The Construction of Palestinian Identities in the Arabic-Palestinian Novel

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Abstract

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This thesis looks at four novels, Ghassān Kanafānī's *Rijāl fī al-Shams* (trans: *Men in the Sun*) published first in 1964 (Chapter One), Imīl Ḥabībī's *Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Gharībah fī Ikhtifāʿ Saʿīd Abī Al-Naḥs Al-Mutashāʿl* (trans, *Said the Ill-Fated Pessoptimist*) which was published in serial beginning 1973 (Chapter Two), Ṣaḥar Khalīfah's *Al-Ṣubbār* (trans, *Wild Thorns*) published in 1974 (Chapter Three), and finally, *Al-Ḍuffah al-Thālithah li-Nahar al-Urdun* (while there is no English translation of the work, the title translates as *The Third Bank of the Jordan River*) by Ḥusayn Al-Barghūthī (Chapter Four). It analyzes the different ways in which the works construct identity of Palestinian characters using a variety of literary techniques, puts the novels into their historic contexts, and attempts to draw some broad conclusions about the construction of identities in the Palestinian novel in general.

Résumé
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Titre: La construction des identités palestiniennes dans le roman Arabo-Palestinien

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Ce mémoire étudie quatre romans, *Rijāl fī al-Shams* (trans: *Men in the Sun*) par Ghassān Kanafānī, édité d'abord en 1964 (chapitre un), *Al-Waqā'i' Al-Gharībah fī Ikhtifā' Sa'īd Abī Al-Naḥs Al-Mutashā'l* (trans, *Said the Ill-Fated Pessoptimist*) par Imīl Ḥabībī, qui a été publié dans une publication périodique au début de l'année 1973 (chapitre deux), *Al-Ṣubbār* par Ṣaḥar Khalīfah (trans, *Wild Thorns*) édité en1974 (chapitre trois), et, enfin, *Al-Ḍuffah al-Thālithah li-Nahar al-Urdun* (il n'y a pas de traduction anglaise officielle, mais le titre peut se traduire par *La troisième banque du fleuve jordanien*) par Ḥusayn Al-Barghūthī (chapitre quatre). Il analyse les différentes façons dont ces ouvrages construisent l'identité des personnages palestiniens en employant une variété de techniques littéraires, replace les romans dans leur contexte historique et essaye d'élaborer quelques conclusions générales sur la construction des identités dans le roman palestinien en generale.

Acknowledgements
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Note on Translation and Transliteration
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In the following thesis discussion of the four main novels herein considered refers specifically to the original Arabic texts. Since three of the novels are available in translation, I will refer to these translations where Egnlish textual examples are required, rather than re-translate the passages myself. Each instance a translation is used, the corresponding page reference in the original Arabic text is also given, listing the original page number first, followed by a "T" and the page reference in the translation. Where there is a major difference between the officially translated passage and the original Arabic, I have either noted it as such, or provided my own translation, in which case there is no page reference listed for the English version, and only the page from which the text is found in the Arabic.

For its transliteration this thesis uses the standard Library of Congress system. Names, proper nouns and book titles have been capitalized, and the Arabic tā'marbūṭah is transliterated using ah.

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<h1 style="text-align:center">Introduction</h1>
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In writing a thesis on the construction of Palestinian identities in the Arabic-Palestinian novel, there are a few potential biases, terms and matters of theory that must be made clear. First, I am an English-Canadian critic reading Arabic-Palestinian fiction. Second, I am reading these novels as part of the large body of what I conceive as World Literature. Thirdly, I will be basing my understanding of what the novel is and why it is an important cultural/intellectual product worthy of study on D.H. Lawrence's essay, titled, "Why the Novel Matters."[1] And finally, my definition of identity will be based largely on the work of western psychologists and social psychologists. In this introductory chapter I will address each of these issues, provide justification of the theoretical choices I have made, and show why I believe this framework to be effective for my discussion of the construction of identities in the Arabic-Palestinian novel.

In the final section of this introduction I will outline how I have chosen the textual material for this thesis in order to produce a meaningful discussion of the construction of Palestinian identities. Then, finally, I will provide a justification for my choice of authors, and their specific works that I have chosen to deal with here.

1. Western, Eastern: Critic, Texts

Since the advent of post-colonial studies and the intellectual shifts that saw published such pivotal works as Gayarti Spivak's article, "Can the Subaltern Speak" and Edward Said's *Orientalism*, thinkers and scholars identified as western have been impelled to re-examine their work on the non-west.[2] Indeed, the very ideas of "east" and "west" have been re-asserted, if not totally redefined. As an academic working in an Area Studies department, I must acknowledge that my own analysis of Arabic fiction will be placed into a particular "east/west" context. In response to the current, though transitioning, state of the discipline, this critical and self-conscious analysis hopes to avoid the imposition of a particularly "western worldview" on the

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[1] Lawrence, D.H., "Why the Novel Matters." *D.H. Lawrence: Selected Criticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956

[2] Like many scholars I am uncomfortable with the term "western." The "west" is first a term that is ambiguous, referring not quite to geography and not solely to "developed" countries or even a particular cultural context. I use the term in this thesis to refer to the geographic region in which the novel was developed, and extend it to North America, since the novelistic tradition was continued there through immigration and colonization. So I use the term "western novel" when refering to the modern novel published in Western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zeland etc. I use the tern "European novel" referring to the earlier years of the novel's development in Britain and Western Europe, i.e. before novels were beign written in any of the European immigration centers around the world. When not refering to the novel, the term "western" here is meant to indicate that which has been understood as the west, usually in contrast with the east. Specifically, the idea of the west as it has been developed over the past several centuries, and as discussed by Said in *Orientalism.*

people and culture with whom I am engaging through this thesis. Nonetheless, I wish to clearly set out my position as a critic in relation to the texts herein analyzed, and make plain the framework from which I conduct this study.

When a western critic looks at non-western cultural products there is a concern that misunderstandings, misreadings, and even value-impositions will occur, ultimately doing a disservice to both text and culture. This worry, I believe stems from ideas and misunderstandings of difference. In Area and Postcolonial studies there exists an assumption that sees some huge difference between cultures and their products such as fiction. This assumption goes on to presume that the former, being unable to account for a difference that is not understood, will subjugate the non-dominant culture. In this introduction then, and in order to establish grounds for my following analysis, I will be specifically addressing questions such as: Is the Arabic novel different from the western/European one? If it is different, *how* is it different? and, finally How do scholars deal with whatever differences there may be from a literary critical perspective?

1.1 Is the Middle Eastern-Arabic novel different from the European one?

The answer, of course, depends on who you ask. For this thesis, I have sought my answer from some of the leading Arab and western intellectuals in the field of Arabic literature; Sabry Hafez, Edward Said, Issa Boullata, and Roger Allen, who have not only critiqued and analyzed both the English and Arabic novel, but have also shown a deep understanding of the long histories and traditions of both literatures. It is from their scholarship and insights that I will—at least provisionally—answer the first question of this section.

The first matter of debate that surfaces when answering the above question is particular to the novel, and centers on the idea that the novel is essentially a European genre. As something developed in Europe particularly to express European sentiments at the turn of the nineteenth century, the argument goes; the novel expresses a uniquely European worldview. Thus, when it appeared in Arabic the novel changed to accommodate a Middle Eastern worldview.[3] While, for the most part, a consensus has been reached that yes, the novel was developed in Europe, the question of how the genre was absorbed is still under debate.[4] Thus, the question becomes: did the novel change when it was produced in Arabic?

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[3] Hafez, Sabry. *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse: a Study in the Sociology of Modern Arabic Literature.* London: Saqi Books, 1993, 10-11

[4] It is important to take into account, however, critics like Fedwa Malti-Douglas who insist that we remember that the novel form as it came into being in Europe was not born into a vacuum, but rather developed, like many other elements of European culture, with the adaptation and incorporation of ideas from other cultures. See: Malti-Douglas, Fedwa. "Dangerous Crossings: Gender and Criticism in Arabic Literary Studies," *Borderwork: Feminist Engagements with Comparative Literature.* Margaret Higonnet Ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994, 226. See also, Riad, Nourallah. *Beyond the Arab Disease: New Perspectives in Politics and Culture.* New York: Routeledge, 2006, 74,

Edward Said puts the debate on the particular development of the novel outside its European ancestry thus: "the novel *begins* in a particular way [i.e. it was developed in Europe] and moves according to a logic of development implicitly acknowledged by both author and reader [i.e. it evolves based on its new environment]."[5] So, since it has been established that the novel came out of Europe and subsequently appeared in Arabic, we can say that the novel is a genre that has been adopted "according to a logic of development," into the Arabic context. This does not, however, answer the question of whether or not the novel in Arabic is different from that which came out of Europe. Indeed, if the novel (European) was adopted and developed in the Arab world, is it now Arab, or European, or both? How far away from its European roots has it come?

The key to understanding the difference between the two genres, I suggest here, is in the accurate application of language. I apply to the discussion two terms: what I will call the idea of a "range of difference," and "unlike." The second term I define with the ubiquitous apples and oranges example; both fruit, but otherwise incomparable, unlike. To illustrate the specific meaning of the second term I will compare an ideal understanding of a "range of difference" with the phenomena of international adoption. Ideally, in North America at least, it is held that children raised on this continent who were adopted internationally are no more "different" than those adopted here. Statements such as this can be made only because, again ideally, when talking about children we take into account all the different living situations within which they are raised. Internationally or internally adopted children are all children, and in the category of children we understand that there is a wide range of "normal" difference.

What, then, for the novel? Has its upbringing in Arabic made it a thing fundamentally different from its English sibling? I suggest that the European and the Arabic novels, like children raised under different living conditions, express a range of difference, but are not "unlike" each other. Difference between the children in this case is what they face in their day-to-day realities. A child raised in a Palestinian refugee camp—or a novel about this experience—is different from a child raised in, or a novel about, the suburbs of a major Canadian city. The children—and I argue the novels—however, are not unlike each other. Speaking to the idea of this range of difference, Michael Beard discusses the same idea in relation to the Nobel Prize winning author Naguib Mahfouz:

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who points out that the "first impact of imported genres and styles on the Arab scene may be partially compared to the rapt reception of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, with its attendant Oriental vogue, in Europe of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries."

[5] Said, Edward. *Beginnings: Intention and Method.* London: Granta Books, 1976, 157-8

> The importation has undoubtedly taken place, but the means of transport are no less mysterious across cultural boundaries than they are between writers in a single tradition.[6]

If, then, the complex web of origins drawn upon in the writing of a novel are as mysterious as Beard claim, how do we determine if difference in context places the Arabic novel within the "normal" range, or outside of it?

Since we cannot take it for granted that as the novel developed in the Middle East its aims and defining characteristics were taken up along with its form, it is necessary that I clarify what I understand to be the point of the novel in English, before I move on to discussing the Arabic. Once I have explained my own reading of the "point" of the novel in general, I move on to discuss why this idea can also be applied in the Arabic case. I am going to define the "point" of the novel using an essay by D.H. Lawrence, which, in my opinion, is the best articulation of precisely what a novel can achieve, regardless if its life circumstances. I further suggest that what Lawrence defines as the "point" of the novel is equally applicable to the genre of the novel in general, whether it is produced in English or Arabic, in India or in Palestine. What Lawrence describes in his essay, "Why the Novel Matters," informs and explains my understanding of what constitutes World Literature. He says:

> The novel is the one bright book of life. Books are not life. They are only tremulations on the ether. But the novel as a tremulation can make the whole man alive tremble. Which is more than poetry, philosophy, science, or any other book-tremulation can do.[7]

Novels, he continues, "set the whole self-trembling with new access of life, they do not just stimulate growth in one direction."[8] The novel then, according to Lawrence, and for the purpose of this thesis, is a work of fiction that explores the human condition, and, more importantly, probes the reader to do the same.

Perhaps most importantly, Lawrence puts the novel forward as a book of human experience. It is by reading the novel as the "bright book of life" that we can have access to its many layers, meanings, meta-, sub-, and intertexts. The "point" of the novel then, is to genuinely portray the human experience in all its complexity. While not every novel in the world—first second or third—may be able to achieve this level of expression, it is toward this goal that I understand the novel as directing itself. When achieved, as I see it, the novel becomes part of the

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[6] Beard, Michael. *Hedayat's* Blind Owl *as a Western Novel.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, 4
[7] Lawrence, 45
[8] ibid

body of World Literature. It should not be taken for granted, however, that fiction outside of the western tradition aspires to probe human consciousness in the way described by Lawrence.

To show that the "point" of the novel as I have described it is equally applicable to the genre regardless of the language it is produced in, I turn to the well-known literary critic of Arabic, and particularly Egyptian, literature, Sabry Hafez. In his work *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse*, Hafez examines the history of Egypt and the Levant in terms of its creation of a literary public that I understand to be the "logic of development" that Said laid out.

1.3 Different "points"?

Throughout his discussion of the creation of a reading public in Egypt, Hafez comments in a very clear and linear manner on how each phase in the modern history of Egypt (his case study) contributed to the dynamic process of the creation of a literary public. This process involved the printing press changing the availability of texts and then an emerging middle class having time to read them.[9] As Hafez outlines the emergence of a reading public he also traces the particular way in which the novel was incorporated into Egyptian culture. His discussion of how changing technology, industrialization and the rise of the middle class changed and shaped the public into one in which novels made sense, provides a partial answer to this thesis's question: how did the Middle Eastern context shape the development of the Arabic novel?

What is interesting is that Hafez does not take colonialism—the conduit through which technology and ideas were for the most part coming through—into account nearly as much as one would think that it should be. Colonialism, it seems, was just one of the many changes that Middle Eastern society was digesting during this period. I do not, or course, want to reduce or make trivial the grave impact of colonialism on the Middle East, or imply that it is not something that needs to be taken into account. Rather, I suggest that it should be taken in context with all the other rapid changes of the era. In terms of the creation of a literary public that began to produce and consume novels, then, it is the real-life changes—which include technological as well as social and colonial—that formed the environment in which the novel was adopted and adapted in the Middle Eastern context. A further observation by Hafez helps draw lines of comparison between the European and Arabic novels and how they developed to convey similar ideas to their readers.

Hafez sees the development of the concept of "nation" in the Middle East occurring at the same time as the development of the novel. I suggest that this observation can be put in direct conversation with Benedict Anderson's seminal study on the role of the novel in the development

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[9] Hafez, *Genesis*, 63

of "imagined communities" in Europe.[10] If Anderson shows us how effective a novel can be in shaping minds and imaginations of its readers, Hafez shows how the Arabic novel in particular developed alongside increasing public awareness of and identification with the state. That the development of a reading public and the idea of the nation state are similarly simultaneous processes in Egypt as they were in Europe—though certainly with the undertone of colonialism in the former case—is worth noting. Hafez explains the development thus:

> The emergence of the concept of *waṭan* (nation), as opposed to that of *ummah*, or *millah* (the community of the Muslims), is the cornerstone in the changing world-view that led to the genesis of diverse new forms of literary, social and political discourse.[11]

Compare Hafez's explanation of the process with that of Anderson in *Imagined Communities*:

> What, in a positive sense, made the new communities imaginable was a half-fortuitous, but explosive interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity.[12]

If we read Anderson's described "explosive interaction" from the point of view of the development of the novel as just as much a product of the interaction between reader and writer as writer and medium, a striking parallel emerges between the conditions of the rise of the novel in Europe and its development in Arabic. Separated by a century, and tempered with colonialism in the Middle East, the process by which the novel was developed [i.e. the logic of development] in both contexts is not far off. Indeed, if Europe solidified the place of the nation-state in modern times, than it also developed a literature capable of digesting the changes in public identity that accompanied the shift.

The similarities in process of national identity formation, and the public's artistic response in the Middle East and Europe are striking. Indeed, as Hafez notes, the Arab world, and perhaps especially the Levant, was undergoing a radical change in its "social conception of self" during the early and mid 1900s.[13] This change came alongside the formation of the reading public that Hafez describes. Thus, Said's observation that the novel's "desire to create an alternate world, to modify or augment the real world through the act of writing (which is one motive underlying the novelistic tradition in the West)" is "inimical to the Islamic world-view,"[14] can be reconciled with the idea that novel in the Middle East is similar to the European novel. Taking

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[10] Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* New York: Verso, 1991, 40-5
[11] Ibid, 97
[12] Ibid, 46
[13] Hafez, *Genesis*, 99
[14] Said, *Beginnings*, 81

into consideration that the Islamic world-view was being changed and challenged during the period of what Hafez calls the *nahḍah* (renaissance), the idea that this change might be reflected in literature makes sense. Indeed, Muhammad Siddiq in his pioneering study on the comparative expression of identity in Arabic and Hebrew fiction, observes that in early—pre-1948—Arabic fiction, the genre of the novel was used to negotiate life between emerging western trends in Middle Eastern society, and the "traditional" lifestyle and value set that it often conflicted with.[15] For Palestinian novels post-1948, he concludes, the focus on the "west" shifted onto the newly created state of Israel.[16] In other words, novels were being used to work out, among other things, the particulars of a life (and an identity), which was focused on the *waṭan.* In doing this, the new elements of western technology were incorporated into Arab life without turning upside down the "Islamic world-view" which had hitherto dominated.

 If the novel in Arabic is a testing ground for new ideas, a place to mix and challenge new and old, then the dialogue between the Arab world and its writers developed the novel much the same way that it has developed in Europe, North America, and also much of the so-called post-colonial and "developing" world. The only discernable difference, then, between Arabic-Middle Eastern and European-western novels are the elements that the former has picked up during its conversation with Middle Eastern readers and writers, as Said pointed out. Both the point of the novel, and the ideas the genre is used to express fall within the category of "normal difference" discussed above.

The fact of contextual difference, of desert and refugee camps replacing lakes and shopping malls, is not a fundamental difference between the Arabic and European/western novel. It is, however, significant and should be addressed. I turn then, to the question of what this difference means in terms of this thesis' understanding of the Arabic novel. What is particularly important in this discussion is how any difference might influence the scholarly treatment of the genre.

1.4 There is a Difference in Context: What does that mean?
To begin my discussion of what context means to the analysis and understanding of a text, I will suggest that one could assume that the average reader will get as much out of a text written in Ramallah, as they would from the Irish slang of Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, or Shakespeare's *Macbeth.* Each work is written into a specific context, and though clearly a reader will understand

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[15]Siddiq, Muhammad. *Patterns of identity in the Hebrew and Arabic novel.* Ph.D. Thesis. University of California, Berkeley, 1981,4 [NB published under Sadiq Muhammed]

[16] Ibid, 13

the work more deeply the more knowledge they have of each particular time and place, I do not believe that absolute contextual understanding is necessary, if it is even possible.[17] Not all literary critics would agree, however.

In his 1986 article, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capital,"[18] Frederick Jameson says that: "nothing is to be gained by passing over in silence the radical difference of non-canonical texts. The third-world novel will not offer the satisfactions of Proust or Joyce."[19] It seems Jameson's most significant problem with the third-world novel is that: "to read a text adequately–we would have to give up a great deal that is individually precious to us and acknowledge a situation unfamiliar and therefore frightening—one that we do not know and prefer *not* to know."[20]

According to many critics who have subsequently worked on explaining what Jameson meant by these statements, he is here relaying views he sees as prevalent in the western academy.[21] As he continues in the same article, however, Jameson claims that even when one does endeavor to read "third world" fiction, one finds that "all third-world texts are necessarily...allegorical...they are to be read as *...national allegories*, even when, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel."[22]

Having quoted this particular passage, however, I must pause, to preemptively allay some inevitable claims and criticisms from a great number of Jamesonians. Such critics have pointed out that "everybody objected to, took offence at, the same passage in Jameson's essay,"[23] which is, indeed, the passage I just quoted. Moreover, they claim, "most of the critiques of it are entirely misdirected,"[24] and that critiques such as mine "all blindly misread 'national allegory' as

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[17] Mitsuhiro Kodama, in his *Individuals and Community in* Midaq Alley*: Societal Dynamics in the World of Naguib Mahfouz. IMES-I.U.J. Working Papers Series, No. 25. Japan, 2001, agrees. He pushes the idea further, stressing—on par with the importance of context—the use of a novel itself as a source of a "clue for analysis" (38).

[18] Jameson, Frederick. "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." *Social Text*, 15, 65

[19] According to Neil Lazarus, this comment was "ventriloquising his putative 'first-world' reader here. Those postcolonialists who have taken offense at his formulation, believing that he is smugly consigning 'third-world literature' to third-class status, have misread him." (see Lazarus, Neil. "Fredric Jameson on 'Third World Literature': A Qualified Defence," *Fredric Jameson a Critical Reader*. Douglas KEllner and Sean Homer Eds. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004,55)

[20] Ibid, 66

[21] Lazarus, 55

[22] Jameson, 69

[23] Lazarus, 44

[24] Buchanan, Ian. "National Allegory Today: A return to Jameson," *On Jameson: From Postmodernism to Globalization*. Caren Irr and Ian Buchanan, Eds. New York: SUNY Press, 2006

'nationalist ideology'."[25] Jameson's "national allegory" claim, says Imre Szeman, distracts us from his larger point which, "is not to pass aesthetic judgment on third-world texts, but to develop a system by which it might be possible to consider these texts *within* a global economic and political system that produces the third world *as* the third world."[26] For Jameson, Szeman continues, "third-world texts are to be understood as national allegories specifically *in contrast* to the situation of first world cultural and literary texts."[27]

This idea of *in contrast* creates what I consider to be the problem. "Third World Literature in the Age of Multinational Capital," clearly draws lines between the third world and the first. Santiago Colás elaborates on this in his article, "The Third World in Jameson's *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*."[28] Although Colás looks at this later work by Jameson, his insights into the author's developed ideas, I believe, can also be used to explain the ideas at work—and my principal issue—within his "Third World Literature" article.

Colás, in discussing the place of the third world within Jameson's concept of the problem of historicity, notes:

> ...It is the "Third World" that provides spaces and cultural expressions of opposition to the logic of postmodernism, by which the "First World" subject can begin dimly to recall his or her former capacity to think the present historically. Thus, Jameson writes, " I am very far from feeling that all cultural production is 'postmodern' in the broad sense I will be conferring on this term" (6). What culture specifically escapes the cultural logic of late capitalism? Jameson answers later in the book: "various forms of oppositional culture: those marginal groups, those radically distinct residual or emergent cultural languages" (159). [29]

To paraphrase: for Jameson, third world "cultural products" for example, literature, acts as a mirror for what the first world does not have. While he might not, like many of the critics who took issue with his assertion, see a book that is a "national allegory" as a bad thing, Jameson gives third world literature a place *in contrast* to first world literature. Where the first world lacks the ability to historicize, or to inscribe into fiction the political ideas that the third world can—and I am paraphrasing Jameson here—the third world is able to write the national allegory, this placing itself in history during history.

In claiming *all* of third world literature as an allegory, Jameson puts third world literature *in contrast* to the first world, i.e. separating the two 'worlds' from one another. This is where I take

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[25] Ibid, 174
[26] Szeman, Imre. "Who's Afraid of National Allegory? Jameson, Literary Criticism, Globalization," *On Jameson: From Postmodernism to Globalization*. Caren Irr and Ian Buchanan Eds. New York: SUNY Press, 2000,192
[27] Ibid
[28] Colás, Santiago. "The Third World in Jameson's *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*," *Social Text*, 31/32, 1992
[29] Ibid, 263

issue, and this is why I have chosen to use the idea of World Literature—as opposed to Postcolonial, third world, or emerging Literature—to discuss the novels herein analyzed.

I do not want to single out Jameson as the only critic who would read reductively the rich novels of the "third world." Even Arabic-Palestinian novel specialists have noted the primary historical/allegorical reading possible in the exceptionally rich novels I have chosen for study. Issa Boullata and Maher Jarrar,[30] for example, have noted the tendency of Palestinian fiction to follow the form:

> The underlying principal of this pattern [of most Palestinian writings since 1948] is a circular movement or a strong tendency toward a movement that completes the circle and closes it to perfection. The movement starts when disruption begins in the life of a Palestinian character in the novel. This disruption is caused by the establishment of the state of Israel or the continued existence of the Zionist state. Whether the Palestinian characters are portrayed as living in Israel or outside it, the disruption in their life puts them on the move physically and/or psychologically because a previous state of equilibrium has been violated. The movement is towards a re-establishment of this equilibrium in which there is happiness and fulfillment. As long as the equilibrium is not achieved, there is misery or death in spite of occasional material success or wealth...[31]

One can certainly read the four novels herein discussed as journeys to reach a sought after equilibrium. Indeed, the events of 1948 that lead to the creation of Israel and the displacement, exile or ambiguous status of each of the characters who will examined in this thesis, does act as a starting point for each of the texts.

That this is the first reading of the works is not surprising. Indeed, for Palestinians—at some level—any individual claiming "Palestinian" as an identity is making a statement of national-political belief. Thus, in writing the story of a Palestinian refugee, even when the story has as its focus, as Ghassān Kanafānī's does, a long drive through the desert, the narrative can be read as a national allegory of journey and exile. What is missed when a story about a refugee on a long drive to Kuwait is read *only* as a national allegory, I argue, is the story's explanation of how the characters in the story *felt*, which is at least as important as the basic plot summery. Indeed, character development and the expression of the human condition is precisely this dynamic which is lost when we read the "third world" novel as Jameson would have us, as a national allegory.

It is Jameson's own claim that the fragmented nature of our (western suburban) world is what prevents us from really being able to engage with third-world fiction (even if it were above the simply allegorical). What better text to read, I suggest, than the narrative lives whose past

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[30] See, Jarrar Maher. "A Narration of 'Deterritorialization': Imīl Ḥabībī's *The Pessoptimist*" *Middle Eastern Literatures*. 5(1), 2002.
[31] Boullata, Issa. "Emile Habibi." *Journal of Islamic Culture*, 62(2-3) 1988, 18

and present, present and future, are absolutely fragmented and fractured, as in the characters of Kanafānī, Habībī, Khalīfah and Barghūthī's characters of exile. What is exile if not the precise expression of this "western" fragmentation boiled down to its essence, and a thousand times more intense? In the following pages, then, I will suggest that it is time to re-evaluate Jameson's view that "third world" fiction is best read as a national allegory. My thesis is something that I see as continuing the project of critics like Deepika Bahri, whose *Native Intelligence*, among other things, "argues that the undervaluation of aesthetics is a measure of criticism's inadequate resistance to the status quo logic of exchange society, rather than a symposium of postcolonial literature's inability to offer "satisfaction" or relevance for the political project."[32]

I must admit, however, that there is something to Jameson's suggestion that the "strangeness" of "third world" fiction to western "sensibilities" makes it difficult to access its full range and depth. I understand that in order to critically evaluate the novels of this thesis, novels which "make the whole man feel alive,"[33] that a solid understanding of context is an invaluable tool. Since I will never have a full understanding of all contexts for all novels, however, I propose to read the texts on as many levels as I am able. While reading in Arabic, although I am bound to miss cultural and linguistic subtleties, I can still offer an insightful reading. As a specifically Canadian critic with family roots in Western Europe, then, I am not excluded from understanding and commenting on the Arabic-Palestinian novel. The next question, though, is, What about using critics such as Barthes, Brecht, Lawrence, etc., and comparing literary techniques I find in Arabic-Palestinian novels with those of European, Russian or South American works?

1.5 How do Scholars deal with this difference?

Fedwa Malti-Douglas says that "the idea that it is inappropriate to analyze Arab civilization with foreign (read: Western) intellectual tools" is, "alien to civilization itself."[34] She refers, here, to the long tradition of cultural exchanges often overlooked in favour of more current Huntington-esque ideas of the "clash of civilizations," where lines are clear and overlap threatening.[35] Malti–Douglas sees the historical movement of thought, invention and ideas, as a precedent to encourage the continued interaction of Arabic texts with foreign ideas. Similarly, Hanan Ashrawi, in her PhD thesis, highlights further the close relationship between Arabic fiction

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[32] Bahri, Deepika. *Native Intelligence: Aesthetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Literature*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2003,7

[33] I read "man" here, as a reference to the universal human. Thus, "man alive" I understand as "person alive." As a woman critic it is obviously unquestionable that the idea be taken to mean the privileging of one gender.

[34] Malti-Douglas, 228

[35] Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Touchstone, 1996.

and its global counterparts. She notes in Palestinian fiction "an affinity with the literary output of other cultures in seeking to transform a specific factual base into an urgent and comprehensive statement on the condition of humanity as a whole without sacrificing either dimension."[36]

Edward Said comments on this directly when he says, "a novel in particular, if it is not to be read reductively as an item of sociopolitical evidence, involves the reader with itself not only because of its writer's skill but also because of other novels. All novels belong to a family, and any reader of novels is a reader of this complex family to which they belong."[37] The contextual difference can be seen as, rather than *the difference* between the Arabic and English novels, part of the growing complexity of the novel form. Indeed, Malti-Douglas says that when Arabic fiction is treated as "emergent or third world or postcolonial literature" it effectively "sever[s] the modern Arabic literary product from its textual heritage."[38]

This heritage that Malti-Douglas talks about is the combined centuries of literary development from pre-Islamic poetry, popular oral narratives, folktales, autobiographies, and includes the process through which the novel was translated, imitated and adapted into the Arabic context.[39] Thus, the "western" literary heritage was taken-up into the Arabic novel through early translations of some of its classic works.[40] And later cross-cultural exchanges were, of course, intensified through the colonial experience. To read Arabic fiction, then, with only Arab critics and compare the texts only to other Arabic texts is, as Malti-Douglas puts it, not to "protect but to isolate"[41] the Arabic novel.

This thesis, then, in order to unpack the novels' various constructions of identity, will use the sources that help to open up and explain the texts, be they Eastern, western, or otherwise. It will use as a guide to identifying "satisfaction" within a text the ideas of Roland Barthes who has put forward a theory about what gives a reader pleasure. While Barthes concurs that "there is no necessary agreement"[42] about which texts are ultimately satisfying, he does put forward a sort if ideal way to read a text of pleasure.

> To be with the one I love and to think of something else: this is how I have my best ideas, how I best invent what is necessary to my work. Likewise for the text: it produces in me, the best pleasure if it manages to make itself heard indirectly; if, reading it, I am led to look up often, to listen to

[36] Ashrawi, Hanan. "Contemporary Palestinian Poetry and Fiction," *Beyond the Arab Disease*. Riad Nourallah Ed. New York: Routeledge, 2006, 285

[37] Said, Edward. *Reflections on Exile and Other Stories*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000 , 41

[38] Malti-Douglas, 226

[39] Allan, Roger. *Introduction to Arabic Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 178

[40] Allen, 178

[41] Malti-Douglas, 229

[42] Barthes, Roland. *The Pleasure of the Text*. Richard Miller, Trans. New York: Hill and Wang, 1975, 15

something else. I am not necessarily *captivated* by the text of pleasure; it can be an act that is slight, complex, tenuous, almost scatterbrained: a sudden movement of the head like a bird who understands nothing of what we hear, who hears what we do not understand.[43]

In order to come away with something meaningful, then, a reader must approach the text with a curious, but open, mind.

I approach these texts, then, thinking about how it is that after the last page of a book I am left with a particular idea of "Palestinian." I have asked myself as I read the texts, "how do I build from the information on these pages the idea of a Palestinian?" This "idea of the Palestinian," for the purposes of this thesis, I have termed "identity," and, before proceeding to my textual analyses, will explain the parameters of the term.

2. Identity
2.1 Definition of Identity

In their review article on current identity theories two of the fields originators, American Professors Peter Stets and Jan Burke, separate theories of identity into three basic hypotheses: "social identity," "role identity" and "person identity."[44] They define the first two ideas, respectively as, "being like others in the group, and seeing things from the group's perspective,"[45] and "acting to fulfill the expectations of the role, coordinating and negotiating interaction with role partners."[46] Then, in his essay "Identifying Identity,"[47] Philip Gleason describes the "person identity" as that which:

> Involves an interaction between the interior development of the individual personality, understood in terms derived from the Freudian id-ego-super-ego model, and the growth of a sense of selfhood that arises from participating in society, internalizing its cultural norms, acquiring different statuses, and playing different roles.[48]

Both the Stets and Gleason articles discuss the seemingly inevitable overlap between different fields of identity research, and stress the fact that there is no singular definition of identity. The articles, in fact, indicate that the ultimate theory of identity will have to incorporate all three areas of research. I believe, as the leading scholars in the field, the articles of Stets, Burke and Gleason represent accurately the findings of the human sciences on the construction of identity. I must assert here, that it is not the project of this thesis to put forward a scientific

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[43] Ibid, 24-5

[44] Stets, Jan E., and Peter J. Burke. "Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory." *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63(3), 2000, 226

[45] ibid

[46] ibid

[47] Gleason, Philip. "Identifying Identity: A Semantic History." *The Journal of American History*, 69 (4), 1983

[48] Ibid, 914

definition of identity. I do, however, hope to make use of established terms and ideas employed by psychologists and socioloists to ensure a degree of clarity and focus.

I am aware, moreover, that a justification for my proposed definition of identity is in order, since the scholars I use, as well as the bulk of the studies on which they base their conclusions, focus on "western" societies and are performed by "western" academics. Like the issue of using "western" critics to discuss the Arabic novel, the issue of imposing my own idea of identity on works that come from a different articulation of the idea, is problematic.

In his 1984 article, Gleason shows that the current North America conceptions of identity were for the most part developed after World War II.[49] It was at this point in history that the "study of national character was regarded as one of the most exciting frontier areas of the social sciences."[50] This western/North American fascination with identity and national character, moreover, can be put in the context of the creation of the state of Israel. Indeed, scholars have noted that the Zionist project was heavily influenced by the historical moment in which it developed.[51] This influence is apparent in the articulation of Zionist and early Israeli identity.

In the years directly preceding the declaration of the state of Israel, and certainly after the war of 1948, Palestinians found themselves in a political climate where identity was a very real issue. In her insightful study, Barbara Parmenter looks at the changes in Palestinian literature as it came into contact and confronted Zionist literature and rhetoric of the time. She shows, significantly, that Palestinian literature changed from one that expressed beloning in terms of pan-arabism, the tribe or the family during this period (roughly 1930-50) and increasingly dealt with issues of land and belonging in the nationalistic terms that western Zionists had articulated it.[52] Speaking to the realignment of conceptions of the self is the PhD dissertation of Muhammad Siddiq *Patterns of Identity in the Hebrew and Arabic Novel*.[53] In his introduction Siddiq says, "it is imperative to bear in mind the social function modern Hebrew and Arabic literature were assigned by their respective nationalisms, and the crucial role western culture played in this

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[49] Gleason's article, published 1983, might no longer be considered current, and indeed, the seMaltics of the word "identity" are more than likely still developing. For the purposes of this thesis, however, and taking into consideration that the most recent novel under consideration was published in 1984, I feel that the explanation of "current" conceptions of "identity" are still valid as they are described by Gleason.

[50] Gleason, 923

[51] For a brief overview see Tessler, Mark. *A History of the Israeli Palestinian Conflict*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994 24, 36, or an more in-depth discussion, Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry before the First World War*. New York, Cambridge University Press, 1993

[52] Parmenter, Barbara. *Giving Voices to Stones: Place and Identity in Palestinian Literature*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994, 75

[53] Siddiq, *Patterns*, 2

complex relationship."[54] To this end he notes that in the early—pre-1948—Arabic novel, the central theme in terms of identity articulation, is that of reconciling western secularism with eastern religion.[55] After 1948, Siddiq notes that the focus of the Palestinian novel in particular, "is one constant effort to fathom the cataclysmic dimensions of this national disaster, dislocation and despair brought about by that war [of 1948]."[56]

The Zionist articulation of nationalism and national character, then, was developed alongside the process of identity articulation described by Gleason; attachment to a place via the rhetoric of nationalism. In view of Parmenter's proof that Palestinian narrative responded directly to Zionist articulations, I believe it reasonable to posit that the conception of Palestinian identity (as a term and idea) in post World War II Israel/Palestine is similar enough to Gleason's explanation. Added to this is Siddiq's finding that the articulation of identity in Arabic, and particularly Palestinian fiction was formed primarily through contact with the West and the new challenges presented by the war of 1948. Thus, in writing the novel, Palestinian authors were very much engaged with the question of Palestinian identity as it was being conceived in the West.[57]

If, as Anderson and others have discussed,[58] the very form of the novel works to construct the sort of communal identities addressed here, how the novels put forward the identity of the very Palestinians they address, becomes significant. I will discuss briefly the broader implications of the construction of identity in Palestinian fiction in the concluding chapter of this thesis. However, any concrete effects that the articulation of identity in fiction has had on society are something that is beyond the scope of this study. I leave it, then, for future scholars to take ideas produced within this literary analysis and extend them into the worlds of sociology, anthropology and psychology.

2.2 Defining Palestinian
Since part of the project of this thesis is to discuss and uncover the complex articulations of the idea of Palestinian identity, it will not set out a concrete and limited definition of the term.

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[54] Ibid

[55] Ibid, 13

[56] Ibid

[57] Indeed, Said goes as far as saying that ideas of "who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who keeps it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future—these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1994, xii)

[58] See also Homi K. Bahaba. *Nation and Narration.* New York: Routeldge, 1990; and Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition.* Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger Eds. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003 for a discussion on how the novel has played a role in the development of nationalism and collective memory

It will, rather, let the novels addressed dictate through their descriptions and explanations, what constitutes a Palestinian. I will attempt to draw these out through my readings. I believe this non-restrictive approach opens the door for the most meaningful discussion of the idea of Palestinian identity, without limiting or complicating the issue by setting out fixed historical, legal or political definitions.

2.3 The Construction of identity

Having worked through my terminology and justifications for the way that identity, and specifically Palestinian identity, will be discussed within this thesis, I will now briefly define what I mean by the "construction" of identity, and what methods I have used to talk about the constructions in each of the texts.

What I mean in this thesis by the "construction" of identity is essentially the conglomeration of literary devices, and themes that are used within a novel. These aesthetic components build for the reader a cornucopia of images and ideas through which they gain an understanding of the world of the novel. Each component, such as narrative style, character development and interaction, setting, use and manipulation of time and intertexts, works to create a readers' understanding of Palestinian identity. It is the sum of these components that I conceive to be the "construction" of a Palestinian identity.

Mine is not the first work to discuss the issue of identity as it is found in works of fiction, and before movig on to the texts themselves, I believe my analysis will benefit from being placed in dialogue with other works thus engaged. I will therefore look briefly at the works of Robert Langbaum and Muhammad Siddiq, who have both dealt extensively with the issue of identity in fiction. Published in 1977, Langbaum's *The Mysteries of Identity: A Theme in Modern Literature* is perhaps the first extended inquiry into the modern literary expression of identity in English fiction.[59] Langbaum discusses the expression of identity by analyzing a work's "inextricable combination of ideas with forms, words, imagery, emotion and with those critical judgments on our part that are inseparable from the experience of literature,"[60] and comparing themes with early and modern western philosophers. Wordsowrth, he says, "works out in his poetry the new romantic concept of self,"[61] whereas "Eliot's nameless, faceless voices express the sense—which by the twentieth century has come to prevail—that the self, if it exists at all, is changing and

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[59] Langbaum, Robert. *The Mysteries of Identity: A Theme in Modern Literature.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1977
[60] Ibid, 20
[61] Ibid, 29

discontinuous, and that its unity is as problematic as its freedom from external conditions."[62] Through the text Langbaum traces the changes in the literary construction of identity as compared with social and historical changes and expressions of the same ideas.

While Langbaum's study is far more detailed than my own, and draws more heavily on philosophers and psychologists for comparison, his approach to discovering identity in literature is akin to mine. This is not the case in the work of Muhammad Siddiq, which looks at "the dynamics of identity crisis"[63] in Hebrew and Arabic fiction specifically through novels' expression of a "quest for identity."[64] His work, while closer thematically to this study, is unable to offer the same historical or sociological context as Langbaum, and unfortunately does not "attempt to force...works to yield...a uniform concept"[65] or even try to suggest links between the "patterns" he sets out to find within each novel. He sees identity, moreover, as "the general sense of self, personality or individuality" and not "in any specialized psychological sense."[66] Siddiq, rather, explores "the dynamics of identity, 'by establishing its indispensability in various contexts,'"[67] the quotation coming from *Identity, Youth and Crisis* by Erik Erikson, a social psychologist and preeminent scholar on the idea of identity.

Langbaum chooses to define identity in literature against its articulation in philosophy and psychology from Sophocles to Freud to Descartes. Siddiq, on the other hand tries to avoid imposing concepts of identity on literature, and rather applying a psychological interpretation "wherever the concept seemed to require,"[68] leaving the overall set of analyses disconnected and less insightful than it might have been. This study seeks to find a balance between the two methodologies. I have employed the terminology of social psychology as an organizing and unifying concept, but done my best not to choose a single theory of identity, and have rather sought to let the novels convey their own amalgam of identity constructions.

One further study deserves mention here, before I proceed to a discussion of the particular works that this thesis will analyze. That is the work of Mitsuhiro Kodama, particularly his short study titled *Individuals and Community in* Midaq Alley*: Societal Dynamics in the World of Naguib Mahfouz*. While Kodama does not look at the "individual identity" as I have chosen to discuss the

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[62] Ibid, 97
[63] Siddiq, *Patterns*, 12
[64] Ibid, 14
[65] Ibid, 15
[66] Ibid
[67] Ibid, 16
[68] Ibid

idea, he does address the idea of an individual's social and group identity. Indeed, Kodama sees Mahfouz's work relying on place, geography, history, and above all the ideals of Islam to create individual identity.[69] He contrasts, moreover, the western notion of individualism with that which is distinct from it in Mahfouz's work.[70] Kodama's analysis focuses on the individual's relation to his or her community, by looking specifically at married couples, families, relationships between neighbours and the small community that the work focuses on—Midaq Alley—as a social unit.

This thesis, unlike Kodama's work, does not approach the texts it studies looking for a particularly Islamic worldview. Readers might notice, moreover, the absence of an extended discussion of a specifically Islamic component in any of the following analyses. This does not mean that one does not exist, or that the novels' settings mostly in the Muslim world somehow ignore the issue of religion entirely, this, indeed, is not the case. In all of the works lines from either the Qur'an or the Christian Bible, at least, appear often within the dialogue—both internal and verbal—of different characters. These references appear alongside others to popular Middle Eastern singers, political and historical figures. I have chosen not to address the Islamic components of identity because these were not the issues that the texts communicated to me, though that is certainly as much on account of the reader as it is the text.

Where this thesis is paralleled with the work of Kodama is in its interest in the relationships described within the texts. How a character interacts with others in the text is, as I see it, an additional voice at work. From this voice readers can learn how characters actually understand their place in the world (as opposed to how they describe it) and also how other characters understand them. If the relationships that I discuss are particularly Islamic in their tenor, I leave it up to future critics to describe.

3. The Authors

In order to put forward a meaningful discussion of Palestinian identity as it is found in fiction, I have chosen four texts by Palestinian authors. I will read these texts closely so that I might discover the mechanisms at work in each novel's construction of Palestinian identity. These texts are: Ghassān Kanafānī's *Rijāl fī al-Shams* (trans: *Men in the Sun*) published first in 1964, Imīl Ḥabībī's *Al-Waqā'i' Al-Gharībah fī Ikhtifā' Sa'īd Abī Al-Naḥs Al-Mutashā'l* (trans, *Said the Ill-Fated Pessoptimist*) which was published in serial beginning in 1973, Ṣaḥar Khalīfah's *Al-Ṣubbār* (trans,

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[69] Kodama, 38
[70] Ibid, 3

Wild Thorns) published in 1974, and finally, *Al-Ḍuffah al-Thālithah li-Nahar al-Urdun* (while there is no English translation of the work, the title translates as *The Third Bank of the Jordan River*) by Ḥusayn Al-Barghūthī, which was published first in 1984. These authors, of different eras, backgrounds, religions and political persuasions do, however, have their "Palestinianess" in common. Using these authors, I will have the opportunity to compare expressions of identity over time, and—given the different life histories of each—through exile and back.

Kanafānī, for example, was a 1948 refugee who moved into exile as a boy, then joined the resistance movement and PLO in Beirut, where he was killed in a car bombing in 1972. He wrote *Rijāl fī al-Shams,* as well as all his other works of fiction, from outside of Palestine. His *Rijāl* was first published in 1963, before the devastating defeat for Palestinians in 1967. It thus represents an articulation of identity formed at the end of the era of Pan-Arabism. Indeed, the novel reflects the period of time durnig which the war of 1948 was made sense of in the Arab world, and during which resistance to Israeli presence was articulated by Arab nationalism. Since it was at the end of this period, however, the text reflects the growing dissatisfaction with the failures of Arab nationalism to change the Palestinian situation.

Chronologically, Kanafānī's text is followed by Ḥabībī's *Al-Waqā'i*, which was published in 1974, though it was written before the six-day war in 1973. Ḥabībī was 1948-Palestinian, and was therefore granted Israeli citizenship. He lived as an Israeli-Palestinian in Haifa and worked for three terms as a Member of Knesset, after which he wrote *Al-Waqā'i'.* During his life he had to grapple with what his hyphenated status meant for his, and his characters' Palestinian identity. His first novel, *Al-Waqā'i* was written after 1967, when Israel took control of Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza strip. Since the 1967 war was a shock to the Middle East almost akin to the war of 1948, and it changed the daily lives of Palestinians to a similar degree, this was also a pivotal time in the formation of identity in the region. Indeed, after 1967 West Bank Palestinians were re-connected to the Arab population of Israel, and for the first time in almost 20 years the two populations had to make sense of themselves as a whole. The war, moreover, created the political boundaries that exist today, and as well as a whole new set of social circumstances for the Palestinians inside Israel-proper and in the newly Occupied Territories. Ḥabībī's text, then, represents in this thesis the period in which the occurrences of the 1967 war were made sense of and digested in the popular imagination.

Khalīfah, in comparison, was one who stayed in Palestine, but for only the early part of her life. She left Nablus at thirty-one, after a divorce, to pursue an American education, returned

briefly in the late sixties—the period during which *Al-Ṣubbār* was written—and now lives in exile in ʿAmman. *Al-Ṣubbār* was published in 1975, written as the 1973 war took place. That year's October War, though ultimately a defeat for the participating Arab armies, changed the political landscape of the Middle East. While ultimately a defeat for the Arab armies, early wins boosted morale and shocked Israeli citizens. In proving their abilities in battle the Arab (particularly Egyptian) states won, in conjunction with the OPEC crisis, bargaining power that changed the political climate, and also helped boost the Palestinian Liberation Organization into a position of authority both in the Arab world and internationally.[71] Indeed, *Al-Ṣubbār*, was written during a time of political change and solidification. As the PLO broke ties with Jordan backed with new international recognition, and began reasserting its demands for Palestinian self-determination,[72] it was also a period when the idea of a partitioned Palestine was gaining more and more acceptance.[73] The events of this period changed the position of Palestinians vis-à-vis the Arab and Western worlds, and are reflected masterfully within Khalīfah's novel, where given an honest human element.

The most recent book of this study is Barghūthī's *Al-Ḍuffah al-Thālithah*, which was published in 1984. The work, set in the early eighties, was written in the context of the failed Camp David accords, the assassination of Sadat, the Israeli attack on the PLO in Lebanon, and the organization's subsequent move to Tunis. This period of rapid political change and uncertainty is that which saw the development of most of the current issues of Palestinian politics. In writing from this historical period, Barghūthī captures some of the issues against which Palestinians would have been struggling. Having spent most of his life in the Ramallah area of the West Bank, Barghūthī would have been in tune with the popular sentiments of the time. He left briefly to study engineering in Budapest, and returned home after a year to pursue a degree in literature at BirZeit University. He left again to study Comparative Literature in Seattle, after which he returned to teach at BirZeit, and write his novel, *Al-Ḍuffah al-Thālithah*.

The diverse backgrounds of these authors—every one of which embodies a distinctly Palestinian experience—are reflected in their fiction, and illustrate the many varied constructions of Palestinian identity. Each author, then, can be understood as writing from a different period on the timeline of Palestinian history, development, politics and identity formation. Additionally,

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[71] Tessler, 475-83

[72] Gresh, Alain. *The PLO: The Struggle Within, Towards an Independent Palestinian State.* A.M. Berrett Trans, London: Zed Books, 1988, 88

[73] Gresh, 135

each novel, however much it was eventually integrated into Palestinian popular culture, challenges in some way the existing ideas and claims of Palestinian identity, and thus make excellent material for the discussion of their particular construction of identity.

These "traditional" ideas of Palestinian identity, which are being challenged by the novels listed above, have been in part explained by the American specialist in Arabic literature Carol Bardenstein. She identifies narrative conformity to a common conception of "traditional" as one diasporic cultural production, and explains it as,

> The pressure for diasporic narratives to fall into relatively predictable patterns, meeting with different degrees of non-recognition, resistance or questioning of their legitimacy if they stray or deviate from these anticipated patterns.[74]

For example, she says readers

> Expect, or [are] invested in hearing, 'exemplary' accounts or versions of the experience of dispersion. These may be characterized by accounts of life as idyllic before dispersion...of the experience of displacement as one of acute trauma and unrelenting misery.[75]

Each one of the narratives discussed here could, in some way, be considered to in some way embody a diaspora or exile's experience. Whether these authors were moved out of the country, or the country moved out from under them, or their towns and neighbourhoods were filled with refugees, I suggest that any of these experiences is akin to the idea of life in a diaspora. Even the Palestinian who remained on their family land throughout '48 and '67, the constant threat—and even more constant reality—of land seizures, or more recently, the building of walls, have worked to change both the social and physical landscape of Palestine. This, I suggest, puts just as much pressure on writers and individuals to conform to those expectations that Bardenstein describes. Not one of the authors considered in this thesis, however, conform to these sorts of expectations. In their critical and nuanced depictions of the lives of fictional Palestinians, the works of Kanafānī, Ḥabībī, Khalīfah, and Barghūthī, are each rich examples of Palestinian fiction. In my following analyses, I hope not only to bring out some of the unique ways in which these novels each construct Palestinian identity, but also to highlight their pertinence for not only Palestinians, but for humans in general.

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[74] Bardenstein, Carol. "Figures of Diasporic Cultural Production: Some Entries from the Palestinian Lexicon," *Diaspora and Memory: Figures of Displacement in Contemporary Literature, Arts and Politics.* Marie-Aude Baronian, Stephan Besser and Yolande Jansen Eds. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2007, 27

[75] Ibid

Chapter One:
Binary Opposition and the Re-evaluation of Hierarchies in
Ghassān Kanafānī's *Rijāl fī al-Shams*
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Ghassān Kanafānī's *Rijāl fī al-Shams* is the first novel that I will discuss. Written in 1964 and set ten years after the *nakbah*, the novel portrays the lives of four Palestinian men on a journey to Kuwait. The novel has been generally understood as a call to action. Critics like Barbara Harlow, Muhammad Siddiq, Joe Cleary and even Kanafānī himself, have discussed *Rijāl* as a novel which paints a portrait of helpless Palestinians: weak physically and politically and unable to fend for or defend themselves.[1] Muhammad Siddiq, in his work on Kanafānī's fiction, says that the novel: "dramatizes the futility of the effort of the uprooted Palestinian refugees to look for a new home, a new future, and, ultimately, a new identity by moving away from Palestine."[2] The resulting interpretation has been the suggestion that, in order to survive, Palestinians must not move away from the homeland and seek their fortunes elsewhere, but rather their only hope is to return to their homeland and fight for their futures there.[3]

More recently, however, there have been alternative interpretations of the novel's message. In her insightful essay on "Gender and the Palestinian Narrative of Return,"[4] Amy Zalman gives a reading of Abū al-Khaīzarān's castration as part of the novel's ultimate assertion that the failure of the men to reach Kuwait is a failure of masculinity.[5] Zalman writes:

> At the core of these readings is the belief that masculinity's exemplary expression is virility, a belief so self evident, apparently, that it completely underwrites the construction of *Men in the Sun* as a national allegory while remaining invisible itself. However, as a reading strategy, allegorical commentary is not a neutral lens helping magnify the nature of the text in question, but a collective sense of injury to the collective (masculine) national body.[6]

In her essay Zalman argues convincingly for a re-reading of Kanafānī's *Rijāl fī al-Shams* in terms of recognition of social failure. She continues:

> In 1958, the year the events in *Men in the Sun*, as Kanafani writes it, incipient signs marked 'nation' begin to appear. The men, in their dogged forward motion, try to follow the directions that would lead them to conscious self-determination. The problem is that the signs of masculinity and the

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[1] See Cleary, Joe. *Literature, Partition and the Nation State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 200-201; Harlow, Barbara. *After Lives: Legacies of Revolutionary Wrtiers*. London: Verso Press, 1996, 49; Siddiq, Muhammad. *Man is a Cause: Political consciousness and the fiction of Ghassān Kanafānī*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984, 10; Kanafānī, Ghassān. *Al-Adab al-Filisṭīnī al-Muqāwim taḥta al-Iḥtilal 1948-1968*. Beirut: Dār al-Adab, 1968

[2] Siddiq, *Man is a Cause,* 10

[3] Ibid, 10

[4] Zalman, Amy. "Gender and the Palestinian Narrative of Return." *Literature and Nation in the Middle East*. Yasir Suleiman and Ibrahim Muhawi Eds. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006

[5] Abū al-Khaīzāran is the Palestinian character in the novel, introduced last, who gathers the others together and offers to drive them to Kuwait in his water tanker, which is usually used to smuggle weapons for his boss from the gulf.

[6] Zalman, 75

signs of nationalism do not all point in the same direction. The narrative implodes at the crossroads.[7]

The failure of the men to reach Kuwait, according to Zalman, indicates the failure of Palestinian society in 1958 to reconcile the changing realities of the concepts of masculinity and nationalism. This alternative reading, I believe, adds to and nuances the earlier readings of the text given by critics cited earlier.

In the following analysis of identity construction in *Rijāl fī al-Shams*, I will build on Zalman's idea of the impossible reconciliation of ideas, but put the idea under the label "binary opposition." I believe that in his text Kanafānī sets up two main fields of binary opposition that are expressed through the construction of character, setting and even the broader composition of the novel. I see the binaries in Kanafānī's novel, moreover, as challenging Derrida's traditional explanation of the idiom. Thus, where Derrida explains that, conventionally, binary oppositions ultimately subsume one term with its counterpart to form a hierarchy of ideas,[8] (thus, in the binary male/female, the female is subsumed by the male, creating a hierarchy of male superior to female) in *Rijāl*, it is precisely the simultaneity of the binaries that constructs the identities within the work. The first such opposition that appears in the text is the idea of here/not here and the second, universal/specific.

This chapter will first look at the character development of *Rijāl*, and how its portrayals of Abū Qais, As'ad, Marwān and Abū al-Khaīzarān depict the characters as universal individuals who are also specifically Palestinian characters. The second section will look at the different settings of the novel, and how the settings create the same idea of universal/specific, as well as dealing with the here/not here dynamic of exile. The final section will discuss the work as simultaneously a narrative of rebirth and of death, and how the simultaneity of these two opposite readings are understood in light of the final lines of the text, where, Abū al-Khaīzarān asks, "Why didn't you bang the walls of the tank?" (126).[9]

1. Character

Character construction and development in *Rijāl fī al-Shams* creates a binary opposition of specific/universal in two ways. First, it makes plural a narrow segment of Palestinian society

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[7] Ibid, 52

[8] Derrida, Jaques. *Of Grammatology*. Gayatri Spivak Trans. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998, 56

[9] The verb used here is daqqa, translated by Kilpatrick as "knock," can also mean, to be thin, fragile or unimportant, and also to throb or beat, as in a heart. See "daqqa" *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. J.M. Cowan Ed. Urbana: Spoken Language Services Inc., 1994

represented by the men in the sun. For although the main characters, Abū Qais, Asʿad, Marwān and Abū al-Khaīzarān, are all men, all Palestinians and all exiles headed to Kuwait in search of wealth, they are represented in the novel as having distinctly different identities. By taking what might at first seem to be a narrow look at Palestinian men, Kanafānī in fact uses the microcosm of the four men traveling across the desert to demonstrate the multiple identities within that very category and make specific the individual Palestinian experiences of the men. At the same time as the men's experiences of being Palestinians are shown to be individual and specific, the manner in which they are written show the men to be universal characters.[10] I will first show how the characters are constructed as specific individuals (rather than representations of a category), and then show that Kanafānī in fact portrays individuals as universal characters.

The characters constructed in *Rijāl fī al-Shams* create several multiplicities within the category of exiled Palestinian man, the most obvious of which is their wide range of ages. Aged sixteen to fifty, the men are shown to live and react differently to life as Palestinian exiles as a result of their particular experiences of exile, and how much they remember and connect with the past. Beyond age, the men also differ in village or region of origin, as well as their current place of exile. They have been dispersed amongst the nations of the Arab world,[11] and are only brought together into a single narrative category when they decide to leave their refugee-camps and temporary homes. Each of these differences is shown to have an effect on the personality and specificity of the men in the sun, and shows that Palestinian identity is something that is not singular. The men, their experiences, and their own individuality, are used to show Palestinian identity is in itself something multiple and diverse.

One narrative tactic used to achieve this construction in *Rijāl fī al-Shams* is a general avoidance of making broad statements about the main characters. Rather, the men are revealed gradually, through their memories and actions, from multiple perspectives, of which the narrative voice is but one. In crafting his characters without obtrusive commentary, Kanafānī plays the role of host: he introduces the reader to his characters and invites us to imagine who they are by making us privy to their memories and allowing us to understanding their actions from their own point of

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[10] I use universal in this binary to indicate that while Kanafānī constructs men who are products of their own specific and unique circumstances, that they are constructed as men who could be any human, without any "innate" attributes or defining characteristics which would remove their experiences from the world of a "universal" individual or "everyman."

[11] Abū Qaīs in Jordan, Abū Al-Khaizarān constantly traveling between Basra and Kuwait, and Marwān and ʿAsād in unidentified refugee camps, perhaps in the West Bank of what was then Transjordan, or in Gaza, which belonged to Egypt.

view. In thus relating the characters to the reader, we are able to imagine them as universal characters who are shaped by the specificity of their situation.

The narrative's many perspective-shifts allow such a construction to function, giving each character a distinct voice as well as a distinct history. We learn about characters from their own narrations and from their reactions to others within the novel. In having direct access to the hearts and minds of each character, this novel becomes one, as Edward Said describes it, that is "provoking" its characters into action,[12] rather than, say, writing the characters into roles. Kanafānī sets up the world for his characters, lays out their history and seems to leave them to react to the situation. Through this technique wherein readers discover characters through their reactions to the situation of the novel, characters become familiar, making their experience accessible (we can imagine ourselves in the same place), yet giving them the opportunity to become distinct individuals within the text. In the following pages I will attempt to tease apart the different ways in which the men are constructed as unique individuals within the text, as well as the techniques used to describe the men as universally human.

1.1 Abū Qais

Abū Qais is the first character introduced in the novel. The title for the first chapter bears only his name and its pages reveal to us the story behind his arrival in Basra *en route* to Kuwait. He is thus made distinct from the larger group of the men in the sun named in the novel's title. The work opens by describing Abū Qais lying against the ground, listening to the heartbeat of the earth. It is a powerfully symbolic opening, one to which I will return in the final section of this chapter; it is also our introduction to the character of Abū Qais.

As the scene unfolds, Abū Qais is constructed through the memories that he recalls as he listens to the earth. First we learn that he is married, as he imagines that the damp earth smells like his "wife's hair when she had just walked out of the bathroom, after washing with cold water" (11; T21). Cold water here might also be an indication of their status as refugees, living in an UNRWA camp, possibly in Jordan, but the reference is left unexplained. The text is visibly non-political, as compared to Arabic writers such as Ghādah Sammān or Bahaa' Ṭāḥir who pronounce their political positions through the mouths of their characters or narrators.[13] Rather, Kanafānī constructs the characters without overt commentary, and when Abū Qais describes the heartbeat

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[12] Said, *Reflections*, 54

[13] See, for example, works such as *Laylah al-Mīlyar* by Ghadah al-Sammān, Beirut: Manshūrat Ghadah al-Sammān, 1991, and Ibrahim Nasser and Majed Nassar. *41 Short Stories from Palestine*. Ramallah: Bailasan Design, 2003, which have their characters engage in political debates, where the protagonist represents the "good" side, and the antagonist the "bad," and whose protagonists generally represent the political views of the authors.

of the earth as throbbing "under him with tired heartbeats," (11; T21) we can understand that it is *his* heart that beats tired, since we the readers know that throbbing Abū Qais hears, like the sound of water in a conch-shell, is the pulsing of his own blood. We are not told that Abū Qais is tired, but are able to pick up on the idea through other clues. By becoming involved in the experiences of Abū Qais this way—guessing his actions, imagining what the earth sounds like—we get to know him as a person, rather than the symbol of a political idea, or stock character.

We learn most of the facts of Abū Qais's existence through his memories. For example, we learn that Abū Qais has listened to the earth's heartbeat before, and that the opening scene reflects a regular behaviour of his. This becomes clear when Abū Qais shares with readers a memory of describing the earth's heartbeat to his neighbour, and his memory of the exchange begins our relational understanding of him as a character in a certain context. First, his neighbour is described as someone who Abū Qais "had shared the field with, there, on the land that he left ten years ago" (11). The description of the neighbour implies that Abū Qais is a displaced Palestinian, and his subsequent description of the neighbour's response to his discovery of the earth's heartbeat tells us how Abū Qais is received within his own community, i.e. it is through the interaction that we understand his role, rather than his own labeling. The neighbour replies: "it's the voice of your heart that you hear when you lie your chest against the ground" (11). The reply seems condescending, making the idea that the earth has a heartbeat silly and childish, and implying that Abū Qais is the same.

By the reaction of Abū Qais's neighbour, we learn that Abū Qais is not a high-ranking man in his community. The impression of Abū Qais as simple is strengthened as we learn of the ridicule he faces when he asks a schoolboy about a geography lesson and is called a (female) "billy goat" (15).[14] His own son, Qais, affirms the characterization when his father tries to ask him about the same geography lesson which he had spied on through the school window. "What is the Shaṭṭ al-'Arab?" (17) he asks Qais when he arrives home. His son answers, "...I saw you peeking in the window of class today..." (18), implying that Abū Qais had just learned what it was, and was asking, rather than quizzing his son. When Abū Qais insists that he knew about the Shaṭṭ before, his son continues putting him down saying: "No way, you didn't know it...I learned it today and you peeked in from the window" (18). The father and son argue until Umm Qais steps in, catches the eye of her husband and tells Qais to go to the other room to play (18). She does not back up

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[14] Translated by Kilpatrick as "idiot" in: Kanafani, Ghassan. *Men in the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories.* Hilary Kilpatrick Trans. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999, 22

her husband in his assertion that he knew, before that afternoon, about the Shaṭṭ River. Abū Qais may be the man of the house but he does not have much of the "traditional" power or respect typically accorded to the position.

For example, the scene where Abū Qais' friend talks him into leaving for Kuwait shows exactly how the man tries and fails to maintain his position as a "traditional" man of the house. Although it is clear that Abū Qais does not want to go, saying things like "It's a long way. And I'm an old man; I can't walk as you did. I might die" (22, T27), he cannot outright refuse or his friend will see him as weak. He looks, then, to his wife, to help him save face. Repeatedly through the scene Abū Qais looks over to his wife hoping, perhaps, that she will tell him not to go, that "it is too dangerous," but she does not. Although he is shown to be weak (intellectually, physically and socially) he looks to his wife to help prop up his status as the man of the family. If she asked him not to go, said that she would not manage without him, then he could save face. She does not ask him to stay, and thus forces Abū Qais to go on the journey that he does not want to undertake. At the same time, then, her refusal to help Abū Qais save face shows the total destruction of the traditional gender roles, and expectations thereof, within Abū Qais' home.

Through the series of memories played out in the opening scenes, we learn that Abū Qais's weaknesses stretch beyond the field of geography. Again, through the relational character construction, we learn that Abū Qais has had difficulty sustaining his family. He remembers that his wife was pregnant when they fled their village in 1948. As he recalls it, "she bore a child named Ḥusnā, who died two months after she was born, and the doctor said disgustedly: 'she was emaciated to the extreme'" (18). Like the earlier memory of the geography lesson, we learn about what Abū Qais cannot do, and how this places him in the estimation of others. Born at the beginning of his exile, Ḥusnā was emaciated, perhaps because her mother was also going hungry, and dies. The doctor is disgusted, and the novel thus constructs an additional estimation of Abū Qais to add to the readers' understanding of the character.

Abū Qais's actions and memories provide the reader with a construction of his character that is almost completely relational and empathetic: we are not *told* he is weak, we are *shown*, and this idea only comes in relation to the actions of other characters, who set the standards for strength or weakness. Indeed, as we first listen to the heart of the earth with this man, and then witness him belittled by friends and family, we become invested in him. We see him as a man and the head of a family, but at the same time we see him as weak and lacking. His recollections of confusion as to the source of the heartbeat, not knowing where or what the Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab is, and

the death of his daughter after the flight from Palestine give us a unique window into the character of Abū Qais. The narration and his memories do not, however, give the reader a concrete idea of either Abū Qais or the place that he left. We do not know if he *is* weak, or is simply weak *in relation* to other members of his society.

Abū Qais is just a person, and we observe him being assigned social roles through actions with other characters. In this way he is shown to be both a representation of a universal (i.e. it is the situation which makes a person) as well as specifically an old, weak Palestinian man (which is what his particular life experiences have made him). Identity, then, is shown to be relational, so that a character is both what they are under the circumstances, and a universal human being. This idea is confirmed in the narrative through its general use of referents and placeholders for things that could in other situations be concretely identified. One example of this comes in the passage quoted above where Abū Qais describes his neighbour, and other places where he refers to Palestine, its cities, villages and olive groves. These places are typically designated with words like "there" (hunāk), or "where" (ayna), words that act as place holders, referents for information only in memories to which we as readers do not have access. Just as the words "there" and "neighbour" only have meaning when their context is understood, so the character of Abū Qais.

This same referential mechanism of character construction is at work in introductions to both Asʿad's and Marwān's chapters, and indeed throughout the work as a whole. The identity of Palestinian characters in *Rijāl fī al-Shams* is thus in large part formed by the context that the characters relate most closely to, rather than by any inherent label or identity that has been pre-determined by either their situation or the author. Indeed, nowhere in the text does Kanafānī speak through the mouths of his characters, rather, they seem to respond organically to the world around them that Kanafānī has constructed.

I will turn now to look briefly at the relational constructions of the characters Asʿad and Marwān, with a particular focus on the second aspect of character development in the novel mentioned above: multiplicity. Thus, after having established Abū Qais as a character, the other two travelers and their particular character constructions can be seen as working with the first chapter to show that the men in the sun, although all exiled Palestinian men, are also distinct from one another.

1.2 Asʿad and Marwān

The chapter devoted to As'ad—again named after the character it introduces opens very differently from the one that introduced Abū Qais. Rather than the slow description of the pulsing earth drawing out an aging man's memories, As'ad begins with an outburst:

> Asad stood in front of the fat man, the proprietor of the office that undertook to smuggle people from Basra to Kuwait, and burst out: "Fifteen dinars I'll pay you. Fine! But after I arrive not before" (27; T28).

Our first glimpse of him is as aggressive, pushy, a man who knows what he wants and is determined to get it. He does not, however, strike a bargain with the fat man, as in the introduction to Abū Qais. The first scene of this chapter rather segues into a memory of an earlier human smuggling attempt. We learn about the first time he stole across a border from the memory of this event. We also learn that this attempt was made difficult because he is a political activist/guerilla. This information comes from an old friend of his father's, who uses the excuse that As'ad is a political activist to over-charge him to smuggle him to Baghdad (31; T30):

> It's a difficult business. They'll take me to prison if they catch you with me. All the same I'll do you a very great service because I knew your father, may God have mercy on him. In fact we fought together in Ramleh ten years ago. (28; T29)

From this interaction, we know that As'ad's father died in the 1948 fighting, and that As'ad is involved in the resistance movement. According to his father's friend, As'ad 's position as a fighter is a liability. The fact that this same man abandons As'ad in the desert indicates that he has no value to him, either as the son of a comrade or as a fellow Palestinian fighter for the cause.

Like Abū Qais, then, Kanafānī draws As'ad through a collection of memories combined with a present-tense narration of his actions. When we re-live As'ad's near-lethal walk through the desert, as he recalls his parched, cracked lips and the shivers of dehydration, we see how his situation has formed his identity, and can understand why he has come to Basra, as well as why he does not wish to pay the fat man until he reaches his destination. Moreover, we see how others have categorized As'ad as a freedom fighter, and a liability, and how this categorization has, in turn shaped how As'ad relates with the world. We see this directly through the series of events that follow As'ad's appeals to his late father's friend, saying that he does not have the twenty dinars to give him for the trip to Basra. The answer As'ad is given is that: "any friend will give you twenty dinars if he knows you are traveling to Kuwait" (31; T30). Clearly, he does not consider himself As'ad's friend. Who the young man then turns to is significant.

If As'ad has any "friends" who would lend him twenty dinars, or even any "friends" who have twenty dinars, he does not ask them to loan him this amount of money. Rather, he goes to

his uncle, who loans him money only on the condition that upon his return, he marries his daughter, Nadā. If the father's friend's treatment of As'ad informs the reader that he is not valued as a political fighter or as a Palestinian, his memory of the conversation with his uncle confirms this:

> "I want you to make a start, even in hell, so that you will be in a position to marry Nada. I can't imagine my poor daughter waiting any longer. Do you understand?"
>
> He [As'ad] felt the unuttered insult wound his throat, and he had an urge to give the fifty dinars back to his uncle, to throw them in his face with all the strength in his arms and all the hatred in his heart. To marry him off to Nada! Who told him that he wanted to marry Nada? Just because his father had recited the Fatiha with his uncle when he and Nada were born on the same day...He wanted to buy him for his daughter as you buy a sack of manure for a field (35; T33).

Here his uncle affirms the unacceptability of the role of Palestinian freedom fighter, and gives As'ad money so that he will return with the means to marry his daughter. Given the caveat under which As'ad is given money, we understand that marriage—and specifically to his daughter—is what As'ad's uncle sees as his role in society. That As'ad is leaving for Kuwait, where he will supposedly make lots of money, at least enough to come back and support a family, is why As'ad is given the loan, not because he needs to flee a hot political climate.

Just as we saw with Abū Qais, whose memories of his neighbour and the schoolboy define him as someone ignorant of basic regional geography and whose inability to sustain the life of his daughter Ḥusnā shows him to be an incapable father, so it is with As'ad, whose father's friend defines him as an undesirable political activist and whose uncle buys him like a "sack of manure" (35) for his daughter. Others define both the old and the young man for the reader, and indeed in their own lives. While the pasts of Abū Qais and As'ad are different, their present is identical—both are looking for a smuggler to take them to Kuwait. The way they approach that present, however, is again distinct, and based on the relational way they were treated in the past.

Comparing the two men, we see a defeated, aging Abū Qais, who recalls his olive trees and neighbours in Palestine, and an angry As'ad, who, in contrast and because he is younger, recalls the death of his father, and the failure of his friends to help him continue his fight. The men's histories shape their present. Compare, for example, the ways that the two men approach the fat man, or Abū al-Khaīzarān, or even the prospect of getting in the tanker: Abū Qais with hesitation and uncertainty, As'ad with anger and a desire to prove himself. The way in which the men have experienced life as Palestinians in exile is shown to be unique to each character's own context, and the idea of "the Palestinian man" is thus diffused into an idea that rather complex

approaches to understanding how these men operate, and how they have been shaped by their situations.

The third and youngest character on his way to Kuwait is Marwān. Just like Abū Qais and Asʿad, Marwān is male, the "man of the family," and his experience of life in exile dictates his approach to the smuggling endeavour.[15] Unlike Abū Qais and Asʿad, he would have been barely old enough to remember his exodus from Palestine. For Marwān it is rather the social upheaval and sense of loss almost ubiquitous in the Palestinian refugee camp of 1958 that shaped his childhood, and his personal Palestinian identity.[16] His past is expressed, however, in the same terms as that of both preceding characters—through memories.

Marwān's chapter begins as he exits the office of the fat man in Basra. As he mulls over his experience there, he recalls the advice of a family friend, who told him that when he arrives in front of the fat man he should be "more than a man, and show more than courage, or they would laugh at him, cheat him, and take advantage of his sixteen years" (46; T36). His friends have either misinformed him, or are misinformed themselves, however, since when he tells the fat man about his expectations for price, he is told: "Five dinars? Ha, ha! That was before Adam and Eve" (ibid).

We learn, as is now expected, through memories, that Marwān wanted to be a doctor and had been going to school until a letter came to him from his older brother, working in Kuwait to send the family money, who told him that responsibility for the family was now on Marwān's shoulders and that he should come out to Kuwait and start earning money himself (58). Marwān arrives in Basra, naïve, and knows only of the world what others have told him. He is angry because he was told that he should negotiate with the fat man and is embarrassed when he learns that this is certainly not how the he operates. Reality as it is explained in the refugee camp is then shown to be different from its operation in Basra. Like the men described before him, Marwān approaches the fat man based on his experiences, which we know through his memories of his home life (53) and the letter he remembers getting from his brother (58).

It is the experiences in Basra that show, despite his young age and lack of memory of the homeland, that Marwān is clearly a Palestinian man and a Palestinian man in exile. This is asserted in the text through the repetition of narrative structures and phrases linking each of the

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[15] Marwān lives in a refugee camp, but the novel does not identify the place of the camp, which might be in the West bank of Transjordan, what is now known as Jordan, Egypt (in Gaza), or even Lebanon. No matter where he is, he is clearly not in any "home village," which, I hold here, puts him is exile.

[16] Abu Nahleh, Lamis. "Six Families." *Living Palestine: Family Survival, Resistance, and Mobility under Occupation.* Lisa Taraki, Ed. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006, 150

traveling men's chapters. For example, the phrase, "You will find yourself on the road," mentioned twice in As'ad's chapter (28; T29, 45; T35), recurs in Marwān's chapter, spat out at him by the fat man in Basra (45). The matter of fifteen dinars also unites the men. Each laments to the fat man in his own chapter, pleading for different terms—to pay later or to pay less. It is this commonality, obviously repeated throughout the chapters, that leads the men to the acquaintance of the final main character, Abū al-Khaīzarān.

1.3 Abū al-Khaīzarān

The commonality of exile, of men moving to yet another new place in search of wealth with which to start or sustain a family, is what leads the men to Abū al-Khaīzarān. Castrated after being injured fighting in the war of 1948, Abū al-Khaīzarān's memories tell us that he cannot take a wife, nor have a family. He is also set apart in his not having the same refugee camp or exile experience as the other men, specifically *because* of his inability to be the "man of the household." Rather than have a family he is perpetually on the road, he is a professional driver for a rich man from the Gulf. What finally separates Abū al-Khaīzarān, with his altered masculinity, from the other men is the fact of his survival.

While Abū Qais, As'ad and Marwān embody the binary opposition of the specific/universal, this is the only one of the many binaries at work in the novel that is satisfied.[17] Indeed, as Zalman hints, the next binary to come into play, alongside Abū al-Khaīzarān, is the male/female. This idea is elaborated on in Cleary's work, which looks at the character of Shafīqah, the woman for whom Marwān's father left his mother and who has also lost one leg in a land-mine accident in 1948. Where Shafīqah lost a leg, Abū al-Khaīzarān lost a penis, both occurrences that Cleary sees as images of the "dismemberment of Palestine in 1948 and the consequential breakdown of conventional family order."[18] He sees the novel's distress over Shafīqah's amputated leg, just Abū al-Khaīzarān's penis, as a "sign of a castration anxiety that has its roots in male concerns about patrimony and legitimate concession."[19]

Shafīqah, who owns a house and ultimately wins Marwān's father, and Abū al-Khaīzarān, who is the only man to survive the trip to Kuwait, are both symbols of "castration anxiety." I suggest, then, that the novel is putting forward the idea that this concern, in its symbol of changed sexual hierarchies, is what is needed for survival. Just as Zalman says that "the narrative implodes at the crossroads" where nation and masculinity no longer meet, the three passengers,

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[17] Recalling that binary opposition in this text dualizes, rather than hierarchizes the two elements of the binary.
[18] Cleary, 213
[19] Ibid

in their insistence on following traditional male/female hierarchical readings of binary opposition, are unable to support the ideal. Those forced to acknowledge a new reading of the male/female opposition—like Abū al-Khaīzarān and Shafīqah, for example—though not put forward as any sort of "ultimate solution" by the novel, do survive. Though al-Khaīzarān's bitter memories and refusal to accept his impotence lead to the interpretation of the character as a Palestinian doomed for his role in transporting his fellows away from Palestine.[20]

From the categorization of characters as old and lame, dangerous political activists, or naïve young boys who know nothing about the world, the specific/universal allows readers to understand the men as shaped by their circumstances, and constantly reacting to them. Given this dynamic, it should be possible for them to somehow include or incorporate that shift in the traditional conception of the male/female binary (especially Marwān, who has the failed example of his parents, and his father's re-marriage to Shafīqah as a guide). The traditional structures, however, seem to need to be physically demolished before characters are able to re-evaluate the male/female binary, and even then their existence is only half successful.[21]

2. Story Setting

Character binaries push towards the recognition of the simultaneous universal/specific in the creation of individual identity and the re-evaluation of the traditional male/female binary to ensure the continued life of individuals. Beyond these, binaries that exist in the very setting of the novel work to highlight the idea of the simultaneous-opposite in character, and specifically Palestinian identity construction. This chapter will address three aspects of setting in *Rijāl* that work with the idea of binary opposition in its construction of Palestinian identity. The elements of setting to be discussed will be: exile, the tanker, and heat. Each of these aspects incorporates at least one binary opposition that helps to construct the elements of identity that are either affirmed or re-evaluated within the text.

2.1 Exile

The first example of a binary that is developed through one of the story's elements of place is the idea of here/not here. In *Rijāl*, this is represented as the singular state of being in exile: of understanding oneself as part of one place, but of actually inhabiting another. The

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[20] Siddiq, *Patterns*, 13

[21] Najat Rahman notes that some of Darwish's poems are likewise engaged in this call for a re-evaluation of the role of the masculine. According to Rahman, Darwish "is engaged in re-examining [his] heritage, which [he] identifies as paternal" through the story of Abraham, who "combines nationalist and religious constructions of identity" and exposes "nationalist demarcations of identity that have failed and brought on a crisis of identity...where a pluralist past is denied." See Rahman, Najat. "The trial of heritage and the legacy of Abraham," *Islamic Identities*. Lahoucine Ouzgane Ed. New York: Zed Books, 2006, 73

narrative recognizes the two states as binary opposites, but fuses the two together as it constructs identities in exile. What this ultimately reveals for the construction of Palestinian identity is that the tension between here/not here must be reconciled in order to construct a stable identity. Indeed, while the characters are never "here" (in Palestine), but rather always "not here" (in exile), their identity within the text is constantly constructed as Palestinian. Thus, in its construction of Palestinian identity, the idea of here/not here, rather than privileging one binary over the other, in fact uses the opposition to create a specific Palestinian identity. It does this in conjunction with the individual identities that focused on the universal/specific. In fact, the here/not here is used as one of the factors at work the construction of the universal/specific.

This use of exile as precisely the state of being here/not here is established in the very first scene where Abū Qais listens to the heartbeat of the earth. As the scene continues, it shows Abū Qais trying to place himself geographically, and establish the "here" of his relational identity:

> The damp earth, he thought, was no doubt the remains of yesterday's rain. No, yesterday it had not rained. The sky now could rain nothing but scorching heat and dust. Have you forgotten where you are? Have you forgotten? (12; T21).

Abū Qais is confused; "here" is not where he understands it to be. He is not "here" where the spring rains fill the valleys with gushing water and make the earth damp. He is rather, "not here," which happens to be near the banks of the Shaṭṭ al-'Arab. As Abū Qais thinks about his "not here"-ness, he feels, "more than at any time in the past … alien and insignificant" (19; T25).

His confusion, shown in the previous section to place him in the role of an "old and weak" Palestinian, is compounded by his inability to distinguish here/not here. Since his individual identity is in part composed of his status as "old and weak" the fact that his mind and memories are "here" while his body is "not here," is just one more element of his personal identity. Abū Qais is, then, simultaneously here and not here since his memories fuse with the "not here" situation, and Abū Qais in fact evaluates his "not here" on the basis of "here." Unable to distinguish between past and present, here and not here, Abū Qais uses both his memories and his current surroundings to identify himself. He is both here and not here and negotiates life as an exile using the two seeming opposites.

When it comes to As'ad, his position as an exile, as a person here/not here, is defined in the text with the phrase: "You will find yourself on the road" (26, T29; 34, T35). The phrase is, in fact, used repeatedly through the text. The metaphor of a road is apt, since the idea of the road is inherently transitory; it goes from one place to another, there is only here, there and the road. As

a Palestinian As'ad has no place to go, and the road as a non-place, reflects his state of exile. The first time this happened was when As'ad asked a friend of his late father to help get him to Basra. The man, however, took advantage of him, and ended up leaving As'ad in the middle of the dessert on the way. Based on those experiences he refuses to pay the fat man in Basra the fifteen dinars until he arrives in Kuwait, a request that is denied, at which time As'ad again finds himself alone on the road. These overlapping stories show that As'ad is a Palestinian who reacts to the present based on the specificity of his experiences. He, just like Abū Qais, finds himself stranded between here and not here.

As the stories of Abū Qais, As'ad and Marwān come together in front of Abū al-Khaīzarān's water tanker, it becomes evident that the state of exile, which is precisely that state of here/not here, is what unites the men and gives them a group identity. So, while the idea of here/not here is part of each man's personal identity and has been affirmed for him in a different way, it is nonetheless a unifying element. In fact, it is the setting of exile that brings the men together in the element of place introduced next: the microcosm of the water tanker.

2.2 The Tanker

This small world of the tanker unites the characters, for all their specificity, in one place. When they first meet to work out the terms of the journey with Abū al-Khaīzarān, As'ad makes it clear that the men are about to become a group, dependent on each other. He says to Abū al-Khaīzarān:

> "You seem to me to be a Palestinian. Are you the one who's undertaking to smuggle us?"
> "Yes I am."
> "How?"
> "That's my affair."
> Assad laughed sarcastically and then said slowly, bringing out each word forcefully:
> "No. Its *our* affair. You must explain all the details to us. We don't want to have problems from the start" (63-4; T45)

The italics in the English translation are used to convey the emphasis that As'ad puts on the concept of "we" or "our" in the original text. The Arabic is: "innahu sha'nanā naḥnu" (24) and As'ad not only indicates the "our" possessive on the idea of "affair" (*sha'nnā*) but then asserts the idea of "our" again at the end of the sentence using "naḥnu" simply for emphasis.

It is then agreed upon that As'ad will "negotiate" (*atifāwaḍ*) on behalf of Marwān and Abū Qais (*'ankum*) (64; T46) with Abū al-Khaīzarān, which can be read as the next phase in the group's identity formation. Indeed, in the chapter called "The Deal" (*al-ṣafqah*) (61; T44) all of the terms upon which they will work together are set, in a sort of social contract. This formation of a social identity fits exactly with the process, described by Stets and Burke, as "a person's knowledge that

he or she belongs to a social category or group," which is precisely what is being established in this chapter.[22] In describing the tanker, moreover, the narrator of *Rijāl* confirms the idea of a community creation, in calling it, "a small world, black as night, [that] made its way across the desert like a heavy drop of oil on a burning sheet of tin" (103; T63).

Through the tanker they have become a community of exiles, rather than individuals in exile, but the group dynamics are clearly shown to be based on the individual identities put forward in the opening chapters. Palestinian identity in *Rijāl* is thus shown to be a combination of individual and group identities, both of which rely on the re-conceptualization of the here/not here binary. To reiterate, the individuals, who are both here and not here,[23] are united under that very binary and form a community based on the identities that establish them as here/not here. Within that community As'ad takes the role of leader for the would-be passengers. He negotiates with Abū al-Khaīzarān, thus pitting the castrated man against the group of "traditional" men. The resulting dynamic of castrated against non-castrated brings the male/female binary into the miniature community. The tanker driven by Abū al-Khaīzarān thus unites the Palestinian exiles in their state of here/not here and adds to its call for a re-evaluation the male/female binary.

Once the castrated man has made his deal with the other men, they enter the physical space of the tanker, which can be read as the symbol of a womb. This idea will be expanded in the final section of this chapter in its reading of the story as a narrative or rebirth, so for now I will deal with the idea of the womb as a setting, and how it influences the construction of the male/female binary in the character's group identity. Since the symbolic castration of Abū al-Khaīzarān represents the *nakbah* of 1948, and

> The moral and emotional failure to come to terms with the historical loss of Palestine and
> the consequent collapse of the traditional symbolic order is staged as a refusal to come to
> terms with the fact of male castration.[24]

The ultimate death of the un-castrated males (who are totally unable to reconcile the idea of castration with their construction of identity) in the womb of the tanker represents the other side of the symbol. The death of the men in the water tanker represents the metaphoric abortion of Palestinian group identity when it is unable to re-formulate the male/female binary as a social construct, rather than splitting the binary into a social hierarchy.

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[22] Stets, Jan E., 225

[23] This idea of here/not here, or Abū Qais, is the confusion about where he is, and for As'ad is his constantly being "on the road."

[24] Cleary, 216

If the men had made it out of the tanker's belly alive, it might have suggested that they were born again into a new life in Kuwait. Their deaths and still-born delivery by the castrated Abū al-Khaīzarān, however, indicates that their desire to leave their families and go to Kuwait—and behind that the idea that it is the man's role to provide for the family—is ill fated. By using the symbol of the womb and having the non-castrated group of men enter it, the narrator of *Rijāl* affirms the impossibility of the continuation of the group without some sort of re-evaluation of the male/female binary as a balance rather than a hierarchy.

2.3 Heat

The water tanker is what directly connects the ideas of exile, here/not-here, and the problematic conception of the male/female binary with that of the desert sun and heat, the third prominent feature of the setting for *Rijāl fī al-Shams* that I have identified here. The symbolic settings are layered, like the construction of identity. First, the characters are developed through the simultaneous specific/universal binary, which shows them all to be in exile, expressed by the here/not here. Next, the four distinct exiles are united in the setting of the tanker, which shows that in order to achieve a rebirth from the womb, a re-evaluation of the male/female binary is necessary. Finally, it is the heat, without which the tanker might not have been a catafalque, which adds the life/death binary to the novel.

Throughout the novel the sun is a source of heat, and ultimately death. This is the opposite of the sun's usual function as a symbol bringing life or hope, a reversal which helps explain the binary oppositions at work in the text. The description of the sun becomes more focused and intense as the story continues, moving away from any possible understanding of the sun as a source of life, towards its power to bring death. For example, as the men set out in the water tanker the narrator mentions that, "the sun was pouring its inferno down on them without any respite" (79; T52). Then, when Abū al-Khaīzarān prepares the men for their first turn hiding inside of the tanker and opens its lid, Kanafānī describes the sweat as it drips off and then evaporates from Abū al-Khaīzarān's body in minute detail (83; T56). When Abū al-Khaīzarān endeavours to describe the inside of the tank to the men about to stow themselves in it he says: "I advise you to take your shirts off. The heat's stifling, terrifying, and you'll sweat as though you were in an oven" (80; T57). Then when he sticks his head in, As'ad comments: "this is hell. It's on fire" (ibid).

Thus, as the men approach their death in the womb—marking the imbalance of the male/female binary—the imbalance of the life/death binary is likewise established. In the novel,

moreover, the sun also functions as a representation of the oppression felt by the men in the sun. This oppression, representing both the Israeli state and apathetic Arab nations, is tied to the idea of life/death. What this tells us about the novel's construction of Palestinian identity is that oppression, represented by heat, is part of the identity of the characters. The men's problematic understanding of the male/female binary that puts in motion the death over life hierarchy should be differently conceptualized. The novel calls for a re-evaluation of male/female not as a binary but as a duality, and continues its call or revision with the heat metaphor. Using the symbol of heat *qua* occupation and repression, the novel calls for it to be re-read as a source of life and death.

I interpret these linked binaries as dualities rather than hierarchies. They are the novel's call for their re-conception of a Palestinian identity that recognizes oppression/occupation as death. Indeed, the text puts this forward as an old way of thinking, and, importantly, asks readers as well as characters to begin to thinking of oppression/occupation not as death but as a symbol of life and renewal. If heat, as a symbol of oppression and occupation, killed the men in the womb of the tanker, set up differently, it might have been the source of the articulation of a new identity that does not rely on the subjugation of one binary to the other. Rather, the characters must place life and death on a continuum and begin to make sense of an identity that includes death and occupation, but also life and a future. Indeed, this final idea is so important to the text that it is expanded on through the novel's three competing story structures.

3. Story Structure

There are three structural elements at work in *Rijāl fī al-Shams* that add to the novel's use of binary oppositions to construct identity. On its first reading, story begins is one of rebirth. It is ultimately, however, a story of death, and it ends with a question "why didn't you bang the walls of the truck?" which undermines much of the preceding narrative. Indeed, this final question destabilizes both the rebirth and death narrative structures, casting both as narratives that must be questioned. The three different but overlapping structures work together to form the life/death binary. The binary, as it is used in the structure of the story to build the identity of its characters, depends on the novel's use and construction of the universal/specific, here/not here, and male/female dualities.

As discussed in relation to the sections of character development and use of scene, the binaries work in conjunction with and build on each other. This final section will explore the

novel's life/death binary and its elaboration on the ideas built during the discussion of character and setting constructions of individual and group identity. This section will show that in its construction of the rebirth and death narratives, combined with the ending of the story, which is framed as a question, the structure of *Rijāl* affirms the novel's call for a re-evaluation of its characters' hierarchical conception of binaries. The competing structures of the novel show that the binaries put forward must be understood as balanced dualities.

3.1 Rebirth

The novel begins with a heartbeat. Its first scene is set with the sound of a "tired" throbbing, which signals its oldest character coming into narrative consciousness, and the first hint of the work's possible reading as rebirth narrative. The first scene, and indeed the whole first chapter, is set up as a rebirth for Abū Qais, whose story is continued by each consecutive character as they move forward in narrative time to their meeting with Abū al-Khaīzarān at the water tanker. The novel begins:

> Abu Qais rested on the damp ground, and the earth began to throb under him with tired heartbeats, which trembled through the grains of sand and penetrated the cells of his body. Every time he threw himself down with his chest to the ground he sensed that throbbing, as though the heart of the earth had been pushing its difficult way towards the light from the utmost depths of hell, ever since the first time he had laid there (11; T21).

The image of the heartbeat is what opens the birth narrative. Hidden in the earth and pushing its way to the surface, it is a force waiting to be born. When we learn later that this is Abū Qais's pulse, the image is even more suggestive of a birth, or rebirth, in the form of his trip to Kuwait.

Abū Qais' ideas about Kuwait develop the place as the symbol of utopia that promises a rebirth for him as well as the other men in the story. When he thinks about the place it is as a thing in his mind, waiting to be realized:

> Over there was Kuwait. What only lived in his mind as a dream and a fantasy existed there. It was certainly something real, of stones, earth, water and sky, not as it slumbered in his troubled mind (21; T25).

This is the same image of attendant expectation, the heart pulsing to the light, the image of Kuwait in the mind of Abū Qais, waiting to be realized. If his own idea of Kuwait were not enough, the words of his friends and neighbours further instill the sense of a period of waiting coming to an end: "Do you like your life here? Ten years have passed and you live like a beggar" (22; T26). To which the voice in Abū Qais' mind echoes: "For ten years you have been hoping to return to the ten olive trees that you once owned in your village. Your village! Ha!" (23; T27).

3.2 Death

The chapters trace the lives of the characters moving backwards in age from Abū Qais to the story of twenty-something Asʿad, to young Marwān, unconnected until they end up together in the dark womb of the water tanker, expecting to arrive and be born into a new life in Kuwait. The narrative of rebirth, however, is violently interrupted when the men suffocate in the water tanker. What begins as a narrative of rebirth, then, becomes a story of death. On the first reading the story remains one of life until its final chapter. Knowing the ending, however, turns subsequent readings into clear death narratives. Events, rather than predicting a birth, in fact trace the precise sequence of movements that lead to the men's death. Thus, the narrative of death can be understood to underwrite the narrative of rebirth, reinforcing the novel's life/death binary. Reading the story with the foreknowledge of death, everything that precedes it becomes simply a "back story" that traces why and how the tragic event occurred. Thus, rather than a rebirth, the chapters can be understood as a progression towards death.

The binary, then, is in part constructed by the reader. It is as much up to the reader as the characters to understand that there is no way of balancing life/death by the repetition of the story. Since each of the men knew the physical risk of travel to Kuwait as a Palestinian, the story asks why it was attempted in the first place. Indeed, the final question of the story can be seen as this very question to the men, who ignored the calls for a balance between the group identity binaries of male/female and life/death, and died because of it.

3.3 The Question

Abū al-Khaīzarān's final question to the men as he leaves their bodies on a Kuwaiti garbage dump is, "Why didn't you bang the walls of the truck?" in Arabic, "limādhā lam tadqqu jidrān al-khazān" (126). The verb used here, which was translated into English as "knock," is *dhaqqa*, which in Arabic also carries the connotation of to throb or beat, as in a heart. In reading the knocking on the walls of the tanker as a beating, or a heartbeat, Abu al-Khaīzarān is asking a number of questions. He is asking the men why they didn't live. Within this question are others: why did they get into the womb, why did he let them. Then, taking into account what we know about the binary structures of the novel: why didn't they see that the womb under its current conditions is death and that on order for rebirth to happen the men must first alter the circumstances. In posing the question al-Khaīzarān questions both the story of rebirth and that of death, showing that the whole hierarchical dynamic needs to be re-evaluated, and that along with

that, the relation of heat/oppression to death. It must be a source of new life, of new identity creation.

4. Conclusions

Written in a crucial period of Palestinian history, *Rijāl fī al-Shams* reflects the realities of the condition of exile fifteen years after the state of Israel was declared.[25] The particular use of binary oppositions in *Rijāl* constructs a world in which characters must be able to re-evaluate the hierarchical status of binaries and put them into a balance. Kanafānī shows that individual identity is constructed out of both the specific and universal and uses the first three chapters in the novel to show how the specific/universal is not hierarchized but rather balanced in the creation of individual identity. The second binary is that of the here/not here, which is shown in the novel to represent the incorporation of Palestine into the personal identity of each of the characters. That the sate of being here/not here is common to, though expressed differently by, each of the Palestinian characters, makes it the basis for the creation of a group identity. Thus, Palestinian group identity is based on the common incorporation of the idea of exile, even though experiences of exile are different.

The male/female binary is introduced to complicate the group dynamic and to show that the success and continuation of life is based on the necessity of the group to re-evaluate this binary—much as it had already understood the universal/specific and the here/not here. That the male/female was tied to the life/death binary is a sign in the novel for the work that still needs to be done on the construction of Palestinian identity. The failure to understand the two binaries as two parts of a whole, rather than as ideas with which to define social hierarchies, is what ultimately leads to the death of the three non-castrated males. Abū al-Khaīzarān lived since he physically embodies a re-evaluation of the male/female binary, but since he is unable to emotionally reconcile the ideas (shown by his willingness to help the non-castrated men maintain the old male/female hierarchy) he is just as much a tragic character in *Rijāl* as the other three men who died.

Kanafānī's novel constructs Palestinian identity as a work in progress; what are put forward for change are the established hierarchies: the here/not here of changing exile, the male/female, which drives the men in the sun on their fateful journey, and the life/death imbalance that comes from the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The Palestinians in his novel are

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[25] Kimmerling, Baruch, and Joel Migdal. *The Palestinian People*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003, 218

challenged to create an identity that incorporates the idea of repression and occupation, and uses this new understanding in the construction of a new social identity.

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Chapter Two
Negotiating Multiple Identities: Métissage in
Imīl Ḥabībī's *Al-Waqā'i' al-Gharībah fī Ikhtifā' Sa'īd Abī al-Naḥs al-Mutashā'l*

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"The global mongralization or métissage of cultural forms creates complex identities and interrelated, if not overlapping, spaces"

<div align="right">

- Françoise Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations*[1]

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In her work, titled *Jesus, Joseph and Job: Reading Rescriptings of Religious Figures in Lebanese Women's Fiction*, Michelle Hartman uses Lionnet's idea of métissage as a reading tool to uncover the "transformative power" within the French and Arabic texts by Lebanese authors that she analyzes. In her work, which in part aims at introducing modern Arabic fiction into the western literary sphere, Hartman explains the particular significance of métissage in the Lebanese context:

> In the case of Lebanon there are some very clear elements of mixing that can be immediately identified: the involvement of Europe as a colonial/mandate power leading to linguistic and cultural mixing, the presence of many religious and confessional groups, the complex geography of a very small country (cities, mountains, plains), and class differences which result both from family status and differences in wealth.[2]

I suggest here that the same elements of mixing are apparent in Ḥabībī's Israel, with—of course—the added context of the establishment of a Jewish state. So, whereas for Hartman's context "the very concept of métissage seems almost a perfect fit with the early nationalist rhetoric about Lebanon as a crossroads of civilization and an association of confessional minorities,"[3] the idea does not at all conform to any of the prominent Israeli or Palestinian national myths of the era. This, then, is what makes Ḥabībī's text such an interesting one to engage in the study of the construction of Palestinian identity.

Ḥabībī's main character, Sa'īd, is a Palestinian living in Israel who's construction of identity not only includes the elements described by Hartman, but goes further in suggesting a way in which all these elements, along with the Israeli and Palestinian national myths, might come together in a single métis identity. A number of elements formulate the particular métis of the novel: Sa'īd's own name—"the Pessoptimist"—he novel's opening, which quotes an entire Samiḥ Al-Qāsim poem, and its frame narrative, use of irony and satire, confessional style and character construction, *Al-Waqā'i' al-Gharībah fī Ikhtifā' Sa'īd Abī al-Naḥs al-Mutashā'l* (Translated as

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[1] Lionnet, Françoise. *Postcolonial Representatons.* Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1995, 4-5

[2] Hartman, Michelle. *Jesus, Joseph and Job: Reading Rescriptings of Religious figures in Lebanese Women's Fiction*. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag Wiesbaden, 2002, 41

[3] Ibid, 41-2

Saeed the Ill-Fated Pessoptimist), puts forward the idea of an embodied contradiction, one thing made up of many.

Sa'īd, the story's protagonist, is a Palestinian who, through his position as the son of an informer, manages to sneak into Israel after its creation, and remains there as a spy. His ideological commitment to the Israeli state apparatus, his social position as an inferior to Israelis and his role as an outcast in the Palestinian community, combined with his personal association and self-identification with his family, the Pessoptimists (*al-Mutashā'l*), and other authors from around the world, make Sa'īd essentially identity-less as far as the social roles and identities are described in the novel. He does, however, have an identity, simply not one that can be attached to a typical social or group dynamic. Indeed, both the novel as a whole and its main character evoke the contradiction and multiplicity inherent in Françoise Lionnet's idea of métissage.

Sa'īd, then, is shown to rely on his personal, self-constructed identity, which works at bridging the gaps between what have been put forward as his social role-options. This process of identity construction in Ḥabībī's novel reflects the approach described by Lionnet wherein the postcolonial subject engages in a process of "braiding all the traditions at its disposal, using the fragments that constitute it in order to participate fully in a dynamic process of transformation."[4] The novel's ultimate (yet ambiguous) ending, with Sa'īd—or a man who resembles him—located in an asylum in Acre, works to question the possibility of such métissage as Sa'īd is shown to construct it. Thus, while putting forward the idea of identity as métissage, Ḥabībī does not in the end endorse the concept.

This chapter will look first at the novel's use of polyphony (in the Bakhtinian sense), then at its construction of social roles using secondary characters, and finally at Sa'īd's self-constructed in-group, around which he bases his own identity. This will be done keeping the larger project of métissage in mind. Within each section I will discuss the implications of each facet of the novel on its construction of Palestinian identity and then conclude with a brief comparison to the distinct, yet similar, construction of Palestinian identity laid out in the previous chapter on Kanafānī's *Rijāl fī al-Shams.*

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[4] Lionnet, 5

1. Polyphony

Following the discussion of the idea by Mikhail Bakhtin, I understand polyphony here to be:

> [When] a character's word about himself and his world are just as fully weighted as the author's word usually is; it is not subordinated to the characters objectified image as merely one of his characteristics, nor does it serve as a mouthpiece for the author's voice. It possesses extraordinary independence in the structure of the work; it sounds, as it were, *alongside* the author's word and in a special way combines both with it and with the full and equally valid voices of other characters'.[5]

For *Al-Waqā'i'*, these multiple voices are inserted into the text as much through other characters as the use of intertexts, a frame narrator, and the plurality of meaning behind the irony in the text. I see Ḥabībī's use of polyphony as one of the methods for communicating the idea of a métis identity. Since I have neither the space nor the native expertise in Arabic to uncover all of the multiple voices at work in *Al-Waqā'i'*, I will begin this section with a survey of the scholarship that explores the different voices at work in the text. I will then continue with an in-depth exploration of the use of the footnote in *Al-Waqā'i'*, and how it works to expand the text's polyphony by including additional perspectives in the construction of identity in the text.

1.1 A Survey of Polyphony

From its first publication in *al-'Ittiḥad*,[6] critiques and discussions of *Al-Waqā'i'* have taken as part of their analyses the many different means by which the story of Saʿīd is communicated. The presence of each of the voices uncovered by different scholars in *Al-Waqā'i'* represent a different voice within the polyphony of the text. Akram Khater, for example, has looked at the use of language in *Al-Waqā'i'*, and shown how its sophisticated interplay of classical, colloquial and invented Arabic, "bridges the gap of linguistic and cultural alienation," thereby "reclaiming" a specifically Palestinian idea and identity.[7] In showing that Saʿīd is able to communicate using this heteroglossia,[8] and is best expressed through multiple languages, we understand him as a multi-glossic individual: one person who is best conveyed with a combination of languages. Through this plurality and its expression of irony and complex satire, Khater points out that in Ḥabībī's novel, "irony [and the multiple readings available through it, is] inherent in the duality of a

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[5] Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Caryl Emerson Trans. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984, 7

[6] Published in instalments over three years, from 1972-4, in *al-'Ittiḥad*, the Communist Party if Israel newspaper according to Ibrahim Taha and in Al-Jadīd according to Maher Jarrar

[7] Khater, Akram F. "Emile Habibi: The Mirror of Irony in Palestinian Literature." *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 24 (1), 1993, 84, 76

[8] Heteroglossia is also a term used and defined by Bakhtin. He says that the novel "can be defined as a diversity of speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized." For Ḥabībī's text, this includes the made-up arabic words, the use of Palestinian idalect, as well as the references to Hebrew words which sound like German. (See, Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four essays.* Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist Trans. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, 263

Palestinian-Israeli identity."[9] By establishing Ḥabībī's use of heteroglossia as showing the duality of identity within Saʿīd, Khater sets up what I argue is the novel's construction of métis identity.

Rula Abisaab, a McGill Shi'i scholar, approaching the text from a different angle, also reveals part of the novel's polyphony in her article, "*The Pessoptimist*: Breaching the State's *daʿwāī in a Fated Narrative of Secrets*," which focuses on the use of secrets in the novel.[10] She argues that the reality of Saʿīd is in fact plural. Since, as Abisaab sees it, part of Saʿīd's identity is a "performance of Israeli citizenship"[11] and the other component is the secret of "the real esoteric truth that lurks within him."[12] He is a split individual and everything he says and does in fact has two meanings. Saʿīd then has two consciousnesses operating simultaneously, each of which insert a voice into the text. His fractured personality is, nonetheless, part of Saʿīd's identity, so Abisaab's discovery of polyphony through a "performance of citizenship" must also be woven into his métis identity.

In his "A Narration of 'Deterritorialization': Imīl Ḥabībī's *The Pessoptimist*," Maher Jarrar has examined Ḥabībī's use of intertextuality in constructing the idea of a "narrative of 'deterritorialization'," i.e. "seeking thus to create a new narration" and re-claiming an identity within Israel.[13] Saʿīd's narrative is simultaneously a story of a man loyal to the state of Israel, and one wherein he re-claims a Palestinian identity for himself and other Palestinians. Like Khater and Abisaab then, Jarrar notes a polyphony which is also part of the construction of Saʿīd's identity, thus showing him to be a métissage.

For Anna Sessona, Ḥabībī's intertextuality illustrates the idea that Palestinian identity is "polyhedric," and that this multiplicity and its inherent creativity work to "manipulate the oppressors' discourse to partially overcome oppression."[14] Sessona shows, like Abisaab's discussion of the use of secrets, and Khater's discussion of heteroglossia, that the novel speaks on multiple levels to communicate both Saʿīd's character and the wider story of the novel. In conjunction with his own voice, then, Saʿīd's story is told through the multiple perspectives illustrated by the scholars just mentioned. This makes the novel itself a sort of métissage, braiding together heteroglossic multiplicity, the duality of a performed and secret life, a "narrative of deterritorialization," and polyhedric intertextuality working to manipulate

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[9] Khater, 86

[10] Abisaab, Rula. "*The Pessoptimist*: Breaching the State's *daʿwāī* in a Fated Narrative of Secrets." *Edebiyât*. 13(1) 2003

[11] Ibid, 4

[12] Ibid, 5

[13] Jarrar, Maher. "A Narration of 'Deterritorialization': Imīl Ḥabībī's *The Pessoptimist*" *Middle Eastern Literatures*. 5(1), 2002

[14] Sessona, Anna Zambelli. "The Rewriting of *The Arabian Nights* by Imīl Ḥabībī," *Middle Eastern Literatures*. 5(1), 2002, 40-3

oppressors. Indeed all of these independent threads of narrative are components of Saʿīd and the world he lives in. Their polyphony is what creates Saʿīd's fractured identity, and perhaps it is their multiplicity that mark Saʿīd for failure.

Unable to find a place for himself in such a polyhedric society, Saʿīd's métis is ultimately different from those molded in the Lebanese fiction that Hartman explored, or the French African fiction discussed by Lionnet. While the final section of this chapter will discuss Saʿīd's failure at length, I wish to suggest here that one component of this failure is precisely the existence of the polyphony explored here. The obvious skill with which Ḥabībī created Saʿīd and his novelistic world, the very elements that create Saʿīd and the novel as métis, are what prevent Saʿīd from existing as a successful individual.

From this examination of the studies of other scholars, and providing my own reading of their collective significance, I will give my own reading of the novel's polyphony by examining its use of footnotes. I will attempt to show, in detail, how Ḥabībī uses two further techniques of polyphony to braid multiple ideas into a single text, and create Saʿīd's identity as métis.

1.2 Footnotes

The text of *Al-Waqāʾiʿ* employs two different sorts of footnotes.[15] The first sort resembles the type of footnote commonly used in critical works. These footnotes, used in approximately half of the chapters, are marked with an asterisk and range from three words to six lines long. They explain the significance of many ancient Muslim and Arab figures as well as the specific meaning of words used by Saʿīd. The historical and linguistic notes can be seen as sort of stabilizers, connecting the work to external non-fictional ideas and events.[16] The second type of footnote, however, is one that is embedded within the text, rather than appearing on the lower margins of its pages. This embedded footnote occurs only once, as a two-page chapter titled, "Saʿīd resorts for the first time to footnotes" (58). It is clearly set apart from the rest of the text in terms of its style of narration and address, but is included as a chapter and called a footnote, rather than appearing—for example to be marked with an asterisk usually indicates this—as one.

Since footnotes used in fiction work to bring in other sorts of voices and narrative styles, I think Ḥabībī's use of the technique in *Al-Waqāʾiʿ* is yet another example of the novel's polyphony, and one which I will discuss in terms of its construction of identity in the novel.

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[15] All the footnotes discussed here appear in the 1974 publication of the compiled sections of Ḥabībī's work. See, Ḥabībī, Imīl. *Al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Gharībah fī Ikhtifā Saʿīd Abī al-Naḥs al-Mutashāʾil.* Baīrūt: Dār Ibn Khaldūn, 1974. In the English translation used—and indeed all those I have been able to locate—the footnotes to which I refer are either placed in an "Endnotes" section or are omitted entirely. I have referenced the English translation where applicable.

[16] Benstock, Shari. "At the Margin of Discourse: Footnotes in the Fictional Text." *PMLA,* 98(2), 1983, 205

1.2.1 The Academic Footnote

In his use of academic-style footnotes in a fictional text, Ḥabībī is working to show the fictionality and unreliability of what a reader might traditionally think of as stable fact. I will examine the following two instances: the fourth (and longest) footnote, and then sixth, four-word footnote. The former, which occurs in chapter one, gives the brief history of the Mamluk Emperor Qutuz, who was assassinated by one of the men he brought back from exile. The footnote comes in the following context:

> But we are used to such wonders. We don't raise an eyebrow if kings are deposed or if they stay. Brutus is no big deal now, no subject worth writing [novels][17] about. "Et tu Brute," indeed! The Arabs certainly don't say, "Et tu Baybars"; Qutuz* the sultan this hero Baybars murdered, could only, after all, mutter a grunt in Turkish (14, T4).

While it is difficult to resist a more extensive analysis of Ḥabībī's opinion of the novel's purpose in general here, I will focus my comments on the contradiction that the footnote brings to the words of the text.

This footnote (the longest in the work) catalogues the incident wherein Baybars joins up with and then kills the Sultan, giving rather more particulars than might be necessary in a footnote detailing a person or event. How then do we reconcile the evident interest by the footnote's author (Saʿīd, the supra-narrator, and/or Ḥabībī) in the story of Qutuz, with the stated unimportance attached to the situation by Saʿīd in the body of the text? I suggest that the obvious contradiction is but a further example of the work's polyphony. By explicitly positing information where Saʿīd deems it unimportant, the work is showing that Saʿīd, who claims that he speaks for "the Arabs," might not express the only valid opinion according to the text.

Depending on whom we understand as being the author of the footnote, its meaning changes. On the one hand, it could be an example of Abisaab's explanation of performed versus secret identity. Saʿīd, believing that expressing interest in Arab history might be inconsistent with his stated allegiance with the state of Israel, expresses his interest instead through the footnote. On the other hand, if we understand the footnote as being written by the frame narrator, it could be seen as a further example of the narrator's project to undermine Saʿīd. Yet a third option is that the author of the footnote is an example of Ḥabībī inscribing himself into the text. This option might be read as the author himself admitting that the text does not, or indeed cannot, express all points of view or relevant information. These alternative readings each

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[17] The word "novels" was left out of the translation, and I have re-inserted it here since I think Ḥabībī is referring to his own novelistic endeavour.

position the relationship between the reader and the text differently, and illustrate a different set of voices putting forward information in the novel. Thus the presence of the footnote, specifically as it is used by Ḥabībī to insert additional information—itself a form of polyphony—contains within itself a multiplicity of voices, all of which must be taken into account.

The second example I will use is a shorter and non-historical footnote. It appears in the third chapter, where Sa'īd describes his ancestry. In this chapter he explains to the reader the events that began the family tradition of "our forefathers...divorcing our grandmothers...right up until the state was founded," (18; T8). Here Sa'īd names some of the earlier Pessoptimists and tells the reader about their lives. He tells her story, a "Cypriot girl" (ibid), the first grandmother of the Pessoptimists, who married a descendant of Genghis Khan, then ran off with a Bedouin, who "divorced her when he found her being disloyal to him with Al-Raghīf bin abī 'Amrah*" (18). There are many clues to the construction of Sa'īd's identity within this short history of his foremother, and the extra information provided within the footnote. First, the name "Al-Raghīf" translates into "loaf" as in loaf of bread, and it is after this man's name that the footnote asterisk is placed. The footnote reads: "The father's surname was Al-Jū'a" (18), "Al-Jū'a" translating to "hunger."[18]

This catalogue of names, which is certainly not historical, is nonetheless used to provide extra information about Sa'īd's ancestry.[19] The footnote, much like the first example, does not at all clarify the story of his great-great-great etc. grandmother. The footnote, in fact, gives the reader contradictory information and undermines Sa'īd's interpretation of the legend. Indeed, while Sa'īd presents his story as a long-known legend, his catalogue of names—often meant to legitimize a story in the Islamic tradition—casts doubt on the tale. What is the opposite of hunger if not a loaf of bread? If the father was named hunger and the son loaf, what are we to make of the long line of tradition and ancestry that Sa'īd is at this moment claiming for the Pessoptimists?

At the same time that he establishes the very idea of the family of the Pessoptimists, then, the text in the extra information we are given in the footnote shows that things can change between father and son. Or, alternatively, if they do not change, than either Hunger or Loaf were incorrectly named and we have no way of knowing, based on names, who they are or what their condition is, as Sa'īd asserts with the name Pessoptimist.

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[18] The translation, which includes the footnote information in the body text, translates the phrase as "Loaf, son of Hunger" (T8)

[19] I will talk more about the body of the text (as opposed to the footnote which it precedes) in the final section of this paper which looks at the ways in which Sa'īd identifies himself

Saʿīd is a Pessoptimist who is unsure of what this ancestry means. Is a name a designator? Or can it be wrong as in the case of Hunger and Loaf? Or alternatively, perhaps ancestry does not determine fate. In any case, the ideas presented in the footnote contradict what Saʿīd is saying in the body of the text. As with my analysis of the first footnote, I suggest that this is a technique used in the novel to show the doubt and uncertainty that are part of what makes up Saʿīd's identity and the society put forward by the text. The footnotes serve to insert alternative voices, undercutting the larger narrative's construction of Saʿīd as a character. In understanding Saʿīd from the multiple voices within the text, his own actions and statements take on a multiplicity of meaning, since we have been given the tools (by the polyphony of the text) to evaluate him in multiple ways.

In providing alternative information to the reader, the academic footnote helps the reader recognize the many different methods of understanding Saʿīd that are open in the text. Moreover, since we must take all readings of Saʿīd into account when discussing the text's construction of identity, we ultimately amalgamate all the perspectives available to us into our reading of Saʿīd and the world he lives in. The academic footnote, then, participates in the text's construction of identity as métis.

1.2.2 The embedded footnote

Chapter fourteen of book one is titled, "Saʿīd resorts for the first time to footnotes" (*Saʿīd yultaj'a li-awal marah ilā al-ḥawāshī*) (58). It marks the only usage of what I will call an embedded footnote in *Al-Waqāʾiʿ*. Like the academic footnote just discussed, the embedded footnote gives the reader additional information about phrases or people mentioned in the text. The difference, however, is that this embedded footnote does not appear at the bottom of the page, but rather as a chapter in its own right. This chapter begins with the word "footnote" (*ḥāshah*) (58; T44) and ends with the phrase, "end of footnote" (*intaht al-ḥāshīah*) (60; T45), thus setting it apart from the text. It has within it, nonetheless, academic footnotes marking names and phrases like the other chapters.

The embedded footnote, I suggest, adds to the polyphony at work in the use of the academic version. This footnote, like the others, gives the reader information that contradicts what the body of the text puts forward. It is not, first of all, the "first time" that Saʿīd has used footnotes in the text, since academic footnotes precede and follow it. What marks it from the others, however, is that it is the first time that Saʿīd has "taken refuge" in a footnote, i.e. let the information of the footnote fill the entire page. If we are to understand "iltaj'a" as refuge, "a place

or state of safety from danger or trouble,"[20] then I suggest that we might assume that the footnote is creating a space for Sa'īd to explain something that is troubling him. I will outline briefly the chapter preceding the embedded footnote, to give a context for what I believe the footnote is trying to explain.

The chapter just preceding the embedded footnote is titled, "How Saeed Becomes a Leader in the Union of Palestinian Workers" (55; T41). This chapter ends with Sa'īd describing his first meeting with Adon Safsārshak, the officer in charge of Arab informants in Israel. Sa'īd details his meeting with the man, and then tells us that, upon being given some money for his allegiance, he goes to a nearby restaurant (later said to belong to a man named Kiork) and eats. In a typical self-effacing anecdote about his lowly status in the informants' office, Sa'īd tells us as proof of his stupidity, that he had been "the last of the committee members to realize that the late Kiork used to serve us donkey meat in his restaurant; and we used to eat it and thank him, mind you" (59; T43). The embedded footnote, ostensibly, deals with the events and issues of this preceding chapter.

The embedded footnote begins by cataloguing an "official request submitted by Hebron dignitaries to the military governor seeking permission to import asses from the East Bank" (58; T44). Sa'īd explains that the shortage of donkeys is due to their being made into sausages in Tel Aviv. This recalls for the reader his own consumption of the donkey meat in Haifa, thus implicating him in the shortage. Sa'īd then wonders to the narrator:

> Is the tragedy the asses of Wādī Al-Nisnas, which remained for more than a year emancipated: donkeys from Al-Ṭīrah, and donkeys from Al-Ṭanṭūrah, and donkeys from 'Ayn Ghazāl, and donkeys from Ijzum, and donkeys from 'Ayn Ḥūḍ and donkeys from Um Al-Zaynāt, preserved from detainment, and from the noise of the women, since they didn't migrate and no one profiting from their fatty meat except the late Kiork, or is the farce the tasty sausages, made in Tel Aviv? (58-9).

This rumination simultaneously recalls Sa'īd's assertion that his life was saved from a stray bullet by a wandering donkey (16; T6) and his expression of stupidity that he was the last to realize that Kiork sold him donkey-sausages. It is then linked to the events of 1948 when Sa'īd says, "is it not true that whenever people leave their homes the asses remain, and when people stay the butchers find nothing to make into sausages except the meat of asses?" (59; T44). This maxim put forward by Sa'īd refers, I believe, to the many Palestinians who left their homes "just for a month or so" (59; T45) in the 1948 war, and expected to return to take care of—among other things—their donkeys. Their owners not being able to return, the donkeys of the 1948 refugees

[20] "Refuge," *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* 9th Ed.

would have been, as Saʿīd calls them, "emancipated" from working for their masters, only (as the waves of Jewish immigration continue after World War II) to be turned into sausages in Tel Aviv.

The question Saʿīd poses, then, becomes a much more significant one. It is posed, moreover, in a way that asks the supra-narrator, to decide which of the events (the Palestinian refugees versus the Jewish ones) is tragedy, and which is farce. This follows precisely a saying that Saʿīd attributes to the supra-narrator (though in fact it comes from Marx)[21] that "history, when repeating itself, does not reproduce itself precisely. If the first occurrence is tragedy, the second would be farce" (59; T44). In other words (paraphrasing Marx's explanation and applying it to Saʿīd's situation) was World War II, the Holocaust and the immigration of Jews to Israel the first displacement, and the war of 1948 and the creation of 711,000 Palestinian refugees[22] the second?[23] Or were WWII and the emigration of Jews to Palestine simply the preparation of historical circumstances for the tragedy of the Palestinians? If the answer were the first explanation, than that would mean—according to Marx's idea—that the creation of the Palestinian refugees was the farce and thus a failure of consciousness.[24] This failure of consciousness is a failure to see the future, a failure to move beyond history and its methods of revolution. Interestingly, when referring to the events around which Marx based this theory of farce, he called them, "tragicomic."[25]

The footnote, then, calls into question the level of awareness of both parts of society with which Saʿīd has contact: the Israeli and the Palestinian. Since this footnote elaborates on the scene where Saʿīd first introduces himself to Safsārshak, and is employed as an Arab informer, I conclude by suggesting that Saʿīd, "takes refuge" in the footnote to explain, but not narrate, his own doubt as to his level of understanding in terms of what his actions are affecting in terms of a larger Palestinian, or indeed Palestinian-Israeli revolution, or at least status quo change.

To support my ideas about what sort of novel, and thereby identity Ḥabībī is constructing in this chapter, and his use of footnotes in general, I turn to the work of Michael Dunne, who has looked at the use of the footnote in South American writer Manuel Puig's *Kiss of the Spider*

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[21] Marx, Karl. *The Eighteenth Brumarie of Louis Bonaparte.* New York: International Publishers, 1963, 15

[22] (UNHCR). Note on the Applicability of Article 1D of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees to Palestinian refugees, 2002

[23] I.e. "the spirits of the past"[23]: WWII and the Holocaust, are "conjured"[23] to the service of the new Jewish community since that community is relying on a learned past rather than creating an entirely new present (Marx, 15).

[24] Mazlish, Bruce. "The Tragic Farce of Marx, Hegel, and Engels: A Note," *History and Theory*, 11(3), 1972, 335

[25] Quoted in Mazlish, 336

Woman.[26] Although Puig's footnotes are certainly different from those of Ḥabībī, both authors use them as one of the components in a larger intertextual, or heteroglossic, and identity building strategy. I would argue that in *Al-Waqāʾiʿ*, as in *Kiss*, identities are established "dynamically among a polyphony of voices" which includes "the search for individual authenticity, and a phenomenological acceptance of the other."[27]

As Dunne sees it, the footnote is used within the text as a sounding board, as a way to enter information from the "world" that is outside of the purview of the novel in its "regular" story.[28] The use of this "extra-textual" information is then compared to the events of the story to help develop characters and especially to develop within them an understanding of something new. Thus, when Saʿīd tells the story of the donkeys, or of the life of Qutuz, or elaborates on the family of Loaf son of Hunger, he shows us the multiple levels of consciousness within the text. The combination of these different voices help create for Saʿīd the only identity that seems possible with such fractured and often conflicting ideas: métissage.

1.4 Conclusion

Dunne describes the footnote as a technique that helps characters of a work, and indeed the work's readers in their task of "overcoming boundaries, socio-economic and aesthetic, bridging gaps, [and] meeting the other person as a subjectivity equal to ones own."[29] I would argue that the same achievement is realized by the use of the footnote in Ḥabībī's novel. By giving multiple frames to the story, Ḥabībī uses footnotes to show how Saʿīd's story can be understood in multiple ways. No matter how one interprets the story, however (or which frame it is viewed it through), the text is the text, and its ultimate "truth" encompasses each of the readings available to it. This complex example of polyphony is the structural strategy of the work in its larger project of creating Saʿīd as métis.

2. Others identify Saʿīd

If the multiple voices that speak through the structure of the text establish Saʿīd and the world he lives in as métis, it is the voices of the novel's secondary characters that tell the reader how Saʿīd fits into that world. These secondary characters, I will argue, function to show the reader (and Saʿīd) the different social-role options that are available to him. This section will show how the secondary characters are in fact representations of pre-constructed social roles,

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[26] Dunne, Michael. "Dialogism in Manuel Puig's "Kiss of the Spider Woman," *South Atlantic Review*, 60(2) 1995
[27] Ibid, 135
[28] Dunne, 134
[29] Ibid, 135

none of which are acceptable for Sa'īd, who, as métis, cannot belong to one single social group. The role of secondary characters in the novel's construction of Sa'īd's identity is to make problematic his expressed (and I will elaborate more on this in the last section) métis identity, which incorporates parts from all of the developed secondary characters, but does not fit into the social-role category of any of them.

His interactions with secondary characters show that Sa'īd's identity is trapped, and perpetually located between multiple sides. These sides include Mizrahi and Sephardic Israeli, Palestinian rebels, revolutionaries, communists and refugees, as well as elements of European and North American, culture. As Khater has observed, all of his relationships and encounters with other Palestinians, and I would add, Israelis, "represent the ties that Sa'īd cherishes and seeks in an identity."[30] I will first look at how Sa'īd interacts with and observes the characters representing different social identity options. Then I will examine the pivotal scene where Sa'īd, stranded on a stake (*khāzūq*), is approached by each of these secondary characters, who call to him to come down and join their particular social group.

2.1 Israeli Characters

Looking first at Sa'īd's interactions with secondary Israeli characters, we see that he repeatedly attempts to fit himself into the in-groups represented by different levels of the Israeli establishment. When his efforts fail, Sa'īd finds himself confused by the double standard (and indeed, double-speak) at work behind all these relationships, and is ultimately unable to assume any sort of Israeli social identity. A particularly rich example of this is when Sa'īd is taken to prison for the first time. I will outline a series of interactions with different Israeli characters and show, by adapting his language and form of communication with each character, Sa'īd is working to identify himself with Israeli social groups.[31]

After he is arrested, Sa'īd is taken to prison by the "big man of small stature" (109; T123), a man we understand only to be the superior to Joseph, the Mizrahi to whom Sa'īd reports in his capacity as an informer. Sa'īd is accused of betraying the state and is sent to prison. In the jeep on the way, Sa'īd is beaten by some guards. In pleading for them to stop, Sa'īd "yelled, "Help, Help O, big man!...in high Hebrew to convince them of my status and get them to stop" (110; T124). The tactic works, and Sa'īd is taken to the front of the truck where he sits next to the Big Man. Using the language of the State of Israel to indicate that he is not part of the out-group in the jeep, and

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[30] Khater, 78

[31] For a discussion on the use of language in the formation of social identity, see Tafjel, Henri and Colin Fraser, Eds. *Introducing Social Psychology*. New York: Penguin Books, 1978, 380-99

thus ensure his better treatment, Saʿīd's language shift—especially into high Hebrew to indicate not only his belonging with but higher "educated" status—is an example of one of Saʿīd's attempts to integrate with, or at least to construct his social identity vis-à-vis Israelis.

Having worked the first time, Saʿīd continues using language as a tool for social identity formation as he sits next to the Big Man. As they continue towards the prison, the Big Man explains to Saʿīd the social hierarchy of the jail. The Big Man tells Saʿīd that in prison, the jailers are his superiors, and the prisoners his inferiors (110; T124). Beginning again to feel excluded and his identity vis-à-vis the Israelis in the jeep challenged, Saʿīd decides to show his "status" by commenting on the terrain surrounding the road to the prison. He makes a mistake, however, and calls the "Yizrael plain" (ibid) by its Arabic name, "the plain of Ibn Amir" (109; T123). When the Big Man began "growling ominously" Saʿīd tries to smooth over the situation and regain his "status" by saying, "What's in a name?" (110; T124). The trick, however, does not work this time, and Saʿīd sits in the jeep, ill at ease.

When he arrives at the prison and is introduced to the Prison Warden, Saʿīd describes the interaction wherein they have coffee, and talk, as genial. Obviously trying to re-establish himself as a member of the same social sphere as the Prison Warden, Saʿīd again uses his knowledge of English literature and local geography to try to engage with him. When the warden "began quoting from Anthony's speech over the body of Caesar"[32] Saʿīd "filled in the lines he had forgotten" while exclaiming, "bravo" (129; T129). It is after this exchange that the warden informs Saʿīd, that while he may be superior to the other prisoners—as the Big Man explained to him *en route*—when in their presence, the guards "shall treat you as we do them" (ibid). Thus, despite his collegial conversation with the warden, Saʿīd has not managed to place himself in the social milieu of the Israeli warden, he is a prisoner, and not even one of higher rank as the military governor had assured him. Saʿīd has difficulty mentally bridging this gap, and "begins to feel uneasy" (ibid).

Saʿīd is then escorted out of the warden's office by a guard, with whom he again tries to establish a certain collegiality, convincing himself that "this guard is my friend, my brother; we have walked along two corridors in the same prison. It is like sharing bread and salt" (ibid). When Saʿīd has sufficiently convinced himself that he and the guard share a certain social identity, Saʿīd, for a third time, tries to bring up Shakespeare in order to establish himself as somehow

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[32] A speech which deals explicitly with the use of language to create in-groups and out-groups in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (Act III, Scene 1)

equal (or in this case even superior) to this Israeli. He tells the guard that he and the warden were talking about "Shakespeare and Othello and Desdemona," to which the guard responds, "You know them then?" (ibid). The guard clearly does not know or care who these figures are, which simply highlights Saʻīd's failed attempt at creating some sort of unity between the two men. Indeed, it is precisely because the Israeli characters conceive of Saʻīd as a member of an out-group, that the final part of this scene can happen.

Saʻīd encounters a final group of characters identified by their involvement with the state, and, while increasingly aware of his failed attempts at securing himself a spot within the social in-group of the characters, tries one more time to show the Israeli guards that he is, indeed, like them. The guard leads Saʻīd into a "dark room with no window or furniture," where Saʻīd is confronted with a "circle of jailers, all tall and broad shouldered. Each one had sleepy eyes, arms at the ready with sleeves rolled up, thick, strong legs, and a mouth wearing a smile worse than a frown" (ibid). Saʻīd tries again to make sense of the situation and establish himself in terms the guards will understand,

> I tried my best to carve on my own mouth that smile, but the left side of my face kept collapsing and when I corrected it the right would promptly collapse. Having corrected that, I would feel my lower lip give way, and when I would repair that my teeth would chatter (129; T129-30).

Then, in one of most brutal scenes of the novel, Saʻīd's attempts to show himself as a person who fits with social identities he observes within the Israeli state apparatus fail. This scene marks the end of Saʻīd's efforts to integrate into Israeli society in anything more than an outward fashion.

The scene continues as Saʻīd tells us that, "one of them [the Israeli prison guards] began with a comment, 'Quote some Shakespeare for us, you son of a bitch!' Then he gave me a tremendous punch" (129; T130). His beating continues until Saʻīd feels "their boots cutting off my breath, and I sank down unconscious, completely defeated" (ibid).

Despite his monumental physical and psychological efforts, in his interactions with characters identified by their association with the Israeli state, Saʻīd is unable to establish any connection with them on terms he can understand. The characters affiliated with the Israeli state do not, moreover, present a unified face. Each of the characters, the Big Man, the Warden and the guards, give Saʻīd different cues in terms of his position in the Israeli state apparatus, leaving him engaged in hopeless linguistic shifting and attempts to demonstrate "status," which show his consistent out-grouping by Israeli characters. Unable to finally make sense of his position as

informer (someone granted privileges but always out-group status within the state structure) Saʿīd's time in prison is in fact a turning point in the novel.

Indeed, it is shortly after his beating in prison that Saʿīd decides that he has had enough of serving the state and asks the military governor, "but why can't you get off my back and onto someone else's?" (177; T134). The governor refuses his request, and makes sure that Saʿīd is maintained as a character in limbo. In relating the incident, Saʿīd says that the military governor explains his refusal thus:

> "Your father gave it to you as his inheritance, and you will pass it on to your children..." then he warned me that people would not believe my repentance, saying that my inheritance would always get the best of me (177; T134-5).

The governor shows Saʿīd that, despite his personal change of heart, the world he lives in is not so adaptable. Saʿīd remains boxed into his role as informer and excluded from forming any sort of social identity in conjunction with its development in the Israeli state apparatus. According to the state, then, Saʿīd has an identity (a social role) as a member of an out-group, tolerated only on account of his service (support and maintenance of the out-group itself) to the state.

Not only is Saʿīd kept separate from the characters representing the Israeli state apparatus, but the novel does not develop any other characters who, like him, are Palestinian and sympathize with the Israeli state or even try vaguely to assimilate into Israeli culture: Saʿīd is not given an in-group. Most of the novel's secondary characters, in fact, fall basically into two groups: those identified with the Israeli state apparatus discussed above, and other Palestinians, which is the next topic of this section. Both of these groups put Saʿīd into an out-group, and require of him a total assimilation in order to escape his current state of limbo.

2.2 Palestinian Characters

Ḥabībī's secondary Palestinian characters act towards Saʿīd in much the same manner as those associated with the Israeli state. One of the first examples of the similar process of the Palestinians and Israelis placing of Saʿīd into an out-group occurs when Saʿīd first enters the newly created state of Israel. Once he declares himself to the state, and commends himself to Adon Safsārshak, Saʿīd is taken to a mosque, run by a former principal of his. Here he is introduced to other Palestinians, many of whom have snuck back into the area, or have hidden in the mosque from the fighting and confusion of the events of the war of 1948.

As soon as the Israeli soldiers who escorted Saʿīd to the mosque have left, the principal announces to the hidden Palestinians "He's one of us" (*wāḥid minnā*) (31; T20). One of the other Palestinians seeking refuge in the mosque takes this as a good sign, and declares, "Now there's

one of our boys for you folks! And if he can come back, why, the others certainly can too" (ibid). And perhaps they could come back in the manner that Sa'īd did, but the man who called him "one of our boys" does not include Palestinians who work for the Israeli state in his "our," which is made clear when someone else asks: "Did you cross in secret?" (ibid). We know that Sa'īd has not crossed in secret and that in fact, he has been permitted to return to Acre only because he has indicated his loyalty to the state of Israel as an informer against other Palestinians. We can understand, then, Sa'īd's answer to this question: "I didn't want to explain to them about my sister's lover, the doctor, nor about the donkey, nor about Adon Safsarsheck, and so answered, 'Yes.'" (ibid). Sa'īd's fears of non-acceptance are confirmed, since, when pressed, Sa'īd mentions his affiliations with the state, at which a "sudden din, this time of anger, arose" (32; T21).

Sa'īd is aware that his position vis-à-vis the Israeli state will alienate him from the other Palestinian characters. He seems to understand this better than he does the reasons behind the gap between himself and the Israeli characters he engages with. He nonetheless hopes to be included somehow in their Palestinian society, indeed as Ibrahim Taha has observed, there is, within each of the Palestinians he encounters in the novel, a part of the identity he wishes for himself.[33] This desire is made clear whenever he comes across another Palestinian. Not once does Sa'īd feel comfortable expressing his relationship with the state to other Palestinians. His unease is compounded by the assumptions that other Palestinians make about him. As we saw in the scene in the mosque where Sa'īd's return was first assumed to be an act of resistance for which he was praised, but when his real strategy for return was revealed, he was condemned and abandoned. His return, then, which brings him into contact with the other Palestinian characters, is also the reason for his excommunication from that Palestinian society.

A similar scene occurs after Sa'īd has been beaten in prison and finds himself badly injured in the prison hospital. It is here that he meets the son of Yu'ād,[34] who is also named Sa'īd. "What's your story, brother?" he asks Sa'īd, who only moans in pain. We then learn that the young man is "a *fedaiy*, a guerrilla and a refugee" (170; T131) and then asks the older Sa'īd again about his own affiliations (170; T132). Showing that he is fully aware of the different conception of Palestinian identity that this young man is likely to hold, Sa'īd recalls:

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[33] Taha, Ibrahim. *The Palestinian Novel: A Communication Study.* New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002, 75
[34] Yu'ād was his first lover and the woman after whom book one is named, her daughter, also named Yu'ād, is the brother of this second Sa'īd

> I did not know what to reveal about my identity before the majestic figure...Should I tell him I was a mere "sheep," one who had stayed in the country, or should I confess that it was through crawling that I entered his court? (170, T132).

The young man has shown him affection immediately after his personal defeat at the hands and feet of the prison guards. Sa'īd is aware of his position according to the young man and wonders, "had we met outside, would he have called me brother?" (171; T133). Without the same sort of linguistic and physical shifting that Sa'īd felt he must perform when trying to assimilate with the Israeli state, Sa'īd shows himself much more aware and comfortable with the workings of Palestinian culture, though he is just as unable to fit himself into it. As Taha has observed, in these situations where Sa'īd feels he cannot truly identify himself with the Palestinians whom he so wants to connect with, by letting them make assumptions about him he is "giving vent to his inner thoughts through [these characters], with whom he cannot explicitly identify."[35]

A scene at the close of the novel nicely summarizes what Sa'īd's interaction with the secondary characters of the novel tells us about Palestinian identity. This is Sa'īd's final scene, and pulls together all of the characters that Ḥabībī has developed throughout the different books and chapters of *Al-Waqā'i'*. This is when Sa'īd awakes and finds himself stranded, inexplicably, on a very high stake. The secondary characters pass by one after the other, first the Israelis then the Palestinians. To the Israelis Sa'īd asks what they are going to do about the stake. His first and closest Israeli acquaintance is Jacob, who is a Mizrahi Israeli, and claims that everyone is on their own stake and he therefore cannot do anything about Sa'īd's predicament. Next the military governor, and the members of the Israeli Communist party all come by and give Sa'īd reasons why they cannot help him with the problem of the stake. Then his Palestinian friends start to come past his stake and he asks them to join him on it, but they refuse:

> The first Yuaad passed by. I stretched out my hand to her to pull her up, but she gripped me fast and began dragging me down to an exile's grave. But I held on tight to my stake (204; T158).

Then his wife Bāqīah, son Walā' and the second Sa'īd pass by and offer incentives for him to come down from the stake, which he refuses.

The procession of people in this scene mirrors the general role of secondary characters throughout the novel. As Sa'īd asks each of the Israeli characters for help, they simply reply to him with the generalities that they apply to the relations between Israelis and Palestinians, taking no note of their extended relationships with him and his consistent effort to engage them as

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[35] Taha, 75-6

equals. Then the Palestinians, who he wants to include as part of his identity, refuse to join him, insisting that, instead, he should come down and join them. Sa'īd, then, is stuck on the stake, unable to find a social group with which to identify. His decision to stay, I read as a rejection of the demands of the secondary characters for him to come down and assimilate with them, rather than joining them as the métis individual he is.

2.3 The Creature from Outer Space

I will conclude this discussion with a brief look at the third sort of secondary character found in *Al-Waqā'i'*, the Creature from outer space. Indeed, I believe it telling that the only characters who accept Sa'īd as the métis that he is, are the aliens he describes as taking him off the stake at the end of the chapter (205; T159). The Creature, described by other critics as "apparently representative of 'other worldly' if not traditional religious philosophies, or perhaps lunatic detachment from reality,"[36] is ultimately representative of the third, but impossible, solution for Sa'īd's social identity formation. As the Creature approaches Sa'īd he says:

> I just wanted to say to you: this is the way you always are. When you can bear the misery of your reality no longer but will not pay the price necessary to change it, only then you come to me.
> But I can see that the problem has now become yours alone. So speak the words, 'If God wills it,'
> then climb onto my back and let's go (ibid).

It is the creature's use of the word "alone" (*waḥada*) in referring to Sa'īd that confirms the impossibility for Sa'īd to choose one of the available social identities. He is alone, a state which precludes a social in-group, and he is shown to turn to things beyond the social reality with which he is faced. If the Creature represents a God, an alien, or Sa'īd's ultimate dislocation from the reality of his world, then his choice to leave with him is what ultimately shows Sa'īd's own alienation from society. By making this choice Sa'īd shows the impossibility of constructing his identity in conjunction with only one of either the Israeli or Palestinian identities shown in the text.

3. Sa'īd identifies himself

Given the layers of meaning and almost infinite frames of interpretation left open in *Al-Waqā'i'* by the polyphony in the text, and taking into account Sa'īd's inability to be defined by a social in-group, Sa'īd's personal identity, at first, appears totally allusive. Indeed, Abisaab has commented that, "the search for the objective individual identity of Sa'īd proves to be a futile

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[36] LeGassick, Trevor. "The Luckless Palestinian," [Review] *The Middle East Journal.* 34(2) 1980, 219

endeavour, mainly because he is present in the others."[37] Rather than Sa'īd being present in other characters, as the last section discussed, I suggest that each of the other characters is part of Sa'īd, though he is not *like* any of them.

The search for Sa'īd's identity, then, is first made possible by recognizing it as métis. Though the very polyphony that helps establish Sa'īd's métissage undermines Sa'īd's own voice—making it difficult to use most of Sa'īd's satirical comments about his own existence without addressing every possible interpretation of the lines' multiple interpretive codes—there is one element of Sa'īd's narrative which allows him to be located. I find these instances in scenes where Sa'īd talks about himself in relation to other characters in the novel. The most reliable examples of this occur when Sa'īd relates himself to characters who are not developed as secondary characters within the story, but are rather used as references or symbols throughout the work. Three such examples of this type of self-identification are: Sa'īd's description of his extended family, and then immediate family, and finally to other authors. It is through these various but stable reference points that Sa'īd establishes himself, with his own voice, as a métis individual.[38]

The first such reference point in the novel is Sa'īd's name, which is given in the novel's title, and is the first identifier we have for Sa'īd. His full name, *Sa'īd Abī al-Naḥs al-Mutashā'l*, directly translates as "Happiness Father of Ill-fated Pessoptimism," and, in the Arabic tradition, is meant to indicate both Sa'īd's personal characteristics (the given name) and lineage (surname). The personal characteristics of Sa'īd, in terms of what we might know from his given name, are, like everything else about Sa'īd, open to interpretation. Issa Boullata indicates as much when he comments on the fact that Sa'īd's name means "'Happy,' though he is one of the most miserable persons."[39] This is the case, I suggest, since there is no "lineage" or "ancestry" associated with his given name, no stable tradition that makes the name a symbol connected to things outside the novel's frame.

The family name, with its long history tied to characters who do not appear in the novel, I suggest, is a different case. In itself a sort of métissage in its combination of two seemingly opposite states: pessimism and optimism, the family name is shown to be a single characteristic, embodied through generations. After the supra-narrator has confirmed for us in the opening

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[37] Abisaab, 4

[38] By "stable" I mean here that, since the people and characters to whom Sa'īd claims affiliation and similarity are not developed in the text, they are not, like Sa'īd, undermined by the multiple layers of meaning within the novel. As undeveloped symbols or people who exist outside of the text, these individuals provide a sort of extra-textual reference point for Sa'īd.

[39] Boullata, Issa. "Symbol and Reality in the Writings if Emile Ḥabībī." *Journal of Islamic Culture*, 62(2-3), 1988, 12

chapter that he has received letters from a Saʿīd Abī al-Naḥs al-Mutashāʿl, in chapter three Saʿīd formally "Gives His Ancestry" (*Saʿīd yuntasib*)[40] (18; T8). In this the third chapter Saʿīd declares that his family began with a Cypriot slave woman, who, paradoxically, is from Aleppo. Already, with the first member of the family, a duality of character emerges in the Pessoptimist family. The woman, like Saʿīd, is made up of two national identities, the Cypriot and the Aleppine, the Palestinian and the Israeli. From the beginning, then, the Pessoptimists have embodied the idea of métissage.

This grandmother of Saʿīd, after "making a fool" (*takhūnuhu*) (18; T8) of the master who married her, was the cause of an "infamous" (*mushhūrah*) (ibid) massacre that the master perpetrated when he found himself a cuckold. The woman, and first of the Pessoptimists, then went on to marry and be divorced by a number of other men, and, according to Saʿīd, his

> Forefathers kept on divorcing our grandmothers until our journey brought us to a flat and fragrant land at the shore of the sea called Acre, then on to Haifa at the other side of the bay. We continued this practice of divorcing our wives right up until the state was founded (19; T8).

This brings up the interesting idea that the paternity of the generations of Pessoptimists might be less than certain, and that perhaps there were Pessoptimists born of one husband and raised by another—yet another sort of métissage.

When Saʿīd has finished cataloguing his ancestry and establishing the multiple identities rolled into one family history, he moves on to describe how his immediate family carries on the same tradition of métissage. It is at this point that Saʿīd himself explains the meaning of his last name, and significantly, he emphasizes, not that it is a contradiction, but that, as Jayyusi has confirmed, it is a word constructed out of two others.[41] As he puts it, "this word combines two qualities, pessimism and optimism, that have been blended perfectly in the character of all the members of our family" (22; T12). Saʿīd is adamant in his assertion that he is not half a pessimist and half an optimist, but, rather, precisely that which incorporates the two ideas. Saʿīd then gives an example of the typical behaviour of a Pessoptimist: "When I wake each morning," he explains,

> I thank the Lord he did not take my soul during the night. If harm befalls me during the day, I thank Him that it was no worse. So which am I, a pessimist or an optimist?" (ibid).

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[40] *Yintasib*, literally translates as "to affiliate oneself" or to "declare attachments"

[41] According to Jayyusi, "the word "pessoptimist," [is] coined from the partial merger of "optimist and "pessimist." [and that] Habiby aims to mix the comic with the tragic and the heroic on the one hand, and, on the other, to uncover the various contradictions that crowd the distance between the extreme poles of Zionist colonialism and Palestinian resistance" (xi) see Jayyusi, Salma K. Introduction of Habiby, Emile. *The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-Fated Pessoptimist: A Palestinian Who Became a Citizen of Israel.* Jayyusi, Samla Khadra and LeGassick, Trevor, Trans. New York: Vantage Press, 1982

Though he recognizes the two distinct characteristics of his personal identity, he finds himself to be a perfect representative of both, and thus of neither.

This is an identity, furthermore, to which Saʿīd is deeply attached. When he first finds himself alone on a stake Saʿīd laments, "Why should I be expected, alone among all my fathers and grandfathers…to submit my fate to the laws of nature and the rules of logic?" (154; T119). In this scene Saʿīd is trying to understand his position in the newly created Israel, which, as we just explored, is divided into different sorts of Israelis and Palestinians from whose social identity he finds himself totally alienated. By refusing to submit to the "laws of nature and logic" (i.e. to the categorizations offered to him by the secondary characters of the novel) Saʿīd affirms his connection with his family, who represent a continuing métis identity. By believing the history of his family, who "searched for happiness over the centuries in miracles that contradicted these laws" (ibid), rather than the "laws of nature and logic" which tell him he is stranded on a tall stake, Saʿīd privileges the way of life he learned from them over his own senses. Saʿīd, thus, embodies all the contradictions of a Pessoptimist.

Saʿīd can, then, be seen here as building the events and myths of the past into a story of his ancestry. The story of the Pessoptimists is portrayed as a symbol, proved and established over centuries. In using this symbol—however contradictory it is—to identify himself, Saʿīd is able to clearly declare one of the prominent components of his own identity. Saʿīd is more than just a Pessoptimist, however. The next part of this section will show how he uses the identities of other, extra-textual, authors in order to expand and nuance his personal identity.

Within the body of the text Saʿīd refers to many different authors by name, using quotations, or paraphrasing their ideas.[42] These intertextual techniques are complex and layered. In the interest of space and clarity, then, I have chosen one instance where Saʿīd uses an extra-textual author to identify himself. I will go through it thoroughly, rather than surveying a few such examples. I have chosen one of the most frequently quoted scenes of the novel,[43] which tells the story of a young mother trying to enter the newly created state of Israel. Saʿīd, who is traveling with an officer *en route* to Acre just after his own arrival in the state, sees the mother and child hiding in a sesame field. The officer also spots the two, whom he confronts and sends

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[42] See, for example, Sessona, who has looked at Ḥabībī's use of Classical and Modern Arabic texts, with a focus on the re-telling of the *Thousand and One Nights* tale of the City of Brass, and Jarrar, who has examined the use of Voltaire's *Candide* as a pre-text.
[43] See, Tamari, Steve. [Review] "Saeed, the Ill-Fated Pessoptimist by Emile Habiby," *MERIP Reports* 136/137, 1985; Jayyusi, Salma Khadra, Ed. *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992

away, "anywhere you like to the east" (26; T15). Saʻīd learns from the officer's interrogation of the woman, that she and her son are from a town called Berwah, and Saʻīd comments:

> Berwah is the village of the Poet Mahmoud Darwish, who said fifteen years later:
>
> *I laud the executioner, victor over a made-up eye:*
> *Hurrah for the vanquisher of villages, hurrah for the butcher of infants.*
>
> Was he this very child? Had he gone on walking eastward after releasing himself from his mother's hand... (26; T16)

Here, Saʻīd writes part of Darwīsh's life into his own text; he has borne witness to what he believes to be a formative experience for the poet and later asserts that the experience was a significant one for himself as well. Saʻīd lays claim to Darwīsh's exile at the very moment that he, Saʻīd, is entering the state. He, then, is calling himself a sort of exile, even while living in his childhood city. Saʻīd's existence in Israel is as an amalgam, the place incorporates the places of his past, but the new realities of the Israeli state. Saʻīd's home is no longer the home that he knew, he is in a sort of exile.

The original Arabic text differs slightly from the translation quoted above, the line preceding the poem translates as "Al-birwah, this is the village of the poet who said, after fifteen years..." (26). There is an asterisk after the word "poet" with a footnote reading only "Maḥmūd Darwīsh." The different identification of Darwīsh is significant. In the original, Ḥabībī has Saʻīd's character use the poem without any reference to the poet's name, presumably because Darwīsh's lines are so well known to Palestinians that his identification would have been redundant. Moreover, I suggest, it acts to place Saʻīd and Darwīsh together in an in-group, so that Saʻīd might be identified as an author like Darwīsh, contrary to the social groups shown with secondary characters. That Saʻīd feels no need to identify the author of the lines within the body of the text, helps indicate to the reader that the poem and its author are both very much a part of the life and identity of Saʻīd. Indeed, Saʻīd has claimed the exile of Darwīsh as his own. The footnote is for the reader who may or may not share his sentiments. This act of inclusion or of in-grouping, I suggest, helps us locate a personal and almost social identity for Saʻīd in two ways.

First, Darwīsh is introduced as part of Saʻīd's past, as a boy he saw during an experience that shaped him. Described on the day of his forced exile as a figure who, the further away from his village he went the taller he seemed to become, Saʻīd seems to foreshadow Darwīsh's eventual position as poet of the Palestinians. According to Saʻīd and the officer he was with, "by the time they [Darwīsh and his mother] merged with their own shadows in the sinking sun they had

become bigger then the plain of Acre itself" (26; T16). The officer then asked, "Will they ever disappear?" (ibid). By identifying this figure as Darwīsh, Saʿīd deepens the meaning of the young boy's appearance in the text, highlighting the fact that he will not, indeed, ever disappear. In then identifying this incident as the point wherein he "observed the first example of that amazing phenomenon [that of "never disappearing"] that was to occur again and again until I finally met my friends from outer space" (25; T15), Saʿīd marks it as a formative experience.

In writing and therefore claiming the boy-Darwīsh, Saʿīd uses the story of the poet to help tell his own story. Since Darwīsh is an individual who exists outside the text and is stable as a figure or symbol, his connection to Saʿīd is a chance for the reader to relate Saʿīd to something concrete. I suggest that Saʿīd is identifying himself with the process of authorship, of making all of his different experiences into one story. In using Darwīsh specifically, Saʿīd aligns himself with a particular kind of writer, one who uses his life experiences to illustrate both the general condition of Palestinians, and of particular individuals living under occupation. Darwīsh, and now Saʿīd, are both authors. They are men who take different parts of their worlds and weave them into a single narrative, a kind of métissage. Saʿīd thus defines himself as an author, and highlights the author's position as someone who creates métis, implicating himself.

The second way that Saʿīd uses Darwīsh to identify himself is through his poetry, which is quoted within the text. There are four lines of Darwīsh's poetry included the novel, those two quoted above, and then, in the same scene Saʿīd writes:

> It was that same poet of Berwah mentioned above who later said:
>
> *We know best about those devils,*
> *Who of children prophets make.*
>
> He realized only quite recently that those same devils could also render a whole nation utterly and completely forgotten (27; T16).

Darwīsh's lines can be understood as a voice calling Saʿīd a "devil," since it is in fact Saʿīd who marks Darwīsh as a prophet. In using these lines of poetry Saʿīd is able to address a difficult issue: his position as state informer who helps Israel vanquish villages and execute children. Indeed, Saʿīd's own narrative shows us is that he is no devil, nor a "butcher of infants," but that his actions—especially in not raising a hand to stop the officer from pointing his gun at the boy-Darwīsh—can justify his being labeled as such. I suggest that in quoting some of the more critical passages of Darwīsh's poetry (those that refer to the Israeli state as an aggressor) Saʿīd shows that he is aware of his own position as an informer and employee of that same state. In hinting at his

own place within the Israeli state apparatus Saʿīd places his identity *qua* devil in conversation with the innocent character he has portrayed himself as throughout his letters. In understanding that as an individual Saʿīd might be understood as all those things that Darwīsh accuses him of, Saʿīd acknowledges himself as métis. In quoting Darwīsh he acknowledges his position as "devil," but through his ultimate rejection of his role as informer he shows that he is not one.

Using the character, history and poems of Maḥmūd Darwīsh, Saʿīd is able to articulate the things which he understands as composing his individual identity. He highlights his position as storyteller, as someone who creates a single narrative out of many parts, and as an exile who is not in exile. He also uses the poetry of Darwīsh to illustrate his awareness of (but at the same time doubts about) his role in the displacement and mistreatment of other Palestinians.

4. Conclusions

The Palestinian identity that Ḥabībī constructs within *Al-Waqāʾiʿ* is one that is specifically developed to cope with and move through Israeli society. The contradictions embodied in the identity of Saʿīd echo the binary oppositions of Kanafānī, yet move one step further in realizing the inherent contradictions of Palestinian identity under one comprehensive construction. The métis identity that the work develops, however, is shown to be unacceptable for the 1974 Jewish and Palestinian communities of Israel. Saʿīd's failure to be accepted is as much his own in not understanding the impossibility of a métissage within Israel, as it is the failure of the communities to make room for the inevitable shifts and changes that will occur when two populations live on the same land.

The complex layering of satire, allegory, intertextuality and polyphony in *Al-Waqāʾiʿ* show that, like Saʿīd's seemingly contradictory identity, the text itself is difficult to understand and unpack. By combining the techniques, the novel shows that métissage exists, but depends on its audience to find a place for it in a world that is not yet ready to understand identity as métissage. The text, in fact, points out the faults of two societies as much, if not more, than those of its main character.

Chapter Three
Privileging Awareness: new identities in
Saḥar Khalīfah's *Al-Ṣubbār*
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Whereas Kanafānī and Ḥabībī construct identity as something formed by a relationship between individuals, their historical experiences and external social expectations, Khalīfah centers on the individual. Specifically, Khalīfah uses a unique narrative lens to structure both characters and society with a focus on the role of the individual. While the novel depicts individuals of all political persuasions, it is not a character's political allegiances that determine whether or not he or she is placed into the in-group built by the novel's narrative lens. Rather, it is the characters' demonstration of social awareness and concern for others that place them in the focus of the narrative, which in turn leads to their inclusion into the in-group constructed.

Al-Ṣubbār's bustling urban setting of 1973 Nablus gives Khalīfah a broad spectrum of characters to draw upon in her construction of both a micro-society and the identities existing within it. In contrast to Kanafānī's characters who take shape in the isolated world of the water tanker, Khalīfah's setting of a Palestinian community in Nablus allows for a complex network of social interaction to be laid out. While Ḥabībī uses the urban setting of Haifa, its location within the boundaries of Israel forces Saʿīd to negotiate two different communities. By working within these two diverse communities Ḥabībī inevitably simplifies them in order to fit both in to the text. So Khalīfah, having only the urban Nabulsi community to describe, is able to discuss the many different social factors at work within what might have otherwise been a homogenized community.

Khalīfah maximizes her exploration of *Al-Ṣubbār*'s community by using a shifting narrative lens that focuses on each of the novel's actors. The narrative lens, when resting with any given character, allows the reader access to the thoughts and social commentaries of that particular character. In so doing, the novel is able to overlap diverse perspectives and create multi-perspectived characterizations. This narrative technique ultimately gives the reader a highly developed sense of the characters' roles in Nablus society. What this technique achieves is a look at Palestinian identity based on the placing of a handful of characters in either an in- or out-group set up by the novel. The in-group—for which the out-group acts as a foil—is meant to put forward a particular idea of Palestinian identity based on the many social and political factors active in Nablus.

The first section of this chapter will show how this shifting lens works to construct the identity of *Al-Ṣubbār*'s characters from multiple points of view. In it I will suggest that the lens technique used in the narrative acts as a model for the creation of an ideal for the social in-group. The narrative technique achieves this by laying out the novel's expectations for how ideal Palestinians should negotiate the world. Next, the second section of this chapter will look at the novel's use of one-dimensional characters in the creation of an out-group. This out-group helps identify the characteristics that the novel works to affirm, and highlights—as if to warn others away from—particular elements of social identity. These elements are represented—in fact symbolized or embodied—by the one dimensional characters of the text; the traditional/familial, capitalist/bourgeois and popular/socialist. Since the characters who symbolize these are elements are active within the text, and whose actions elicit reactions from more developed characters, the literary technique can be understood to be showing how traditional/familial, capitalist/bourgeois and popular/socialist systems are all ill-suited for the Nabulsi and Palestinian communities.

In the final section, I will outline how *Al-Ṣubbār*'s construction of identity is ultimately the attempt to construct an ideal individual. Through partial integration of the social systems represented by the one-dimensional characters, those Palestinians privileged by the narrative lens as potentially ideal characters are able to shape their identities individually and critically. Ultimately, the identity that is created by the novel is an amalgam; using identities already available in the Nablus community, but critically evaluating each in light of the needs of a 1974 Nablusi community.

1. Narrative lens

The narrative technique used by Khalīfah in *Al-Ṣubbār* serves two functions. First, it is the technique by which the reader gets to know the works' characters from multiple perspectives, thus providing a fuller image as they fit engage with the world around them. Second, and perhaps most importantly for the novel's construction of identity, the technique acts as model; showing readers the multiple perspectives that are needed in order to construct a social identity in a changing society. This distinctive technique has been noted by a number of critics as the element that allows Khalīfah a sensitive and nuanced commentary on Palestinian society. Muhammad Siddiq describes the narrative tactic thus:

> Khalifah's third person narrator, though omniscient, remains remarkably unintrusive. This narrator
> is present on two levels in the narrative. On the first, he or she is directly present to name the

characters and objects and to let the reader in on the state of mind or emotion of the characters. The narrator performs this function objectively in short concise designations and neutral descriptions. On the second level, the presence of the narrator is largely indirect and imperceptible and can only be inferred from the type of interior monologue Khalifah uses in the novel. Briefly, this consists of an exquisite and highly effective blending of a character's sensation, emotion, or state of mind with the wider, more general, and invariably more politically and culturally resonant sensibility of the omniscient narrator.[144]

I perceive the "indirect and imperceptible" narrator that Siddiq describes as a complex method used by the text to create a model for individual identity construction within a changing social reality. Indeed, the omniscient narrator acts as the first identity constructed in the novel, one that establishes itself based on a nuanced understanding of other character identities. Moving from character to character, allowing, as Siddiq explains, the characters to express "sensation, emotion, or state of mind" by acting like a video camera, placed on the shoulder. The narrator, then, lets each character narrate their own world, and weaves each of these points of view into the larger message of the novel.

To illustrate this idea I will use the example of the neighbourhood grocer, Hāj 'Abd Allāh. A secondary character within the novel, Hāj 'Abd Allāh is nonetheless developed and is used to connect many of the characters and ideas presented in the narrative. It is the store of the Hāj where people meet, and later the Hāj who provides the example for part of the novel's exploration on the role of capitalism in Nablus society. Thus, while he is less of an intricate character than either of the protagonists and has fewer complexities to unpack, he interacts with most of the characters either directly or in memories. This makes Hāj 'Abd Allāh the most accessible example of the way characters of *Al-Ṣubbār* are constructed.

We first learn of the character of Hāj 'Abd Allāh through the guards at the Jordan River crossing where Usāmah (the first of the protagonist) re-enters the West Bank. The Hāj appears as an entry in Usāmah's small notebook, and the Hāj's relationship to him is explained to the Israeli soldiers who interrogate Usāmah:

> 'Whose name is this? And whose address?'
> 'It's the name and address of the shop where my mother buys her vegetables.'
> 'What's the grocer's name?'
> 'Its right there in front of you.'
> 'Hajj Abdullah Mubarak, Good Faith Grocery, Saada Street. Why are you carrying this address?'

[144] Siddiq, Muhammad "The Fiction of Sahar Khalifah: Between Defiance and Deliverance," *Arabic Studies Quarterly*, 8(2), 1986, 151. See also, Zeidan, Joseph T. *Arab Women Novelists: The Formative Years and Beyond.* New York: State University of New York Press, 1995, and Harlow, Barbara "Partitions and Precedents," Sahar Khalifeh and Palestinian Political Geography," *Intersections: Gender, Nation, and Community in Arab Women's Novels.* Lisa Suhair Majaj, Paula Sunderman and Therese Saliba Eds. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002, for further discussions on the narrative techniques used in the novel.

'So he can direct me to my mother's house' (13; T12-13).

The grocer is seen as a suspicious figure. The soldier questions Usāmah as to why he is carrying the name and address of a man not in his family, and Usāmah explains the grocer's role in helping him re-unite with his mother (13). The grocer also looks out for Usāmh's mother—as per the request of Usāmah's cousin ʿĀdil the second protagonist—and is thus entrenched as both a father figure to Usāmah (36; T37) and a respected member of the community. The good character of the grocer is thus presented by Usāmah, and reinforced by ʿĀdil. Moreover, the grocer also has the title "Hāj," a term of respect for an elder or one that indicates religious piety. According to the first few chapters of the book, the grocer is an upstanding member of the community. In chapter thirteen (fourteen in the translation), however, we are given a different take on the grocer entirely.

After a long day, Usāmah decides to "stop at the grocer's and listen to what people are saying" (63; T70). When he gets there, "Hajj Abdullah seemed delighted to see him" (ibid). He calls him "son," invites the young man in for tea and offers him the armchair to sit in. During this scene the narrative voice relates what the grocer says to Usāmah:

> Middle-class people like you are in a terrible fix. Everybody is—except for the workers with jobs "inside," they're the ones with money. See that seedy-looking fellow over there, the one who helps me? Come a little closer so he won't hear...Now him, just listen to this, sir, he isn't satisfied with less than ten pounds a day! Three hundred pounds a month, mind you!...Every month he wants a raise. He complains about inflation, but does he think he's the only one suffering? I can't make ends meet (64; T71).

The Hāj, here, places himself in the complex dynamic of the Palestinian political economy. During the historical period in which *Al-Ṣubbār* is set, working in Israel was seen by some as a betrayal of the country. It was, however, where wages were higher than those found in the West Bank, thus affording families proper nutrition, access to better education, and the ability to achieve a higher standard of living generally.[145] In this situation local merchants like the Hāj were accused of taking advantage of the economic situation and profiting by reducing the wages of local workers and forcing them to work in Israel. Thus, added to his position as an upstanding member of the neighbourhood, is his status as a member of the merchant class.

There are two earlier scenes in particular that set up the Hāj's comments. In these scenes the shifting lens shows ʿĀdil, Zuhdī and Abū Sābir—ʿĀdil's two good friends and factory co-

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[145] For a description of the economic situation in the West Bank during the period just after the October 1974 war, see, Tessler, 478, For a discussion of how Khalīfah describes this situation in her fiction, see Zeidan, Joseph T. *Arab Women Novelists: The Formative Years and Beyond.* New York: State University of New York, 1995, 180, and Siddiq, "The Fiction," 147.

workers—boarding a bus that will take them towards the very work "inside" Israel with which Hāj ‘Abd Allāh has a problem. On the dawn bus ride into Israel, the workers exchange stories about the poor working conditions in the West Bank. First, Abū Sābir tells the story of his old carpentry job, terminated during the 1967 war. He tells his friends that after the war he went back to his boss in hopes of resuming his work there, and was offered the same job for forty percent less pay than before the war and occupation (43; T46). When Abū Sābir protests, he tells us, the boss says: "there are plenty of workers looking for jobs. If you don't like the wages, you can leave" (44; T46). At this point in Abū Sābir's story, Zuhdī jumps in, "the bastard! Just like the one I worked for" (44; T46). Then he shares his own story of why he is now working "inside" and of mistreatment by his boss at an olive oil press factory that he says drove him to the factories and construction sites of Israel.

When the men on the bus finish their stories the narrator tells us that, "curses on the mean bosses arose from all sides of the truck" (44; T46). Just like Hāj ‘Abd Allāh, the bosses of the men on the bus face difficulties with the new economic situation and are accused of taking advantage of it. The workers thus put forward a general image of "the boss:" stingy, uncaring and disloyal, willing to complain about their former employees working "inside," but not willing to provide the incentive for them to stay. The character of the "mean boss," a figure familiar to all the men on the bus affirmed by concrete stories of mistreatment, does not immediately seem to fit what we know about the Hāj as an upstanding community member. Indeed, suddenly being able to identify him as a representative of the "mean boss" stereotype serves as a striking juxtaposition to his earlier portrayal as an upstanding member of the community: the Hāj is a "mean boss."

One perspective, however, does not cancel out the other. Rather, the construction of the identity of the grocer becomes increasingly nuanced and complex. The Hāj is shown to be neither a singularly good, nor an ill-intentioned individual. He is a concrete example offered by the omniscient narrator of how an ideal Palestinian would go about understanding the other characters of *Al-Ṣubbār*. The lens continues to make complex the character of the grocer when it shifts to focus in on Bāsil, ‘Ādil's younger brother, who has been imprisoned for throwing a rock at a troop of Israeli soldiers. In prison, the young man learns about the objections of communist freedom fighters to merchants like Hāj ‘Abd Allāh.

In prison discussions Bāsil hears "words like 'pragmatism', 'demagogy', 'capitalism', 'communism', 'socialism', 'compradorism'," and wonders, "What [is] it all about? What [does] it

mean?" (103; T124). He is introduced to a new way of understanding his society, and works to assimilate the ideas into his own context. Bāsil thinks of Hāj ʿAbd Allāh:

> Get ready for some more lies, Hani [Bāsil's best friend and the son of Hāj ʿAbd Allāh]. Get ready for some more things you won't understand. Like 'compradorism'. Yes your father's a comprador, Hani. He's merely a means to channel in goods from the capitalist countries. That's why he has no problem marketing goods for Israel. Your father, Hani, is a reactionary. He's only interested in safe profit, and cares nothing for the country's welfare (103-4; T124).

The Hāj is thus given a third dimension. He is a father, a merchant having trouble in the post-67 economy, he is a "mean boss" and now also a comprador. The scene is an example of the way the shifting narrative lens, by moving between ʿĀdil, Usāmah and Bāsil, is able to construct the social and political scene of 1973 Palestine, and give depth and multiplicity to its characters. In doing so, it acts as a model for identity construction by showing the reader how one should approach and understand other characters before evaluating them.

In addition to exemplifying the success of the shifting lens technique, the scene with Bāsil in prison is an example of how the novel is able to give a personal account of the perspective of popular socialism; one of the important ideologies prevalent in the West Bank. As we listen in to Bāsil's thoughts and follow his absorption of socialist ideas, we learn not only the reasons behind his demonization of Hāj ʿAbd Allāh, but also how this process might empower others who use the ideology for their own benefit. In the scene just quoted we see Bāsil, for example, think of what his newly acquired political knowledge will provide him in terms of status amongst his friends, specifically his best friend, and Hāj ʿAbd Allāh's son. The scene continues: "Ha, ha, ha! Compradorism! I've got your number, Hajj Abdullah! By God, it's perfectly legal to steal from someone like you. Your crates of cola had better beware of my devilish plans!" (103; T125).

Bāsil hopes to confuse and belittle his best friend by accusing his father of compradorism, and then further gratifies his own desires with the tool of socialism, by justifying the theft of the sweets and colas that he cannot afford but yet desires whenever he visits Ḥānī in the shop. By giving the reader this insight, the narrator deepens our understanding of the function of popular socialism within Nablus and West Bank urban society. We see how Bāsil, in learning about popular socialism, is first given tools with which to undertake a critical look at his society and understand the role of the merchant from a new perspective. We also see, however, how even Bāsil is able to twist this new information in order to satisfy his own personal desires. Indeed, like we see the Hāj from many perspectives, the narrator is able to make the reader familiar with the good and the bad of Palestinian political ideologies.

The reader learns about this possible manipulation of popular socialism alongside Bāsil, and then observes as he connects the ideas of the movement to the world with which he is familiar. As the novel continues, it moves beyond simple and direct explorations of the character of the Hāj. It allows us to evaluate the grocer with the ideas that Bāsil has introduced. For example, the narrator also describes a bread seller who Usāmah encounters, and to whom we can compare the Hāj.

Usāmah observes a man selling "fresh bread! One pound a loaf!" (61; T67) and watches as the vendor comes across "a well dressed young man," who asks him "where's it [the bread] from?" to which the vendor replies, "its just bread" (ibid). And then the bread seller:

> Sensing from the well-dressed young man's expression that an attack was imminent, repeated defensively, 'Now look, sir, this is just bread. Does even bread have to have a religion and a race? This is top quality bread—it's worth its weight in gold!' (ibid)

Usāmah here observes the dynamic between the two men, which develops the ideas that Bāsil brings up when he learns about socialism in prison. This time, however, the narrator is giving us the bread seller's point of view. With this new information we understand more about merchants' justifications for selling Israeli products and are able to sympathize with characters like the bread seller and the Hāj; this as an imperative quality for the identity that the narrator illustrates. Rather than having information on the economic situation of the West Bank only from the socialists, the narrator, by using the shifting lens, makes sure that multiple perspectives are given.

By being able to shift from character to character observing the world from different points of view, we as readers have access to a number of perspectives. The intricacy of the narrative strategy ensures cross-conversation and subject-overlap between scenes. It constructs, I suggest here, a method by which to understand life in the West Bank, and is put forward as a model against which the characters of the story are evaluated.

As the novel has shown us in the general figure of the merchant and the specific person of Hāj 'Abd Allāh, a multiplicity of views is essential to understand his character. In putting forward the thoughts and actions of so many characters as they think about and interact with Hāj 'Abd Allāh of the Good Faith Grocery, he is developed as a three-dimensional character. Specifically, we see the Hāj from a functioning community, socialist and capitalist perspective. With the information we gather from the different points in the narrative, we as readers can place him into

each of the roles he occupies, and then understand how he can be each role simultaneously, therefore becoming a dynamic character within the text.

If the medium is the message, then the narrative style and its emphasis on showing characters from multiple perspectives is the first element in the novel's construction of Palestinian identity. By providing similar such contrasting and nuanced articulations and perceptions of each character in the text, the method of narration can be seen as the first example of how a Palestinian identity should be constructed: based on a nuanced understanding of the world around them. Indeed, readers being given information from multiple sources and political points of view is the first indication that the characters of the novel are expected to do the same. This ideal is borne out through the novel since the characters best able to carry out this sort character analysis form the novel's in-group and leadership community, two of whom will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

Emphasizing the novel's demand for and construction of an in-group based on three-dimensional characters, is its use of one-dimensional characters. These one-dimensional characters are shown to assess life in the West Bank with a singular perspective (in contrast to the model that the narrator provides) and are negatively portrayed and un-liked by other characters. It is to the portrayal of these characters that this chapter will now turn.

2. One-dimensional Characters: the out-group

The function of one-dimensional characters in *Al-Ṣubbār* is to confirm the novel's construction of successful Palestinian identities as multi-faceted and broad-minded. How they are portrayed, moreover, illuminates some of the broader criticism at work within the text. First, the one-dimensional characters as individuals are refused entry into the social in-group made by the text's narrator and protagonists. This makes them into a sort of out-group, which in turn strengthens the in-group status of multi-perspectived characters. Beyond being condemned as individuals unable to see other points of view, the characters each act as symbols for a different political or ideological systems. Thus, as the multi-faceted characters pass judgment on the one-dimensional ones, they pass similar judgment on what they represent. The underlying message of this technique is to emphasize that social structures and characters like the Hāj must be able to understand more than their own point of view. This section will look at three such one-dimensional characters—Abū ʿĀdil, a second ʿĀdil who Zuhdī (a co-worker of ʿĀdil al-Karamī)

meets in prison, and Abū ʻĀdil's old farm hand's son, Shaḥādah—who will be discussed in turn below.

In seeing and condemning the one-dimensional characters who represent inflexible social structures—the traditional familial (Abū ʻĀdil), the socialist (the prison ʻĀdil) and the bourgeois (Shaḥādah)—the characters in *Al-Ṣubbār* form an out-group. This process helps solidify an ideal social identity as one that has the triple focus (rather than any one of the singular foci) of political commitment, social commitment, and acknowledgement of the traditional family/elite structure. Since precise parameters for these three power structures are never firmly established within the novel, it seems that as long as the individual is aware of the political situation around him/her and makes informed choices, he or she is seen as successful.

2.1 Abū ʻĀdil: Patriarchal Elite

The first one-dimensional character presented in the novel is Abū ʻĀdil. He represents what is put forward as a traditional patriarchal elite. In *Al-Ṣubbār*, Abū ʻĀdil is dying and remains alive only because of an expensive dialysis machine required to maintain his health against an unidentified kidney disease. The machine and indeed the continued existence of Abū ʻĀdil are symbols of superfluity and excess. Abū ʻĀdil is an ill man but refuses to die. He is also a member of the old Nabulsi elite and portrayed as someone who sucks the resources out of his community without giving back to it. Moreover, he is someone who refuses to adapt himself to the new conditions of life in Nablus. This is shown to be unacceptable for a society under duress.

In an anecdote that ʻĀdil relates to Usāmah, Abū ʻĀdil's personal opinions of and role in the Nablus community are made clear. He recounts that:

> Last night I heard my own father making some absurdly ridiculous statements to a visiting journalist. Yes, there he was bemoaning the lost glories of the Arab nation, while the French journalist did his best to console him, telling him similar stories about the history of France. The thousands of Frenchmen who worked in Hitler's armament factories. Can you believe it? I actually felt rather comforted myself (58; T65).

Through ʻĀdil we see a rejection of the things embodied by his father: clinging to historical greatness, the employment of empty rhetoric, and the idea of looking to the west for consolation. ʻĀdil's total disgust at the comfort he feels in his father's parallel between 1974 Palestine and Vichy France, as well as how he speaks at length about the "glories of the Arab nation," shows ʻĀdil's own internal conflict; caught between the comfort of myth and the knowledge of reality. By repeating to himself and others his revulsion towards the actions of his father, ʻĀdil reinforces his desire to give up the unproductive myths of the past and present.

The same sentiment of the elite being out of date and more of a burden than a blessing is evident in the description of Abū ʿĀdil's house. For example, when Usāmah enters the building he is described as opening "the massive gates to the family house" (55; T58) after which he climbs "the ancient spiral staircase" (ibid). The word translated into "massive" is ḍakhamah, and has a connotation of something being too large, overgrown or out of proportion. The word translated as "ancient," ʿatīqah, has, as one of its meanings, the idea that something is outmoded or obsolete. Indeed, from the description of the family home, the reader is made aware of the position of the Karamīs as members of an ancient era whose time has passed. This idea fits with ʿĀdil's earlier sentiments. We learn later that the house is a waqf, and that it is actually a burden to the family since it must be kept up and they can no longer afford servants (49). All of this only affirms what the novel puts forward more generally: the elite are useless and outdated.

Abū ʿĀdil is unable to sustain the role of an elite patriarch. He must rely on his son to provide the family income, he is totally unaware of his ʿĀdil's abandonment of the family farm and present work in Israel, of his daughter's love affair with an imprisoned freedom fighter, and of his other son Bāsil's budding ambition to join the fight for freedom. Despite his ineptitude, the house and his position as "elite" still accord respect to Abū ʿĀdil and his family. Indeed, the Karamī family maintains its elevated status within Nablus and while ʿĀdil condemns the inaction and superfluity of his father, not all characters disregard elite status. Abū Sābir, for example, after having his fingers cut off in a workplace accident, tells ʿĀdil that he will never know what it is truly like to be in his position:

> No matter what bad luck you have, you are still a Karmi [sic], born to wealth and power. Doors will always open to you, the doors of the rich, the doors of the banks. And the gates of heaven too! (ibid)

In this passage Abū Sābir clearly illustrates his respect for the patriarchal-elite, as opposed to ʿĀdil's marked distain. ʿĀdil's lineage is clearly something that matters to Abū Sābir, and lineage is a trait he takes into account as he negotiates Nabulsi society. Here we see a contrast in opinion. While Abū Sābir may not think Abū ʿĀdil perfect, he still respects him. However "unproductive" Abū ʿĀdil is in the novel, characters like Abū Sābir show that elite is still a categorization that holds weight and influence. Elite status must then be recognized rather than discounted, as ʿĀdil believes, in the formation of a social identity.

As a template for a social identity, we see the idea of a society constructed only of a patriarchal-elite (like in the living room of Abū ʿĀdil) rejected, but we are also shown how it is incorporated (in parts) into an active and changing existence. Indeed, without his respected

position as an elite, 'Ādil, the first born son of Abū 'Ādil Al-Karamī, might well fail in his efforts to educate his fellow workers and convince them to fight for the rights supposedly accorded to them as quasi-members of an Israeli state. It is in large part the respect of Abū Sābir—and those like him—for 'Ādil-the-elite which permits him to take the injured man's case to the Israeli courts and challenge the rules of the occupation.

> Indeed, despite 'Ādil's belief that:

> People give only in order to take. Banks are the same. And God too. And I don't have anything left to give. The farm's mortgaged, and the family mansion's been left in perpetuity to the whole Karmi clan. All I have is this arm of mine...I'm in the same boat as you [Abū Sābir]. Misfortune's united us and made us equal (49-50; T51-2).

His unquestioned status as elite is what allows him to put his idea of what society should be to work. 'Ādil places the unquestioned elite status into a balance, a triple-pan balance[146] which also incorporates political awareness and the ability to act.[147] The reality of 'Ādil's existence within the text of *Al-Ṣubbār* confirms this idea. 'Ādil is a member of the elite, and that social category continues to play a role in society. The extent of that role, however, is what is being tested and contested throughout the novel. If 'Ādil is accorded respect by Abū Sābir on account of his lineage, it is certainly not the same case with Usāmah or Zuhdī, who respect 'Ādil because of his kindness and commitment to his peers.

Thus, the status and power within the community that elite lineage accords certain characters is only condemned in certain cases. For Abū 'Ādil it focuses the attention of the community on the past, or outside the immediate Palestinian context (like the comparison with Vichy France). In 'Ādil's hands, however, this respect is used productively as he works to guarantee Abū Sābir compensation for a workplace accident. Simply being elite, like Abū 'Ādil, is tied with resource squandering and stagnation and seems to be being eclipsed by a different value system that emphasizes commitment and political action. The idea of political action, however, is given many definitions in the novel. From 'Ādil's court actions against the construction site managers, to Usāmah's intention to bomb the buses of workers *en route* to Israeli construction sites action is action, which is what is important. Indeed, the novel seems to support any action at

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[146] I coin the term, envisioning the double-pan scales of justice but put in this more complex setting of West Bank society, where there is not a clear right or wrong, but rather, according to the novel, three major ideas that must be put in balance for a character to be successful.

[147] See also Zeidan, who characterizes 'Ādil as representing "the in-between generation that tries (if somewhat reluctantly) to come to terms with the older generation" (179)

all as long as it indicates that characters are performing out of a firm belief in helping society, with an awareness of all the dynamics they act within.

Interestingly, Joe Cleary notices some parallels between the figure of the emasculated male in Kanafānī –Abū al-Khaīzarān—and Khalīfah—Abū ʿĀdil.[1148] Both men embody the figure of an emasculated male, in some way representative of a national failure.[149] Cleary makes the parallel in passing, and does not elaborate on the larger meaning of Abū ʿĀdil as an emasculated male. To compare the characters, then, I suggest that where Abū al-Khaīzarān is a flawed prototype of a male/female balance in *Rijāl fī al-shams*, I see Abū ʿĀdil as functioning to represent a clearly outmoded facet of Nablus society. Where in *Rijāl* Abū al-Khaīzarān was the character who survived and thus offered a modicum of hope to future generations, in *Al-Ṣubbār*, it is the emasculated man who is shown as something to be left behind. In Khalīfah's text it is Abū ʿĀdil's son—a character able to incorporate what his father represented for the novel into a broader understanding of society—who is rather offered as the work's prototype.

This I read as Khalīfah building on the established idea of the emasculated male, but making it clear that being unable to carry out traditional male functions (sexual or social) no longer goes far enough to express the new realities of Palestinian society. Indeed, her portrayal of ʿĀdil as a successful character within the text shows how the positive features of the now emasculated male must be assimilated into the new multi-conscious identity. So, changed from Kanafānī's symbolic interpretation of the national failure, Khalīfah shows through Abū ʿĀdil that it is time the national failure as an identity be abandoned as a singular identity, and rather incorporated into the new political realities that surround the characters of *Al-Ṣubbār*.

2.2 ʿĀdil from prison: socialist

Socialism was one influential trend in the political development of Palestine that was on the rise in the mid seventies.[150] This trend is reflected in a second character, also named ʿĀdil, who Zuhdī meets in an Israeli prison. This second ʿĀdil works in the text as an example of a character who adheres unquestioningly to popular socialist ideology. This ideology informs all of his actions and the way he relates to all other characters within the text. The notion that popular

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[148]Cleary, 216
[149] Ibid, 249
[150] Tessler, 436

socialism is but one of the prominent ideologies in the West Bank at the time is not something that this ʿĀdil entertains.

The shared name of ʿĀdil—meaning justice or balance—creates a rather obvious parallel between this prison ʿĀdil and ʿĀdil al-Karamī. Zuhdī, who is the link between them, compares the two ʿĀdils as he sits in prison, constipated from the prison food and wanting to go home:

> This Adil tells me, 'One's life is expendable in the cause of one's country.' For the cause of one's life, the country's expendable! You [ʿĀdil Al-Karamī] said that. Marx said it. Was it you or was it Marx? I can't remember. My stomach makes my head hurt and my headache makes my stomach hurt. The two have come together, and my constipation has become a common denominator, uniting two opposites (115; T140).

Both the ʿĀdils are in leadership roles, both try to advise Zuhdī as to the proper way to negotiate an occupied Palestine. There is a clear difference, however, in the way that the ʿĀdils treat Zuhdī. Indeed, what separates ʿĀdil Al-Karamī from the prison ʿĀdil is his regard for the individual. Where ʿĀdil Al-Karamī puts life ahead of politics, ʿĀdil from prison believes life is expendable. The second ʿĀdil's coldness is confirmed when Zuhdī tells us that he: "sat at the head of the government of cell number twenty three, claiming to be the 'conscience' of the Palestinian revolution! But what a cold heart the man had!" (115; T138).

The prison ʿĀdil, with a frozen and immovable heart, represents a static, popular Palestinian socialism. He has a singular idea of how Palestinian social identity should be structured. He holds daily educational sessions in the cell where he preaches to the other inmates, seizes food given to the men by their families to ensure rations are distributed evenly amongst the men, and also "kept a close lookout for any deviant behavior, whether sexual or moral" (ibid). There is even a scene where, having found an old illiterate peasant farmer hording some sweets, he sentences the man to a beating, and when the man charged with carrying out the punishment refuses, both are beaten by his cronies (117; T140). With the dictatorial prison ʿĀdil, Zuhdī is afraid that "power will make him become like all the rest" (ibid) and that the prison ʿĀdil will "give orders and we'll have to carry them out" (ibid). The prison ʿĀdil is thus shown to be anything but the balanced person that his name puts him forward to be. This prison ʿĀdil acts rather as a foil for ʿĀdil Al-Karamī, who is better able to weigh and balance his socialist ideals and the idea that everyone is equal both before and after those ideals are put in place.

2.3 Shaḥādah: Capitalist Bourgeoisie

Just as Abū ʿĀdil has no compassion for his family, insisting on feeding the kidney machine rather than his children, and ʿĀdil from prison does not treat the others in his cell as people but

rather people-to-be-governed, Shaḥādah shows no feelings for his old friends except the desire to show them up.

Shaḥādah, the son of the Karamīs' farmhand and childhood playmate of 'Ādil and Zuhdī, represents the emerging bourgeois. His cares are portrayed as solely economic and he is said to have been one of the first to abandon work at the Karamī farm. Shaḥādah has little regard for loyalty, even towards his father who he left wandering around the old property, shabby and thin (38), abandoned in Shaḥādah's search for wealth.[151] Shaḥādah's money is used for his own indulgence. He wears a leather jacket and gold ring, which Usāmah calls frivolous and clearly looks down upon (78). Shaḥādah's double error of forgetting 'Ādil and Usāmah who shared their "bread and salt" (ibid) with him, and then flaunting his new wealth amongst the men in the coffee shop puts him in league with the other single-minded characters, and posits him as a representative of gluttonous bourgeois capitalist economic growth.

The scene that sets up Shaḥādah as a one-dimensional character takes place in a Nablus coffee shop. The scene is set with the loud chatter of men sitting at backgammon boards and a room thick with the "stink of cheap tobacco" (75; T90). 'Ādil enters the room, and is greeted by all. "Shahada did not speak, however, but went on drawing on his pipe, with the superior expression demanded by his high status as a successful businessman" (76; T91). 'Ādil ignores the snub and addresses Shaḥādah directly, "Shaḥādah, how are you? How come you don't say hello to me? Strangers speak to me, but not you; how come?" (ibid). Shaḥādah avoids the question and instead shows off his wealth by offering to buy a round of coffees and water pipes for his friends. He repeatedly slings barely veiled insults at 'Ādil, who responds with questions like, "How's your father?" (78; T92), who we know is frail and shabby wandering the abandoned fields of the Karamī farm, to which Shaḥādah responds, "He's fine, thanks be to God" (78; T93). Shaḥādah is thus shown to be a single-minded character who shows no affection for anything but the "wallet stuffed with banknotes" (77; T91) that he flashes around the café.

As with Abū 'Ādil's status as elite and the prison 'Ādil's ideas about socialism, Shaḥādah's money is not what makes him a one-dimensional character. Rather, it is his singularity of focus on the commodity that places him as one dimensional and generally negative. As Usāmah watches Shaḥādah he wonders if his childhood friend has "forgotten the cheap cigarettes of [his]

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[151] Zeidan also comments on this attribute of Shaḥādah, putting him in a category of people whose "desire to move up in class rank overshadows feelings of national solidarity." (181)

past?" (78; T93), and describes him as, "adorned with an expensive ring," and noting that "he held a pipe, and he spoke out of the corner of his mouth like some big foreign film star" (77; T90-1). The association with foreignness, which we saw also in ʿĀdil's description of his father, indicates how he is out of touch with local society, a condition very much tied with single-minded-ness in *Al-Ṣubbār.*

In the case of Shaḥādah, both ʿĀdil and Usāmah provide alternatives and contrasts to the single-mindedly capitalist character. ʿĀdil, as we know, works in Israel just as Shaḥādah does, but there is a difference between the two, which ʿĀdil himself points out when he asks his old friend about the condition of his father. Where ʿĀdil works in Israel to meet his family and community obligations—supporting his father, and his family and being able to spend time advising to his co-workers—Shaḥādah uses his wages to escape his low social position and at the same time neglects his obligation to take care of his own father.

Similarly, when we compare Shaḥādah to Usāmah, we see that they are both middle class, and both put their goals and interests ahead of supporting their families. For example, Usāmah is committed to blowing up the workers' buses, which he knows will push him underground with the guerilla movement (74; T87), making it impossible to support his widowed mother. Yet he is not a one-dimensional character. When he sees Shaḥādah in the café, Usāmah thinks to himself:

> Why don't you give some of this great advise to your father, my fine fellow? God help your poor father! Go on, enjoy yourself, my friend, strut around and be happy. Let Israel strut around like a turkey-cock and do what it wants with us (78-9; T92).

For Usāmah, Shaḥādah's neglect of his father and country are linked. It is not Shaḥādah's money that he comments on, but rather how he gets it and what he does with it. That Shaḥādah first makes his money in Israel and then fails to meet his personal obligations are what make him one-dimensional for Usāmah.

Identity for the characters of *Al-Ṣubbār* is thus formed in part against the out-grouping of one-dimensional characters. The social identity that the novel tries to construct, which we learn from the rejection of Abū ʿĀdil, the prison ʿĀdil and Shaḥādah, is neither wholly traditionally patriarchal, socialist or capitalist. Most importantly, however, we see the static identities fractured, and small fragments of each incorporated into the successful characters of ʿĀdil Al-Karamī, Zuhdī and Usāmah. Through the use of one-dimensional characters, the novel is allowed to explore the ways in which the developed characters go about considering different political

ideas and their associated identities, as they construct a social system and Palestinian identity in opposition to this out-group.

3. Awareness as an Individual identity

This section will look at two of the fully developed characters in order show how their character construction centers on their ability to consciously evaluate their position in Palestinian society. This section will prove that the construction of Palestinian identity affirmed in the novel is that of a flexible, aware, and constantly thinking individual, as exemplified by Usāmah and Zuhdī. These characters, clearly not part of the one-dimensional out-group, form two of the prototypes for how in-group individuals might manage the negotiation between their own personal and the available social identities.

The first character I will look at is Usāmah; the freedom-fighter who returned to the West Bank from the gulf. Upon his re-integration with Palestinian society, Usāmah is faced with a reality different than the one he had been told about while in the guerilla camps. The very fact that Usāmah is able to observe these different realities is what lets him into the in-group carved out by the narrator. Indicating the interest of the text in Usāmah's willingness to confront and make sense of other points of view, is the very timeframe of the novel, which begins upon Usāmah's re-entry, and ends shortly after his death.

3.1 Usāmah

Usāmah left the West Bank in the early sixties before its 1967 occupation by Israel. He would have only heard stories of the effects of that Six Day War that took the territory away from Jordanian control and brought it under Israeli rule. The resulting re-connection of West Bankers with the Palestinian population of Israel, their increased economic integration with Israel and the Israeli military presence, alongside the rapid increase in the number of Israeli settlements in the area, meant a massive social change for the population of the West Bank. The occupation also effected a large change in the way Palestinians conceived of themselves.[152] No longer was it "how do I assert my identity as a person living in a Palestinian area annexed by Jordan?" Rather, people were forced to see themselves in comparison and opposition to Israelis and the realities of occupation.[153] On his return to Palestine, then, Usāmah is out of touch. He had been working in the oil states where he attended guerilla training camps and only had contact with the situation in the West Bank through political conversations and accounts. It is thus rather a shock for the

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[152] Taha, 16
[153] Taha, 17

man when he returns to find his home very much changed yet in some ways uncannily similar to the way he left it.

This political-social background frames Usāmah's return to the West Bank. Since his social identity changed during his absence from the West Bank, Usāmah did not have a chance to react to the particular challenges and changes that shaped life there. His return, then, is a re-introduction to the social ideas developed in the West Bank, which he finds at odds with his own. The characters who Usāmah meets challenge his idea of what it is to be a Palestinian in the West Bank, and he engages with these challenges to his identity throughout the text.

When Usāmah returns to the West Bank, he is literally a man on a mission. He has come from a guerilla training camp where he was charged with stopping Palestinian/Israeli economic integration and exploitation. He is horrified by the way his countrymen interact with the Israeli soldiers at the border-crossing and feels alienated by them. He sees himself as the only person who is active in the fight against the Israeli occupation. He is outspoken when the topic of political action arises in the taxi as it pulls away from the border (7; T7) and condemns other Palestinians for being "complicit" in the Israeli economic colonization of the West Bank. At the same time, however, Usāmah is not the hardened fighter he poses as. A song by the popular Lebanese singer Fairouz plays on the radio. Usāmah, sitting in the taxi on the way to his mother's house thinks:

> Why do the sad songs hurt so much? Is it because we are a romantic people? He'd never been romantic himself. At least he wasn't any longer, or so he believed. How had he come to that conclusion? Training. Bullets. Crawling on all fours. Pulling in your stomach. Such things make you unromantic in thought and deed. Personal dreams evaporate, the individual becomes a single shot in the fusillade.... They'd said many things and so had we; logical things, historical equations are imposed on the individual making him a single number in the equation...Thus romanticism fades and dreams die. Yes, and poetry dies, along with passion. Everything becomes a link in the chain of the 'cause' itself. But... [a song lyric is played] The words cut into him, into his sensitive lonely soul (7; T5-6).

Fresh from guerilla training, as soon as Usāmah hears the songs and smells the scents of Palestine he is divided. Is he a "number in a historical equation" (7; T6) as he claims, or is he a reflective poet, sensitive to the loss of life that his mission entails? Although Usāmah returns to Nablus with one goal and a determination to see it through, he allows his views to be challenged and thinks seriously about how his task will affect West Bank Palestinian society.

Although Usāmah returns to Nablus to challenge what he sees as the complacency of the Palestinian people, he soon feels that "two mutually antagonistic factors were at work within him" (64; T87). For, "although he believed unequivocally that all the Egged buses had to be blown

up and that the workers had to abandon their treacherous role, Adil's unexpected presence among them created a cruel dilemma" (ibid). Usāmah is able to recognize that both he and his cousin "believed he was in accord with the group," (ibid) and had the community's best interests in mind. Thus, despite Usāmah's consistent assertions to himself, that "there was no longer more than one dimension to the issue, not after the 1967 defeat and the occupation that followed," (75; T88) it is clear that he is affected by the ideas and opinions of the men he has met who work in Israel. Throughout the chapters, the reader is privy to his thoughts as he questions the mission he was sent to accomplish. In the same way that the reader has a hard time totally condemning the grocer Hāj 'Abd Allāh because of the personal information they have about him, including his genuine friendliness and hospitality towards members of the community, we cannot dismiss Usāmah's ideas either, since he is genuinely thinking about how his actions will impact the community.

A good example of Usāmah's willingness to ponder the consequences of his actions and whether he is doing the right thing for Palestine is when he is invited along with 'Ādil and Zuhdī to visit a recovering Abū Sābir. The man had recently had the fingers on his right hand cut off in a workplace accident on a construction site in Israel. Since he was an "illegal worker," he has no rights to hospital services or even an ambulance. 'Ādil, on his way to convince Abū Sābir to press charges against the construction company that denied him those rights, invites Usāmah to come with him.

On the way into Abū Sābir's apartment, Usāmah passes the man's young daughter playing in the street in front of the house. The girl's eyes rest on Usāmah, which makes him wonder, "Why is she hostile to me? It's as if she knows!" (70; T81). The image of this young girl watching him haunts Usāmah, and later on, as he sits in a café:

> He shuddered when he remembered that her eyes had not been those of a little girl at all, that her gaze had seemed to bore into his head and read his thoughts, thoughts that threatened her father and everyone like him (76; T89).

As he thinks of the girl he is "engulfed by a rising sense of panic" (ibid) and to assuage this feeling he insists on talking to 'Ādil and trying again to convince him of the impropriety of working in Israel and the corresponding necessity of carrying out his mission. But he continues to question his own convictions when he is alone, and wonders: will he "be able to undertake the mission that was required of him?" (68; T78). Usāmah again shows us his sensitivity to the value of life when

he wonders, "how could he actually kill people—he, Usama, who'd once mourned for a lamb slaughtered on feast day?" (ibid).

Usāmah does eventually attack the Egged buses. During the attack his stomach is "split open" (153; T183) by a bullet. He thinks about the wedding he will not have, and watches as his blood mixes with the earth (ibid). Even at this late stage, however, Usāmah evaluates his actions:

> The organizations are afflicted with short-sightedness. Not true, you fool! But you don't know how a man feels when a plane flings him from an Arab airport to Lisbon. Pyjamas with a jacket on top... (ibid)

As readers we must ask ourselves if his death is a condemnation of his willingness to kill and injure his fellow Palestinians. Or if, perhaps, his fatal injury gives Usāmah a final chance to re-evaluate his position. If the latter is the case, than the above quoted passage holds a great deal of significance. In his final moments Usāmah seems to recognize a misinterpretation of "the organizations" (*munaẓimāt)* (154). This term alludes to the PLO and the relatively newly established—and limited—systems of local governance in the West Bank and Gaza. It also likely refers to the many international organizations such as the UN, with an interest in making or keeping peace in Israel and Palestine. This declaration is a retraction of his earlier agreement with a young man, a fellow taxi rider on his way to Nablus from the Jordanian border, that the others in the cab (and Palestinians in general) are "short-sighted" (22; T22).[154]

The retraction is not complete, however. Usāmah follows this with a caveat: "but you don't know." The "you" might be the "organizations" or his fellow Palestinians, or indeed the reader to whom he cannot explain how it feels to be Palestinian: spit out of countries, unwelcome. Usāmah tries to convey how it feels to be a Palestinian in exile. He uses the image of himself, wearing pyjamas in an airport, clearly plucked out of bed in a surprise deportation from another country, to convey the shame he feels in exile. He uses the image as a final explanation of his decision to bomb the Egged buses. Despite knowing that the "organizations" are not "short-sighted," Usāmah declares that they "do not know" how he feels. Thus, what the "organizations" cannot do—make him feel like he has any control over his life and country—he does himself.

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[154] The accusation of short sighted-ness referrs to the belief in the mid-seventies that the Palestinian Authority was trying to appease Israel in order to gain legitimacy and thus political and diplomatic power (though this also includes the "collaboration" of individuals working in Israeli factories with the "normalization" of the occupation and "fraternizing" with the occupier). Political actors not-involved with the PA, however, often saw this appeasement as "short-sighted," preffering to wage war against Israel—and suffer the resulting casualties—for long term gains of independence.

Usāmah finds himself at this tragic impasse, and the novel very realistically does not give an indication as to what the solution is.

Usāmah's ambiguous ending adds to the sense that *Al-Ṣubbār* is a work that values questions over answers. Indeed, it is Usāmah's encounters and personal challenges in Nablus which create the frame within which the novel exists. Since the entire novel takes place between the time Usāmah re-enters the West Bank on his mission and the immediate aftermath of that mission, the delays that he himself creates by deliberating his position, open up the novel's time frame. Without Usāmah's personal struggle and reconciliation with the changed West Bank culture and society, there would have been neither the time nor the opportunity for the deep exploration and multiple character developments that the novel puts forward. It is within the disconnect between myth and reality and the willingness to engage that gap that the novel occurs.

It is clear that the narrative style of the story privileges those able to take other points of view into account over their one-dimensional counterparts. Although the story's parameters are dictated by the challenges facing Usāmah on his return to Nablus, his is not the model closest to that put forward by the narrator, discussed in part one. This, I suggest, is because Usāmah's ability to take other perspectives into account is limited to the consideration and concern for the life and ideas of his blood relative, 'Ādil, who regularly rode the bus he was to blow up. The question of how able Usāmah is to consider other points of view can justifiably be raised.

3.2 Zuhdī

There is, however, a character in the novel who is shown to be able to truly internalize the different ideas and points of view put forward in the text. Although Zuhdī simply "wants to get by," and does not think in grand political terms like 'Ādil and Usāmah, it is his ability to understand many different political points of view, rather than be a political activist, which makes him a successful character in the novel. Indeed, if 'Ādil Al-Karamī is the novel's role model—someone whose patience and open mind never fail—then Zuhdī can be seen as its success story. From total unawareness of different points of view shown in the text, he is a character who listens to the different arguments about why he should or should not work in Israel. Indeed, Zuhdī takes a critical look at the world of Tel Aviv and tries to apply what he has been told to his daily life. Although he prefers 'Ādil's non-violent approach to dealing with the Israeli occupation, in one of the final scenes of the novel Zuhdī takes up Usāmah's arms and fights Israeli soldiers. Even this action, however, is the result of weighing alternatives. This completes the image of

Zuhdī as a character capable of making fully considered decisions, which posits him as the primary example of a successful identity constructed within the novel.

In a novel that moves around three major political axes, it is telling that an unaffiliated character like Zuhdī can distinguish himself. It is precisely his engagement with each of the prominent political ideas in *A-Ṣubbār* that show him as a successful character, rather than his choice of one idea over another.[155] There are three particular scenes in which Zuhdī is shown to critically assess the political ideas being expressed to him. In each, he takes into account at least one other contrasting political view and one other personal view before he acts. The first is when he is at work in Tel Aviv and has had enough of being treated badly by Jewish Israelis. At work, however, he is confronted not with hostile Israelis, but with men who enquire about the price of bread and sugar in the West Bank:

> Zuhdi felt sorry for them; he was confused. Maybe they were oppressed after all, like everyone else. If they were living a life of luxury they certainly wouldn't have cared so much about the price of sugar and bread. They are privileged though, he reminded himself. The lowest-paid of them made twice as much as any Arab worker, no matter how skilled or experienced...How can Adil say that Shlomo has more in common with me than the owner of the olive-factory at Jifi! Impossible! I don't believe it (90; T110).

In this scene the narrator shows first that Zuhdī's immediate expectation of rude treatment by his Israeli co-workers is challenged and second that he allows himself to wonder about their economic difficulties. Zuhdī reminds himself that while they might not be well off, they are better off than him. After listing a number of ways in which his Israeli co-workers are better treated than he is, Zuhdī thinks back to when 'Ādil compared the oppression that he endures to that of his colleagues the Israeli labourers'. After his own assessment of the idea based on the information at hand, however, Zuhdī rejects 'Ādil's suggestion.

The scene continues and one of the Israeli workers comes to work alongside Zuhdī. He makes small talk and mentions a Palestinian attack on an Israeli settlement. He says that a home was destroyed and people were killed; perhaps trying to share his disgust at the war between them, testing Zuhdī to see what his reaction is, or merely relaying a piece of news he had heard on the radio that morning. Zuhdī, after having established the existence of unequal treatment between himself and his Israeli co-worker, begins to get angry; believing that Shlomo (his co-worker) is taunting him. He restrains himself, however and first:

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[155] Siddiq notes this trend in the novel, saying "the wide divergence in the political views and practices of the three members of the family suggests that blood relations can no longer serve as a unifying factor on political or ideological questions," "The fiction," 149

hoped the man would leave before he lost control of himself. *Go away, Shlomo. God protect you! I know it wasn't you who blew up that house in Saada, that you're not responsible for putting Hamada and Basil and the rest in prison. But yet in some way you're to blame too, you're responsible but not responsible!* (91; T112)

Shlomo is totally unaware of Zuhdī's internal dialogue, or that he is at that moment being held accountable as a citizen of the State of Israel for the violent acts suffered by Zuhdī's fellow Palestinians. However, being an individual who shunned violence like ʿĀdil, Zuhdī manages to maintain control of himself until Shlomo walks away, confused by his co-workers' silence. As he walks away he mutters, "*Aravim muloukhlakhim,*" (dirty Arabs) (ibid). The phrase sets off the tense Zuhdī and he attacks Shlomo with a wrench, an action for which he is then imprisoned.

Zuhdī's analysis of the situation does not end with this act of violence. Indeed, even while in prison he reflects on the way that the two men interacted; on inequality, society and the occupation. This time Zuhdī looks at the situation from a humanist perspective, but also takes into account his earlier observation that both men were labourers at the factory and both somewhat financially insecure. While wishing he were out of prison, Zuhdī thinks:

> Shlomo wasn't all bad. He was just a human being, like you and me. But he was also an ass, just like the thousands of Shlomos before him. I'm an ass too. Two assess fighting over a bundle of clover and a pack-saddle made in a factory. And what did we gain from it all? He's in the hospital and I'm in prison (108; T139).

Zuhdī's ability to see Shlomo, and his own attack on the man, from more than one perspective is in itself impressive. Zuhdī is surrounded by the prison ʿĀdil and his colleagues, who insist that they will be the "clean up crew" for the current mess of Palestinian society, he is in an Israeli prison and is inundated by new political ideals which challenge those that ʿĀdil Al-Karamī had told him before. Despite all these challenges to broad-minded thought, Zuhdī is nonetheless able to take an external view of the situation. Regardless of which point of view is right or wrong Zuhdī is able to ask himself the question "what did we gain from it all?" That the same question appears in Usāmah's final scene shows that the ability to ask this question is something that the novel highlights as positive in its three-dimensional characters.

Zuhdī, however, is more explicit in his critical assessment of West Bank society than either ʿĀdil Al-Karamī or Usāmah. He is, in fact, even able to critique the ideas of the novel's two protagonists. In the scene where Usāmah attacks the bus that Zuhdī is riding, Zuhdī escapes the bus and takes cover near some rocks on the side of the road. Ducking both Israeli and guerrilla fire, he finds himself in just as much of a quagmire as Usāmah had in his final minutes. It is in this moment, trapped between two armies, that Zuhdī thinks:

Do you believe me, Adil al-Karmi, my brother? I swear by all that's holy that sitting in the Hummuz Café's worth more than the whole world. *Aravim! Muloukhlakhim*! And still Adil al-Karmi keeps intervening to try to solve the Middle East conflict! While the screwdrivers and the wrenches fly, and bits of wood fall out of the sky. I'm not Christ, by God! And there's Shlomo, with his head split open. Poor guy. The man wasn't all bad. Just an ordinary man like me, like you too, Usama, you bastard! (153; T183).

Zuhdī is angry. A character who wants to provide for his family, live undisturbed, and generally avoid political action, he is thrust into a situation where he has the option to remain hiding behind a rock letting Israeli soldiers shoot at other Palestinians, standing up and being shot by a bullet from either one of the two sides, or attacking the soldier standing directly in front of him and joining the fight with the guerillas who caused the fight in the first place.

Zuhdī lauds ʾĀdil's attempts at conflict resolution, he identifies ʿĀdil as a Christ figure: taking on the work of his people, being scorned and badly treated by Shaḥādah, Usāmah and his family who take him for granted. Zuhdī, in contrast to ʿĀdil the Christ figure, talks about himself as "just an ordinary man" who feels badly for hurting Shlomo, and at the same time expresses his frustration with mistreatment at the hands of the Israelis. His repetition of the Hebrew phrase, "Dirty Arabs" reminds us of his feelings of humiliation at the construction site the day he hit Shlomo. He shows that he understands the freedom fighter's position, that using force is valid for Usāmah who is "just an ordinary man," but Zuhdī is nonetheless angry with Usāmah for putting him in the middle of the fight.

While Zuhdī is able to see the reasoning behind the actions of both protagonists, to feel sorry for Shlomo and to abhor the idea of killing the Israeli soldier who is shooting at the guerillas, he attacks the soldier with a screwdriver, takes his rifle and turns it on the other Israeli soldiers. Even as he tells himself to "Fire! Fire!" Zuhdī evaluates his new position. He decides that he has become a "*shawka* now, a 'thorn'" (153; T182). He thinks to himself, "in spite of yourself and everything" (ibid) he has made the decision he never thought he would have. Indeed, he makes it clear that he does not like his new position, but that under the new circumstances of his life it is the appropriate decision to make. He does not stop assessing the decision critically though. He is the character who is able to be the most sympathetic to the different political ideas of West Bank Palestinian society. He condemns none, but ultimately refuses to sit on the fence and not act. Like Usāmah, he chooses violence as the only option available for his particular situation, and also like Usāmah he is ultimately uncomfortable with his decision.

In calling himself a "shawka," which means "thorn, spike, prick, prickle, spine, sting point,"[156] Zuhdī recalls the title of the novel, *Al-Ṣubbār*, which translates as "prickly pear," a fruit covered with small cactus spines. His action, taking on the role of a Palestinian resistance fighter, and the difficult process he went through in making that decision, is a *shawka*, which, I argue here, is symbolic for the novel's distaste for situations that require characters to make a choice *between* identities rather than allowing characters to assemble their identities based on individual preference or on critical assessment. The soldier then and Israeli violence represent a fourth one-dimensional character/system that is condemned by both Zuhdī and the narrator.

4. Conclusions

In *Al-Ṣubbār*, the narrative style, the rejection of one-dimensional characters and the emphasis on plurality work together to construct a Palestinian identity that is in the process of a painful paradigm shift. This position is fitting, given the historical period in which the novel was written. The construction of Palestinian identity in *Al-Ṣubbār* is ultimately that of individuals trying to find their way in a complex social reality. Individual Palestinian identity is expected to take account of the many different political ideas current in West Bank society and to negotiate a place for the individual somewhere in the middle of these ideas. The characters that the novel portrays most sympathetically are those who are able to understand and make sense of all the political ideas in the West Bank and indeed who are able to look at them critically. The use of one-dimensional characters as the novel's only out-group indicates the importance given to individuals who construct a social identity, rather than accepting a stalk one.

Khalīfah's characters are shown to struggle with the thorny idea of how to be Palestinian, which is indeed the most valued trait in the text. It is this very question, "how should I be Palestinian?" which unites the successful characters of Khalīfah's text. It posits that the idea of "Palestinian" is in flux, changeable, something that is not yet determined, and yet also something vitally important to think about. What this indicates is that there is no single political identity (as in resistance fighter, socialist, capitalist bourgeois, or patriarchal elite) or even hierarchy of political identities privileged within the text. *Al-Ṣubbār*'s characters don't need "an identity," in the national/political/hierarchical sense of the term. Rather, they are responsible for consciously constructing their own place within a world where political ideas are changing.

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[156] "shawka" *Hans Wher: A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. J. Miltan Cowan Ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966, 494

Chapter Four
Moving Beyond the Borderlands: The necessity of society in
Ḥusayn Al-Barghūthī's *Al-Ḍuffah al-Thālithah li-Nahar al-Urdun*
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By writing "the Palestinian" in the West Bank, Jerusalem, Western Europe and Budapest—
i.e. on home ground, disputed ground and foreign ground—Ḥusayn Al-Barghūthī goes further
than his predecessors and constructs a more broadly conceived Palestinian identity. Where
Ghassān Kanafānī constructed identity around the experiences of four Palestinians in exile, Imīl
Ḥabībī around one man's experience of conflicting Israeli and Palestinian social expectations, and
Ṣaḥar Khalīfah in opposition to rigid and one-dimensional ideas within the West Bank,
Barghūthī's construction of Palestinian identity moves the exploration onto almost an existential
scale. Indeed, the protagonist of the work is alone in the world, isolated from his family by his
own choice, and is shown to be the only person capable of determining his social identity; this
being the task he is set throughout the work. By presenting the quest of the protagonist in the
form of a collection of memories set beyond the borderlands of Palestine, the Palestinian in
Barghūthī's work is constructed on both an individual and a global level.

Al-Ḍuffah al-Thālithah centers on a young Palestinian living in Budapest in the early 1980s.
The story moves back and forth in time through the memories of the protagonist, who we learn
very late in the narrative is in prison. The narrative slides from memory to reality, to the
remembering of a memory in a stream-of consciousness style. It begins with the narrator
recalling the day he left Palestine in a letter to a woman named Dānā. It then moves with the
narrator's memories to Beirut, then onto Italy and then Budapest, where the narrator spends
most of his time wandering the city. As the narrative moves towards the present (where the
protagonist sits in prison) it becomes clear that the novel is driven by the need to locate a social
identity for the character who renounced his Palestinian social identity when he left the country.
The narrator's final escape from prison only happens once he has been able to re-form a social
identity for himself and agrees to re-enter society.

A key feature of the protagonist's quest for identity is that its construction is two parts.
The first of these is the individual identity of the protagonist, which is portrayed as unchanging
throughout the novel. The second component is the social identity, which is being debated within
the text. Social identity is shown to be something that is changeable but that is also necessary.
The first section of this chapter will look at how the narrator separates himself from what he
understands as a Palestinian social identity, and how he then constructs his individual identity

for the reader. This will be followed by an examination of how the secondary characters in the novel challenge this constructed personal identity, and how they suggest alternative social identities for the protagonist. The final section of this chapter will take a broader look at the novel and examine Barghūthī's use of metadiegesis as he tells the story of the narrator.[157] It will further discuss how the re-telling of other texts within the narrative nuances what the secondary characters bring to the text. Indeed, in these extra-texts the novel is able to introduce new themes and connect the protagonist to worlds outside of himself, thus broadening the scope of social identity formation beyond the protagonist's immediate experience.

1. Renunciation of a Palestinian Social Identity

The first scene of the novel is five pages long. It is dense, and written in the form of a passionate letter. The structure of the letter's narrative, rather than following any sort of external logic, reflects the narrator's stream-of-consciousness. In the letter the protagonist tells a woman named Dānā about how he plans on leaving Palestine. What becomes clear after the first line is that the protagonist is not just leaving Palestine. He is, in fact, renouncing the place, its people and its politics. It is on these three levels that Barghūthī's narrator detaches himself from a Palestinian social identity. The rest, he figures, is his own identity, which he brings with him into exile.

The novel begins:

Dānā, oh my love!
 I will leave this city on this night. I will renounce it for the yellow lamps in the empty streets with nothing but my garbage-bag suitcases and the tomcat on the pavement. I will renounce it, leaving through the narrow dark ghetto where gangs gather and which women fear.
 I will renounce it and mount a small horse going towards the deep valleys and riverbeds and the dark trees. I will make tea on the sun and moon of the open country under the stars and drink the tea alone. I will grab by the nape the sweating horse, with longing inside me and tears on my face, glistening in the strange light. From my frozen provisions I will leave a child born dead and hang him on the branch of an olive tree until the sun and moon dance around him like phantoms. And near the tree the horse will neigh resolutely, and sit, until I tell him about freedom.
 I will leave this city on this night crossing the last iron road stop. I don't own anything except my hands, I will drag them and watch somehow a hyena drag a woman in her nightclothes whose yellow hair dangles behind her, crossing the steadfast Sahara who lights my way through it glowing the red setting sun. I will rush to separate the gathered starving wolves and search for the victim or lost traveler. I will disown my mother and my father, when they dry up far in the darkness of hopelessness they call for me. I will leave this city and I will try to become alone in this moment like I was alone before it. I won't carry my book or my memories, and I won't say farewell to my friends, I will become alone and try living like that. I will search for the green night and orange stars (7-8).

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[157] Gerard Genette first used the term to refer to "narrative embedded within the diegetic narrative." In Genette, Gerard. *Narrative discourse: an essay in method*. Jane E. Lewin Trans. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980

In this emotional and erratic opening passage the narrator explains to the reader who he is. The section establishes the character of the protagonist, outlining multiple facets of his life through disjointed narrative. At the same time as he explains his background to the reader, however, the protagonist announces his renunciation of it.

In social psychological terms, this passage expresses the idea that "[for] a group living in a particular environment these personal bonds [to the place] become partly collective ones, shared by the group and thus defining at once both its territory and social identity."[158] Thus, the protagonist's physical separation from the land, even before one takes into account his written renunciation of its people and politics, indicates a separation from a Palestinian identity that is tied to the land. As Anne Whyte, a social psychologist puts it, "to leave is to break the bonds with both the environment and the group."[159] This dramatic leaving thus announces a split in the identity of the protagonist. The letter, moreover, is very specific about the geographical places and particular people the protagonist is renouncing. An in-depth look at this leaving will help in understanding how the letter writer understands his own individual and social identities.

1.1 Renouncing Space

Physical space is clearly important for the protagonist. He repeats several times the phrases "this city" and "the valleys," naming specific features of each, like the street lights or the olive trees. The geographical space in this passage, in fact, is divided into three separate categories: the city, the valleys and the road. The first he quits, the second he imagines as a sort of pastoral "green space," divorced from the life of the city, and the third he describes as an unfriendly place where the protagonist is always alone. The first two ideas are clearly juxtaposed. Where the narrator describes the city as dark, empty, a place where gangs roam the streets, the valleys are deep and green, a place where one can see the stars. In contrast to the city, then, the valleys are romanticized. The road, which I will get back to shortly, is an undescribed no place.

The idealization of the pastoral, especially of olive groves, is something characteristic of the way Palestine is described in post-*nakbah* poetry.[160] Barbara Parmenter has discussed this phenomenon as way of thinking about the land of Palestine post 1948, which marked reclamation of space through prose and poetry beginning in the mid fifties.[161] Similarly, Bardenstein, in her work, "Figures of Diasporic Cultural Production: Some Entries from the Palestinian Lexicon," notes the

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[158] Tajfel, *Introducing*, 375

[159] Tajfel, *Introducing*, 375

[160] Parmenter, Parmenter, Barbara. *Giving Voices to Stones: Place and Identity in Palestinian Literature.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994, 42

[161] Ibid, 42-7

use of the pastoral ideal as an expression of a metonymic diasporic fragment around which the Palestinian diaspora "cluster" as these communities work at establishing their own sense of community identity.[162] If these ideas are applied to the description of land in *Al-Ḍuffah al-Thālithah*'s introduction, two things emerge. First, the protagonist is renouncing the city and what it represents to him. At the same time however, the protagonist is actively claiming the idea of the valleys by writing them in this idealized way. By hanging his "child born dead," on the branch of an olive tree in the romanticized valley, the protagonist affirms the importance of the myth.

This "child born dead," I suggest, can be interpreted as a symbol for the Palestinian identity that the protagonist is leaving behind. The child represents the protagonist who, though he is leaving Palestine, knows that he is leaving something of himself behind as he leaves. The "child born dead" is his aborted Palestinian social identity. The protagonist, however, is still alive, and takes with him the childhood memories that, although he sees them as 'coming to nothing,' are still part of his personal history. Then, although the protagonist ultimately quits the very valleys that he has claimed as part of his history, this scene sets them apart as a place where his Palestinian social identity is located.

This act, I suggest, indicates that although the protagonist is renouncing his Palestinian social identity in its broad sense, there is a part of it that he keeps. In hanging his rejected identity in these valleys, he acknowledges that it is in these mythical Palestinian places that his past resides. His Palestinian identity, then, is based on the collective myths of place developed over centuries. What is significant is that the protagonist makes no move to renounce his personal identity, of which his past is a part. The collective effort to re-claim the land through words, the writing down of imagined places—his imagined Palestine—are what the protagonist takes with him as part of his personal identity. Thus the protagonist's idea of Palestine is constructed as not only a thing built out of a collective memory, but also something that shapes the individual.

1.2 Renouncing the Palestinian People

The protagonist renounces his parents and hangs a "child born dead" on the branch of an olive tree in preparation for his departure. However, the fact that these are things that he must do before being able to quit Palestine means that for him they are significant. The opening scene

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[162] Bardenstein, "Figures of Diasporic," 31 and see Bardenstein's other article, "Trees, Forests, and the Shaping of Palestinian and Israeli Collective Memory," *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present.* Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer, Eds. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999, for additional discussion on the topic.

is executed like a tug of war for the protagonist's sense of identity, at once aligning him with fellow Palestinians, and also inserting an obvious gap between himself and those who he has named.

One example of this is the protagonist's later description of a woman who is in the process of hanging "an aborted baby girl in a nylon bag on one of the bright neon bulbs at the intersection" (9-10). The description is an obvious parallel with his earlier hanging of a dead child on the branch of an olive tree. The protagonist, like the woman, left a child born dead. Even as he introduces the parallel character, however, he says, "I will quit a woman hanging an aborted baby girl..." (ibid). Like his described connection to the land of Palestine—at once connected but nonetheless leaving—so are his relationships with other Palestinians.

The same idea holds for his declaration that he will "disown my mother and my father, when they dry up far in the darkness of hopelessness they call for me." While the protagonist unequivocally asserts his separation from them, they are still "mother" and "father," names that indicate close affiliation. What this tells us, I suggest, is that the protagonist is telling the reader his "back story." By making explicit to the reader what he is renouncing, we learn about the social identity that the protagonist is leaving behind. Thus, at the same time as he leaves his past, the narrator is writing it into his renunciation. Like the claiming of land through its idealization the narrator lays claim to his history by writing it down. In doing this the protagonist is asserting that part of his individual identity—his history, where he developed—is unequivocally Palestinian, despite his quitting the place and its people.

1.3 Renouncing Palestinian Politics

In an interesting combination of the ideas of people and place, the last thing that the protagonist declares that he will leave before moving on to describe his experiences in Beirut, are the "mourners of the year nineteen sixty seven":

> I will leave the mourners of the year nineteen sixty-seven wearing black mourning robes and dancing a dance in circles, striking their faces and breasts in lamentation in the moonlit squares of the villages (11).

The sense of loss associated with the war of 1967, the hardship and humiliation of life under Israeli occupation, are recalled in this opening scene of *Al-Ḍuffah Al-Thālithah*.[163] In recalling the war of 1967 and the people who mourn the moment that began Israeli occupation, the protagonist connects the ideas of the people of Palestine and the land of Palestine. The event,

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[163] See Chapter Three's discussion of Usāmah's re-entry into the West Bank after the war of 1967 for more on how the war changed the situation in the West Bank.

which some say was the defining war of modern Palestine, united West Bank, Gazan and Israeli Palestinians. It also, however, cut them all off from the rest of the world because of new Israeli controlled borders.[164] By rejecting the "mourners of the year nineteen sixty-seven," the protagonist is separating himself from the political arguments over the land. The idea of the land—in its politicized capacity as disputed, seized and fought for—is rejected alongside the people who mourn its political loss. He thus rejects Palestine in all its facets: the people, the place and the politics.

In telling the reader explicitly what he is not, the protagonist shows us the basis from which he will construct his exile-identity through the rest of the novel. Once he has left Palestine, the constant rejection of it and its people stops, and the protagonist defines himself in relation to the people and places of other countries. By setting up the novel with this scene, however, the protagonist constructs his identity as essentially Palestinian, even though he rejects it and wants to "become alone in this moment like I was alone before it" (8). In the following scenes of the novel where the protagonist continues to search for a new social identity, it is with the idea of Palestinian put forward here constantly in the background. Despite his self-professed alienation from the Palestinian people, place and politics, the protagonist shows his history to be—as a result of his life experiences—Palestinian. Palestinian identity, then, is constructed by the protagonist as something ever-present and unavoidable, despite his attempts at alienating himself from it.

2. Secondary Characters and the Re-Construction of a Social Identity

Since *Al-Ḍuffah al-Thālithah* is made up entirely of memories and experiences from the point of view of the protagonist, we as readers are exposed to the world according to only one lens. In the first part of this analysis, I looked at the ways in which the character separated himself from a Palestinian social identity. For additional cues to the identity of Barghūthī's narrator my analysis will turn to the ways in which the novel's secondary characters interact with the narrator. I will pay particular attention to how interactions challenge the solely individual identity of the narrator and work towards the re-creation of a social identity.

This section will look at three characters whose interactions with the protagonist change or challenge his identity. I will begin by analyzing the first interjection into the text by a secondary character, and then follow with a look at the two most developed secondary

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[164] Tessler, 399

characters: the narrator's best friend in Budapest and an oracle who appears to the narrator near the end of the novel.

2.1 The Lebanese Stranger

The first time the words of a character other than the narrator appear in the text is just after the introductory scene, where the narrator stops imagining his departure from "this city," and begins relating the next part of his journey. We learn that the narrator goes to Beirut where he "will be woken up by someone buried in his bed-coffin" (13). The scene continues, and indeed, the protagonist is woken up by a man, buried amongst blankets, who "whispers with caution" that the narrator's "accent is Palestinian!" and that he should "Change it!" and then is said to bury himself under the covers again (ibid).

This serves to undermine the rejection of a Palestinian social identity established in the opening scene. The protagonist's otherness according to the unidentified man is connected to his identity as Palestinian. While the narrator may have renounced Palestine before he left, outside of Palestine, he continues to be identified as Palestinian regardless of his personal decisions as to what elements make up his individual identity. Indeed, this first secondary character interjection adds a further layer to the idea of alienation that the protagonist had expressed: not only does he reject the label "Palestinian," but the character reacts to (and out-groups) him specifically as a Palestinian. He is thus in a sort of limbo. While no longer choosing to create his identity around Palestinian people, land or politics, he is still identified by other Arabs as Palestinian.

The protagonist makes no comments as to whether or not he changes the way he speaks to cover up what others perceive as a Palestinian accent, and tells us only that he leaves the "Ashrafīah" (13) neighbourhood where the scene took place, and "will sleep in a weapons house that [i.e. the next] night" (13).[165] The narrator thus appears to consciously avoid characters who alienate him on account of his being—or at the very least speaking with the accent of a—Palestinian, and seeks out a different overnight refuge.

This first appearance of a secondary character marks the first challenge to the protagonist's rejection of Palestinian social identity. The interaction places him in limbo, where he refuses to be "Palestinian" but is alienated and shunned on account of the history that that identity has imprinted on him. In this limbo, the protagonist moves on from Beirut to Budapest where he wanders the public parks and gardens. He has few extended interactions with other characters until he meets Bilāl.

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[165] A Christian area of Beirut, often controlled by Christian militia troops and notoriously anti-Palestinian

2.2 Bilāl

Bilāl first appears a third of the way through the novel. The protagonist says that he meets him on the Frūtsa Promenade on one of his many solitary wanders through the pubic spaces of Budapest. The introduction of Bilāl comes without preface, immediately after the protagonist's rumination about the waves of the Danube. He simply begins his next sentence with the following information:

> I met him on the Frūtsa promenade, a small walkway near Budapest, he was dancing without a shirt, revealing the brown curly hair on his chest. He was dancing on an unsteady table and everyone was screaming and laughing. A fair-haired woman took him a glass, which glistened and inverted the light shining on her (54).

This scene introductions a new phase in the novel, which revolves mostly around interactions with European women. The shift in focus seems to be tied to this new character, Bilāl, who from the first description is consistently associated with their presence. Indeed, mention of such foreign women almost disappears when Bilāl does. It is in the following scene with Bilāl that we discover he is Arab, and most likely Palestinian, rather than Hungarian or European. The narrator finds Bilāl singing in Arabic in a park, at which point the following dialogue occurs,

> [Bilāl:] The brother from Palestine?
> [Narrator:] Of course! And you?
> [B:] From the same clay.
> [N:] Listen! I assimilate and you clap your hands. Okay?
> He got up from the grass near the theatre in his black sweater and black pants and messed up hair, looking like he had just been through the Amazon, he danced a little then he stopped suddenly.
> [B:]And now, my lady, my lady, life is very expensive and my problem persists without me living. The past is like this street exactly: the trees real and tall at its sides, but naked under the glistening neon lights after the rain births another grove of tree phantoms, sleeping outside on the black asphalt, to be perfumed with the fruit and the leaves in the depths. The past is part of the tree phantom, not pointing anywhere except at the astrology of our world. But why do we look at this always, and crave it always, and forget the tangible truth around us? Life is like this road exactly: half of it is a dream and half of it is real (55-6).

The full scene is composed of Bilāl's monologue related by the protagonist, and is the longest reported speech in the text. It marks a significant point in the novel where the protagonist momentarily stops narrating his life and existence and allows another character to assume the role of storyteller. In terms of his style of speech, Bilāl's is very much like the protagonist's; it is wandering, immediate and flows in a stream-of-consciousness manner. I suggest here that Bilāl's monologue, a criticism of Palestinians in exile, conveys an idea adopted by the narrator who is unable to make the criticism himself. Indeed, Bilāl acts as a convenient foil for the protagonist as well as how he has chosen to identify himself. Both men are Palestinians in exile living in Budapest with the same introspective manner, yet they have each chosen different

ways to cope with their state of exile. By handing over narration for close to two pages, the protagonist (or author) gives Bilāl space in the text to explore and express his ideas and we are left to compare the two characters.

In this highly significant monologue, the two men—sitting beneath a tree beside a road near the Budapest theatre—are the tree phantoms that Bilāl describes. From Palestine, they are now on the road looking for a sign in the wrong place. Bilāl accuses them, and those like them, of craving signs, and forgetting the "tangible truth" that surrounds them. This "tangible truth," is the very social identity that the protagonist rejects. It is society and human interaction that is forsaken when the protagonist wanders the world alone "looking for signs" so that he can understand "how to be a Palestinian." What Bilāl suggests is that the individual must not struggle with the binary here/not here of exile. Instead, he says, the individual must form a social identity within their own particular circumstances, rather than seeking out an ideal that would result in the privileging of either part of the binary.

This image of the tree phantoms lining the road and the idea of the here/not here of exile conjures the symbol of the road as it is used in Kanafānī's *Rijāl*. The symbol, in fact, is employed in the same way as it is in Kanafānī's text; the road is a no-place, a symbol of the exile that is the expression of the simultaneous here/not here states. Like Kanafānī, Barghūthī—through Bilāl—uses the symbol of the road to challenge the protagonist's current understanding of identity. As Kanafānī suggests a change in the conception of the here/not here binary for Palestinians, so Bilāl challenges *Al-Ḍuffah al-Thālithah*'s protagonist's idea that social identity can be renounced entirely and one can survive with only an individual identity. Thus Barghūthī, like Kanafānī, suggests that the here/not here binary be reconciled into a continuum where it is possible for the protagonist to be both here and not here, but still interact with others in the present. As the monologue continues, Bilāl elaborates on the state of here/not here in the novel and brings up two important ideas: assimilation and the notion of being on the wrong path.

The idea of assimilation is introduced by the protagonist, when he says, "Listen! I assimilate and you clap your hands. Okay?" (55). We know already from the behaviour of the protagonist that he either does not want to or cannot assimilate into life in Budapest. Bilāl does not respond to his request, but gets up, dances a little, and begins his speech, which challenges the protagonist's position as an alienated figure. Since Bilāl, unlike the protagonist, is willing to engage with the idea of assimilation, he has first hand understanding of what it is to be a Palestinian living and interacting with a foreign culture. This is indicated first by the ambiguity

over his ethnicity or background, the constant associated presence of European women, and full engagement with Budapest city life, i.e. with the theatre from which he just exited. He is, further, willing to put the idea of assimilation into a sort of personal-philosophical context as he talks to the protagonist. It makes sense that it must be a secondary character who brings up and deals with the idea of assimilation, since the protagonist, self-situated as an outsider, is unable to do so.

Then there is the idea that either Bilāl or the protagonist's life choices have led them to the "wrong path" in terms of constructing an identity. The first words of the monologue address this concern. Bilāl says, "life is expensive," indicating that according to him, life's decisions are weighty and the questions and ideas he and the protagonist deal with are not easy to make—and indeed—that all decisions are made at a price. The decision to take one "road" over another, then, does not seem to be a problem for Bilāl. What is important is that all roads are different and mean losing different aspects of identity. In connection with the idea of assimilation, this might indicate that whatever one gains with being part of a host society, one loses something as well. The second part of the sentence, "and my problem persists without me living," further explains Bilāl's philosophy on exile and assimilation by indicating that the solution (or "road") of one person is not the ultimate solution that must be sought by all. It is a question bigger than Bilāl, and one that endures.

Bilāl continues his explanation with a metaphor: the truth of tangible reality, and the dream of the road. The idea of the analogy is that Bilāl's is not necessarily, nor does he know what is, the correct answer to the question of assimilation and exile. Since he, like the protagonist, looks to the "astrology of our world" for signs rather than the "tangible truth around us," he is just as likely right in assimilating as the protagonist is in his decision to wander and reflect in solitude. The image Bilāl gives us in his monologue shows a second option for identity construction that is available to the protagonist. Mainly, assimilating into European society. That the protagonist eventually falls out with Bilāl shows us that he chooses not to assimilate, but rather to continue his solitary existence.

Bilāl's assertion that alienation is a choice adds to the challenge that the unidentified Lebanese man put to the protagonist's rejection of Palestinian social identity. Indeed, it is through secondary characters that the protagonist's idea of himself is challenged. What he thinks he wants is put to test and confronted by the actions of others. It seems appropriate, moreover, to deal with the issue of social identity through interactions with secondary characters, since the alienated narrator seems to refuse to entertain the idea on his own. These ideas of exile and being

on the wrong path recur near the end of the novel, after we learn that the narrator is in prison. It is in prison that he has spells of hallucination. While he is in these spells, an additional secondary character is brought into the text.

2.3 The man in Aldūrādū

During the protagonist's extensive discussion with the character he hallucinates, ideas of exile and assimilation are again brought to the surface. The narrator depicts his time in prison as difficult, he recalls often that he "desired death," (128) and was on the verge of giving up life. There is very little dialogue that originates from characters other than the protagonist as he sits in prison. Then, suddenly, a voice addresses him (*shay' qāla lī,*) (129). What follows begins one of the most extended exchanges of the novel. The dialogue—all from the recollection of the protagonist—marks a second turning point for the development of the character, his conception of identity, and his understanding of how he fits into the world. The dialogue begins with the voice addressing the narrator:

> He who is half dead is censured completely
> Because life is not a play thing
> And longing is not only betrayal
> Oh my heart! Will you renounce with me those words? (129)

These words are a direct response to the narrator's earlier confession that he had wished for death. The voice's assertion that the protagonist is half-dead—not dead in body, but, we must then assume, dead in spirit—combined with his caution that those who are half-dead are "censured completely," acts as both a warning and an admonishment. He continues by telling the protagonist that thinking of death is not something to be treated lightly. He tells the protagonist that life is "not a play thing," and that even "longing" for death is a "betrayal" of the self, society and, since the hallucination might be read as God, it is a betrayal of God as well. The voice pleads with the protagonist to retract his thoughts about death. In this plea, he says "my heart," which either indicates that the life of the narrator is important to him or he is in fact calling the protagonist his "heart," indicating a pet name and a certain level of familiarity. He then asks the protagonist to renounce with him the desire for death. This is significant since it is the opposite of alienation. It is a union with the voice to help the protagonist back on the correct road: life and society.

If we conceive of the ultimate expression of alienation from the physical and human world as death, the voice can be seen as a sort of safeguard, demanding that the narrator maintain his only real connection to the world in the novel: his physical presence. The novel permits the

narrator to alienate himself from the world (i.e. renounce his social identity) only up to a certain point. The hallucination, as an intervention by the author, the protagonist's inner self, God or otherwise, is acting as a force that will not permit the protagonist to take any final steps away from society. The voice directly addresses both the ideas of exile/alienation and that of being on the wrong path. If the voice asserts the idea that "man is made for society" then he does not at all indicate—like Bilāl or the Lebanese man—which society or where; this is something shown to be up to the protagonist himself to decide. The voice then posits existence and union (as the opposite of alienation) as the correct mode of life, above ideas of places or peoples.

The voice continues, and gives instructions to the protagonist in the form of a prophecy:

> You will leave the cell totally, on a treacherous journey and you will lose everything soon. You will lose everything, you will forsake all of your skins skin skin like an onion, so as not to slip on the onion, rather you will diffuse the air of the non-spirit and reach your final skin (130).

The voice fuses the ideas of the prison cell and the isolation within which the protagonist lives. He tells us that the prison cell is the protagonist's own construction (by rejecting social identity), and that when he gets out and finds himself on the right path; he must "diffuse the air of the non-spirit." The non-spirit, the part of him that was "half-dead," must be abandoned: he must stop rejecting society and with it social identity. The voice tells the narrator that he must, in order to "renounce" his desire for death, do away with his constructed fields of alienation, i.e. from his country, his people and people in general, and shed his "skins skin skin."

The voice then shifts focus, from delivering vague prophecy to actually calling the protagonist back to the things he has abandoned. The voice asks the narrator if he remembers

> The blue evenings and the water running between the rocks of the valleys and the sun, warm and bright in the morning and how it undressed the red and yellow flowers between the humming of bees (130).

Here, the voice is calling the narrator back to the physical lands that he had renounced at the start of the novel. The man tells the narrator to let go of his "skins", i.e. his renunciation of land, people and politics, and to go back to the land. After this first instruction the voice reminds the narrator of his mother, and of the beautiful girl he wanted to marry (130). In doing so the man tells the narrator to go back to people, to the people he remembers and renounced, the people of the land that he left. Then the man admonishes the narrator, "you were a child in those days and the years passed and you waited for what you did not find" (130). The voice reiterates his point that rather than finding what he had hoped, in this case a social identity he was comfortable with,

the narrator "went to become something else" (130), i.e. he went on to be alone in a self-constructed prison cell.

The man behind the voice, unlike Bilāl, is not a Palestinian. He cannot therefore provide the protagonist information on how to be a Palestinian. I suggest that the man, rather, is telling the protagonist how to be a person. As mentioned earlier, the voice admonishes the protagonist for removing himself from first his own society and then society in general by building his prison cell (i.e. skins skin skin). This reading is supported by what we do learn about the man behind the voice. Said to be a sort of oracle living in a paradise, he represents a man who has found his own utopia and can thus advise the protagonist on how to find his way out of the dystopia that he has created for himself.[166]

The man behind the voice was born in what the narrator describes as "Aldūrādū" (134), a "paradise" (ibid). The man is called a "fierce soothsayer" (ibid), is dressed in white (ibid), and the protagonist is so fascinated by him that he recalls, "I loved his life and his experiences, so I asked him to tell me about his childhood, because my childhood was much more tormented than necessary" (ibid). The fierce soothsayer then tells him that he was born in the Amazon and when he grew up, after a long time searching, he found the paradise of "Aldūrādū" (134-5). He goes on to warn the protagonist, however, that he must not seek out "Aldūrādū," that he must not dream only about it since "for all men, oh son, there is a lost paradise special for him, and for each one of us a paradise lost for him, and for every paradise its verses are special" (135).

Since Aldūrādū (or Eldorado) is said to be a "lay earthly paradise" a "legendary region of South America which was said to possess extraordinarily rich lands, occupied by peoples whose habits and customs were characterized by great purity and simplicity," the location of the soothsayer in this paradise lends him the authority to instruct the narrator.[167] Having clearly found his utopia the soothsayer reaches out to the protagonist to help him shed his "skins skin skin" and re-enter society.[168] This, the soothsayer says, is the first step in finding one's own utopia. By telling the protagonist that he must not spend all his time thinking about finding his identity, the voice criticizes the narrator's quest, which begins with the first scene of the novel.

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[166] In writing a dystopian novel, Barghūthī joins the tradition of Dostoyevsky, Elliot and Joyce. Each of these authors construct dehumanized urban environments that express "anxieties associated with the modern predicament." (see *Dystopian Literature: A Theory and Research Guide*. M. Keith Brooker. London: Greenwood Press, 1994, 175) For Barghūthī's narrator, that modern predicament is exile, which he writes for his character as loneliness in a foreign city, unable or unwilling to form a new social identity.

[167] "Myths and Symbols." in *Dictionary of Literary Utopias*. Vira Fortunati and Raymond Trousson Eds. Paris: Editions Champion, 2000, 416

[168] "utopia," for the purposes of *Al-Ḍuffah* is defined as the ultimate balance between the individual and social identity.

He is told that there is a "paradise lost" waiting for him, which he must enter the world of men to find.

Eldorado, first used as a literary utopia in Voltaire's satirical *Candide*, is also brought up in Ḥabībī's *Al-Waqāʾiʿ*. *Candide*, as mentioned earlier in chapter two, acts as an intertext, from which Ḥabībī nominally drew the structure of *Al-Waqāʾiʿ*, and the satirical voice. Saʿīd, in the chapter titled "The Amazing Similarity between Candide and Saeed" (*al-shabah al-firīd bayn kandīdi wa Saʿīd*) (94; T72) comments to his extra-terrestrial friend about the critics' accusations that he has copied the story of Voltaire. "Don't blame me for that," he says, "Blame our way of life that hasn't changed since Voltaire's day, except that El Dorado has now come to exist on this planet" (93; T72). The use of Eldorado in *Al-Waqāʾiʿ*, then, works in a similar to the way it is used in Barghūthī's text. In both cases it refers to someone else's utopia. For Saʿīd it is Israel, the supposed utopia for the world's Jewish population, and for *Al-Ḍuffah al-Thālithah*'s protagonist, it is the paradise found by the soothsayer. It is left to each character to find his own Eldorado. The difference being that Saʿīd finds his in the impossible answer of an alien rescue, where *Al-Ḍuffah al-Thālithah*'s protagonist is told to look for it on the earth among men.

It is not clear whether *Al-Ḍuffah al-Thālithah*'s use of the Eldorado myth is directly drawing upon Ḥabībī's earlier use of the idea. For now I will suggest that Barghūthī is drawing both on the general myth (part of which is developed in Voltaire) as well as on Ḥabībī's use of the term. As a Palestinian literary critic, philosophy professor, student of comparative literature and writer, it seems certain that Barghūthī would have been familiar with Ḥabībī's text. Since authorial intent here is moot, I suggest that the parallels between the texts are not accidental. What is interesting then, is how Barghūthī builds on and changes the idea of Eldorado from either Voltaire's or Ḥabībī's use of the myth. Thus, where in Voltaire Eldorado is a place that puts in relief the ways of life in Europe at the turn of the seventeenth century, Ḥabībī references the myth in order to contrast the idea of a paradise for the Jews with the realities of the Palestinians. Barghūthī takes the reference to suggest that Eldorado is not the same for everyone. I.e. a paradise for the Jewish population of the world is not the paradise of the Palestinians, meaning that the idea of paradise is subjective and almost individual. Finding it, then, can be understood as an individual quest.

I now return to the text of *Al-Ḍuffah* to examine the soothsayer—someone who has found his own Eldorado. He is a character in the text who challenges the conception of social identity held by the protagonist, and suggests to him that finding a social identity is something that can be achieved by the individual, but that it is something that must be accomplished. What is

particularly interesting about the soothsayer as a character who helps construct the protagonist's identity is that he is not Palestinian. This is significant when thinking first about what this means for the character's construction of a Palestinian identity, and then when we recall Jameson's declaration that those outside of the Third-World cannot properly understand third world fiction. His assertion that "to read a text adequately –we would have to give up a great deal that is individually precious to us and acknowledge a situation unfamiliar and therefore frightening—one that we do not know and prefer *not* to know," just does not fit when we encounter a soothsayer who inhabits a European-made utopian place advising a Palestinian character that he must find identity in society, and not specifically Palestinian society.[169]

The answers that the novel puts forward for the protagonist are both general human truths and specifically Palestinian realities. In the closing scene, after coming out of his hallucination and miraculously getting out of prison, the protagonist walks out onto the street, where he sees the sunshine and shakes his head, then plunges "into the taxi like all the rest of the people" (140). Having felt the sun, described as shining on the street and on all the people in it and uniting them, the narrator re-joins his fellow humans in the taxi.

The secondary characters in the novel challenge the protagonist's renunciation of a Palestinian social identity. First by indicating that he is defined as a Palestinian on account of the things specific to Palestine that shaped his individual identity. Specifically his accent or mannerisms, which would single him out as a Palestinian in foreign contexts, but which would not have seemed identifying features in Palestine. He is thus marked as a Palestinian even though it is a social identity that he rejected, showing that having been raised there, his personal identity has taken on some unmistakable Palestinian social traits. The second character, Bilāl, challenges the protagonist's decision to renounce any sort of social identity, either European or Palestinian. He accuses the protagonist of being on the wrong path and of looking for signs in the wrong places. While he does not insist that the protagonist assert a Palestinian social identity, he does reveal that being "on the road" unites the two characters and puts them into their own social group as exiles. The final character shows the protagonist that he must take on a social identity if he wishes to stay alive. For the soothsayer, the renunciation of social identity is death, and as a fellow being who has found his social identity, he cannot allow the protagonist to quit the world.

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[169] Jameson, 66

The secondary characters, while showing the protagonist that part of his individual identity is Palestinian, indicate that his social identity does not have to be the same. What they do insist on, however, is that he is a human, and humans are social creatures. They must engage with their fellow humans in order to survive. The function of secondary characters in the novel directly contradicts Jameson's assertion that in order to understand third world novels we must give up some of ourselves. By showing that social identity is essential, but not ultimately tied absolutely to one's native culture, the secondary characters indicate to the reader that the protagonist is a person whose individual identity was shaped by his life in Palestine. In his creation of a social identity, then, the protagonist can choose whatever society he wishes.

3. Metadiegesis

Interestingly, what the novel's use of secondary characters suggests here is confirmed in the novel's use of metadiegesis. An overwhelming theme of the novel, and a characteristic of Barghūthī's work in general, is its complex fabric of independent narrative threads. Images of the Budapest metro, its public gardens and the Danube are woven in with memories of the streetlights of Ramallah, the hills and mountains of its surrounding countryside, and the city streets of old Jerusalem. This sort of writing stitches different places into one world: that of the protagonist. This multi-national setting serves as a backdrop for the global message about identity that the novel presents. As the narrator searches for his identity all over the northern hemisphere, with his dreams taking him to a South American Eldorado, his situation is taken out of a singularly Palestinian context.

Perhaps even more effective than setting and character use in making the case study of a Palestinian man into a work on human identity, are the protagonist's references to other artists and works beyond the narrator's own immediate context of exiled life in Budapest. These instances of intertextuality and metadiegesis are a key part of the novel's narrative and create a polyphony of narrative voices despite the single character responsible for the narration. The inclusion of such texts and stories works simultaneously to tie the book into a broader artistic circle and to bring well-known works to the service of understanding the text and broadening the readers' frame of reference.[170]

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[170] The novel seems to assume a well read and rounded audience who will know the significance of *Blow Up*, the Hemmingway story, what the later works of Van Gogh look like, as well as the significance of Ghassān Kanafānī, since he as a figure is never explained, and the first names of these artists are never mentioned. Also significantly, these references will have a different resonance with eastern and western audiences.

Furthermore, instances of intertextuality act as clues urging the reader to look outside of the novel's text for more information. This can be seen, in part, as an extension of the function of the secondary characters by suggesting that the narrator does not have all the answers. The novel's uses of intertextuality also act as external referents, and point to an outside and independent source whose meaning can be more easily located, for example, in stories with clear plots, settings and logical action. The number of intertextual references within the work is large and covers diverse material such as stanzas of Frank Sinatra lyrics, verses of Bedouin poetry, allusions to Vincent Van Gogh's painting techniques at the final stage of his madness, the figure of Ghassān Kanafānī, two short Hemmingway stories and a British art film by director Michelangelo Antonioni. It is these three last works, independent of their inclusion in the novel, that are the most developed, and stand on their own as complete narratives within themselves. The concreteness of these works makes them the most straightforward examples to use in a critical discussion. They are, moreover, almost totally related to the reader within the pages of the text, and thus fall under the specific category of metadiegesis: the re-telling of a story within a written fictional form.[171] It is these works which I will analyze below.

3.2 Antonioni

The work's metadiegetic moments occur alongside the narrator's memories of life in Budapest and are incorporated into the text in the same way as his re-tellings of events from his own life. The first of these to appear in the novel is the relation of the Antonioni film, which the protagonist refers to as *The Developer (al-Taḥmīḍ*, though the English title is *Blow-up).*[172] An art film with enough nudity and marijuana use to cause a stir when it came out in 1966, the film centers on the idea of presence, i.e. how do we as human beings perceive the existence of things, how do we know if something is present.[173] The film itself begins with a parade of mimes running through the city. It catches up with the photographer (who is the main character) as he exits a homeless shelter for men, where he has been taking "real" shots of life in London. The plot of the film is built around the photographer's unknowing capture of a murder—or what he thinks was a murder—on film. The images, however, are hardly discernable in grainy enlargements. Indeed,

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[171] Genette, 67

[172] The movie was released in the United Kingdom and North America under the title *Blow Up*

[173] The film's release date the year before the landmark war of 1967, may very well be a coincidence. The importance and indeed symbolism that the number 1967, or even 67 in general has taken on, however (for a detailed first hand description of the meaning that the number has to many Palestinians see Mourid Barghouti's *I Saw Ramallah.* Ahdaf Soueif Trans, New York : American University in Cairo Press, 2000) I think the year cannot be glossed over. Its significance then, brings to mind the changes in Palestinian understanding of presence and absence that would have occurred between when the film was released, and when the protagonist sees it on television.

the shadow of a hand holding a gun as well as a dead body can be seen only when the negative images the photographer captured are printed and blown up so large that they look like a patchwork of grey, black and white spots. The blurry prints, however, seem to confirm the suspicions raised for the photographer by the strange behaviour of the woman in the pictures. She, after noticing the photographer snap the shots of her and her lover, chases him down and demands the negatives. She refuses to explain why she wants them, but insists until the photographer gives her negatives. To trick her and keep the now intriguing negatives the photographer gives the woman a finished roll of film from that morning's fashion shoot, rather than the images he captured in the park.

The key moment of the film is when the photographer is asked how the murder happened, and answers, "I dunno, I didn't see it." So, the photographer saw the woman and the man in the park, a shadow of a gun in a blown up photograph, and a dead body in the park. Since the photos were later stolen, the body removed and all concrete proof destroyed, however, the photographer had only what he had seen—or thought he had seen—as evidence. The photographer's answer "I dunno," brings up the question "how do you know something when there is nothing outside your own senses to confirm your belief?" This inability of an individual to establish facts about the world without external social confirmation is particularly relevant for *Al-Ḍuffah al-Thālithah*'s own protagonist. When the film ends the photographer is not at all sure if he has been witness to a murder or if he just saw figures in the grains of the super-enlarged film that triggered his imagination. The action cuts out as the mimes reappear and begin mimicking a game of tennis. The credits roll just after the camera has zoomed in on the face of the photographer, who realizes that he can hear a tennis ball bouncing, even though the mimes are, indeed, miming the match.

The ideas brought up in the film make for a fascinating comparison with those of exile and identity that are dealt with in the novel. First, the protagonist of *Al-Ḍuffah al-Thālithah* is a Palestinian struggling to find his own identity. He has renounced Palestine and Palestinians but is nonetheless Palestinian as part of his individual identity. The questions then become: What is a Palestinian out of Palestine? How much does physical presence (i.e. concrete proof) matter in knowing who one is? How much are the idea of Palestine and the realities of life in Palestine reflected in the actual identity of a character? The specific way that Antonioni's film is incorporated in to the novel gives us further hints and outlines parallels between the two works, which help to answer the questions drawn out by them.

The film is related to the reader when *Al-Ḍuffah Al-Thālithah*'s protagonist arrives at a large residence in Italy on Christmas Eve, alone (29). The protagonist explains that he is by himself in the building (which seems to be a hotel), and that all the other buildings in the area are locked because it is Christmas. He describes the neon lights in the hallways and their red linoleum tiles. He opens all the doors to the other rooms on his floor, and feels "the fear of loneliness dissipate" (29). Edgy, or perhaps just bored, the protagonist turns on the television, and narrates to the reader the plot of the film that flashes across the screen.

> I will turn on a black and white television, its colours pitch black and excited of dejection, I will see a film, *The Developer*, an English film, that talks about the life of a lonely photographer who takes pictures and develops them, he takes many pictures of a young man and a woman who he sees in a public park. He develops the pictures and sits looking at them in his house, in one of the pictures the woman embraces her lover, but her eyes are staring at some spot in the forest, he concluded that she was looking for a secure place to kill her lover.
> It was a moon lit night when the photographer returned to that same place, the wind was storming over the moonlit forest and it blew his hair violently. He cut through the meadow and through small shrubs and found under some branches the corpse of the man wrapped in a white covering, he returned to his house to find the pictures he had taken stolen. I turned off the television and returned to my room... (30)

Like the novel's use of secondary characters to challenge the protagonist, instances of metadiegesis like Antonioni's film are used to convey to the reader something about the protagonist that we cannot get from him alone. In this case it is the idea that reality is subjective, and that discovering the truth is next to impossible alone (indeed, the photographer tries and fails to find a friend to come and see the dead body in the park in order to objectively confirm its existence). This is the earliest point in the novel that the idea is introduced, it provides a distance between the ideas and the narrator, who is simply re-telling a story which spoke to him, but who does not reveal any of the connections between himself and the film.

The questions raised by the film are important for the text. When the re-telling occurs the protagonist has quit Palestine, been confronted by the Lebanese stranger and has moved on to Italy. Given that he has left Palestine and the social identity associated with it, it certainly makes sense that the protagonist is struggling with the idea of what place and presence means for an individual's identity. Indeed, it is so important for the text that the idea comes up again in the monologue of Bilāl discussed above. Bilāl, however, is introduced later in the text. I suggest that Barghūthī uses metadiegesis to insert an idea into the narrative before it is fully addressed. One of the uses of metadiegesis in the text then is as a way of suggesting ideas to the reader and/or protagonist. Unlike direct contact with a secondary character, with metadiegesis the protagonist

does not have to react to it, but merely tell it. A similar use of metadiegesis occurs when the protagonist relates a Hemmingway story.

3.2 Hemmingway

Two thirds of the way through the novel Barghūthī's narrator relates the plot of what he says is a Hemmingway story. The protagonist tells the reader this story after one of the his rare allusions to a city in the West Bank, or at the very least a scene in Eastern Europe that reminds him of his experience (or constructed memory) of an exodus from Haifa. Thus, the story comes to the reader in a complex of frames. First, the narrator is sitting in a prison cell recalling life in Budapest, he then digresses to a memory of being in a jeep watching an officer who is clearly looking for someone—constantly checking a map and playing with his pistol (117). From this memory the narrator again shifts and launches into a further digression:

> I recalled some story by Hemingway that I can never remember exactly. It's a story about a woman and a man from London, he married her because she was rich and she married him because he was young, it was a story of this sort. The two went to the darkest wilds of Africa fleeing boredom and routine or, most obviously, from themselves. They met an old hunter who made his living by hunting in the blackest parts of that place. The husband is wounded and the hunter—doing the right thing because the animal was hidden between the thick trees—searches for it.[174] The beast bellowed preparing to pounce, the husband, frozen with fright did not fire and did nothing until one shot was fired into the air.
>
> He hated himself and his wife hated him. He had been overcome, by all the cowardice from his own life, during all his preceding years of marriage put together. Finally, the hunter injured a rhinoceros who was also hiding behind some hill, and found a chance to teach the husband something about courage. The hunter advised him to turn away from the line of attack of the rhino and to fire on him from the side, on the head or temple directly, and not to aim right for the horn and he readied his conviction with this in mind. The animal came, it had been gathering every bit of its remaining strength, and all of its blood that he had, but there was no escape for his skin or his horn, but he tackled the final battlefield with presence, his shattered and hopeless battlefield, where he would encounter his killer face to face.
>
> He went blindly, rashly, and the bullets bounced off his demolished horn but he kept moving forward. The husband did not jump aside but remained petrified in the same place to prove his worth and parity; to balance out the first hunting incident. The moment of the climax was one minute, he was roused, and did not change his mind except fighting for his life with all the life he had left, and between a cowardly decision, also, which was connected with the deepest part of his own ego (118-9).

The story turns out to be two stories, both by Hemmingway, and both of which centre on the experiences of a husband and wife. They are fused in the memory of Barghūthī's narrator—an idea enforced by the narrator's assertion that he, indeed, does not "remember exactly." The stories are easily confused. Both take place in "darkest Africa," both center around young, well-off, dysfunctional couples on safari mid-way through their hunting trips. Both the husbands die at

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[174] Barghūthī does not indicate here what was injured, he simply uses *jaraḥ*, to injure. Thus the sentence actually translates as: The husband wounds and the hunter—doing the right thing because it was hidden between the thick trees—searches for it.

the end of their respective stories and both wives are portrayed as somehow having an upper hand in the relationship.

There are some important differences in the two stories, however, and *Al-Ḍuffah Al-Thālithah*'s narrator selects the plot of one story and the characters from another in his rendition. In the story quoted above the social background of the husband and wife is that found in the couple from Hemingway's "The Snows of Kilimanjaro."[175] The story line he relates, however, is clearly from a work in the same collection of stories titled, "The Short and Happy Life of Francis Macomber."[176] The husband and wife from "Snows" have some significant differences from those in "Happy Life," so that the substitution is significant and adds depth to the already complex usage of multiple narratives within the work.

When comparing the relationships represented in each story the difference between the couples that appears most clearly are the power-dynamics of the two relationships. The question of who brings what to the relationship and why the other values what their partner brings becomes important since the narrator has selected one couple over the other. To clarify the different dynamics and facilitate an in depth look at why *Al-Ḍuffah Al-Thālithah*'s conflation of the two stories is so interesting, I put forward the following excerpts from Hemingway's two short stories. The first shows how the husband from "Happy Life" describes his marriage:

> His wife had been a great beauty, and she was still a great beauty in Africa, but she was not a great enough beauty at home to be able to leave him and better herself and she knew it and he knew it...If he had been better with women she might have started to worry about him getting another new, beautiful wife; but she knew too much about him to worry about him either.[177]

Here balance of powers in the relationship is explained: a wealthy awkward man, an aging beauty; each gaining status from the other. It is in this story that the husband faces the wounded rhinoceros, hoping to prove his worth after finding out his wife has spent the night with the safari leader.

The husband-wife dynamic in the story related by Barghūthī's narrator, however, takes the relationship as it is represented in "Snows," which is described by the husband in the story as follows:

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[175] Hemmingway, Earnest. "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," *The Snows of Kilimanjaro.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964.
[176] Hemmingway, Earnest. "The Short and Happy Life of Francis Macomber." *The Snows of Kilimanjaro.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964.
[177] Ibid, 139

> The steps by which she had acquired him and the way in which she had finally fallen in love with him were all part of a regular progression in which she had built herself a new life and he had traded away what remained of his old life.[178]

The husband in "Snows" is said to have been a poor aspiring writer who feels that his ability to write and his quest for a comfortable life (i.e. marrying into money), are actually two mutually exclusive goals. Possibly echoing both the narrator of *Al-Ḍuffah al-Thālithah* and Barghūthī himself, the husband in the related story deals with the idea of leaving one life and goal for another. As the excerpt shows, however, it was not against his will that the husband changed his life, indeed, both the husband and the wife changed to accommodate each other. It is only according to the husband as he sits dying of a gangrene infection that he reveals to himself how he really feels. As the gangrene infection slowly gets worse and hope for rescue diminishes, the husband sums up his relationship with his wife as quoted above. He determines that his desire for a "good life" and his wife who gave it to him, took away what had made him a good writer: his poverty and connection with other people. The man that Barghūthī's narrator places into the story is the one whose life changed to avoid hardship. Without hardship, he (both the husband and perhaps the protagonist) felt he no longer thought with the sixth sense of an artist, and was no longer the same person.

The narrator changes the story into one where a man abandons his life for the one he thought he wanted and ends up losing what made him an artist. The same man, as Barghūthī's narrator tells it in his changed version, faces a battle for his life where he stands, determined to prove his worth and courage. The man does not succeed, however, since, as the final line of the related story tells us, he is "shot in the head from behind" (119) by his wife, before he has the chance to kill or be killed by the rhinoceros.

In this metadiegesis Barghūthī takes life as it is told by Hemmingway in his short story collection, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* and constructs his narrator's life out of different segments. The narrator, like the husband in "Snows," has traded in one life for another. The life of the artist versus the kept husband is paralleled with the narrator's life in Palestine versus his life in Budapest. He feels, like the husband in "Happy Life," that he must seize an opportunity to define himself, to re-establish or re-define the situation he is in.

The context within which this story is related again offers clues for its meaning to the protagonist. The scene framing the relation of the story sees the narrator sitting in a Israeli

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[178] Hemmingway, "Snows," 12

military Jeep watching an officer fail in his efforts to find a third unidentified person. In the wider context of the novel's progression it comes at a point before the protagonist admits he is in prison, and just after Bilāl has disappeared from the narrative. This point in the novel is characterized by nights spent sleeping in public washrooms or on couches of friends. The narrative also becomes less clear, disjointed. The narrator's re-telling of Hemmingway at this point, I suggest, acts to present his own feelings into a different context. In this use of metadiegesis Barghūthī superimposes the idea of Palestinian exile and his protagonist's individual search for meaning onto the bored world of Hemmingway's couples. Hemmingway's characters travel to the Amazon, like Barghūthī's protagonist, in search for identity.

By re-telling the classic stories of Hemmingway and the famous art film of Antonioni, Barghūthī constructs a Palestinian identity that is fully, globally, human, but also specifically Palestinian. The metadiegesis used in the novel serves to connect the issues facing the protagonist with similar ideas expressed through other narrative mediums. Not only does this bring English texts and dramas into Arabic, connecting the two artistic traditions, but it also unequivocally shows thinkers like Jameson, who suggests that human experiences change across borders, oceans and economies, that the search for identity for the Palestinian character is no different than the Americans of Hemmingway.

The intertexts are a way that the novel communicates with the reader what the protagonist cannot. The particular metadiegesis of the novel acts as an additional voice within the text, inserting into it additional information that broadens its scope. Taken in conjunction with the protagonist's actions, metadiegesis can be seen as the second stage for the protagonist in working through his search for a social identity. Where actions provide the material, metadiegic moments help develop the protagonist's feelings about or understanding of the actions he himself takes. If these moments of metadiegesis provide a comparison with outside sources, the secondary characters in the novel are what the text uses to directly challenge the protagonist's beliefs. The novel shows direct interaction to be effective in helping the protagonist re-engage with society, forcing the him to enter into contact with others. It is only this re-engagement that will help the protagonist develop the necessary social identity that will complete his character.

4. Conclusions

In giving his character space outside of Palestine, illustrating his self-imposed alienation on "home" and "foreign" ground, Barghūthī constructs a man who struggles with the question of

how he is supposed to live his own life. The opening scene of the novel illustrates a split; the protagonist is no longer in Palestine, but his past is. This in turn creates the novel's driving question: what is "Palestinian" outside of Palestine? By renouncing the place the protagonist splits his identity into two overlapping dimensions: the personal and the social. Though it becomes clear that his personal identity is very much defined by his Palestinian experience, his social identity—how he defines himself in relation to the world (now outside of Palestine) and interacts with it—is the one that the protagonist struggles to find.

While the novel does not provide a formula for successful social identity formation outside of Palestine, it does work out a few key elements of Palestinian identity. First, it establishes that personal identity is different from social identity. This is significant for the protagonist because it means that he retains some of his Palestinian identity even after he quits the country. According to the work then, a person's individual identity is shaped by history and experiences. This, for a Palestinian, means that there are personal traits that are nonetheless Palestinian due to the specific cultural or historical life history of the individual. This gives one answer to the question: how is one Palestinian outside of Palestine? One simply is; Palestinian is part of the individual just as their memories are.

The second element of identity that the novel insists on working through is that of social identity. Understood here as an individual's self-concept derived from perceived membership of social group, the novel shows that this sort of affiliation is essential to the success of the protagonist.[179] Rather than giving an answer or formula for the development of a social identity in exile, however, the novel concentrates on establishing the importance of social identity for its protagonist. For the protagonist, and perhaps in general, a Palestinian identity is in part that which is unchangeable about the identity of a Palestinian. According to the novel, it is the relationship between the Palestinian and the world, either in Palestine or abroad, which needs paying attention too. From the suggestiveness of the metadiegetic moments to the challenges of secondary characters, the novel moves from renunciation to reunion, with a focus on how the individual negotiates his own world and the societies within it. Within the existential quest of the protagonist, the novel's strongest message seems to be that an alienated Palestinian identity is an unsuccessful one.

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[179] Hogg, M.A and G.M. Vaughan. *Social Psychology* (3rd ed.) London: Prentice Hall, 2002, 123

Conclusions
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Although writing from different moments, with unique pasts and prospects for the future, the authors of *Rijāl fī al-Shams*, *Al-Waqāʾiʿ Al-Gharībah fī Ikhtifāʿ Saʿīd Abī Al-Naḥs Al-Mutashāʿl*, *Al-Ṣubbār*, and *Al-Ḍuffah al-Thālithah li-Nahar al-Urdun*, made past, present future and self essential elements in their constructions of Palestinian identity. By constructing fictional identities with the "real stuff" that Palestinians themselves must cope with, the stories are uniquely able to make sense of Palestinian history and the changed nature of its' present. While all the novels include elements of the past, present, future and self, not all of them put forward successful or positive constructions of identity. The creation of a successful identity, in fact, is shown to require a conscious balance of the elements of the pasts, presents and futures woven through the texts.

Characters of the four novels are each written in the midst of an unacknowledged quest to cobble out a space for themselves between 1948, displacement, and the desire for self-determination. It is only, however, those protagonists who survive to the close of the narrative who have succeeded in navigating the changing circumstances of Palestinian life. These characters are shown to have found a reasonable, or at least the beginnings of a path or way to manage life incorporating the elements of Palestinian realities. This delicate balance, however, is shown to be a painstaking process. Most characters within the texts do not represent successful identities, but rather identities in process. Both successful and unsuccessful characters are shown to struggle with the slippery elements they must twine together. Indeed, those characters who are not successful illustrate a sad reflection on the essentialness of the task of finding this elemental balance.

Those characters not able to balance the four key elements are distinguished by their absence from the text at the close of the narrative. What seems pivotal for the general theme of the construction of Palestinian identity is that these characters are portrayed no less sympathetically than their successful counterparts. In some cases, in fact, they are the protagonists and heroes of the novels. Thus, the passengers in men in the sun, Saʿīd, and Usāmah are examples of failed identities. That protagonists can fail seems symptomatic of a Palestinian identity being worked out, tested, criticized and put forward by writers of fiction.

For Kanafānī, his characters are lost in all senses of the term. His criticism of their attempts at constructing a Palestinian identity seem harsh, but only underscore how important that construction is. The men in the sun, by refusing to acknowledge and incorporate into their

current realties and the changed nature of Palestinian society, to balance male and female, presence and absence, they sun parish in the water tanker. Where they have not been able to align their pasts with the present, Saʿīd, in comparison, appears to have looked too far into the future. Ahead of his time, he must leave his world and escape to outer space where his own amalgam of past, present and future can exist. His disappearance from the text shows both how impossible his own identity is, as well as the practical impossibility of him existing within any of the societies portrayed in the text. Then there is Usāmah, Khalīfah's tragic failure. Neither in the past that he chose, nor in the present he lived could Usāmah find his own future. Having decided that he had no other option but to sabotage the Egged workers' busses, Usāmah hears the ghost of wedding music and dies on the earth.

For the novels, however, a failure of identity is not necessarily a failure outright. Usāmah's very presence in the process of identity construction, for example, was what opened up *al-Ṣubbār*'s narrative space. Without Saʿīd's ridiculous achievement of the impossible we could not, perhaps, have seen that Palestinian identity must be more than an individual exercise. Saʿīd is a call to action for both Israelis and Palestinians to look at the fractured society they have constructed, and seriously evaluate expectations. Even the bleak ending of three of the men in *Rijāl* is shown to leave space for a better answer: "Why didn't you bang on the walls of the truck? Why?"

Each of the novels, despite the seemingly overwhelming failure of constructed identities to survive in the present of the works, put forward possibilities. Kanafānī's Abū al-Khaīzarān, though castrated out of a traditional male role, illustrates both the pain and possibility of change. He is a living example of a man who is trying to come to terms with his past, make the best of the present reality, and carve a place out for his own future. His is certainly not a rosy image of exile, but his final question begs an answer, and the answer will in turn begin a new narrative. In their mistakes, then, the succeeding generation may find answers. For Saʿīd, his métis is both the problem and the solution. Since the work is more of a criticism of society than it is of character, Habībī's braiding of the pasts, presents and futures of Palestinian and Israeli societies are successful in that Saʿīd does weave all these components into a single character. Saʿīd exists, and it remains to the individuals around him to make sense of him. In Khalīfah's text, ʿĀdil is the only surviving protagonist. He remains because he is able to use what is good of the past—his elite status—to respond effectively to the needs of his community. He is able to critically assess the trends and individuals of his community, and because of this he is shown to succeed.

Weaving Khalīfah's two protagonists into a single character, Barghūthī's protagonist illustrates both the challenges of the process of identity construction, and the risks behind failure. On the brink of death, he sits in prison after having refused to acknowledge his present realities, and having stopped looking for an alternative future. By renouncing Palestine and the people in it the protagonist give up on his history. His subsequent wanderings only seem to prove that despite having abandoned both the present and future of Palestine, he cannot separate himself from its past. Even then, however, the protagonist is not successful, since he refuses to react and interact with the present of which he is a part, and envision a future for himself. Having thus failed to establish an identity that balances elements of past-present-future, the character gets to a point where he welcomes death. It is not until the soothsayer interjects, reminding the protagonist of his old dreams for a future, and of the people still living who he wanted to share that future with. Acquiescing to the soothsayer as he re-lives his past and his dreams through the images brought forward, the protagonist miraculously escapes from his prison and re-emerges into society.

The process behind success, this ability to make sense of a volatile past, changing present, and uncertain future, is a quest that underlies all of the novels discussed here, as well as many more. It is, moreover, a process that is mirrored in the act of writing itself. Indeed, it seems that authorship and the process of constructing the narratives and their characters is part of a larger project. These novels create the nexus where past, present and future can be assimilated and made sense of. The number of instances where Kanafānī, Habībī, Khalīfah and Barghūthī reference other characters, novels and writers is evidence of the centrality of fiction in the imaginary process of constructing a successful identity.

For many of us, too, wherever our present happens to be, the process of its inclusion into our past, and ideas of how one might go about looking towards a future in days where the world seems in flux, is certainly pertinent. The story of a modern crisis of identity might these days be almost universal. Although the identities constructed in the works here are distinctly and deeply Palestinian, as Hanan Ashrawi has noted,

> Rather than restricting the scope and universal appeal of the stories, this adherence to a perceived and experienced reality [read, Palestinian reality] has served to enhance the genuine universality of the statement on the human condition in general as it is experienced and concretely rendered in a specific situation.[180]

The specificity of these Palestinian narratives give truth to the pain of the process, and result in human tracts on how to *be* in the age of exile and nationalism. They put forward examples of

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[180] Ashrawi, Hanan, 204

individuals who cannot, can almost, and can balance the demands of the present with responsibilities of the past and a constant hope for the future.

The narratives of exile and characters re-negotiation of the relationship between place, time and self, as Said puts it, "gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that—to borrow a phrase from music—is *contrapuntal*."[181] This contrapunal awareness, and the wider process of its construction, is something that is not particularly Palestinian. Within these works, rather, there is developed a specificity that speaks truth about a state and a modern reality that is then shared through the narratives of the works discussed in this thesis.

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[181] Said, Edward. *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000, 186.

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