions, with the key to these being excess. There is an excess of power concentrated in the hands of a tyrannical ruler...owning an unlimited amount of wealth...The Oriental Gothic text must also contain a harem and the connotations of excessive sex...If the Gothic sometimes lacks realism, then in the Oriental Gothic realism should not be anticipated at all - instead the irrational and supernatural should be

expected.⁸⁴Westerners sought romance and magic in the East in a way that showed the effect of *The Arabian Nights* on their mentality. However, the attack on Islam as a lascivious religion persisted and was accompanied by an image of “romantic eroticism”. The image of harems and concubines was perceived as a truth beyond doubt.⁸⁵

Such trends were clearly manifested in Sir Walter Scott’s novel *The Talisman* (1824), which dealt with the benevolent character of Saladin. Scott emphasises the noble conduct of Muslims and their humane treatment of other religions and their respect for other people’s beliefs. Muslims, in general, are presented as being generous, noble, faithful, and honest. In the novel the physician, El Hakim, tells the Christian Nazarene that “Saladin makes no converts to the law of the Prophet, save those on whom its precepts shall work conviction. But fear not that thy brows shall be bound with the turban, save at thine own free choice”.⁸⁶

Scott praises the Arab Muslims for their civilised manners, which “shame those who owned a better religion”.⁸⁷ *The Talisman* appeared at a time when Islam was conceived as a danger, a threat, and a militant religion. Thus, its appearance marked a bold attempt to portray a historical truth without being influenced by prejudice.

This more favourable image was greatly enhanced by the publication of *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History* in 1841 by Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881). The chapter on “The Hero as a Prophet: Mahomet: Islam” was introduced on Friday, 8th of May, 1840 as a lecture in Portman Square, addressing the intellectuals of British society.⁸⁸ Carlyle considered the Prophet a hero and ranked him among the most influential men in the history of mankind as a “man of truth and fidelity; true in what he did, in what he spake and thought”.⁸⁹

Other writers who contributed to the making of a somehow more positive Arab image include Edward Lane (1801–1876). By his work *Account of Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836) and his translation of the *Arabian Nights* (1838–1840), he had a highly influential impact on a large number of readers by picturing a romanticised view of the East.

Travellers and Missionaries

The 19th century saw the upsurge of travel and many English travellers visited the Arab world. These travellers returned to their homeland with differing stories, not always factual, about the East. A multitude of purposes were behind these travels and apart from commerce and tourism, many were indulging in expeditions for colonial purposes. Western powers expressed strong desires in the Arab lands that were occupied by Europe's primary enemy, the Ottoman Empire.

A colonial attitude towards Arabs characterised many of the travellers' records in the 19th century. As Norman Daniel says, "The imperial attitude meant thinking of people-encountered in daily business-as being of a different and inferior kind"; thinking of them as agreeable or disagreeable, but always as different."⁹⁰ Some of the prominent travellers during this period were Richard Burton, C. M. Doughty (1843–1926), Edward Lane (1801–1876), Alexander Kinglake (1809–1891), Eliot Warburton (1810–1852), and Wilfred Blunt (1840–1922).⁹¹

These writers gave mixed opinions in their representation of the Arabs. C. M. Doughty, for example, sometimes seemed to be sympathetic with Arabs, praising their hospitality and "the sanctity of the Arabian religion".⁹² However, at most other times, he expresses his distrust and doubt about Islam as a religion and Arabs as a benevolent people. In *Arabia Deserta* (1888), he describes the Arabs as negative people with "criminal hearts...capable of all mischief".⁹³ To face the threat of religious extremists, Doughty says that the "Arabian religion of the sword must be tempered by the sword".⁹⁴

The Arabs are also presented as childish characters, as Gertrude Bell (1868–1926) in her journey into Arabia in 1891, makes such an accusation: "The Oriental is like a very old child. He is unacquainted with many branches of knowledge which we have come to regard as of elementary necessity".⁹⁵ Richard Burton also alluded to "the childish East" and Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) felt worried about how to handle the Orientals, saying "We treated them as children, and this answered perfectly well".⁹⁶

In addition to the above-mentioned characteristics of the presumed Arab character, the appearance of different national struggle movements opposing Western colonial domination over the Arab world in the late nineteenth century triggered a serious fear of Islam as a religion. The national movements were seen as “a network of dangerous organizations animated by a barbarous hatred of civilization”.⁹⁷

The Images of the Arabs in the American Context

American writers depended heavily on the images provided by Europeans about the Arab world and the East in general and it is no surprise that the United States, following its independence in 1783, drew the same stereotypes about Arabs. Another key event that consolidates this negative image was the first encounter between the American and Muslim Arabs during the Barbary Wars (1785–1815). The piracy against American ships approaching Mediterranean countries for trading with Arab was a dominant theme in many literary works that appeared at that time, such as Susanna Rowson’s *Slaves in Algeria* (1794), Royall Tyler’s *The Algerian Captive* (1797), John Howard Payne’s *Fall of Algiers* (c.1826), Richard Penn Smith’s *The Bombardment of Algiers* (c.1829), and Joseph Stevens Jones’ *The Usurper* (c.1855).⁹⁸

All these cited works show how American travellers portrayed horrific images of the barbarity and savagery of the Arabs. Royall Tyler, a traveller who presents “the first American contribution to the traditional Western polemics on Islam,”⁹⁹ reiterates the previous convictions found in his society that inherited the European beliefs about the Islam and its prophet.¹⁰⁰ The first American novel that featured a distorted image of Muslims was entitled *Father Bombo’s Pilgrimage to Mecca* (1770) and was written by Philip Freneau and Hugh Brackenridge. It provided the American reading public with exotic Oriental tales.¹⁰¹

The American interest in the East started in the 19th century, mostly for missionary and commercial purposes. In 1820, the first American Presbyterians came to Syria working under the auspices of the American Board of Control for Foreign Mission (ABCFM), which took definitive measures during the first two decades of its

foundation to establish a strong and permanent base in Jerusalem. The board held the conviction that missionary movements were bringing enlightenment to Arab lands and follow the traditional belief of the United States and Europe.¹⁰²

Most American travellers to the Arab world contributed in the formation of a negative Arab image in the US. The impressions of these American travellers mostly revolved around the idea that Arabs are primitive beings who cannot cope with civilisation. John Ross Browne's *Yusef; or, the journey of the Frangi* (1853) is an example where the Arabs are described as "the most barbarous people on the face of earth".¹⁰³ Browne claims that Arab Muslim women are absurd to wear the veil, and that Arab men are fatalistic people accepting what life offers without objections.¹⁰⁴

Similarly, novelist and writer Mark Twain (1835–1910) shows the urban Arabs as dishonest, treacherous and vicious. In his book *Innocents Abroad* (1869), where he recorded his visit to Egypt and Syria. He expressed his disappointment at the poor Egyptian urban life. Twain describes the people of Damascus as "the ugliest, wickedest-looking villains we have seen."¹⁰⁵ They reminded him of 'red Indians', and he says:

They sat in silence and with tireless patience wretched our every motion...They were infested with vermin and the dirt that caked on them till it amounted to bark...The children were in a pitiable condition-they all had sore eyes and were otherwise afflicted in various ways.¹⁰⁶

However, there were a few cases of tolerance and objectivity towards Islam as a religion, due to belated contact with the East. A number of American travellers were impressed by the Bedouin Arab as a pure and innocent man untarnished by the Industrial Revolution like the North American Aborigines. Washington Irving (1783-1859) pointed out this opinion by saying that "the Indian in his native state, before he has mingled much with white men, and acquired their sordid habits, has the hospitality of the Arab".¹⁰⁷

For George William Curtis (1824–1892), an American traveller, the Arab Bedouin is a noble savage. A number of American writers were greatly enthusiastic about the

teachings of Islam; Washington Irving, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) and John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892) were preoccupied by the idea of the Orient.¹⁰⁸ They believed that Islam is a religion filled with mercy, with a deep understanding of human nature. The new favourable approach rests on the existence of faithful people from other religions and races: “The Mohammadan has faith in one God, in his kindness and mercy.... (B)ut he is not a Christian”.¹⁰⁹ In *The Alhambra* (1832), Irving further commends the Arabs for their “higher civilization and a nobler style of thinking...The Arabs were a quick-witted, sagacious, proud-spirited, and poetical people and were imbued with Oriental science and literature”.¹¹⁰

Other American writers who wrote in a more realistic manner about Islam include William Cullen Bryant (1794–1878), Law Wallace, and F. Whittaker whose book *Muhammad the Iconoclast* (1875) marks a shifting attitude towards the portrayal of the prophet Muhammed. Whittaker says, “Mohammed was a preacher of the truth...he preached the truth, and we must recognize the fact”.¹¹¹ Astonished at the simplicity of the Muslim devotion, William Thompson (nineteenth century) described it as “a scene not witnessed in all places in such perfection”.¹¹²

Very few writers highlighted a new perspective other than those echoed in previous, static convictions. In general, the attitude of Americans in the 19th century towards Arabs was confined to describing them as villains, fanatics, and uncivilised human beings. Helen McCready Kearney says that Arabs have been viewed as Levantine people who “assumed to possess the infamous racial traits associated with that breed. They were cunning and materialistic”.¹¹³ What has already been established and taken for granted in the past centuries concerning the Arab image has mostly formed the stereotypical Arab character in 20th century Western culture and hence in 20th and 21st fiction.

The Arab Image in Twentieth Century Western Culture

A characteristic feature of the development of Western art and fiction during the 20th has been the frequent depiction of characters drawn from non-Western cultures. The Middle East and Arab world in particular, attracted greater attention owing to the rising political and economic importance of the region. The end of WWI intensified the

interest as more Arab countries, which were occupied by the Ottomans, succumbed to the British and French mandates. However, the new direct contact zone did not change the stereotypes about the East. A number of factors subscribed in maintaining the lingering effects of past centuries.

First, writers drew the Arabs in the same way of representation made by earlier centuries' Orientalists. Duncan Macdonald, for example, in his book *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam* (1909), which was one of the earliest works dealing with Arabs in the 20th century, describes them as "easy of belief...hard-headed, materialistic, questioning, doubting, scoffing at their own superstitions and usages, fond of taste of the supernatural-and all this in a curiously light-minded, almost childish fashion".¹¹⁴

Whether such representation was intentional or as a result of ignorance of the region, it was further heightened by the records of English travellers to the East. Among those prominent travellers were David Hogarth (1862–1927) and T. E. Lawrence (1888–1935), a.k.a. Lawrence of Arabia, whose views about the Arabs and their world conditioned the writing of later Westerners to a large extent. For instance, David Hogarth in *The Wandering Scholar* (1896) describes the Arabs as opportunists who only think in terms of profit in their relation with others, regardless of human values.¹¹⁵ However, Lawrence's attitudes were ambivalent for he describes the Arabs as "a limited, narrow-minded people, whose inert intellects lay fallow in incurious resignation." On the other hand, he describes them as "a people...of ideas, the race of the individual genius".¹¹⁶

Another important factor in the formation of a sinister image of Arabs were the ex-soldiers participating in the WWI who thought that Arabs were classified as 'bedus' and 'sheikhs', though both were seen as "thieving rascals".¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, a distinction was made between the 'good' Arab who was willing to co-operate with the mandate and help the British and the 'bad' Arab who revolted and opposed them, the latter being considered to be the city chauvinist, or the fanatical man in terms of religion. The ex-soldiers accused the Arabs of being ungrateful and deceitful since they did not consider the so-called gains which the colonial powers granted them.¹¹⁸

The negative reaction towards Arabs was extended to Islam. The main reason for this view was the declaration of jihad - holy war- during the WWI by Muslim clerics of the Arab region against the West. Thus, the Arab character was depicted as a fanatical man blinded by his hatred against anyone who is not a Muslim. It emerged following its prototype in the medieval ages following the Crusades.¹¹⁹

One of the earliest fictional works that employed this blurred image of Muslim Arabs in the 20th century was John Buchan's novel *Greenmantle* (1916), which defines Islam as "a fighting creed, and the mullah still stands in the pulpit with the Koran in one hand and a drawn sword in the other".¹²⁰ The writer, who was a director of the British Intelligence in the First World War, describes Islam as a militant religion.¹²¹

As Gavin Hambly says, the novel is "a story of Muslim intrigue and fanaticism pitted against the civilizing mission of the British Empire".¹²² This was exactly how the author meant it to be. Buchan showed the character of Greenmantle, who was designed to be the coming saviour as a seer that "has arisen of the blood of the Prophet, who will restore the Khaliphate to its old glories and Islam to its old purity...They believe they are on the eve of a great deliverance".¹²³

The publication of Buchan's *Greenmantle* brought forth many stereotypes representing the Muslim character as the "sword-wielding Muslim thundering" that is high on drugs in order to launch attacks to kill political leaders and white slavers. Therefore, Islam in Western historical memory becomes the perennial source of Western fear and incarnation of evil throughout history and the present time.¹²⁴

An example emerging from the millennial type of *Greenmantle* is A. J. Quinnel's popular novel *The Mahdi* (1981) where Muslims are pictured either as "simple savages or agents working naively against their religion and nation".¹²⁵ The novel depicts Islam as "an aggressive, young and expanding religion, the only major religion in the world that could be so described".¹²⁶

Islam, which was conflated with Arabs, was regarded in later works as a religion with a dual image: one of an erotic and sensual nature and also one, which is menacing and threatening. The British at this time perceives that "Islam" has crossed the line

from religion to politics.¹²⁷ Consequently, Islam is viewed in terms of violence, fanaticism, and mercilessness. As in the Middle Ages, Islam has been viewed throughout the West as a menace and an irrational dogma, while Arabs are considered “anti-Christian,” and aggressively belligerent.¹²⁸

Edward Said delineates how the various groups of Western intellectuals looked at Islam: “For the right, [it]...represents barbarism; for the left, medieval theocracy; for the center, a kind of distasteful exoticism”.¹²⁹ In other words, Islam is seen as a religion without mercy, love, and tenderness. It is viewed as incapable of understanding the social forces, which move the modern world. Other writers shared this biased view of Muslims and Islam, claiming that cruelty and aggression are the basic ingredients of Islam.¹³⁰

These reflections were clearly manifested in Hollywood’s early film productions. McAllister highlighted the influential role of Orientalism in creating a certain type of image through the Western, and American in particular, circles which see the Orient as the stuff of children’s books, fantasy and popular movies.¹³¹ For example, the novel *Garden of Allah* (1905) by Robert S. Hichen, which was transformed into silent films in 1917 and 1927, was about an English woman who finds sexual adventure in the Sahara with an Arabian Sheikh. The Arab life was satirically drawn and turned into a phenomenon in the cinema.¹³² *Garden of Allah* exposed the classic features that were previously drawn about the Arab world, where most of the action takes place in the desert and the Arabs are shown as “mystics and dimwits”.¹³³ The representation of Sheikh was the fertile ground for Sheikh Films by Rudolph Valentino in the 1920s.¹³⁴

In the late 1920’s and early 1930’s, Hollywood productions showed new trends, exposing the Middle Easterner’s as embodying “Otherness”, in which the white man is in charge of the education of primitive non-white people. Films such as *The Desert Song* and *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* (1934) showed Western men rescuing Eastern people from primitive barbarian sheikhs.¹³⁵ Another aspect of the films showed Arabian females as stereotypically humiliated, demonised and eroticised.¹³⁶ The basic drive behind this strategy is to improve American superiority in a Manichean picture showing brutal Arabs versus heroic Americans. McAllister

commented that this was indicative of the interplay between US policy and US businesses that was also based on economic interests.¹³⁷ At this period, America was reproducing its model of economic, political and cultural development and later this strategy shows suitable preparation for a second period of military expansion.¹³⁸

Second World War and After

By the end of WWII the Arabs saw the eclipse of both British and French imperial domination over the Arab countries and the rise of U.S. influence in the region. Although US policy encouraged the independence of Arab countries from colonial powers; It supported the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 on a land historically claimed by the Arabs as Palestine. In his book *American Encounters with Arabs: The "Soft Power" of U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Middle East*, William Rugh justified the heightened interests of the US in the Middle East on the grounds of its fear of the Soviet threat.¹³⁹ The US administration feared that the Soviet Union, its wartime ally which had turned into an adversary, could manage to gain a foothold in the region and block its supply of oil. US political and economic interests, coupled with propaganda, portray the Middle East as the biblical land that should be protected from communist expansionism.¹⁴⁰

Hollywood epic films, such as *The Prodigal* (1955), *The Ten Commandments* (1956), *Solomon and Sheba* (1959), *Ben Hur* (1959), *Exodus* (1960) and *El-Cid* (1962), may be conceived as being the early stages of this propaganda. These films stressed that the 'Holy Land' and Palestine, in particular, were connected to the West through Jewish and Christian history.¹⁴¹ The film *The Ten Commandments* draws on the Bible story of Moses and how he frees the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, leading them to the Promised Land.¹⁴² The film tries to send a moral message about freedom, revolution and determination of nations to achieve their noble goals. The film *Ben Hur* showed both Arabs and Jews as suffering from the oppression of ancient Rome.

McAllister describes this cluster of films as "overlapping between religious and political interests on one side and seeking to repulse the Soviet influence in the region on the other".¹⁴³ US propaganda aimed to show America as the alternative for colonial powers such as Britain and France and in 1956, the claims were asserted

when the US President Eisenhower decisively refused to support Britain and France in their attack on Egypt.

In fiction, writers drew on biblical themes – namely, the founding of Israel and the oppression of this region’s people under occupation. For example, Leon Uris’ *Exodus* (1960) draws on the story of Israel’s creation in 1948 and the suffering of the Jews under British mandate and their flight from Nazi oppression.¹⁴⁴ The novel presents the moral argument that the people – the Israelis – have the right to revolt against the oppressor, though it denies the same rights for Arabs. It describes the Arabs as “dregs of humanity, thieves, murders, highway robbers, dope runners and white slaves”.¹⁴⁵

By 1983, *Exodus* had gone through its 53rd printing in the English language.¹⁴⁶ This figure underlines its popularity and its circulation within the Anglo-American world. At the end of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, the novel had sold twenty million copies around the world, from which seven million copies were distributed in the United States alone; meaning that one American in thirty read *Exodus*.¹⁴⁷ This novel wielded influence over a great number of the reading public and influenced their political attitudes and beliefs. Few popular fictional works have ever had this type of socio-political effect. Uris himself wished that his work could gain such an influence, saying: “I set out to tell a story of Israel. I am definitely biased.

1967 and After

The defeat of Arab countries in the war with Israel in 1967 paved the way for the emergence of the Arab image in Western fiction as the hesitant deserter and Western fiction reflected the defeat in religious themes depicting the war between Judaism and Islam. The Israelis went to war with backward idiot Arabs. For instance, Morris West’s *The Tower of Babel* (1968) shows the Israelis fighting in a right cause against the Arabs who are powerless and suffering from a bitter defeat.¹⁴⁸

Following the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, another distorted image emerged in Western popular opinion – namely that of the hesitant deserter.¹⁴⁹ The West looked at the defeat in terms of religion, seeing it as a war between Judaism and Islam in which

Arabs were portrayed as backward idiots. West's *The Tower of Babel*, for example, emphasises the "rightful" cause of Israelis in fighting this war, while Arabs are shown as powerless and suffering from a bitter defeat.¹⁵⁰ Janice Terry says that many fiction writers sometimes fail and write historical mistakes because they do not conduct extensive research before they attempt to write. In addition, Terry notes, they are always in a hurry to print their works while a certain crisis is still making newspaper headlines, as otherwise readers may lose interest in the subject.¹⁵¹

Moreover, the armed actions carried out by the Palestinians set an image of the Arabs: that of the "terrorist". Western writers looked Palestinians, in particular, as "dedicated vicious political fanatics, and "unpredictable terrorists". The acts of Palestinians were seen as "insensible terror" and 'savagely and irrational'.¹⁵² As a result of the presumed terrorist character of the Palestinian, numerous works appeared that depicted the Israelis as brave and skilful in identifying, pursuing and killing militant Arabs in different countries.

Consequently, Palestinians absorbed most of the "negative traits commonly associated" in the West "with the Arabs".¹⁵³ The 1967 War had left its own disadvantageous consequences on the Arab character, as Gregory Orfalea says:

The 1967 War marked a turning point not only in the history of the conflict, but also in the coverage of the Palestinians and their leadership...Ironically, it was in trying to counter their invisible victim image of refugee, that the Palestinians created a highly visible – yet primarily negative image, the Palestinian 'terrorist'.¹⁵⁴

This image was reinforced following the October 1973 War and the oil crisis that ensued. The Arab-Israeli conflict caused an un-expected problem to the West when OPEC, which included major Arab oil exporting countries, imposed an embargo on exporting oil to Israel's allies. Arab leaders declared the embargo to bring pressure on Israel and its Western allies, such as the U.S. and the UK, to make the latter pull out of the occupied territories. The oil crisis raised oil prices and resulted in a boom of wealth for many Arab oil-rich countries.¹⁵⁵

A great number of popular writings appeared after the oil boycott which tried to depict the Arabs as a dangerous people bent on destroying the West. Arabs have become mostly associated with “the negative aspect of oil, i.e. boycotts, price increases, (often referred as ‘gouging,’ ‘robber,’ etc), and the price-fixing “oil cartel”.¹⁵⁶ Of these writings, Herbert Stein’s *On the Brink* (1977) is one in which Arabs are depicted as “crafty oil magnates who care nothing about the economic well-being of the world”.¹⁵⁷ The reader is led to believe that Arab oil-producing countries have to be controlled by the West for the sake of the world’s economic stability.¹⁵⁸

The Arab oil boom produced the stereotype of the tycoon oil sheikh who has the ability to shake Western markets whenever he wants. Thus, Arabs are seen as vindictive people whose main objective has been to manipulate and cause havoc in the West.¹⁵⁹ Despite the oil boom, life in Arab countries is shown by writers to be regressive, and Arabs are shown to have a tendency to believe in old, detestable customs. In Margaret Rome’s *Son of Adam* (1979), for instance, the writer presents a highly fantastic image of the Arab homeland in which it is customary to see “Arab males’ refusal to admit a woman’s existence except when necessity forced them to”.¹⁶⁰

Hilary Mantel’s novel *Eight Months on Ghazzah Street* (1988) is one example where the author depicts life in an Arab country. She combines an atmosphere of suspense and tension in a way that presents a fantastic and mysterious East.¹⁶¹ It follows the same old tradition of the Oriental tale. Despite the fact that after the 1973 War Arabs were looked upon as people who fought in a brave manner, an event which Edward Said called “Shattered Myths”, Arabs were still viewed in the old stereotypical way that embodied highly negative attributes; this was because the West over-categorised them as a whole.¹⁶² Thus, readers of these novels are directed into perceiving a certain system of beliefs that suits the overall Western negative view of Arabs.

Reeva Simon sums up the negative portrayal of the modern Arab character in popular fiction, saying:

Instead of quaint natives, the Westerner saw “ragheads,” “aliens” in “bedsheets,” irrational religious fanatics who wave Kalashnikovs instead of swords and undertake suicide terrorist missions in place of cavalry charges, and wealthy ‘petroshiekhs’.¹⁶³

What aggravated the negative image of the Arabs is the method used by those novelists which Van Teffelen calls the technique of “metaperspective”, which means that Arab voices or arguments are rather shadowy or invisible in the novels.¹⁶⁴ Actually, Teffelen thinks that they are weak voices unable to attract a popular audience; therefore they tend to be superficial discourses in order to evade the argument.¹⁶⁵ The true Arab character remains almost invisible and hidden as he remains a sinister and mysterious presence that should be should be feared and ostracised.

1979 and After

By 1979 the Arab world had seen witnessed dramatic events: the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and the attacks against a group of American marines in Beirut in 1983. The period saw an increase in military operations launched by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) against Israel and the emergence of Islamic fundamentalist organisations such as Hezbollah, Amal and Hamas with their anti-Israeli operations. The escalation coincides with the rise of plane hijacking, for example, the bombing of aircraft Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie in the UK in 1988, which ushered in another phase of U.S.-Arab tensions. The Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988) and the concerns for the oil supply were also significant events that impacted the representation of Arabs in Western fiction.¹⁶⁶

These events highlighted the previous association of Arabs with terrorism in fictional works. For example the novel, *The Hand of Fatima*, by Raphael Rothstein (1979) revolves around a plot of a Palestinian group who are financed by Libya to use European sex trade workers to carry bombs into planes and cause heavy losses amongst Westerns.¹⁶⁷ Libya is also mentioned in Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre’s *The Fifth Horseman*. The novel’s plot draws on Qaddafi’s threats to

detonate a hydrogen bomb hidden in Manhattan. He will do so if the US does not force Israel to pull out from the West Bank and East Jerusalem.¹⁶⁸

McAllister pointed out that the characteristic feature of these novels is the depiction of Americans and Westerners as main characters—instead of Israelis—as the main victims and eventually, as the fighters of this terrorism. She highlighted that this indicates a new substitution within the Orientalist discourse and an extension of the concept of the dangerous Other.¹⁶⁹

As a brief conclusion, Western writers promoted the distorted images of the 19th century, which depicted the Muslim/Arab women as sexualised entities and men as fictional figures from the Middle Ages. Therefore, they reproduced and perpetuated the stereotypes made by previous novelists and travel literature writers. However, the abusive language has changed in order to accompany historical and political developments that happened in the Western-Arab encounters. For example, Western writers no longer used the term of “slave-trader” as appeared in the *Arabian Nights* and have replaced it with current terms, such as, a “kidnapper” or “hijacker”. The same changes took place to the term “savage” or “barbaric”, which they left out and use a “terrorist” instead.

Zayan El-Amine in “The Making of the Arab Menace” stresses the role played by Hollywood in reproducing this imagery and language: “Hollywood films have played an important role in perpetuating and amplifying these racist caricatures. Arabs in films are portrayed as being terrorists, fanatics, dirty, irrational, violent and above all disposable.”¹⁷⁰ Writers also continued to borrow stereotypes from the classically colonial period to highlight Western superiority. They also linked terrorism to Arab and Muslim community and do not take Islamic fundamentalism as a fringe movement that could appear in various communities across ages.

Moreover, terrorism was exaggerated to be apocalyptic war in which the Western side win at the end of the confrontation. Western writers reproduce historical figures to portray Arab and Muslims as terrorists, such as, novel *The Mehdi*. The trend reveals a craving of Western readers to receive productions demonising Muslim

Arabs and a response from Western writers to satisfy this desire. The imagery serves a variety of purposes within Western circles. J.A. Progler argues:

The long history of encounters between Western civilisation and Islam has produced a tradition of portraying, in largely negative and self-serving ways, the Islamic religion and Muslim cultures. There is a lot of literature cataloguing (and sometimes correcting) these stereotypes...Western image-makers, including religious authorities, political establishments, and corporate-media conglomerates, conceptualize for their consumers image of Muslims and/or Arab in sometimes amusing and other time cruel or tragic ways.¹⁷¹

The connection between Islam and terrorism underlines the adaptation of the old stereotypes and historical content for recent developments. In other words, Western fiction sacrificed history and politics to satisfy personal and ideological objectives. Western writers were not only confined to reviving old stereotypes, but they have tried to rationalise the topics they are discussing. A number of novelists mustered up their power to legitimise their biased perspectives and give them a sense of credibility. They sought to achieve this objective by bringing up political and social events that showed Arab as ruthless terrorists and monsters. This trend continues to be gain currency in the 1990s fiction. The aspects of its development will be further discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis.

B- The West in the History of Arab Fiction

The invasion of Egypt by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798 not only marked the beginning of European colonialism of the Arab World, but also ushered in a cultural renaissance that moved to Arab countries, such as Syria and Lebanon.¹⁷² The Arabs started to engage in extensive debate about the elements of Western supremacy and to this end Arab intellectuals investigated Western philosophy and literature in search of explanations for their society. The travelling of Arabs on educational scholarships to Western countries consolidated the drive. This was an ample opportunity to study the West from the inside and have direct contact with its society and culture.¹⁷³

The interplay between the two cultures resulted in the rise of travel literature, which provided first-hand experience of the encounter between the self and the Other. Although writers adhered to classical forms of writing, they discussed new themes in mostly autobiographical writings. Egyptian writer Rifā'a al-Ṭahtāwī (1801-1873) is often seen as a leading figure in the Arab renaissance. He examined Western culture, political systems and social conventions in his book *Takhliṣ al-Ibrīz fi tālkhīṣ Bārīz– Extraction of Gold In the Description of Paris* (which is also translated as *The Quintessence of Paris*).¹⁷⁴ The book narrates a journey undertaken by the author to Paris in the late century, describing its geography and his fascination by its civilisation, arts and political administration system:

The Parisians are distinguished among the people of Christendom by the sharpness of their intellects, the precision of their understandings, and the immersion of their minds in deep matters...They deny miracles, and believe it is not possible to infringe natural laws, and that religions came to point men to good works... but among their ugly beliefs is this, that the intellect and virtue of their wise men are greater than the intelligence of the prophet.¹⁷⁵

Al-Ṭahtāwī described France and the West from an Egyptian and Muslim perspective. He emphasised that Egypt and the Muslim world should learn from the West in order to edify the cultural and social ills of the East. Al-Ṭahtāwī believed the solution for social and cultural ills lay in introducing reform, advocating women's education and the parliamentary system in the Arab world. However, he stressed that reforms should comply with the norms of the Islamic culture.¹⁷⁶

Another writer who viewed the West with fascination was the Lebanese thinker and journalist Ahmad Fāris al-Shidyāq (1804-1887). The different educational background of Al-Shidyāq led him to adopt a different view from Al-Ṭahtāwī's towards the West.¹⁷⁷ Al-Ṭahtāwī was an imam (preacher) and a graduate of an Islamic religious institution, while Al-Shidyāq was a graduate of a Christian school and of secular institutions. Consequently, their educational background played a crucial role in shaping their perspectives of the West.¹⁷⁸

Al-Shidyāq was, perhaps more concerned with the social structure of England and France and its association with the political systems in each country.¹⁷⁹ He praised the social web of Western society, highlighting the way that Western families raised children, and the level of knowledge attained by Western scientists, as key differences from the Arab world. He ascribed this advanced knowledge to the English habit of owning a home library. He also expressed admiration of the conduct of English families towards their children. The examples cited by Al-Shidyāq were meant to draw the attention of the Arab people to ways of developing and modernising their society.¹⁸⁰

Al-Shidyāq stressed that reforms could be achieved by properly planned human acts and “not to expect revelations from God on a daily basis as to what he has in a destiny for us”¹⁸¹ He also emphasised that the starting point could be realised by assessing “our affairs against those of others”.¹⁸² He associated Western superiority over the Arab world with Western planning and management, saying: “where European has taken lead over us in this age is in manufacturing and trade because of their organisation and methodical ways”.¹⁸³

The preoccupation with modernising the Arab and Muslim world by the transmission of the knowledge about the West was the main theme for Tunisian writer Khayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisī (1820?-1889).¹⁸⁴ In his book *The Surest Path to Knowledge Concerning the Condition of Countries* (1887), he pointed out that keeping up with the West could be achieved by understanding the elements of power and strength, which the West was enjoying.¹⁸⁵ For al-Tūnisī, Western stability stemmed from the application of reforms and legislations. He argued that Western elements could be adopted by the Muslim world, provided that they complied with Islamic *Shari'a* Law.¹⁸⁶

Unlike his predecessors, Egyptian writer Mūḥamad Al-Mūwaylīḥī set the East-West encounter in his country to illustrate the cultural crisis and give his view on how to handle it. Al-Mūwaylīḥī's book *Ḥadīth' Īsa Bin Hishām (The Story of 'Īsa Bin Hīshām)* gave a broad picture of Egypt and showcases the stakes of its cultural crisis.

The major cause for all this change is the rapid penetration of Western civilization into Eastern countries and the way in which people in the East are behaving like the blind, emulating Western people in every conceivable aspect of their lives. In so doing, they are not enlightened by research, nor they use analogy or consider issues in a sensible fashion. They pay no attention to incompatibility of temperament, differences in taste, or variations in climate and customs...we have destroyed our houses with our own hands. We are like Western people living in the East, even though in different ways of life we are as far apart as East is from West.¹⁸⁷

Al-Mūwaylīḥī sets forth the cultural problem in Egypt as a conflict between traditionalism and modernisation. He advocates a critical view against both blind imitation of the traditions and blind imitation of Europe.¹⁸⁸

For Al-Mūwaylīḥī, the problem is twofold: a crisis of Arab Muslim culture and a poor grasp of Western modernity. The solution of the first problem lies in examining the Muslim Arab sources, while the second problem can be solved by going to the West in order to understand both the ideas and their cultural contexts. In other words, innovations taken from the West should be fit for the Arab Muslim world and not be blindly imitated.¹⁸⁹

In the second half of the 19th century, a new strand of representation appeared in Arab writings depicting the East-West encounter. The details of travels into Europe were narrated in a dialogue of characters from the two cultures instead of the direct description by the Eastern author that predominated the earlier works.¹⁹⁰ ‘Ali Mubārak’s *‘Alam al-dīn* (1883) is a typical example that illustrates this shift. The protagonist, a graduate student of Al-Azhar University who travelled to the UK to teach Arabic upon an invitation by a British tourist who had met him in Egypt, engaged in a series of dialogues with various Western characters.

The novel was composed of a collection of short independent episodes in ornamental rhymed Arabic prose. The episodes shared two characters: the Eastern protagonist and a western character. The novel manifested Mubārak’s deep admiration of

scientific progress in the West and his ardent desire that this work revive the erstwhile scientific spirit within the Arab to prosper by making use of the Western knowledge.¹⁹¹ However, Mubārak highlights the East as superior to the West in terms of social and family values. Consequently, he stressed the need to strike a delicate balance between the scientific scholarship in the West and the Islamic conventions in the East.

In the early 20th century, the attachment to the spiritual East was consolidated and crystallised in Arab novels that underlined the value of their world. Arab writers considered the political context in their region, given that most Arab countries were under Western colonialism. Therefore, unlike their predecessors who expressed their unlimited fascination with the West and its progress in science, arts and politics, early 20th century novelists attached a special importance to the East, valorising its spiritual and religious legacy. The new generation included renowned writers, such as Taḥa Ḥusayn, Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm and Yaḥya Ḥaqqī.¹⁹²

As with 19th writers, the West impressed Arab novelists who travelled to Western countries seeking higher education in the early decades of the 20th century. They deemed it a symbol of science and freedom, and even as a space to vent repressed sexuality. However, they were aware that it was an ideologically and religiously different space from the spiritual East. In other words, they saw values in both worlds and tried to strike a balance between the two. This approach was clearly adopted by many Arab novelists, namely Taḥa Ḥusayn in *Adīb* (1935), Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm in (*‘Aṣfur min al-sharq*) *A Bird From the East* (1938) and Yaḥya Ḥaqqī in (*Qandīl Umm-Hāshim*) *The Saint’s Lamp* (1944).

In *Adīb*, Taḥa Ḥusayn portrayed the cultural encounter between the East and the West as a conflict between the world of repression and the world of freedom.¹⁹³ He juxtaposed Western progress with Eastern decadence. Thus, he set this disparity between France and the female French character, Ferdinand, and Egypt and his wife Hamīdah. However, Ḥusayn suddenly portrayed France as a tempting land of pleasure and vice that could drive man away from the right course of life. Thus, the protagonist fell a victim and was swept away by the misleading pleasures of the West (sex and alcohol). Consequently, as he was deeply immersed in the superficial

elements of the Western culture, he failed to continue his studies and obtain his diploma. In other words, Ḥusayn highlighted that the protagonist failed in this test because he could not maintain the delicate balance between his Eastern identity and the Western knowledge surrounding him.

Nonetheless, in his autobiography *The Days (Al-Ayyām)*, Ḥusayn tried to restore the required balanced view of the East-West binary by highlighting stages of his stay in France.¹⁹⁴ He depicted Paris as a city of demons and angels that boasts of a multitude of artistic and aesthetic features. France was praised as the land of civilisation, science, knowledge, arts and literature. He contrasted France and its advanced progress with the decadent East and its backward mentality. The success of the protagonist in achieving a PhD and returning to Egypt indicated that the mission assigned to him was to understand and convey these sciences and arts to Eastern society. In other words, Ḥusayn believes that the East can advance by adopting progressive Western values; this is on the caveat that they do not conflict with the intrinsically spiritual values of the East.

Likewise, Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm in his novel *A Bird from the East* demonstrated the contrasting images of the underdeveloped East and the advanced West.¹⁹⁵ The protagonist was shown honing new artistic skills that he developed during his stay in France. This new awareness demonstrated the development of the protagonist and his acquisition of Western knowledge. The protagonist divided the West into two camps: the East represented by his Russian friend Ivan, and the West, symbolised by his French friend Andre. Al-Ḥakīm put forward the two camps in order to demonstrate the ideological school of thoughts in Europe for the Arabs. Unlike the East that stood for pure idealism and spiritual values, Al-Ḥakīm associated both schools of the West with sterile materialism and moral decadence. After showing the developments of the protagonist, the writer concluded that the East could be the spiritual solution to the pragmatic West.

The 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the establishment of the state of Israel marked a watershed moment in the political and literary history of Arabs. The West was denounced by the Arab nations as biased towards Israel in the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict. Moreover, the start of the struggle for independence across the Middle East

led to the formation of new Arab-Western encounters based on the feminisation of the West.¹⁹⁶ The Arab world symbolised itself as male and the West as female. This gendered treatment of the West reflected a new mode of Arab thinking where the West was an equivalent, not a master, and at the same time an integral piece within the equation of Eastern spirituality and Western materialism.¹⁹⁷

In Suhayl Īdrīs' (*Al-Ḥayy al-Lāṭīnī*) *The Latin Quarter* (1953), the Lebanese protagonist falls in love with a French woman while studying in Paris.¹⁹⁸ The relationship with the Western woman initiated a conflict for the protagonist, as he had to choose between his social duty towards his family and country, and his own desire. Despite the strong bond of love between the Arab man and the French woman, and the fact that they had a baby, the eventual separation emphasises Īdrīs' idea that an Arab man cannot break away from his roots and responsibilities. The end also underlines the growing cultural differences that put an end to any possible convergence between people from these two worlds.

The dialects of masculinity and femininity formed a new layer in Ṭayib Ṣāliḥ's novel (*Mawsim al-Hijra ila al-Shimāl*) *Season of Migration to the North* (1969).¹⁹⁹ The Sudanese writer shaped the encounter between the Arab African and the West in the context of revenge and decolonisation where there was antagonism between the North and the South. The "desire (of the Arab world) for the north (West) becomes the desire for the European woman", as Wail Hassan remarked.²⁰⁰ Ṣāliḥ conceptualised the novel through the protagonist Mustafa Sa'īd, a Sudanese man who left his colonised country, for the country who was colonising it; he went to England following the First World War and returned to his native country following its independence in the fifties. Ṣāliḥ reduced the narrative to anti-colonial retribution through a string of encounters between the protagonist and a number of English women. The sexual engagement with Western women became the protagonist's prime objective in order to settle accounts with the coloniser, who had dominated Sudan for a long time, usurping its resources and enslaving its people.

However, this vituperative approach passed through a turning point following Arab defeat in the 1967 war with Israel. The six-day war marked a watershed in the Arab

political scene and the literature produced. Albert Hourani pointed out that the fiction produced after the 1967 war reflected the disturbance.²⁰¹ As the interest in Pan-Arabism ideology flagged among Arab political parties, similar feelings permeated novelists handling Arab-Western encounters in the post-war era. The writers unsettled the traditional Arab-West binary and engaged in redefining the Self and their own culture. Hence, Arab novelists saw the West as a space for freedom and democracy as well as a refuge from the oppression and tyranny of Arab rulers.²⁰²

One of the original novels that reflected this new sensibility was (*Sharq Al-Mutawaṣiṭ*) *East of the Mediterranean* by ‘Abd-al-Raḥman Munīf (1975), in which the writer portrayed Arab countries as places of torture and abuse of human rights.²⁰³ The East was represented as a huge prison wherein a man could be arrested for minimal reasons, such as reading a lot, or having educated friends who embraced political activism. In contrast, the protagonist expresses his admiration of the West, depicting it as a haven of freedom and justice. The protagonist praises the practice of democracy in the West, hoping that similar changes can take place in his country.

Munīf was not the first to adopt this self-rejecting approach. Egyptian writer Ṣunāllah Ibrāhīm’s novel (*Najmat Aghuṣṭus*) *The Star of August* (1974) preceded Munīf’s novel.²⁰⁴ Ibrāhīm staged the encounter between the East and the West in a relationship between the protagonist and Tania, a Russian woman. Selecting a Russian woman not from the ex-colonising West but from Europe was another trend in the Arabic novel at this historical juncture. Nevertheless, the writer used the encounter to draw comparisons between the conditions of the Arabs and those of the Russian people. He concluded the former were living in poverty, disease and repression, while the latter was living in happiness, equality and welfare.

The Syrian writer Ḥannā Mīnāh adopted the same approach in his novel (*l-Rabī’ wa-l-kharīf*) *The Spring and Autumn* (1980).²⁰⁵ The writer set the encounter in Budapest in Hungary, and it was between the protagonist, a Syrian novelist called Karam al-Mujahīdī, and Baruska, a Hungarian woman. Like the first generation of expatriate Arab intellectuals in the 20th century, the writer praised the experience of socialism in Hungary and denounced the repression, poverty and tyranny of Arab countries.

Mīnāh used the relationship between the Arab-European couple to highlight the Arab world as backward and the socialist world as advanced and free of social illness. The contrast between the two worlds was intensified when the protagonist faced a new bleak reality when he returned to his native country following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Almost as soon as the protagonist arrived in Damascus he was arrested and punished for his leftist political ideas. This end indicated that this depressing political reality continued to prevail even after the key changes that should have taken place in the wake of this demoralising war.

However, this favourable mood towards the West underwent new changes with the emergence of the second generation of expatriate Arab writers. The increasing involvement of Western powers in the Arab world and their position on key events, such as the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, had shaped anti-Western views.²⁰⁶ The second generation felt alienated from the Western ideals of freedom and democracy, which they had been aspiring to achieve in the East in past decades. However, this disillusionment did not necessarily mean any change in views from Arab writers towards the West. The writers, rather, underlined their resentment with both worlds.

The Egyptian writer *Bahāa' Ṭāhir* embodied this anger in his collection of short stories (*Bilams Ḥalimtu Bik*) *Yesterday I Dreamed of You* (1984).²⁰⁷ In the short story carrying the same name as the collection, Ṭāhir depicted these feelings within the Egyptian protagonist who was exiled to the West after facing serious challenges to his political ideals in his native country. The feeling of alienation towards the West was highlighted through the encounter between the Egyptian man and a local Western girl called Anne Marie. The suicide of the latter stressed the dominant theme for the writer, showing that Westerners could be intelligent and successful in the management, health and industry sectors, but they were not successful and lacking the spirituality embraced by the Arabs. This view has become the dominant theme in Arab fiction of the 19th century and early 20th century. Chapter Three of the thesis will shed light on the developments of this theme in the 1990s.

As a brief conclusion, the image of the West in Arab fiction is mainly shaped into three patterns. Firstly, the West is seen as the Self or as a better Self with which the

Arab would like to identify. Secondly, the West is perceived as the opposite of the Self or the rejected identity and in the third pattern, the disparity between Self and Other is recognised and discussed in a dialectical way. Although these three patterns are not chronologically developed or even divided in clear-cut historical stages, the reader can easily find that the first pattern appeared in the 19th century. In the second pattern, the West is portrayed as the rejected Other due to the spread of colonialism in a large number of Arab countries and feelings of hatred accumulating from excessive Western use of power.

Recognising the Self and the Other in a dialectical way was the third pattern when the steam of postcolonial power subsided. The shift comes from a profound experience of having acquaintance with Western countries, the balanced view of the third pattern, however lost its momentum due to the Second Gulf War. The crisis of the Second Gulf War (1990-1991) changed the political landscape between the two worlds and dramatically shifted the nature of their relationships. The dissolution of the Soviet Union has also resulted in major transformations in the relationships of the Arab world with the United States and Western powers. The most salient feature of these transformations is that cooperation with the United States has replaced competition in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.²⁰⁸ The absence of the Soviet ally has spurred many Arab countries, which depended in the past on Soviet protection, to seek the U.S. support.

The changes were not limited to foreign policy spheres. The demise of nationalism and socialism has facilitated the emergence of radical and religious movements inside the Arab world. A number of Islamic movements have appeared, seeking a political role.²⁰⁹ They send a message that they are looking for ways, including the use of violence, to address the wrongs made by Arab regimes. The young Muslim Arabs, whose political and economic rights have not been addressed by their political regimes, received the message of these movements and join their ranks.²¹⁰ Moreover, the activities of these movements are not limited to their respective Arab countries or regions, but they have expanded and become international organisations challenging the whole global order. This nonconformity has opened a new page in the Western-Arab encounters.

Notes

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²⁴ Teun Van Dijk, "Discourse, Context and Cognition", *Discourse Studies*, 8(1), 2006, p.163.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 291.

²⁶ Van Dijk, p. 293.

²⁷ Van Dijk, p. 294.

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- ⁴⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 301.
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Chapter Two

Western Representations of Arabs

Following the end of the Cold War, the Second Gulf War (1990-1991) provided the West with the opportunity to reconsider the role of the Arab world in their foreign policies.¹ The Arab world, a zone of conflict between the United States-led Western powers and the Soviet bloc during this ideological war, went to the top of the Western political agenda. Moreover, the deployment of an U.S.-led coalition in Saudi Arabia with a mission to liberate Kuwait epitomised the United States' new role as the sole military superpower in this vital region.² The assumed responsibility necessitated political engagement to resolve outstanding problems in the region, particularly the long-running Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

The Second Gulf War (1990-1991) marked a watershed moment in the Western approach towards the Arab world and the Middle East region in general. Before this war, the Arab world was not a priority for Western countries as they were deeply preoccupied with the emergence of new democracies in Eastern Europe following the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Bloc. However, the outrageous invasion annexation of Kuwait by Saddam Husayn on August 2, 1990 triggered a shift in the nature of the West's involvement in the Persian Gulf region. Western countries did not look at the invasion of Kuwait as a regional issue, similar to their reception of the First Gulf War between Iraq and Iran (1980-88). Rather, they dealt with it as a global crisis. Thus, United States President George Bush described the invasion as “a ruthless assault on the very essence of international order and civilized ideals.”³

To counter and thwart aggressions, the U.S. administration deployed an over 450,000-strong military force, equipped with sophisticated weaponry, to Saudi Arabia. This force was part of a large coalition of more than thirty participating countries, including the UK and France as well as Egypt and Syria.⁴ Despite the massive Iraqi Army deployment, coalition forces and their advanced weaponry managed to destroy the Iraqi Air Force and seize control in nearly six weeks following the beginning of the war on January 17th, 1991.⁵ The coalition crowned its

military victory in ground operations with the liberation of Kuwait on February 26th, 1991.

Although the war paralysed Saddam's military strength and capability of launching any attack against neighbouring countries, the United States administration believed its commitment did not end with the declaration of a ceasefire. On the contrary, the war reinvigorated the States' vision of a new world order and a new Middle East. This approach also took aim at addressing changes engulfing the balance of power all over the world and in particular the Middle East. United States Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney outlined this vision:

The major interests of the United States in the region required its continued close involvement; the United States would need increased presence and the capability, through pre-positioning of heavy equipment, to quickly return forces to the region should the need arise; and the long-term presence of US ground forces should be minimized.⁶

Along with maintaining peace in the Gulf region, the U.S. administration sought to bask in the success of the coalition of Western and Arab countries in the Gulf War, as a means of resolving major political conflicts, such as the long-standing Palestinian-Israeli conflict. A *New York Times* editorial on April 25th, 1991 evoked the new environment, saying:

The opportunity is extraordinary. For the first time since Israel's foundation as a state, Arabs and Israelis are at least talking about the shape of a peace settlement in the same broad terms. The Persian Gulf War has dramatically transformed strategic and political thinking across the Middle East.⁷

The American administration viewed the settlement of many outstanding problems in the Middle East lay in finding a way-out to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In a speech to a joint session with Congress on March 6, 1991, American President George Bush acknowledged the impact of the this long-running conflict, saying "We must do all we can to close the gap between Israel and the Arab States and between Israelis and

Palestinians...the time has come to put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict.”⁸

Hence, the U.S. Administration set about on a policy aspiring to reach a lasting peace in the convoluted Palestinian-Israeli conflict by pressuring both parties to accept compromises. The U.S. approach sought to provide Israel with peace and recognition, and at the same time legitimate political rights for the Palestinians. Although the U.S. approach did not acknowledge the concept of an independent Palestinian State, it projected, for the first time, a Palestinian autonomous entity. This direct political involvement reflected the growing role of the U.S. in the region and how its influence in the region had reached its highpoint by the end of the Second Gulf War. This prompted many U.S. policy-makers to believe that the triumph of their country in the war could serve in changing the political dynamics in the region and provide a golden opportunity to close the gap between Western and Arab countries.

However, the hopes of United States policy-makers to create a lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East region seemed too optimistic. Despite huge diplomatic efforts to bring about an Arab-Israeli peace, both parties appeared reluctant to compromise their basic positions. Although Western powers organised and sponsored the Madrid Conference (1991) between Israel and Arab countries, and the Oslo Accord (1993), peace agreements had hardly changed the ideological differences between the conflicting parties. Even though the Gulf crisis brought many Western and Arab countries together in one coalition, the outcomes of any Arab-Israeli agreement evaporated all chances of cooperation.

Consequently, Arab animosity towards Israel remained the same, if anything becoming worse. The tensions increased the Arab people's suspicions of their countries' commitments towards the U.S., and precipitated their reluctance to implement the U.S. vision of a new world order. Despite the major contributions made by America and the West, many Arabs, including Islamist fundamentalists, thought the West got involved in the Gulf crisis to protect its political and economic interests; not out of moral obligation. The frustration of the Arab masses resulted in the radicalisation of Islamist movements, which shaped a vision depicting the States-led West as the main enemy and Arabic regimes as their satellite rulers.

The Western intervention in the Arab world has unleashed adverse responses. First, it sparked argument about the legitimacy of bringing non-Muslim Western troops to the Arabian Peninsula in order to fight another Arab country.⁹ The division was also the cause of a rift between a Saudi Arabian royal family and their key ally, Saudi national billionaire Usāmah Bin-Lādin, who later staged a global religious war against the West.¹⁰ A string of violent actions that started with the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Centre by Islamist fundamentalists has brought the West and the Arab world in to a new phase of ideological war.¹¹

The Impact of the Second Gulf War on Western Fiction

In the 1990s, the rising stakes of the conflict led to an increase in the number of Western fictional works dealing with the volatile Arab world.¹² Western novelists began to move away from stories depicting encounters between left-wing characters and their adversaries, into those focusing on the Western-Arab binaries. Western fictional works shed a new light on Islamist movements and religiously motivated terrorism behind spectacular incidents like the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York. Violence was automatically associated with religious and nationalist movements from the Arab world.

Furthermore, Western fictional works representing Islamist radicalism portray the Arabs as ruthless and faceless killers who seek vengeance on the West for deep-seated ideological and religious reasons. Muslims are conflated with Arabs and there is no distinction between Arab and Islamic fundamentalists. Radicalism is seen as a symptom of the “Otherness” of the Arab world, rather than a problem within it. In contrast to the degenerate Arab “Other”, the U.S. emerges as superior, right, and unbeatable. While romanticising American nationalism, American writers intentionally depict its exclusionary ideology. The United States becomes a fortified society that excludes non-Americans.¹³

Thus, this representation has posited the Arab world within an ideological frame that conditions the public understanding of this region. Western writers consolidate this tendency by emphasising that Arabs have distinctive characteristics that make them a different group, thus showing them as “others”. The discourse of novels in the

1990s centred on the idea that the contact of the two worlds developed into a struggle between the civilised, democratic and modern West and the primitive, brutal and underdeveloped Arab world. The aspects of this struggle are manifested through various themes.

Another major theme is that the West's involvement in the protracted Arab-Israeli conflict. The Western representation of the first conflict supports Israel by invoking historical and religious aspects that strengthen Israel's claims. In contrast, Arab acts of violence are interpreted as terrorism. Although the nature of the West's role is unknown, it is depicted as having acted neutrally towards both the Israelis and the Palestinians; novels endeavour to show the West as mediating for peace through introducing a discourse illustrating the approaches of the two warring sides to its readers.

This romanticised image of the Arab world continued to appear in Western fiction in the 1990s. The Arab country is defined as timeless and out of touch with civilisation. The Arab space is objectified and its people are essentialised so as to convey the necessity of penetrating the space lived in by primitive people. The West uses space as a signifier of difference and segregation between cultures. Therefore, new contact does not remove boundaries, but it redefines it according to Western mainstream perspectives.

Western writers highlight that values of individuality and freedom are lacking in the Arab world. The condition of the Western individual is sharply contrasted with that of his/her Arab counterpart. Western fiction pays special attention to the differences between the West and the Arab world through underlining the absence of these typical Western values in Arab countries. At the same time, striking Arab totalitarianism is underscored by evoking Orientalist stereotypes that continue to the present day. These conceptions of Arabs seem interwoven with the Western ideological narrative that shapes their collective identity.

Gender has been an essential part of the discourse surrounding Western fiction. Writers use it to underpin the link between the Arab patriarchy and discrimination against women. Many Anglo-American writers draw Arab women as victims of the

historical and political developments in their region. Injustice against women still persists, despite the dissemination of new ideas about the gender and the progress of communication. These ideas are used to exclude Arab Others from the Western identity and the march of modernity; the unbalanced gender relations in Arab culture consolidating its disassociation from the West.

Nevertheless, Western fiction does not rule out the inclusion of Arab people within the Western system. Western writers put forward this assumption by reviving the Sheikh Romance. Thus, the virile and savage Arab is socialised and tamed by a Western female in order to be accepted within the West. This transformation is associated with another process: removing the hegemony of patriarchy. In other words, the Arab male is not only a symbol of the Arab world but also of men and their masculine dominations. However, the transformation of the Arab does not reflect harmony between the East and the West. On the contrary, it means the appropriation of Arab values and their replacement with Western ideals. Finally, Western fiction focuses on the idea that Western values are of the highest level and that other cultures should compromise or disassociate from the system and be classified as Other.

After reviewing a large number of Western novels that appeared in the period from 1991 to 2001, Anglo-American literature staging encounters between the Western and Arab worlds can be divided into two groups: the first accounts for the greater majority, consisting of thrillers, spy stories, and political and international intrigues; the second category consists of historical accounts, romances and adventure novels. The plots of both categories revolve around six main topics: the Arab-Israeli conflict, the excesses of Islamic fundamentalism, the Arab country as a land of political and individual repression, the sterility of Islam as a religion, oppressed Arab women, and the hedonism of the Arab male.

2-1 Friends, Lovers, Enemies

Barbara Victor's novel *Friends, Lovers, Enemies* is the first work discussed for two reasons.¹⁴ The first reason is chronological: the novel was published in 1991 and represents one of the earliest works that deals with the Arab-Western encounter

following the Second Gulf War. Secondly, the novel is one of the earlier Western novels that discusses the Arab-Israeli conflict and reflects the Western standpoint in the 1990s. Furthermore, it is also one of the few Western works that develops the Palestinian character in a realistic manner. The Arab character of this novel is based on the life of Khalil al-Wazir, a.k.a. Abu Jihad, the Palestinian military fighter and the aide of Yāsir Ārafāt, who was killed by an Israeli hit squad in Tunis in 1988.

American writer Barbara Victor is well versed in the Middle East and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. As a journalist, she covered this region for many years and interviewed many of its major political figures, including Yasir Arafat, Yitzak Rabin, Ariel Sharon and King Husayn.¹⁵ Her stories and articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Washington Post* and *Politique Internationale*.¹⁶ She also wrote three non-fiction books on the Middle East. Victor's first book *Terrorism* tries to shed light on the Lebanon War from 1975-1982. Her second book *A Voice of Reason: Hanan Ashrawai and Peace in the Middle East* highlights the role played by this Palestinian woman.¹⁷ Victor's book *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Woman Suicide Bombers* examines the roots of the phenomenon and the forces driving Palestinian women to conduct suicide operations at key stages in the intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹⁸

Victor's stint in the Middle East and her close working knowledge of its delicate nature gave her the ability to mix fiction with reality. This new portrayal also underlines the direct impact of Western foreign policy on fiction. Novelists toe the line of politics following the Second Gulf War, which emphasises the importance of giving the Arab world, to a certain degree, the right to voice their ideas and concerns. Although this novel is not free of historical misconceptions, it generally represents one of the earlier Western novels that develop an open Arab-Israeli discourse, allowing the reader to understand the ideological stances of both parties. It is noteworthy that the portrayal is different from that of many earlier Western novels, which tended to show only the Israeli viewpoint and ignore or mute any Palestinian view.

The plot recounts how Gideon Aviram, an undercover Israeli Mossad agent, uses Sasha Beale, an American television journalist, to gain information about the

renowned Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader Tamir Karami. The latter is to be interviewed by Sasha in a documentary series called “Family”. The Mossad agent is pursuing the Palestinian fighter, whose name appeared on first female Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir’s famous hit list, because he caused the death of many Israelis, including Aviram’s wife and son. Although Aviram’s initial motivation behind his relationship with Sasha is to reach Tamari, he falls in love with her and is reunited with her after exacting revenge on the Palestinian commander during a bold operation in Tunis.

The novel is portraying the same line of events that appeared in Victor’s first novel *The Absence of Pain* (1988), which deals with a female New York-based TV journalist who falls in love with a married Israeli soldier when she flees to the Middle East in order to forget her unsuccessful marriage.¹⁹ Yet Victor in this novel gives a voice to the Palestinian side, which is hardly covered in *The Absence of Pain*. This new consideration indicates Victor’s growing engagement with the Arab world and her interest miscomprehension of the roots of its resentment towards the Western involvement in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The main plot of the novel starts with the explosion at the Alitalia office in Rome. The event triggers an Israeli manhunt for the Arab guerrilla that masterminded the attack, adding another chapter to the Arab-Israeli saga. It also leads to the unplanned involvement of the American character Sasha Beale, a journalist on holiday in Rome. The incident prompts Sasha’s TV channel to ask her about providing media coverage of what happened. The blast also initiates Sasha’s personal engagement with an Israeli mother and son—a detail that the reader learns later is connected to the Israeli protagonist—and the long-standing Arab-Israeli conflict, which had never entered her mind before.

Apart from the aspects related to Sasha, the blast scene is reminiscent of the bloody scenes of aircraft hijackings and public place explosions in the 1970s and 1980s. It also demonstrates the continuation of such attacks against civilian people for political reasons. Repeating such a timeline of events in her novel reveals how the author uses her past religious, historical and political experiences to account for the present. Victor also wanted to emphasise the representation of the Arab-Israeli

conflict as a predominantly ethnic dispute, going back in history and continuing in the present. The elements of the scene depict the Palestinians as aliens living in Tunisia and threatening the Israelis both inside and outside their homeland of Israel.

This spatial separation creates ideological borders between the two groups. The borders constructed serve to homogenise each side in the conflict. Israelis are essentialised as one single political community facing internal and external threats in its territory. The killing of Miriam and her son outside Israel emphasises this principle. Furthermore, the killing of Miriam, who was working at the Holocaust Museum, invokes similarities between the Arabs and the Nazis, who themselves committed atrocities against the Jews. The novel asserts that the Holocaust is part of Israel's social memory.²⁰ This gives it a definitive identity by setting up the Arabs as outsiders and enemies.²¹

The author not only equates the Arabs with the Nazis, but also homogenises them by attributing a tribal mentality to them. Victor highlights internal conflict between Palestinian factions and the Syrians. This disagreement between the two Arab groups leads to the death of Karami's first son, Tarik and his departing Syria. This primitive conduct consequently emboldens the negative stereotypes nurtured by earlier Orientalist discourse. Palestinian primitivism is contrasted with the nobility of the Israelis and the Americans, as despite being of different ethnicities they are united. The novel discusses how "group identities must always be defined in relation to what they are not".²²

Moreover, the author exercises an exclusionary discourse against the Arab figure by placing him outside his predicted territories. In contrast, the Israeli characters are located inside Israel or performing intelligent, educated jobs abroad. The expatriation is an attempt to silence the Arab subaltern by disassociating his identity from the political cause of restoring his occupied territories. The author does not account for the spatial expatriation of Palestinian characters or explains the reason for them being outside their native territory. Michel Foucault's statement that "space is a question of power" works perfectly in this novel.²³ Victor takes the Palestinian outside of both his native space (Palestinian territories) and his cultural space (the novel).

This presentation of the characters is another technique used by Victor to belittle Arabs. By delaying the appearance of the Arab protagonist she prevents the Arab character from introducing his case and demonstrating the grounds of adoption of his current discourse towards the West, or at least his attitude towards his people's conflict with Israel. His belated appearance is sharply contrasted with the early appearance of the Western and Israeli characters. The writer's aptly timed manifestation of the Israelis allows them to create a rapport with the reader. The unbalanced technique reflects a clear bias in favour of the Arabs' rivals.

Furthermore, the author consolidates Israeli claims in the novel by creating more than three developed Israeli characters and opening up space for them to articulate their various views. The multiple voices agree on one common idea: that Israel is the victim and the underdog in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Rafi Unger, an Israeli diplomat, summarises his claim in this statement:

Please understand, Miss Beale, while the Rome terrorist attack was a major media event for us, it was just another atrocity...We have them nearly every day in our country" (Victor, p.126).

The novel allows Western and Israeli characters to invoke historical and political ideas that reinforce Israel's claims regarding the violent acts in Palestine. It also represents Arab acts of violence as terrorism, while showing those by Israel as "reprisal... directed at guerrilla bases".²⁴ The author ideologically shapes the Western view of the Arab reaction towards the Israelis.

As Renato Rosaldo in his article "Imperialist Nostalgia" points out "descriptions of character attitude are fertile sites for the cultivation of ideology".²⁵ Victor's treatment of the Palestinian character deprives them of the ability to defend their political ideologies. She reduces the Palestinian counter narrative initiated by Karami, the only Arab voice in the novel, through distorting his discourse and therefore the grounds of his claim:

(Karami): Do you think they weep for any of our children?

(Sasha): (B)ut I doubt that they are planning any kind of violent retaliation against your children. (Victor, p.259)

The Palestinian subaltern is deconstructed and transformed into a negative. The main Arab character is seen as a killer of children and innocent civilians.

Impartial Western Involvement

When the author shows the nature of the Western involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict, she tries to conjure the idea that the reasons for involvement of Western parties were nothing but humane. The scene of the dead Israeli mother and her son in Rome prompts the American Sasha to investigate the roots of the accident and track down the character that had planned the violent action. The writer also tries to portray Western involvement in the conflict as casual and impartial. Therefore, Sasha Beal runs into the encounter as a bystander who witnesses an act of terrorism. In other words, it implies that her opinion is a political and ideological one, albeit from a distant and objective stance.

The author uses third-person narration to invoke this neutrality. This method also allows her to present both the Israeli and Arab perspectives and then give the reader the space to judge the whereabouts of the conflict. However, the method of presentation of the ideas and the parties involved in the encounter reveals the opposite of this intention. For example, Victor magnifies and defines the minor Israeli characters, while she marginalises the minor Arab characters by reducing their identity into token appearances, such as the coffee man and numerous guards. As Spivak argues, tokenism does not allow the (Arab) subaltern to speak: “when you are perceived as a token, you are also silenced”.²⁶

Not only does the writer mar Western objectivity, at a later stage she also demonises the Arabs and paves the way for rejecting their perception of the conflict:

Sasha wanted to scream and to plead and to cry until it was as clear to her as it was to the rest of the world that these kinds of things just weren't done in the name of honour and commitment. ... (S)ince most of the world

didn't understand this ancient war whose adversaries never ran out of self-justifications. Not even the people who were so busy killing one another understood it, not even when they made their pious statements of regret" (Victor, p.258).

The author points out that the reader is not aware of the horrific nature of the Arabs. She describes them as ruthless killers who never regret their violent actions. Therefore, the series of crimes committed are going to continue:

One of the more spectacular actions during that period was when Karami took over a hotel on the rue de l'Ancienne Comedie and held a group of German tourists hostages...it wouldn't have attracted that much attention except that they were handicapped. (Victor, p. 117).

The above paragraph shows that Tamir Karami, the author's Arab character, is a callous international criminal who knows no mercy. The killing of Karami at a later stage is in retaliation against a brutal action committed by Palestinian guerrillas against a number of Israeli children, which resulted in Tamir finding his way on to Israel's most wanted list. His description is aesthetically tailored to fit in with his image in Western colonial culture as both an anti-Israeli fundamentalist and merciless international criminal. By identifying Karami as an anti-Israeli fundamentalist, Victor narrows the Palestinian viewpoint and aims at slicing the Palestinian subaltern, restricting the space in which the "colonized can be re-written back into history".²⁷

Arab Marginalisation

The author also uses the narration of the novel to marginalise and mute the Arab voice by reducing it to an object. The narration obliterates the identity of Karami and creates another imagined classification, in which the Palestinian is described as being from an inferior and bloody race.

Karami: "Why is the media more interested in our attacks than in the attacks the Israelis committed daily in the Territories?"

Beale: That is not the case. If you want to fault the media, say we tend to be more interested in the spectacular. You provided that kind of drama. Now the other side seems caught up ... Can't you acknowledge a terrible injustice when a child is killed in the name of any political cause? (Victor, p. 259).

Victor renders Karami as a repulsive Palestinian activist who assumes the mantle of savagery instead of depicting him as a human being with all the potential and frailty that the human condition inherits. Rather, it is a Western attempt at reconstructing the Palestinian character as a ruthless and cruel killer, fitting the West's perception of Arabs as an inferior race.

Furthermore, Victor portrays Karami as a fanatic who wants to subjugate Israel through a reign of terror. Dehumanised and demonised, Karami is depicted as anti-Semitic, anti-Israeli and a symbol of a backwards race. By depicting the Palestinian character as an enemy to humanity, it is another means of defaming him. Victor's novel not only encourages occupation and colonisation, but also propagates pro-Israeli political ideology.

The author works out a presentation strategy rooted in colonial discourse; the novel's narrative places the coloniser at the centre of the text, marginalising the colonised because he represents the horrible side of humanity. The narrator utilises his strength as a coloniser to name, describe and delete the Arab via several narrative subtleties.²⁸ The above-mentioned mechanism aims to re-invoke negative stereotypes of colonised people.

Paul Brown describes the technique that plays on the invocation of these stereotypes as "discursive strategy", which "locates or fixes the colonial other in a position of inferiority".²⁹ Victor attempts to reconstruct the imaginary enemy who fits the Western colonial concept of racially inferior. In other words, it is an orientalising process that works out how to stimulate the Western reader's fantasy. Victor's representation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a vivid example of the Western invention of Palestine as an Orient. The colonised Palestinian is viewed as violent,

cruel and anti-Semitic—a stereotype, which is repeated in Western literature to the extent that it becomes integrated into the popular and collective consciousness of Western people.

It is worth noting that Western cultural mythology is full of negative images of Arabs manufactured and promoted by predominantly Western writings. This had a great impact on writers dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict, such as Barbara Victor. As Edward Said states in *Culture and Imperialism*:

I do not believe that authors are mechanically determined by ideology, class or even economic history but authors are, I also believe, very much in the history of their societies, shaping and shaped by that history and their social experience in different measure.³⁰

In view of the Western cultural mythology surrounding the Arab Orient, the Palestinian appears in Victor's fiction as a marginalised and self-destructive individual who bears no resemblance to the typical Palestinian citizen. The writer controlled the testimony of the Arab character by reflecting on its historical development. Fanon stated in *The Wretched of the Earth* that colonialism "turns to the past of the oppressed people, distort, disfigure and destroy it."³¹

Victor exercises the information blackout by letting Karami express the history of his case and people, and then taking the reader by surprise with the discovery of the memories recounted by a 4-year-old boy. Karami speaks of the exodus of his family and the Palestinian people at the time of Israel's establishment. The author blames the Palestinian and their Arab allies for the tragedies they suffered:

You had a chance in 1947 to have a state of your own. It was offered to you by the United Nations. Why did the Palestinians refuse it?"

"Why doesn't matter. It was a mistake" (Victor, p.234).

The author follows the Orientalist tradition of obscuring realities from the region. She condemns the Arabs and blames them for brutalities committed against Palestinians. She also exonerates Israel of any responsibility for the brutalities that took place in

Palestinian territories. Victor blames the Palestinians for their tragedy. This trend continues in her later works on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In her book *Army of Roses*, she highlights Palestinian women conducting suicide operations, highlighting that a cause is their marginalisation within Palestinian society. They seek martyrdom to fulfil a personal commitment and to blindly respond to the systematic process of encouragement and psychological control.³²

Victor not only vilifies the Arabs, but also highlights the humanity of the Israeli Army and its civilised treatment of the Palestinian women and children who are not involved in any violence. When the Israeli hit squad enters Karami's house in Tunisia, they run towards him and allow Gideon Aviram to assume the task of killing. As an incarnation of heroic and moral values, Gideon Aviram refuses any violence against Karami's wife and children. The novel presents the killing of Karami as if it were only the revenge "of [a] bereaved father and husband" (Victor, p. 293) and a necessary operation by the Israeli Mossad against a ruthless killer of their people.

Moreover, the novel includes a vivid description of the Israeli security training. This deliberate attempt to ignore and conceal the atrocities committed by the Israeli security forces is part of the colonial discourse of the novel, which aims to justify the occupation and place blame on the victim. Throughout her representation of reality, Victor seeks to create a kind of amnesia, ignoring the real discourse of violence and replacing it with an alternative discourse which produces the Arab-Israeli conflict in a new form to fulfil invested political interests.

These images and grounds of action constitute what Edward Said calls "the moral epistemology of imperialism",³³ where the approved history of colonial nations, such as America, South Africa and Israel, starts with what he identifies as the "blotting out of knowledge" of the native people or making them "into people without history."³⁴ The author carries out this process by suggesting that the Palestinians that are part of the Arab World are victims of Arabs, who thought:

Homeless, we would fight the Jews for them. We had an incentive, an interest in it (Victor, p. 235).

The killing of Tamari at the end imparts Victor's main message that the schemes of the Arab to perpetrate barbarity as a means to an end, no matter how heinous, will fail because Israel has superior military and intelligence forces. The author believes that Israel has the right to use any means necessary to destroy the PLO, which is a tone felt on every page of the story.

Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens point out that the distinction between terrorism and the armed struggle of a nation under occupation is deliberately blurred in the West's coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict.³⁵ Said cites an article by Israeli Journalist Amnon Kapeliouk who contends that this strategy aims "to delegitimize Palestinian nationalism in toto..., the better to be able to ignore its undeniable claims on Israel".³⁶ Albert Memmi accounts for this contradictory discourse by stating that the coloniser's violence against the colonised is justified on moral grounds—which is defence for the nation and family in the Aviram case. The self-defence of the colonised, displaced from their own territories, is condemned as terrorism and seen as evidence of a barbaric, primitive nature.³⁷

The novel not only presents an example of a morally just Israeli hero, but infers that this hero is one to follow. Melanie McAllister underlines her favourite points about this character, saying, "They are brave and valiant; they take up arms reluctantly, but they fight well; and they take care of their own."³⁸ Aviram is taking revenge for his family and his country against a brutal terrorist. Then, the Israelis have the moral imperative to use any and all means against the Palestinians, including the killing of Tamari in Tunisia. Therefore, the novel re-models the Israeli-Arab conflict as a war in which Israel is fighting a just war against Arab terrorism.

Moreover, the separation of Tamari from his French wife Jocette at the end of the novel reflects the author's view that the rapprochement provided following the Gulf War in 1991 is not within the realms of possibility. Although Jocette sacrificed her freedom and rights towards keeping the relationship with Tamari, Tamari squanders the opportunity by wreaking havoc on civilian people. The author seems to feel that the Arab character does not value family life or the social obligations shared by a man and a woman. Victor underlines the widening cultural gap between the East and

the West, a view reiterated in a number of Orientalist works. She also underscores the absence of shared spiritual and moral values between the two cultures.

The Arab indifference to the civilised style of a family and relationship is contrasted with the will of the Israeli protagonist to embrace it. Therefore, when he manages to achieve his mission as a bereaved father and an Intelligence Officer, he travels to Sasha in order to revive his relationship and resume his stable course of family life. The reunion of Gideon Aviram and Sasha Beale in America also reflects that Israel is a Western outpost for the U.S. in the Middle East with which they share spiritual and moral values. Gideon's travels to America highlights the conclusion of the novel, showing that there is no viable solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and that, consequently, the Western-Arab antagonism is to persevere.

2-2 Innocent Blood

Unlike Victor's *Friends, Lovers, Enemies*, Christopher Dickey's novel *Innocent Blood* shows how the Americans—as representatives of the West—supersede the Israelis as victims of Arab/Muslim terrorism. Dickey, son of American poet and novelist James Dickey, has begun to get acquainted with the Middle East while working as *The Washington Post* Bureau Chief in Cairo in 1980s and after working as the Paris Bureau Chief and Middle East Regional Editor for *Newsweek Magazine* in the late 1990s.³⁹ His articles and stories shed light on political and social developments in the Middle East as well as offering a perspective on the mind-set that generates terrorism.⁴⁰

The novel deals with the Western-Arab encounter through international plots in which the Arab character remains the victim of Western monolithic discourse on the Orient. Dickey's novel typically underscores the condition of the American-Arab relations by following the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the initiation of the American hegemony. It also illustrates how Western writers, especially the Anglo-American world, have shifted their "bad guy" placeholder from predominantly Russian-speaking Soviets to Arab-speaking Palestinians or Islamists.⁴¹

Brian Edward, Assistant Professor of English and Comparative Literary Studies at U.S. Northwestern University, is one of the first literary critics to refer to the shift. He points out that “With the end of the Cold War a new foe quickly took the place of Soviet communism in the imagination of many Americans, much of the same energy that animated American fear of the “red” menace (the communists or the Soviets) shifted during the 1990s to panic in response to the “green” terror (militant Islamic fundamentalism)”.⁴²

The end of the Cold War led to writers redirecting their focus onto the Middle East and underlining its association with the concept of terrorism. Unlike previous thrillers about the Arab world, which portray Arabs as plane hijackers and bombers exacting revenge on the West for what they think is a biased view on the Arab-Israeli conflict, the 1990s’ novels depict the Arabs as radical Islamists looking for spectacular attacks against vital facilities in the U.S. Melani McAllister says these novels mark “a new substitution within the Orientalist discourse and an extension of the concept of the dangerous other.”⁴³

This discourse takes shape in Christopher Dickey’s *Innocent Blood*. The novel tells the story of Kurt Kurtovic, a former American Army soldier and the son of immigrant parents from former Yugoslavia, who is lured by an Arab jihadist into becoming a terrorist. The ideological recruitment of the protagonist aims to stage a media-grabbing attack against civilians gathering at the NFL Super Bowl match in New York. The novel illustrates Kurt’s disillusion with global jihadist ideas as his American identity triumphs over its vestigial religious and cultural nature.

Dickey’s *Innocent Blood* is his first novel and the key work in revealing his interest in counter-terrorism, espionage and the Middle East. As a journalist both at the *Washington Post* and *Newsweek*, Dickey tried to cover the Arab world and give a better understanding for detached American readers.⁴⁴ Dickey also investigated the roots of anti-American sentiments across the Middle East. In relevant context, he has studied the tenets of Islamic fundamentalism in a search for their ideological grounds for attacking the United States of America. He states that a new element in his search lies in the following statement:

I started work on “Innocent Blood” in early 1994 after doing months of intense investigative work on the World Trade Center Bombing. There would be more terrorism in America, I thought. It would come to the heartland. And because so much counter-terrorism thinking was based on racist stereotypes, a blonde, blue-eyed “All American killer would be invisible to the system. So I set the beginning of the novel in Kansas, in a town not far from the Oklahoma border, and I created a profile of a young man trained to kill by the U.S. Army—a Ranger, a Gulf War Veteran—who feels a void in himself that he cannot admit.⁴⁵

Oklahoma in this context refers to the Oklahoma City bombing in April 1995, considered the deadliest of its kind in America at the time, as it killed 168 people and injured 600.⁴⁶ The huge attack and the discovery that the perpetrator was a white American named Timothy McVeigh - carrying out the violent attack to exact revenge upon Christians - did not leave an impact on Dickey. He clung to his thinking that that immigrant people from the Middle East could be posing a threat to America. “I had written half the book in April 1995 when I got a call from Newsweek’s New York Headquarters telling me the Federal Building in Oklahoma City had been blown up. I did not change the story to adapt to events. I didn’t need to.”⁴⁷

Dickey justifies his indifference to the magnitude of the Oklahoma City bombing by saying that terrorism has become “anybody’s game” and can be carried out by “individuals with terrible intent answerable only to their own ideas of God and justice.”⁴⁸ However, he acknowledged his ideas on attributing terrorism charges to Arab people in a later publication:

I met a woman who was all-American in looks and language but whose name was Arabic and whose father was an immigrant from Algeria who taught French in Kansas. This struck me as strange and fascinating. I had just a couple of conversation with this woman, and she was certainly not a terrorist, but as I thought about her background, the “self” I wanted to take shape.⁴⁹

The statement reveals how terrorism overwhelmed Christopher Dickey in the 1990s and became a predominant concept that attracted Western writers. Dickey highlights a new vision for the potential terrorist, saying “the greatest danger to our peace is not would-be hi-tech terrorist intent on fabricating a nuclear device. It is the man or woman with just enough skills to get the job done.” However, Dickey stops short of explaining why terrorism is allegedly ascribed to Arabs and Muslims as well as the shaping of these charges.

Early chapters shed light on the character of Kurt and his growth from a teenager to a mature man to his joining the US Army. The novel establishes a connection between the strength of the strong American hero and the nation’s strength. It is no coincidence that details of Kurt’s development run alongside the emergence of America as the most powerful nation in the world following the disintegration of the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s. The novel demonstrates the prowess of the U.S. in the spectacular body of the American protagonist. The first and second chapters detail Kurt’s strong body and his tough reactions as exemplified during the U.S. Army training when he beats David, his brother-in-law. His body strength can symbolise “a form of protection” and function as “a sort of armour against the world”.⁵⁰ Kurt stands as the hero rescuing Americans from Arab terrorists.

These features of strength are clearly manifested in Kurt's performance during the U.S. invasion of Panama and the U.S. capture of its president Manuel Noriega. Crossing the border and undertaking the mission of deposing the Panamanian ruler reflects the new trend in U.S. foreign policy and the States' new self-appointed role as the world’s policeman. This new role necessitates missions outside U.S. territories to restore peace and achieve justice even when requiring military operations. The U.S. identity is thus seen as one projected externally as an all-embracing identity that looks to form the other into a better shape.⁵¹

The consolidation of power of identity for Kurt came to a halt when he reaches a turning point in his life as he is called to see his dying mother in hospital. His mother tells him of his father, a Bosnian, and his Islamic roots, giving him his father’s Koran in addition to a notebook of translated Islamic rituals. Dickey adds an element of cultural hybridity to the protagonist by revealing that the rugged Western hero has

Eastern roots. This cultural addition appeals to an American society reared on the notion of heterogeneity of immigrant society. It also posits a new American/Muslim conflict and initiates Kurt's search for his true identity.⁵²

Kurt's search intensifies when his unit is deployed to Saudi Arabia, the home of Islam, as part of a multi-national coalition intent on liberating Kuwait from Saddam's regime. His knowledge of his Islamic roots shakes his previous opinion of the American identity and initiates questions about his current identity. The protagonist's encounter with the novel's first Arab character Khalid al-Turki, a Saudi officer, reflects on how Kurt has transformed into a hybrid subject. In Bhabha's terms, this subject feels that he is "neither the one nor the other".⁵³ His wavering between two cultures prompts him to articulate cultural differences as a process of both integration and resistance throughout his encounters with the Other.⁵⁴

Kurt expresses an ambivalent relationship with Arab/Muslim culture. He is willing to learn more information about Islam and Arab culture, but he is not attracted to Saudi Arabia the locale. His experience in Saudi Arabia makes him see it in a negative way, as a land of taboo, inhibition and, most strikingly, harem-filled. When Kurt is invited to attend a party organised by his Saudi student Khalid, he sees girls who:

(A)rrived in stretch Mercedes Limousine driven by Pakistani chauffeurs. They were clustered in the back like crows in a cage, their bodies and faces covered completely in black. But as they walked into the house they shed the layers like butterflies coming out of the cocoons and by the time they reached the pool, they were dressed for Malibu.⁵⁵ (Dickey, p. 102).

The female other is exposed to symbolise "the Western masculine power of possession, that she, as a metaphor for her land, becomes available for Western penetration and knowledge".⁵⁶ The party scene and the plethora of Arab women justify the American intervention in the region.

The American-led Western presence is accepted as it gives protection and security for Arab women. Thus, the answer to Kurt's question about "what would happen to Saddam" is: "Oh, ever since you said you would protect us we are not worried,' said

the blonde” (Dickey, p. 103). The representation of Arab women as an ideological tool aims at maintaining the U.S. as a world policeman and protector of humanity. It is an implicit criticism of the patriarchal role held over women in the Arab world. The arguments (superior/inferior, democratic/authoritarian, developed/backward) correspond with the American/Arab world dichotomy.

Kuwait is meant to function as a generally passive background in the novel, where the U.S. army victoriously encounter Iraqi troops. U.S soldiers break into the unknown landscape, camouflaged in Iraqi uniform, hiding in holes full of putrid water in order to shoot their enemies. In their search for the Iraqi troops, they have examined the space from every angle. Images of smart weapons and guided strikes are prevalent. U.S. Army soldiers not only hit their targets, but they also penetrate the landscape. The focus is on U.S. soldiers’ heroism and their resolve to sacrifice their life for other people’s freedom. It implies two things: first, it stands for penetrating the land of the Other and seizing its cultural space.⁵⁷ Second, it marks the end of primitivism and the start of civilisation.⁵⁸

The writer appropriates the Arab characters in any role when only identifying them as idle, fat, and black wearing traditional white robes. The Arab characters identified by the narrator are described in a way that makes them seem ambiguous and unknown. It is a tool to heighten the suspense of the reader. Yet it is, at the same time, a ploy to alienate the reader from this character. The abjection of the other through reductionist language constitutes a form of primitivisation of the other as Julia Kristeva points out. In her *Powers of Horrors*, she uses the concept of abjection to analyse the individual’s separation from—and later his identification with—not only his mother but also his father.⁵⁹

While the American-led coalition managed to drive Iraqi troops from Kuwait in 1991, all attempts to override the fragmented self by Kurt have gone in vain. His obsession with his true identity continues to invade Kurt’s life. Even his attempt to forget his past experience in the Arab world by spending some time at a bar and having sex with a Filipino call girl, ends with a stark discovery. He finds out that the Filipino call girl is a Muslim named Aysha. The name refers to the youngest wife of Prophet

Muhammad and the unexpected encounter with a character carrying this name has led Kurt to believe that escaping his Muslim roots is impossible.

Like a romantic hero, isolation aggravates Kurt's suffering and the notion of centrality of identity leads him to consider travelling to his parents' land. The apex of his suffering appears when he feels that the U.S. is no longer his home:

The idea that I belonged somewhere else had been growing in me for long time ...Americans do not know about belonging. I thought, and now I'd begun to know my faith. I wanted to find my history, too to find just that place where I belonged in every sense-belonging to the land, to the people, part of their blood, their past, their future. (Dickey, p.152).

The protagonist feels the U.S. Army does not give him the sense of belonging that he sought when he joined. Furthermore, the U.S. as a country does not fill the void that is growing inside him. Consequently, Kurt leaves the army, which stands for his American identity and Western culture, to void his consciousness and start once again. This step functions as a fresh start in the search for a valid identity. In other words, the journey to former Yugoslavia is not a short stay or a tourist trip, but rather a journey of self-discovery by which he can penetrate the cultural space of his parents' native land and explore his potential identity.

Kurt's journey to Croatia and Bosnia introduces him to a new reality: Yugoslavia was divided along ethnic and religious lines following a civil war that broke out in 1991. Muslim Bosnians, his father's people, were left helpless in the middle between the overwhelming Orthodox Serbs and the powerful Catholic Croats. As the Croats succeeded in defending themselves against the Serbs, the Bosnians fell prey to other ethnicities of the former communist country that had military capabilities. For this reason, global jihadists streamed into Bosnia and Herzegovina to act as its army. Kurt starts to empathise with the suffering of the Muslim Bosnians on the ground and looks for ways to help them

His links and sympathy with these Muslim militants strengthens after meeting Rashid, the only Arab man whose conduct he appreciated during his mission in the

Second Gulf War, while he was en route to his father's birthplace. In Bosnia, Kurt is also introduced to the worst horrors, of which he has not heard or seen in American media. His discovery of these brutalities and his respect for Rashid leads him to believe in the ideals of global jihadists, which are rooted in the lack of justice and the West's biased treatment of the Muslim/Arab world, particularly in regards to the Israeli/Arab conflict and the seemingly unconditional U.S. support for Israel.

The writer draws the character of Rashid as the epitome of anti-Western and anti-American sentiment. He is also the symbol of global jihad. His actions emanate from the belief that the U.S. is tipping the conflict between Israel and the Arab-Islamic world in favour of the Hebrew state. They also think the Arab regimes let down the Palestinian cause. Rashid explicitly tells Kurt about them and how he sees fundamentalism is the only way to right the wrongs he has experienced and the appropriate response to abuses he is suffering:

Our family was driven out of Palestine in 1948... Now Israelis live where my mother was born, Israelis have my grandmother's shop. They claim it all belongs to them. All that they stole. You know my mother still has a key to our house in Jaffa? She has the deed. My grandmother took it with him. He thought he would be going back. The Arabs were going to get it all back to us. (Dickey, pp. 182-183).

Like Barbara Victor in her novel *Friends, Lovers and Enemies*, who attributes the problem of the Palestinian refugees to the Arabs' rejection of the UN two-state solution, Dickey ascribes the frustration of Palestinian fighters who join global jihadist groups to the mistreatment they have received at the hands of the Arabs:

(W)e lived with the black-eyed Arabs of the desert. Others from Palestine lived with the Egyptian boot on the back of their necks. We lived – wherever we could live – and we waited. But all the Arabs did was lose more, even Jerusalem, until Al-Aqsa was in the hands of the Jews. And we lived with those Shit Kuwaitis, and we built their country, and they lost even that – and then they blame us. They are pigs, these people. (Dickey, p.183).

Dickey showcases the Arabs in conflict to homogenise them in order to ascribe a tribal status and primitivism that invokes Orientalist discourse. The Arab world, though composed of one ethnicity, is seen as fragmented and weak, while America, though composed of different ethnicities and races, is united and powerful. From Dickey's point of view, this imbalance necessitates unrest and violence directed towards the West.

In other words, Dickey constructs the Arab Jihadist as possessing a fixed identity that poses a threat to the existing social order.⁶⁰ Bhabha argues that this is a feature of the ideological construction of Otherness in colonial discourse. He points out that colonial discourse tends to demonstrate this fixity in a contradictory way. It shows its "rigidity and unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition".⁶¹ The Western representation tries to divest the Arab world with fundamentalism in order to justify "ruthlessness against the other by concealing similarity between the other and itself".⁶²

Kurt's begins developing an anti-American frame of mind when he starts to probe the scale of brutalities afflicting the Bosnians. However, the key event takes place when he goes on a mission behind the fault lines of Serbian-held territories and sees the abuses committed against a 15-year-old Bosnian girl. She is raped, tortured, burned and dumped outside a barn occupied by the Serbs. Drawing similarity between the Bosnian and Palestinian tragedies suggests how short the distance between enthusiastic fundamentalism and the practice of terror can be. Furthermore, the links between the victims make it easier for Rashid to play on Kurt's doubts and fears that the U.S. is the evil behind the tragedies happening to the Arab/Muslim world:

Each morning as I listened, anger rose up in me like the sun. True and horrible stories, what I was living every night, were not even believed by the people who reported them. You could tell by the tone of the announcers. They would talk about massacres, rapes, torture, slaughter, and they would sound puzzled. Or they would say everybody did that sort of things in these parts. I thought at first that the people in America did not – could not – know what was going on here. But they did not know, in a general sort of way. They just did not care. They could have done more to

learn. They could have done more to help. So much more. But just didn't, and I started to realize that, in a way, that made them accomplice (Dickey, p. 201).

The protagonist feels America has let down Muslim countries and harbours strong emotional issues with U.S. Foreign policy. Being a U.S. citizen, Kurt is now satisfied that he can change American foreign policy. He can also take the war home with him by penetrating the heart of the American elite in order to teach the States a hard lesson. Kurt, at that moment, gives tacit approval based on his field experience.

When he returns home to his original culture after experiencing Bosnia, Kurt develops a new consciousness, a new vision towards his home and his parents' native country. America is no longer a valid home and a source of pride. Kurt's former captivation with the U.S. is replaced with a new conclusion and a new perception on true identity and space. Back in his country of birth, he realises:

In December 1992, at every turn, in every corner of the world, Muslims were reviled; humiliated, murdered, tortured, killed....God knows how Americans enjoyed feeling sorry for everyone else that December, before knocking back their drinks and sitting down to their turkeys (Dickey, p. 251).

Humanity and mastery, which have been exclusively attributed to America, are now being discerned in the eyes of the American Muslim and felt in his heart. Kurt's rebellion against his country and his people evolves into a deeper understanding of the dialectic of the West and Muslim worlds. This resentment reinforces Kurt's identification with Rashid's world and prompts him to go ahead with his plans to stage a spectacular attack against vital U.S. facilities.

By displacing the action to the States and making all of his central characters American, Dickey effectively forecloses any possibility that the reader will enter imaginatively into the experiences that produced and sustained Arab fundamentalism. Instead, Dickey highlights that threats to Americans can exist at home. The depiction of terrorism inflicted on vital facilities is obviously inspired by

actual bombings in the 1990s. This heightens the drama of the rescuing situation, when resolved, and also heightens the heroism of American saviours. Foucault's statement about Western writers that "have not reached the point of the de-sanctified...still governed by a certain number of oppositions that remain inviolable" is relevant here.⁶³

Furthermore, the sacredness of a space sets boundaries that deny the space to others and excludes them physically and culturally from the homeland. David Morley states that members of a society create imaginary geographies that locate them at the core and the Other at the periphery as different and threatening.⁶⁴ In *Innocent Blood*, all Arabs living in America are represented as terrorists who harbour a grudge against America and are ready to carry out lethal attacks against its people. The author stops short of defining the grounds of their resentment, but he comes up with the conclusion that their anger results in their implications in terrorist schemes against the U.S.

The political conflict between the U.S. and Arab/Muslim terrorists in the novel operates as a transforming factor for the American landscape. It moves from being the land of inclusion, America as a melting pot, to becoming a land of exclusion in which the imagined authentic American community rejects outsiders.⁶⁵ As a fragile status that can be revoked anytime, the 'American-ness' of the Muslim/Arab people is untrue and unsettled. The novel attempts to deny the power of the peripheral Muslim-Arab world that can "deconstruct any centre of which it is part."⁶⁶ The author materialises the rejection of the Arab/Islamic perspective by exposing the unwholesome relationships between members of this community.

The rejection is consolidated in Kurt's mind when he realises the destructive schemes hatched against the American people. Consequently, discovering the discrepancy between Rashid's propagated ideas versus his actions, leads Kurt to disavow the viewpoints he embraced following his visit to the former Yugoslavia. The redemption of the American hero comes when he finds out that Rashid is planning to stage a chemical attack against American civilians. His suspicion is strengthened when he uncovers that Aziz Hilmi, the Arab expert who sets up chemical weaponry, has been killed to obliterate any trace of the upcoming crime.

Negating the Arab other and severing ties with its ideology allows Kurt's return to American culture. Kurt is reinstated into American society thanks to the appearance of Chantal Silberman, an American researcher of terrorism and the Arab world at a famous think tank in New York. Kurt runs into Chantal while he is in a café. Their short conversation develops into a friendship that would change Kurt's views and his political orientation. Chantal puts forward a new model of character and thinking, developed in America. In other words, the writer presents the possibilities of immigrant society in America and engages the reader to decide their standpoint on the Muslim character.

The writer refutes the grounds for Kurt's Islamist frustration by establishing opposition between him and Chantal. Unlike Kurt, Chantal, a daughter of French immigrants who lost relatives in World War Two, has not taken this issue as reason to alter her attitude towards America or blame it for the calamities that ruined her life. Moreover, Chantal's research serves to de-validate the political agenda of Islamist fundamentalism while at the same time strengthening the American nationalist agenda that sees Islamic fundamentalism as another. Presenting different discourse elucidates how the US nation "utters different narratives for its different inhabitants".⁶⁷

In contrast, Kurt's innocence is juxtaposed with the representation of the Arab terrorist as a dehumanised monster. The comparison underlines the aspects of the Western/Arab encounter in a number of fictional works throughout the 1990s. Furthermore, highlighting the image of the American hero as the rescuer of the nation from Arab terrorists is an attempt to silence any political claim from the Arabs. It actually perpetuates their association with negative connotations—mainly terrorism. It is a method of cultural defence in which the novel becomes a "political metaphor", whereby one discourse, namely U.S. foreign policy, is dominant.⁶⁸

The novel ends with a U.S. victory and the justification of its foreign policy. While celebrating Kurt's masculinity, when he has risked his life to rescue American civilians, it exemplifies the perceived inevitable end of inhuman terrorism. The death of the Arab character stands for the termination of a threat a cruel and barbaric enemy could pose to America. The novel illustrates how America manages to rid

itself of terrorism. The symbolic battle between nations, as presented in the novel, rests on the idea of strengthening the American national identity to the point that it is invincible. The novel eliminates any doubt about the validity of America's political and military actions, maintaining its position as a righteous world policeman.

While the Anglo-American writer's representation of the American/Western character may have changed, their representation of the Arab character remains the same. The Arab male is highlighted as a threat to the peace and integrity of America and the world as a whole. The writer's focus is on the conflict between Western and Arab values, citing it as the main force driving Arab radicalism against the West and its people. However, the above novels do not deal with the nature of political or ruling regimes in the Arab world and are confined by the reaction of their Arab characters towards major political events.

2- 3 I Know Many Songs, But I Cannot Sing

American writer Brian Kiteley in his novel *I Know Many Songs, But I Cannot Sing* (1996) distinguishes his work from the previously two discussed novels by depicting a new perspective on the Western-Arab encounters. His approach focuses on looking at the Arab world from inside, featuring the dialectics of the Self/Other in a unique way. The writer redefines the contacts between the Western and the Arab world by glossing over a number of abstractions like the political reactions towards global and regional events. He rather focuses on Egypt following the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Al-Sadat by an Islamist fundamentalist in 1981. He draws an image of an Arab country and the traditions of its society. He elaborates on his mechanism to approach the Arab world and perceives the manners of its people in a Western way. In other words, the West is used as a yardstick to assess aspects of Arab culture and traditions.

In this novel, Kiteley moves the setting from American to international. The challenges facing the protagonist of the novel are similar to those of the hero in Kiteley's previous novel *Still Life with Insects* (1989). The hero of *Still Life with Insects* is a Minnesota chemist and amateur entomologist, recovering from a nervous breakdown by recording the circumstances of his life.⁶⁹ Likewise, the

protagonist of *I Know Many Songs, But I Cannot Sing* is Ib, an alienated expatriate university history professor, searching for his identity while interviewing people across Cairo's shadowy streets.

The novel is a direct reaction to Kiteley's time spent in Cairo as a teacher at its American University. His stay in Egypt gives him the opportunity to become acquainted with the Arab world and details a firsthand experience of this world and the cultural interplay between the Western and Arab characters. This approach was a success and the novel was received with great popularity in American cultural quarters on account of the underlying West/Other duality theme. Michael Gorra points out that the reader considers it "a bold attempt to deal with the issues of colonialism, mimicry, and otherness that have engaged so much of the most important fiction being written today".⁷⁰

The story begins as Ib returns to Cairo from Massachusetts after attending the funeral of his stepfather. It is the last week of the Islamic period of Ramadan when daylong fasting from food, drink and so much more, from sunrise to sunset, hits hard on the body and mind, creating a surreal environment, which is a dominant aspect in Kiteley's fictional writings. The setting indicates the writer's attempt to show Egypt as a place infused with exotic imagery. It also highlights the Islamic culture and the people still practising its rituals.

This type of narrative allows Kiteley to mix fact with fiction in a world where logical rules are suspended. It is also reminiscent of the intriguing environment created by Franz Kafka, where reality is used as a special realm of a boundless dream.⁷¹ This style of narrative allows the writer to indulge in a sequence of events not necessarily connected. However, the core of events rests on realistic aspects of life that demonstrate the interaction of people and their shaping of ideas. The rising political tension in Egypt at this historic juncture heightens suspense and underlines the themes

While in Egypt, Ib befriends Gamal-Leon, an Armenian working as a translator in Cairo, who continues to be his companion from the beginning of the novel till the end. They moved from one café to another, to theatre rehearsals, and to a prison for

an interview with a jailed fundamentalist, before finally ending on the edge of the desert. Their movements feature endless search for an identity and a new approach to the binary of the West and the Arab world. They also demonstrate a Western journey into the Arab culture to find out the possible similarities between the two. The interviews represent an exploration of Egypt's people at that critical time and whether the perspective of Arab-Western rapprochement is a possibility

The engagement with people illustrates the players of cultural dialogue between the East and the West and aspects of their interaction. On the one hand, Egypt and Egyptian people represent Eastern culture. On the other hand, Ib symbolises the Western part of European culture and Gamal-Leon, the Armenian, stands for the Eastern part. Ib and his companion are digging deeply into the roots of the Western-Eastern encounter. They look for them by going on errands to meet people for interviews across Cairo's mysterious streets.

The writer from the outset emphasises the context of separation and segregation between the West and the Arab world by scaling down the window of convergence between them, notwithstanding Western attempts to cancel this divergence. Despite living for years in Egypt as a resident, Ib, who resembles the author as an American professor of Islamic history at a University in Cairo, is still considered a foreigner. The novel starts with a scene showing Ib talking with an Egyptian man calling Ib "Khawaja", a foreigner from the West, despite that fact that the latter speaks Arabic during the conversation. The isolation and estrangement that Ib feels in his interaction with people in Egypt mirrors the general limits of human understanding and the absence of direct contact between the Arab world and, in particular, the West.

Kiteley explores the factors precipitating this widening gap by presenting polyglot, complex characters with murky features. Ib is distressed following the death of his Dutch stepfather, who Ib's mother divorced to be able to marry Ib's father. Ib is not on good terms with his sister because she is jealous that he received his stepfather's entire inheritance. In the meantime, Gamal-Leon struggles with his unfortunate marriage to a Christian Egyptian, whose sister converted to Islam so that she could

marry a Muslim extremist that then went to jail. The variety of characters adds an exquisite cosmopolitan flavour to the novel and its ideas.⁷²

The writer offers a little domain featuring two dissimilar worlds. The contact between these two worlds turns into a duet of mutual cultural misunderstanding. The author emphasises that there is contact between the two worlds, but that it can never amount to communication. However, the narrative lays the blame for this miscommunication on the Arab world as it is backward and inferior in comparison with the Western world.

The one-sided accusation holds the Arab/Easterner in the circle of periphery and dependency. Featuring the Arab culture and Egypt as objects to be sexualised, exoticised and romanticised reinforces this cultural relegation. As Edward Said states in his book *Orientalism* the East was “almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences”.⁷³ The Egyptian is rendered as an exotic and native figure of the Oriental Other.

Kiteley embodies this marginalisation through the technique of narration. Glen Weldon in the *Iowa Review* comments on the novel saying that the reader “sees Ib only at a great distance, through the scrim of his confusion and his (quite considerable) memory lapses”.⁷⁴ This technique allows very little information about the protagonist to be given, and the reader can only learn about him through his dealings with others. The meeting between Ib and Gamal-Leon, an Egyptian character carrying the same name of Ib’s former Armenian friend, is one of the best examples illustrating this technique. This is Gamal teasing Ib by telling jokes over the course of night and putting on different disguises; these disguises uncover some of Ib’s history and conjure events from his past. Unlike the Egyptian characters shown in the story, the replies of the protagonist highlight him as a committed person who is socially and culturally engaged.

This style is common in popular Western fiction, which tackles events in the Arab world. Writers use this technique of narration in order to show the Western viewpoint on events in the Arab world, and to restrict access to any Arab voice. In *Orientalism*

Edward Said explains how “the West has held the privileged position of interpreting the world through Western eyes, of constructing and controlling the dominant reality. The colonised have had to accommodate and to assimilate to live in this world ordered and defined by the West”.⁷⁵ Then, the West employs this technique to impose its perspective of actions and its encounter with the Other world.

The West as a colonising power justifies its involvement in the encounter by presenting a negative picture of those colonised as barbarians, or at best naïve people incapable of governing themselves and therefore in need of some benign and resourceful power to guide them. This kind of dichotomy is the underlying principle of colonial relationships. Therefore, the colonised are considered as a homogenous group of backward nations.

The stereotypes of colonised peoples, regardless of their nationality, have common negative characteristics in Ania Loomba’s terms: “laziness, aggression, violence, greed, sexual promiscuity, bestiality, primitivism, innocence and irrationality are attributed... by the English, French, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese colonists to Turks, Africans, Native Americans, Jews, Indians, the Irish, and others”.⁷⁶ With the distinction of civilisation and barbarism as the demarcating line between man and beast, the Self and the Other, and the Occident and the Orient; Kiteley reflects Egypt as dirty, ugly and living under tyranny. In the first chapter, Kiteley cites an extract from a novel that’s publication was serialised in *Al-Ahali*, a local Egyptian newspaper. The paragraph recounts:

A sultan in medieval times decides a certain Sheikh, later a saint, is developing too large a following. The sultan sends agents to do what they must do. The saint assumes several different forms – as a lowly donkey, as a beautiful young woman, and as a wrinkled old man – to fool the agents of the sultan. They are so baffled they are won over and they turn on their master, who in turn has to disguise himself as a street actor and circus performer to escape their vengeance (Kiteley, p.19).

The story is an allegory depicting the Arab world as a state full of political repression in which the rulers impose their powers by political deceit and through silencing the

opposition. The story alludes to the fact that that clout of these rulers will inevitably diminish, however hard they try to keep it in place. The Arab world is drawn as being in a state of fear, where overwhelming incarceration enslaves human beings.

Kiteley delineates the impact of the political oppression on the people by citing examples of members from the Muslim Brotherhood who disguise their dress and appearance in order to remain incognito before government security. Gamal-Leon explains to Ib that Saffyah, a female member in the Muslim Brotherhood, walked in the street wearing jeans and without the veil she usually wears “to avoid harassment ... (The) Muslim Brothers shave their beards in the villages to keep from being beaten by the police all the time”. (Kiteley, p.94).

The author satirises the political situation in Egypt and the big brother culture that has dominated Egyptian life since the killing of Anwar Al-Sadat. Gamal-Leon says:

The police are everywhere. It's called the City Eye system. People aren't frightened as they were under Sadat or Nasser, but in fact they're dangerously lulled into a feeling that this regime is incompetent, basically good-hearted. Personally I am glad so many of my conversations are being recorded. When I'm an old man, I'll use the records like ancient journals and perhaps write my autobiography. (Kiteley, pp.121-122).

This atmosphere, which is also present in George Orwell's *1984* and generally in communist countries, haunts Ib, the American/Western protagonist, and turns him into a paranoiac. He even starts to believe he is being pursued and watched by the government. The author imparts his perception about this Arab country to Western readers who may not be in touch with the current situation at the time. It is noteworthy that insinuation of such terror reminds the reader about the Soviet states and implies that the Arab world is not different from theirs.

The Orient: An Antithesis To The West

The examples chosen from this novel aim to distort the identity of Arab people. The distortion transforms them into people “without history” living in a timeless dark

age.⁷⁷ Interestingly, the implications made are similar to those in previous writings about the Arab world, which, in turn, proves that the representations of Orientalism writers still run deep within Western literature. The Arab subaltern remains the colonised victim of racial representation, which “[represses] the political history of colonialism”.⁷⁸

As well as consolidating the marginalisation mechanisms, Kiteley’s novel foreshadows a faith in the supremacy of the West through emphasising the inferiority of Arab culture; the writer does this on several occasions. One of these subtleties is showing Arabs as dependent and complacent. Kiteley says that bureaucracy runs deep inside Egyptian institutions, which makes it difficult for officials to rule the country and exacerbate the suffering of Egyptian immigrants coming to Cairo from other provinces. Fort Worth, another American character in the novel, “calls Egyptian ‘wogs’ behind their backs” and “rails against their circular thinking” (Kiteley, p. 109).

Furthermore, the author explains that the above-mentioned imperfections turn Egypt into a poor country and one that sharply contrasts with the sound procedures followed in Western countries. It repeatedly mentions that uncleanliness and air pollution are rife in Egypt: “The air pollution blown briefly into the desert, and the odours of unwashed bodies and donkey manure and absolutely unregulated vehicle exhaust fumes are as intoxicating as ever” (Kiteley, p. 12). In another example, “(a) certain street can’t make up its mind which direction to go and dithers, turning sharply here and there, narrowing, then widening, before it abruptly concludes in a great pile of bricks and trash” (Kiteley, p. 15).

Apparently, the distorted image of the Egyptian and the false Arab world history aims to stereotype the colonised Arab and obscure the realities of the colonisers. The ultimate fictional discourse reveals the existence of racial and ideological demarcation separating the colonising West and the colonised East. After being Orientalised and exhibited to the readers, the Arab has to conform to the Western norms of the Arab world; he should be a replica of past writings, which show him as ruthless, despotic, inferior and an incarnation of dependency.

Sexualising the Arab world

In addition, the author uses the image of the Arab world as an object of sexuality in order to subvert the Other. The novel includes many detailed sexual scenes, which satisfy the Western appetite by arousing “a desire for direct and physical contact with the exotic, the bizarre, and the erotic”.⁷⁹ The sex scenes are meant to titillate readers so that they can in some way experience the bodies of Arab women, who in reality are not available for their consumption.

Western readers can imagine themselves as the characters that touch, caress, probe, explore, and consume the bodies of the Orient. Readers are invited to weave themselves into the text as sexual objects. At the same time, readers can maintain their distance because the characters in the novel are fictional. For instance, Gamal-Leon talks about the promiscuity of Suha, an Egyptian ambassador’s daughter, saying: “that girl was no virgin. I’ve seen her at orgies that would make you blush even if you saw them on the screen in the private darkness of an Amsterdam porno theatre” (Kiteley pp. 38-39).

In another scene, when Gamal-Leon introduces Nur (who wears a veil) to Ib, he describes her as a degenerate woman and tells him that she is “a short round woman who wears a full hegab”, and that “she has beauty that grows every time you meet with her...I will translate while you have sex with her” (Kiteley, p. 86). Moreover, Ib, in the writer’s authorial voice, is represented as a womaniser of Arab women. Thus, he longs for Saffiah and Ruqayah’s oriental beauty and makes several allusions about them. He befriends Suha and Lena, who are both drawn as liberal educated women, though Ib continues to view them in a sexual manner. He explicitly states that Nermine favours him over other men.

When a Western protagonist depicts Egypt as a land of temptations, corruptions, and threats, his own personality coalesces in terms of active self-fortification against the features of their surroundings. Egypt is seen as both fascinating and frightening because of cruelty, the religion and ideology. The tension between the fantasy of its pleasures and the horror of its atrocities has given Egypt a mythical conception. The narrator’s negative portrait of Arab culture implies a positive characterisation of Ib, transforming his personal characteristics into national ones, so that he seems to

embody the inborn freedom and individualism of his people. Consequently, Kiteley rules out any possibility of communication between the West and the Arab world for inherent reasons within the Arab mentality.

Kiteley lays the blame for the cultural chasm on Islam, showing it as the disparaging factor that turns Egypt into a place of alien people that are victims of an irrational religion and rituals. The writer is not concerned as to whether he gives an accurate description of Islam, but subscribes to it uncritically and for the sake of ideological purposes. The indifference appears clear in the reactions of the protagonist towards Islam. Although Ib is an academic teaching history at the American University in Cairo, he shows very little interest in understanding the religion of the country. He even avoids communication with three European converts to Islam who were trying to befriend him during one of his errands. Ib can communicate with them in their native languages, but instead “knows he does not exist for these men. They can smell his cynicism and casual refusal to accept the simple truths of their faith” (Kiteley, p. 28). The protagonist cannot understand the spiritual ideals they find in Islam.

Therefore, Ib is unaware of the religious atmosphere in Egypt during the month of Ramadan, when Muslims observe fasting from sunrise to sunset. He denies any spiritual experience with this ritual and instead sees Muslims as “disoriented from lack of food and grateful for the promise of something in their stomachs” (Kiteley, p.17). He also denotes them as “Zombies” and “walking stomachs” (Kiteley, p. 21). Kiteley attributes hypocritical self-indulgence to Muslims and Arabs, dismissing the custom of fasting as a mask for an inner compulsion for lust and gluttony.

Moreover, the cultural gap between the East and West cannot be bridged due to the orientation of the Arabs. These feelings are realised when Ib walks through Cairo streets. On one occasion, the protagonist feels he is entirely lonely and outcast as he sees a group of Muslims turned towards Mecca and observing prayers, not paying Ib any attention. Ib regards this collective behaviour as a sign of divergence and disorientation between the West and the Arab world. He also considers it as anti-Western conduct that cannot be tolerated.

Another reason for the unbridgeable gap cited by Kiteley is the intolerance of Arab Muslims towards non-Muslims. For example, Ib comes across tents that the Egyptians are building during the month of Ramadan in which to serve food at sunset. He hears them talking about schemes including coercing Egyptian Christians living in the neighbouring area to consider converting to Islam as they pass by Ramadan tents. (Kiteley, p.22) The description reveals how Kiteley views Islam and Egypt as a barometer of difference. He imagines the location as depository of values and systems that are entirely different from the Western system of modern values.

Ib also highlights the latent intolerance shown by Muslim Egyptians towards European converts. Thus, Ib imagines:

(T)his man going home to his wife in a middle class apartment block in Giza. Would he ever vent his spleen over these dim, showy, flat-footed ex-unbelievers? Would his wife shut the door in their faces and shout to her husband. "They're here! Have you not yet convinced them what a silly mistake renouncing their own born cultures and religions? They'll never understand Islam, and they'll certainly never marry any of my daughters!".(Kiteley, p. 27).

The statement reflects the religious intolerance and conjures the image of Egypt as a land of religious and political oppression. The writer is not concerned whether the description of Egypt is accurate, distorting it for political purposes. The writer uses Egypt as a reference point to highlight the reality of Arab and Muslim countries. He also employs the image to underline the exceptional aspects of Western culture: liberty, religious tolerance and human rights.

In the final chapter of the novel the author resorts to the image of the desert, thus reviving one of the most commonly used images of the Arab world. The desert is a classic example of the opposition between nature and science, between wilderness and civilisation, and it also provides juxtaposing images of a progressive urban centre and desolate wilderness.⁸⁰ The desert also evokes a condition of fear because it is inhabited by rough and savage people. They display the qualities of what is seen as the opposite of civilisation, even though they possess advanced

technology. As Baudrillard explains, the desert can be “associated with the figure of the non-human or anti-human who is outside the social order”.⁸¹ Depicting Egypt as a desert denies its presence as a place and it become mute; it is only spoken for by the cognitive mapping of the West.⁸²

Thus, negative stereotypes of Muslims have become part of the dominant discourse. Gramsci and Foucault agree that a hegemonic relationship is established “not through force or coercion, nor necessarily through consent, but most effectively by way of practices, techniques, and methods which infiltrate minds and bodies, tastes, desires”.⁸³ The Egyptian people are seen as a reflection of what the desert represents. They are ignorant, ruthless and far from the standards of the Westerners. They also lack any medium of communication with the West.

As a brief conclusion, certain Western action novels develop a profound analysis of the nature of terrorist violence and its representation, digging deeply into the causes of political conflict and the impact of terrorist violence on the modern world, as well as on the psychology and philosophy of the people who may be involved in the violence and its aftermath. However, these novels blame Arabs for the violence and consider their grounds for taking actions as baseless.

2-4 Hideous Kinky

The delicate connection between Islam and the system of values in the Arab world remains the centre of attention for Western writers who shy away from the political themes in the previously discussed novel. British writer Esther Freud in her novel *Hideous Kinky* highlights this theme by depicting the Arab world as a place of spirituality. She sets her story in Morocco in a bid to demonstrate the modelling of this earnest quest for self-discovery in light of Western-Arab encounter. The main characters set out on an intellectual journey in order to realise their familial and societal identities, which have been shattered in the West.⁸⁴ The novel also underlines how the shaping of Western identity is historically and geographically determined by anxiety and global context.⁸⁵

Since its first publication in 1992, the novel has gained widespread acclaim and has been shortlisted for a number of literary prizes. In 1993, Freud was selected as a Granta Best of Young British Novelists under 40.⁸⁶ However, the Moroccan setting in Freud's first work, published in 1992, does not come to the attention of Western literary circle. Rather, they attach significance to the novel because it includes an interesting narration technique. Freud employs a four-year-old child to narrate, demonstrating the transition from innocence to experience, without sentimentality. The novel is a literary genre that creates a unique fictional world.⁸⁷

It also manifests her overlying theme that highlights "family relationships, children and lovers" as well as a style that is characterized with "the wealth of sensuous details that she brings to the storytelling".⁸⁸ It is also a manifestation of Freud's personal quest for a father figure. This emphasis is more understood in view of the fact that Esther Freud is the daughter of British painter Lucian Freud (1922-2011) who is infamously known as being the father of fourteen children who feel they "never really saw that much of him."⁸⁹

In this novel, Freud depicts the Western female protagonist, the mother of two girls travelling to Morocco, as unconventional and nonconformist. Her actions are consistent, and seem to stem from a belief in freedom and self-reliance. The mother is also shown as exploring Sufism in search of personal fulfilment. The mother's wish to escape to "somewhere" uncovers a rebellion against the prevailing social order of modernity.⁹⁰ Stephen Levin classifies the novel as part of texts that "reveal a persistent desire to escape the post-war destruction of Europe and America...the war itself, environmental destruction wrought by industrialisation, or the oppression of ubiquitous commodification".⁹¹

Although it is not stated explicitly, the reader feels that the mother intends to raise two girls who can stand on their own, and do so at an early age. She goes in this direction because she believes the world does not offer much protection, and others (the Arabs) cannot always be counted on. Thus, the novel details the story of a British mother and her two daughters in Morocco. The narrative focuses on the growing self-awareness of the mother and the two girls as they move from one socio-cultural space to another and from one identity to another.

In terms of a postmodern theory, it could be said that the mother provides a clear example of a Western split identity character in her search for a stable identity and for a space where her cultural and gender plurality can be expressed.⁹² The mother and her two daughters are codified to be the bearers and guardians of Western culture and, at the same time, the ones who hold the key to its salvation. The family is placed in a delicate position in which it seeks a salvation in a culture it is actually escaping.

The rest of the narrative chronicles the ebbs and flows of the British family's life in Morocco. The events dramatise the West-Arab encounter and symbolise two starkly different epistemologies and civilisations. The text is constructed along carefully juxtaposed dichotomies in which the mother looks for her identity and tries, albeit unsuccessfully, to recover a wholeness that she has already lost to the Western forces of ignorance and oblivion.

Search for a Spiritual Alternative

The first chapter of the novel begins with a scene showing the mother and her two young daughters en route to Morocco. Giving details of travel, mapping and naming is an example of using space as a question of power.⁹³ The space is used in the construction of a cultural identity. This is clearly demonstrated through the description of Western and Arab characters at Morocco's immigration checking area. Dave, a secondary Western character, is depicted as having "a whiskery face with bright blue eyes"⁹⁴ and an easygoing spirit. In contrast, the Arab immigration officer is shown as having a "dark, serious face with a thick moustache" (Freud, p. 5), never speaking and giving orders using signals.

This West-Arab encounter reflects the author's desire to create a murky image of the Arab character. Not only does she deprive the Arab character of voicing his ideas, but she also stops him from having any engagement with the reader. The contrast of imagery mirrors the predilection of Western fiction to draw the Arab character in a subjective way. If we use Ferdinand de Saussure terminology here, it is a form of constituting signifiers and objects. It also implies that the East is a land of cultural

Otherness, full of people who cannot be understood in Western terms and thus should not be thought of as a counterpart.

The author gives no clues explaining why the mother is in Morocco and why the friends who accompany her there leave. The book cover tells us that the story takes place in the 1960s, though nothing in the novel refers to this fact.⁹⁵ Citing similarities between the author's life and the novel's details, critics read the novel as an autobiographical account that sheds light on part of the author's life in addition to manifesting the cultural East-West encounter and its outcomes.⁹⁶

However, critics stop short of classifying the novel as a feminist text, though its story revolves around the struggle of a young woman and her two daughters during their time in a patriarchal Arab country. Emphasising the cultural and the spiritual encounters can account for this classification. Instead of underlining the conditions of women, the mother has indulged in the search of a land where she can get rid of the burden of herself and where she is free from constraint. It is more like a free land of wandering and self-elevation.

Many researchers treat *Hideous Kinky* as a travel novel with the aim of constructing a national identity by negating the other. Stephen Levin argues that the novel is part of the "hysterical novels genre" which involves female characters seeking to escape to an elsewhere as rebellion against the prevailing social order of modernity rather than an escape from the paternal order.⁹⁷ The escape takes the form of a pilgrimage to the distant shores of the other, with the aim of reaching a self-discovery in terms of being and identity. The escape is interpreted as "a self-punishment that eventually enables a return home." Levin explains that the process involves the "submission of the (Western) self to the enveloping presence of cultural otherness".⁹⁸

Choosing Morocco gives the indication that there is a specific cultural aspect that highlights this country as the first option for Westerners when they are on a quest for truth about the self or when they want to escape their social order. Despite the fact that the author never explains the situation that has prompted the mother to plunge into this purifying self-discovery process, the second chapter reveals that Morocco is

selected for its repository of unconscious cultural images and values that have been accumulated across the ages:

There were rows and rows of shiny, coloured dresses packed against the walls, and also soft white caftans with thick embroidery round the neck. We stood at the entrance, which was like the mouth of a cave of treasure, and watched as dress after shimmering dress was pulled and shaken and laid on the ground before us (Freud, p. 12).

The author turns the country into a subjective creation that plays on the strings of certain Western archetypal images about the Arab world. The narrator evokes the story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, which is cited by Orientalists to indicate that the Arabs occupy a mystical land of genies, magic carpets, thieving bandits, decadent sultans, conniving sheiks and sensual harem girls.

The narrator consolidates this association when she talks about the imagined picture of her father. She says, “All that came to my mind was colour illustration from Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves” (Freud, p. 21). In other words, the family is not only moving from one place to another in the present time, but also moving through history: from modern Britain to the land of Arabia during the first millennium.

The link incites a perception that Morocco is still living in this timeless era. The contrast between the West and the Arab world constructs the space of the Other as a fantasy world that is not only exotic, mysterious and alluring but also “static, frozen and fixed eternally”.⁹⁹ As Edward Said says in *Orientalism*, Freud uses “imagined geography” to make sense of the other land, the Arab world. In spite of its subjectivity, the West views this imagined geography as scientific and objective.¹⁰⁰

Moreover, the British family wear local dress of a religious nature (a caftan that covers women from head to toe and observes Islamic dress code) during most of their time in Morocco. This reveals an attempt to void the mother’s consciousness and indicates the disavowal of differences. Levin agrees with this view, saying that postmodern travel novels approach the pilgrimage journey as a form of masquerade.

It is a play in which the mask is worn to submerge oneself wholly into another cultural group.¹⁰¹

Paul Schilder's *The Image and Appearance of the Body* puts forward this idea, stating that clothes constitute an essential part of the body. What someone wears can create immediate identification with others who wear the same attire. It also reinforces subconscious stereotypes associated with these dresses and perpetuates the myths linked to their world.¹⁰² Thus, the Moroccan dress revives old stereotypes of the Arabs held by the West that Arab lives centre on religion and superstition. It is a way of life that Western authors associate with the past and what existed in the West before the ages of industrialisation and enlightenment.

The introduction of Arab characters, such as Hadoui, the fortune-teller, and the Chief of the Sufi Order, serves to perpetuate these stereotypes. It also reinforces the notion that Morocco is a timeless, unchanging place. As Homi Bhabha contends, stereotyping is a discursive strategy that the colonialist uses to establish the concept of fixity in the ideological construction of the other. This fixity is a "sign of cultural/historical/racial difference".¹⁰³ The stereotyping strategy aims to produce a "form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always in place, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated".¹⁰⁴

Despite the fact that the mother surrenders her consciousness and engages in unification with the Arab world, she finds out that the Arabs meet her readiness with indifference and ignorance. Frustrated and financially impoverished, the mother develops her own mechanisms of coping with her challenges. Her ambitious plan to find her true identity has led her to create an alternate space where she can realise her dream of self-rediscovery. To escape her harsh reality, she resorts to selling hand-made dolls as a way to express ideas about the outlines of identity she is looking for, acting out her desires of realisation of the Self.

The dolls provide a sense of accomplishment and shore up the mother's feelings of loss in Morocco. While the mother escapes her social alienation, she reconciles herself with the world that she can create through her tailored dolls. The mother uses the dolls to free herself from the hegemonies that suppress her and negate her

identity and existence. In other words, she recreates an alternative world in which her desires are fulfilled and her suffering is softened. The mother also draws the outlines of this world to Arab people and makes them sense its significance.

The mother is not the only Western character who creates an imaginary space to live out an identity; her two daughters have their own ways of handling the Arab world. The elder daughter, Bea, tries to recreate her own English life by insisting on going to school and obtaining a proper education. The youngest, the unnamed narrator, is immersed in trivial things, such as mashed potato and sweets. The latter realises her identity as a Western girl. Although both fixations may seem trivial, they remind the mother of British food and identity which she cannot find in Morocco.

As the two daughters begin to identify themselves with order and reason, the Arab side is perceived as chaotic and irrational. The East “became a cipher for the Western unconscious, the repository of all that dark, unacknowledged...repressed and liable to eruption”.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, the two girls help shape the negative picture of the Arab world and create a consistent opposition between the Occident’s rational superiority and Oriental superstition. For example, Bea initiates this contrasted image when she describes what happened in her school in Morocco:

We sat in a room and copied everything the teacher said. One girl got beaten with a stick.

Mum was horrified. ‘Why?’

“Because she peed in the classroom. The teacher beat her until the stick broke, and then when the stick broke everyone was very happy, and then a boy from the school next door who is her favourite boy brought over a new stick. (Freud, p. 59).

The description reflects the author’s tendency to indicate that the Arabs lack creativity and, consequently, the ability to define their identity. It also implies the Arabs are lazy and unwilling to cooperate with the Other because they would like to see things from a one-sided perspective. Moreover, the scene unveils uncivilised cruelty towards children.

The author consolidates the theme of unjustified cruelty and unwillingness to understand the other in another scene when the narrator tells of her experience with a Sufi cleric:

Sheikh Sidi Muhammad of the red beard was my enemy. He had shouted at me on the first day when I climbed into the rose bed ... Sheikh Sidi Muhammad had shouted and waved his arms and rushed over to me and pulled me out of his garden by one ear. I tried to explain about smelling the flowers not picking them, but he interpreted the tears that sprang to my eyes as a sign of guilt and now he kept a stern watch over me all times. (Freud, p. 156).

The repetition of these details underlines the author's tendency to depict Arabs as cruel and sadistic people who enjoy scenes of unjustified violence. Therefore, the postcolonial discourse of the novel becomes an apparatus of power that turns on the "recognition and disavowal of racial/historical differences".¹⁰⁶

The author takes a further step by linking violence to social traditions and the Islamic code of behaviour. For instance, when Fatima, Bilal's younger sister, appears with a split on her lips, it comes out that her brother punished her because she watched the village festivals without her veil. He punished Fatima by tying her in the barn and beating her. Bilal comments on the accident by saying, "It is important that Fatima will not make bad her reputation. If she is not good, she will not be married" (Freud, p. 41). The statement reveals how the author attributes the violent behaviour to Islam, though it is merely a social convention about marriage in the Arab world and the Middle East region.

Like many other Western writers who write about the Arab world, Freud has a confused idea about the role of Islam and social conventions in the Arab world. Many actions highlighted in the novel, such as the social reputation of the girl, can be derived from social conventions and codes that can exist in various societies and faith communities. The author underlines Arab people's insistence on formal adherence to Islam and its related cultural customs. These imputed features make

Oriental people stand in sharp opposition to the heroic religious and cultural values of the mother and her two daughters.

Furthermore, the two daughters help to intensify their mother's disenchantment with the Arab world and expedite their mother's self-discovery. Holding onto Western traditions helps deactivate their mother's psychological alienation from the West. Bea's insistence on going to school symbolises a Western spirit of culture, discipline and rational behaviour. Her refusal to stay with her mother's friend, Sophia, while her mother goes to the Zawiya - the Sufi lodge – reflects a rejection of her mother's irrational religious rituals. Her attendance of the birthday party organised by Westerners suggests her adherence to the West's traditions and culture.

The youngest daughter voices an innocent and unconscious warning against the Arab culture. She does not show any interest in Islam even when she sees her mother observing and performing prayers. Instead, she feels estranged from her mother and she shows her resentment towards the religious rituals. The narrator rejects her mother's hand after she bought a carpet to perform prayers on and by keeping a distance while her mother prays. She says "... Mum...knelt down in the street to pray. She mimed her intricate washing procedures and stretched out her arms to Mecca. Without a word we hid ourselves behind a wall" (Freud, p. 103).

The alienation of the youngest girl is intensified when her mother goes to Sufi Zawiya and wears the veil to practice the Islamic rituals. She starts to dream of a black hand that tries to stifle her mother. This association between the veil and the choking black hand conveys the West's deep-seated dislike of the veil as a symbol of inhibition and repression. The daughter expresses her relief when she learns that her mother has stopped wearing the veil. The narrator says, "surely this meant now she would stop wearing her Muslim haik that turned her into someone's secret wife, with or without the veil" (Freud, p. 53).

Finding herself in an uneasy position, the mother shuttles between the images of Western modernity and Arab primitiveness; between Western civilisation and Arabian backwardness; between Western knowledge and humanity versus Islamic cruelty and darkness. She becomes a divided subject with conflicting allegiances.

After experiencing life in Morocco firsthand, the mother is equally disillusioned with the humanist and spiritual discourse she has heard of and looked for in the past. She is exposed to the negative side of the Arab world with its ignorance, violence and marginalisation. Consequently, the Arab world that appears is human in her imagination and dreams, yet paradoxically primitive and savage toward the Other in its behaviour.¹⁰⁷

The mother's decision to abandon Sufism and stop observing Islamic rituals, such as praying and wearing the hijab, reveals that her fascination with Morocco is over. The mother has nothing to do with Islam. She also finds out that Islam does not fill the void that she was feeling in the West. Wearing Western dresses again indicates that the mother realises that her host country has provided a sour journey of self-discovery and is not much different from her country of birth. The difference between alienating cultural features in the Arab and Western worlds hardly exists. In other words, Morocco sets up the mother in the symbolic order where she fully realises that she is a separate entity in a society that, while seemingly extending its humanistic and spiritual values, denies her any sense of fullness, unity or coherence.

The mother's decision to leave for an unidentified place means that her search for spiritual knowledge is in progress. Her stay in Morocco turns into a transit stage in her journey in search of a meaning and an identity. Morocco becomes the mirror, if we use Lacan's terminology, in which the mother sees her reflection as a separate subjectivity and an independent consciousness.¹⁰⁸ The mother becomes a postmodern self that continues to reveal itself on the border of historical determinism and fictional uncertainty.

The novel's narrative invites the reader to a polarised description of the Western and Arab worlds. Freud's Western characters often lie beyond the restrictions of one-dimensionality. They defy national, gender, class, and racial categorisation. The unnamed young girl (the first-person narrator) valorises everything that is Western and denigrates everything that is Arab. Her discourse at the beginning of the novel fictionalises the Arab world and consequently humanises the West. Unlike Arab characters, Western characters are shown as mastering the alien circumstances of

the Orient to their advantage. Western characters simultaneously develop powers of self-control, self-preservation, and self-reliance.

Despite the fact that the novel is brimming with Arab characters, they are portrayed as passive and unable to define themselves. For instance Bilal, the protagonist Moroccan conman and acrobat, is portrayed as helpless and unable to express his ideas. He never speaks of himself and he never represents his emotions, presence or even history. Instead the narrator speaks for and represents him. This marginalisation results in confusion and murky rapprochement between the West and the Arab world. Other Arabs are merely minor characters that are either portrayed as villains, for instance the Nappy lady, or minimised to lesser roles.

Narration as a Marginalising Technique

John Mullan states in his review of the novel that it has “a lot of questions, [but gives] no answers”.¹⁰⁹ Yet the most outstanding element is that having a child narrator denies the reader key information about the story. Other questions revolve around the age of the mother and the identity of the person who is occasionally sending money to them. In many scenes, the mother is shown as going to the bank to check whether the money transfers from abroad have arrived. Choosing a child as the narrator means such basic information is missing.

At the outset, Freud gives no clue about the age of the narrator, and the reader is surprised to discover late on in the novel, as the narrator discusses her birthday, that she is turning five years old. The language and style used by the narrator do not reflect this fact and infer that she must be older than this. For instance, she is able to use words such as “entourage”, “culminated” and “stringently”. Another set of words used by adults are the words hideous and kinky, which are the narrator and her elder sister’s favourite words.

Although it is not known whether Freud uses this technique intentionally, using a first-person narrator and assigning the narration of the novel to a Western character marginalises the Arab characters. The technique silences its subaltern, obliterates its identity, and imposes a Western fictional meaning on it. Freud’s unprecedented

narration technique enables her to create and tailor the rendering of characters and events to the interests of the Western perspective.

This narration method reduces characters to personas used to express the author's ideas and cover up her ulterior interests. Given that the novel is seemingly a fictionalised autobiography of the author's early childhood, selecting a five-year-old narrator enables the author to mask and conceal certain information from the reader. On the other hand, it is also an evasion mechanism to avoid giving direct judgments on her true family members—for instance, the contentious relationship between her father, Lucian Freud, and her mother. British media published a great deal of information about the controversial life of Lucian Freud and his children from his relationships with a number of women.

On the other hand, this method of narration is a tool to hide colonial perceptions. It allows the author to justify exaggeration, distortion and reduction of the Arab world. It keeps her reflections about Morocco to the reader in “the timeless zone of childhood” as a simplistic and primitive area.¹¹⁰ Freud transports the reader to the imagined Morocco without giving much insight into the true image of the country. Moreover, portraying Morocco from a British point of view further silences the Arab Other and hides its real identity. The idioms, expressions and excuses clearly illustrate the colonising nature of the book. The experience of the Orient is based on a Western perception where the colonised are helpless and have no power to resist the coloniser's gaze and power of interpretation.¹¹¹

The binary between fiction and fact plays a role here. Freud brings the reader closer to the Orient by fictionalising and manipulating the facts for her own sake. It is a feature of British travel writing to lump Arab and Muslim people together under broad headings, portraying them in a negative way.¹¹² However, the author never manages to show the mother's in-depth search for a true objective. Her observing of Islamic rituals is always shown as a practice to forget her ambiguous loss. For example, when the mother visits Luna, a Danish woman who converts to Islam and gets married to a Muslim Moroccan, to ask her how to be a Sufist. She finds her observing fasting in Ramadan and consequently the mother decides to do the same. In other words, the mother is never shown as a true seeker of religious meaning.

Superiority of Western Values

The final two chapters sum up the outcome of the mother's quest for spiritual identity. The mother's decision to abandon Sufism and stop observing Islamic rituals indicates her disillusionment with Morocco and Islam as a compensation for the West. Moreover, her decision to leave for an unidentified place means that her search for spiritual knowledge is in progress. Islam and Arabs continue to be at the periphery and turn into useless tools for the West to look for knowledge and domination. Islam is rather employed as a tool for reevaluating the West and its system of values. The novel creates a sense of cultural imbalance that places Western cultures above Eastern cultures. The cultural discrepancy awakens the mother's true sense of Western values and prompts her disillusionment with the Arab world and its spiritual and cultural values. In other words, the East-West encounter becomes a medium to redefine Western identity.

Freud uses geography to take on a personified quality that translates into attitudes towards that part of the world. The novel plays with near-mythological stereotypes about Arabs, which imply that the Arab world is a land of cultural otherness, full of people who cannot be understood in Western terms and thus should not be thought of as human. It often reinforces the belief that Arab people are weird, strange and backwards.

The end of the novel reflects a desire to part with this geographical region and sever any connections with its people. The writer concludes that spiritualism of the East, represented by Arabs, is spurious and does not yield the ideals for which the West is craving. It also does not fulfil the aspiration of finding the faithful "husband" and "father" which initiated the search in the novel. Return to the West suggests that it should be restarted in the West. A similar cultural encounter takes place in the next novel analysed

2-5 Virgins of Paradise

British writer Barbara Wood, in her novel *Virgins of Paradise* (1993) shows the bad condition of women in the Arab world, highlighting another reason for Western

resentment. Her approach is based on juxtaposing the “liberated” woman in the West with the “oppressed” woman in the Arab world. Unlike Freud’s perspective in *Hideous Kinky*, which gives a timeless and general view about points of difference between the two worlds, Wood showcases the tenuous relationship in a particularly historical setting. The outlook is based on the status of woman in the West and Arab countries throughout the twentieth century. The novel illustrates how new political developments in an Arab country have opened a Pandora’s Box of problems for its women.

Wood is a prolific political writer who wrote 22 books on various topics. She is well-known for writing historical romance fraught with suspense by setting her novels in exotic countries. She blends romance with reality by reading and examining the unique culture and history of these countries.¹¹³ As an immigrant - she immigrated with her family to the United States from her UK hometown in Lancashire - she has a keen interest in shedding light on female characters who immigrated abroad after suffering from hardship in their native countries.¹¹⁴ Thus, the protagonists of most of Wood’s novels are female characters who unveil their sad memories when they come back to their native land and locations.

The protagonist of *Virgins of Paradise* is a female character from a mixed cultural background, rather than being a purely Western figure, as is the case in a number of Wood’s previous novels. The conflicting values of the two worlds are unleashed in the first chapter. Female protagonist Yasmina, who is born to an Egyptian father and English mother, returns to Egypt after a stint in America. She feels insecure during her tour of Cairo, despite being an ex-member of its community, because she is wearing Western clothes that reveal parts of her body.

These concerns illustrate how gender and dress are used as instruments of demarcation between the Arab and Western worlds. The appearance of Yasmina demonstrates how “idealized images and real bodies of women serve as national boundaries”.¹¹⁵ It also showcases vivid examples of continued Western stereotypes about Arabs. Wood’s protagonist oscillates between shaping Western and Arab identities. The outcome of the struggle leads to the conclusion that the author tries to draw at the end of her stories

The fear and tension clouding the meeting between Yasmina and her grandmother Amira creates suspense for the Western reader who is fascinated by the relation of gender and culture. The reader is engaged by the challenges facing the female protagonist and would like to know the past that gave rise to such a situation. The writer draws the reader towards this perspective by employing a flashback storytelling technique. The process helps the author to pinpoint the stages and the developments that led to the essentialised representation of the Arab women as an undifferentiated category marked by oppression.

The novel also reflects geographical and ideological development of Muslim Egyptian women by associating the political history of Egypt – from the waning British Empire, Egyptian monarchy and the nascent Egyptian nationalist state – to Yasmina growing up. The novel unfolds the painful saga of an Arab woman or “a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present”.¹¹⁶

Early chapters of the novel describe the Arab males as misogynists. Yasmina’s father, who wanted a baby boy, resents the birth of his daughter. Throughout the novel, the novelist reiterates how Egyptian families prefer boys to girls. Ali Pasha, one of the characters, states this claim clearly: “A man who did not father sons... was not really a man. Daughters did not count, as the old saying implied: what is under a veil brings sorrow” (Wood, p.21).¹¹⁷

The domination of Arab men and the surrender of Arab women are major themes in the novel. Most of its minor female characters are described as inactive and enslaved to the domineering patriarchal culture. Nafissah, Sarah and many other female characters in the novel fall victim to arranged marriages; these either end tragically for them or keep them in a miserable, vicious cycle. The novel stresses that the continuation of these conditions places Arab women on the margins of society, victimised to the core. This renders the novel as a feminist work, given that its author focuses on gender relations with respect to Arab society. It glosses over the gender inequality in the West, though many Western feminist writings emphasise this too.

Besides the hybrid characters of Yasmina and Camelia, the female characters represent Arab women as passive and lacking agency in life. Nafissah sums up the pangs of this representation: "According to custom, she was required to lead a quiet and chaste life. But how could she, when she was just twenty, and her husband was man she just barely knew" (Wood, p.40). As Rokhsana Bahramitash, in "The War on Terror, Feminist Orientalism and Orientalism Feminism", points out, "Feminist Orientalism regards Oriental women only as victims and not as agents of social transformation".¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, *Virgins of Paradise* demonstrates a change in the depiction of Arab women, moving them from the veiled and secluded harem of the colonial period to the feminist motifs brought up by feminist writing and popular culture that gained momentum in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War.¹¹⁹

In the 1990s, the politics of representing Arab women changed and started to be shaped by the material and ideological conditions that determined the nature of relations between the Western and the Arab worlds. Following the Second Gulf War, the shift in the balance of power brought about a corresponding shift within the general image of Arab women. The Arab woman becomes the focus of Western feminist writers.¹²⁰

Unlike feminist writers, who preferred to use a first-person narrator in their works, Wood chooses a third-person narrative to suggest impartiality in narration. Nevertheless, the technique deprives the protagonist from expressing ideas directly, consequently missing the opportunity to communicate their ideology to the reader. The author is all-knowing, using poly-vocality as a technique. Thus, multiple female Arab characters take part so as to construct the Other in various forms as an object and as a passive creature.

The purpose behind showing this diversity is to document the female protagonist's oppression and allow the reader to generalise the condition of Arab women. Second, as Yuval-Davis argues, women are represented as the biological reproducers of members of an ethnic group and its boundaries. They signify national difference, and therefore act as a symbol in the ideological discourse used in the construction and reproduction of a nation.¹²¹

The story delves into a series of comparisons that bring up central events and ideas. Wood draws a comparison between the status of women in the Western and Arab worlds through introducing the Western character Alice Westful; an English girl who gets married to Ibrahim, Amira's son and Yasmina's father, in order to establish her point about difference between the West's "liberated" women and the Arab world's "oppressed" women. This stark contrast stands out when Alice finds out about the inhibition imposed over women. For example, she "discovered that there wasn't even a word in Arabic for 'children'. If a man was asked how many children he had, the word used was 'awlad', which means "sons," Daughters weren't counted" (Wood, p.80).

The slanted way of presenting these ideas about the Arab world to the Western reader indicates that the novel re-inscribes the colonial judgment about the Arab world by clustering all Arab women into one monolithic category. As Chandra Mohanty argues, the category of "oppressed women" is generated through an exclusive focus on gender difference. The oppressed Arab woman has an additional attribute, i.e. "the third world difference", which includes a paternalistic attitude towards women in the third world.¹²²

The technique used to propagate this ideology uses remarks that put off the reader and negatively influence them about this part of the world. Thus, the poor stereotypes of Arab women have become part of the hegemonic and dominant discourse of the West. Gramsci and Foucault agree that the hegemonic relation is established "not through force or coercion, nor necessarily through consent, but most effectively by way of practice, techniques, and methods which infiltrate minds and bodies, tastes, desires".¹²³

It is also a tool for the Western hegemonic knowledge over the Arab/East. By hegemonic knowledge Gramsci means a system of thought that is formed over time and that is representative of the interests of the dominant class, which universalise its own belief and value system to subordinate classes.¹²⁴ In the novel, the writer vilifies the Arabs and hold off any attempt of outreach to the Arab world

The protagonist, Yasmina, is the exception that the writer wants to project as a favourite example of Arab women. Like minor female characters, she could have been held hostage to circumstances and she would have faced the same fate of oppression due to gender if she succumbed to her. As a woman living in the Arab world, she has suffered from enclosure and imprisonment. This conflict starts to change when she leaves for America following being dismissed from her family house by her father for “honour considerations” after being raped by her family’s friend.

The novel works on the delicate juxtaposed dichotomies between these two locales, the United States and Egypt. The contrast shows Yasmina’s attempt to establish identity recognising her idiosyncratic qualities. The narrative focuses on the growing self-awareness of the protagonist as she moves from Arab space into the Western world and learns the features of its identity.

Yasmina’s story has a more interesting element than if she were a male protagonist since she, as a woman, has to struggle against the patriarchal structure of gender relations. In other words, the novel becomes a tool to reinforce hegemony by fuelling racism against Arabs and Muslims. The knowledge in the novel is inseparable from implications of power. Orientalism turns into a “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient”.¹²⁵

After obliterating the Arab identity and imposing a new structure of knowledge, the author starts producing new discourse. An outstanding example comes from the title of the novel: *Virgins of Paradise*. The name refers to the block in which the women of the Rasheed family were raised. It is also a reference to Camelia’s question in the novel when she asks about the reason behind not stating the reward of women in paradise when it is stated that men are given “Huris”, young Virgin girls in Islam (Wood p.114).

The author takes a metaphysically debatable notion and imposes it as a fact about the Arab world. The idea of young virgins as a reward for men was mentioned in the Koran, yet the lack of an equivalent reward mentioned for women does not mean it does not exist. The writer also overlooks information that mentions women along

men in a number of Koran verses. Interestingly, underlining this issue marks the shift of female Western authors from highlighting the theme of male-oriented cultural injustice towards women, to Eurocentric views. The woman is also considered as a representative category for a nation: the Arab world. Therefore, the author follows the archetypal paradigms, which have used preconceived ideas about Arab women

Another Orientalist motif used by the author is the sensuality of dark, Arab women and their infatuation with Western white men. Nafissah falls for a British officer, even though he is a serviceman of a country occupying her homeland, because of his white complexion and blue eyes. She justifies her involvement by saying “he is so handsome...so elegant and polished. He must be six feet tall, and his hair is the colour of the wheat” (Wood, p.47). Said explains this feminising of the Orient is used as a tool to justify domination.¹²⁶

When Yasmina travels to America, she falls in love with her professor Dr. Declan. She even continues her feelings towards him while she is married to another American character, Van Kirk, who has agreed to marry her so that she can get a Green Card and stay away from Egypt. Submission into the hands of the West turns the Arab world into the silent Other, an object that is incapable of defining or representing itself, and that is therefore in need of Western subjectivity.

This objectification represents the Arab woman as a metaphor for sensuality. The women are often shown as veiled and covered from head to toe, yet revealing “the very charm it was intended to conceal.” Ella Shohat argues that “the process of exposing female Other.... [signifies] the Western masculinist power of possession, that she, as a metaphor for her land, becomes available for Western penetration and knowledge”.¹²⁷

Another controversial issue raised by the author is the theme of mutilation or the circumcision of women in Arab countries. All the female characters undergo this ritual. The ceremonies surrounding a woman’s circumcision are carried out in secret; this is contrary to the public and celebrated operations conducted on the boys. The ceremony for Sahra’s circumcision details the brutality of the ritual and cruelty practiced against Arab women.

Before Sahra had been able to utter a sound, the local midwife had appeared, a razor in her hand. One swift movement, and Sahra had felt a searing pain shoot up through the body...forbidden to move or even to urinate, Sahra had learned that she had just undergone her circumcision... Sahra's mother had gently explained that an important part of her body had been cut away in order to cool her sexual passion and make her faithful to her husband, and that without such an operation no girl could hope to find a man who would marry her (Wood, p.29).

The author refers to women's circumcision as part of Islamic and Arab social conventions, though it is actually an African ritual that can be found in Islamic and non-Islamic countries alike.¹²⁸ Consequently, this motif is another Eurocentric misconception about the Arab world, used to degrade its status and portray the East as backward and unable to stand independent by itself.

The mutilation is then linked to the honour and virginity motif, which many Western novels and writings have highlighted to denote the Arab world as irrational. Thus, Yasmina's father disowns her when he discovers that his friend Hasan Sabr raped her. Sahra leaves her family so that they do not discover that she made love to her boyfriend out of wedlock. Wood recorded the feelings of fear and anxiety that filled Sahra before she flies from her home:

[Sahra] thought, recalling how her sister cried out when her husband had performed the virginity test. Sahra knew the test must be done, otherwise how did a family prove its honour, which lay in a daughter's chastity? She thought of the poor girl from the next village, who had been found dead in a field. She had been raped by a local boy, her family dishonoured. Her father and uncles had killed her, as was their right because, as saying went, "Only blood can wash away dishonor" (Wood, pp. 30-31).

The author reasserts the dichotomisation of social values associated with women in Islam's "backward" vision versus the West's "progressive" vision. In this recurring paradigm, the Islamic "Other" is portrayed once again as the foil, a caricature based on notions of an anachronistic Islamic identity.¹²⁹ This representation contrasts

sharply with the concurrent concept of imperial “progress” and the inherent superiority of the West.

The subsequent success of female characters who lost their virginity reflects the author’s will to undermine Arab concepts and replace them with Western notions of fidelity. The redemption of Yasmina only lies within her willingness to accommodate herself to modernity and Western cultural norms. This simply masks the encroachment of Western cultural hegemony over the East. Samir Amin argues, “The progressive Westernization of the world is nothing more than the expression of the triumph of the humanist universalism invented by Europe”.¹³⁰

In the end, the novel shapes the problems of Arab women by producing a stereotyped representation of them. Arab women became a universalised category suffering from religious and social oppression. Practices, such as circumcision, the dominance of the male, and the obsession with virginity and honour, are basically oppressive to women. These customs are the root of this backward Arab society and the driving force for Arab women’s sexual rebellion.

2-6 Falling for the Sheikh

Unlike the negative Arab characters showcased in the previous Western novels, *Falling for the Sheikh* by American writer Carole Grace (2001) puts forwards a new type of Arab hero. Instead of the fat or shabby protagonist, Grace portrays the Arab as a tall, dark and handsome man who sweeps up the Western heroine and introduces her to a new world. However, the literary genre celebrating the masculinity of the Arab does not differ thematically from other Western fictional works about the Orient. Grace’s book also shows the development of the literary genre, as it looks at the Arab male Other as an alternative to the inert and frustrating Western male.

Grace has been in touch with people from various countries from her time spent working as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher to immigrants.¹³¹ However, her knowledge about people from other nations becomes more profound when she joins the hospital ship Hope for three voyages, visiting a number of

countries, including Tunisia. Following Grace's marriage, she goes with her husband to work in Algeria.¹³² Although she loved living abroad, she came back to California to raise two children in her mountain-top home overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Her writings about the peoples with whom she was acquainted and shared abiding memories give her an alternative view on life.

Falling for the Sheikh is the first of Grace's series of novels that depict the romance between a white Western woman and a dark Arab Sheikh. Her Amazon page detailing her novels shows the 'Sheikh romance' genre accounting for large part of her thirty-five romance novels.¹³³ This high portion reveals Grace's continued interest in such a theme as well as giving an indication about her Western readership. Researchers date the West's fascination with the Arab character back to the 1920s, following the representation of this figure by Rudolph Valentino in Hollywood's film *The Sheikh*.¹³⁴

Traditionally, the publishing house that has been in charge of publishing such exotic romance is Mills and Boon. The history of this publishing house indicates that it has published such fiction for 102 years. It is arguably one of the most famous British publishing companies to publish books where the winsome Western heroine is looking for love beyond national territory.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, continued publication of this type of romance throughout modern decades reflects a tendency among Western writers to capitalise on this fascination to express their perspective about West-Arab contact. The exotic setting of these novels adds flavour and offers the required space to voice unfavourable attitudes about the Arab culture. Grace's novel touches upon a new element by discussing the idea of how to incorporate non-conformist Arabs into the Western fold.

Falling for the Sheikh brings this debate up in a love story that is initiated between Amanda Reston, an American nurse, and Rahman Harun, a rich Sheikh from a fictional Arab country who has moved to California. They fall in love when Amanda helps Rahman recover from a skiing injury. The relationship develops a happy ending, which is a scenario that rarely happens in novels characterising the West-Arab encounter; it is a sign that rapprochement between the two is in the realm of possibility.

The idea of whether the Other, and the Arab in particular, is accepted for inclusion in the West constitutes a main point in this romance. Grace expresses this attitude through her female protagonist:

Like a mindless robot, she walked to the window and opened the blinds just slightly. He had the manner of one who gave orders and was used to having them obeyed. But she was not used to taking orders from patients and she wasn't about to start now.¹³⁶

The beginning of the novel reflects that the male/female relationship remains the core of modern romances. The central character is the white female Westerner, while the male is an Arab. The description of the male character is similar to that given by Orientalists who mostly describe Arabs as ruthless despots who enslave women and deny them their rights.

However, this motif marks a new direction for the Sheikh romance genre, as the two characters and their relationship is established in a land of equality. The West-Arab encounter is gendered in a way that fantasy, ethnicity, desire and danger are intertwined. References are often made to emphasise the differences between gender relations in the two worlds. The Western character is presented as a real, down-to-earth human being while the Arab character is depicted in both realistic and fantastical terms. Thus, Rahman Harun is described as maddeningly demanding and as coming from a fictional Arab sheikhdom. Evelyn Bach, in her study on the Sheikh romance genre, notes that there is a "confusion of fantasy and rational observation that typically characterizes representation of the East".¹³⁷

Linking the East to the imaginary maintains the stagnant situation of the Arab world and dispels the idea of change happening in this world which, consequently, essentialises the Arabs. Thus, when Rahman asks Amanda to wear a nurse's uniform, she replies "why do not you wear a long robe and a white headdress around your head" (Grace, p. 55). Bach points out:

(T)he fantasy of the Arabic East is seamlessly meshed with the "truth" of it, because the existing stereotypes of Arabs, deserts and romances

formulae are sufficiently unshakable to allow them to shift, intact, in and out of the known universe.¹³⁸

Moreover, hiding the nationality of the Arab allows the author to generalise and maintain negative stereotypes, shaped in the past, which are associated with all Arabs. It is a way to ignore the Arab subaltern by depriving him of his idiosyncratic voice and particularity. The ambiguity about the nationalities of Arab characters is curtailed to the mindset of the West. Thus, as in all Sheikh romances, the hero of *Falling for the Sheikh* is foreign, dark and equipped with impressive masculinity. He is “wealthy, indeed often aristocratic, but they are also active and successful participants in some major public endeavour”.¹³⁹ The description of the appearance of the Arab figure stimulates the reader’s response and nurtures their stereotypes of this character.

As Evelyn Bach says in her study about this Sheikh romance novel, the novel reveals “complex trajectories of desire”.¹⁴⁰ Its narrative elucidates how Western cultural fiction shapes the romance between the Arab hero and the Western heroine. The latter constitutes a desiring subject for an Arab hero who is an “object of desire” for her.¹⁴¹ The strings of power are held in the hands of Amanda who sets the conditions of this encounter:

I want a family man. Someone who’s ready to settle down... not someone who’s only happy in a mansion or an estate...someone who does not come with a lot of emotional luggage” (Grace, p. 98).

This description demonstrates Amanda’s mixed feelings. The Sheikh has become the object of desire for the Western heroine. He is still the object of the Western imperialist gaze, which looks at the Arab Other as both a source of fear and fascination. Much like the Arab world, the male is “at once dangerous and desired”.¹⁴² Billie Melman points out that the Sheikh romance illustrates mixed feelings about the Arab world. Therefore, in this novel “the Orient served as the site of mixed feelings, attraction and repulsion; intimacy and a sense of distance”.¹⁴³

Although the traditional view is to portray the Sheikh “as a masculine lover, with loads of sex appeals”,¹⁴⁴ Marian Darce Fernier sees it from a different perspective. He says that it examines “how to handle marriage to a stranger in a world in which women and men were [...] socialized to be as different as possible from each other”.¹⁴⁵ The hero of the Sheikh is especially portrayed in terms of black and dark shades, such as when, for example, Amanda “brushed his dark thick hair” (Grace, p.43). The darkness highlights him as different, as the Other, and as exotic and sexually desirable. It adds to the sexual suggestiveness shown on the cover of the novel, which features the heroine and the hero in some sort of close physical proximity, potentially an embrace.

Although the novel does not depict anyone wearing any Arab dress, it makes up for this element in some other details. The hero is shown to be living in an opulent villa with brightly coloured sections. It is decorated with paintings and supplied with state of the art equipment, recalling the lavish architecture of Oriental palaces and the realm of the Arabian nights.

Surprisingly, religion, which is almost always the bone of contention and a great source of difference within the romance novel, is absent from the discourse of Grace’s novel. Not only that, but the Arab character is dislocated from his traditional cultural and social space, and he does not observe the traditions of this space. This is despite the fact that Rahman’s parent instilled in him the values of the family and their country (p.37). In the novel he does not do anything to observe Islam. On the contrary, he drinks alcohol and eats pork, which according to Islamic rules are forbidden. Therefore, the differences in religion are held and the naturalised secular/Christian world, the symbol of Western culture, remains prevalent.

As in *The Innocent Blood*, Grace’s novel touches on the idea of inclusion of the Other Arab into Western society. However, *Falling for the Sheikh* takes a different line from *The Innocent Blood* by showing how an ethnic Arab can be incorporated into the Western world. The inclusion rests on the Western heroine who acts as a catalyst to make the Arab Other cross his boundary into the Western world.

The author explains how Others, like Rahman Harun, can become Western and act

differently from racial others and therefore be a worthy partner to a white woman like Amanda, as well as a citizen of the American nation. Rahman's inclusion is conditional on his observing the Western ideals of women's freedom and independence.

Jayne Anne Krentz proposes that the major theme is female power.¹⁴⁶ Amanda manages to win by virtue of her patience, intelligence and gentleness. She tames the most difficult creature, the Arab male, and brings him to his knees. She also obliges him to recognise her power as a Western woman. She both brings him to the feminine world and the Western fold.

Part of what makes the Arab character acceptable is that he is not threatening to change the system. Conversely, he is working hard to uphold the values of the existing social structure. There is an underlying insistence throughout the novel that no other system could be as good. The underlying assumption is that he commits to this because he worships, admires, and loves white patriarchal power.

Therefore, the Western heroine 'civilises' the Arab hero into a domestic love and he thus becomes an acceptable husband for a white woman: "The heroine has tamed the dark side of his nature, uncovered his innate nobility, revealed his underlying integrity".¹⁴⁷ This creates a "relation to the Orient that, whilst it retains a sense of difference, challenges Western assumptions about the inimical otherness of the Orient".¹⁴⁸ The main suggestion is that the regions are really the same. The two spheres (the Western female and the Arab male) have to be brought together in order to reach a harmony and consensus. To resolve the difficulties, the Arab male has to be socialised into the Western heroine's world and affirm her way of life and values. A displacement of the Arab patriarchy with Western gender equality allows rapprochement between the two distant worlds.

Conclusion

This chapter tries to analyse diverse fictional works that represent the Arab character and provide a case study of the literary encounters between the West and the Arab world in the decade following the Second Gulf War (1990-1991). The analysis highlights the development of these images, commenting on how they have been naturalised through repetition, overlapping, summarising and revision of previously fixed images. The Arabs in 1990s Western fiction looked more stereotypical than they ever did in previous decades. The perception of otherness in Western fiction has been extensively intensified; the Arab world portrayed as a place of violence, terror and oppression.

The rise of the negative images about the Arab characters and the creation of the Self/Other dichotomy reflect the impact of politics on the nature of these literary encounters. Although the representations of Arabs cannot be understood as deliberately planned nor be held as merely coincidental, the novels selected for analysis reveal how politics and fiction are inextricably linked and can shape encounters between the West and the Arab world. The relationship between fiction and politics belongs to a tradition linking nation building to art. Moreover, they demonstrate how politics, culture, historical events and various vested interests can come together in a productive way. The novels also mirror the dramatic changes that took place to the relationships between the West and the Arab world following the ends of the Cold War and the Second Gulf War. The new reality has prompted the Western writer to cope with them and give the reader his contribution into depicting the new encounters juxtaposing his world with the Arabs.

Moreover, portraying Arabs as primitive, foreign devils helped create an environment of tension within the Arab world. The focus of Anglo-American fiction on the ideological differences with the Arab world highlighted the Western-Arab encounter as a clash of civilizations and perpetuated a hostile relationship between the West and Arab worlds. A number of Western novels represented Arabs as not only evil people, but also merciless killers lacking conscience, as is the case in Christopher Dickey's novel *Innocent Blood* in which the Arab character sought to blow up a stadium during a Super Bowl game. The Arab-Israeli conflict deepened the negative

image of the Arabs. In Barbara Victor's novel *Friends, Lovers, Enemies*, Israel was represented as a civilized country at war with savage and merciless Arabs who killed not only mothers, but also children. Arabs are demonstrated as an extension of the Nazi threat. The Western novels ignored the Palestinian perspective and showed no interest in presenting their suffering under Israeli rule.

Western writers have shown a tendency to portray the two cultures as systematically different over many points. To demonstrate these vast differences, Western fiction focuses on the Arab world and its space. Thus, the setting of most of these novels is within the space of an Arab country. This place is objectified, and sometimes feminised, by the penetration of the Western character. The role of the Western character is to discover and demystify the Arab landscape. This process establishes the prevailing boundaries between cultures. In other words, the West conducts a redefinition operation. This process also includes the identities of people in the region. For example, the portrayal of the Palestinians in the diaspora both in Barbara Victor's *Friends, Lovers, Enemies* and Christopher Dickey's *Innocent Blood* has challenged the idea of a fixed homeland. The Western discourse in these instances tends to homogenise Palestinians and Arabs into one identity.

The approach of Western novelists towards Islamist fundamentalism draws attention. While Western writers denote Arabs as terrorists and conflate them with Islamist fundamentalists, they use the word terrorism with great reservation in naming or depicting non-Arabs as terrorists. The bombing of Oklahoma City in 1995 is a good example in this respect. Although an American citizen, not of Arab origin, was detained in connection with the attack, it was a source of inspiration for Christopher Dickey's novel *Innocent Blood* to depict the scenario of an American terrorist who fell under the sway of Islamist fundamentalism. Western novelists portray the fundamentalist as the degenerate other in order to justify violence against this figure.

Western writers adopt the same approach towards Islamist fundamentalism, conflating Muslims and Arabs. They not only essentialise fundamentalism as "bad", but also blur the difference between the Arabs and Islamists. The Anglo-American novelist also depends on the cultural difference to distinguish the fundamentalist as inferior and alien to their culture, even if he is apparently defined as a member of the

Western community. Therefore, Western writers use the fundamentalist Other to strengthen Western national identities.

Western writers emphasise the context of difference in their representation of the Arab world in different ways. Thus, difference is expressed by showing how various political events are constructed in these two cultures. Secondly, the difference is underlined in social interaction. The novels highlight the difference between the two cultures when it comes to everyday social encounters or political institutions where representative people from the two worlds are brought together. Views on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Islamists and fundamentalism are a few examples of these differences.

A number of Western novelists employ gender as a powerful tool to define their culture and mark differences between them and the world of the Other. Therefore, women are used as instruments to distinguish the West from the Arab world. Anglo-American writers idealise the image of the Western woman and essentialise the Arab woman as veiled and imprisoned. Western fiction in the nineteenth century continues to play on the Orientalist treatment of the Arab woman. The novels portray women as submissive and repressed creatures because of Islam and social conventions in the Arab world. In this sense, the novels operate on a general perspective, drawing the Arab woman as the essential Other. Furthermore, this vilification of the Arab culture contributes to strengthening Western national identity.

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Chapter Three

The Arab Representations of the West

The Arab world in the last decade of the twentieth century witnessed key dramatic events that constituted a watershed in its political history. The end of the Cold War and the subsequent disintegration of the Soviet Bloc changed the nature of encounters with Western countries. The transformations positioned the Islamic world of which Arab countries constitute the core, in a struggle versus American-led powers. The image of the Arab world has accordingly turned from an ally in the ideological war against the expansionism of the 'Red' threat into a bitter enemy. As Régis Debray points out, the early nineties saw the emergence of the 'Green' peril, a term that symbolises Islam as a hostile international force posing a growing challenge to the West and undermining its values.¹

The Second Gulf War (1990-91) was a sequence of events that initiated another major development in the West-Arab encounter and left a huge impact on both sides' politics and communities. The ramifications of the war, started when Şaddām Ḥusayn's army invaded Kuwait in early August 1990, resulted in a global crisis given that a majority of the world's petroleum supplies come from the Gulf region. The formation of the American-led coalition to drive Şaddām's army out of Kuwait also marked the first regional war in which Arab countries allied with a coalition of Western forces against another Arab country with the blessings of Saudi Arabia, the Arab regional force and the central home of Islam.²

Unlike previous wars, this battle produced a huge reaction in the Arab world. Both ordinary people and intellectuals were greatly divided about the crisis and its ensuing repercussions. A number of Arab intellectuals and writers expressed strong pro-Iraqi reactions driven less by support for Şaddām Ḥusayn than by association with Western colonisation and their satellite allies of Arab regimes. Moroccan writer Layla Abu Zayd envisioned this group's viewpoint:

(I stood) As an Arab by the Iraqi people (during the Gulf War in 1991). The reasons for my stand were simple: Do I support the one who strikes at Israel and America and punishes both for the first time in 42 years for the

crimes they committed against the Palestinians? Or, do I support the stretching from the Gulf to the Ocean who fight on the side of America and Israel and allow our sacred lands (in Arabia) to become the military camps of polytheists, or to be trampled under their army boots, and to be littered with their beer cans? ³

The group only focussed on the idea of fighting an American-led coalition. Whereas a second group of Arab writers and intellectuals saw the Gulf War as a suitable opportunity to end one-man regimes and close the chapters on despotic rulers such as Ṣaddām Ḥusayn and Mu'ammār al-Qadhāfī. However, the upholders of this vision were unaware whether this was viable through Western military involvement. The continuation of old dictatorships filled Arab intellectuals with doubts as they felt that hopes for a new life with democracy dashed in the wake of the bloody conflict that broke out in January 1991. Pessimism was prevalent and many compared it to the Arab defeat in the Six-Day War with Israel in 1967. "This is a second catastrophe. It is like the Arab defeat in 1967," Egyptian writer Yūsuf Īdrīs said.⁴

Nevertheless, American intervention in Iraq after Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's invasion of Kuwait resulted in shaping the Arab world against the West and its involvement in the conflict. At the same time, the complexity of the conflict placed several Arab countries in an ambivalent position. On one hand, the West-Arab encounter stimulated nationalist feelings emphasising their sense of Arab identity. On the other hand, it reminded them of internal divisions in the wake of this war. Serious questions remained over the idea of whether a Pan-Arab world was viable following the war, or whether the idea was merely an emotional attachment.

Moreover, the September Oslo Agreement (1993) between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) compounded the situation for both the average Arab and the intellectuals. The agreement in many Arab eyes was considered to be another declaration of defeat, as it did not address the basic and mandatory requirement of Palestine's self-determination, democracy and economic independence.⁵ On the contrary, the Arab world felt that the agreement had consolidated the status of Israel and consequently was abandoning the central cause and the long-running struggle in which they had been engaged.

The retreat dealt a blow to secular liberation movements in the postcolonial Arab world. The failure of secular Arab movements to provide a model of progress and achieve success offered the opportunity to Islamists to voice their criticism. Religious groups deemed the concluded Palestinian-Israeli peace agreements as the point of collapse for secular nationalists. The agreements also destroyed the foundations of a system of values embraced by Arab generations since 1948. The role of the nationalist ideology adopted by the secular Pan-Arabism intelligentsia, which dominated the Arab scene in the postcolonial era, receded as a direct result. The crumple of the secular ideals resulted in a cultural and ideological crisis across the Arab world.⁶

A radical Islamist movement, which had revived in the 1980s following the Iranian revolution and the holy war launched by Islamists against the Soviets in Afghanistan (1979-1989), presented itself as an alternative for the unsuccessful secular regimes. The victory of the Islamist factions and the defeat of Soviet forces in Afghanistan put forward the Islamist experience as a model of success.⁷ The radical Islamists also capitalised on the growing misery and oppression under secular Arab and Westernised regimes to shun a Western secular style of life and promote Islamic Sharia.⁸ The poor Arab masses that, suffering from autocratic and corrupted regimes, were hugely drawn to the idea that Islam can be a salvaging power.

The resentment felt by the Islamists was not only directed at the secular political regimes, but also extended to all ideological and cultural symbols in Arab countries. For them the danger lay in the secular intellectuals who had shaped the outlook of Arab society. These animosities led to a war between radical Islamists and secular nationalists. The Islamists based their stance on a hypothesis that secular ideologies failed to hold a footing in Islamic countries and consequently attributed the losses suffered by the Arab world to these ideologies. In a later dramatic turn, the encounter developed into a violent showdown rather than symbolic debates. Radical Islamists resorted to armed actions to get rid of what they saw as secular rivals. Modernists found themselves trapped between Islamist fanatics and irretrievably degenerate political regimes.

A wave of assassinations instigated by radical Islamists claimed the lives of a number of respected intellectuals. In 1992, leading intellectual Faraj Fawdah was

assassinated in Cairo after publishing a number of books criticising the radical Islamists and their attitude.⁹ Two years later, a botched assassination attempt targeted Egyptian Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz, leaving him paralysed in one arm.¹⁰ In 1996, Egyptian philosopher and linguist Naṣr Ḥamid Abu-Zayd was ordered by court to divorce his wife, citing his blasphemy as a ground for the verdict.¹¹ Abu-Zayd was deemed an apostate after publishing a hermeneutical approach to the interpretation of the Qurān.

The Impact of Second Gulf War on Arab Novelists

This traumatic environment resulted in the migration of many Arab writers and intellectuals, including an exodus of intelligentsia from Iraq and Algeria following the turbulence in their countries. Consequently, the exclusion of the Arab writer is a recurring theme in many Arab novels of the 1990s. A large number of novels portray the Arab protagonist as an anti-hero living in exile due to his or her failure to live in their homeland following certain historical events. The perception of the West was selective without being reduced to a single concept. The West as a setting, rather, features the Arab character and a struggle with identity. The characters drawn were not portrayed as having a collective image or typical identity; they reflected personal, fragmented and heterogeneous elements that symbolise different, complicated cultural traditions.

Syrian writer Halīm Barakāt says that the exile of Arab writers has fuelled the search for identity, explaining that “serious writers living in exile often have to search for a new identity...some others have become marginal to both their adopted culture and their Arab homeland.”¹² Moreover, he personally admitted that living for 30 years in America “had left him neither assimilated nor displaced”.¹³ For example, the protagonist in the Ībrāhīm Āḥmad’s novel *The Child of CNN*, is an Iraqi immigrant who has been living in America for over 25 years, feels excluded by his American wife and her community despite having spent such a long time with them.

Furthermore, Arab writers who have been living in the West depict negative imagery of their host countries due to political approaches taken by their governments toward the Arab world. A number of writers believed in political collaboration between Western governments and Arab autocratic regimes. Arab writers think that Western

countries help sustain the rule of corrupt and tyrannical regimes in order to advance their interests irrespective of the Arab people's aspirations. Bahāa Ṭāhir's *Love in Exile* represents this collaboration in the tacit agreement between a Western businessman and a wealthy Arab Emir from the Gulf region as a means of destroying the life of the Arab protagonist. This theme is repeated in almost all the selected novels of this study. The West in Arab novels was portrayed as an imperialist, homogeneous entity that works against the welfare of the Arab world.

Arab writers in the nineties also emphasise their detachment from the national community due to the drastic changes that happened in the political and social landscape. Exile from one's own society is a theme used by novelists for various purposes. On the one hand, Arab writers use the theme of alienation to express their isolation from society, and more importantly from the ruling political regime. On the other hand; it is an opportunity to contemplate the root cause for the nation's decadence and to create a new drive to key issues. To achieve this, Arab writers resorted both to their collective cultural history in order to probe the past and think of new avenues for the present.

Egyptian writer Nura Amin underlines this condition, stating that 1990s writers are "trapped in history".¹⁴ Arab writers continue to imagine their characters living within a circle of the past and present, and stopping short of any progression into the future. The hampered development of the present reflected the stalemate felt by Arab intellectuals and writers during this era. In the case of representation in Palestinian Yūsuf al-Īlah's novel *The Memory Spinning*, the protagonist tries to articulate a lost identity by immersing in the golden past of Palestine under the Ottoman rule in order to make up for the bitter reality of the present—an experience which is defined by division and political disillusionment.

The Arab-Israeli conflict was a major topic tackled by Arab writers, depicting Israel as an imperial power and the Israelis as a harmonised group poised against the wellbeing of the Arab world. The Western stand was shown as biased and indifferent to the atrocities committed by Israeli forces against Palestinians. Bahāa Ṭāhir's *Love in Exile* highlights the low-level media coverage of the massacre of Sabra and Shatilla camps during the Israeli invasion of Beirut in 1982. The novel draws Western

intellectuals as helpless and contradictory for presenting themselves as staunch supporters of human rights in many parts of the world, while giving a lukewarm response towards the crimes and abuse committed against the Palestinians during the Israeli invasion.

Gender was at the heart of representation of Arab-West encounters. Arab men are drawn in a variety of form: the committed intellectual, the virile macho and the romantic idealist. All encounter a number of Western characters, both men and women when they travel to their country. However, all writers highlight the Arab's masculinity in contrast to the Westerner's. Hence, Western women are employed to draw a demarcation line between the Arab Self and the Western Other.

Arab novelists depicted Western women as the symbolic bearer of the nation and its cultural metonyms. They also highlight the bodies of Western women and their physical attraction as tools to set national boundaries. Arab novelists emphasise the sexuality of Western women, portraying them as pretty and modern, yet sexually permissive. As Jan Jindy Pettman argues:

Women's movements and bodies are policed, in terms of their sexuality, fertility, and relations with "others" especially with other men. This suggests why men attach such political significance to women's "outward attire and sexual purity". Seeing women as their possession, as those responsible for the transmission of culture and through it political identity; and also as those most vulnerable to abuse, violation or seduction by "other" men.¹⁵

Arab writers underline the stark difference between the traditions of the two worlds and its reflections on the role of love as a factor in bridging the gap between the two worlds. Arab writers attribute the failure of harmony to pervasive Western political biases or even callous indifferences to the other. All the selected novels end with separation or the death of both Arab and Western characters that engage in intimate or loving relationships, forced termination of which usually takes place due to strikingly different values and traditions. This dichotomy reflects the absence of any rapprochement between the two worlds despite them existing alongside one another.

Recurrent tragic endings have marked a tradition in Arabic novels that will be elaborated upon in the analysis of the following novels.

3.1 Love in Exile

This chapter begins with an analysis of Egyptian author Bahāa Ṭāhir's novel *Love in Exile* (1995) because it underlines a timely change in the Arab mentality towards the West. In this novel, Ṭāhir breaks away from the traditional representations of the East-West encounter made by Arab writers who often depict the West as a haven of freedom and human rights. He confirms the political will to usher in a new era of cultural relationships in the wake of the Second Gulf War and the end of the Cold War. In this novel, Ṭāhir also underscores the links between repressive Arab regimes and the West, emphasising that their collaboration will crush the average Arab or Western person who may oppose their political schemes.

Ṭāhir also emphasises the relationship of fiction and politics, and the impact of politics on people from different walks of life. He accounts for this importance, saying:

I have always thought that you cannot separate politics from fiction. It is important to combine what is happening to ordinary people because what happens in the political life affects everyone.¹⁶

The writer attaches special importance to the detrimental effects of power and materialism on the intellectual. This novel illustrates how Arab intellectuals are gradually swept away by worldly desires and abandon their longtime ideals.

Love in Exile tells the story of an unnamed Egyptian journalist whose life has changed dramatically after the death of Gamal Abdul Nasser in 1970.¹⁷ The hero is demoted from his post as an Editor-in-Chief to an outcast journalist after refusing to write an article praising the new policies embraced by former President Anwar al-Sadat (1970-1981). This negativity runs parallel with personal disturbances at home that end in divorce from his wife and his travel to Europe country to work as a press correspondent for a newspaper that hardly publishes his articles. At a press conference held in another European country, he gets to know a young Austrian

tourist, Brigitte, who is brought to the conference to translate from Spanish to German. As both the Arab journalist and Austrian tourist had left their native countries to seek psychological stability after unsuccessful marriages, the relationship between the two characters developed into a loving, comfortable life.

However, the stability comes to an end with two major events. The protagonist falls subject to harassment by a rich Emir from the Gulf region when the former refuses the latter's request to run a new Arabic newspaper, which the wealthy Emir plans to establish in the European country. Making use of his political networks in both the Arab and the Western world, the Emir causes the Arab protagonist to be sacked from his job as a correspondent and Brigitte from her job as a tourist guide. Secondly, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon unleashes differences between the protagonist and Brigitte about how to react towards the Israeli aggression. The reverberations of these two key actions lead Brigitte to decide to return to Austria, while the Arab protagonist goes to meet the Emir. After failing to find him, the protagonist goes to a nearby park and surrenders to his heart disease.

The novel starts with an unnamed Egyptian journalist, the narrator, showing a reluctance to attend a press conference in a Western city about human rights atrocities the right-wing government in Chile committed against its people:

That day I was reluctant to go to that press conference. I knew ahead of time that certain things would be said which if I were to report, would not be published by my paper in Cairo. And even if the paper published the article, it would shorten it, dilute it, and jumble the paragraphs in such a way that the reader would not be able to figure out what the story was about. (Ṭāhir, p. 4)

The depiction of the journalist as having no real interest in covering the press conference intensifies the reader's suspense to work out the reasons behind his reluctance and the marginalisation he feels at his newspaper. It is also a way to reflect an objective judgment about conclusions. The writer wants the reader to draw conclusions out while, at the same time, becoming familiar with the cultural encounter between Arab and Western characters that takes place in the novel.

At the press conference the hero sees Pedro, a Chilean man, speaking of the suffering of his people under General Augusto Pinochet's government (1973-1990). It is at this press conference the protagonist also meets a female tourist guide Brigitte who the author uses to represent the West. Unlike the Arab protagonist, the Austrian Brigitte does not feel alienated in the Western country. She highlights this when the narrator says that "she was European and with her passport she considered the whole of Europe her hometown." (Ṭāhir, p. 3). Nevertheless, the Arab protagonist's attraction to her leads him to think of new prospects having previously followed a quiet life in the Western country.

The press conference motivates the Arab protagonist to the dramatic transformations shaping his present life:

Who did you want to come? Who cares now, here or everywhere else? Who cares about a conference held by a committee named The International Doctors Committee for Human Rights about human rights violations in Chile? What Chile and what rights? The time of horror, my friend, was over when they slaughtered thousands in the capital's soccer stadium there. The time of shedding tears over Allende was over when the military killed him. They killed him three years after Abd el-Nasser died. (Ṭāhir, p. 10)

The vivid description of the details reported in the press conference introduces the Arab protagonist, the narrator, to the reader. The novel's protagonist is an Egyptian journalist who has lived in self-exile in an unnamed Western city after becoming disillusioned with the political situation in his country throughout the 1970s. Ṭāhir employs the first person narrator to feature the developments of the hero and points out the motivations that will inspire him to take actions in his relationships with Western characters.

The opening chapter presents three major themes which are repeated throughout Bahāa Ṭāhir's works: the rapport between the intellectual and those in power, the impact of social transformation on Egyptian society, and the tenuous East-West encounter.¹⁸ The three themes are part of the writer's ongoing search for the roots of progress and the roots of societal breakdown across history, as well as 's consistent

interest in contrasting the Arab Self and the Western Other through various developed characters.¹⁹

Love in Exile is not thematically separate from Ṭāhir's earlier work by any means. Although it was released in 1995 and was translated into English in 2001, it evokes his classical theme, namely, the condition of the intellectual and how he copes with the cruel reality that engulfs his life under an authoritative Arab government. The writer also highlights how the revolutionary aspirations of the Arab middle class are undermined by the collaboration between the West and members of right-wing Arab regimes. The West is portrayed as an exponent of the colonial powers that dominated Arab countries before their independence. However, Ṭāhir refrains from describing this East-West divide as a clash of civilisations.

I don't see things in the racist light of discredited notion of the 'clash of civilisations'. I am mainly interested in human beings, regardless of ethnicity. But I am also interested in structures of domination and subordination. It does not matter if the protagonist is black or white. What matters most is how some people subjugate others.²⁰

This novel also asserts Ṭāhir's narrative technique in mingling history with political realities to reflect themes of renaissance and progress. This theme has appeared earlier in his historical novel *Rifaa Sons*, which traces the historical narrative back to the shaping of the Egyptian mind, by demonstrating key renaissance figures in Egypt's modern history.²¹ However, Ṭāhir's exploration of Egypt's history is meant to reflect local, regional perspectives, though he embraces universalism and considers Egypt to be a microcosm for humanity.²² The writer pays special attention to the condition of the intellectual in a postcolonial Arab country and his political and social challenges.

This novel is a continuation of 's theme in his novel *As Duha Said* (1985), which highlights the deviation of intellectuals from their political engagement and their revolutionary ideals for the sake of material desires.²³ The novel features the conflict that arises between social justice versus the power of love or, in other words, the meeting of love and justice. It also emphasises the aftermath of the independence revolution in the Third World and the responsibility of leaders to make any revolution

succeed.²⁴ The theme of the East-West encounter also appeared clearly in *East Palm Trees* and *Yesterday I Dreamt of You*, while *Aunt Safiya and the Monastery*, touches on the social fabric in Egypt, stressing the concept of the nation's social cohesion and unity.²⁵

Love in Exile is a development of these ideas, widening the focus of the Arab-West encounter in order to discuss in depth the cultural conflict in the wake of key political developments that engulfed the Middle East. Set in 1982, the novel unveils the existentialist condition experienced by Arab intellectuals during the 1980s and 1990s. The unnamed Arab protagonist is a disillusioned hero digging deep into his history so as to rediscover the causes of defeat. The retrospective highlights major aspects and stages in the narrator's life and their impact on the shaping of his character.

Like the writer, the hero criticises the political situation in Egypt under President Anwar Sadat (1970-1981), and the deviation of intellectuals from their revolutionary ideals and subsequent powerlessness. However, rules out that the Arab protagonist represents him. In an interview Ṭāhir points out that his works do not include details from his life nor are they autobiographical. But at the same time "they reflect the outcomes of personal experiences".²⁶ In particular, the novelist highlights the degradation of committed intellectuals and the emergence of opportunists and propaganda writers.

I jumped out of the bed and went to the living room and stood in front of Abd al-Nasser. I asked him why Ghassan Mahmud was alive and Khalil Hawi dead. Why do those who believed you and your vision die? He had seen us, as yourself said, washing in the morning in the Nile, the Jordan, and the Euphrates. So why did you lie to him? Why did you raise and hold close to your bosom those who betrayed you and betrayed us? `Those who sold you and sold us? Why is it that only Ghassan Mahmud stay alive? Don't defend yourself and don't argue with me! Khalil Hawi has committed suicide.... Don't cry! Especially, don't cry! And there's no need for that rasp in the voice or for a decree from the President of the Republic to nationalize the International Company of the Suez Canal, an Egyptian shareholding Company, and there's no need for a great country has come

into being to protect and threaten and preserve and waste, and there is no need to for that ringing in the ear because I can't stand it, you hear? (Ṭāhir, p.148).

The alienation felt by the protagonist does not deter him from re-engaging with the intellectual community that still retains the cultural ideals from the early 1930s and the Spanish Civil War period. The protagonist's attachment to these ideologies does not show a desire for future objectives, but rather reveals nostalgia for the past in order to revisit present failures:

In our youth, that war which we did not live though and which only knew by reading about it, meant many things to us: the dream of a new world, one united against the dictatorship and injustice, the dream which collapsed leaving behind a few symbols: Hemingway and "For Whom the Bell Tolls", Malraux and L'Espoir, Picasso and "Guernica", and Lorca's poems, the Symbols that fixed our imagination in our early youth. (Ṭāhir, p. 55)

The novel is full of political symbols, historical references and literary allusions that enrich the multilayered discourse used by the author. Mixing poetic language and historical details adds an international aspect that creates a universal language closing the gap between the Arab-Western cultures.²⁷ This convergence paves the way for the main event of the novel, the love between the Arab character and the Western character Brigitte.

The author also tries to consolidate objectivity in the novel by showing a realistic image of the West in a bid to avoid over-generalisation.²⁸ For example, Brigitte, an Austrian tourist guide, and Dr. Muller, the chief of a human rights organisation, represent the positive side of the West as both of them advocate values of understanding, equality and honesty. Nevertheless, they expose the hidden, negative part of the Western world. Dr. Muller, the human rights activist and the organiser of the press conference betrays the trust of his friend, Brigitte's father, when he has a love affair with his wife while Brigitte's father was away fighting in the Spanish Civil War. Ṭāhir compares the Western intellectual to the Arab one, emphasising their deviation from political commitment due to their immersion in

personal desires. Ṭāhir underlines that it is a universal phenomenon that has plagued intellectuals across the world

Brigitte herself is a victim of racism in her own Western community, one that does not accept her marriage to an African student and having a baby with him. As a result of this rejection, a group of young men including students from her Austrian university violently attack her and her husband while they are travelling home. The brutal attack results in her baby dying and the separation of Brigitte and her husband. The story of Brigitte and her African husband serves as a metaphor for the Western community and the way in which it deals with the foreign Other. The author does not make any favourable statements about the West that are depicted in previous Arab fictional works. He negates the image of the West as the land of freedom and human rights.

Ṭāhir also criticises the West, accusing it of perpetuating xenophobia and intolerance to the Other. The feelings of alienation are complicated by disappointment and anger over the support provided by the West to Israel. The author condemns what he believes to be a Western bias towards Israel when it invaded Lebanon in 1982 and all the atrocities that took place during this invasion. The author also decries the West's stand against Arabs and its seeming indifference to the suffering of Palestinians. The writer illustrates this by having the character Bernard, a leftist Western journalist; abstain from publishing cases detailing acts of aggression committed by Israelis against Arabs:

Bernard: "You won't find one journalist here willing to publish this."

Ibrahim Said, "Why? I'm giving you specific cases with names and testimony from neutral sources."

Bernard interrupted, "I believe you one hundred percent and yet I cannot publish this.".... You know why. If we say that armed soldiers kidnap unarmed citizens from another country, that's a serious accusation."...I told you I believe you, but what would the editor-in-chief believe me? What would I do or what would he do if we received an official refutation and we were told that there are commandos and that we are encouraging

terrorists, or more seriously, what if we were told that by defending these terrorists we are anti-Semitic?" (Ṭāhir, pp. 79-80)

The dialogue reveals the different points of view on the political events that distinguish the Arab Self from the Western Other. The novel articulates the narrative of difference, emphasising Palestinian suffering, a recurring theme in Arabic fiction.

The novelist follows contrasting political paths, portraying incidents as seen through the eyes of groups or individuals who embody the experience of the whole nation. By choosing Ibrahim, an Egyptian national, and Marianne, a Norwegian nurse living in Palestinian camps, Ṭāhir widens the scope of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, rendering it as an international problem that deserves global attention and, in particular, a different kind of treatment from the Western community.²⁹ Ṭāhir portrays the West eclectic in dealing with international crisis, highlighting one crisis, such as the atrocities in Chile and downplaying the crisis in Lebanon.

Consequently, the central character finds himself divided between two urgent issues as he abandons his political and personal commitments by succumbing to an unexpected love affair with a Western woman. Becoming an alternative for his divorced wife, Brigitte makes him feel a sense of contentment again. Furthermore, the protagonist looks at Brigitte as the power that can heal him from familial wounds he sustained after realising that he is unable to raise his growing son and daughter.³⁰ The protagonist's problem is exasperating, as he feels unable to protect his children in Egypt from the dominant ideologies in the country due to settling in a European country. Consequently his son is adopting Islamic fundamentalism as a way of coping with life, while his daughter prefers to embrace superficial Western trends.

The second binding issue for the Arab protagonist is his political commitment as a Pan-Arab intellectual defending his engagement both in country and in exile. As a sign of despair and fatigue, the protagonist prefers the warmth of love and turns his back on his national and Arab commitments. The idea of escape prevails for a while as the tired hero believes that the healing power of love can give him the peace of mind he was hugely missing.³¹ It also shows that the West can impact the identity crisis taking place with the Arab characters in exile.

However, the complex system governing the life of intellectuals proves elusive. The invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the massacre of Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatilla Camps in Beirut upset the balance the unnamed Arab protagonist is trying to maintain. It causes a sea change in the protagonist's life, which he clearly states by saying: "Everything changed after what happened in Lebanon" (Ṭāhir, p.133). Lorenzo Casini argues that the invasion of Beirut is a turning point in the novel, adding that it also marks a shift in the author's writing style.³²

Before the massacre occurs, the text is largely introspective, dominated by dialogue and the free direct thought of the protagonist, that is centred around the memories of his life. After the massacre, instead, the protagonist attempts to reassert his existence as a political subject by denouncing what has occurred in Lebanon.³³

In spite of the scale of brutality associated with the event, it is the magnitude of shock that succeeds in turning the formerly negative character into a positive and active player. Political developments result in the restoration of his revolutionary spirit and his engaging with his cultural side. Therefore, when he faces the question of adhering to his commitment as an Arab intellectual or giving in to personal affairs, he places his devotion to the collective imagined community of the Arab over his personal desires.

The protagonist embodies this return by resuming his role as an active writer communicating the message of his society:

I wrote everything I found out and sent a letter to the newspapers in Cairo every day containing what I heard, reactions, and what the newspapers here said. For the first time I began sending articles to the Arab papers published in Europe without even bothering to follow up and find out what was published and what was not. What mattered was to write as much as possible, for ultimately something must get through"(Ṭāhir, pp. 246-7)

The strengthening affects his interaction with the Western Other, which is reflected by the end of his relationship with Brigitte. The split takes shape due to internal and external factors. The reactions of the couple appear to be contrasted following their

participation in the demonstrations staged to protest the invasion. Although Brigitte takes part in the protest, she believes the demonstration cannot bring back the dead in Lebanon, ignoring the fact that this action symbolises a renaissance for the protagonist and the action that makes him feel alive.

However, the protagonist does not blame Brigitte for his subsequent separation from her. He ascribes it to an external factor brought about by an alliance of evil or, as he describes it, “that sword from the unknown that sever them” (Ṭāhir, p. 238). The evil alliance, which is represented by the Arab Prince Hamid from a Gulf country and Davidian, a wealthy Jewish construction developer who supplies the Israeli army with large amounts of financial aid, has hatched a plot to harm the protagonist and his beloved by influencing the couple’s managers to lay them off and lose their jobs.

To highlight the relationship between Western powers and Arab autocratic regimes, Ṭāhir portrays the Arab prince taking this action as an act of revenge for the journalist’s refusal to work with the Prince’s shadow newspaper. The prince disguises his political schemes and his support of American policies in the Middle East with Islamic fundamentalism. By citing the collaboration between Western warmongers and Arab Sheikhs, Ṭāhir emphasises the deceptive appearances of Western liberalism and Arab regimes as characterised by religious fundamentalism

The death of the protagonist and the departure of Brigitte to her native city in Austria represent the end of the love story and indicate Ṭāhir’s view that any Arab-West conciliation is doomed to failure. The novelist attributes the breakdown of their cultural union as due to external factors, which individuals cannot overcome. The writer criticises the partiality of the official Western stand on key issues. For him, the bias is manifested in the politicised treatment of media and news in connection with Arab issues, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

At the end of the novel, Ṭāhir concludes the end of classical post-colonial intellectuals who fought for independence and justice. Opportunists who place their worldly desires over their national ideals replace these figures. Ṭāhir also thinks that all acts of resistance on the Arab side have dismally failed and were in vain. While there are a number of Western individuals who can gloss over cultural and ethnic or

national restrictions, they are unable to counterbalance the predominating racial trends. The writer determines that the approaches of the West's right wing and leftwing parties are similar in dealing with the non-Western Other.

Ṭāhir aims to deconstruct the essentialised concept of Western purity and abandon traditional Arab understanding of the West. The novelist finds a new meaning in the Western concepts of freedom and individuality. The process challenges the fixed notions of Western identity that continue to be valid even after the end of the colonial era. The Arab identity is shown as influenced by the past and becomes inevitably linked to history. Ṭāhir investigates how to challenge the images of our past that have dominated our life and act effectively.

3.2 The Child of CNN

Like Ṭāhir in *Love in Exile*, Iraqi novelist Ībrāhīm Āḥmad continues with the same thematic pattern of the cultural encounter between an Arab man and a Western woman in his novel *The Child of CNN*. However, he sets the novel in a different locale, against the political developments of the Second Gulf War. The writer chooses an American woman to represent the Western world and an Iraqi man from an immigrant community in Detroit to be the representative of the Arab world. He also supports the first plot with another line of events involving exclusively American characters living in New York City, highlighting the American economy to draw a broader picture of America.

Moreover, unlike Ṭāhir in *Love in Exile*, Āḥmad draws from his imagination rather than from personal experiences, mixing fiction with historical facts drawn from the Second Gulf War.³⁴ The mixture of characters marks an early reflection of this war in Arabic fiction, revealing its profound impact on the Arab mentality. It also highlights a key stage in the forging of anti-Americanism across the Arab world in the 1990s, especially as the Second Gulf War is the first war of its kind that has witnessed the direct involvement of the US Army in the Arab world.

Despite the fact that the novel demonstrates considerable political engagement with a Pan-Arab ideology in Ībrāhīm Āḥmad's works, it is a rather belated preoccupation. Born in Iraq in 1946, Āḥmad belongs to the generation of the 1970s, which critics

regard as an extension of the sixties. This generation appeared following the liberation of Arab countries from colonialism.³⁵ Both Leftist and Pan-Arabism ideologies have wielded great influence on the interconnected generations. However, the writings of Iraqi novelists in the seventies placed special interest on the life of the intellectual within his country boundaries.³⁶ They feature a new sensibility detailing the ordeal of Arab intellectuals under dictatorial regimes and undereducated masses reluctant to set them free from the restrictions of their social conventions.³⁷

Furthermore, this existentialist situation is the salient feature of Ībrāhīm Āḥmad's early fiction. His first published work, *20 Very Short Stories* (1976), touches on sketches of various individuals living in these critical times—the Iraqis under the Ba'ath regime (1968-2003). He continues this theme in his second collection *Flowers in the Hands of the Mummy* published 1981. In a move that caused drastic changes in his life and fiction, Āḥmad left Iraq in 1979 along with a number of Iraqi writers and intellectuals with socialist leanings following the collapse of the Progressive National Front Agreement (1973-1978) struck between the nationalist Ba'ath Party represented by Iraqi President Āḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr and the Iraqi Communist Party represented by its Secretary-General 'Aziz Muhammad.³⁸

After settling down in Sweden, Āḥmad's fictional themes, style and genre have seen dramatic transformations. His experience in exile prompts Āḥmad to be more in touch with the challenges facing the identity of Arab immigrants in their Western Diaspora and consequently this became one of the pressing themes of his work. Offering enough fictional space in the novel to show the multi-faceted struggle of Arab immigrants in Western exile can account for Āḥmad's turn to writing novels rather than short stories. Āḥmad focuses on showing the strife of Arab characters in their quest to maintain social order within their hard-defined cultural boundaries. *The Child of CNN* is the first part of a trilogy highlighting this situation and exemplifying the Arab-American encounter during the build-up to, and aftermath of, the Second Gulf War.

The novel draws on two separate stories that take place in the United States at the beginning of the 1990s. The first story revolves around the life of an Iraqi immigrant engineer Jamīl Ṣābir who works for a large American company. He left his native

country following the Ba'ath coup against General 'Abd al-Karīm Qāsim in 1963. He has settled down in the United States and married his university colleague Judith. After twenty years of living together, problems between them come to the fore over a number of issues, such as the name of their son and US involvement in the Second Gulf War.

The fallout between Jamīl and America moves from the home to security authorities. Problems arise when Jamīl accuses the US Government of collaborating with Iraqi dictator Ṣaddām Ḥusayn in an interview with a media outlet. He is summoned by the FBI to their offices several times and subjected to harsh interrogation. Jamīl is eventually released although authorities keep him under surveillance. Unable to return to his country where Ṣaddām is still ruling, the protagonist succumbs to his fate and accepts the reality of the inevitable military attack against his native country.

The second story takes place in New York and tells the story of the American Juliet who finds herself in a delicate situation as the father of her dead boyfriend Hardy requests her to implement his will and accept artificial insemination of Hardy's sperm. The request glorifies Hardy who died when his fighter plane was downed over Iraq. After lengthy discussions with her grandmother Candice, Juliet decides to accept and undergoes artificial insemination with her boyfriend's sperms. The will is part of a large-scale scheme sponsored by major American companies and promoted by the channel CNN, regarded as the iconic American symbol during the Second Gulf War. The scheme's premise is to establish a sperm bank for American soldiers taking part in the Gulf War in order to create a generation of American heroes.

The insemination operation, carried out by Doctor Ernest and nurse Angela, succeeds and Juliet becomes pregnant. Nine months later Juliet wants to kill the baby after giving birth to a deformed son. When the doctor rejects her request, Juliet sends him to a sanatorium. Afterwards, she flees the hospital and adopts a hippie lifestyle on the streets of New York. The banks, sponsoring the CNN Child Scheme, resort to a brazen trick by publishing a manipulated picture of a deceased Hardy sitting next to a beautiful woman, Juliet, and their lovely child Adam, in a newspaper to cover up the failure of the scheme.

When Doctor Ernest and nurse Angela try to help Juliet's grandmother Candice reveal the trickery, they are sacked from their jobs at the hospital under pressure brought about by the financial institutions sponsoring the CNN Child Scheme. When Juliet decides to return home and bring back her deformed son from the sanatorium, she is shocked to find that he has already disappeared. Candice dies of shock and Juliet is left to bear her legacy as the bank repossesses her grandmother's house.

The Child of CNN highlights the historical developments of the Arab-American engagement, demonstrating the roots of Arab disillusionment with American policies at the present time. Āḥmad ascribes Arab resentment to the American involvement in the Middle East and changes in American sensibility towards the Arabs.

America who is now clamouring to save peace and justice is not innocent in what has happened. In fact it is the one who has organised the sedition just as it organised the disasters in order to sell its wars, its agreement and principles. It always needs a reckless ruler who will create consumers to pay for her evil depressing products...and the whole issue is a grave shameful American scheme with its nightmares. (Āḥmad, p. 8)

The novelist tries to rewrite history with his subjective representation of political events and cultural juxtapositions. The first chapter opens with the protagonist Jamīl Şābir, an Iraqi immigrant, leaving his office job at an American company and feeling unwilling to return to his house in Detroit due to problems with his American wife Judith. Jamīl is a leftist intellectual and has fallen out of love with his wife after twenty-seven years of believing that America is the land of freedom and cultural tolerance. The disenchantment with this dream poignantly comes up after having recurrent heated debates about identity and cultural belonging:

My discussions on politics with Judith had become painful and harsh, reducing us to only the few words we felt obliged to say to know one another's whereabouts. Our debates and discussions ceased as I realised her racial arrogance - something that went unnoticed during my engrossment in the 'quiet life'. I am no longer attracted to her polished speech, nor her forced spontaneity.³⁹ (Āḥmad, p. 10)

The protagonist's personal resentment is aggravated as he sees his wife, who has accepted her marriage to an immigrant; start to show a different reaction towards cultural issues in the build-up to the Second Gulf War. His wife, who used to be tolerant, placing love over all ethnic and religious considerations, argues that all immigrants should abandon their inferior native identities and willingly become assimilated into the superior American identity. The grounds for this claim are Judith's belief that "politics belong to those who support their country. Anyone that disagrees is considered a lawless beast, waging war and causing global unrest". (Ãḥmad, p. 10)

The change in the nature of the couple's relationship mirrors the shift in Arab-American encounters and its development by the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the United States as a superpower. Ãḥmad demonstrates the background of life in America and underpins the general mood of the Americans at the beginning of their involvement in the Second Gulf War. The author expands the picture by referring to hate crimes launched by Americans against members of the Arab community, especially before and during the Second Gulf War:

In Detroit and other states they burned shops and restaurants owned by Arabs and they plundered the belongings of many of them and inflicted ill-harm into their families. (Ãḥmad, p. 25)

Ãḥmad shows how the Americans demarcate their boundaries with people from within and outside the nation by ostracising immigrants in particular.⁴⁰ The nationalist feelings expressed by his wife against her husband and average Americans against the Arab community in Detroit represent the rise of nationalism as a practice of domination and the root cause of cultural conflict. As Etienne Balibar points out this domination arouses a conflict for the non-nationals (Arabs), forcing them to make a choice as to their loyalties and where they belong.⁴¹ In other words, Balibar reflects that these dual belonging cannot be tolerated.

The influence of this cultural phenomenon and its impact on cultural interaction appears clearly when a row erupts between the couple over the name of their son-to-be. While the protagonist calls his son the Arab name 'Hāni' in honour of his brother, killed by the right-wing Nationalist Guard in the February 1963 coup, his wife prefers

to name their son 'Henry'. The latter name is completely Western with no symbolic or emotional attachment for her, yet she manages to enter it on their son's official documents regardless.

The writer portrays the Arab character as emotional, tolerant and culturally profound while he portrays the American wife as possessive, spiritually hollow and self-righteous, imposing her view above all else. This episode gives a brief analysis on the nature of American globalisation in the nineties as a culturally hollow development. It also illustrates how America invokes its mastery and cultural domination over nations. Furthermore, the writer highlights the *fait accompli* of the situation facing Arab immigrants in the Western Diaspora.

The portrayal of the Other in this novel is different from a similar theme in Western novels shown in Chapter Two of the thesis. While Western fiction blurs the two, essentialising the Arab as 'bad' and 'dehumanized', the image of the Westerner in Arab novels is more complex, portraying from several angles. In *The Child of CNN* the Self is depicted as living in the same society of the Other and tries to deal with it. However, the elements of difference with the Western Other withstand this integration. *Āḥmad* tries to investigate these elements of difference by setting the events of the novel against the backdrop of the Second Gulf War.

With his disillusionment with America exacerbated, *Jamīl's* relationship with his arrogant, overbearing American wife continues to deteriorate and the differences between the couple move from the home to the media. In a press interview *Jamīl* vents his anger by expressing his opinion about the Second Gulf War and the links between America and *Şaddām Ḥusayn*:

The Americans built up the dictator's military strength to remove their Iranian enemy. The dictator has offered services to America that has never been provided by all of their official agents in the world; what they must now do is remove the statue of Liberty and replace it with a statue of him.
(*Āḥmad*, p. 187)

The statement indicates that *Jamīl's* resentment has reached a critical point. In stark contrast to being the champion of peace and freedom, *Jamīl* associates American

power with Arab dictators. He believes that America is involved in the Gulf War to defend its political interests. The author underlines that Şaddām Hūsayn is a loyal agent delivering valuable services to the Americans.

Ãḥmad consolidates this negative image of America by introducing the reader to a second plot that touches on the life of Juliet, a passionate, innocent and honest girl who works as a saleswoman at an aquarium in New York. Juliet finds herself in a critical situation as Johnson, the father of her boyfriend Hardy, informs her that Harvey has died following the crash of his US Air force fighter jet over Iraq. Although Hardy's father was a stumbling block for the couple, protesting against their relationship, he requests Juliet fulfill his son's will by accepting to undergo artificial insemination using Hardy's sperm. The project reveals the infatuation of Americans with their army servicemen and military power.

They want your wedding to Hardy to be a big party, which they will broadcast as a commercial advertisement for the bank. They also want you to sign a contract with them to appear in a series of advertisements... In fact, they want your wedding to be a national holiday...showing America's glory and power. (Ãḥmad, p. 123)

Ãḥmad uses the scheme to evoke the association of America's militarism and materialism. The commercialisation of noble feelings deprives basic human rights, such as, marriage and parenthood. Human beings turn into a mere commodity, their emotions rendered as propaganda.

Ãḥmad puts forward the idea that the American façade of power and progress hides the servitude of man for the sake of major capitalist companies and foreign policy. Thus, when Juliet proceeds to carry out the will, she is surprised by the conditions established by the sponsoring bank. Although Juliet refuses the bank's terms, she is forced to go to the military unit where her boyfriend was serving as the designate hospital has asked for exorbitant fees if she carries out the IVF in private. Ãḥmad hints that America, enslaved to financial institutions that place material gain ahead of spiritual and essential values, cannot be the bearer of these noble ideals.

The novelist emphasises that the American attempt to impose artificial reality over natural life will fail. The scheme of generating powerful children through artificial insemination results in the birth of a deformed child named Lawrence. Major American companies and media agencies reject this demoralising outcome and collaborate with Johnson to hide the negative information about the child, instead fabricating good news in the media. They are also involved in a series of actions that destroy the lives of Juliet and her grandmother, as well as Doctor Ernest, who conducted the artificial insemination procedure and his nurse, when they try to reveal the truth. The four characters symbolise how the falsifying American propaganda machine crushes innocence.

The writer aims to show the level of misinformation in America and the capability of the media to disseminate false information in the hands of American institutions. The author portrays major capitalist companies as managing the media and placing gain over any other principle. By presenting two illustrative examples from American society, the writer aims not to focus on isolated cases but rather on trends over a period of time. He also identifies shortcomings that contribute to the outstanding problems between the two worlds and justifies his criticism of American policies towards its citizens and foreign countries.

In another example showing America as a police state exercising rigid controls on people, the FBI office summons Jamīl on charges of having ties with Ṣaddām's regime. The investigations bring Jamīl face-to-face with the Western Other, not shown in public. However, this encounter does not deter him from expressing his view about the hidden collaboration between American administration and Ṣaddām Ḥusayn. Jamīl adamantly tells the FBI investigators:

The American intelligence picked him up when he was an outcast on the streets of Baghdad and they put him in the presidential palace and until the invasion of Kuwait you were giving him weapons equipment and major facilities. (Āḥmad, p. 192)

Jamīl is similar to the protagonist of Ṭāhir's *Love in Exile* in accusing the West of having links with despotic Arab regimes. The protagonist also underlines the idea that the West is traditionally the supplier of weapons and arms to the Arab dictators who

oppress and persecute their people. This association turns America into a dictatorship that collaborates in perpetuating injustice.

Disappointment with America as a land of freedom and welfare reaches its crescendo when Jamīl is released from detention. He feels that he is longer living in the welcoming country that hosted him when he fled his home in 1963: “America smells different, to me. The scent smothers, like the stink of a dark cellar.” (Āḥmad, p. 197). The bad smell suggests the decay and degeneration of America as an ideal world. It also reflects the culmination of the protagonist’s disillusionment with the American landscape. America morphs from a land of inclusion and a cauldron of cultures into a land of exclusion rejecting outsiders.⁴² The boundaries between the two cultures do not disappear but are redefined. The acquired American identity of the protagonist is unsettled and can be revoked at any time. Despite living for many years in the United States, the Arab-American is described as having marginal loyalty to the American identity.

In an Iraqi context, Āḥmad’s Jamīl equates the American FBI with the Ba'athists following 1963. Āḥmad employs this evocation through the character of an Iraqi journalist Īsmā’īl al-Ḥayik whom Jamīl sees going on hunger strike in Canada on TV “in protest at the reckless, wanton rush into war” (Āḥmad, p. 300). The association between the bloody coup of the past and the present war is established when the protagonist finds out that the protesting journalist is a friend Jamīl had met in Qasr al-Nihāyah prison when he was unconscious and bleeding from brutal torture during the crackdown on leftists following the 1963 political coup in Iraq.

Al- Ḥayik also affirms Jamīl’s suspicions about the collaboration between the United States and the Ṣaddām Ḥusayn:

The American President had called on the Iraqi people to remove their crazy President... what deception was this? In fact they were sitting far from the limelight whispering to each other in secret, telling jokes to each other and laughing. (Āḥmad, p. 311)

The author portrays the American authorities, specifically in relation to Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s regime, as hypocritical. While they promote vitriolic criticism against the

regime, they were its main supporters and supplied it with weapons before the Second Gulf War. Āḥmad underlines this contradiction during the interrogation of the protagonist by an FBI investigator over Jamīl's links with Ṣaddām's regime.

The question remains: Why has the writer been so harsh against the West and America in particular, despite living in Sweden, where there are relatively low levels of racism? Defining the protagonist as a leftist who left Iraq after a right-wing coup in 1963 can explain the persistent sad memories against the U.S.'s indirect involvement with activities against progressive regimes in the Middle East. The writer's view of America is hardened as he sees direct US involvement in a military and political conflict affecting his country and innocent people rather than targeting only the regime.

The writer emphasises the discrepancy between the image of America from inside and its perception overseas. He depicts the justifications used to launch the war:

America's fleets, strategic bases, satellites and its major companies are in danger and will be destroyed or hijacked by those people who are shown on TV screens as frail and pale and even incapable of swatting flies away from their faces. (Āḥmad, p.191)

The writer uses satire to downplay the stand taken by America in the conflict. The sarcasm aims to shatter the archetypal image of America as an advocate of political freedom and democracy. The novel exposes the cultural differences between the two worlds and indicates the consequences of this tenuous encounter and the possibility of any potential convergence.

The final chapter shows Jamīl Ṣābir as returning home late one night and sitting in front of the television to wait for the start of the attack on Iraq. He feels divided and crippled by being unable to leave America and save his country. The image of America becomes fraught with the pain of dispossession and complicated by frustration over the American foreign policy towards the Arab world. To the novelist, America is the peak of brutality. The offer of finding a haven in America from oppression in the Arab world is at the expense of turning the Arab into a rootless man without cultural belonging.

Ãḥmad constructs the Arab-American encounter as a clash of wills in which the Arab Self opposes the Western Other represented by America's political, social and cultural forces. This binary is similar to Michael Shapiro's notion of 'identity stories' in which stories creates a boundary between 'us' and 'them' and consequently 'imposes a model of identity/difference'.⁴³ The novel criticises American indifference to the ordeal suffered by Arab people and exposes the scale of atrocities committed against vulnerable people in the Arab world.

3-3 The Memory Spinning

Unlike the Occidental location used in the two novels mentioned above, Palestinian writer Yūsuf al-Īlah sets the location of the Arab-Western encounter on his country's land, the Palestinian territories. Partly, the personal circumstances can account for this selection. Unlike Arab writers selected in this chapter, Yusûf al-'Ilah spent most of his life inside Palestinian territories. He lived for four years in Lebanon to pursue his graduate studies at Beirut Arab University. Nevertheless, the English literature degree helped Al-Īlah to become an English language teacher at Ramallah schools.⁴⁴ More importantly, it helped him to get acquainted with world literature written in English. The Impact of these readings is clear in the themes, narrative and the characterisation of Al-Īlah's novels.

As a writer of knowledge about the symbolism of Palestinian territories for the West, Al-Īlah's employs the location to redraw the faintly perceptible image of the Palestinian people in both many Anglo-American and Arabic fictional works. He seeks to elicit his compatriots' search for identity and recognition. Largely, the violence characterising the Arab-Israeli conflict has cast a shadow on the human dynamic of the Palestinian people. The move is also meant to alert the reader's attention to this place and to actualise its cultural and political associations.

In the context of the Arabic novel, the writer's approach revitalises interest in the Palestinian character that often appears in Arab fictional works by breaking from the stereotypical image of the exiled Palestinian wishing to return to their Palestinian homeland. Instead of showing sympathy and solidarity towards the persecuted

Palestinians by the Israeli power, Al-Īlah conveys a realistic picture of the political and social life of his compatriots inside the country.⁴⁵ He shows how they cope with the intricate challenges imposed on their daily lives under the Israeli military presence. Al-Īlah sheds lights on the impact of historical legacy on that part of the world.

Published in 2000, *The Memory Spinning* not only demonstrates a change in the treatment of the Palestinian cause and its characters, but also marks a new shift in the genre of Al-Īlah's' writings.⁴⁶ Born in 1952, the novelist is a well-established writer with a large number of published political articles and short stories that reflect on the political and social conditions of the Palestinian people.⁴⁷ Although the novel is the first of its type in Al-Īlah's career, it is followed by a number of sequels that illustrate the delicate situation of the lost, dispossessed and fragmented Palestinians inside their territories. The novel also features the recurring theme in Al-Īlah's novels, namely the emotional bond between people irrespective of their race, class, religion or gender and the holy lands in Palestine.⁴⁸

The novel tells the love story of a Palestinian couple: Nabīl and 'Aydah. The former is the son of a working class family that suffered a great deal of loss via British and Israeli powers, whereas the latter is the daughter of a Western-educated Palestinian doctor who furthered his studies in the United States. The couple met while studying at a Hebrew University in the 1970s and fell in love despite the social and class differences between them. However, each of them has to follow a different path in life after Israeli settler Ben David Nephtali who lives in a nearby town Kibbutz rapes 'Aydah.

Although Nabīl establishes his own independent life after getting married to another woman, his life continues to be associated with 'Aydah. Thus, his wife's jealousy of 'Aydah causes their eventual divorce. 'Aydah manages to continue her life even after giving birth to a boy named Jad as a result of the rape. She enrolls him at a nursery run by a Spanish woman called Innayat. 'Aydah also gets engaged to a Palestinian man called Rabah breaking off the engagement in search of a different style of man. She finds her target in 'Auni Abu-al-Shabāb, the son of a Palestinian traitor who sells Palestinian properties in the interests of the occupiers of his country.

The Arab protagonist, Nabīl, starts the novel's narration by recounting the story of his love affair with a Palestinian girl called 'Aydah at a coffee shop where they used to meet twenty years prior. The recollections not only incite his feelings of separation with his beloved, but also the loss of his homeland and recognition. Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* calls this beginning the stage of 'primary resistance'.⁴⁹ Al-Īlah reinterprets the history of Palestine, highlighting the sensibilities of the present time. He points out imaginative challenges and unravels the tragedy of resistance by using memory in a bid to recover a history of lost homeland and identity.

Nabīl's memorising process leads him to ponder the causes of his loss of University classmate 'Aydah and reterritorialise his national identity. Thus, the novel apparently flows as a dialogue between Nabīl and 'Aydah, revealing their comments, concerns and sometimes obsessions as if they were "two sides of the same coin that is called identity". (Al-Īlah, p. 145). Yet the novel works as a defense mechanism to cope with the current situation by trying to counter its hostile reality. It is, rather, a literature of defense and rebellion that does its utmost to preserve the uniqueness and identity of the Palestinian society. *The Memory Spinning* reflects a collective memory full of variety, dispute and confrontation.

Like a number of Palestinian writers who associate Jerusalem with women, Al-Īlah metaphorically links the heroine 'Aydah to Palestine or, more precisely, the Palestinian territories before 1948⁵⁰ She symbolises the historical Palestine that enjoyed religious tolerance under the Ottoman rule when the three major Abrahamic religions (Islam, Christianity and Judaism) were able to co-exist in harmony. 'Aydah's story manifests this historical reality and proves it was a viable structure before the coming of British and Israeli powers. She is the daughter of a Muslim father hailing from the 'Udhmānīyah (Ottoman) village in West Jerusalem. The ancestors of this village immigrated and settled down in the Holy City seeking its blessings. A trilingual-English, Arabic and Hebrew-speaking woman with European facial features and Western sensibilities chooses to return and continue her life in Jerusalem, despite having spent her childhood and being able to stay in the United States.

'Aydah becomes symbolic of 'the battleground of group struggles'.⁵¹ She negotiates her way through a number of cultural perspectives, all of which lead to the

confirmation of her true identity. Her insistence on wearing the Kaffiyah- a dress accessory emblematic of Palestinian nationalism- during her student life at the Hebrew University reflects her determination to emphasise a Palestinian/Arab identity. It is also a tool with which to resist the imposition of Israeli culture. Therefore, she naturalises the reality imposed by the Israeli power on her own terms. She responds to the challenges without being discriminated against or compromising her Palestinian identity.

Al-Īlah uses the body as a symbol for Palestine and the connections between 'Aydah and other characters as an allegory for its cultural encounters. 'Aydah's resistance to the advances made by an American character named Tash and a British officer named Cook symbolises her victory against colonialism. Her rape at the hands of Ben David Nephtali while Nabīl is absent stands for the occupation of the Palestinian homeland when the Arabs departed in 1948. The rape of her body "not only represents a violation of the boundaries, but also implies a national or state humiliation".⁵² Her lover Nabīl stands for the Arabs who abandoned Palestine and left it alone to face its fate.⁵³ The rape also embodies the reality Palestinians who remained in their territories after 1948 war had to tolerate. The outcome of 'Aydah's raping, Jad, "has a Jewish identity and features with Arab flavour but not Ottoman" (Al-Īlah, p. 24) provides the implications of this forced reality.

In this novel, Al-Īlah also breaks away from the above-selected Arabic novels, blaming the West for all the illness blighting the Arab world by concentrating on Palestinian society. The novelist, rather, exemplifies Jan Assman's conception of cultural memory and the process by which society reconstructs its past "within its contemporary frame of reference".⁵⁴ The cultural memory offers counter memories of the past by providing memories, which "somehow deemed closer to the past experience of 'ordinary people'".⁵⁵ The key outcome of the cultural memory is the interaction between the past and the present. Like the protagonist of Marcel Proust's novel *In Search of Lost Time*, Nabīl is remembering the lost time through the recollection of the lives of certain people and memories of locations that are connected in the collective Palestinian memory.

Furthermore, choosing the early 1990s as the starting point of the process is a deliberate attempt to bolster the position of the Palestinians who suffer from

weakness due to the deeply growing Arab division following the Second Gulf War. The writer also confirms the seamless continuity of the Palestinians as a geographically distinct group across ages from Ottoman rule, British mandate, to conflict with Israel and the Second Gulf War. The novel establishes a boundary for Palestine, making the interaction inside its territories stretch across history. The writer underlines the boundaries between Palestine and the outside, creating Israel as a temporary and external power.

Al-Īlah does not fully develop the characters of the Other, preferring to draw them as models without individual qualities and human characteristics. Hence, the reader does not know anything about the shaping or the motivation that prompts this character to pursue such a line of action. The novelist almost tends to minimalise it as though it is shaped to express only certain ethnic groups or political parties. On the one hand, the minimalisation emphasises Palestinian character and highlights the presence of its national character despite attempts to marginalise its role. On the other hand, it reflects a lack of balance due to a problem within the collective Palestinian identity, continually dealing with concerns of threatened existence and culture.

Four types of the 'Other' can be identified in the novel, namely the faithful Ottoman, the colonial British and the biased Americans, along with the scheming Spanish. The Ottoman Other symbolises the golden era under which the Palestinians had lived. The protagonist endures a symbolic journey to Istanbul so as to restore the golden past of the Ottoman Empire and reclaim a lost identity. The writer tries to chart the geographical and cultural territory, which is bitterly disputed in the present due to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Unlike Western writers who reduce the Palestinian-Israeli conflict into an ethnic one, the novelist depicts it as historical and cultural in which the Other resists obliterating its main landmarks.

Consequently, Istanbul symbolises the past, which the protagonist tries to reclaim in order to counter the identity that Israel, with the help of the UK and the US, tries to impose at the time. Two characters without individual characteristics represent the Ottoman Other: `Sultan Abdulhamid II at Place Dolmabahce Palace and Hasan Tutli (Uluabatli). The first represents the Muslim ruler who refused the offer made by Theodore Herzl, the man behind the idea to create a national state for Jews and

write off Ottoman debt in return for a directive allowing the settlement of European Jews in Palestine.⁵⁶ Unlike a number of Palestinian characters in this novel, such as Abu Jimīz al-Qalqīlī and ‘Aunī Abu-al-Shabāb, the Ottoman Sultan does not sell off the Palestinian territories for material gains.

Al-‘Īlah believes that the Israelis are intent on obliterating the Ottoman legacy in Palestine in order to cut links with this glorious past. The novelist views that the Israeli objective is to eliminate the narrative of the decade-old history and deprive the Palestinians of re-living the erstwhile historical experience of a shared identity that they had enjoyed under the Ottoman Empire:

They obliterate any Ottoman mark that links the past to the present; history to the people of the Islamic caliphate. The campaigns aim is to portray vulnerable people disconnected from their historical roots, admitting weakness, acknowledging defeat, in order to be amazed by the power of the Other, kneeling down before him. (Al-‘Īlah, pp. 35-6)

The writer highlights that Palestinians feel the Israeli measures aim at disassociating the Palestinians from an identity that has been shaped in the Holy Land since ancient times. Therefore, they see the Israeli objective as an attempt to legitimise the dispossession of the Palestinian homeland.

The second Turkish character is the little-known martyr figure Hasan Tutli (Uluabatli). He is cited in historical records as the Ottoman hero who managed to open the Istanbul gates while fighting in the conquest of the Byzantine City in 1453.⁵⁷ The character stands for courage, martyrdom and more importantly, action, which Nabīl is lacking. As an inspiring figure, Hasan tells Nabīl to stop his historical journey, leave the past and return to reality, as the best way for Nabīl to face the challenges of his daily life. Al-‘Īlah believes that Palestinians should abandon living in the happy memories achieved by the Other coming from a foreign land and think of realistic solutions that emanate from the nation.

The protagonist compares the position taken by the Turkish state in the past with those taken by the British army during their rule in Palestine (1917-1948). Al-‘Īlah describes the British army, represented by Captain Cook, as criminals who killed the

brother of the narrator's grandmother among others (p. 45). He also depicts them as "violent occupiers that forced many sons of the country to leave their homes for fear of the occupiers' whips" (Al-Īlah, p. 46) as did the narrator's uncle. The writer represents the British as a conspirator, indulging in a series of fraud and camouflage in order to hide its colonial and materialistic desires. In the novel the British search for and steal a precious Ottoman necklace, illustrating the British role in changing the cultural landscape of Palestinian territories after superseding the Ottomans. Al-Īlah demonstrates the belief embraced by Palestinians that Imperial Britain has collaborated in erasing the Palestinian identity and "planted Israel" in its place.

Thus, the writer shows how the Palestinian is trying to reclaim the nation and replace the Israeli power.⁵⁸ The novel intensifies feelings of belonging and identification for the Palestinians. It reflects how Palestinian writers show unreserved support for the Palestinians in their protracted struggle with Israel. The memory process not only strengthens Palestinian nationalism by celebrating a golden age and sympathising with political allies, but it also evokes the emotional bond between the Palestinian and his homeland. Consequently, the silent native Palestinian speaks and acts on a territory reclaimed as part of a general movement of resistance from the silencing Other.

Like Britain, the US is depicted as an ally of Israel and its main supporter in the war against the Arabs. One of the hero's father's friends says that the United States is an ally of Israel that "provided support, men, arms and money... Had this support not been given, the Jews would not have been victorious." (Al-Īlah, p. 39). The American position entrenches the Arab image of the West and homogenises Arab-Western encounters. The stereotypes are actualised in the gendered treatment of the juxtaposition between 'Aydah, the Palestinian heroine, and Mr. Tash, who works as the American Consul General in East Jerusalem. The novel shows 'Aydah refusing Mr. Tash's offer to work in the American Consulate in East Jerusalem because she recognises his sexual desire for her. Tash is depicted as targeting 'Aydah because she represents a "castle of different history and culture that he wanted to storm with masculine diplomacy" (Al-Īlah, p. 112). Her repeated rejection of him represents the failure of the American approach in this encounter.

In a direct response to the Madrid Peace Conference (1991), the writer draws the image of Spaniard Innayat who works as the Director of the City of Peace (Jerusalem) Nursery for Orphans where 'Aydah's son is raised. The writer covertly criticises Innayat because she:

Renouncing her Islamic faith following the defeat of the Muslims in Andalusia, [Innayyat] adopted a new language and travelled East, willed by her belief in the Canaanisation of the cultural identity of the Arab and Jewish people". (Al-Īlah, p. 34).

The writer thinks that organising the political event in Madrid exacerbates bitter feelings and serves as a stark reminder of their defeat and the Andalusian paradise lost. Canaanisation as a term refers to the Canaanites and Phoenicians who dominated the Mediterranean region in ancient history. The novelist thinks this initiative is an attempt to cut Palestinians off from the rest of the Arab world and attach them to both the Jews and the Mediterranean non-Arabs.

Al-Īlah reflects on key political events and their consequences for the Palestinian people. The novel demonstrates his opposition to the outcomes of the Madrid Conference and the Oslo Peace Treaty with Israel in 1993. His rejections emanate from his doubts over the integrity of Western involvement, taking into consideration that previous attempts proved unjust to the Palestinians. Hence, he views the Arab-Palestinian participation in these events as a form of betrayal as it would lead to acknowledging the end of the struggle for the liberation of Palestine and the central cause of the Arab world.

The novel marks the emergence of a new generation of Palestinian writers who express their disappointment after the signing of the Madrid Peace Conference and the Oslo Treaty. The writers considered Arab participation in 'Western peace' as recognition of Israel and consequently acknowledging the loss of Palestine as a homeland. Moreover, they hold responsible the Arabs and Palestinians that contributed to Palestine's loss as a result of their negligence and inaction. This self-flagellation is a trend pursued by pioneer Palestinian writers such as Ghassān Kanafānī in his novel *Returning to Haifa* (A'idun ila Ḥayfa)⁵⁹ and Emile Habibi in his

novel *The Secret Life of Saeed the Pessoptimist* (Al-Waqa'ah al-gharībah fi khtifa Sa'īd Abi l-Naḥs al-Mutasha'il).⁶⁰

The novel brings to the forefront the inner conflict of the Palestinians after signing the Oslo Treaty with Israel and their reaction towards Western involvement in the protracted Arab-Israeli conflict. Unlike the expectations raised after the signing of these agreements, Palestinian writers continue to have a negative image of the West, citing political differences as the grounds for their antagonism. Western support for Israel also remains the main reason for Arab writers referencing a negative image of the West.

3-4 Gardens of the Night

In contrast to the political debate initiated in the above-mentioned Arabic novels, Libyan writer Ībrāhīm al-Faqīh in his trilogy *Gardens of The Night* prefers to construct the encounter between the Arab Self and Western Other in a different manner. He largely refrains from shaping Arab-Western encounters with political leanings. Al-Faqīh rather uses the Arab and Western characters to highlight his alienation as a Western-educated intellectual from his own Arab society, using the West as a catalyst for the “conflict between rural village, and individualistic urban values”.⁶¹ The theme is common among many Arab novelists in the postcolonial period, such as Egyptian Yaḥya Ḥaqqī in his novel *The Saint's Lamp* and Lebanese Suhayl Īdrīs in his novel *The Latin Quarter*.

This topic also marks thematic and stylistic shifts within the author's fiction and mirror a major trend in the Libyan's fictional writings. Libyan fiction which recorded intermittent appearances in the 1950s actually started in 1960s with the emergence of notable writers such as Ībrāhīm al-Kūnī, Ṣādiq al-Nayhum and Ībrāhīm al-Faqīh. These writers were concerned about development in the country and how it could be carried forward after independence in light of the clash of visions held by rural and urban communities. Libyan writers expressed this preoccupation in a number of short story collections that illustrate the nature of Libyan society and the social conflict within this country in the postcolonial period.

Al-Faqīh's collection of short stories entitled *There is No Water in the Sea* (1962) is a clear example.⁶² The collection received the lion's share of acclaim in Arab literary circles because it uncovers the social dynamics within Libyan society.⁶³ It also reveals the loss of a man due to his failure to settle the tug of war between rural and urban values. In his short story entitled *The Locusts*, Al-Faqīh underlines the juxtaposition of views expressed by members of the same community.⁶⁴ He takes on the rigid system of values embraced by a Libyan rural community and their insistence on continuing its ethics.

This dynamic continues in the 1970s novel which saw the emergence of experimental aspects in writing style, including writers preferring novels to short stories and becoming more concerned with the details of ordinary middle-class lives. The shift was a direct reflection of the social transformations that had taken place in Libyan society following the rise of Mu'ammār al-Qadhāfi to power in 1969 and up to the 1980s following the new oil-based economy.⁶⁵ The change of ruler and discovery of oil left its impact on the economy of Libya and its people. Both of these factors unleashed a number of social transformations and a shift in fictional themes.

Libyan writers shed light on the reactions of society towards these new circumstances. Social justice and class struggle within the new political context are the main themes that writers stressed in a number of fictional works. The representation of the Libyan woman and her condition becomes a tool to reflect these themes. The woman symbolises the backwardness of Libyan society; she is an intellectual symbol engaging in a struggle for survival against various social challenges.

Al-Faqīh's first novel *Fields of Ashes* (1985) constitutes another brilliant example that illustrates this dichotomy.⁶⁶ The novel heroine Jamīlah is struggling because she breaks away from the traditions of her village and joins teachers training at college. Her nonconformity results in an intricate web of problems. Women are jealous of her beauty, while men are trying their best to win her heart at any cost, going as far as to fabricate stories that stain her reputation in order to force her to get married. The novel also reveals the misuse of power practiced by politicians, which Al-Faqīh represents with the City Governor character. Infatuated with Jamīlah, he bestows money and favours to marry her. At the same time, he orders the village residents to

leave in order to build a military base for the American army. The writer criticises the isolated life of the village community and their clinging on to values handed down to them from past generations.

In his novel *Gardens of the Night*, Al-Faqīh maintains his preoccupation with women, dramatising the life of the protagonist as an eternal search for identity and meaning of life through encounters with women.⁶⁷ However, he diversifies the setting of this engagement by adding Western characters to the shaping of this dominant theme. The addition renders this encounter a universally social conflict. The trilogy details the life of the protagonist, Khalīl al-Imām, who lived in the West during his postgraduate studies and suffers from alienation when he returns to his native country.

The first part of the trilogy entitled *I Shall Offer You Another City* tells the story of Khalil after coming to Edinburgh in order to study a PhD in literature with a thesis on "Sex and Violence in the Arabian Nights". Khalīl comes across a Scottish couple, Donald and Linda, and rents a room in their house. Donald is deeply immersed in Eastern philosophy and abstaining from sexual contact with his wife due for psychological reasons. The situation then involves Khalīl in a love triangle with the couple, with the lenient husband believing that Khalīl and he can share Linda's heart. Khalil's association with Linda develops into a sexual relationship.

Although Linda becomes pregnant with a boy from Khalīl, she decides to leave him when she finds out that he has initiated a relationship with another British woman, Sandra. Khalīl starts to meet Sandra when they rehearse for Shakespeare's *Othello* in the Theatre. She has the role of Desdemona, while he plays Othello, owing to his dark complexion. The liaison with Sandra is consummated in sex, but it does not continue as a steady relationship. Sandra's bohemian behaviour prompts her to various adventures with men and one of these adventures results in her abduction. The accident leads Khalīl to discover that Sandra is the daughter of a wealthy family that collected her when she was released by authorities. The failure to establish a lasting relationship with both Linda and Sandra prompts Khalīl to return to Libya after finishing his studies.

The second part of the trilogy entitled *These Are the Borders of My Kingdom* recounts the story of Khalīl after his return to Tripoli. He immerses in reading the Arabian Nights to escape and forget his love woes in Scotland. While Khalīl is reading Arabian Nights, he embarks on an imaginary journey towards the tomb of Shaykh Abu al-Khayrat, Blessing Saint. Instead of seeing a tomb, he talks to the Shaykh, whom he finds is still alive. The Shaykh instructs Khalīl, as a spiritual cure, to look in the desert for the City of the Coral Necklace. Khalīl accepts the suggestion and manages to arrive at the City, but does not clearly recognise the place recommended by the Shaykh.

When Khalīl arrives at the city, he comes across a similar situation to the protagonist of Sophocles' Oedipus as the inhabitants of the city select Khalīl to be the city Prince because he is the first person who has arrived to the city since the death of their previous Prince. The city's residents follow a tradition of crowning the first person that reaches the gate of the city as their ruler. Khalīl is also married to Princess Narjis al-Qulūb, who represents the traditional Eeastern woman - knotting the deadlock in an arranged marriage.

Khalīl leads a happy and stable life without any problem, yet the appearance of Budur, a beautiful girl with both beauty and a strong personality greatly affects Khalīl. The ties between Khalīl and Budūr develop into a relationship, repeating the same scenario of Linda and Sandra in the first part of the trilogy. Although Budūr tells Khalīl that she does not object living as a second wife, Narjis al-Qulūb refuses this reality. The event that defuses this heated crisis comes when Khalīl's wife asks him to break open a closed door in their house. When Khalīl opens the door, he falls into a dark place that catapults him away from the City of the Coral Necklace into his home in Tripoli with the book of the Arabian Nights still open.

In the third part of the trilogy, *A Tunnel Lit by One Woman*, al-Faqīh continues the same triangle of one man divided between two women. Khalīl is shown as a university lecturer married to Fatima in a traditional and monotonous life. His plight comes to the fore when he meets Sana, an imposing woman, during his lecture on the Arabian Nights. Khalīl is impressed by her education and her ideas, falling in love with Sana and intending to divorce Fāṭima. After engagement to Sana, he meets his

fiancé and unjustifiably rapes her before their wedding. His act causes the same loss encountered in the first and second parts of the trilogy.

The researcher will highlight the first part of the trilogy, as the East-West encounter is more clearly manifested than it is in the other two parts. In this novel, Al-Faqīh follows the same pattern of postcolonial Arabic fiction, such as Ṭayib Ṣālih's novel *Season of Migration to the North*, in which an Arab male goes to Europe facing the cultural challenge of the West in a series of relationships with women.⁶⁸ However, there are certainly a number of differences between the aforementioned novel and Al-Faqīh's trilogy. For instance, Ṣālih's novel investigates the power of colonial displacement on the colonised Arab male, while Al-Faqīh's novel deals with the legacy of the post-colonial period on Arab culture two decades later.⁶⁹

The first part introduces Khalīl, informing us that he works as a university lecturer in Tripoli and is pursuing a stable life with his Libyan wife. However, economic and social stability do not bring psychological comfort to him. Khalīl even starts to feel alienated from his community:

I really did not live with them, I even hated having to come to into contact with them, and saw my life merely as the prelude to a time which refused to come, so I escaped into the past looking for a breathing space. (Al-Faqīh, p.4)

The protagonist has an attachment to his days in Edinburgh. On the one hand, these days offer him an escape from the dull life in Tripoli he is suffering. On the other hand, Khalīl goes back to past events in order to investigate the roots of his alienation.

The nostalgic feelings also reveal the impact of personal life on the writer. Al-Faqīh has lived in the UK for a considerable time. He came to live in London from 1962 to 1971 after receiving a scholarship to study drama. He returned to the UK again in the 1980's, working as a diplomat and following his postgraduate studies, finishing his Ph.D. in Literature in 1990.

The journey toward the UK also provides a getaway from his native country, Libya, and its commitments. The Western experience has given Khalīl an opportunity to relieve himself of the restraints of the East and its values. The protagonist finds his spiritual salvation by remembering his relationship with Linda, the landlady from whom the protagonist rented a lodging:

Something about this woman had been stirring me up since the first time I saw her, when she came with her husband to the Grapes some days before I moved into their house. That day, Linda was wearing a blouse, open at the front, and revealing her cleavage in which nestled a cross of red gold. The light from the fire was reflected on the cross, and lit up a magnificent and dark symmetry in her figure and features. (Al-Faqīh, p. 12)

The vivid description of Linda and the association made by the protagonist between her 'cleavage' and 'Cross' underline his point of interest. Khalīl is fascinated by both her physical attraction and her culture, namely, Christian Western culture. On the one hand, the protagonist idealises Linda's beauty as symmetrical in 'figures and features'. Moreover, Linda is "typically constructed as the symbolic bearer of the nation".⁷⁰ Al-Faqīh uses women to establish a contrast between the East and the West through highlighting the freedom of Western women and the confinements of Eastern women.

As for Linda, she looks at Khalīl in a different manner that goes beyond the East-West encounter. Finding herself sexually unsatisfied with Donald not practicing his role as a husband, Linda seeks Khalīl to be the sexually masculine alternative. Khalīl accepts this role, thinking Linda can "quench the thirst of the heart" (al-Faqīh, p. 6) and realises the woman of his dreams. Therefore, both willingly submit to each other:

We gave ourselves up completely to each other, as if what was developing between us was the response to something both of us had found irresistible and inevitable. I did not know what excuse she had given to get away from her husband, and I felt no need to waste valuable time asking her. (Al-Faqīh, p. 14)

As Patrick Hogan points out this depiction of characters aims to 'feminize' indigenous men and 'hyper-feminize' indigenous woman".⁷¹ Khalīl deals with Linda as a woman that satisfies his desires and makes him feel the physical comfort and cultural belonging for which he is searching.

The protagonist becomes the typical post-colonial character who feels the Western woman has the potential power to address instability taking place within the man from colonised countries:

I realized that I sought the company of women out of a purely human need, regardless of any intellectual, philosophical or moral stance - a human need, whereby the woman becomes a fundamental prerequisite for the achievement of complete spiritual and physical satisfaction, an amulet to dispel the diseases of loneliness and melancholy. I wanted to be able to transcend the scars of old wounds, inflicted upon me by belonging to desert tribal communities now ensconced in concrete blocks in cities.
(Al-Faqīh, p. 24)

Khalīl thinks that his relationship with Linda can counterbalance the displacement that he feels when his community moved from the desert to cities in Libya. She gives him a spiritual cure based on intellectual and physical wholeness. Al-Faqīh shows how the relationship between the Arab and Western characters is based on dependency. Therefore, the convergence between Khalīl and Linda demonstrates how the Arab Self cannot be realised except in the presence of the Western Other. Khalīl says "it still remained an integral part of my being, of which I could never be free. This was the source of my internal conflict, however hard I pretended to disregard it." (Al-Faqīh, p. 55)

Together with this idealised representation of Linda, Al-Faqīh emphasises that the obsession of a Western woman in having sex with an Eastern man emanates from her infatuation with his primitive nature. Franz Fanon argues that a white woman views the black man as "the keeper of the impalpable gate that opens into the realm of orgies, of bacchanals, of delirious sexual sensations."⁷² The rituals of the sexual relationship between Khalīl and Linda are a relevant case in point. All sexual contact between Khalīl and Linda takes place under the influence of alcohol and in the dark.

The use of African perfume by Linda to entice Khalīl to continue his sexual relationship with her suggests a primitive environment.

The preparations made by Linda to create an enticing environment are labeled by Wail Hassan as “fetichism in sexualized Western fantasies about Africa and the Orient”. (Al-Faqīh, p. 97) Linda not only seeks to satisfy her sexual desires but would also like to reach the inner African part of Khalīl. Although Khalīl is not a Tarzan of the African bush or a Sheikh with a tent in the desert, rather a postgraduate student advancing his education, he invokes in Linda the instinctive desires that are lacking in her Western husband.

Al-Faqīh recreates a stereotypical image of the Western woman in Arab fictional works as a sexually permissive and heavy drinker. In his encounters with Western women, Khalīl reinforces the Eastern memory about the Western woman as an easy catch for Eastern men. He also attributes Western women’s preference of Eastern men to their erotic desires for powerful and virile men from the East. Khalīl depicts Western men as sexually weak husbands or partners.

In both novels, interracial sexuality does not seem to be motivated by true love and nor does it seem fruitful or to yield harmonious relations. Khalīl fashions the Western woman in a virgin/whore dichotomy by comparing Linda’s image with that of the Arab woman.⁷³ As a cheating wife, Linda is portrayed as the symbol of sexual depravity in the West. The failure of the illicit Khalīl -Linda relationship and Linda’s rejection of all of Khalīl’s attempts to reach their son Adam evokes Al-Faqīh’s ultimate rejection of this illegitimate combination. It also suggests the failure of this East-West encounter when it is conceptualised in this manner.

Towards the end of the first part of the trilogy, the novelist shows that the fascination with the Eastern man is infinite, with not only married women suffering from being sexually unsatisfied, but also unmarried women attracted to the Arab’s physical features. Therefore, when his relationship with Linda cracks following Donald walking out, it is easy for Khalīl to find an alternative, Sandra, a female student at Edinburgh University. The Arab protagonist finds in Sandra a physical substitute. Khalīl states this when he describes his initial impressions of her:

She was a small woman, but her perfect proportions made her size unnoticeable. With her wavy, unkempt saffron-coloured hair tumbling over her face, the green of her eyes and the ruddy hue of her skin, she was like a doll who was very much alive. A slender and beautiful creature, I wanted to hold her in my hand and look at her. (Al-Faqīh, p. 58)

Khalīl's description of Sandra reveals his physical interest in her prettiness that ultimately attempts to embody the beauty of all Western women. Khalīl also finds in Sandra a spiritual escape from "the state of gloom raging at home" (Al-Faqīh, p. 59) in Edinburgh. He discovers that she can fill the vacuum left when Linda leaves to restore her relationship with Donald. Khalīl underlines these feelings when he says, "Sandra was beside me, offering me a substitute which for a few moments filled the emptiness Linda had left in my life". (Al-Faqīh, p. 72)

Like Linda, Al-Faqīh depicts a stereotypical image of Sandra as a Western blonde woman with coloured eyes and fair skin. Khalīl gives an over-sexualised image of Sandra in the same manner that Western writers describe Harem woman from the East. He depicts her as loose, having sex with strangers. Al-Faqīh complements this representation of the Western woman with the image of Othello in the West. Khalīl, who had played minor roles previously, is selected by the director of the acting group to play the protagonist role due to his uncanny resemblance to Othello:

The director saw that my skin was swarthier than other people's, my hair as black and coarse as a moor's and I had a distinct accent appropriate for a black moor among Venetian nobility, he chose me to play the role. (Al-Faqīh, p. 57)

The decision to select Khalīl to play Othello's role infers that he is chosen for physical resemblance and not for his acting skill. The author emphasises the continuation of Western perceptions about Arabs/Africans across cultures. Al-Faqīh also presents the contemporary Arab reading of the Western mind, confirming that cultural stereotypes about the East are still valid in the present time.

Sandra's unbridled passionate adventures end with a horrendous rape, adding

another layer of symbolism to the image of the West in Al-Faqīh's novel. The novelist has recreated the environment of the Arabian Nights that tells fantasy stories of love, sex and violence in Edinburgh. As Rasheed El-Enany argues:

The novel has achieved in one sense is to show the Western city of Edinburgh of the late twentieth century actually living its daily life according to the phantasmagorical norms of unbridled passion, violence and narcotic stupor of the Arabian Nights, norms of life that the West has for centuries ascribed to an imaginary Orient.⁷⁴

Al-Faqīh tries to counter the Orientalism discourse that sees the East as exotic world of the Arabian Nights by evoking the existence of this world in the home country of the Orientalism.

The violence at the end of the first part of the trilogy constitutes a wake-up call for the protagonist to return to reality. It also underlines the protagonist's disillusionment with a world that incites him to make a decision about his life. The protagonist finds the solution by forgetting the cultural experiences he has had in the West and reconsiders his impression of the people of his country. He stresses the need to review the idea of national identity and the dynamics of its relationship with the West.

Through the novel's protagonist, Al-Faqīh endeavors to challenge the classical Orientalism and Occidentalist views about the encounter between the Arab world and the West. However, this does not mean that Al-Faqīh is not free from shaping the Arab world in an Orientalism discourse. Moreover, Al-Faqīh's gendered treatment of Western characters draws attention. The novelist tends to draw Western men as sexually weak, for example Donald, or delinquent rapists, such as the abductors of Sandra. This classification both vilifies and demonises the Western male character. At the same time, he valorises the Western woman, depicting her as sexually attractive, even prettier than Eastern women. The sets of gendered comparisons and contrasts help the reader mirror Arab's slanted view of the West and Occidentalism discourse trying to counter the Orientalism discourse of the West.

The novelist underlines many problems in Arab discourse that are kept silent. The novel includes explicit sexual scenes and allusions to traditions practiced by Arabs,

such as giving birth to children in the UK so as to earn British citizenship, which Arab writers usually refrain from mentioning. However, Al-Faqīh underlines this point to indicate the opportunism of some Arabs who seeks to enjoy the rights of British citizenship and boast of their Arab identity.

The novel concludes tragically with the departure of the Arab protagonist for his home country. Not settling the outstanding issues with Western people reflects the absence of any solution to the challenges facing the Arab world and the West in the present time. Like Arab writers in the early 1990s, such as the Egyptian Bahāa Ṭāhir, Al-Faqīh gives a pessimistic overtone to the contact initiated between the Arab Self and the Western Other. The open and tragic end of both the first part and the third part of the trilogy links the national boundaries of the Arab intellectual and the international/Other location.

Al-Faqīh reviews the history of the developments Arab-Western encounter, questioning the shaping of the image of the Other in both cultures. Al-Faqīh points out that both Arab and Western cultures continue to view the Other in a stereotypical way even after the spread of information and the modern communication revolution that bridged the gap between people. However, the novelist neither gives advice about how to address this polemical issue, nor offers an idea regarding how to handle the Arab-Western encounter with a new approach.

3-5 Only in London

Like Al-Faqīh, the Lebanese writer Ḥanān al-Shaykh in her novel *Only in London* avoids the political shaping of the East-West encounter. Yet Al-Shaykh inverts the gender equation of the encounter, making it between an Arab woman and a Western man. The change reflects the writer's deep-seated interest in highlighting the condition of Arab women in her male-dominated world. Setting most of the novel's events in London draws attention to the Arab woman's struggle to define her identity within the delicate cultural interaction of Diaspora in the West. Al-Shaykh underscores the idea that identity is "a product of the discursive traditions that shape and reshape the way people understand themselves in light of the political and social factors that individuals and communities encounter."⁷⁵

The novel is a continuation of al-Shaykh's central theme of women seeking freedom in a patriarchal world oppressing them. As Andy Barnes contends, the protagonists of al-Shaykh's books are "women on a quest to discover the source of their freedom."⁷⁶ Her female characters are nonconformist women who defy the oppressive systems and conventions that deny them of basic needs in life such as "money, property and even their own sexuality".⁷⁷ In *The Story of Zahra*, the female protagonist Zahra decides to return to Beirut during the civil war after leaving for Africa to marry a man to whom she is not emotionally or physically connected.⁷⁸ She searches for a woman's active role within a country engulfed in civil war and violence. In a bid to transcend political boundaries, Zahra initiates a sex with a masked sniper, irrespective of his political or religious affiliation, on one of Beirut's rooftops. The sniper kills her later when she informs him of her pregnancy.

In a similar scenario, female Lebanese protagonist Suhá in novel *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, gets back to Lebanon after migrating with her husband to an unnamed Gulf country, most likely Saudi Arabia, to better their living standards. She ended her residence in the Gulf country because it intensified her loneliness and imprisonment, given that women in there are socially confined by a draconian, repressive system that does not allow them to be in public without a male guardian and without a dress covering their body from head to foot. She leaves everything in the rich Gulf country to return to her relatively poor home country where she can at least feel her gender identity.⁷⁹

Yet al-Shaykh in *Only in London* introduces new elements into the conceptualisation of her recurring theme and characterisation. The writer shifts from depicting Arab women in a local setting to an international one, namely the migrant Arab community in London. The writer gives a cosmopolitan touch to the shaping of characters. Instead of Lebanese women as in her previous novels, *Only in London* presents an Iraqi female protagonist along with minor Moroccan and Egyptian characters. The new setting reveals the writer's preoccupation with the political, economic and social transformations that have taken place in the Arab world in the last three decades.

Moreover, it reflects the impact of Diaspora life on the writer herself, who has been settled in London since the early 1990s. In other words, the novel is al-Shaykh's

attempt to tackle the problem of belonging and identity politics for women within the Arab community in the United Kingdom. Youssef Rakha ascribes the shift in *Only in London* to the change of 'psychological landscape' in al-Shaykh's personality after settling in London.⁸⁰ The City turns into a global microcosm in which the Arab woman has to define her identity through a delicate social and cultural system.

Only in London tells the story of four characters that meet on a flight from Dubai to London. Iraqi woman Lamīs returns for a second chance at independence after a failed business venture in Dubai.⁸¹ She left the UK to forget her loss after divorcing her husband. In London, the 30-year-old Lamīs sets out on a journey to locate her identity by deconstructing a number of dualities: home/exile, nationalism/individuality and masculinity/femininity. Amīrah is a poor Moroccan girl whose circumstances result in her transformation into a prostitute in London. She pretends to be a Saudi Princess to deceive rich men from the Gulf. Samīr is a flashy gay Lebanese man who naively smuggled a monkey that is used by smugglers to hide diamonds. Nicholas is an Englishman and the only Western figure; he goes to Oman to work as an antique expert. Lamīs falls in love with Nicholas at a later stage, initiating a cultural encounter based on sex and desire.

Al-Shaykh's novel features female characters who have racial, gender and class identities that go beyond binary theories of absolute difference or absolute universality as well as being marked by various attempts to leave behind already predetermined cultural, social and gender roles that are imposed by society on them.⁸² Marianne Marroum points out although Al-Shaykh is separated from the native land by physical dislocation as a refugee; she is neither bound by temporal and spatial factors. Marroum highlights this ideological reality that makes people believe they are ideally living both the symbolic order and the mode of production.⁸³ This way, the novel's female characters are depicted as ideally Arab but not necessarily in an Arab environment. They are carefully pictured against the backdrop of London's spatial boundaries and psychologically coded barriers of walls, gates and even decaying buildings.

The novel's prologue brings together the four protagonists Amīrah, Lamīs, Samīr and Nicholas on a turbulent flight from Dubai to London, already giving clues about the

major topics tackled by the novel: exile and displacement. It strongly underscores the marginalisation of Arab women as experienced by the characters in a culturally intricate environment. More importantly, the plane symbolises the shrinking of distances between countries and cultures. The novel illustrates how the availability of more affordable airfares has helped in the increase of migration worldwide over the last four decades.⁸⁴ Syrine Hout states the theme of social status is symbolised by the characters taking business class and how this is contrary to the usual portrayals of government reports and the media regarding the Arab community and the international migrant community as a whole.⁸⁵

Al-Shaykh depicts the encounter between the Arab world and the West through the character of Lamīs. She is the stereotypical Arab female whose main drivers are vulnerability, insecurity and anxiety that she keeps hidden under a calm and poised pretense. A victim of circumstance, Lamīs had to flee from Najaf in Iraq to Syria in order to evade the regime of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn at the age of twelve, growing up in exile in Syria and Lebanon until she was married off to a rich Iraqi businessman and moved to London when she was seventeen. Such a marriage, however, did not make her happy and she had to seek divorce, even amidst reproaches from her parents, relatives and friends. Adding to these continuous reproaches is Lamīs' longing for her only son Khālīd, who continues to live with his father.

But all these have failed to weaken Lamīs' resolve to end her loveless marriage through divorce. On the contrary, her exposure to Western culture, where marriages can easily be ended through divorce, strengthens her will to go ahead with her decision. This, in a way, makes Lamīs and her life in London a representation of Western culture for her family, friends and relatives back in her home of Iraq, whose concept of womanhood is limited to being betrothed and staying married at all costs. As stated by Hanadi al-Samman, there is nothing more important in Arab culture than the man's reputation.⁸⁶ Thus, it is extremely disrespectful for a woman to divorce her husband as it will ruin his reputation as a man and he will most likely become the laughing stock of his society. Lamīs' predicament, therefore, of being scorned by her own family and friends, is a natural consequence of her own decision to end her marriage, based only on the lack of love between her and her husband. The Arab society does not consider it enough to be the reason for divorce.

Dejected and isolated, Lamīs sets out on a spiritual journey to investigate and draw the boundaries of her new world in London by questioning her knowledge about the UK capital and its British citizens:

I don't know a single English person to invite for a cup of tea or a beer? They're out of bounds to me, just like the city. They only that I've had direct contact with are the Beverley Sisters, a few doctors, and of course the General. (al-Shaykh, p. 13)

This is an example of an Arab woman in her search of a well-defined identity and an open space where she can find true belonging. The dynamics of this experience grab more attention as Lamīs faces challenges: the conflict between the social conventions of her Arab country and those of the Western country and the fight to define her identity against the repressive patriarchal structures. Moreover, the West becomes a haven for the Arab woman to free herself from the patriarchal restrictions suppressing her and negating her female existence in Iraq.

Lamīs thinks that the key to fitting in with British society and finding her female self is by improving her English and picking up an English accent. She attempts to create a new reality in order to fulfil her dreams of understanding what accepts and satisfies her feminine self. However, she finds out that acquiring this Westernised individuality can only be realised at the expense of her native Arab identity. The private English tutor who teaches her English lessons implies this challenge in his instructions to Lamīs in order to have a good command of the language:

'Turn on the television. Go to the theatre or the cinema every night...Talk to your English friends; keep away from anything Arab, even in your mind. You should also stop eating Arab dishes, because subconsciously you'll be saying their names'. (al-Shaykh, pp. 52-53)

This sought integration within the British/Western society is only achieved by abandoning the Arab identity. Lamīs underpins the scale of the challenge facing the Arab woman in the immigrant Arab community where the identity of the home country is endangered by the predominant identity of the Western country.

Nevertheless, Lamīs is not the only person that feels isolated and tries to change. The English character Nicholas is feeling lonely after two unsuccessful relationships. He feels his relationship with Danish blonde Anita has become “boring and routine” (al-Shaykh, p.41). Furthermore, Nicholas leaves the possessive English Liz because he “no longer had to take refuge from the coldness of her eyes while she tried out all her intellectual, sexual and psychological remedies for their failing relationship”. (Al-Shaykh, p. 45).

The disillusionment with Western women incites Nicholas to think of an imaginary female alternative with characteristics different from those in the Western women of previous relationships. His thinking prompts him to remember Lamīs and the experience he had with her when they shared the minibus on the journey from Heathrow:

She had beautiful, delicate hands and, like most Arab women, her hair was coal black, a long river held in at the nape of her neck...She could have stepped down from the temple walls of Khajuraho. Her dark wide eyes looked newborn, as if she were staring around trying to comprehend everything for the first time, and they betrayed her. It was erotic. So her big smile, her long hair. (Al-Shaykh, p. 46)

The memorising and the association of Lamīs’ image with that of the sculptures of Khajuraho repeats the stereotypical images embraced by the West about the Arabs persisting across the ages. Although Nicholas works for an Omani collector of Islamic daggers and has first-hand experience with a life shared between Oman and London, he continues to depict a generic picture about the Arab woman as both exotic and erotic. In this example, Al-Shaykh follows Edward Said’s hypothesis that Orientalists or Western specialists in the East are behind the perpetuation of the West’s cultural misconceptions about the East.

The coincidental meeting between Lamīs and Nicholas at Leighton House Museum, which boasts an outstanding Arab Hall, boosts Orientalist stereotypes. The museum offers a suitable contact zone between the West and the Arab world. On the one hand, it reinforces Nicholas’ idea about the female Oriental Other that he is trying to

actualise in London. On the other hand, it locates Lamīs within the mythological realm of an Eastern Princess in the Arabian Nights. It also makes Nicholas exclude Lamīs from the confusing Arab women that he has experienced at work in the past:

Despite their well-groomed appearance, their mild way of talking, the Arab women who arrived at Sotheby's showed sudden bursts of ferocity and equivocated as they tried to pump him for information about the prices he expected certain articles to reach at auction or what sums the other Arabs might bid. When he discovered that these women were fasting during Ramadan he was completely lost. (Al-Shaykh, pp. 46-47)

The meeting also symbolises the conditions of the understanding between the Arab world and the West. Al-Shaykh perceives that the convergence between the two worlds can suddenly, but not intentionally, be arranged. The convergence between the Arab world and the West still depends on colonial legacy and does not break new grounds for communication. As a feminist writer, al-Shaykh sees that women can play a role in bridging the cultural gap between these two worlds.

Consequently, the relationship between Lamīs and Nicholas develops following the museum meeting and becomes sexual. Like Zahra in the *Story of Zahra*, Lamīs enjoys sexual gratification that she lacked in the arranged marriage with her Arab husband. Unlike her husband, whom she describes as “an eunuch who felt no sexual desire, or at least no urge for physical contact with her” (Al-Shaykh, p. 127), Lamīs is reaching the physical ecstasy that she has secretly tried to achieve through touching a wooden chair in the house of her ex-husband. Nicholas revitalises her consciousness as a woman and sudden perception overwhelms Lamīs that her feelings of loneliness and alienation in London are over.

Nicholas reawakens Lamīs' feelings about her Arab identity when they plunge into various conversations over a number of personal topics. Her feelings about her native identity intensify when she accompanies Nicholas to visit the Oriental and Indian Collections at the British Library in order to read a rare Arabic manuscript. Lamīs feels happy after reading the old Arabic in which the manuscript is written. The event recognises Lamīs' role as an active player and makes her voice heard

within the environment of the Arab culture. As Rasheed El-Enany points out, Nicholas makes Lamīs restore “her confidence in her own Arab culture, the Arab culture she had denied in her eagerness to free herself from repression.”⁸⁷ Lamīs starts to regret abandoning her Arab Self and come to give up her previous idea “that being an Arab was an obstacle in her life” (Al-Shaykh, p. 10).

Lamīs’ connection to the Arab world strengthens more and more when she meets her 13-year-old son Khalid on a day outing. The event revives her maternal instincts. Lamīs slowly comes to understand that her rejection of the forced marriage with her Iraqi husband does not negate her responsibility toward their son. When Lamīs’ reunion is over, she develops a new consciousness about her family and community. Her previous marriage no longer reminds her of painful and unhappy memories. Rather, it is replaced with a new perception about personal and social commitment to a son and community.

On another occasion, Lamīs feels lost and out of touch with Nicholas’ Western friends who come to his flat to meet him for a low-key reunion after his return from Oman. Lamīs struggles to understand their conversation about politics, individual preoccupation and even food. After a number of attempts to engage with them, she finds out:

It was only her presence that made their conversation deviate, albeit slightly, from their normal course. They were set in moulds according to their jobs, politics, the antiques trade, the international business community. (Al-Shaykh, pp. 155-6)

Integration with Western community and life prove difficult and elusive. Lamīs endeavours to locate herself within this community, but she concludes she cannot articulate her identity in light of their perspective on life and values.

Moreover, the cultural gap between Lamīs and Nicholas becomes deeper and destabilises their relationship. As his return to Oman draws nearer, Nicholas asks Lamīs to move to his flat as an announcement of their partnership in a Western sense. Lamīs rejects the proposal, citing her community’s social and cultural

concerns as reasons. This rejection shows that Lamīs is still a woman bound by her cultural ties and her given set of values. The uncertainty of the relationship ultimately pushes Nicholas to leave London for Oman in a bout of despair after failing to convince Lamīs to adapt herself to the Western status quo

Al-Shaykh prefers to make Nicholas voice the conclusion of this love story to reflect that the final say on a sentimental relationship rests with the male and his judgment about its continuation. It also seems that the novelist tries to demonstrate the Western view of the prospect of an Arab-Western encounter. In a letter Nicholas sends to Lamīs after leaving for Oman, he explains that their relationship fell apart due to cultural differences that repress the decision-making of Arab women:

I felt there were matters you needed to sort out and think about, but my existence making this more difficult for you. Perhaps taking you in the opposite direction from where you wanted to go. In short, I was complicating things, muddying the waters. You could accuse me now of not being direct with you, and say that I should have talked to you about whether we should live together or separate. But how can I force you into a situation? How can I urge you to have certain feelings towards me, knowing that I took the initiative, not you? (Al-Shaykh, p. 273).

The end of Lamīs and Nicholas' relationship not only demonstrates the conclusion of a love between a man and a woman, but also showcases the cultural impediments that very often halt any coming together between the Arab world and the West.

The novel raises key questions about the space allowed for the Arab woman in a Western exile. The novel stresses that her role is defined in light of the socio-political landscapes, which she is trying to escape. The cultural categorisation in the West neglects the endeavours made by the Arab woman to establish herself. It also underlines the reality that her boundaries are only demarcated by the Western system of power. As Foucault points out there are liberating acts and not liberating space.⁸⁸ For Lamīs, London was the space dictated by her exile in the UK, which prompted her to act in a way that she perceived as liberating. However, she realises

that its liberating setting is rather elusive and does not give her the opportunity to disengage from her native Arab space.

However, as Stuart Hall argues there is no accurate representation of any culture that can be gleaned from only one experience or one identity because cultural identities come from somewhere; they have histories such that the identities assigned to different cultures and groups are merely narratives of the past.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, it is noteworthy to look into al-Shaykh's novel as a representation of the Arab-West cultural fusion as seen through the perspective of a migrant who experienced cultural alienation in the Western world.⁹⁰

Al-Shaykh features this perspective through her other Arab characters. Moroccan Amīrah is depicted as strong in contrast to the stereotypes of Arabian women who are soft and docile with no ambition or individuality beyond their call of duty as wives or daughters. She enjoys a strong desire to change the course of her life and not be like any other Arabic girl devoid of ambition. Amīrah went to London as a young girl and worked as a maid and cleaner in various households that needed her services. Her burning desire to live like a man changed when she was molested many times at her workplace. As she began to think seriously about her body, men and getting wealthy, she decided to become a high-class prostitute with wealthy Arabs in London as her clients.

Amīrah's character is patterned after the Arabian classic folk tale *The Thousand and One Nights*. She survives in London as a modern-day Shahrazad who continuously tells stories to get her way with people. Pretending to be an Arab Princess, Amīrah lies about her supposed sack of money that did not arrive yet from her kingdom, so she has to borrow money from chivalrous Arab gentlemen who are more than willing to save her from her precarious situation. The disturbing predicament of Amīrah, according to Lorraine Pounds, shows how attractive the Western world is to Arab people. The West accounts for the promise of freedom, success and a life of wealth and affluence that are not easily acquired in the Arab world. These aspirations have been driving many migrants to do extremely unlikely things in order to keep thriving in the Western world rather than go back to their homelands⁹¹.

Another Arab character in the novel is Samīr, a gay Arab who is also on the trip to London to escape from his heterosexual life in Beirut: from his wife, his five children and everything that has made him a loving husband and a caring father, as his friends and family in Beirut see him. On the plane, Samīr dons his Versace shirt, long brightly coloured scarf and cowboy boots as he swaggers in his feminine voice with a monkey in tow – a picture of liberation from everything that he is not and of hope to finally find his real self in the invitingly free world that is London. However, Samīr becomes entangled in various unpleasant activities in London that make him more comic than pitiful primarily because of his naïve nature – that instead of suspecting others of wrongdoing, he goes on engaging them in his unrelenting quest for a happy life that he believes awaits him in London.

In general, Samīr provides a unique depiction of the fusion of Arab and Western cultures in a manner that is unexpected, seeming superficially comical yet profoundly meaningful for the underlying message symbolised by Samīr – that of coming out in a world that is perceived to be more accepting yet pushes him into difficult situations that make it necessary for him to make fun of the situations and of himself without any dignity left in himself. Samīr shows such difficult situation through his colourful fashion and projection of himself – his way of coping in the strange Western world to which he has longed to belong.

The three Arab characters Amīrah, Lamīs and Samīr come from different national, cultural and sexual backgrounds but are linked by their common status as migrants – an underlying theme of the novel as emphasised by the characters' strong attachment to their passports. Both Amīrah and Lamīs regard their status as British citizens, while Samīr is on a continuous quest for ways to renew his visa. The great importance that they give to their British visas clearly shows that these migrants cling tightly to their status as British migrants, like they cling to life. For instance, when Lamīs misplaces her “precious British passport” (Al-Shaykh, p. 2) during turbulence on the plane, and Nicholas finds it and gives it back to her, she happily treats it as if “the Englishman had given her back her life”. (Al-Shaykh, p. 2).

In conclusion, the novel *Only in London* presents a variety of stories that help readers examine issues such as prostitution, cross-dressing, divorce and cross-

cultural love in the context of London's Arab communities from a gendered and multi-ethnic approach. Depicting Arab communities in London that are somewhat neglected already, the novel raises awareness of the Arab migrants' predicaments as they continue to do their best to survive in a strange land which they like to call their own in order to pursue their own hopes and dreams. By situating the characters within the larger fabric of the multi-ethnic metropolis London, Al-Shaykh combines the stereotypical habits of both London's English and Arab citizens.

3-6 Those Who Are Far Away

Moroccan novelist Bahāa al-Dīn al-Ṭawd in his novel *Those Who Are Far Away* re-uses the political theme that characterises a number of Arabic novels representing the West that emerged in the nineties. However, he refrains from basing the encounter on current political issues, preferring to build the story on monolithic cultural juxtaposition between the Muslim East and Judeo-Christian West. By refashioning the interplay between previous colonial powers and the colonised people, the novelist sheds light on the roots of the polemical East-West relationship and the factors impacting their current ideological differences.

Al-Ṭawd belongs to the new generation of Moroccan novelists who come to literary writing late and from different non-fictional fields, such as law, journalism and sociology.⁹² The writers of this generation, such as 'Abdāllah Laroui and Al-Ṭawd, enrich the Moroccan literary scene with new themes and diversify the narrative styles with new techniques. The novelists employ their academic studies and professional information to review the interaction between their culture and the West.⁹³ They mainly engage with the national identity and the cultural encounter with the West in post-colonial Morocco, highlighting the historical and ideological dichotomy between the Self and the Other.

The third element that distinguishes these novelists is their use of Western philosophical approaches in a bid to find out new ways to look at the Western-Arab encounters. For example, Al-Ṭawd points out that he embraces the idea of social alienation as explained by French sociologist Emile Durkheim. The approach views the relationship with the Other, whether it is a local or foreign individual, as inevitable. The Self can only be reflected by the Other and the individual personality

is shaped by society and the people with whom he socialises. Al-Ṭawd applies this approach by focusing on the life of a Moroccan immigrant in the West and exploring the interaction with the Western Other. The novelist also investigates the crisis of identity and its ability to abide by Moroccan/Arab traditions in cross-cultural encounters.

The novel starts when the narrator, an unnamed Moroccan doctor, recalls his friendship and experience shared with another Moroccan student named Ṭdrīs while they were studying at the University of Madrid. His reminiscences of the love story with a Spanish girl named Pilar and other events inspired him to look for his whereabouts after thirty years. The narrator travels to London to meet Ṭdrīs after finding out that his friend has settled down in the UK capital working as a literary editor at a well-known magazine specialising in Orientalism. At a meeting in London, Ṭdrīs does not answer the questions posed by the narrator, but he gives the narrator his diary on the condition that he can read its contents only when returning to Morocco.

After reading the diary, the narrator discovers the love story between Ṭdrīs and Pilar has come to an end when Pilar's father refused his daughter's marriage to a Muslim immigrant. In an attempt to ease the tension he is feeling in Spain, Ṭdrīs sets out on a journey to the Netherlands to meet his Moroccan friends. In Amsterdam, he comes across a Dutch-Spanish girl called Kristiansen studying English Literature. Both Ṭdrīs and Kristiansen admire the personality of each other and the affair between them develops into a relationship. Although their relationship continues when Ṭdrīs leaves for Spain and later England, it reaches its lowest point when Kristiansen tells Ṭdrīs about a marriage proposal made by her Dutch colleague at work. Ṭdrīs' lukewarm response prompts Kristiansen to accept her colleague's request.

Ṭdrīs travels with his Spanish friend Angel to England in a bid to work and improve his English. He has passed through hard experiences, moving from one job to another until he is introduced to an English publisher at an Orientalism magazine called J. Kurt. Ṭdrīs impresses Kurt with his critical ideas and the latter appoints him as a Literary Editor. Despite the fact that Ṭdrīs discovers that Kurt is a Jew using him to propagate Orientalist ideas hostile to Arabs, he continues his career at the

magazine. He later marries Kurt's niece, Esther, illustrating the change of the protagonist's view after residing in Europe.

In a shift that cuts short all the developments in the protagonist's life and his encounters in the UK, Īdrīs comes across the narrator in The Grand Palace City in Morocco while the narrator is sitting at a café on a windy and rainy day. Īdrīs, shabby, pale, and absent-minded, asks the narrator to help him restore his passport so that he can travel to the UK and see his daughter, who was taken away from him by force. Although the narrator agrees to help Īdrīs and asks him to sit with him at the café, Īdrīs goes out in the rainstorm and ends up dead. In a symbolic conclusion, Īdrīs' body is swept away by heavy rain through the city streets.

The early chapters introduce the unnamed Moroccan narrator and the protagonist, Īdrīs, through their meetings in Spain. Al-Ṭawd uses a second-person narrator to tell the story so as to evoke objectivity in the presentation of the story ideas. The novelist reinforces this through assigning the task of narration to a physician, a relatively neutral personality between Arab and Western characters given his academic, scientific background and his acquaintance with both worlds. The beginning of the novel shows the physician's driving him to see a patient with symptoms, and to examine the challenges of the disease.

Thus, the technique allows the narrator to give the reader clues about the personality of the Moroccan hero, describing him as an outsider, to use Albert Camus' term from his novel *The Stranger*. Like Paul Meursault in *The Stranger* smokes and drinks coffee with milk in front of his mother's coffin. Īdrīs asks the narrator to go with him to the Opera House to enjoy classical music despite the fact that Īdrīs' mother has died within the same week.⁹⁴ This gives a clear example of the cultural duality dominating the life of this Arab character and Arab immigrants in the West. It also illustrates how the post-colonial Arab character tries to establish his own space and breaks away from his native system of values. Moreover, ignoring the mourning ceremonies reflects a disconnection from the cultural conventions of his Arab space. It also reflects that the protagonist is finding himself more and more related to the Western world.

Divided between two cultures, Īdrīs sets out on a journey across cafes, pubs and theatres in Madrid to create an alternative imaginary area and develop his own mechanism of coping with Western reality in Spain. On one occasion, Īdrīs comes across a Spanish girl named Lolita who sings sad melodies from Andalusia that evoke nostalgic feelings of the Arab presence in Spain. Andalusia arouses memories of Arab identity, culture and political pride. Īdrīs who boasts of hailing from family that has roots in Spain when it was under Arab rule draws comparisons between Andalusia and modern Spain through the story of Lolita:

One Night, when they were at a Spanish friend's house, Īdrīs suggested that Lolita sing old songs from Valencia. She started to sing and suddenly stopped, bursting into tears. Later, she admitted that she is an illegitimate daughter of a Muslim Moroccan man who was a soldier in General Franco army and who fell in love with her mother. He wanted to marry her mother, but he refused to convert to Christianity, which was set as condition of marriage. Therefore, he returned to his country with a broken heart.⁹⁵ (Al-Ṭawd, p. 11)

The story of Lolita's parents shows how a personal relationship between a Western woman and an Arab man turned into a national battle. Fredrick Jameson in his study *Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism* underlines this phenomenon, arguing that a salient element of all literature works produced in the former colonies express national allegories.⁹⁶ Ashcroft et al consider this type of fiction to draw "upon the many different indigenous local and hybrid processes of self-determination to defy, erode and sometimes supplant the prodigious power of imperial cultural knowledge".⁹⁷ The story of Lolita highlights that Arab immigrants continue to engage with their native countries and identity, even when they depart in search of a better life in the West.

Al-Ṭawd also deconstructs the image of modern Spain for the Arab people, emphasising the stakes of the Arab immigrants when they try to indulge or integrate with Western life. Al-Ṭawd argues that the condition of conversion from Islam to Christianity for marriage is not only religious, but is also cultural. The Spaniard looks for ways to eliminate the Arab identity by disassociating its link with Islam. The fate of the Moroccan soldier in Lolita's story evokes the deportation tragedy of the Arabs

from Spain following the fall of Granada Kingdom in 1492.

Al-Ṭawd also underlines that the conception of modern Spain is entirely different from the Andalusian image perceived by the Arabs for centuries. Modern Spaniards do not consider the Arab presence as a golden era in their country's history and they rather downplay its cultural aspects. Thus, when the father of Ṭadrīs' friend Angel De Ramon refers to the dictatorship era of General Franco and its relationship with the monarchy, he associates it with the Islamic reign in Spain:

The current government was supposed to provisionally run the country, but it has continued for long time. However, a military despot will not deter the people, who have regained Andalusia after eight centuries, from restoring the monarchy. (Al-Ṭawd, p. 46)

Al-Ṭawd highlights that the Spanish/Western discourse robs the Arabs/Muslims of their identity and culture by denoting their presence in Spain as temporary and associating them with a dictatorship. Drawing attention to this political narrative of Spanish society, Al-Ṭawd aims to showcase the Western shaping of their identity and therefore the objective of this discourse in dealing with the Other.

This creates a sense of appropriation for Ṭadrīs and drives him to look for ways to reclaim cultural identification with this forgotten era of Spanish history and recover an effective relationship between the Self and the place. Ṭadrīs thinks in terms of invasion and possession of land even in his emotional relationship with Spanish women. Hence, upon managing to attract the attention of Spanish girl Pilar and developing a relationship with her, Ṭadrīs describes her as “the angel that has driven him to come to Madrid. When I own her, I would own the whole of Spain,” (Al-Ṭawd, p. 36). Using the word “angel” and later animals, such as “rabbit” and “peacock” and “gazelle”, to describe Spanish women reflects fondness and endearment. This portrayal suggests the protagonist does not seek carnal pleasure, but rather sees women as the medium to repossess a lost world:

Would I be descendant from that hero who came to them as an invader and aggressor who lived in their land for eight centuries, which passed on like one night? Or like dream finished in one of the warm mornings...Here I

am re-writing history and take revenge for this happy quick dream which has lasted only for eight centuries. However, my revenge is of different type, a type that lives up with the present time. (Al-Ṭawd, p. 50)

Ṭadrīs assigns to himself the mission of restoring Spain and taking revenge for his people from the infamous Spanish Inquisition Courts (1487) and modern Spain under the rule of General Franco (1936-1975), by reinstating his identity and presence within Spain. Ṭadrīs also recreates his alternative reality and frees himself from the Western discourse that overwhelms his life and eradicates his cultural identity across history.

Parallel to Ṭadrīs' attempts to re-establish his identity in modern Spain, Valderrama, Pilar's father, exerts strong efforts to quash these endeavours by rejecting Ṭadrīs' relationship with Pilar. As a surgeon, Valderrama views Ṭadrīs as a malignant tumour that "should be removed from his pure and healthy family". (Al-Ṭawd, p. 51). Pilar's father stands for both the patriarchal authority and a mouthpiece expressing the discourse of the Spanish people towards Arabs. Ṭadrīs' experience with Pilar reveals the distinctive qualities that characterise Western identity and the discourse dominating its interaction with other cultures. It is through the creation of Ṭadrīs and Pilar's relationship that the Arab protagonist lays bare the paradox of liberal Western discourse. Ṭadrīs outlines the manner in which certain Western characters react as exponents of a cultural system.

Realising himself disenchanted with Spain's exclusionary discourse, Ṭadrīs leaves for the Netherlands to see his Moroccan friends and relieve the resentment he has felt in Spain. His reunion with his compatriots cements his native identity. Ṭadrīs also finds this alternative after meeting a Dutch-Spanish girl named Kristiansen who studies English Literature at the University of Amsterdam. At their first meeting, he shows utter indifference to the nationality of her Dutch father. For him, Kristiansen is attractive because her mother comes from the Spanish city of Granada. Her mother's origin serves Ṭadrīs' desire to attach himself to Andalusian culture. Therefore, when she told him about her mother's origin, he says "everything is clear now. I have found what I have been searching for five centuries", (Al-Ṭawd, p. 74).

Ṭadrīs reinforces this psychological development with the story of one of his ancestors

who was forced to leave his pregnant wife following the fall of Grenada into the hands of the King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella I in 1492. Their story evokes the protagonist's will to reclaim this lost aspect of the Western cultural discourse and recognises the role of the Muslim/Arabs in both Spanish and Western thought. The protagonist creates these imaginary characters to release his hope and achieve what he was lacking in Spain, believing that Kristiansen can compensate for what he fails to achieve in Spain.

Kristiansen denies this historical link and views her "culture is an extension of the European Culture which is based on diversity rather than disharmony" (Al-Ṭawd, p. 153). Her dispassionate response to Īdrīs' claim about the association of their histories and the Arab-Western relationship casts doubts about their affair. Disappointment prompts the Arab protagonist to leave his newly developed beloved to rebuild his cultural identity, which he is seeking to realise in his interactions with the West. Īdrīs' belief about realising his Arab identity becomes the main motive for his journey to the UK.

In the UK, Īdrīs sets out on another cultural journey to establish his Arab Self. He and his friend Jose land jobs in a Kent-based apple farm in order to live and save some money to pay for an English language course, yet they faced a different situation. They both suffer from hunger, disease and racism from English workers at the farm. Īdrīs equates this UK apple farm with the concentration camps to criticise the English system and its exploitation of the immigrants. Al-Ṭawd reinforces the idea of xenophobia against the immigrants with another accident, which takes place when the two flee to London. Īdrīs and his friend Jose are beaten by a number of English youths who have seen them dancing with English girls at one of London's nightclubs.

Nevertheless, the painful experience of racism does not deter Īdrīs from his endeavor to assert his identity. This task also motivates him to accept working at a literary magazine called *Fawasil*, Breaks in Arabic, even though he is a Jew hater, discovers that its owner Jacob Kurt is Jewish. At his new work, Īdrīs tries to reconsider the Arab-Western encounter and convey new ideas about his culture by relating it to Western and European thought. He highlights this historical juncture by publishing a research, concluding:

European civilization is not a unique and genius creativity based on Greek and Roman sources alone, but there are other civilizations along with them, such as, Islamic, Jewish and Eastern Christian sources.” (Al-Ṭawd, p. 139).

Ṭadrīs highlights the role of Arab-Islamic civilisation and its contribution to the Western mind. However, the challenge intensifies with the discovery of book collections written by Jewish writers bent on defaming Islam and its culture along with recently published books in Israel criticising the Arab world, found at Kurt’s house. Ṭadrīs is equally disillusioned after finding out that Kurt is deceiving him about the humanist discourse of the magazine. Hence, the West for Ṭadrīs appears as misleading by hiding its real intentions.

The feelings of disappointment are tendered with the introduction of Kurt’s niece Esther to the scene. Not only is Ṭadrīs attracted to Esther’s physical beauty, but also finds her a source of psychological compensation to the loss and damage that he has endured after discovering Kurt’s books. He expresses his attitude about her, saying, “I do not feel a sexual desire as much as I reclaim a lost right or what I have imagined to be so.” (Al-Ṭawd, p. 154). Esther initiates new feelings for Ṭadrīs, helping him to have self-recognition both as a man and an Arab character. This recognition equally results in the shift of his views towards the Jews and his separation from his culture that forbids any contact with this ethnic group in particular. The Jewish community also rejects the relationship between Ṭadrīs and Esther.

I am the phenomenon, which they have to study. Neither does the Jew accept me to be a lover for Esther, nor can any Jew accept this act. Neither does the Arab accept this act, nor does any Arab accept it. But will I be free to act independently from myself. This question remains resonating inside me without finding any answer. (Al-Ṭawd, p.164).

Al-Ṭawd underlines the frustration of the protagonist because he is unable to combine the extreme views of both the Arab and the Jewish communities. He also illustrates the battle within the Arab character because he feels Esther is a human being and a woman who has the right to befriend and get married. However, he feels powerless to convince his community about the new understanding that he has

developed after staying in the West and getting acquainted with Western people and their culture. Therefore, he is aware of the difficulty to re-fashion the encounter between the Arab world and the West and consequently Īdrīs' inability to rectify the ideas of his country about Western people.

The novelist stops short of giving further details about Īdrīs's life with Esther. Yet, he indicates the nature of events that the Arab protagonist has undergone. The implication that Īdrīs has been forced out of his life in the UK is clear when the narrator sees him in Morocco looking shabby, unshaven and stranded without a passport to travel to the UK to see his daughter from his marriage with Esther. The tragic end of this relationship refers to the implications of any marriage that tries to go beyond the restrictions set by both Arab and Jewish communities. The gap between the two cultures is too huge and any effort to bridge the two cultures is crushed. It also points to the outcomes of cultural journeys that Īdrīs has carried out in three major European countries.

Al-Ṭawd argues that the sense of belonging and nationalist spirit is dominant in the encounters of the Arab protagonist with other Western people. The novelist employs three Western women: Pilar, Kristiansen and Esther as major players. They stand for three European countries and their cultures. Consequently, the readers can have a variety of inclusive experiences. The diversity engages the reader with the sad end of the protagonist and the conclusions drawn from the cultural encounter with the West.

The final scene showing Īdrīs dead and swept away by heavy rain in Morocco symbolises baptism ceremonies, washing his guilt and contamination away. Al-Ṭawd projects the cultural contact between the West and the Arab world as an unwholesome connection. The West is represented as an infection and disease that threatens both parties. Īdrīs' relationships with European women are viewed as a re-reading of history, culture and power. It is also an attempt to re-discover the relationship between the Arab world and the West. The novel also accounts for the prevalence of the Western power structure and its views on the history of cultures.

Conclusion

The construction of the Western image in Arabic fiction has changed dramatically following the Second Gulf War (1990-1991). Arab novelists shape new encounters vilifying the Western Other as an enemy or an antagonist. The new approach replaces the mixed view of enchantment and antagonism that continued to appear with post-colonial Arabic fictional works in the seventies and the eighties, such as the Sudanese Ṭayib Ṣāliḥ's *Season of Migration to the North* and the Saudi 'Abd-al-Raḥmān Munīf's *East of the Mediterranean*. The shift in the literary image dovetails with a sea change in the Arab viewpoint about the West following its military involvement in the Second Gulf War and its huge impact on the entire Arab world. Arab intellectuals expressed their resentment at Western involvement in Arab events, especially the Western engagement with the Arab-Israeli conflict.

A number of Arab novelists spend a great deal of effort raising objections on principles of freedom, democracy and human rights adopted by the West. Writers seek to convey the message that contrary to what the West propagates, democracy and human rights are not functioning in the right direction. The West acts in cases of human rights or democracy when it is in their favour. In other words, the West does not act out of pure humanitarian or democratic conduct. The reality of Western action is that it is against Arabs, especially when it comes to the Arab-Israeli conflict. A recurring image is Western silence over the Israeli actions against the Arabs in Palestine and Lebanon.

There is also a reference to discrimination against Arabs in Europe and America. A number of Western people behave racially against Arabs because they see their encounters with the Arab world as a clash of civilisations. The West is drawn as a land that hides discrimination against Arabs and Muslims under a veneer of cultural integration. Arab immigrants living in the West are portrayed as suffering from Western attempts to forcibly assimilate within the melting pot of Western society and abandon their ethnic and cultural identity.

A special focus is placed on America as a global superpower and champion of freedom. The Arab novelist is disappointed with the American approach to handling political events in the Middle East. Like Europe, America is drawn as immorally

individualist and collaborating with the despotic regimes in the Arab world as well as living off wars and conflicts in the Middle East. American society is often depicted as a deluded society that blindly believes the justifications made by the U.S. government to wage wars across the globe. The American person is represented as an exponent of the American imperialism, which is bent on imposing its cultural model over Other people both inside and outside America.

Arab writers recreate the models of the Arab-Western encounters in order to uncover the dominant Western system of power and values. Arab novelists achieve this objective by rewriting history with their subjective representations of political events and views. In a number of the selected novels, Arab writers consolidate nationalism by returning to the golden past to overcome their present reality. Although many novels disapprove of Arab internal difference, the blame is laid on rulers and not the average person. Hence the Arab novel highlights the homogeneity of the self by resurrecting history and lamenting lost pan-Arabism.

Arab novelists also seek to change the formula of power between the Arab world and the West by assigning the task of mapping the Other to the Arab character. Arab writers employ first person or omnipresent narrator techniques without allowing the Western characters in their novels to be the narrators. This is a deliberate attempt to eliminate the individuality of Western characters. Although loving relationships created by Arab writers are conventional and superficial, they are written to maintain the same examples that are acceptable to the Arab readership. They undertake this objective by shedding light on gendered encounters involving Arab masculine and Western feminine characters. The process is greatly consolidated by linking personal relationships to national history.

Gender relations play a significant role in Arab fiction in the 1990s. Despite the fact that Western women are deprived of their individuality, they are drawn as representative of Western countries. Arab novelists continue to draw stereotypical patterns of Arab men and Western women. A very recurring pattern of representation shows the Arab protagonist goes off to a Western country, probably European, where he falls in love with a beautiful woman. The woman stands for Europe and Western culture. While the Arab man usually experiences true love, the Western woman sees him as an exotic friend or compensation for sexual failure with a

Western man. For example, Linda sees Khalīl as the primitive man who can sexually compensate for the impotency of her educated Western husband. Moreover, young Sara finds Khalīl an interestingly exotic friend with whom she can have a new sexual experience that she has not tried before.

Women's bodies are highlighted in terms of their relationships with Arab men. Arab writers attach political significance to the Western woman's body features and cultural symbols, such as the Christian cross as an emblem of European culture. Western women are portrayed as promiscuous especially with their Arab lover to emphasise it as a prevalent phenomenon of immorality in the West. Denounced in a number of sexual relationships, Western women are negatively shown not simply because of their gender but also because of their race. The immorality marks the boundaries of the Arab identity and its difference from the Western Other.

The Arab writers illustrate how the Western man loses his appeal as a well-educated, tolerant, committed person. He becomes bigoted, defeatist and a traitor who both betrays his principles and even collaborates with Arab right-wing regimes against the well-being of the Arab world. A female Arab writer points out that the West which was usually described in the past as romantic and a land of women's rights degenerated into an intolerant, individualist and indifferent place to women's emotions. In other words, the West appears as a fertile ground for Arab writers to assert a self-image as well as an independent identity by resisting the imposed Western thoughts.

Notes

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Conclusion

The thesis studied how the Arab world and the West perceive and construct the image of each other in the decade following the Second Gulf War (1990-1991). As the world is undergoing drastic transformations in the age of globalization and technology, people continue to engage with the issues of identity and alterity. It is thus a timely point to assess the development of this engagement within the West and the Arab world. Unlike many researchers, such as Bernard Lewis and Rasha al-Dusuqi who focused on the image produced in one world only, the thesis is one of the first to investigate the topic in a comparative manner. By narrowing the time to one decade (1991-2001) and fiction, more specific aspects have been identified, compared to the broad attempts by Edward Said and Janice Terry, to name but a few.

While I have found that it is impossible to formulate one single image of the East-West encounters since the end of the Cold War, it is possible to say that the images constructed by Western and Arab writers of the Other have become increasingly critical and negative. The shaping of thinking about the Other is conducted in terms of cultural criticism. Both Western and Arabic writers concentrate on cultural issues, such as the system of values of the Other and its authenticity. Whereas Western novelists discuss the struggle arising from the supposed outdated Arabic/Islamic values, Arab novelists focus on the presumed difference between theory and practice of general principles of democracy and freedom in reality.

Fiction as an influential tool of cultural production plays a vital role in the representation of Arab-Western encounters. Novelists employ their fictional works to strengthen their own identities by portraying the image of others. Consequently, this process renders fiction an integral part of the nation's project that narrates its shared history, values and aspirations. Looking at the different aspects of the Arab-Western representations in fictional works (1991-2001), I can identify three main types of discourses: the discourse of difference by establishing the identity of the Self and the Others; the discourse of resistance and its association with the delicate discourse of nationalism.

Discourse of difference

The construction of national identities is characterized with difference. The identity of the Self is defined by the external Others. For example, the national image of the American society is constructed by contrasting it with that of the Arab terrorist who is associated with fundamentalist ideology-both secular and Islamic radicalism. The image of the Arab terrorist is drawn as posing an external threat to America only, but also humanity in general.

The Western construction of the Arab world is not far from the images shaped in the seventies and eighties. However, the image drawn following the Second Gulf War adds new elements, recreating a new representation of the East as violent and barbaric. The image reflects a shift from the relatively peaceful image of harem-filled place into the hotbed of violence and radicalism. Furthermore, the transformation in the image maintains the divide between the tolerant West and the fanatical East.

Terrorism becomes a predominant term in a large number of fictional works dealing with Arab characters. Writers condition the Western-Arab encounter to ascribe terrorism charges to Arabs and Muslims. Arabs are drawn as scary creatures with a radical ideology that threatens and seeks to inflict harm on Western countries in their heartlands. Therefore, it is no wonder that Western writers use the term terrorism when they describe actions carried out by Arab character in a political context. As the case in Christopher Dickey's *Innocent Blood*, the writer acknowledged that he is unconsciously attracted to the idea that the potential danger threatened the global peace is Islamic terrorism. Surprisingly, he has ignored a spectacular event, such as, the Oklahoma City bombing though he drew many details of his novel protagonist on the story of Timothy McVeigh, who carried out the attack to take revenge from American federal authorities on purely Christian issue.

The biased coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict is another salient feature in Western fiction. The writers conditioned the development events between the

warring Israeli-Arab factions, making it difficult for readers to recognise the aggressor and the victim. In terms of terrorism, they drew Arabs and Palestinians as terrorists, while they depicted Israelis as the underdogs who are only defending themselves against bloody aggressions. Arabs are equated with Nazi criminals who committed atrocities against the Israelis based on race and religion. They also justify the Israeli armed backlash, stating that they target the perpetrators who attacked their civilian peoples both inside and outside their territories

The Arab image of the West and its people has seen a similar shift. After depicting it as a haven and model of human rights in the postcolonial period and up to the 1980s, the West turns into a hostile place towards the Arabs and becomes a location that pursues policies inflicting damage to the Arab world. This discourse seeks to establish the West, including America and Europe, as different by highlighting its behaviour towards the Arabs as politically and socially contradictory. It also tries to bring Arab views together by highlighting the Western policy in the Arab world as biased, namely in the context of Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq, and also in the interest of Israel in its conflicts with the Palestinians. In other words, the Arabic novels attempt to revive the Pan-Arabism, which reached its nadir in the Second Gulf War (1990-1991). Thus, the Arab discourse attempts to divert attention from its internal problems and direct it towards fighting the external Western enemy.

Discourse of Resistance

The focus of the Arab novels is on deconstructing Eurocentrism by readdressing the attention given to the Arab world. The Arabic fiction implemented this step by highlighting different topics from the ones selected in Western fiction. Arab writers take into consideration that Western writers depicted the encounter with the Arabs as a global conflict brewing in the volatile Middle East and affecting the life of people in the West. Thus, they preferred to shed light on national and local issues, for example, the Israeli invasion of Beirut in 1982 and the ordeal of Arab people in Palestinian territories under the Israeli rule. Therefore, Arabic fiction attempted to give a voice to political and social issues, which they believed were overlooked by

Western fiction.

The trend of emphasising issues underrepresented in Western fiction demonstrates how Arabic fiction turns into a channel of resistance. The novels produced in the Arab world put forwards a different vision from the one shaped by Western novelists. The Arabic fiction also produced a level of awareness, which could challenge the dominant patterns of knowledge which the West has established. The resistance of Arabic fiction did not only result in a reversal process countering the dominant Western issues. But it also included a debate over complicated regional issues, such as the loss of Arab unity and breakdown of postcolonial major ideas, due to the Arab division and fragmentation after the Second Gulf War.

The findings from this study do not agree with the conclusion drawn by Rasheed El-Enany in his study *Arab Representations of the Occident: East-West Encounters in Arabic Fiction*. It is hard to support El-Enany's statement that Arab fiction becomes a channel to "grasp the Western spirit" rather than a ploy to attack it. The high number of works attacking the West, which appeared following the Second Gulf War, has rather highlighted the rise of the West demonisation. While the trend of demonising the West in Arabic fiction should not be exaggerated, it should be underlined as a key stage in the development of the imagery of the West in Arabic novels. The difference between El-Enany's conclusion and mine might be ascribed to the focus on novels given that he mainly studied Arabic texts before the Second Gulf War, while I have studied the ones that published by and after 1991.

Discourse of nationalism

Fiction has become a tool for the consolidation of national identity. Both Western and Arab fictional works produce novels focusing on the national identity of its own culture. Hence, the representations of Anglophone novels show the West as a caring and impartial party in terms of its approach to problems in the Middle East. For example, America in Dickey's novel *Innocent*

Blood is drawn as a multicultural albeit homogeneous nation, which is caring, yet is still tough with terrorists inflicting harm on its people. The new representations replace Rambo-like characters or men of action of the Cold War era. Moreover, Barbara Victor in her novel *Friends, Lovers, Enemies* features the West as an impartial party and clever negotiator for the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The consolidation of Arab nationalism is a key issue in the period after the Second Gulf War. Arab novelists highlighted this issue through their representations of a number of topics, such as the plight of Arab people living in Palestinian territories under the Israeli rule and the Israeli invasion of Beirut in 1982. The Arabic novels celebrated the past in a bid to restore the golden era of the currently lost Arab identity. For example, the Arab identity under Nasser depicted in Ṭahir's *Love in Exile* is different from the one under al-Sadat. However, Arab novelists do not only seek to lament the loss of the Arab identity, but they look for ways to understand the present and face its challenges. Arab writers highlight the political and social transformations, which are taking place in the region. For instance, Yūsuf al-Īlah in *The Memory Spinning* highlight the key stages in the modern Palestinian from the British mandate and up to the Arab-Israeli peace agreements in Madrid and Oslo. In this way, the Arabic fiction does not only consider the engagement with the external other, but also deals with the internal struggle within the Arab world itself.

Based on these two ways of representation, we can say that the West and the Arab world have a different vision on the nation. The Western novelists draw America as a unified nation boasting of racial diversity. For instance, the American protagonist of Dickey's *Innocent Blood* is an immigrant man of a Bosnian origin, whose Americanness overcame his religious affiliation at the end of the novel. While the Arab novelists highlight the social transformations and how they affect the social and historical context. For example, Ṭahir's *Love in Exile* marks the decline of secular nationalist movements and the loss of postcolonial identity due to the rise of Islamist fundamentalism in Egypt.

Western and Arabic fiction employ gender to define the nation and its difference from the other. As for Western novelists, they use the gender to demonstrate the huge difference between two worlds by juxtaposing the freedom of Western women with the oppression endured by Arab women. For instance, Yasmina, the female protagonist of Barbara Wood's *Virgins of Paradise* is raped and persecuted in her native country, Egypt. She only manages to enjoy her rights as a human being and a woman in the United States. In other words, the woman is used to vilify the Arab character as an uncivilised other and demonstrate the aspects of difference between the two worlds. Western novelists put forward their system of values as the only valid cultural model for living in terms of gender.

The continuation of Sheikh romance fiction is a noticeable phenomenon reflecting a Western craving to see the Arabs in certain stereotypical manner. Despite the fact that they have lost its time significance, the publications of such type of fiction has kept on to be on demand. As most of the writers of this fiction are woman, the works are filled with feminist ideas in which Western women describe their ideal world. They also become an arena of cultural encounter in which Western values triumph over Eastern ones given that all works ended with the Arab sheikh accepting the Western system as a way of living in order to be the equal spouse of the Western woman.

Arabic novelists use sexist slant on their representation of the Western woman. They continue to draw old stereotypes of the Western woman, showing her as an easy catch and looking for a virile brown man. The attraction of the Western woman to the Arab emanates from her desire to try an exotic experience or to compensate for sexual failure with a Western man. The Arab man irrespective of educational qualifications is seen as the primitive creature that combines the qualities of exoticism and virility. Therefore, Arab writers see the relationship between the Arab man and the Western woman is doomed to failure given that it does not emanate from true

love. It also shows that Arab writers are not optimist about the power of love in narrowing the gap between the two worlds.

The encounter between an Arab man and a Western often involves a sexual relationship in a bid to reflect an Arab mastery over the Western Other. Drawing the Western woman as a promiscuous maintains a traditional belief about women from this culture and symbolises the immortality of the West. Although the image is old, its continuation reflects a will to maintain this misrepresented image. Arab writers find the distorted image providing them with ways to balance between the Western superiority and Arab inferiority in politics. Thus, the virility power of the Arab makes up for his weakness in politics and ideology in his encounter with the Western Other.

The thesis has so far highlighted the relative scarcity of studies dedicated to this topic. Even crucial writers, such as Esther Freud and Bahâa Ṭahir are only known through a few critical articles. While studies on the image of the Arab world are far more than studies on the image of the West, these studies tend to be more generalising. Therefore, I hope this study paves the way for an intellectual climate, which discusses the shaping of the East-West encounters in the West and the Arab world. I also hope that that the thesis develops an interest for researchers to conduct comparative studies in a scholarly manner.

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