

**The City and Social Transformations in Arabic Literature:
The Saudi Novel as Case Study (1980- 2011)**

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March, 2013

The University of Leeds

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Dedication

This work is gratefully dedicated in love and appreciation to some special people in my life: first of all, to my parents, Norah and Homoud, who always inspired and encouraged me from an early age in research and scholarly activities; then, to my wife Fatimah for her constant patience and support, who not only helped me so much from the beginning of this endeavour, but also managed to keep me motivated through to its completion; and finally to my children Tala (10), Rayan (7) and Eyaad (3), who all taught me how to stay entertained and free-spirited.

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Abstract

Nowhere has the call of the city been more insistent during recent decades than in countries of the so-called developing world. The attractions of cities and the real and imagined opportunities they offer have resulted in the emergence of the middle class and urban populations at a relentless pace in South America, Africa, the Middle-East and South-East Asia. One consequence of this is that the city has given birth to the novel as a new literary genre with the most intimate connection to the city as it can address the deficiency caused by the fact that the complex social phenomena that have accompanied the rise of the city have not been adequately covered by poetry and have thus been kept from critics and readers. The novel has a unique capacity for probing the undercurrents of city life and dealing with the small-scale events and transitions that bring to life the city and the changes that it has produced. It can offer conclusions about these transformations by looking at the city in relation to issues that are increasingly linked to it, such as religion, freedom, alienation, war and the changing lives of women.

This thesis therefore employs the thematic approach in pursuit of what it sees as the urgent need to explore not merely the literary representation of the city, but also the role and impact of the city on the growth and development of various social issues and its inhabitants. The thematic approach enables a balanced description and analysis of the Saudi city and its social transformations through the Saudi novels under consideration: they provide a canvas covering various real and imagined cities and multiple time frames, as determined by the gender, age and the experiences of the various novelists. The chosen sample consists of those novels which best serve the objectives of this research. The period of this study between 1980 and 2011 is regarded as the one in which the Saudi city and the novel reached maturity.

This research has emphasised that the rise of the city and its social transformations have been at the expense of traditional lifestyles and family units, and have led to a marked increase in religious loyalty and affiliation – sometimes including violent extremism – in the city, which is seen as an apt environment for the growth of religion. The city has also affected communication patterns between men and women and has tended to break down the collective mindset of the rural community. It has led to both greater individual freedom and to feelings of alienation, which shows the correlation between the two.

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Table of Arabic Words Transliteration into the Latin Script

Transliteration System Consonant

| Symbol | Letter | Symbol | Letter |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| ' | ء | ṭ | ط |
| B | ب | ẓ | ظ |
| T | ت | ‘ | ع |
| Th | ث | Gh | غ |
| J | ج | F | ف |
| ḥ | ح | Q | ق |
| Kh | خ | K | ك |
| D | د | L | ل |
| Dh | ذ | M | م |
| R | ر | N | ن |
| Z | ز | H | ه |
| S | س | w | و |
| Sh | ش | y | ي |
| ṣ | ص | | |
| ḍ | ض | | |

| Long vowels | |
|--------------|---|
| Ā | ا |
| Ū | و |
| Ī | ي |
| Short vowels | |
| A | َ |
| U | ُ |
| I | ِ |

Introduction

Introduction

Since the Arabs first embarked upon the pilgrimage that has been the story of Arabic literature, nothing has ever threatened to dislodge their poetry from the sacred and majestic position it has occupied over so many centuries. However, the impact of the industrial revolution elsewhere in the world and the corresponding phenomenon of the discovery of oil in the Arab Gulf countries are events that have significantly influenced the rise of the modern city, to which the largest proportion of the world's population has been drawn in this day and age as though by some magnetic force. This has in turn tended to break down the old collective mind-set of the rural community and led to more attention being paid to the value of the individual mind, eventually creating urbanisation and the emergence of the middle class.

One consequence of this is that the city has given birth to the novel as a new literary genre. This may be classed as the art form enjoying the most intimate connection to the city; and it has also shown that it can challenge the position accorded to poetry for the first time in history, being more suited to revealing the complexities and mirroring the rapid transformations, including social changes, that have been taking place in the modern city.

Just as there is awareness concerning the impact and the contribution of the city in various aspects of life, there is also a diverse range of studies of such phenomena in the form of both literary and non-literary contributions. Examples of these are the historical link between the city and the novel, the relationship between the place and the time, the importance of describing the place or setting, the importance of the place in literary works, the study of civil architecture through the novel, and the patterns of daily life as represented in the novel. This research study indeed aims to focus on the content of the selected novels from the period in question to examine the impact of the city on the social transformations of its inhabitants and to monitor the shifts in their behaviour that have occurred within the city. Critical studies try to consider Saudi literary output in general. However, the need to study the city, which is one of the most significant aesthetic elements in the novel's construction, through the literature it has inspired has

become an urgent one if we are to be acquainted with its real role, particularly with regard to the social transformations that require more detailed attention. In order to demonstrate what role is actually played by the city, it must be analysed through the novel, which is indeed one of the most important elements that exists and appears in the structure of the city and indeed the novel is considered the daughter of the city, simply because “the novel originally is a product of the city” (Musa, 2003. Vol, 1: 40).

My previous experience had been in both studying and teaching Arabic criticism and literature – particularly poetry – through all their historical stages, and indeed it is true that poetry once had a significant role in terms of its contribution to reflecting and documenting social realities from the point of view of literature, given that, as ‘Aşfūr (1999) has confirmed, poetry was the pulse of the world before the modern-day city took shape. Nonetheless it became very clear to me that there are many complex social phenomena that have accompanied the rise of the modern city but have been missed, neglected and not dealt with through poetry. The restrictions of the poetic form, such as metre, rhyme and rhythm, act as limiting factors which do not make poetry a medium suited to keeping up with the speed of events in the modern city; furthermore, poetry may be limited to just one specific focus of attention. This led me to embark on the study of the novel, which has arisen from the city and is thereby better able to describe and analyse those sometimes violent and often complicated social transformations. With all due respect and appreciation for the great works of historians who portray a macro outlook of the city or of geographers who narrate the details of the place in a neutral, static and scientific manner, along with many others’ contributions, we feel bound to say that it is a novelist who explores the micro details, effectively bringing the city and its human transformations to life for the readers.

The present research therefore recognizes the urgent need to highlight another aspect, which is not the city as such and the ways it is represented in literary works, but rather the role and the impact of the city, which have ultimately been the source of several transformations in Saudi society. In other words, it will endeavour to contribute to the study of the city and of the ways it is shown in the Saudi novel to interact with those who inhabit it.

In contrast to the attention devoted to the issue of place in Arabic poetry, which began a very long time ago, it is the view of many critics such as Abdullah Abu Haif (2005) that the beginnings of the study of place through the novel cannot be traced back very far and that the contributions to this field have been very rare. The study of human relations and social transformations from the perspective of literature has been far from the eyes of critics and readers and is something that is hugely deficient, despite its importance from the point of view of studying and building up societies. Beyond that, there is lack of knowledge regarding the important role of the novel in terms of its monitoring, addressing and tackling the precise, micro details of social transformations within the city. As one commentator has observed, “The existing studies are insufficient to fully cover this aspect, especially Arabic studies” (Mahbak, 2005: 142).

As a result, the Cairo International Forum 2003 entitled ‘The Novel and the City’ took this concern seriously and strongly recommended that an in-depth study of this significant aspect as part of the novel should be carried out. The works of the Forum were published in three volumes (1740 pages) by Al-Majles Al-Alā li Al-Thaqāfah fī Misr.

Furthermore, there is some dissatisfaction felt about the level of output of literary criticism in the Arab world, and not least in Saudi Arabia, given that it is very little compared to recent literary and artistic production. This study has therefore attempted to reduce the huge gap that has developed between the massive literary output of recent years and the minimal output of critical writing, in the belief that the latter activity should not only keep pace with but also go hand in hand with the former. All of these considerations and concerns have motivated me to undertake this research.

The new and original contribution of this present research to this field can be highlighted in several ways. To start with, by portraying real and imagined events through the lives of the heroes and heroines of selected novels, this research into the novel, which has a unique capacity for delving into the depths of the cities, neighbourhoods, streets and houses will be illustrating and dealing with the events and transitions that occur in small incidents but are most likely not to be accessible to other

fiction and nonfiction genres, as most of what has been written about the Arab cities has been abridged and does not reflect the city's real inner life or the interconnected fabric of its social structure.

As for the original contribution of the present research, I can say that the subject of this study is new in terms of the research samples, the time period selected, and also the methodology employed, since I have not found in the available sources of information any study that is related or deals with this particular topic.¹ Therefore, I believe that most of the issues which have been addressed through this research are new contributions to its field in terms of its context and are addressed through the literary side as represented by the novel.

Moreover, the studies that tackle people's lives in the cities often face critical difficulties when they try to clarify the micro details and transformations of urban society due to the pressure of religious, political, social and other restrictions in such a closed and conservative society as Saudi Arabia. The results of such studies are sometimes unsatisfactory and leave a lot to be desired; however, the literary contribution as represented by the novel can overcome all those barriers by using its key element of fictional characters to provide more accurate results and to be closer to the reality, which comes through in this type of contribution.

In other words, this research's contribution will also be to follow these changes and their impact on the circumstances and lives of ordinary people and the ways in which these are seen from the perspective of literature and, more precisely, through the genre of the novel. For unlike other literary genres which have such restrictions as space and scope, the genre of the novel offers a great deal of freedom; as such, this research seeks to offer some clear and new ideas, carrying the city and its transformations to life for the readers and providing conclusions concerning the impact of the city on the social transformations, considering the city in relation to religion, freedom, alienation, war,

¹ Examples are the King Faisal Centre, the King Fahad Library, the Library of Al-Imam University, the Library of King Saud University, the Indexes Available of Academic Studies, the relevant websites, and also a number of specialists, experts and critics in the field.

women, and social transformations through the city. Therefore, this contribution will be useful and new not only at the level of the valuable literary field that it investigates, but also in terms of an important aspect of the history of the Saudi novel and in relation to the Saudi social, historical, psychological, geographical, and demographical studies, as this study will provide all these subjects with more interesting and accurate details that can only be obtained through literature.

The above is what prompted the idea of this research, which ultimately attempts to build on previous valuable studies and to complete that space surrounding the impact of the city and the impact of social transformations as manifested through the novel. It will benefit from the novel's ability to delve deeply into the lives of communities and to act through the wide freedom of its characters and fictions in order to focus on the scope of this research and the questions that arise from it about the existence of the Arab city and its impact on religion, freedom and alienation, the Gulf War and Women.

The twelve novels which are going to be studied here in depth also provide a canvas covering various cities and multiple time frames, as determined by the gender, age and experiences of the various novelists. The chosen sample consists of those novels which, in the researcher's opinion, best serve the objectives of this research.

This study will focus on the influences and impact that places have on human beings, and on the ways that the city, in particular, represents the transformed relationships between people and places. Therefore, this research will make use of all the methods and approaches which can contribute to achieving the stated research objectives and which may be applied to the case of the Saudi novel. There is no doubt that all of the following approaches, such as the sociological, descriptive and psychological, can play a significant role in the analysis of literary text; however, this thesis will rely on the thematic approach, which can benefit from all the above as well as from Freudian analysis, literary and historical criticism, structural linguistics and formalism as the thematic approach can be counted as one of open approaches on account of its flexibility and freedom in the description and reading of the text. It is also about reading the text in a profound and open manner, searching for recurring themes and images

detailed in the creative text, activating the semantic level by monitoring the semantic fields, gathering some statistics of lexical words and frequently recurring vocabulary, interpreting the text from inside and outside and studying the subject in order to reach the substantive structure which dominates the creative work; and furthermore surveying the items that are repeated with a noticeable frequency in the fabric of a literary work and analysing them, making comparisons between the semantic, lexical and rhetorical phenomena in terms of harmony and differences, and avoiding an over-analysis which can lead to forcing (or twisting) something out of the text which is not actually there. In view of the complicated nature of the social fabric of the city and its rapid and violent transformations, as well as of the complexities in the construction of the novel, the need is urgent to use the thematic approach so as to arrive at a balanced description and analysis of the Saudi city and its social transformations through the texts of the Saudi novels under consideration.

The reason why we have specified the period of this study as that between 1980 and 2011 is because this is regarded as the period in which both the Saudi city and the novel reached a stage of maturity, as Al-Ḥāzemī and Al-Yūsif (2008) have confirmed. In addition to that, the date 1980 corresponds to the beginning of the new AH (i.e. Muslim) fifteenth century, which marked an important milestone and a new period of history for many researches and critical studies.

Consequently, many clear manifestations of transformations have emerged during that period, accompanied by the vibrant growth of the Saudi city and also a great enthusiasm for and interest in writing the Saudi novel. A great number of factors made this period one of the most significant and richest periods of the history of Saudi Arabia, which deserves to be given more careful attention and scrutiny due to its sheer productivity and then the pressing need to monitor and study such a rich phase.

Some of those factors are the following:

1. There was the political and economic stability of Saudi Arabia and the positive impact of the education movement, which in turn led to the establishment of many literary institutions such as the literary clubs and associations for culture and the arts.

2. There was the media's attention to the remarkable development of the Saudi novel, as well as the entry of modern means of communication which have contributed to the propensity towards reading and writing about the city and the novels it gave rise to. It has to be highlighted that "in the period from 1930 until 1979, only 50 novels were published in Saudi Arabia; this sharply contrasts with the recorded figures during the following 28 years, during which 431 novels were published" (Al-Ḥāzemī. and Al-Yūsif, 2008: 30, 40).

3. Transformations experienced by the Saudi society at the political and cultural levels, especially after the events of 11 September 2001, which resulted in a broadening of freedom of expression and the creation and establishment, by the Ministry of Culture and Media, of a number of civil society organisations such as the King Abdul Aziz Centre for National Dialogue, the Society for Human Rights, the Organization for Human Rights, the Association of Journalists, and the Publishers' Organisation.

4. There was a strong contribution from local, Arab and international publishing houses, which continued to follow up all new literary works and present them to an eager readership which had been waiting for new publications, particularly by the new generation of Saudi writers.

5. The writing movement in Saudi Arabia benefited from modern means of communication in terms of new media, which led to a faster exchange of literary works such as the popular novel, *Girls of Riyadh* (2005), which had been written and published firstly through emails, between the young generation of writers and the senior, more established authors.

6. The effects of globalisation and the wide use of the Internet in Saudi society have allowed the dissemination of literary and intellectual production and criticism, and attracted young people to frequently contribute to the literary magazines, both in print and electronically.

7. Despite the serious attempts at evaluation and critical study of this enormous production, "the revolution that occurred in the Saudi novel has not yet been covered by literary critics" (Al-Ḥāzemī. and Al-Yūsif, 2008: 48). Ḥasan Al-Huwamel indicates that "literary criticism which plays the role of the guiding, enlightenment and evaluation of the written text was not compatible with the newly created literature, resulting in delayed maturity of the literary works in question" (Al-Huwamel, 2003: 26).

8. The emergence of the oil economy in Saudi Arabia has caused many changes in Saudi society, which led to huge migration from the deserts to the cities and made those cities more extensive, stable and modern. The emergence of the oil economy has also led the Saudi State to establish industrial cities such as Jubail and Yanbu, located on the Eastern and Western sides of Saudi Arabia, respectively. “Mudon has created 14 industrial cities throughout the Kingdom, three of which are situated in the Eastern Province” (Group, 2011: 123). Moreover, the oil economy has helped the Saudi government “to promote ‘New Economic Cities,’ where the country's economic future will materialize” (Lippman, 2012: 94).

This thesis begins with this Introduction and is then followed by five chapters and a Conclusion, as follows: Literature Review, The City and Religion, The City as a Site of both Freedom and Alienation, The City and the Gulf War and The City and Women. The first chapter covers the research subject and its importance, the contribution of the study and the methodology used, the reasons for studying this topic and the specific period of 1980-2011, and also the background and related work. It also addresses the issue of the existence of the Arab city and its importance and the position of Islam vis-à-vis the issue of urban civilization, given that most Arab cities are Islamic. Furthermore, the chapter offers examples of several cities, such as Birmingham which represents the modern city, Mecca as a city of civilisation, culture and religion, Baghdad representing the Arab and ancient Asian city and Cairo as an Arab-African mega-city. This is then followed by a discussion of the Saudi Novel, a literary phenomenon which has positively exploded since 1980 and until the present day.

Chapter Two illustrates religion as a product of the city and describes its popularity, maturity and impact on the civil Saudi society. This chapter traces the city in religious and other sources in order to provide the real vision of the role of religion in terms of building cities and civilisation, and then the impact of the city on social transformation. Public life, including the judiciary, employment and social relationships, for example, have been based on the scales of religion in the Saudi city, and through this chapter it can be seen which is more religious, the village or the city. The role of religion appears as the main engine for many of the Saudi city transformations as it is the deciding factor in the formation of the Saudi society – morally, psychologically, socially and

economically. This chapter shows how the characteristics of the religious text elaborated the imagery and stories in the Holy Qur'an and created many new Arabic words and meanings which undoubtedly have a broad influence on the style of writing and ideology of the city, and how the city acts as an incubator of civilizations and human transformations. This chapter, furthermore, endeavours to illustrate the role of the mosque and other religious institutions in forming the city and its community, and to explain how much confidence people of the cities have in those institutions and in those who uphold the name of religion. It also focuses on those violent religious transformations that have taken place from 1990 onwards. The chapter has been divided under the following subheadings: Introduction, Literature Review, The City in Religious Sources, The Impact of Religious Sources on Writers, The City and Civilization in other Sources, Religion in the City, Religion between Village and City as Perceived through the Novel, In the City, The Role of the Mosque, Role of Holy Quran Memorization Schools and Islamic Awareness Societies, Role of Student Activities, Summer Centres in Schools and Youths Camps, Religious Transformations from 1990 onwards, and the Conclusion.

Chapter Three highlights the correlation between freedom and alienation, where one of the most important motives for exile is the search for 'freedom', under its general concept, which integrates all types of freedoms. The excessive habits of using the concept of freedom and then infringing the freedoms of other people in its name, or the fear of freedom itself, have also led some to avoid it. The chapter then goes into the question of alienation, and how this phenomenon has imposed itself on Arabic literature as a whole and particularly on the contemporary Arabic novel, which is also concerned with the content of this humanitarian issue which belongs to all lifestyles, particularly in the cities where all manifestations of both alienation and freedom are to be found. The attractions of cities and the opportunities, both real and imagined, that they offer have increased urban populations at a relentless pace. Moreover, this process has undoubtedly been at the expense of traditional lifestyles and family units and has affected communication patterns within the family, particularly between men and women. With regard to women's alienation, the Saudi novel often presents a male relative, particularly a father, brother, husband and son as a major player in causing

social alienation, as he has the social power and thus is able to act according to what he believes.

However, the truth is that this authority on the part of some men does not affect only women but rather men also, as it becomes evident through this research. Furthermore, such topics as the role of the city and its intention to break down the collective mind-set of the rural community, the psychological alienation that has dominated the Arabic novel, and the extent of both the freedom and alienation margin that the city offers to its intellectuals, have all been illustrated in this chapter. Attention is also given to the environment of the city as contrasted with that of the village, and to how the city has led to both greater individual freedom and to feelings of alienation, and how the language of the city is able to liberate some while, by contrast, causing others to be alienated. This chapter involves the following subsections: Introduction, Literature Review, Freedom and Alienation in the Saudi City from the Perspective of the Saudi Novel, Social Freedom and Alienation in the Saudi City, Psychological Freedom and Alienation in the Saudi City, Cultural Freedom and Alienation in the City, The Role of Language in Emotional and Linguistic Emancipation, and Conclusion.

Chapter Four refers to war and its themes that have been and still remain one of the most important sources for an Arabic literature that has been drenched in wars which have filled the hearts of its writers with strong feelings of frustration and disappointment, as wars tend to come to an end eventually, but without their impact and effects being so quickly removed or forgotten.

One of these wars in question was the Second Gulf War (1990/1991), the impact of which began before the actual war did. It had an impact perhaps similar to that of the oil boom on the social composition of the Saudi city. Social unrest and psychological distress for the people of the cities during the war reached an unprecedented level and reshaped the social map of the Saudi city dramatically. This was because the war led suddenly to regiments of people with their own alien cultures, customs and military personnel and also their own heavy media coming from countries both far and near to live and engage with a new community such as the Saudi society, taking the latter by

surprise and subsequently having severe – and rapidly spreading – social and political impacts on relations within the Arab world. Indeed, this war has contributed remarkably in the way of forming the image of the Arab Gulf societies, especially in the formation of the term ‘the ego and the other’ where the ego no longer means all the Arabs, as a result of the fact that the war caused a major shock to Arab relations. The Arabs had thought that they were one nation and had not expected a war to break out between cousins, but more probably with some foreign party.

With regard to the Arab Gulf people, this war is reflected in their lifestyle and their thinking, and in the attitudes of their intellectuals that have dominated their writings during and about this war, particularly in the case of the Saudi novel. The war has, moreover, caused significant economic and financial shifts affecting most Saudi families, in the form of changes which have transformed the society in such a way as to make it an increasingly consumer society – indeed, to an annoying extent. Chapter Four portrays these developments through the lens of modern Arabic literature as represented by the Saudi novel. It addresses the transformations that came about in the city as a consequence of that war under the following headings: Introduction, Arab Cities in Literature and War, The Political Earthquake of the Second Gulf War (1990/1991), The Impact of the War on Novelists and on their Style, The Impact of the Gulf War on the Intellectual and Literary Trends in Saudi Cities, The Economic Impact of the Gulf War on Saudi Cities, The Social Impact of the Gulf War on Saudi Society, Western Influence as Represented by the American Presence in Saudi Society, and Conclusion.

Chapter Five concerns itself with the Arab woman during and after her journey to the environment of the city, both from within Saudi Arabia and abroad. The status of Arab women in general, and of Saudi women in particular, is a controversial theme and is probably the most frequently discussed topic at all levels and in all forums across the Arab world. This is because the issue of women is a crucial one with which everyone feels that they have a right to engage, whether they are Islamists, liberals and academics or others. Some claim that they want women to be enlightened through being liberated, while others call for women’s modesty and chastity to be protected and for them not to be sucked into westernized modes of behaviour. This chapter shows that, although Saudi women are a part of the totality of Arab women, the environment of Saudi

women has its own special characteristics which have made them different in many respects. The religious influence has permeated the lives of Saudi women in both village and city, and the writings about women with their viewpoints then being linked to Islam gave them wide acceptance. However, the migration of Saudi women to the city has raised their level of religious awareness, and enabled them to protect themselves from those who were exploiting them in the name of religion or traditions. This chapter reveals the impact of the novel in terms of raising women's issues and also shows the extent of the impact of the city and of education on women, and how these have led women to take the initiative in demanding their rights and contributing towards raising public awareness about their importance and their rights. Such women's awareness of themselves and their existence is not a new phenomenon, but should rather be seen as the outcome of a long struggle waged through the twentieth century, with women eventually in our own time assuming their rightful roles positively in the context of the city. This chapter considers the study of the Arab women within the city, as represented by Saudi women who were portrayed by the Saudi novelists writing about their own Saudi society, under the following sections: Women's Affairs in both Village and City with Religion, The Beginning of Modern Writing on Arab Women's Issues, Academic Contribution, Participation and Role of Women, The Saudi Novel and its Role in Changing Society and Advancing the Situation of Women, The Role of the School and Learning, The Position and Status of the Women in the City, and Conclusion.

There are some difficulties which this research methodology has faced as a result of relying almost entirely upon Arabic novels. One of these is, for instance, the fact that a large number of Saudi novels have been studied for this research as a main source; however, of these only one novel has been translated into English, namely *Al-Qārūra*, (*Munira's Bottle*, 2010) by Yousef Al-Mohaimed. All quotations from the novels have been my own translation.

Furthermore, it is very often the case that literary researchers face a lot of specific literary challenges as they deal with the kind of rhetorical and figurative language in which every word and every letter is significant and has a particular importance. This difficulty increases also when the researcher deals with more than one language and is

therefore required to take into account the importance of the word as it is in its original language.

Another of the encountered difficulties is that some Arabic titles of novels and references that are used by the research carried out here do not in fact carry a clear and obvious surface meaning and cannot be translated literally; otherwise they do not make sense, and therefore they may be subject to personal interpretations and the angle that the researcher may decide is more likely to be correct.

The thematic approach is not a popular method used and applied to the study of Arabic literature in the Gulf region, and thus there has been a shortage of critical paradigms and applications that might have helped to support this research from the standpoint of the Arab world.

Some quotations do not have a date or page number as they are from newspapers, web pages and electronic sources, so that I have mentioned only the author's name and the year. However, the full details of those are listed in the Bibliography.

With regard to the subject of Qur'anic translation in this research, I have tended not to rely entirely on one single interpretation and then become subject to just one opinion, but have rather relied on three interpreters in order to be closer to the source text. This point has been dealt with in greater detail regarding such interpretations in the footnote provided when such verse is mentioned for the first time.

Overall, the study has attempted to answer certain research questions, which are as follows:

- 1) Is there such a thing as an Arabic city, and if so is it a real or a fictional city?
- 2) What has been the impact of the sudden appearance of oil on Saudi society?
- 3) Has the phenomenon of the new technology affected the literary movement and social transformations of Saudi society?
- 4) What has been the impact of the city and its religious platforms such as mosques, centres and Qur'anic schools, youth summer centres and so on, on the transformations of the city community?

- 5) Has immigration to the city after the emergence of the oil economy led to more freedom or more alienation in their general concepts?
- 6) What has the Second Gulf War done to this conservative society?
- 7) What has been the extent of the impact of migration to the city on women's rights, affairs and freedom?

These are some of the research questions about the city and its social transformations which have been studied in this thesis, and which have yielded some interesting results that represent the literary point of view as expressed mainly through the vehicle of the Saudi novel.

Chapter One

Literature Review and Methodology

Chapter One

Literature Review and Methodology

1 The Research Subject and its Importance

Throughout their lives, people are often associated with certain places, and a correlation exists between the individual and the place as each depends on the other. In the domain of artistic creation, which usually includes basic elements of people and places, the city appears as a part of the place or setting in which people live and is affected by them, while they, in turn, are also influenced by the place.

‘Place’ is one of the most significant aesthetic elements in the novel’s construction, as “events, characters and conflict cannot be imagined without the space in which they exist” (Shitwī, 2002: 27).² And even if there was a literary work without a specific place or setting, this work would ultimately be static and would negatively affect the rest of the novel’s technical aspects as “fiction depends for its life on place”(Giles, 2011: 142).

The industrial revolution and the desire to move towards cities have led to urbanisation and, consequently, the need to create a literary genre capable of maintaining pace with this development and the disclosure of its complications. Huge industrial revolutions fuelled the emergence of cities during, approximately, the past two centuries, and were accompanied by the emergence of the novel as a literary genre, which describes human relations in an unprecedented manner. All of this created new civil spaces.

Over the past almost three centuries, the city has continued to provide both a generous and valuable foundation of material for novelists, while novelists have remained loyal,

² My translation.

continuing to draw on the city's landmarks and shapes. It is often said that if the city reflects what happens in it, the novel also fulfils this role.

Just as there is awareness concerning the impact and the contribution of the city in various aspects of life, there is also diversity in the studies of this effect. However, the need to study the city through literature has become necessary, particularly in the novel, which is counted as the art form with the closest connection to the city, simply because "the novel was originally a product of the city" (Musa, 2003. Vol, 1: 40).³

1.1 The Contribution of this Study

Previous studies have provided good material concerning the impact of place in general and the city in particular on the novel. Furthermore, these studies have highlighted the historical link between the city and the novel, the relationship between the place and the time, the importance of describing the place, the importance of the place in literary works, the study of civil architecture through the novel, and the daily life as represented in the novel.

Moreover, it is very possible to find some works related to the narration of human emotions as the city life evolves, as well as those experienced when people have to leave their former habitat, all of which are considered positive contributions in this field.

Despite the strong links and synergies that exist between the novel and the city, and particularly the significant role which the place or the city plays in the novel's construction, "the existing studies are ultimately deemed insufficient in terms of fully

³ My translation.

covering this aspect” (Mahbak, 2005: 142),⁴ especially in the area of Arabic literary studies.

According to ‘Aşfūr (2003), The Cairo International Forum, which was held in 2003 under the title of *The Novel and the City*, highly recommended the need to study this significant aspect as an integral part of the novel. Moreover, in spite of the importance of prior studies in this field, there is still a need to discover other aspects; not the city as such and the ways it is represented in literary works, but rather the role and the impact of the city, which have ultimately led to several transformations.

This research aims to focus on the impact of the city on the social transformations of its inhabitants and to monitor these shifts that have occurred within the city: it will endeavour to contribute to the study of the city in the Saudi novel, and the research will consider the city's role and impact on the growth and development of various manifestations inside it as reflected in the novel. These include ‘The City and Religion’, ‘The City as a Site of both Freedom and Alienation’, ‘The City and the Gulf War’ and ‘The City and Women’, as highlighted in the chapters of this thesis.

The purpose will also be to try to follow these changes and their impact on the circumstances and lives of ordinary people and the ways in which these are seen from the perspective of literature and, more precisely, through the genre of the novel.

It is often thought that, unlike other literary genres which have such restrictions as space and scope, the genre of the novel offers a great deal of freedom; as such, this research seeks to reach clear and new ideas and results concerning the impact of the city on the social transformations, considering the city in comparison to religion, freedom, alienation, war, women, and social transformations. The novels which are going to be studied here also provide a canvas covering various cities and multiple time frames as determined by the gender, age and experiences of the various novelists. The selected

⁴ My translation.

sample is made up of those novels which, in the researcher's opinion, best serve the objectives of this research.

Critical studies try to consider Saudi literary products in general; however, what has been hugely lacking is the study of human relations and transformations from the perspective of literature, which has been far from the eyes of critics and readers. In order to contribute to this important aspect in the history of the Saudi novel, the idea of this research was born, which ultimately attempts to build on previous studies and to complete that space surrounding the impact of the city and the impact of social transformations as manifested through the novel.

1.2 The Methodology

This study will focus on the influences and impacts that places have on human beings, and on the ways that the city in particular represents the transformed relationships between people and places. Therefore, this research will make use of all the approaches which can contribute to reaching the research objectives and which may be applied to the case of the Saudi novel. There is no doubt that all of the following approaches, such as the sociological, descriptive and psychological approaches, can play a significant role in the analysis of literary text; however, this thesis will rely on the thematic approach, which can be counted as one of the open approaches due to its flexibility and freedom in the description and reading of the text. This work will focus on selected themes deemed important for the study, and endeavour to analyse the work of different authors on the subject.

The thematic approach benefits from psychology and Freudian analysis, literary criticism, historical criticism, structural linguistics and formalism, as Jean Richard and Gaston Bachelard confirmed through their practical works, for instance Gaston Bachelard's *The New Scientific Spirit* (1986) and Jean-Pierre Richard's *Littérature et sensation* (1954).

The thematic approach applied in this research will be based on using the following techniques:

- reading the text in a profound and open manner,
- searching for recurring themes and images detailed in the creative text,
- activating the semantic level by monitoring the semantic fields,
- gathering some statistics of lexical words and frequent vocabulary,
- interpreting the text from inside and outside and studying the subject in order to reach the substantive structure which dominates the creative work
- surveying the items that are repeated with a noticeable frequency in the fabric of a literary work and analysing them, making comparison between the semantic, lexical and rhetorical phenomena in the harmony and differences, and avoiding an over-analysis which can lead to forcing (or twisting) something out of the text which is not actually there.

The thematic approach, therefore, with all its multidisciplinary ramifications, can help the research to apply linguistic, sociological and psychological tools so as to arrive at a balanced description and analysis of the Saudi novels under consideration.

This work will focus particularly on the period between 1980 and 2011 for reasons explained in the following section.

1.3 The Reasons for Studying the Period 1980-2011

There is no doubt that “the year 1980 is significant in the literary history of the Saudi novel, as it is often thought that this year marked the coming of age of the Saudi novel” (Al-Ḥāzemī. and Al-Yūsif, 2008: 53).⁵ A wide range of reasons support this idea:

1. The political and economic stability of the Saudi Government have positively impacted on the education movement, particularly higher education, which in

⁵ My translation.

turn has led to the expansion rate of the educated class and “the establishment of the literary institutions, such as the literary clubs and associations of Culture and Arts” (Al-Qaḥṭānī, 2002: 16).⁶ This has been accompanied by the media’s attention to the remarkable development of the Saudi novel, as well as the entry of modern means of communication, which have supported and raised the cultural awareness of Saudis and made the novel a compatible literary genre and a most appropriate literary genre within the modern and fast-moving world. All these factors have contributed to the propensity towards the reading and writing of novels. It has to be highlighted that “in the period from 1930 until 1979, only 50 novels were published in Saudi Arabia; this sharply contrasts with the recorded figures during the following 28 years, during which 431 novels were published” (Al-Ḥāzemī. and Al-Yūsif, 2008: 30, 40).⁷

2. Transformations experienced by the Saudi society at the political and cultural levels, especially after the events of September 11 2001, led to a wide margin of freedom of expression and the creation and establishment, by the Ministry of Culture and Media, of a number of civil society organisations such as the King Abdul Aziz Centre for National Dialogue, the Society for Human Rights, the Organization for Human Rights, the Association of Journalists, and the Publishers’ Organisation.
3. A strong contribution from local, Arab and international publishing houses, which continued to follow up all new literary works and present them to an eager readership which had been waiting for new publications, particularly by the new generation of Saudi writers.
4. The writing movement in Saudi Arabia benefited from modern means of communication in terms of new media, which led to a faster exchange of literary works such as the popular novel, *Girls of Riyadh* (2005), which had been written and published firstly through emails, between the young generation of writers and the senior established authors.

⁶ My translation.

⁷ My translation.

5. The effects of globalisation and the wide use of the Internet in Saudi society have allowed the dissemination of literary and intellectual production and criticism, and attracted young people to frequently contribute to the literary magazines, both in print and electronically.
6. Despite the serious attempts at evaluation and critical study of this enormous production, “the revolution that occurred in the Saudi novel has not yet been covered by literary critics” (Al-Hāzemī. and Al-Yūsif, 2008: 48).⁸ Ḥasan Al-Huwamel indicates that “literary criticism which plays the role of the guiding, enlightenment and evaluation of the written text was not compatible with the newly created literature, resulting in delayed maturity of the literary works in question” (Al-Huwamel, 2003: 26).⁹
7. The emergence of the oil economy in Saudi Arabia has caused many changes in the Saudi society and led to huge migrations from the deserts to the cities and made those cities more extensive, stable and modern. The emergence of the oil economy has also led the Saudi State to establish industrial cities such as Jubail and Yanbu, located on the Eastern and Western sides of Saudi Arabia, respectively. “Modon has created 14 industrial cities throughout the Kingdom, three of which are situated in the Eastern Province” (Group, 2011: 123).¹⁰ Moreover, the oil economy has helped the Saudi government “to promote ‘New Economic Cities,’ where the country's economic future will materialize” (Lippman, 2012: 94).

⁸ My translation.

⁹ My translation.

¹⁰ Modon means “an independent public organisation, which oversees the development of industrial cities” (Group, 2011: 148).

1.4 Background and Related Work

Many people argue that ‘the novel is the daughter of the city’. The industrial revolution and the desire to move towards cities have led to urbanization and, consequently, the need to create a literary genre capable of keeping pace with this development and the disclosure of its complications. Lehan R. D. (1930-) was not the only one to believe this. As the city grew and its social and economic functions became more complex, authors developed new methods with which to describe the metropolitan landscape.

Anne Lambright and Elisabeth Guerrero have maintained that:

The city is not only a site built of towers of steel and glass but is also both a product and a generator of modern culture...Clearly, the city provides a panoramic vantage from which we can view the sociocultural landscapes of Latin America...It is clear that urban geography not only reflects social structure but also serves to create and sustain societal hierarchies. (Lambright and Guerrero, 2007: xi)

Lambright and Guerrero also showed the effective participation of women in this aspect as they pointed out that: “women’s views of the city, as expressed particularly through literature, are unique and revealing, as women writers propose new mappings of urban space; contemplate the vertiginously rapid transformations to the modern city” (Lambright and Guerrero, 2007: xii).

With a focus on the modern city, Harding has investigated the lasting contributions of James Joyce and John Dos Passos to Transatlantic thought in their efforts to envisage the city. Harding has mentioned that “Arguably, the greatest work of art created by the city is the city itself, for in its totality urban civilization represents the apex of human achievement” (Harding, 2003: ix). According to James R. Giles, who examined six 20th century novels, the earlier novels of Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Jack London and contemporary authors such as Hubert Selby, Richard Wright and John Rechy mined

American ghettos with exotic and magnificent characters. Giles has tackled the narrative distance and characters to analyse the culture of the inner cities (Giles, 1995).

Humanity's hopes, fears, dreams, imagination, and despair have been reflected in the city and examined through the characterization of Woolf, Blake, James, Wordsworth, and Baudelaire among others. All these have been taken out of novels, poems, films, photographs, architecture and conveyed to the readers by Caws who demonstrated that

what we read in the field – that field of the city in all its bizarre mixture of culture and nature is bound to determine, to some non-fictional extent, what we know of it, what we imagine it could be, what we fear it may be or become. (Caws, 1991: 1, 2)

Barta addressed the impact of the city and its attractiveness to the people of country and village when he pointed out that: “the city affects forever the lives of characters whom it attracts from the country or those who come into contact with its envoys in the village” (Barta, 1996: 3). If the city reflects what happens in it, the novel also plays this role, as evident in Bely's *Petersburg*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, Doblin's *Berlin*, and Alexander Platz's novels which all illustrate distinctive features of the modern European city (Barta, 1996). Particularly on the subject of London, Efraim Sicher has analysed novels in relation to their social, political, technological, and scientific discourses of the time, expressing the metaphoric and mystic aspects of Dickens' urban realism (Sicher, 2003).

Julian Wolfreys posed several questions, such as: did London, in fact, assist in forming the modern literary conception and representation of urban space and its effects on our lives in cities as city-dwellers, and how did the rapid change and development of London affect or alter their prose and poetry? In addition, how did writers in the first half of the nineteenth century seek to respond to the nature of London (Wolfreys, 1998)?

Lehan (1998) also relied on literature to observe what changes and what has remained constant in the function, physical structure, and conceptualization of cities.

If the concept of the novel was and still is that it reflects the place and the time period in which it was written, it provides information about customs, traditions, dress, mannerisms, technology, beliefs, etc (Goldmann, 1975).

Several studies have focused on such aspects, including those of Goldmann, who stated that “The novel form is representative of everyday life” (Goldmann, 1975: 7), and of Robert Alter(2005), who illustrated how the novel represents and reflects the reality of the city by exploring the “experimental realism” practiced by writers such as Dickens, Flaubert, and Kafka.

Artists and writers have struggled to describe cities, including Paul Anderer, who investigated the private and domestic spaces that represent Tokyo in post-war Japanese fiction and Steven Marcus, who analyzed the breakdown of the city as signifying a system in the novels of Saul Bellow and Thomas Pynchon (Chapman, 1987).

In fact, one of the most powerful aspects of modern literature is its ability to reveal the secrets of the city. The extent of the link between a novel and the city in which it is set, including their mutual reliance on one another, makes the two effectively inseparable.¹¹ Unlike historians who portray a macro outlook of the city or geographers who narrate the details of the place in a neutral and static manner, a novelist explores the micro details, effectively bringing the city to life for the readers. The place in which the novel is set is significant not only because it is the place where incidents occur or where figures are moving, but also because it is the essential space that contains the main elements of the work of art. The city creates the world before being used as a depiction of the world. Thus, what the novelist depicts is just an idea of the city and not the city itself, meaning it is a fictional city.

In addition, the novel’s setting might be a location created in the writer’s imagination by drawing on specific elements of reality. As Lehan states, “Writers of literature relied on imaginative systems”(Lehan, 1998: 7). For example, some of William Faulkner’s

¹¹ Richard Lehan says “the city and the literary text have had inseparable histories” (See, Lehan, R. D. 1998: 289).

(1897-1962) novels represent the cities of the American South, incorporating their psychological, social, and geographical aspects. The novels entitled *The Castle* (1930) by Franz Kafka and *Monster* (1999) by Walter Dean Myers are based on a set of shifting locations, because the themes of these novels are essentially based on the notion of a bureaucratic labyrinth to which human beings are subjected in our contemporary civilization.

As far as the Arabic novel is concerned, there is a 2007 novel entitled *Al-Malūna* (The Cursed Woman) partially set in the city of Miami by Amira Al-Muḍhi, who has never visited this city. The novelists seek to build their virtual location, and make its shifting, dream-like character something difficult to pin down or conceive of physically. The city in a literary work is often not specific in terms of geographical location, as much as it constitutes a part of the self. There is the desire of the fiction writer because of the change imposed by the time and place, to talk about, for instance, Dammam, Riyadh or Jeddah specifically: at the same time, however, it is not talk about the city itself; it is talk concerning the relationship of the self with the city at the moment that remains in the mind.

Yet some real cities have tempted novelists to write about them; thus, the construction of the novel's city is based primarily on the actual city, as is the case in the Arab world (e.g., Cairo in the work of both Naguib Mahfouz and Yūsif Al-Gu'īd or Fez in the work of Abdulkarim Ghallāb and Alṭāhir bin Jellūn).

The place may also incorporate realistic locations such as cities, villages, homes, hotels, offices, streets, coffee shops, and military barracks as well as variables such as planes, ships, buses, and cars. There are also those cities which can be called open places, which include the sea, and the desert as examples and closed or enemy places which are often represented by the prison and places of exile, in addition to historical and legendary places; moreover there are cities made of mazes and the absurd portrayed for the reader as wonderful places full of strange secrets, riddles, strange people, complex and overlapping streets, invoking a sense of adventure and of dread at the same time. *Al-Ghuraf Al-'Ukhrā* (*The Other Rooms*, 1986) by Jabrā Ibrahīm Jabrā is a case in

point. According to Halsā, “three types of places exist: metaphorical, geometric and the place as experiment” (Halsā, 1989: 8, 9).¹²

A symbiotic relationship exists between the ‘city’ and the ‘novel’. The constancy and integration between the city as part of the place and part of the novel have remained essential factors in literature. The city has continued to provide a generous and valuable foundation of material for novelists over the past three centuries while novelists have remained loyal, continuing to draw on the city’s milestones and shapes. Although the cities of the real world have ceased to exist as they once were and their features have changed over time, their images continue to exist in novels. For instance, the Paris of the past has remained in Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*, Balzac’s *Human Comedy*, and Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*,¹³ while Dublin is particularly vibrant in James Joyce’s works. Alexandria remains a significant factor in Lawrence George Durrell’s *The Alexandria Quartet*, and London comes to life in many novelists’ works, such as Dickens’ *Oliver Twist*, Woolf’s numerous works, and many of Tayeb Salih’s writings such as *Season of Migration to the North*.¹⁴

This fact indeed prompted the Irish novelist James Joyce to remark, after he had finished his great epic fiction *Ulysses*, the events of which take place in the city of Dublin, that if Dublin were to be exposed to a devastating earthquake, because of his novel it would be possible for it to be rebuilt.

In the Arabic context, Alexandria appears in Abdulfattāh Rezq’s novel *Alexandria*¹⁵, Mecca dominates in the works of Rajaa `Ālim¹⁵ and Cairo is prevalent in the novels of Naguib Mahfouz.¹⁶

¹² My translation.

¹³ According to critic `Āmer, Paris is named approximately 539 times in this particular novel, as determined by a French critic interested in Proust's works (`Āmer, N. 2007).

¹⁴ For further details, see Salhi and Netton, 2006.

¹⁵ Such as Ṭarīq Al-Ḥarīr, Khātām, and Siter.

¹⁶ Such as `Awlād Ḥāratnā and Naguib Mahfouz’s trilogy.

The city in the novel is not limited to long-established cities with vast histories; indeed, Los Angeles is prominent in Peter Smith's works. North America's magical beaches, cities, and sun are vital components of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novels such as *The General in his Labyrinth* and *The Autumn of the Patriarch*. In the French writer Daniel Pennac's *The Dictator and the Hammock*, the narrative describes the most important aspects of life and nature along with more precise details of the place, characterizing Brazil. Richard Lehan has asserted that the real image of the cities was one given by literature (Lehan, 1998).

Despite the strong links and synergies between the novel and the city – particularly the significant role that the place or the city play in the novel's construction – “the existing studies are insufficient to fully cover this aspect, especially Arabic studies” (Mahbak, 2005: 142),¹⁷ and therefore, the Cairo International Forum 2003 which was under the title ‘The Novel and The City’ highly recommended that an in-depth study of this significant aspect as part of the novel should be carried out. “The works of the Forum were published in three volumes (1740 pages) by Al-Majles Al-A‘lā li Al-Thaqāfah fī Misr”.

However, this does not suggest a total absence of literary contributions. Serious attempts of literary criticism have been made to cover vital aspects of this connection between the novel and the city in the literary field. The current discussion will highlight some of these attempts, starting with world literature and then Arabic literature.

The strong association and relationship between the place and artistic creation were reported early on in poetry. In French criticism, Bachelard asserted that the significance of place initiated the ultimate success of literary creativity. He argued that, undoubtedly, place is the creator's starting point; the old house, the home of childhood, is a place of familiarity and the centre for adaptation of the imagination (Bachelard, 1994). This concept was further developed into what is currently known as the Phenomenological Criticism by critics Gilbert Duran and Jean-Pierre Richard. In their analysis of the

¹⁷ My translation.

technical characteristics of Lorca's poetry, they identified the poet's relationship with the city and also showed some comparisons between Lorca and T. S. Eliot regarding the city (Duran, 1980).

Criticism did not stop with poetry, but extended to the novel. According to Dunlap, who examined American life in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston via the novel, "the 1860s saw the production of significant novels of the city by Bayard Taylor, George W. Curtis, and Theodore Winthrop" (Dunlap, 1965: 8). Dunlap also focused on the social life of the city and discovered that the city is a fertile ground for contradictions. It should be realized that although the city possesses a great deal of friendliness, it also has a wide spread of envy (Dunlap, 1965). Meanwhile, Lehan (1998) examined how Los Angeles figured in literature in the conclusion of his book. Lehan, who studied place and time widely, also pointed to the difficulty of separating time and space in the form of art work.

Narrative's impact provided an awareness and development of the importance of place and time, especially Greimas' contributions in the field of narrative discourse, which played a positive role in the development of the term spatial (or place) in the twentieth century. Moreover, Lotman (1977) examined place and its connotation in his book *Structure of the Artistic Text*. Earlier contributions by European realistic novelists of the nineteenth century, such as Balzac and Zola, attempted to distinguish communities through the places described, thereby confirming the strong link based on vulnerability and impact between location and character. Wellek maintained that it is of great importance to describe the place as a prelude to an important figure in the literary work, namely the hero, and stated in his book *Theory of Literature* that when you describe the house you describe humans as the place as if the house was part of the human (Wellek and Warren, 1980). Practically speaking, it is those first places that have had an impact on the writer's life that make the deepest impression on their mind. Although the author might have lived a long time away from these places, other places fail to put their imprint on his mind: "There is the kind that results from failing to imprint something in the first place" (Carruthers, 2008: xi).

Such previous attempts to explain the place may have been focusing on its description, which is an essential element in constructing the place; at the beginning of the last century, the English critic Muir (1979) commented on ‘the event novel’, which is based on an important component of the place. As Muir stated, “There is in the great character novels a feeling of intensely filled space as extraordinary in its way as the feeling of crowded time in the dramatic novel” (Muir, 1979: 85). Thus, the role of the city is not to stay within its boundaries, but to broaden its horizon in order to contribute to the city’s creation and be integrated into the novel (Taddei and Al-Biqā‘ī, 1997).

Although readers may not have visited many cities in reality, the relevant literary work provides a deep sense of belonging to them. On the other hand, some cities not only remained immortal on paper only, but in fact they also remained eternal and have become a landmark and destination for lovers of literature and writers from around the world. Literature trips are organized to visit the cities featured in such literary works, including tours to Spain to “search for the location of the bridge so famously exploded in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Leafing through books” (Lambert, 2008)¹⁸ as well as Florence, toting copies of *The Divine Comedy* as tour members strolled the medieval city (Lambert, 2008).¹⁹

¹⁸ “They located the riverbank where the bridge ought to have been” (see Lambert, 2008).

¹⁹ Additional tours include: Camden, NJ—Walt Whitman lived here in the only home he ever owned, receiving visits from Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde, and William Makepeace Thackeray. Oxford, MI—until his death in 1962, William Faulkner resided in a Greek revival house called Rowan Oak. His study is as he left it. Austin, TX—O. Henry (William Sydney Porter) occupied an 1886 Queen Anne-style cottage that today is the O. Henry Museum, sponsor of an annual pun-off. Hillsboro, WV—Pearl Buck, the first American woman to win the Nobel Prize in literature (1938), was born here. The home has been restored to its 1892 condition. Pepin, WI—Laura Ingalls Wilder’s family lived in South Dakota, Missouri, Iowa, and Minnesota, but she was born right here in a little house—a cabin. Sauk Centre, MN—Nobel laureate Sinclair Lewis, who grew up in Sauk Centre, used it as the model for Gopher Prairie, the setting for his 1920 novel, *Main Street*. Providence, RI—H.P. Lovecraft, master of the creepy short story and routinely derided as “the best bad writer in America,” lived here, died here, and used Providence as the setting for many of his eldritch tales. (See Farnham, 2008).

1.5 Arab Cities

On the Arab side, we can safely say that there is near consensus that the novel is a literary genre capable of coping with the complexities of the city, although some views do not refute the contribution of the village and suburb to the making of the novel's subject matter. Yūsif Al-Qu'īd states: I have a rural base, as the novel can sometimes be seen as a product of village life. However, that does not mean you can strip the novel of its full heritage or the city of its full complexity. The non-human relations, is a valid ground for the novel. The different nature of rural areas and different circumstances make the village closer to poetry than to the novel (Al-Qu'īd, nd). Naguib Mahfouz, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, further asserted that the genre of the novel reflects the era of the modern city, while poetry was the pulse of the world before the crystallization of this city (‘Aşfūr, 1999).

Huge industrial revolutions fuelled the emergence of cities over the past two centuries, specifically during the late 19th Century with the rise of the middle class (Al-‘Alim, 1993). This process was accompanied by the emergence of the novel, which describes human relations in an unprecedented manner. All this created new civic spaces, which are reflected in both Arabic and French in the Algerian novels, such as *The Algerian Trilogy* (1985)²⁰ and *Nedjma* (Star, 1956).²¹

Unlike the place in Arabic poetry, the beginnings of the study of the place were not ancient. This is according to Abdullah Abu Haif (2005), who pointed out that perhaps the study of Ḥussein Al-‘Ubaydī's *Theory of the Place in the Philosophy of Ibn Sīnā* (1987) is the first of its kind to examine the philosophical perspective of the place, while the first critical and literary studies of the place were to appear in the study of ‘Abdulwahhab Zaghādān *The Place in Risālat Al-Ghufrān: Its Forms and Functions* (1985), which describes the place and its relationship to literature, and the research of

²⁰ By the Algerian novelist Moḥammed Dīb.

²¹ By the Algerian novelist Kateb Yacine.

Ghāleb Halsā *The Place in the Arabic Novel* (1989), which are amongst the first researches to raise the question of the general aesthetics of the place in the field of Arabic literature.

There were a number of reasons for the trend of migration towards the cities, including drought and the economic hardships it imposed. Some rural dwellers thought the city would be their salvation from many of the hardships of the village and that it would be heaven on earth. They thought that in the city they would live an affluent and carefree life. However, they soon realized this was an illusion, and after experiencing the complexities and difficulties of city life, they became nostalgic about their former rural life and disillusioned with the city.

Both the city and civilization of the twentieth century have developed sharply and led to annoyance and hostility on the part of a number of writers, because of the destruction of human freedom, the exploitation of their resources and the wars that destroyed much of human civilization.

Since the era of Sodom, Hammurabi and ancient Rome, to the cities of today, the tradition firmly continues in the description of cities as bastions of corruption, extravagance, greed, arrogance and parasitism. In contrast, the rural population is usually stereotyped around the world, and in the various languages and dialects of the world, as being at the centre of stupidity, ignorance and naiveté .

In any event, the tendency of anti-urban centers did not reach this limit, however, after the industrial revolution in Britain and other countries in Western Europe, which witnessed the migration of millions of starving, miserable peasants and farmers from rural to urban strongholds to form an inexhaustible source of cheap labour in the nearby industrial cities, as in China today, and in many other developing countries.

While some Western writers have used words such as ‘the collapse of civilization’ (e.g. Arnold Toynbee), and ‘the civilization is going to fall’ (e.g. Colin Wilson), several Arab writers even damned and disowned the city because for them it represented the

headquarters of authority, which they equated with injustice and oppression, as is evident in the story of *Mal'ūn Abūkī Balad (Town of a Damned Father, 2007)*.²² They also abhorred the city because it was the location of a prison, as indicated in the novel *Al-Fallāḥ (The Farmer, 1967)* by 'Abdulraḥmān Al-Sharqāwī. The city was also portrayed as a ghoul or a monster in the story *Al-Nadāhh (The Mythical Animal, 1969)* by Yūsef 'Idrīs (Abdullah, 1989).

Several novels have also depicted the sense of alienation, discrimination and restriction of human freedom felt by many city dwellers in contrast to the atmosphere felt away from the city. Good illustrations of this are *Dimā' wā Ṭīn (Blood and Mud, 1994)* by Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī and *Ayyām Al-Jafāf (The Days of Drought, 1993)* by Yūsef Al-Qu'īd. Hence, several novels have been written from the city only as a place, whereas others have been written about the views of city dwellers.

Most of what has been written about the Arab cities has been abridged and does not reflect the city's real life or the interconnected fabric of its social structure. It is perhaps true that most places in the Arabic novel are derived from imagination rather than knowledge or direct experience. So, in forming a realistic image of a supposed place described as a mixture of desire, dream and reality, it is not certain whether the writer is dealing with a real place or merely imagining it, and whether the writer meant this city or another city to be absolutely unimaginable (Gharāibah, 2004). As such, the picture remains quite blurred, particularly in light of recent experiences.

Consequently, despite the recent interest in the study of the city in the Arabic novel,²³ a critical variation exists in the reality of the Arab city and its appearance in the novel. Indeed, some critics, e.g., Baalbaki (1995) and Al-Maḥmūd (2006), argue that the Arab city in its real sense is non-existent in the Arabic novel, that the places depicted in

²² This is the title of a short story by ṭbrāhīm Al-Ḥardalū, and the story refers to Al-Kharṭūm where an old rural villager went to look for his son. He believed the city was just like his village, but he did not find anyone there who helped or hosted him when his money ran out. People there were rushing around on the streets, frantically going about their business. So he took a train and returned to his village, desperate to find his son and cursing this city.

²³ Such as the Cairo International Forum (2003), entitled '*The Novel and The City*'. "The works of the Forum were published in three volumes (1740 pages) by Al-Majles Al-A'īā li Al-Thaqāfah fī Misr."

Arabic fiction can only be related to large villages and that the nature of the composition of the large village does not correspond with the makeup of a modern city in terms of its main components. Importing a Western city into the Arabic novel (as in the case of Paris in Mohammad Al-Muwaylihi's works) is a typical example of this belief.

However, other critics, e.g. Al-Nuṣayyer (2007), have argued that the defect seems to be in the authors themselves, as they have not yet discovered the nature of the relations that constitute the fabric of the modern city and its composition. According to this perspective, authors' shortcomings are, firstly, a lack of understanding of the structure and nature of the city's middle class and, secondly, their failure to investigate and engage with the formation of the city bourgeoisie and the work they do in commerce and industry. Thus, it is necessary for authors to know the city, its civilization, urbanization processes, history, and religion.

A number of writers and critics believe in the earlier views of Al-Maḥmūd and link cities to the industrial revolution, which leads to the conclusion that the industrial revolution was one of the most important criteria for the assessment of the cities, although it might not be a requirement for places to be classified as cities. Therefore, some cities might have missed the industrial revolution, yet have retained the features and characteristics that classified them as cities, such as Jerusalem and Mecca as religious cities, Fez and Damascus as historical heritage cities, and Dubai as a modern commercial city.²⁴ Furthermore, many books have been written around the theme of the city under such titles as: *Al-Madīna wa Al-Turāth (The City and Heritage, 1994)*, by Ahmad Maṭlūb, *Al-Madīnah wa Al-Shi'r Al'arabī Al-Mu'āṣir (The City and Contemporary Arabic Poetry, 1995)*, by Mokhtār Ali Abu Ghālī, *Madīnat Burāqish (The City of Brach, 1998)* by Ahmad Al-Madīnī, *Madīnat Al-Riyādh 'Abra 'Aṭwār Al-Tārīkh (The City of Riyadh through Phases of History, 2001)* by Ḥamad Al-Gāsir, *The City in the Islamic World (2008)*, by Salma K, Renata Holod, Attilio Petruccioli and André Raymond., and *Faḍā'āt Madīna (Spaces of a City, 2012)* by Riḍā Ṣāleh.

²⁴ Also as a term the city has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an under the name of city fourteen times.

In addition there are many cities that have been made the hero of several novels, as in *Lāmalā ʿīka fī Rām Allah* (*No Angels in Ramallah*, 2010) by ʿīnās ʿAbdullah, or *Laylah Wāḥedah fī Dubai* (*One Night in Dubai*, 2010) by Hānī Naqshabandī.

According to Mokhtār Ali Abu Ghālī, “there is no doubt that the Western city as a subject is different from the Arab city, but this simple difference between them should not lead to the denial of their classification as cities”. He also confirmed that “Indeed, urban studies and all the definitions that have been applied by scholars can be applied to the Arab city and no one can unite the way of life in the village and in the city” (Ghālī, 1995: 12).²⁵

Simply reading a novel such as *Al-Rrajʿa Al-Ba ʿīd* (*Distant Rain*, 2001) by Fuʿād Al-Takarlī highlights the relationship and the disparity between the city and rural areas from the perspective of the author, who lived in a rural area and subsequently taught in cities. Such understanding leads the reader to realize that the Arab city *does* exist in Arabic fiction.

In addition, the idea that the city was created as a human product is subject to variations in culture, geography, and civilization produced by the human mind, which makes it possible to benefit from people’s knowledge. This would apply to many Arab cities beyond the size and population census.

The presence of the city is highlighted on two levels: as the moulder of events (e.g., influencing the structure of the narrative through its own character, as in *Laylah Wāḥedah fī Dubai*)²⁶ and as an incubator of a series of events which provide the urban

²⁵ My translation.

²⁶ *One Night in Dubai* (2010), by Hānī Naqshabandī, who portrayed the city of Dubai as a heroic character.

atmosphere and setting for the literary work, as in *Al-'Erhābī 20 (The Terrorist 20, 2006)*.²⁷

In reality, there are several key differences between the Western city and the Arab city. The Western city leans on essential foundations, such as justice, equality and freedom, each of an acceptable level, and the rules governing the law and the individual, following different revolutions and social movements that brought about the beginning of the modern era. The French Revolution is a case in point and, while the Arab city has provided aspects of these elements which remain a fertile soil for scholars, religious, social and judicial values and also the impact of scholars and leaders are the main engines of the Arab civilized city (Beshārah, 1996). All of these qualities have remained and grown with the Arab city purely because of the support of the Qur'anic verses,²⁸ with some of them being interpreted as follows:

Verily! Allāh commands that you should render back the trusts to those to whom they are due, and that when you judge between men, you judge with justice. Verily, how excellent is the teaching which He (Allāh) gives you! Truly, Allāh is Ever All-Hearer, All-Seer. O you who believe! Obey Allāh and obey the Messenger and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. (Q. 4: 58, 59)

It must be emphasised that the cities are not a final product; rather, they are dynamic cities as a result of the interaction between continuous variable factors, such as the economic, social, political and religious factors. Since most Islamic cities are governed by laws that are based on Islamic Shari'a, these laws and constitutions are reflected in the urban structure of these cities.

Cairo is a good example of a Muslim Arab city which has been influenced by the nature of relationships and emotional ties, the automatic direct methods of communication and the pattern of intimate groups, which are supported by the religious obligation, such as daily meetings for the five prayers, weekly meetings for the Friday prayers, and annual

²⁷ *Terrorist 20*, by Abdullah Thābet, whose narrative focused on the Asir region and the city of Abha.

²⁸ All of our Qur'an translations are based on (Abdul-Rahman, M. S. (2009), Al-Hilāl, M. T. & Khān, M. M. (2006) and Ali, A. Y. (1983)).

meetings, such as the Eids²⁹ prayers, all of which are derived from the verses of the Qur'an, which can be translated as the following:

Guard strictly (five obligatory) *As-Salawât* (the prayers) especially the middle *Salât* (i.e. the best prayer - '*Asr*'). And stand before Allâh with obedience... (Q. 2: 238)

O you who believe (Muslims)! When the call is proclaimed for the *Salât* (prayer) on Friday (*Jumu'ah* prayer), come to the remembrance of Allâh [*Jumu'ah* religious talk (*Khutbah*) and *Salât* (prayer)] and leave off business (and every other thing). That is better for you if you did but know (Q. 62: 9). Therefore turn in prayer to your Lord and sacrifice (to Him only). (Q. 108: 2)

These features, which can be seen in Cairo and other places, may not appear clearly in some Arab cities, but the Arab city in general has nevertheless acted as an incubator for many of the social relations and religious ties, as indicated hugely by both Oriental and Arabic studies.³⁰

Furthermore, in terms of the religious authority and its impact on cities, Cairo might be closer to the date of the founding of the ancient Greek and Roman civilisation, where Religion was an extremely effective factor in the formation of various Greek and Roman cities, such as Athens, Rome and Constantinople.

As a result of these and other factors, the social fabric and the sense of religion are still clearly reflected in the community of Cairo. Despite the complexity of the civil society apparent in Cairo, transferred to the fabric of the society are values such as ceremonies and religious events, and these points quite possibly amount to one of the most prominent and key differences between the Western and the Arab city.

²⁹ Eid Al-Feṭer which is the minor feast, the feast of the breaking of Ramadan fast or the Lesser Bairam, and Eid Al-'Aḏhā which is the feast of immolation, or Greater Bairam (see Baalbaki, R. 1995).

³⁰ For further analysis of these studies, see Allāhām, 2004.

1.6 Birmingham: An Example of a Modern City

A city such as Birmingham in the UK, which has all of the attributes of a modern-day city, has a lack of apparent links in relation to social and religious values to such an extent that links are sometimes completely absent. The omnipresence of religious buildings in the city betrays a past when religion occupied the central focus of this city. Perhaps secularism and politics in European countries, led by Britain, has played a role in the marginalisation of religion and its role in strengthening the religious and social ties of the community. Furthermore, there are some signs at the level of political discourse as well, referring to renewing the relationship with religion, but strong reactions mostly support the absence of the role of religion in the Western city.

Mueller (2009) invites us to consider the case of the French President Nicolas Sarkozy. On numerous occasions, he has argued that his country needs to rethink its traditional strict separation of state and religion, called *laïcité*. In particular, according to the twice-divorced self-confessed ‘cultural Catholic’, France should develop a ‘positive secularism’. In contrast to *negative laïcité*, which according to Sarkozy ‘excludes and denounces’, *laïcité positive* invites ‘dialogue’ and at least recognises the social benefits of religion.

In a much-criticised speech in Rome at the end of 2007, Sarkozy acknowledged the Christian roots of France, which he called ‘the eldest daughter of the Church’. He also praised Islam during a visit to Saudi Arabia. At present, he is calling for state subsidies for faith-based organisations; a policy proposal that consequently upsets his many secularist critics (Mueller, 2009).

However, this does not mean the complete absence of the role of religion in the Western city, which was run by religious control and power, although there is the effect, which cannot be compared to the influence of Islam in Arab cities, which still has some roots

that sometimes appear, and perhaps the call of the ‘Red Tories’ is one of these roots. Mueller³¹ states that:

Finally, there is Britain, usually seen as perhaps the most secular country in Western Europe, and thus the least likely candidate to see the return of religion of any kind (outside its Muslim community). Under David Cameron’s leadership, the newly invigorated Conservative Party is listening to a number of thinkers, dubbed the ‘Red Tories’, who urge the party to turn its back on Thatcherism and embrace civil society, local community, the family, and, not least, religion as a major force in fostering responsible social behaviour. (Ibid)

According to Jamāl Shaḥīd, Arab civilisation is in the essence a city-based civilisation which grew up in Mecca and Medina and later flourished in Damascus, Baghdad, Qayrawān, Cairo, Cordoba and Fes. And, if the desert which gave birth to myths, legends and poetry deserves to be heard, the city also gave birth to science, philosophy, prose and poetry (Shāḥīd, 2007).

Such a view enhances the presence of an ancient Arab city due to the presence of immortal names in the fields of medical sciences, mathematics and philosophy, such as Al-Fārābī (950), Al-Ghazālī (1111) , Ibn Mājāh (1138), Ibn Rushd (1198), Ibn Al-Fārid(1237), Ibn ‘Arabi (1240) and Ibn Khaldūn (1406), who in his *Muqaddima* studied the linguistic meaning of the Arab civilisation and some of its urban features; the reasons for the emergence of major Arab cities and some characteristics of their people are all the subject of studies in his famous book (*Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*).

The important images of the Arab religious city, the Arab African city and the Arab Asian city represent many of the features of the rest of Arab cities where all features of the cities and all kinds of social transformations are to be found.

³¹ Jan-Werner Mueller is Associate Professor of Politics at Princeton University and Open Society Fellow, Central European University, Budapest.

1.7 Mecca: A City of Civilisation, Culture and Religion

Mecca, which has been a permanent member of the Arab Cities Organization since 19 April 1973, is known for its religious history, culture and civilisation, which go back to many centuries before the advent of Islam with the support of several factors, such as the various and diverse endowments and the presence of pilgrimage, which is considered to be religious, social, cultural and economic.³²

The contribution of Mecca as the old commercial centre is due particularly to the fact that it is situated strategically at the crossroads of migratory commercial convoys from Yemen to Syria, Iraq and Egypt, not to mention its trade with East Africa across the Red Sea. The tribe of Quraish was the tribe of traders and, therefore, some of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) were traders, such as Abu Bakr and ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭāb, ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān and the first wife of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Khadija Bint Khuwaylid. According to Al-‘Alī, the large number of verses in the Holy Qur'an which were revealed in Mecca used terms such as ‘account’, ‘trade’, ‘balance’, ‘whit’, ‘measure’ and ‘loan’ owing to the fact that Mecca is a trading city (Al-‘Alī, 2000).

Mecca was marked by the presence of thinkers, poets and 'owners of the word'. In addition, the existence and attention of the Quraish tribe in the pre-Islamic era and its impact on many of the literary fields, such as public speaking, oratory, proverbs and commandments, which were all recorded in the major Arabic source books, imposed the dialect of Quraish in Mecca as the prevailing language of literature, which had been practised by intellectuals from various Arab regions, since it was the language that was understood by all as a result of pilgrimage and trade, and of the sovereignty of this tribe. In addition, there were contributions from the other tribes around Mecca, such as the Hudhail tribe.

³² For more details, see Al-Fauzan, A. 2006.

Mecca's relationship with the Islamic world as a place frequented by millions of people from diverse cultures made it a multicultural centre. In addition to that, the region of Mecca included the famous markets for the Arab oral literature – both pre- and post-Islam – Dhī Al-Majāz, Dhī Majnah and the most famous one: ‘Ukādh.

Mecca as a centre of trade and a crossroad of civilisation has attracted people from various parts of the world who eventually settled and intermarried there, resulting in a very cosmopolitan environment with populations tracing their roots to various ethnicities and races. This movement of people into Mecca started from the days of the Prophet Abraham (PBUH). Mecca possesses historical documentation reaching back more than 1,000 years. Perhaps the Holy Mosque in Mecca is the oldest centre of learning in history, with its doors remaining open throughout the day to teach all science and knowledge in multiple languages. Under each column there is a circle of different people such as Indians, Arabs, East Asians, Persians, Kurds and Westerners. Mecca is known as the holy place which has more than 700 hotels but which can still not accommodate the huge flow of visitors.

According to Kevin Wright, Director of the Global Organization for Religious Tourism, the number of visitors visiting Saudi Arabia each year for the pilgrimage and the ‘Umrah³³ is more than six million visitors from abroad; as a result, income is estimated to be approximately \$7 billion per year (Kuna, 2009). The Saudi Minister of Pilgrims stresses that during the month of Ramadan in 2008 (September) Mecca received over 3.2million visitors from both home and abroad (Agency, 2009). Thus, a city like Mecca cannot be classified as being ‘outside the circle of cities’.³⁴

³³ Pilgrimage to Mecca in the form of the so-called "minor Hajj" which, unlike the Hajj proper, need not be performed at a particular time of the year and whose performance involves fewer ceremonies, (see Wehr, 1980).

³⁴ In Qatar, Mecca, which is located in Saudi Arabia, was chosen as capital of Islamic culture in 2006, and it was a witness to its long cultural and influential role. Chancellor of Umm Al-Qura University Dr. Nasser Al-Şāleḥ confirmed that a large number of lectures, papers and seminars were presented on this occasion, along with more than 300 research and 500 events on the impacts of Mecca in many places around the world (‘Ābdullah, 2005). Furthermore, Umm Al-Qura University in Mecca sponsored the publication of more than a hundred books on Mecca and its impact, written by local and global authors,

1.8 Baghdad: An Arab Asian City

Baghdad, which was built in 762 on the latest model by the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mansur, who chose it as the capital of the Islamic caliphate, reached the peak of its prosperity during the reign of the caliph Harun Al-Rashid in the early 9th century, and then became a forum for scientists and scholars for several centuries (Al-Baghdādī, 1997).

Al-Ḥassan Al-Ḥamadānī, who died in 945, described how it was an ancient city and a profitable market, with people from as far as China coming to it for trade and returning with immense profit (Al-Baghdādī, 1997). Al-'Araabi Bishr ibn Al-Ḥārith visited Baghdad in 881 and was shocked by its level of civilisation; he took off his shoes and fled to the desert again (Ali, 2001: 46).

Baghdad was a leading place in areas such as schools of philosophical thought, medicine, and knowledge of speech and logic, and has given birth to many experts on these subjects, men of the likes of Al-Khawārezmī (846), Al-Kindi (873) and others,

all of this in one year. On the occasion of Mecca being chosen as the capital of Islamic culture some of the main activities were presented by King Abdulaziz University, such as:

- 1) *'The holiness of Mecca and its grace'* (a study of the place and references to it as mentioned in Psalm 84 in the Bible) by Dr. Laila Zarour from the Department of Geography.
- 2) *'The holiness of Mecca in the Arab poetry'* by Dr. Ibtisam Hamdan from the Arabic Language Department.
- 3) *'Citizenship'* by Dr. Noura Alsaad.
- 4) *'The Alkaaba sidana through the history'* by Dr. Fathia Al-Qurshi from the Department of Social Studies.
- 5) *'The shaping of the book of Mecca'* by Dr. Huda Alamode.
- 6) *'The ecological characteristics of Mecca and their effect on the pilgrims'* by Dr. Faydeh Boukari from Department of Geography.
- 7) *'The women of Mecca and the scientific life'* by Dr. Ibtisam Khashmeri from the Department of History.
- 8) *'The canto on the footsteps of the beloved Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him)'* by Prof. Aisha Al Qarni from the Department of Islamic Studies.
- 9) Nada Burnji from the Department of European Languages prepared the visual displays which showed the cultural aspects in Mecca. She also gave a presentation which included some rare antique pictures taken for the Haram in Mecca.

It was Dr. Ibtisam Kashmeri who prepared four visual displays done by the students of the Department of History. Other displays were presented by students from the departments of psychology and social studies. For more on this see: Center, F. R. (2009).

who were busy in the field of translation and the transfer of Greek, Indian and Persian sciences into Arabic. Dār Al-Ḥikmah (832), in Baghdad, was the centre for their research and translations. Al-Nizhāmiyya school in Baghdad was established in 1066 as a first school in the rehabilitation of jurists and scholars in jurisprudence, speech and Arabic language and literature (‘Amīn, 2006), and “the Mustansiriya School, which was the greatest University for theoretical and applied knowledge in Baghdad was established in (1227)” (Bāqer, 1976: 182).³⁵ It would be sufficient imply to read a novel about Baghdad, such as that entitled: *Ṣakhabun wa Nisā wa Kātibun Maghmūr* ‘(Clamor and Women and an Inglorious Writer, 2005) by Ali Bader, in order to realise and comprehend that you are in the midst of the qualities and characteristics of this city and its culture.

1.9 Cairo: An Arab-African Mega City

Cairo, the Triumphant City, is the glorious capital of Egypt. It is the largest city in the Middle East and Africa and lies at the centre of all routes that lead to and from Asia, Africa and Europe. It is the largest Arab capital, and the first capital of Arab culture in 1996, being the capital of the land of civilisations, the cradle of the Pharaohs' civilisation, an incubator of the Greek and the Roman civilisations, a beacon of Coptic civilisation, and a guardian of the Islamic civilisation. Cairo's position as a bridge between the East and the West of the Muslim world makes it an important centre (Al-Maqrīzī, 1998: 158).

Cairo was founded on 16 July 969 AD, by the Fatimid leader Jawhar Al-Sequilli, by an order from the Fatimid Khalif Al-Mu'izz lideenallah. It was named ‘the city of the 1,000 minarets’. Cairo is Africa's most populous city and the Arab world's cultural centre. People from all over the world visit Cairo to see the monuments and artefacts of ancient Egypt, as well as the various aspects of modern Cairo. Cairo provides its visitors with great cultural destinations, including a vast number of art galleries, music halls, cultural

³⁵ My translation.

centres, etc. Cairo is the city in which past and present meet universally. On its East side stands the evidence of 2,000 years of Islamic, Christian Coptic, and Jewish culture, all of which are still flourishing until this day. On its West side lays the Ancient Egyptian city of Memphis (Giza), the renowned capital of the Old Kingdom and the site of the Pyramids. Indeed, a journey through Cairo is a journey through time, a journey through the history of an immortal civilization (Egypt, 2006). Maria Golia stated that Cairo is a fourteen-hundred year-old desert oasis occupied by 16 million people whose lives are shaped and coloured by its proximity to the Nile (Golia, 2004). The statistics in 2004-2005 show that the number of people in Cairo exceeds 19 million in the daytime (Salīm, 2007).

Consequently, Cairo is also a city which serves more than five provinces and many towns, relying on the division to which Lombardo has referred and which divides the development of the European cities into three parts: 1. The stage of the city before the modern industrial development; 2. the stage of the modern industrial cities; and 3. the stage of the metropolitan, which can be defined as a big city which includes, controls and runs a group of provinces and cities.

“Cairo may be classified as belonging to both the first and the third parts” (Ārif, 1995: 35-41).³⁶ Furthermore, the condition itself can be found in Al-Madina Al-Munawwara, and then in Kufah and Cordoba; all of which were centres of the Islamic Empire throughout history, and many other cities were following them.

Cairo is one of the most important world capitals, and has hosted various literary salons and publishing houses which attracted celebrity writers and lovers of literature, including the Rīsh which was established in 1908, Alpusta, Dār Al-Kutub, Al-Salām, Al-Ĥilmīyah, Indiana, ‘Izavich, Ali Baba (Darwīsh, 2002). In addition to the Al-Ĥureya and ‘izāvich salons, Cairo was also a haven for Egyptian and Arab leftist intellectuals, where the publication of some of their books took place and exercised an impact on the salons and literary coffee shops, the latest of which was perhaps *Harā’iq Al-Kalām fī*

³⁶ My translation.

Maqāhī Al-Qāhirah (Fires of Speech in the cafes of Cairo, 2004) by Mohammed Abdel Wahed, who monitored the cultural and political history of the of Cairo cafes and salons, which began to emerge in the mid-nineteenth century, with the beginnings of the emergence of the phenomenon of intellectuals. Browsing through books such as *Al-Qāhirah fī Ḥayāti (Cairo in my Life, 1986)* by Ne‘māt Ahmad Fou‘ād is enough to enable one to see Cairo through the eyes of its people and the eyes of others who have experienced the land.

Cairo is one of the cities which has been depicted and recorded by many novelists. Each writer has taken features which are commensurate with the narrative story. Through such novels the city has been known by many people before they even visited it. It has been more attractive to novelists; that could be so because it is one of the places which often expands to accommodate all of the narrative circumstances and allows characters to move and engage in all spectrums of life, social, political and intellectual, something which attracts a novelist to describe these in detail.

These diverse characteristics have made Cairo appeal to many artists and writers, who have then ultimately made it into a hero or an important part of some of their works, such as the works of Naguib Mahfouz, Nabīl Rāgheb, ‘Alā’ Al’swānī, Rashīd Yahyāwī, Karīm Ghallāb, Mohamed Barrāda, Ghazī Al-Qosaībī, Yousef Al-Qu‘īd, Ibrahim ‘Aṣlān and Jamāl Ghīṭānī.

Cairo has not only drawn the attention of the Egyptians, but has also become a catalyst and stimulus for many writers to the point that it has become what is known as a Phenomenon of Literary Refugees, most of whom were from Lebanon, such as May Ziyādah, Naguib Al-Haddād, from Syria ‘Adnān Al-Barāzī, from Iraq Khudāre Marī, and from Palestine Mohammed Al-Ghūl.

Of course, there are other major cities which have a presence in literary works, such as Fez in Morocco, Constantine in Algeria, Beirut in Lebanon and Dubai, the city of trade and finance in the U.A.E.

1.10 On the Saudi Novel Side

Despite the presence of the Saudi novel at the Gulf and most Arabic historical levels, it has suffered from periods of interruption between the publication of one novel and another. “The date of the emergence of the first novel in Saudi Arabia is 1930, with *Al-Taw’amān* (*The Twins*) by the author ‘Abdaqaddūs Al-‘Ansārī, while the date of the first novel in Yemen was in 1939, with *Sa’īd* by Moḥammad ‘Ali Loqmān”³⁷ in Kuwait it was “in 1962 with *Modarrisah Min Al-Mirqāb* (*Teacher of Mirqāb*)³⁸ by ‘Abdullah Khalaf” (Kheḍer, 1996: 39),³⁹ while in the rest of the Arab countries, Tunisia saw in 1935 *Jawlah Ḥawl Ḥānāt Al-Baḥr Almutawasit* (*Tour around the bars of the Mediterranean*) by Ali Al-Ddūjī, Syria produced *Naham* (*Insatiable*) by Shakib Al-Jābery in 1937 as the first artistic novel, and the first artistic novel in Lebanon was *Al-Raghīf* (*The Loaf*) by Tawfīq ‘Awwād in 1939, (Al-Nassāj, 2007). The first novel published in Algeria was, *Ghādat Umm Al-Qurā*⁴⁰ in 1947, in Sudan it was in 1948, with *Tājūj*⁴¹ by Uthmān Hāshem, while the first attempt at fiction in Morocco was in 1957 with *Al-Ṭufūla* (*The Childhood*) by Abdulmajid Benjelloun (Al-Shentī, 1990).

From its birth in 1930 until 1959, Saudi Arabia saw the publication of only nine novels: *Fatāt Al-Busfūr* (*The Girl of Bosphorus*, 1931) by Ṣālih salām, *Al-‘Inteqām Al-Ṭabī’ī* (*The Natural Revenge*, 1935) by Moḥammad Al-Juhārī and *Fikrah* (*Idea*, 1948) by the author ‘Aḥmad Al-Sibā’i, followed by *Al-Ba’tḥ* (*The Resurrection*, 1948) by Moḥamad ‘Ali Maghrebī, and *Al-Zawjah wa Al-Ṣadīq* (*The Wife and the Friend*, 1950) by Mohammad Omar; then Abdalssalām Hāshim Ḥāfīzh published his novel *Samrā’ Al-Ḥijāziyah* (*The Brunette Girl of Hijaz*, 1955) then appeared *Ibtēsām*⁴² (1957) by the author Maḥmūd Al-Mashhadī and *Thaman Al-Taḍḥiyah* (*The Price of Sacrifice*, 1959) by Muḥammad Al-Damanhūrī. In other words, during almost 30 years, only nine novels

³⁷ My translation.

³⁸ Mirqāb is a neighbourhood of Kuwait City.

³⁹ My translation.

⁴⁰ Means Ghādah is the mother of the villages.

⁴¹ Name of a city in Sudan.

⁴² This is a woman’s name.

were produced in Saudi Arabia, a number which is undoubtedly negligible compared with the output of some other Arab countries.

However, the only element linking together all Saudi novels since their inception until the current literary boost is the character of the city, which is an essential component of some of the novels.

The most important thing expressed by the Saudi novel about the place is “the shift in community’s image of the city from a community with naive, spontaneous and simple relationships to a community with wide and complex relationships which are subject to political changes, and economic and social influence” (Al-Dighary, 2004: 358).⁴³

The city in the Saudi novel could be an Arab or a Saudi city, like some of the early novels, whose events tended to occur in Cairo, Beirut or even a European city such as London. Good illustrations of this are *Wadda‘tu Āmālī* (*Farewell to Hopes*, 1958), *Ma‘tam Al-Wourūd* (*Flowers Funeral*, 1973) by Samīrah Khāshuqqī, *Thaman Al-Tadḥiyah* (1959) by Muḥammad Al-Damanhori, *Al-Barā‘ah Al-Mafqūdah* (*Lost Innocence*, 1972) by Hend Bā Ghaffār, *Ghadan Sayakūn Al-Khamīs* (*Tomorrow will be Thursday*, 1977) by Hudā Al-Rashīd, *Shoqat Al-Ḥurriyah* (*Freedom Flat*, 1994) and *Al-‘Aṣfūriyah* (*Madhouse*, 1996) by Ghāzī Al-Quṣaybī. As to the novels which used a Saudi city as their setting, we find for instance, *Al-‘Adāmah* (*Nothingness*, 1996), *Al-Shemaisī* (*Shemaisī* [District of Riyadh], 1997), *Al-Karādīb* (*The Prisons*, 1998), by Turki Al-Ḥamad.

At the present some novels draw their titles from names of cities and places, for example: *Banāt Al-Riyāḍ* (*Girls of Riyadh*, 2005) by Rajā‘ Abdullah Al-Sāni‘, *Lāyūjad Muṣawwir fī ‘Unayzah* (*There is no Photographer in ‘Unayzah*, 2008) by Khālid Al-Bassām, *Lā ‘Aḥad fī Tabūk* (*There is Nobody in Tabūk*, 2008) by Muṭlag Al-Boluwī, *Yamorrūn bi Al-Ḍhahrān* (*Passing through Al-Ḍhahrān*, 2008) by Fāliḥ Al-Ṣaghayyir, *Ṭarīq Al-Qaṣīm* (*The Road to Al-Qaṣīm*, 2008) by ‘Abd Al-Raḥmān Al-Yūsif, *Al-*

⁴³ My translation.

Ḥamām Lā yaṭīr fī Buraydah (*No Pigeons fly in Buraydah*, 2009) by Yūsif Al-Moḥayemīd, *Sūr Jeddah* (*Walls of Jeddah*, 2009) by Sa‘īd Al-Wahhābī, as well as novels which have been named after the names of streets and other locations such as: *Shāri‘ Al-‘Aṭāyif* (*The Road to Al-‘Aṭāyif*, 2009) by ‘Abdullah bin Bikhīt, *Ḥillat Al-‘Abīd* (*Al-‘Abīd District*, 2009) by Ṭāriq Al-Ḥayder. It also repeated the names of some cities in the novels of some novelists, such as Jeddah in the works of both Laylā Al-Johanī and Abdu Khāl, Mecca in the works of Rajā‘ ‘Ālim and ‘Abdullah Ta‘zi, Riyadh in novels by Turkey Al-Ḥamad, ‘Abdullah bin Bikhīt and Rajā‘ Al-Šāni‘.

The presence of the city may be found not only in the novel but also in the writing of Arab history whose writers, characters and events all have the capitals and the cities of Arab countries as their main setting. For instance, there is ample history written about the odalisques⁴⁴ in the royal palaces and harems, but not much has been written about slave markets where male and female slaves were sold and bought. There is also a rare presence of the far distant cities and villages which can be found only in travel literature books.

According to (*Al-Riwāya Al-Sa‘ūdiyyah Wāqī‘uhā wa Taḥawwulātuhā*, 2009),⁴⁵ “Saudi Arabia has produced 271 novels from 2000 until 2008, a figure which is many folds bigger than the 208 Saudi novels which were produced during approximately 70 years from 1930 to 1999” (Al-Nu‘mī, 2009: 36).⁴⁶ *Mu‘jam Al-‘Ībdā‘ Al-‘Adabi fī Al-Mamlakah Al-‘Arabiyyah Al-Sa‘ūdiyyah*⁴⁷ pointed out that “462 novels have been published until 2006, with a large presence of novels written by men. There were 232 men amongst these novelists, while the number of women novelists was 88 between 1930 and 2008” (Al-Ḥāzemī and Al-Yūsif, 2008: 55, 61).⁴⁸ However, for the first time, in 2006 there was a balance in the literary production and publishing between men and women, as 50 novels came out, half of which were written by women.

⁴⁴ A word meaning female slave, slave girl bondmaid, bondwoman (Baalbaki, R, 1995).

⁴⁵ Meaning: *Saudi Novel, Its Reality and Transformations*.

⁴⁶ My translation.

⁴⁷ Meaning: *Glossary of Literary Creativity in Saudi Arabia*.

⁴⁸ My translation.

Furthermore, all of the four stages of the Saudi novel (1930-1980, 1981-1989, 1990-1999, 2000-2006) (ibid: 16) presented all the types of places that have been mentioned. *Al-Ḥamām Lā Yaṭīr fī Buraydah* (2009) by Al-Muḥaymīd represents the real place. *Ṭariq Al-Ḥarir* (*Silk Road*, 1992) by Rajā' 'Alim, shows the mythical or strange place. *Rebāṭ Al-Walāyā* (*Bond of Protection*, 1987) by Hend Bāghafār indicates the closed place. *Al-Mawt Yamurro Min Hunā* (*Death Passes This Way*, 1995), and *Al-'Ayyām Lā Tukhabī 'Aḥadan* (*Days Hide No-one*, 2000) by 'Abdu Khāl, represent the historic place.

Most of the works by the new generation were written basically for the present-day place, while the cities and places of the past were neglected, particularly the old villages which provided an aura of innocence, purity and simple brotherhood. However, in spite of the rare literary works regarding the older kind of city, there were only a few novelists who tried to monitor the shift in human values and the extent of its relevance to the modern world of falsehood and commercial values. For example, these can be reflected in 'Abdulraḥmān Munif and his generation's works. *Mudun Al-Milḥ* (*Cities of Salt*) (1984-1989) by Munif, which commended the Bedouin who refused to accept the oil revolution, which was a cause of the disappearance of many of the ethics of humanity, is ultimately a case in point.

It is often stated that the studies of the place, or the city as part of the place, in Arabic literary works are very few, as has already been mentioned. Nonetheless, those who follow this subject closely, and particularly those of recent studies, find that there are some serious contributions in this field,⁴⁹ both through the study of the city directly or via a vision of the other side, such as the village and the desert, and through academic research, such as in the following: *Al-Riwāya Al-'Arabiyya Aljazā'iriyah wa Qaḍiyat Al-Rīf*. (*Algerian Arabic Novel and the Question of the Rīf*, 1988) by Sālim Sa'dūn, *Al-Makān fī Riwāyāt 'Abd'arraḥmān Munīf, Mudun Al-Milḥ Namūdḥagan* (*The Place in*

⁴⁹ Such as in the Second Cairo Research Series Forum on Arab Novelistic Ingenuity, 2003 – under the title of *The Novel and the City* (Cairo 2003).

the Novels of 'Abd'arraḥmān Munīf, with (Cities of Salt) as case study, 1992) by Maryam Khalfān Ḥamad and many more such studies.⁵⁰

There are also some examples of literary studies such as *Jamāliyyāt Al-Makān fī Al-Riwāya Al-'Arabiyya, (The Aesthetics of Place in the Arabic Novel, 1994)* by Nābulṣī, N. and *Shi'riyyat Al-Makān fī Al-Riwāya Al-Jadīdah: Al khiṭāb Al-Riwā' ī 'Edwārd Alkharrāṭ Namothajan: (The Poetics of Place in the Modern Novel, as in the Narrative Discourse of Edward Al-Kharrat, 2000)* by Ḥossain, K.⁵¹

We may also cite the conference paper of Mo'jeb Al-'Adwānī under the title of *Al-Makān fī Al-Riwāya Al-Sa'ūdiyyah Al-Mu'āṣirah (Place in the Contemporary Saudi Novel)*.

These studies have varied objectives, and include those interested in the historical link between the city and the novel, the relationship between the place and the time, the importance of describing the place, the importance of place in a literary work, regrets about leaving the city and feelings of nostalgia, and those who are interested in the human impact on the city. As stated above, the Arab city is often heavily influenced by the religious factor, and therefore the next chapter will address the topic of the city and religion.

⁵⁰ *Tawzhīf Al-Makān fī Al-Riwāya Al-Miṣriyyah* by Jahān, A, Moṣṭafā (*The Employment of Place in the Egyptian Novel, 1993*), *Al-Riwāya Al-Miṣriyyah wa Al-Madīnah: Dirāsah Naqdiyyah fī Al-Tafā'ūlāt Bayn Al-Riwāya wa Al-Madīnah (The Egyptian novel and the City: a Critical Study of the Interaction between the Novel and the City, 1997)* by Ḥusīn Moḥammad. *Delālat Al-Makān fī Al-Riwāya Al-'Arabiyya, fī Sa'ūd Miṣr Dirāsah Naqdiyyah (The Sense of Place in the Arab Novel in Upper Egypt: a Critical Study, 1967-1992)* by Yūsif Al-Rifā'ī (1999). *Qaḍāyā Al-Makān Al-Riwā' ī fī Al-'Adab Al-Mu'āṣir (Issues of Place in the Contemporary Novel, 1997)* by Ṣalāh, S., *Jamāliyyāt Al-Makān fī Al-Riwāya Assa'ūdiyyah (1970-2002)(The Aesthetics of Place in the Saudi Novel, 1970-2002)* by Ḥamad Al-Belhid (2008) (PhD thesis in literature). *Al-Madīnah fī Al-Riwāya Al-Sa'ūdiyyah* (a chapter of Ḥasan Al-Hāzmī's thesis). *Ṣūrat Al-Madīnah Al-Jazā'iriyah fī Al-Riwāya Al-'Arabiyya Ba'ad Al-'Istiqlāl wa 'Inda Albert Camus: Dirāsah Fanniyah Moqāranah (The Image of the Algerian City in the Arabic Novel Following Independence and in the Work of Albert Camus: a Comparative Artistic Study, 1988)* by Al'Akhḍar Al-Zāwī Belqāsim.

⁵¹ See also, *Al-Makān fī Al-Riwāya Al-Baḥrainiyyah: Dirāsah fī Thalāth Riwāyāt (Al-Jathwah, Alḥeṣār, 'Ughneyat Almā' wa Alnnār.) (Place in the Bahraini Novel: A Study of Three Novels, 2003)* By Ḥasan, H.

Chapter Two

The City and Religion

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2 Introduction

It is not surprising that Islam pays more attention to the city, enabling it to meet the socio-cultural and economic needs of the community. Religious discourse which is produced by the city has more popularity, maturity and impact on the Saudi civil society. Religion is the main engine for many of the Saudi city transformations as it is the deciding factor in the formation of the Saudi society morally, psychologically, socially and economically. Despite many attempts by a number of Arab governments to reduce the power and the control of religion and its impact on social transformations, the results of the Arab Spring strongly suggest the strong survival of the religion and its power as a main element in the general shifts affecting Arab cities and their people. This chapter will therefore address this issue through the following topics: the introduction and the literature review the city and civilization in religious and other sources, the impact of religious sources on writers, religion in the city, religion between village and city, the role of the mosque, the role of the Qur'anic schools and Islamic awareness societies, the role of student activities, summer centres in schools and youths camps, and religious transformations from 1990 onwards. For this we will rely on the perspectives of the Saudi novels as represented by *Mafāriq Al-'Atamah (Parting of Darkness 2004)* by Mohammad Al-Muzaini, *Al-'Erhābī 20 (The Terrorist 20, 2006)* by Abdullah Thābet and *Sharq Al-Wādī (East of the Valley, 2006)* by Turki Al-Ḥamad, which have clearly referred to most of these issues.

2.1 Literature Review

Although religious transformations in cities are studied on a broad canvas, those studies take the nature (character) of the historical, social, political, religious and architectural writing. For example, the book *Al-Ttayyār Al-Īslāmī fī Al-Qiṣṣah Al-Qaṣīra fī Miṣr* (*Islamic Trend in the Short Story in Egypt*, 1990) by Mohammed Al-'Akhras, illustrates the Islamic trend and its impact on the short story in Egypt in the second half of the twentieth century. This study confirms that Islamic Literature⁵² can be defined by its own characteristics, which distinguish it from Arabic literature; it also exemplifies the positive impact of the religious story – as represented by the Qur'anic story – on all types of Arabic story.

Sociologiya Al-Jumhūr Al-Siyāsī Al-Dīnī fī Al-Sharq Al-'Awsaṭ Al-Muāṣir (*The Sociology of Religion and Politics in the Contemporary Middle East*, 2005) by Ahmed Khalil addresses the issue of the Arab person who is dominated by political and religious slogans to the point of believing that these two are the main components of his identity. In the end, the people of the Arab world discover that the mess in which they live is the reason behind the dual vacuum which characterised the political and religious discourse from the 1920s until today and the reason for their persecution by their own governments.

Al-Shakhṣīyah Al-'Islāmiyah fī Al-Riwāya Al-Miṣriyah Al-Ḥadīthah, Taḥlīl wa-Naqd (*Islamic Character in the Modern Egyptian Novel, Analysis and Criticism*, 2007) by Kamāl Sāad Khalīfah displays a wide range of Islamic characters through both historical novels and so-called Islamic literature. The writer describes the Islamic character as a character full of the principles of the civilization, thereby symbolizing the values of truth, goodness and virtue. The author gleaned these qualities from the novels of Naguib Mahfouz, Naguib Al-Kilani, Abdul-Rahman Al-Sharqawi and others.

⁵² For more information about Islamic Literature, see *The Islamic Literature* 1959 by Najib Ullah; *The Islamic Literature* 1971 by Muhammad Ashraf; and *Islamic Art, Literature, and Culture* 2009 by Kathleen Kuiper.

Reuven Snir's *Religion, Mysticism and Modern Arabic Literature* (2007) is a valuable contribution to the research on the theoretical relationship between modern Arabic literature and Islam as an element which had significant influence on the Arts. This book presents some literary activities for both adults and children. In Chapters Two and Three the author discusses the work of Naguib Mahfouz and Salman Rushdie and provides more details on the social values represented in literature.

However this study will focus on different perspectives depicted in the novel, which are more accurate and have a bigger ability in terms of providing details about the societies and personal lives of the individuals.

Consideration of the Arabic novel in general and of the Saudi novel in particular, requires identifying the position of Islam vis-à-vis the issue of the city and civilization, which is based on cities according to the belief of several critics, such as Shāḥīd (2007).

The word 'city' / *Madina* is derived from the verb 'M D N' which means to settle in a given place, while 'Urbanization' *Tamaddun*, corresponds to the ethics of the people of the cities who progressed from a nomadic way of life to a settled state, in which schooling and education are provided.

The term 'civility' or *Madaniyyah* means the progress of scientific, artistic, literary and social developments which flourish in the cities (Shāḥīd, 2007).

The word 'civilization' or *Ḥaḍārah* according to Ibn Manzūr derives from the root 'Ḥ Ḍ R', which according to him:

...essentially means attendance (as opposed to absence), and residence in urban areas. Bedouin are often said to be civilized, if they follow the morality of urban people and adopt their habits. It also means permanent residence in the town or

city without travelling, as do the Bedouins, in addition to civility and progress (Ibn Manẓūr, 2005: itme of M D N and Ḥ Ḍ R).⁵³

It is clear from the above that the words "civil" and "civilization" are intrinsically linked to the city and not to the desert or the countryside, and therefore the Arab civilization is essentially a civilization of cities, a fact which has also been supported by religious sources.

2.2 The City in Religious Sources

The term *city* is mentioned fourteen times in the Holy Qur'an, whereas the word *village* is mentioned thirty-three times. Although names of villages are mentioned in relation to human qualities, such as hunger, fear, joy, and greed, the city, on the other hand, is referred to as an actual place. There are numerous passages in the Qur'an that address the village as an identity; for example, the story of Joseph's brothers and their father includes this passage: "Ask the village (its people) where we were, and the caravan with which we travelled hither. Lo! We speak the truth" (Q 12: 82). Also the meaning of verse No 112 which is:

And Allâh puts forward the example of a township (Makah), that dwelt secure and well-content: its provision coming to it in abundance from every place, but it (its people) denied the Favours of Allâh (with ungratefulness). So Allâh made it taste extremes of hunger (famine) and fear, because of that which they (its people) used to do. (Q 16: 112)

The city is shown as a space and a place where things are moving, e.g. 'And he entered the city at a time of unawareness of its people: and he found there two men fighting...' (Q 28: 15), and also in the meaning of verse No 20 of sura Yâsin: 'And there came a man running from the farthest part of the city. He said: "O my people! Obey the Messengers' (Q 36: 20).

⁵³ My translation.

Names of cities are often mentioned in relation to ‘Ḥaḍāra/ civilization and ‘Umran/ architecture’.

Sometimes the Qur’an refers to the same place as either a village or a city (e.g., the story of Moses and Al-Khidr in the chapter of Al-Kahf):

Then they both proceeded, till, when they came to the people of a township, they asked them for food but they refused to entertain them. Then they found therein a wall about to collapse and he—Khidr—set it up straight. [Mûsâ (Moses)] said: If you had wished, surely, you could have taken wages for it!’ (Q 18:77, 82). "And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city; and there was under it a treasure belonging to them; and their father was a righteous man, and your Lord intended that they should attain their age of full strength and take out their treasure as a mercy from your Lord. And I did them not of my own accord. That is the interpretation of those (things) over which you could not hold patience. (Q 18: 77, 82)

When the situation is about food, as an example of human needs, the name of the village is assigned. In this context, the city has been shown in a positive aspect.

The city was also counted as a religious centre in terms of sending messengers to it and taking the responsibility for any punishment that could be brought on the villagers, and this indicates the importance of the role of the city in Islam;

And never will your Lord destroy the townships (populations) until He sends to their mother town a Messenger reciting to them Our Verses. And never would We destroy the townships unless the people thereof are *Zâlimûn* (polytheists, wrong-doers, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allâh, oppressors and tyrants. (Q 28: 59)

Elsewhere in the Qur’an, Prophet Joseph (PBUH) admits the goodness of Allah since his lord brought his family to the city of Egypt. He said, “O my father! This is the interpretation of my dream a foretime! My Lord has made it come true! He was indeed good to me, when He took me out of the prison, and brought you (all here) out of the

bedouin-life – after *Shaitân* (Satan) had sown enmity between me and my brothers” (Q 12: 100).⁵⁴ In this context, too, the city has been shown in a positive aspect.

The word ‘Bedouins’, meaning those who do not live in the city, is mentioned ten times, with all of them mentioned in the context of dispraise except one.⁵⁵ More than once in the famous *Muqaddima*, Ibn khaldūn indicated how Al-Bukhārī⁵⁶ cautioned against the dangers of extreme preoccupation with agricultural implements (Ibn Khaldūn, n.d: 142, 394). “Agriculture was definitely considered one of the lowliest occupations, suitable only for the meanest type of human being” explains Badawi (Badawi, 1985: 27). Since the city is not the place for agriculture, it is obvious that the concepts behind these contexts point to the virtues of the city.

When political stability was achieved in Medina, the prophet Mohammad (PBUH) ordered the people to protect the land and forbade acts like cutting the trees and hunting in designated areas. He also encouraged them to settle in the city. The prophet Mohammad (PBUH) said, "I have declared sacred the territory between the two lava plains of Medina, so its trees should not be cut down, and its game must not be killed"(Al-Nawawī, 2010: No 3154); and he also said, "Medina is best for them if they knew. No one leaves it through dislike of it without Allah putting in it someone better than he in place of him; and no one will stay there in spite of its hardships and distress without my being an intercessor or witness on behalf of him on the Day of Resurrection (ibid.).

This was taking place in the early days of Islam as an aspect of the encouragement to settle in the city and keep it safe.

⁵⁴ In the other translation, the phrase “brought you (all here) out of the bedouin-life” reads: “brought you from the desert”.

⁵⁵ (See Q 9: 90, 97, 98, 99, 101, and 120, Chapter 33: 20, Chapter 48: 11, Chapter 48: 16, and Chapter 49: 14.

⁵⁶ Al-Bukhārī wrote the second most important book in Islam. He collected the correct hadiths (sayings) attributed to the Messenger of Allah.

The Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) also commended other cities, such as when he said: a city called Damascus is a good Muslims' home at that time (Al-'Albāni, 1983: 15).

The Qur'an and the Hadith highlight the importance of civilisation on numerous occasions using different scenarios. For example, if the material progress of society was one of the criteria of civilization, the Qur'an rejects the progress of human societies in the material aspects only if it was not based on humanitarian standards or on the criterion of piety, as in the Qur'anic verses which can be translated as follows:

(128) Do you construct on every elevation a sign, amusing yourselves (129) And take for yourselves palaces and fortresses that you might abide eternally (130) And when you strike, you strike as tyrants (131) So fear Allah and obey me (Q 26: 128-131).

Material means and earthly powers become a tool of oppression and bullying if they are not combined with the values of religious balance, as the Qur'an differentiates between people, based on piety which is something that everyone can achieve, and not on race, colour, social, political and economic status; it moreover urges acquaintance between civilizations, as in the following translation:

O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allāh is that (believer) who has At-Taqwâ [i.e. he is one of the Muttaqûn]. Verily, Allāh is All-Knowing, All-Aware (Q 49: 13).

When the distinction in life is based on Piety, this means justice, because everyone can achieve it and that leads them to feel that building up civilization and preserving it is his or her responsibility.

In addition to that, many Hadiths of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) urge urbanization and discourage a return to an introverted life style (Al-Ta`arrub) after the process of migration and urbanization. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) says: "Avoid the Seven great destructive sins..." one of them being "(Al-Ta`arrub) (as described above) after the (Hijrah) migration"(Al-'Albānī, 1990: 145).

The above are some illustrations of the Islamic religious sources that show the view of Islam regarding the city and its civilization and of how Islam is seen by its sources as an urban phenomenon or a religion which favours cities. The Islamic religious sources may in turn have had an impact even on writers, as is shown in our next section.

2.3 The Impact of Religious Sources on Writers

There is no doubt that the characteristics of the religious text elaborated the imagery and stories in the Holy Qur'an and either created many new Arabic words and meanings which were unknown to the Arabs previously or changed the meaning of what was known before the Qur'an, such as the word "Munāfiq" (Hypocrite)(Al-Suyuṭī, 2010: 79). There are also the words "Qur'an, Sura (chapter), 'Āyah (Verse) and Tayammum" (Al-ʿAskary, 1997: 52);⁵⁷ all of these as contributions of the Qur'an may certainly be counted as a source of inspiration for Arab and Muslim writers who write about the social transformations of the city.

In Arabic literature, the prose text has benefited from the style of the Qur'an to a large extent. Lockard states, "In Arabic the Qur'an clearly comes across as both a scripture and an elegant literature that has inspired millions" (Lockard, 2010. Vol, B: 249). Significantly, even if some literary texts are considered to be free of any religious influence, they have nevertheless maintained quotes from the concepts and symbols of the religion which might be used by the writer in order to express concerns that have nothing to do with the religious meaning. When the writer uses the religious symbols, he or she comes closer to the world of the reader who also becomes more engaged through the author's knowledge of the background of religious symbolism: "Several prominent figures in Arabic literature wrote texts in imitation of the Qur'an's style" (Fahlbusch. E, 2005. Vol, 4: 471). Good illustrations of this are the *Al-Juthah* collection

⁵⁷ If ablution using water is not possible, and so you then strike your hands on the earth and then pass the palm of each on the back of the other and then blow off the dust from them and then pass (rub) them on your face, this is called *Tayammum*.

by Ṣalāh Abd Assayyid and Amal Dunqul's works. The prominent stories from the Qur'an are also borrowed by various authors, for instance in Naguib Mahfouz's *Awlād Hāratnā*. All this suggests the power of the religious text in the Arab cities, including their people and writers who have been influenced by and have relied on those texts. The city and civilization have also been mentioned in other sources, as indicated below.

2.4 The City and Civilization in Other Sources

There is, in effect, an agreement between most non-religious references on the importance of the city and its incubation of civilizations and human transformations. Some of these references attribute this importance of the city to the care of the religious role of the city, which makes the city a place of human civilization. Saoud states: "From the beginning, Islam was urban and was a city-based religion, encouraging the urban architecture, and building the human being through the building of major cities, which played an important role in the era of Islamic history" (Saoud, 2002: 2).

The history of urbanisation in the Arab region, stretching from the Atlantic to the Gulf, reveals that the city's role is unusual with regard to Arab civilisation, which is based originally on life in cities (Ḥamdān, 1996).

Arab civilization essentially grew up in Mecca and Medina and flourished in Damascus, Aleppo, Baghdad, Cairo, and the cities of the Maghreb and Al-'Andalus. In these cities flourished the literature, arts, ideas and doctrines. Several aspects of civilization thrived, such as grand mosques, schools and major centres of translation (Zikr-ur-Rahman, 2004). Furthermore, there took place the transfer of political power from one city to another that was more open and diverse in terms of religions and cultures.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Transfer of the Caliphate from Medina to Damascus in the era of Caliph Mu`āwiya was a case in point; then the transfer of political power from certain cities to others occurred after that during the period when the Islamic Empire was at its height and when Arabs were in positions of power.

The Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was born in the city of Mecca, "...in an uncultivable valley – by Your Sacred House (the *Ka'bah* at Makah)..." (Q 14: 37) which corresponds with the popular definitions of the city as a place where most people engage in activities other than agriculture. He then migrated to the city of Medina (Zade, 1980). His emigration and the establishing of the Islamic state in Medina was the direct impetus for its civilization, development and diversification in many ways, one of the most important achievements being to bring an end to what existed in terms of individual sovereignties leadership, and the influence of the tribe, and shifting into an urban space whose inhabitants then became city dwellers.

The Islamic city took the lead. Importantly, the leadership followed the migration of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) when he activated the role of knowledge, religion and leadership, which he did not limit to Muslims only, but extended it to non-Muslims who were free to practise their religion. Nawaz has pointed out that, "In the agreements of Muhammad's lifetime it had been explicitly stated that each 'protected minority' was free to practise its religion, and this practice continued" (Nawaz, 2008: 130).

In Medina, the Prophet's city, there was multiplicity of identities and of the concept of the nation, as he established the nation's religion to all Muslims both in and outside of the city. Furthermore, he also established a political nation belonging to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. A good illustration of this is the integration of Muslims, Christians and Jews in one political nation united by geography and political rights. Young observes that, "The prophet aimed to reconcile all the groups as citizens of a unified state. In 623 CE he presented a 'covenant of Medina' and succeeded in having it signed by both the Muslims and the Jews. The covenant contains forty-seven articles" (Young, 2010. Vol, 2: 503).

Restoration of the stability within the city was achieved by reconciling the two tribes of 'Aws and Khazraj, together with their allies including the Jews, who lived there for more than 120 years alongside the Arabs. This restoration was one of the first priorities of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) (Haykal, 2010: 176). Regarding the community of Medina, Nigel J Young states that:

The society of Medina was less homogenous than Mecca, less individualistic, and more ready for a shift its traditional society norms. For the feuding tribes of Aws and Khazraj, a prophet whose authority rested not on blood, but on religion instilled the hope of a unifying force for integrating the social and political order of Medina. When Muhammad arrived in Medina it was inhabited by Arab and Jewish tribes who lived in an uneasy relationship with one another. The Jews in particular looked upon the arrival of Muhammad with disfavour and resentment, and questioned his authority, which was based on his success at winning converts in Medina and the support that was pledged to him from other tribes. (Young, 2010. Vol, 2: 503)

Religion is, by its nature, a collective activity that corresponds with the nature of cities; this has consequently promoted the emergence and growth of many cities. Some unique features which existed for the city in terms of Islam are the Friday prayer and the three days after Eid Al-'Adha,⁵⁹ which should only be performed in cities (Al-Mulaggen, 2008: 439/7). As it is a collective form of worship and encourages a communal interaction, the Friday prayer as an example should not be performed with less than forty people, according to the opinion of some scholars. Muhaimin describes the basic pattern of Friday prayer in Islam and confirms that, "The congregation should not be less than forty people, including the imam". (Muhaimin, 2006: 101). This indicates a preference for cities and urban lifestyle over small villages and tribes.

Moreover, there is the consideration of whoever reads some of what has been written concerning the role of the Eastern city – whether it was an Arab or an Islamic city – including: *The Story of Civilization*, by Will Durant (1954), some of the works of Annemarie Schimmel, such as *Muhammad is His Messenger: Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (1985), and *Rumi: Makers of Islamic Civilization* (2004); *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation* (2004), by John M; *The Hidden Debt to Islamic Civilisation* (2005), by S. E. Al-Djazairi; *Lost History: The Enduring Legacy of Muslim Scientists, Thinkers and Artists* (2008), by Michael Morgan; all of these sources assert

⁵⁹ Some scholars explain this hadith by saying that there is no Friday or Eid prayer outside cities. ('Eid prayer' and Eid al-Adha refer to an Islamic festival commemorating the prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son Ismail to Allah (also called the greatest day of Hajj)).

that this civilisation cannot grow or flourish outside of the city. The attitude of Islam and its call for sustaining and protecting the city life were clear and influential. And, if the religion calls for and stimulates the establishment of cities, it is also true that it reacts to and grows within the cities.

2.5 Religion in the City

Many Arab cities are mostly known for their religious aspect which renders them typical religious cities, such as Jerusalem in Palestine/Israel, Sadr and Najaf in Iraq, Fez in Morocco, Ghardaia and Adrar in Algeria, Qairawan in Tunisia, Zliten in Libya and Chinguetti in Mauritania.

It is worth mentioning that in Saudi Arabia the cities of Mecca and Medina, in the Hejaz region, are known to be religious cities, but in actuality, most Saudi cities have a religious history and each one of them can be considered a religious city. In Saudi cities, all work places, and this includes all shops and government departments, cease their activities close to the time of prayer in order to perform prayers five times a day. Robert et al explain that, “Saudis pray five times a day, facing the holy city of Mecca. In Saudi cities and towns, shops close their doors at prayer time. Whenever possible, people go to a mosque (Muslim religious building) for prayer” (Robert et al, 2007: 17). The state is proud of these religious places and for this reason the Two Holy Mosques have been adopted and celebrated by the Saudi state, which is also proud to bestow upon the King of Saudi Arabia the title ‘Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques’.

Naturally, this has given the state a religious character. Moreover, the Saudi state was established on the monotheistic belief system, and the Pact of Dir`yya of 1744 between the Saudi governor Al-Imām Mohammed ibn Saud and Al-Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhāb (Al-‘Uthaymīn, 2009: 29),⁶⁰ who called for a religious revival of Islam

⁶⁰ My translation. In 1703, Sheikh Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab was born in the town of Ayaina in the region of Najd to a highly respected religious family; he ripped away the heresies and abuses which had

to clear the state of inaccuracies and pagan customs in order to achieve universal monotheism and to apply the true role of Islam (Bisher, 2002: 16). This call, according to Al-Khidr (2010), is based on the Hanbali School, which gives priority to the theoretical side rather than the practical aspects of the Hadith.

Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhāb's call had a broad impact on the Najd region because of the government's support and its dependence on the direct evidence of the Holy Book and the Prophetic tradition. The state was furthermore established as a result of a number of alliances between King Abdul-Aziz and the Ikhwān⁶¹ (Muslim Brotherhood) in Saudi Arabia, who grouped themselves under the banner of religion.

The Saudi writer is religious and conservative both by nature and as a result of his environment. Even if some authors try to rid their ideas of the religious influence, the dominance of the religious aspect soon appears in the writer's style, because the author is an integral part of the conservative community. Cordesman notes that, "Saudi Arabia is an intensely conservative society whose values are religious rather than secular" (Cordesman, 2009: 307).

The novelist's work is profoundly affected not only by his / her own feelings and notions towards the society but also by external factors such as the authority of his devout reader. For instance, in the case of Arabic literature, the religious inclinations of readers and political factors – including any form of censorship – have to be taken into account. Municipal elections in all Saudi cities have shown a clean sweep for Islamists in all of their seats, including in Jeddah, which is known as a less conservative and commercial city. Paya and Esposito have mentioned that, "Islamists performed strongly in Saudi Arabia's 2005 polls, with moderate Islamists winning all the seats on the

grown up around Islam and he preached the faith in its original simplicity. For more information, see Al-Uthaymīn, A. A. S. 2009.

⁶¹ "Created in 1912 the Ikhwān (or Muslim Brotherhood) was a devout force whose purpose was to provide Ibn Saud with a disciplined and organized military. The emir granted the Ikhwān land, seed, tools and other means to cultivate lands in their reserved settlements, and soon tens to thousands of Bedouins flocked to the banners of the new militia. Instead of attacking nearby tribes, the Ikhwān were to fight only when directed against the Saudi enemies of the Saudi dynasty, embracing holy war (Jihad) under the guidelines of Wahhabi religious doctrine" (Bowen, 2008: 91).

municipal councils in the cities” (Paya and Esposito, 2011: 165), which clearly indicates how Saudi readers are inclined to think.

This reality affects not only the writers of Saudi origin but also writers of other nationalities who live in Saudi Arabia such as `Adnan Al-Naḥawi (1928-). Despite the popularity of the novel, *Girls of Riyadh* 2005, which achieved high sales and was translated into more than seventeen languages, it never achieved the status of the book by the Islamic writer, Sheikh `Aidh Al-Qarni’s *Don’t Be Sad* (2002),⁶² of which more than 2 million copies were printed until 2008, with it also being translated into many other languages. In five consecutive years, it ranked first in terms of Arabic book sales. This is a typical example of the impact of religion and the power of religious books, which still occupy the first place in terms of sales at the book fairs until today. Even at the level of literary writing, the religious novel *Azāzīl* (2008) by Yusif Zeidan won the Arabic Booker Prize for 2009.

In Saudi Arabia’s cities, the religious institutions have a strong authority: examples are the Religious courts, Supreme Council of Magistracy, the General Presidency of Scholarly Research and Iftā’, Committees for Legitimacy in the Banks, General Presidency of the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vices, Religious Institutes, Qur’anic schools, Qur’an Memorization Associations and Council of Senior Scholars, which recently included the representatives of all four schools of fiqh, etc... In addition to these, there are also religious broadcasting channels, such as Al-Majd, and religious radio stations, such as Qur’an Radio. Niblock notes that, “Holding the two most holy sites in Islam, attracting many millions of pilgrims every year, Saudi Arabia will always occupy a special position of influence in the Islamic world” (Niblock, 2006: 4). Therefore, it can be appreciated that religion is an extremely sensitive issue to be broached in Saudi society; this might be due to the fact that the cities within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are among global cities known to have suffered from terrorism. “And although public awareness is developing positively in this context, this

⁶² This book focuses on the tragic aspects of human life and deals with it from an Islamic perspective, supported by the religious texts. It has been published in English by: International Islamic Publishing House (2003).

development is rather slow”(Alhasoun, 2008: 266). However, some Saudi novelists, such as Al-Muzaini, Al-Ḥamad and Thābet, for instance, have already tackled this issue in some of their novels.

Novels in which this is the central topic include three novels which have been chosen for examination here: *Mafāriq Al-‘Atamah*⁶³ (*Parting of Darkness*, 2004) by Mohammad Al-Muzaini; *Al-‘Erhābī 20*⁶⁴ (*The Terrorist 20*, 2006) by Abdullah Thābet; and *Sharq Al-Wādī*⁶⁵ (*East of the Valley*, 2006) by Turki Al-Ḥamad.

2.6 Religion between Village and City as Perceived Through the Novel

Some Arabic and Islamic writers and scholars have made significant contributions to the history of contemporary Arab thought. For instance, Mohammed Abduh (1849-1905) has cited elements of religion and religious issues in the early twentieth century

⁶³ The novel’s events are based on the city of Riyadh and interested in space and time from the title and cover image, which occupies more than 85% of the image, with the rest for time. The author chose the word meaning intersections (place), which indicates abundance (Jam‘a Al-Kathra) in accordance with the rules of Arabic grammar. Most of its chapters begin with a place, such as p.9, which refers to the street; p.26, the neighbourhood; p.32, the alley; p.39, the house; p.43, earth; p.80, school, etc.

⁶⁴ The Asir region and the city of Abha: this novel is a narrative work, which is close to the style of biography. The author disappears behind the mask of the hero, Zahi Al-Jebāli. This work was started in 1999 and ended in 2005, stating that the hero could be terrorist No. 20 in the events of 9/11, and could be terrorist No. 27 in the events of Riyadh. The novel has an enormous ego - even at the beginning of the book. However, the novel discusses the Muslim Brotherhood in Saudi Arabia and the elimination of the radical Juhayman and his followers inside the holy mosque by the Saudi state. There is an intersection between this novel and John Updike’s novel *Terrorist* (2006) in terms of the issues, such as the focus on youths - especially secondary school- aged students, and the author’s position vis-à-vis the events of 9/11.

⁶⁵ What is clear from the title is the domination of the place; nonetheless, the novel resorts to symbolism, obscurity and condensing. There is the discussion of the village of Al-Qassim, which is close to the city of Buraydah, also of the cities of Al-Zahrān, Damascus, New York and many others. The writer is clearly fond of observation, analysis and comparison, all of which are activities closely related to meditation associated with a novelist’s eye, which reviews the immediate present, the past and future. There are dramatic transformations created by the city through the movements of the hero between the city and the village and the depiction of the generations, all of which are contemporary in terms of the oil revolution, which caused violent and rapid changes. The hero who represents a whole generation is sometimes involved in the lives of others, in the positives and negatives, wants to be a copy of them, and is sometimes secluded and turn of all to what he believed was not of him. Is that an aspect of the conflict between the self and other between tradition and modernity? Or is it a new identity which combines the old with the new? Both of these options are possible.

in the Arab city, the civilization of Europe and the philosophy of Ibn Rushd in his book *Al-Islam Dīn Al-Ilm wa Al-Madaniya (Islam is a Religion of Knowledge and Civilisation, 2008)*.

Abdul Jawwād Al-Maḥṣ (*Al-Dīn wa Qirā'at Al-Nnaṣ Al-'Adabī (Religion and the Reading of Literary Texts, 2006)*) has applied the religious standard and its ethics, as well as technical criteria, in order to produce an integrated critical work on contemporary literary texts, and has criticized some of the critics who have focused on technical criteria alone.

In his book *Al-Mujtama' Al-Dīni wa 'Al-Madanī (The Religious and Civil Society, 2001)* Ahmed Al-Wāeḍī raised the question of the concept of civil society in the fourth chapter and provided feedback, recommendations and objectives that would link the contemporary civil society with the teachings of the Islamic religion. In the book *Dā'irat Maārif Al-Sharq (Encyclopaedia of the East, 1989. Vol, 1, part 2)* some signals indicate that the immigrant from the village to the city discovers that the village community has more religious immunity.

Mohammed Othman in his book *Al-Madīna Al-'Islāmiya (The Islamic City, 1988)* confirms that religion is an important factor in the emergence of many of the cities, where the relationship between religion and the city is an ancient relationship because the nature of religion is a collective process leading to the emergence of cities that serve its purposes.

Despite the importance of all these contributions, and of many others that we have not cited, they were not able to transmit the full picture from inside the city, village, mosque and the home, as is the case with the novel.

Again, despite the belief that the village is the place of the religious myth, as Kapur has confirmed when he writes “ Myths and legends comprise an important part of religion in the village I have studied” (Kapur, 1988: 51), the novel *Sharq Al-Wādī* comes to reflect the simplicity and purity of faith in the village. People there devote their lives to

praying and working, with religion controlling most of their interests. Al-Ahmad explains:

والناس في الخب لا يفعلون شيئاً غير الصلاة و العمل في الحائط. يصلون كي يعودوا إلى جنة النعيم و يتمتعوا بلحم طيرها، أنهار خمرها و مائها و لبنها، و نسائها.. و رغم أنهم لا يعرفون ماهي الخمر، إلا أنهم يعلمون أنها من الخبائنث في الدنيا، ومن المسرات في الآخرة. يعملون كي يعيشوا لطاعة الرب و دخول جنته، في حياة ليست بالنسبة لهم إلا دار ممر. فإذا وَجَدَتِ الناسَ في الخب لايعملون، فاعلم أنهم يصلون، وإن لم يكونوا يصلون فاعلم أنهم نائمون. يبدأ يومهم بالصلاة وينتهي بها.

People in the village do nothing except pray and work in their farms. They pray in order to enter paradise where they would enjoy game, rivers of wine, water, milk and its women. They do not know anything about wine, except that it is one of the things prohibited in this world and one of the delights of the Hereafter. They work for their lord, and this life means for them only the way to the hereafter. If you do not find them in their field make sure they are praying or sleeping, for they both start and end their day with prayer. (Al-Hamad, 2006: 33-34)

Despite the harshness of the people of the village because of the conditions of life around them, they are so eager and sensitive in their worship. Al-Hamad narrates that

كان الرجال من أهل الخب قد التأم جمعهم في المسجد بينما صوت (شويش) الأجنس ينطلق داعياً إلى الصلاة. افترش أبو عثمان الرمال الناعمة في المسجد، وأسند ظهره إلى الحائط الطيني، وأخذ يتلو القرآن بصوت مسموع، ودموع هلت قبل التلاوة.

The men of the village meet at the mosque even before the call to prayer. Abu 'Uthmān sat on the soft sands and leaned his back on the mud wall and started to recite the Qur'an with tears streaming down his cheeks. (Al-Hamad, 2006: 52)

The novel *Al-'Erhābī 20* is consistent with this vision, and emphasises the tolerance of the ancient people, despite their eagerness to worship, compared with those who came after them. The novel narrates that

مجتمعنا الجنوبي كان جميلاً مبالاً للموسيقى، وحكايات الحب به لا تنتهي، لقد عاش الناس هنا حياة شفافة و رقيقة و فطرية رغم بدائيتها. كان هذا قبل أن يأتي عُرفُ آخر، الذي حرّم كل شيء وجعله عاراً!

Our community in the south was beautiful, inclined to music, and to love stories which never end, and people lived transparent and natural, albeit basic lives.

This was before other ideas came and denied everything, and made it a disgrace. (Thābet, 2006: 49)⁶⁶

The first three novels are virtually unanimous in portraying the religious movement of the period before 1980, which was insignificant and less radical. The novel *Mafāriq Al-‘Atamah* is consistent with the vision of the previous two novels. The character of the old Sheikh Humūd reflects the religious people of the city before 1980. Humūd in this novel is modest and not harsh in his advice, his dealings and his actions. He is portrayed as placid and one who does not like confrontation (see Al-Muzaini, 2004: 46, 120, 149-151).

People in that period were busy only with their work and worship, and they were almost cut off from what was happening around them in terms of global events and religious movements. Men remained in their farm or shop, whilst women worked at home or in the fields of their husbands. Everyone would stop in order to perform their acts of worship, and would then complete their day. This is more or less the general idea that people had regarding the villagers in terms of their religion – or even about those who had been living in Saudi cities up to 1980.

However, despite all of that, and throughout the novel, their religious life was not free of religious myths and fads, and their social life was also not free of injustice, envy, adultery and depravity and probably worse (see, Al-Ḥamad, 2006: 85-94); even their proverbs indicate sometimes how their religiosity is superficial, by stating that:

"المطوّع يوم شاف خديد سارة, أطبق المصحف وعجل بالصلاة"

‘When the religious man saw Sarah's face, he closed the Qur'an and hastened [to complete] his prayers’. (Al-Ḥamad, 2006: 112)

⁶⁶ When he refers to “Our community in the south”, he means Asir, which is a province of Saudi Arabia located in the southwest of the country, and named after the confederation of clans of the same name. The main mountain range rises to heights over 9842 feet (3000 meters), and it has an area of 81,000 km² and an estimated population of 1,563,000. It shares a short border with Yemen, and its capital is Abha. (See Sebastian, M, 2009).

Furthermore, although the teachings of Islam prohibit prayer against the self, they were saying things such as:

الله يطعنني عنك.

May Allah stab me instead of you. (Thābet, 2006: 18)

Novels seem to agree that, unlike the city, the religion of the village did not function as the power that can prevent the spread of myth, magic and jinn, although the teachings of Islam have forbidden magic and undermined myth. The story of marriage between mankind and jinni serves as a substantial marginalia of the ancient stories. Pictures of women who fall down in a trance while dancing because of the jinn, and the participation of the elderly women in providing solutions, prove that this kind of practice did exist, particularly amongst the elderly people (Al-Muzaini, 2004: 66-67). Moreover, the novel *Al-'Erhābī 20*, in order to confirm that, has published more details and the names of some of those books that were in the hands of those people who live in villages, observing that:

كانت كتب السحر, لاسيما (شمس المعارف الكبرى و الجفر), مما يشكل ثقافة الناس ومعرفتهم ويملؤها بالمخاوف والأساطير.

The books of magic, especially what are called (*Shams Al-Ma`ārif Al-Kubra* and *Al-Jafr*) were part of what used to constitute people's culture and knowledge and to fill their lives with fears and myths. (Thābet, 2006: 19)⁶⁷

The novel *Mafāriq Al-'Atamah*, also contributes something on the same point by mentioning the details of the life of superstition within those neighbourhoods of Riyadh villages strictly. The novel states that:

في ساعات الليل يجتمع مجموعة من الناس و يتركون لخيالهم أن يَخْلُقَ أساطير و خرافات حيث البحث عما يملأ ساعاتهم المتناثبة ولياليهم الطويلة. كانت الأذان تشتاق إلى صوت الراوي والقصص التي

⁶⁷ *Shams Al-Ma`ārif Al-Kubra* is by Ahmad Ali Al-Būni, and its English meaning is *The Great Sun of Knowledge*. *Al-Jafr* means skin of a little goat, and it is a controversial book which some scholars have attributed to a Shiite writer called Harun bin Saeed Al-Ujayli, but which some Shiite scholars, such as Al-Kulayni, have attributed to Ali ibn Abi Ṭāleb. The full title is *Ketab Al-Jafr Al-Jāma` wa Al-Nnūr Al-Llāmea` Al-Makhṭūṭah Al-Jafriyah*.

ينسجها من معاناة البسطاء. من خيالاتهم في قصصهم تكون حكايات الجن وأعراسهم. أشعلوا ليهم وسمرهم بحكايات عن تزواج الإنس بالجن. أحدهم ادّعى أنه شاهد عيان، وراح يصف بالتفاصيل الدقيقة أن ابن الجان الأكبر تزوج إنسية عرفها باسمها، وأنجبت منه أبناء، أقسم أنه يراه كل ليل يتلبسون صور قطة وكلاب.

During the hours of night groups of people sit together and let their imagination create rumours and myths in order to fill their long nights so full of yawning. The listeners were interested to hear the narrator's voice that created stories based on the suffering of ordinary people. From the memory of their stories, the stories of jinn and their marriage, one of those people claimed that he saw the face of the jinn and then he described it in detail, swearing that he saw the old son of jinn marry a human woman; he also named her and they had children. He swears that he sees them every night in the form of dogs and cats. (Al-Muzaini, 2004: 67, 68, 71)

These kinds of stories were accepted, especially among children because their minds were full of such myths, which have led some of their children to think that “dogs and cats are sons of humans” (Al-Muzaini, 2004: 68). The novel *Al- 'Erhābī 20* confirms the existence of this type of myth and magic in southern Saudi Arabia.

كثيرا كانوا يقولون إن الساحر فلان يجمد الطيور في السماء، فلا هي تطير ولا هي تسقط. وكان الناس حين يغضبون على بعض يدعون على بعضهم بالساحر فيقول أحدهم للآخر (الله يبلاك بساحر).

It is often said that some magicians can stop birds in the sky, so that they can neither fall nor fly. They were praying to their God to punish their enemies by using ‘magicians’. (Thābet, 2006: 19-20)

There is also the character of Samīḥ in the novel *Sharq Al-Wādī* who represents the world of magic and myth, and he appears as one of the major characters.

It is often thought that people of the village are more religious; however, the novels here explore the micro details of the people's social and religious lives in the villages, which probably appear worse than life in the city. There is no doubt that lack of awareness and illiteracy were some of the most important reasons for the spreading of such myths in conjunction with popular heritage, and thus rendering their religion slightly superficial. Some heritage books include such myths, but in different ways, where some narrators added in the real facts in order to provide something new and interesting in front of both caliphs' sessions – which means that could happen in the city as well – and popular gatherings. A good illustration of that is the difference in the number of the poetic

verses attributed to a poet by different narrators, such as that of the collection of poems of Qais ibn Al-Molawwiḥ, which is called platonic love.

2.7 In the City

Except for Mecca and Medina, the rest of the Saudi Kingdom's cities are small and do not hold major religious activities. Despite the historical significance of some of them, such as the city of Tayma in 1200 BC,⁶⁸ there were no sufficient reasons for their expansion because they often did not have industrial or commercial activity in the first period of the Saudi state and therefore did not have an advantage over other places until the discovery of oil, which was accompanied by a massive and rapid shift towards urban settlement. Wells contends:

Only in the late twentieth century did cities arise elsewhere in Saudi Arabia. Even as late as the 1950s, Riyadh – now the largest Saudi city – was little more than a small dusty town. If you do not keep in mind how new cities are for the Saudis, it'll be hard to realize just how much of a shock the rabid urbanisation of the last few decades has been for Saudi society. (Wells, 2003: 148)

The city requires city dwellers to adapt to change quickly, and also requires dwellers to keep up their religious practices, and necessarily requires residents to also get rid of the patterns of behaviour and thinking which are no longer fit for living in a city, even if they may have been acceptable in the earlier stages of life.

The issue is the reality imposed by the rapid changes in Saudi Arabia as a result of several factors, including the discovery of oil, the establishment of security, the

⁶⁸ According to Eichmann et al, 2006, Tayma is located in a desert steppe zone 220 km southeast of Tabuk, some 300 km southwest of Dumat al-Jandal and 150 km northeast of al-'Ula, being approximately 800 m above sea level. It was occupied at least as early as the middle of the third millennium BC and must have been well known in the ancient Near East, particularly in the Levant and Mesopotamia, for its flourishing economy. The wealth of the people of Tayma and other caravan cities came largely from trade with incense, spices and other goods that were collected in South Arabia and exported to the north.

presence of large global companies in Saudi Arabia and the employment of large numbers of Saudis in those companies in addition to a large number of scholarships to enable them to study abroad, raising public awareness in the city about the various doctrines of those who came to work or teach. All of these led to the development and creation of religious awareness tools, in order to make people able to cope with these rapid transformations.

Jabir, a character in the novel *Sharq Al-Wādī*, shows how the villager does not accept another religion or doctrine even if he or she knows nothing about the other, but in the city they might not accept the other with enough knowledge (Al-Ḥamad, 2006).

In the cities in the early eighties there was the emergence of the so-called *Al-Ṣaḥwa* Al-Islamiyya,⁶⁹ or Islamic awakening which has adopted the approach of Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdul Wahab. Consistent with the Brotherhood movement in Saudi Arabia, “the Islamic revival preceded the adoption of Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdul Wahab’s approach but not in its entirety” (Al-Khidr, Abdul-Aziz, 2010: 51).⁷⁰

During the wars with the Saudi state, the Brotherhood movement did not try to target or exploit youth as the *Al-Ṣaḥwa* movement did. Brotherhood ideas were simplistic and aspired to achieve better social, economic and political opportunities commensurate with their religious orientation. They were openly hostile to everything new which they saw as strange. Most of them were bedouins, who would like themselves to be in a permanent state of war. This is the point of view

⁶⁹ *Ṣaḥwa* movement in the 1980s and early 1990s was a non-violent reformist movement whose aims, means and social base were different from that of the extreme pan-Islamists on the foreign jihad fronts. The *Ṣaḥwa*, whose ideology represented an amalgam of Wahhabi conservatism and Muslim Brotherhood pragmatism, grew on Saudi university campuses from the early 1970s onwards under the influence of exiled teachers from the Egyptian and Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. *Ṣaḥwa* began engaging in open polemics in the mid-1980s against the modernist current known as the *hadtha*. After the Gulf crisis and the deployment of US troops to Saudi Arabia, the *Ṣaḥwa* led by charismatic preachers Safar Al-Hawali and Salman Al-Awda, presented formal political demands to the Saudi government (Hegghammer, 2010: 4).

⁷⁰ My translation.

of the characters in the novel of Al-Ḥamad (2006) in *Sharq Al-Wādī*. When the character Jaber traveled to the city of Riyadh he used to pray in the Grand Mosque, and one day at the dawn prayer:

جاوره في صلاة الفجر رجل أربعيني تبدو من ملابسه وسماته ملامح الأخوان.. سأله الرجل: الأخ حضري و إلا بدوي؟ شكلك يقول إنك حضري.. فقال جابر إنه حضري من القصيم. فلما سمع الرجل اسم القصيم، قال: " عز الله إنها بلاد من طاع الله.. من أي القبائل أنت؟ " (بعد ذلك قال:) ورا ما تجاهد معنا في سبيل الله؟ ولم يدرك جابر ما يرمي إليه الرجل، ولكنه قال: "معكم!... من أنتم؟..". حنا خيالة التوحيد، إخوان من طاع الله، وحرب على من عاداه. " الإخوان يعني؟"، ولم لا؟... "وإلى أين الجهاد هذه المرة؟" ... لم يعجب عقل جابر جهجاءه، فهو من علامات الجاهلية، فطلب منه التخلص منه، والتعمم. قاتل معهم لكنه لم يكن مقتنعا بما يجري...

He prayed next to a man of around forty who, as it appeared from his clothes and features, was from the Brotherhood, and he asked Jaber: My brother, are you a city man or bedouin? You look like a city man to me. Jaber replied that he was a city dweller from Al-Qassim, and when the man heard the name Al-Qassim he said: "The city of those who obeyed God!" and then he asked him from which tribe he was. After that he said, "Why not join Jihad with us in the way of Allah?" Jaber did not know what the man meant, but he said, "I'm with you, but who are you?" "We are the cavalry for monotheism, the brothers of those who obeyed God and the warriors against those who are hostile to God". Jaber: "You mean the Brotherhood? Why not? Where is the jihad this time?..." Jaber's (Uqāl) did not appeal to Jahjāh as it is a sign of ignorance from the perspective of Jahjāh who requested Jaber to wear a turban instead of his headdress. Jaber fought with them, but he was not convinced of what was going on. (Al-Ḥamad, 2006: 76-79)

Religious emotions have been used by some in order to achieve personal or political interests since before 1980, and right until now, but the organisation is completely different now from what it used to be. It was naive, primitive and then became organised, and perhaps people's financial needs have helped the stakeholders to achieve most of their objectives. Al-Ribāi states that: "Since most Saudis are consumers, it is not surprising that they can easily be penetrated intellectually through the exploitation of religious sentiment" (Al-Ribāi, 2011: 42).⁷¹

After a long period of Brotherhood fighting with King Abdul Aziz in his wars to unify the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the relationship deteriorated as the Brotherhood started

⁷¹ My translation.

realising that the king had only his own interests at heart, and their fears grew stronger as the king also prevented them from carrying weapons. The resentment in the Brotherhood further increased as they considered the use of modern warfare and technology (cars and planes, etc...) as promoted by King Abdulaziz to be against the Shariah. King ‘Abd Al-Aziz then called for an end to further military campaigns. “The Ikhwān, who had already grown critical of ‘Abd Al-Aziz because of his use of modern technology and interaction with Westerners, were outraged by the abandonment of jihad for reasons of realpolitik” (Hegghammer and Lacroix, 2007: 104, 105).

Not only this, but they discussed the crosses on the chest of the Imam (King) that came from Britain and the matter of the infidel (Philby)⁷² who was one of the main consultants of the Imam.

All this illustrates the silliness, the simplicity, and the superficial trend of religious beliefs, and further shows how people’s emotions were exploited in the name of the religion in most Saudi cities, not only by the Brotherhood, but also by King Abdulaziz. Accordingly, it was a political game driven by the Brotherhood and the Government according to their own goals and interests. The novel here confirms that when Jaber puts some questions to his expert friend Abu ‘Uthmān:

- "هل يُحرّم الإسلام هذه الأشياء التي يقول عنها الإخوان؟"
 - ضحك أبو عثمان وقال: لا تكن ساذجا يا بني، المسألة لا علاقة لها بإسلام أو غيره...
 - لم أفهم، قال جابر،
 - أقفل أبو عثمان المصحف، وتركه جانبا وهو يقول: وهل الذين قتلوا عثمان بن عفان أو علي بن أبي طالب كانوا مدفوعين بالدين كما كانوا يقولون؟..
 - لا أدري... بس كلام الإخوان لا بد أن يكون صادرا عن علم... أم أنا مخطئ؟..
 - ضحك أبو عثمان وهو يقول: كلامٌ مليحٌ، لو كان صحيح.. القضية ليست قضية دين، بل هو السلطان والمُلك. كلا الإثنين، عبدالعزيز والإخوان دينيون، لكنهم يبحثون عن السلطة والملك في الدنيا أيضا... شف يا وليدي... الإخوان يخافون السيارة والطيارة واللاسلكي ومعاهدات عبدالعزيز مع الأجانب... إنها تعني قوة له وضعفا لهم، وإلا كيف تفسر استخدامهم البواريد والفشق التي هي من صنع الكافر؟..

“Does Islam forbid these things that the Brotherhood talks about?”

Abu ‘Uthmān laughed and said, “Don’t be silly, my son, the issue has nothing to do with Islam or anything else”.

“I’m not with you!”, exclaimed Jaber.

⁷² A reference to Harry St. John Bridger Philby, who was born in Ceylon in 1885.

Abu ‘Uthmān closed the Qur’an he was reading, and leaving it aside said: “Those who killed ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affān and Ali Ibn Abi Tāleb, were they impelled to do so by religion as they say?” “I do not know, but the words of the Brotherhood must have been based on some form of knowledge and expertise... am I wrong?”

Abu Uthman laughed and said, “I wish it was the case, ... the issue is not about how to protect or to follow Islam but how to gain the political advantage and the authority over each other. Both of them are religious, King Abdulaziz and the Brotherhood, however they are looking for the worldly gain too. Look, my son, the Brotherhood is afraid of the cars, the plane, wireless networks and Abdulaziz's treaties with foreigners because it means power for him and weakness for them. Otherwise, how do you explain their use of guns and ammunition, which are also from the infidels? (Al-Ḥamad, 2006: 95-96)⁷³

There are similarities concerning ideas between the novels of Al-Muzaini and Thābet, as the novels indicate that the period pre-1980 was less radical than after.

In the villages, deserts and small cities, there is only one religion, and people worship only one God. However, due to their superficial religiosity, ignorance, and perhaps because of other goals, few of them describe sinners as infidel; all this shows their superficial religiosity. Therefore, this has a negative effect on their relationship with the others. For some of them may go to the cities and see there some other, different religions and religious sects, so they turn to defending and fighting for their beliefs and probably they cause some clashes with the others because of their lack of vision and weak religious background. In this case, this villager either forces himself to learn a lot about his own or some other religion in order to win his case, and the raising of religious awareness and knowledge ultimately will be in the favour of the city, this being the place of religious growth and prosperity; or the villager maybe heading towards violence, confrontation and the exclusion of others. This was so in the cases of the terrorist bombings, which all took place in the cities of Saudi Arabia rather than in any of its villages.

The organisations which presented themselves under the name of religion, but which had multiple objectives and were set up by the Brotherhood and others before 1980,

⁷³ ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affān and Ali Ibn Abi Tāleb are the names of the third and the fourth caliphs in Islam. When he says, “were they impelled to do so by religion as they say”, he is alluding to Al-Khawarij.

were primitive and open even to ordinary people; however, it was the conditions of ignorance and the quest for their own interests that motivated some people to join them. Tal states that: “the Muslim Brotherhood had expanded their work because of the poverty level” (Tal, 2005: 48).

After the emergence of the city or after its settlement, the methods and strategies were completely different from before, and the work became organised either at the state level or at the level of individual and group employers. Notably, there has been a multiplicity of religions, the acceptance of other doctrines or all four schools, control and supervision by the state has become stronger, and awareness of the tolerant teachings of Islam has spread. On the other hand, there was a considerable improvement in the techniques and methods which have been used both by the stakeholders in society and by radical tendencies.

Al-Şahwa movement coincided with most of the objectives of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood Movement, which came to Saudi Arabia through a number of people who migrated to Saudi cities in the sixties. This came as a result of the pressure put on them by the regime of President Jamal Abdel-Nasser and by others who came at later times to teach in Saudi schools and universities due to the polarization between the governments of Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Political movements also had a role in the revival of this Islamic movement as a result of the Soviet- Afghan war, and a large number of youths went for jihad purposes there. There were also some young people who did not go off purely to jihad, but admired the Afghans to the point of imitating them in their dress:

بعض الشباب يلبس ملابس المجاهدين الأفغان التي حاكها خصيصا لهذا المركز.

Some young people were wearing Afghan Mujahideen clothing which was sewed specifically for this camp. (Thābet, 2006: 79)

And they were proud of that. The protagonist of *The Terrorist 20* goes on to say:

كدت أرحل لأفغانستان، حيث جاءني أحدهم، وقال: (أستطيع استخراج جواز سفر لك، إن كنت تريد الهجرة إلى حياة المجاهدين هناك..)

I almost left for Afghanistan, seeing that one of them came to me and said, “I can get a passport for you if you want to move there and take up the life of the mujahedeen there”. (Thābet, 2006: 112)

The youths were motivated to join the jihad in Afghanistan for many reasons, two of them being their seeking for the Jihad's reward and because of the support of their government: “the Saudi regime supported Jihad in Afghanistan in the 1980s”(Jones, 2006. Vol, 85: 164).

It is often mistakenly thought that the simple and only meaning of the word Jihad is ‘holy war’, especially among the people of villages; whereas there are several verses in the holy Qur’an that are revealed to assert the sanctity of the human being, such as “whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one – it is as if he had saved mankind entirely” (Q 5: 32).

This offers a clarification of some meanings of the concept of Jihad, which could perhaps be misunderstood by some of the inhabitants of villages or small cities because of their religious ignorance, or also in big cities because of the diversity of religions and the extremism of some of their followers, which leads to violent confrontations between such followers or induces some people to read into religious texts those ideas or aspects that happen to correspond with their goals. Abdul-Hakim has pointed out that, “The Jihad is not even one of the five pillars of Islam. Jihad is a moral and spiritual struggle to achieve excellence” (Abdul-Hakim, 2002).

According to the Holy Book the basic concept in Jihad is to strive for Allah and only him. As Allah says, "As for those who strive (*Jāhadū*) in Us (the cause of Allah), We surely guide them to Our paths, and lo! Allah is with the good doers" (Q 29: 69).

There is also another meaning for Jihad, namely the so-called “greater Jihad, (*Jāhada Nafsah*) which is about controlling oneself” (Natan, 2006. Vol, 1: 43).

Pilgrimage to Makah can be another form of Jihad: “Aisha, wife of the Prophet (PBUH) asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, we see jihad as the best of deeds, so shouldn't we join it?' He replied, 'But the best of jihad is a perfect Hajj (pilgrimage to Makah)’” (Bukhārī, 1997. No: 2784).

Treating one’s parents with kindness is also a form of Jihad. A man asked the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): “Should I join the jihad?’ He asked, 'Do you have parents?' The man said, 'Yes!' The Prophet (PBUH) then told him, 'Then strive by serving them!’” (Bukhārī, 1997. No: 5972).

Abdul-hakim states that: “The Qur’an began to urge us Muslims to fight for our Justice against those who oppress us. This would involve fighting and bloodshed. The root word of *Jihad* (JHD) implies more than Holy War. It signifies a physical, moral spiritual and intellectual effort” (Abdul-Hakim, 2002).

There is a great number of words in Arabic denoting armed struggle, such as “(harb) which means war, (sirā’) and (ma'raka) which means struggle and combat. The Qur'an could have used any of these if war was the intended meaning of this struggle. Instead, Jihad is a much richer word which has a range of connotations” (ibid).

There was a quasi-religious ideology based on the interpretation of religious texts selected to comply with the directions of this movement, and it was supported by an activity in the distribution and authorship of the Islamic tapes and small booklets, especially in the cities; they also guided people through the Friday sermon. This may be one explanation for the fact that all suicide bombings in the name of jihad have been located in the big cities of Saudi Arabia such as Riyadh, Jeddah and Al-Khobar. Most of these agenda may be initiated through mosques that have had an acceptance and credibility among these cities’ residents.

2.8 The Role of the Mosque

The book *Globalization, the City and Civil Society in Pacific Asia: The Social Production of Civic Spaces* (2008) by Mike Douglass and Kong-Chong Ho, follows the design and construction transformations of the mosques in the cities and the reasons for their construction in central cities. The book *Islam's Role in the Modern World* (2004) by Qureshi, however, notes the difference between the role of the mosque in the life of the country dweller and the city dweller, and also the role of the mosque's Imām (leader) in both countryside and city. Basil Al-Bayati in his book *City and the Mosque* (1985), discusses the Muslim people, together with the values of the Islamic City. It contains full pages of black and white drawings of mosques in major cities throughout Europe and Asia, and includes a talk with illustrations of the plan of a mosque and its elements; traditionalism and modernism; and a selected bibliography. *Dawr Al-Masājed fi Binā' Al-'Umma wa Al-Dawla (Role of the Mosque in the Building of the Nation and the State*, 2010) by Mohammed Abu Fāris. This book came out as an Encyclopedia to show the role of the mosque, educationally and politically, since the era of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH).

It also deals with the provisions of Sharia for mosques, and its history and role throughout Islamic history in various Islamic countries until the modern era.

There is almost an agreement between the point of view of Qureshi and the three novels which are studied in this chapter on the role of the mosque in a big city.

The role of the village's mosque is no more than as a place of worship which enables people to greet each other on a daily basis; also, in the village, it is the closest thing to a guest house where the stranger can stay (Al-Ḥamad, 2006). However, in the city, it is closer to being a community centre, particularly in the case of big mosques where there are scholars, students, and religious people, youth and children, urban and Bedouin, all of whom come to the city. They attend the political, religious and reform interests. "The larger mosques in big cities also perform an educational service on a higher level, in that

they are usually affiliated with a religious school or Madrasah in which more advanced religious education is carried out” (Qureshi, 2004: 266).

There is a consensus, whether in the village or in the city, on the importance of prayer and that its performance must be in the mosque. “Performing the prayer in the company of others is preferred over praying alone. Muslim men are encouraged to perform their prayers at the mosque” (Cornell, 2007: 25).

In order to impress the value of such prayer on the hearts of the young they are not permitted to miss it, even in some difficult circumstances. “The Sunnah, both by word and deed from the Messenger, shows that prayer must be performed in congregation, in the mosque. And the Prophet (PBUH) intended to set fire to the houses of those who did not attend the congregational prayer at the mosque” (Ibn Bāz A, 2001: 388).

The novel here portrays the life of one of the city children and his relationship to the mosque:

بعد يوم طويل من اللعب، تسلّم يد الإرهاق جسدي المنهك عنوة إلى نوم عميق لا تنقطع وتيرته إلا مع حشرجات صوت أبي.. وصوت المؤذن المرتعش. أتساءل كيف يمكن أن أحمل ركامي من نوم عميق.. أنهض وفي ذهني صورتان تبعثان عليّ النكد: الماء المتجمد سينسكب حتما على أطرافي الدافئة والبرد والظلام القابع خارجا بوحشية وحنق. لكن صوت أبي والمؤذن للصلاة يخترقان كل حواجز الخوف والعتمة المخيمة على كياني. أذهب سريعا إلى المسجد خوف أن لا تقع عين أبي الفاحصة على جسدي النحيل بين الصفوف الأولى.

After a long day of playing, the fatigue comes to take over my exhausted body into a deep and sound sleep which only gets interrupted by the rough voice of my father and the vibrating sound of the prayer caller. I wonder how I can make myself leave the bed amid such a deep sleep. I get up with two images in my mind: cold water coming into contact with my warm limbs, and cold darkness lurking outside our house brutally, but the voice of my father and the prayer caller permeates all the barriers of fear and darkness that surrounds me. I quickly go to the mosque for the fear of what to follow if my father’s gaze eye does not see my small body between the first rows. (Al-Muzaini, 2004: 13)

The novels agree that people of the city resort to the mosque when they commit a sin, and in case of fear or natural disasters, in addition to daily prayers (see Al-Muzaini,

2004: 14, 28, Al-Ḥamad, 2006: 178, 183 and Thābet, 2006: 35). However this role is the role of the village mosque in the perspective of Qureshi (Qureshi, 2004: 266). The mosque plays a similar role to the role of the school in educating the community:

عرفت طريقي للكتاب لأول مرة حيث أقبع في زاوية قصية مضاءة جيدا من المسجد.

I knew my way to the book for the first time in an illuminated corner of the mosque. (Al-Muzaini, 2004: 83)

However, these novels also present the fact that the role of the mosque in the city is more than that. The beginning of the reform of society converted it into a more religious society, starting with the new generation who were based in the mosque and used it as a starting point to implement their plans. The youth of the ‘Awakening: *Al-Ṣaḥwa*’ and the conservatives and Muslim Brotherhood started from the mosque, which was an ideal environment for them to achieve their goals. Their objectives were not only to do away with the ignorance prevailing in the society, but to struggle to change the community, which faced a financial, educational, social, and political revolution. Furthermore, the escalation of oil prices, the effects of globalization, the widening scope of the communications revolution, and the flow of information sped the movement of development in the general way of thinking. All these, in turn, led to internal migrations to the city – whose centre was the mosque – and contributed to the rapid changes in habits, customs, traditions and concepts which had been stagnant for many years in the mindset of the Saudi citizen. Al-Muzaini says:

في المسجد، بدأت أرقب كل شيء لم أعهده من قبل، وجوه مختلفة تطوقها ذقون سوداء فاحمة تبرز نضارة الوجوه، مع ابتسامة لا تتطفئ، تبقى في المسجد إلى ساعات متأخرة. صار حضورهم مميزا سواء مع إمام المسجد أو بعض جماعة المصلين ذوي القيمة الاعتبارية الخاصة. القادمون الجدد ليسوا من أبناء الحي... بدأت أتعرف على أسلوب مختلف في التعامل و ألفاظ وعبارات غير معهودة... وفي كل مرة ينصرفون فيها من المسجد يلقون التحية والابتسامات تملأ وجوههم. ذات يوم دُعيت إلى للانضمام إلى أحاديثهم كنت مبتهجا وأستمع بسعادة غامرة. طال الحديث عن أهمية استغلال الوقت.

In the mosque I started watching around me something I had never seen before, faces ringed by dark beards which highlight the freshness of the faces, with a permanent smile; staying up late in the mosque, they have a distinct presence either with the imam of the mosque or members of the congregation in the mosque who are considered to have a special status... The newcomers are not

people from the neighbourhood...I began to get to know different techniques in interacting and using unfamiliar words and phrases... Every time they walked away from the mosque they would scatter greetings, with smiles all over their faces... One day I was invited to join their conversations, and I did so cheerfully and listen thrilled. It was a long talk about the importance of the good use of time. (Al-Muzaini, 2004: 84, 85)

In order to change things, there were strong and severe clashes between some members of *Al-Şahwa* and their families and communities, such as in the case of the protagonist of *Mafāriq Al-‘Atamah* (2004). Unlike Juhayman⁷⁴ and his followers who depended on cruelty and hardship for their plans (see, Thābet, 2006: 31,32), the good planning of *Al-Şahwa* and the nice manner in which they presented themselves from the mosque had helped them to earn the trust of the people and played a significant role in their success. The hero of the novel *Al-‘Erhābī 20* has stated that:

كانوا يدخلون إلى ضمائرنا عبر طريقين، أحدهما استغلال الجانب الوجداني، عبر الترهيب والترغيب، والطريقة الأخرى هي ما يُكَلِّفُونَنَا ويدعموننا به داخل المركز وخارجه من البحوث والدروس والمشاركات.

They would get into our consciences through two routes: one was through the exploitative use of emotional intimidation and temptation, while the other was through practical support and encouragement for us inside and outside the centre in the provision of lectures, seminars, tutorials, lessons and posts. (Thābet, 2006: 94)

In addition to these means, there was a major factor in terms of attracting many young people to the *Al-Şahwa* movement: they benefited from the cruelty shown by some homes towards their young people, and they supplied for the young the things that they loved – sports and trips, for example – which were provided to them with an intensive religious colour:

⁷⁴ ‘The group that stormed the Mecca mosque in 1979 was a radicalised faction of a much broader pietistic organisation set up in Medina in the mid-1960s under the name of al-Jama‘a al-Salafiyya al-Muhtasiba (JSM), i.e., “The Salafi Group that Commands Right and Forbids Wrongdoing”. Furthermore, the JSM and its radical offshoot, “Juhayman’s Ikhwān”, were among the first manifestations of a particular type of Saudi Islamism which outlived Juhayman and has played an important yet subtle role in the shaping of the country’s political landscape until today (Lacroix, 2007: 106).

يتهيأ الجميع للدخول إلى مسجد المدرسة للإستماع إلى محاضرة يؤديها أحد الدعاة، وغالباً ما تكون عن العذاب والنار والموت، ويضج المسجد كل ليلة بالبكاء. بعد هذا يخرجون للعب المباريات وفق معتقدتهم الديني و يكون تشجيعهم بواسطة التكبير فقط (الله أكبر). كنا معتادين على سماع العبارات التشجيعية الدينية أو بعض عبارات السلف من بعض المشرفين مثل (تذكروا "رحم الله امرأاً أرانا من نفسه قوة"...) أو (خششونا فإن النعم لا تدوم).

Everyone is preparing to enter the mosque of the school in order to listen to the religious lecture, which is often about torment, fire and death until the crying voice of the mosque has been heard. After this, they walked out to play games which were also done according to religious ideology. Their encouragement was only by Takbir (exalting); we were also accustomed to hear the encouragement by religious words or Salaf expressions from the organisers. For instance, they said, remember (God bless the man who showed us the power from himself) or (Be harsh as the blessings do not last)'. (Thābet, 2006: 73, 80)⁷⁵

At the level of vocabulary also, people were accustomed to knowing each other by mentioning their names or nickname ('kunya') such as Abu x.⁷⁶ These young people, however, offered words which were more significant in terms of the fraternal link, such as 'your brother in God'.

أخذت أتمتم (أخوكم بالله) لغة جديدة دخلت قاموس حياتي اليومية.

I began mumbling (your brother in God), a new sort of language that had entered my daily lexicon. (Al-Muzaini, 2004: 85)

These terms do, however, exist in the Islamic heritage as the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) used to give some of his companions nicknames and call them by that such as Abu Turaab⁷⁷ which was the kunyah of Ali ibn abi Ṭālib (600-660) and Abu Hurayrah that of Abdurahman ibn Ṣakher (599-676). "The nickname may be given because of something that is unique to that person, such as Abu Hurayrah (Father/owner of the kitten). The Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) gave him this nickname because he would

⁷⁵ 'Salaf' literally means 'predecessors' in Arabic. The Salaf are the first generation of Muslims who are considered the most authoritative source for emulation and guidance for the succeeding generations (Hussain, 2005: 131).

⁷⁶ X refers here to the name of his or her oldest son or daughter, such as Abu Ali or Om Ali.

⁷⁷ It means 'Father of the Sand'.

often carry a cat or kitten with him” (Abdul-Rahman, 2007. Vol, 18: 285). It was widely used among the young people of the Mujahedin who went for Jihad in Afghanistan or were affected by it, as many people in Saudi Arabia admire the Mujahedin and look at them as heroes, “The Saudi people love every jihad warrior, every fighter, and every man of honour, whether in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Kashmir, or southern Sudan” (Spencer, 2003: 11). Use of this enthusiastic terminology was not intended to carry any real meaning, but rather for psychological reasons; it was intended to build up the character of those young men on the principle of strength and stability, as the violent transformations in civil society in the city needed to depend on inner power.

The psychological factor was one of the most prominent to affect young people, as it is linked to religion and its compatibility with the passions of the youth and their energies. For this, they succeeded in activating the role of young people who believe that reform and change should not exclude anyone, even friends and family members, and even if that leads to problems and clashes. The heroes of the three novels all clashed with their families and friends from the very beginning.

Although the young men gained their knowledge and support from a variety of sources, such as Qur’anic schools, summer centres in schools and Islamic education lessons, the mosque was providing the primary support for this transformation through the Friday sermons (Khotba). Preaching, distribution of Islamic tapes and collecting donations provide a good image of these young people. This was enough to support the rest of the other sources in carrying out their tasks.

So, this generation, which was able to make changes in society, was gaining acceptance from others by being launched from the mosque and not being in conflict with the state. Although there are strong family links in that community, which arose out of being a tribal society and also an Arab one, families can set aside close supervision of their children when they are in the mosque.

بدأ والدي مع مرور الأيام يعتاد تدريجياً غيابي الطويل عن المنزل واتشغالي بالتردد على مكتبة المسجد. في ظل ترقيب أولاد الحي، وانبهار الأباء بهذا العمل...مُوزَّعين إلى جماعات لكل واحدة منها مسؤول. تعرفنا على شيء اسمه نظام. رسم لنا طريقاً مختلفاً لم نعهده من قبل. أصبح الهم الذي يراودنا كبيراً جداً. ذابت قلوبنا مع أصوات النكالي في فلسطين. تأججت مشاعرنا بروح الفداء والتضحية في سبيل الله...الغرياء ذوو الوجوه البضاء والذقون السوداء انسلوا فجأة إلى حياتنا العيثية وأحالوها إلى حياة مفعمة بالعبادة.

My father gradually began to adapt to my long absence from home because I was busy with library of the mosque, which gives us a value at the youth of the neighbourhood and the looks of admiration from highly impressed parents. We were divided into many groups, each one of which had a person in charge, and we learned something called a system that drew for us a different path we did not know before. We came to have big concerns, our feelings stoked up by thoughts of redemption and sacrifice for the sake of God and cries for the cause of the bereaved in Palestine. Those men with their white faces and black beards, slipped into our frivolous lives and turned them into a life full of worship. (Al-Muzaini, 2004: 87, 88, 89)⁷⁸

So, the mosque has had a wide credibility among the cities' population and therefore played a vital role in containing this generation, providing a good image of them, and it was a suitable and supportive environment for their activities. There were also some important elements which shared this role alongside the mosque, and the most important of them were the activities of the Holy Qur'an Memorization Schools and Islamic Awareness Societies.

2.9 Role of Holy Qur'an Memorization Schools and Islamic Awareness Societies

According to some sources such as *Jam'iyyāt Tahfīzh Al-Qur'ān: Katātīb fi 'Aṣr Al-Tiknologya (Qur'an Memorization Associations: Katātīb in the Technological Age, 2010)* by Ḥuṣṣa Āl-'Ashikh, and *Buḥūth Nadwat Al-Enāya Bilqur'ān Al-Karīm*

⁷⁸ Regarding the "system", they were under a strict system that did not allow them even to read what they wanted; they were asked to read some books that encouraged them to stay on the path of this religion. They remembered some names of contemporary Islamic figures and the extent of their religious influence, such as Sayyid and Mohammed Qutb, Ali Greisha, Hassan Al-Hudhaibi, Faṭḥi Yakan, Mohammad Jamal and Najib Al-Kilani. On the other hand, they were warned not to read the deviations of Al-aqqād, Ṭaha Hussein, Muhammad Abduh, Jamal al-Din Al-Afghāni, Zaki Naguib, Al-Ṭahtawi, Qasim Amin and Al-Ḥuṣari. (See, Al-Muzaini, 2004: 93).

wa Ulūmihi (Research of the Symposium on the Care of the Holy Qur'an and its Sciences, 2000) by Abdullah Al-Mazrūa, the Qur'an circles that are currently situated in the mosques are an extension of what is called Katātīb⁷⁹ (kuttāb single of Katātīb) which were held mostly in mosques. However, many other sources such as *Saudi Arabia: A Country Study* (2004) by the Federal Research Division and *Understand My Muslim People* 2004 by Abraham Sarker, tend to say that the Qur'an memorization schools are an extension of Al-Katātīb, not the Qur'an circles. Anyone who examines the curricula of these schools will find them closer to Katātīb because those schools provide a complete curriculum such as Arabic language, Mathematics, Science, etc. as is the case in Katātīb. In the Qur'an circles, however, focus on the Qur'an memorization and recitation (Tajwīd).⁸⁰

According to Singh “Katātīb Schools specializing in Qur'an memorization sometimes included arithmetic, foreign language and Arabic reading in the curriculum” (Singh, 2002: 151). As for the fate of the Katātīb system, Campo states that it “was modified and integrated into the national school system or it remains as an important alternative to the Islamic education provided in the public schools (Campo, 2009: 437).

In addition to these titles, the book *The Qur'an in Islam: its Impact and Influence on the Life of Muslims* (1987) by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī shows how the Qur'an has affected every single moment of a Muslim's life and how the Muslims shape their lives according to what is stated in their book.

All the efforts under these titles have been appreciated. However, the eye of the novelist is going to monitor the role of these schools and Islamic Societies from within their walls through real experience and fictional writing; and the novelist is also going to

⁷⁹ Al-Katātīb is an old-fashioned method of education which used to be in most of the Arab and Muslim countries. Al-Katātīb means a group of young students who with their teacher learn the Quran, fundamentals of Islamic belief and practice and Arabic knowledge. And because the widespread desire of the faithful is to study the Koran, Al-Katātīb are mostly located in mosques and they could be located also in a variety of venues: private homes, shops, tents, or even out in the open.

⁸⁰ Tajwid is the science of Qur'ānic recitation.

monitor these roles throughout the heroes of his novels, as the ones who actually experienced these things.

The inspiration of the Qur'an memorization schools was strong; those schools according to the novel (*Al-'Erhābī 20*, 2006) take their authority from the state, since they also were government schools. Rugh has also confirmed that "Special religious schools intended to support memorization of the Qur'an were established by the government in the 1920s. In 1957 these were made an integral part of the general education system, so they followed the curriculum provided by the government but also emphasized Islamic studies" (Rugh, 2002: 43). Unlike other schools, Qur'an memorization schools provide monthly financial rewards for each student; the teachers are known for their religiosity and there is intensive focus on the religious lessons: "The religious schools, or madrassas, are spread throughout the country and are taught by Islamic clerics" (Peterson, 2008: 146). They were mostly located in cities, and despite the harsh image that was provided by the novels of Abdullah Thābet and Al-Muzaini of these schools as socially religious and conservative, and emotionally cruel, they were nonetheless successful in terms of students' excellence, linguistically speaking. This helped them succeed in their plan of religious transformations in those cities later on, particularly given that these schools existed only in the cities in those days (see Thābet, 2006: 53–62).

The feeling that haunted those who were running these schools was that they were in an alienated religion, and therefore there was an inner drive for consistency on the principle of change.

Islamic Awareness Societies were in almost every single school, playing the role of religious guide for students. Those students who enrolled in the mosque or the Qur'an memorization schools became able to convince school administrations to rely on them to run some student activities. The novel *Mafāriq Al-'Atamah* 2004 narrates this scenario clearly:

أصبحنا نمثل كتلة فعالة داخل المدرسة. استعانت الإدارة المدرسية بقدراتنا للإشراف على بعض الأنشطة، تكونت جمعية للتوعية الإسلامية. لاقت استحسانا وقبولا من لدن كثير من الطلبة. صرنا نرسم مستقبل أمة تُبنى لبناتها بأيدينا.

We came to represent the effective mass within the school; the school administration used our capabilities to supervise some activities, and we established the Islamic Enlightenment Society, which met with acceptance from many students. We were to draw the future of a nation that builds their brick in our hands. (Al-Muzaini, 2004: 94, 95)

Since the Saudi society upholds the religious option in most of the details of daily life, it has paved the way for the success of those young people. The role of those young people did not stop at this border, but with the support of the religious society they made a significant impact on Summer Centres in Schools and Youths Camps.

2.10 Role of Student Activities, Summer Centres in Schools and Youths Camps

The Report: Saudi Arabia (2010) by Oxford Business Group, illustrates some types of activities run by students such as sports and educational activities beside the activities of the Higher Education Ministry. *Saudi Arabia Enters the Twenty-First Century: The Military and International Security Dimensions* (2003) by Anthony H Cordesman, tackles some of the roles performed by religious people, in effect the religious police, Saudi enforcement of Islamic justice and enforcement of Islamic Norms, censorship and control of the media. Thomas Hegghammer in his book *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism Since 1979* (2010) described some activities undertaken by the youth camps and centres which are run in the summer. However, some have expressed the opinion that the role of these centres was simply to stoke the fires of radicalism.

The three novels discussed in this chapter will substantiate the notion that these changes have mostly grown and flourished within the city which provided a fertile ground for them.

Under these educational activities, youths were organized in summer camps and centres, which were funded by the state as confirmed by the novel *Al- 'Erhābī 20*.

كنت أتساءل كيف يُموّنون المراكز والمخيمات والرحلات حتى علمت أنهم يأخذون أموال الدولة.

I was wondering how they could get the money until I got to know they were getting state funds. (Thābet, 2006: 94)

Here, students were being taught the doctrine of Islam intensively, particularly in camps that take place in the deserts of Saudi Arabia, away from the eyes of observers. Hegghammer has stated that “another important arena was the semi-formal religious study groups which are very widespread in Saudi Arabia. These forums come in many different shapes and forms, from evening get-togethers to summer camps in the desert” (Hegghammer, 2010: 139). However, the planning, coordination and management of all programs have taken place in cities.⁸¹ According to Abdo (2000), their ways were close to the methods of the Muslim Brotherhood in the fifties in terms of the intensive nature of their religious instruction, but their program in the seventies and eighties had more impact on the bringing up of young people because of its providing attractive programs such as sports activities. This represents a magnet element for young people and for the protagonist of the *Al- 'Erhābī 20*'s novel this was a good enough reason to join that group because of the sport activities it offered (see, Thābet, 2006: 72-75). Furthermore,

⁸¹ The novel *Al- 'Erhābī 20* is strong on the details of what happens in some camps. ‘Our number was not less than forty in one camp, under the supervision of seven university students, who were invited specially by our teachers and supervisors of the camp to invite young students to join in their thoughts. The camp is divided into four groups by the President and each group has its own mentor from the secondary level and a supervisor from the university students, who appoint someone to be responsible for sports activities, another for culture and the third for the night guard. The program starts at three in the morning for worship and night prayer until the time of dawn prayer, and we start doing hard exercise to build our bodies; then each group has to go to the Qur’an circle until the sunrise. The sports program resumes before breakfast, and after that the cultural program begins till the afternoon; then they start the preaching workshops offered by the university students, and everyone is invited to attend a main lecture by a religious preacher from outside the camp who talks often about youth issues. After two hours’ rest, the groups start visiting each other for preaching. Tea time and an hour before sunset, sports activity starts, followed by Maghrib prayer and then a cultural theatre which begins with passionate religious songs such as ‘O Muslims, God is One’. After dinner we go to sleep, and then suddenly at two in the morning there is a planned attack by the supervisors against the camp in Afghan dress, doing the fighting with the group of night guards, capturing one member of camp and taking the spoils (See Thābet, 2006: 77-82).

the creators of this trend were relying upon young people to implement their programs. These camps offered a purely Islamic lifestyle: memorization of the Qur'an, lessons after dawn prayers, and preaching lectures by senior preachers. Novels here provide stunning images about the strength of the impact of these groups on the feelings of young people and their emotions, as described in the novel by Al-Muzaini.

تحت وطأة هذه التعاليم الصارمة، بدأنا نحترق الأنا، وننتهز الفرصة في ترديد بعض الأناشيد الجياشة التي تزرع فينا قيمة الجهاد والثبات والتضحية.

Under the impact of these strict teachings, we began to despise the ego and grabbed every opportunity to echo the passionate songs that nurture in us the values of jihad and steadfastness and sacrifice. (Al-Muzaini, 2004: 88)

Moreover, many believe that the summer centres in schools and youths camps caused the emergence of a radicalised generation. Hegghammer has pointed out that “Some have argued that organised religious youth activities such as summer camps play a role in radicalising Saudi teenagers” (Hegghammer, 2010: 139). Some believe it was one of the reasons that led young people to join the jihad in Afghanistan. “Several Saudis in Afghanistan met recruiters in such study groups” (Hegghammer, 2010: 139).

However, the novels demonstrate that these centers and camps are supervised, sponsored and monitored by the state through the Ministry of Education, and most of those who are in charge of those activities are educated and are aware:

جميع المشرفين كانوا من المعلمين وطلاب الجامعة الذين يتولون قيادة المجموعات

All supervisors were teachers and university students undertaking to lead all these groups. (Thābet, 2006: 94)

Moreover, the demand for these activities is very large, and thus if they lead to Jihad or radicalism, then most Saudis should be Mujahedeen and radicals. Having said this, there are some writers, however, who do not corroborate with such a view:

There are cases of activities exploiting many religious arenas for socialisation in Saudi Arabia, but it does not mean that these arenas or institutions are inherently for radicalising or always manipulated by recruiters. The number of people taking part in such activities is so large and the number of Saudi jihadists is so low that it means such a causal link cannot be established. (Hegghammer, 2010: 140)

Nevertheless, for as long as these people live in a city, they cannot escape being affected by the transformations that had an impact on the emergence of a radical generation. They came from the villages where they knew only one Lord, and then faced a multifaceted doctrine: religious and sectarian. They felt that their duty was to maintain their religion, which faces a strange competition from other religions because of these extreme transformations. Supporting this was the dialogue between the village Sunni, who moved to the city, and the urban Shiite in Al-Ḥamad's novel *Sharq Al-Wādī* (159–167). The fact is that the Arab personality is characterized by emotional attachments; and so when these people moved to the city, this tribal passion turned into a religious passion, which was received by some stakeholders in society who were turned towards religious extremism under the pretext of the injustice that Muslims faced everywhere, especially the occupation of Palestine. The novel *Mafāriq Al-'Atamah* portrays that in the following passage,

كنا نشعر بالظلم عندما نقرأ ما حصل للمسلمين وما يحصل في كل أرجاء العالم. تنقل لنا الأخبار من مجموعة من المصادر منها المجالات الإسلامية كمجلة الإصلاح أو المجتمع.

We felt oppression and persecution because of the suffering of our fellow Muslims in all parts of the world. And we had received their news through Islamic magazines such as *Al-Iṣlāḥ* and *Al-Mojtama'* magazine. (Al-Muzaini, 2004: 137)

The apparent contradictions in this society and attempts to balance modernity and tradition, religion and tribe are the root of the problem. Furthermore, even if the Arabian was committed to the strict system of the tribe, which is often driven by emotion, his innate behaviour tends to lean towards the behaviour of the independent Bedouin who does not like commitment, who does not like urbanization, but was forced into that because of the city system. This means a commitment to the Charter of Rights jointly with his brothers in the urbanized setting, but some of those who were coming to the

city could not adapt to it quickly. Some of these paradoxes may have led to severe impacts that led to the recalcitrance that was out of state control. One of the main events was the incident of Juhayman, who came from the desert background and stormed the Mecca mosque with his group in 1979. Even though Juhayman was defeated and killed by the Saudi state, his ideas remained alive: “The study of Juhayman’s legacy has showed that the influence of Juhayman on the development of Saudi Islamism is greater than generally assumed” (Hegghammer and Lacroix, 2007: 117).

In fact, some of his objectives and demands had been implemented, either because of a conviction or through fear of the recurrence of such incidents; for example, by preventing the display of songs on official TV, or barring pictures of women in newspapers. “Female announcers were dismissed from television stations, songs were banned from television” (Hassner, 2009: 150). Moreover William Rugh states that “Saudi taboos also include showing people drinking alcohol or even holding wine glasses” (Rugh, 2004: 243) Furthermore, there was increasing control of individual life through the strengthening of religious discourse, and through the role of the General Presidency of the Promotion of Virtue. Thābet explains through his novel,

كان أخي الأكبر تقريبا ضحية لمثل دعوة جهيمان المتشددة في أواخر السبعينات، عندما كان هو وأتباعه يدورون بالناس يعظونهم ويأخذون تأييدهم محتجين على الفساد الأخلاقي برأيهم، الذي تبدت مظاهره في أغنيات التلفزيون والنساء الظاهرات به. كان هدفهم من ذلك الثورة على النظام السعودي الذي يعتقدون فساد، وأن عليهم تطهير البلاد من هذه الحكومة.

My older brother was almost a victim of such a call by the radical Juhayman in the late seventies, when he and his group were preaching to people and earning their sympathy and support against the corruption of morals, indicators of which were the presence of songs and women on television; however, their aim was to revolt against the Saudi regime, which they believed to be corrupt, so that they should purge the country of this government. (Thābet, 2006: 31, 32)

As we shall see, there are many indications that the memory of Juhayman has been kept alive in certain Islamist circles until today, and that his ideology has inspired periodic attempts at reviving his movement. Most prominent among Juhayman’s intellectual heirs is Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi, a radical Islamist ideologue of Palestinian origin who grew up in Kuwait. (Hegghammer and Lacroix, 2007: 114).

With these religious transformations in the city, there were more severe expressions, such as ‘infidel’ and ‘hypocrite’, which also were used against some Muslims just because they had committed some sins. Such instances occur in the novels of Al-Muzaini (2004: 149), Al-Ḥamad (2006: 77) and Thābet (2006: 88).

The impact of all these factors, beside their sense of alienation and worries about conspiracies and secular alliances, and in addition to the intellectual invasion and what happened because of the indulgence in the seventies, made them feel that there was a conspiracy and a plot to corrupt and westernize the society, and that their duty was to advise and resist in both word and practice.

This led in turn to a more religious society in the eighties, and the phenomenon of religion affected even the adult men and women, the elderly and the children. There was the so-called ‘changing the evil by hand’ (that is, by force), which is the first and strongest stage of the rule of changing the evil in Islam, since Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) said, “He among you who witnesses an evil, let him change it with his hand, if he cannot do that, then by his tongue, if he cannot do even that, then with his heart, and this is the weakest faith” (Abdul-Rahman, 2009. Vol, 2: 440). The implementation of this stage is evidence of the strong presence of religion among city dwellers and the power and authority of the person who resorts to the use of force to change unislamic matters. David has confirmed that “The Saudi population is even more conservative and religiously driven than its government” (David, 2008: 48). For example, the image of the religious authority⁸² was quieter in the seventies than in the eighties.

The three novels under discussion here agreed that there was an appearance of the religious attribute but even all of their characters had lived through that period of the religious rise and practiced to change the evil by hand. Al-Muzaini’s novel has pointed out that,

⁸² An example was the increasing power of the General Presidency of the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vices. Then there was support for charitable activities, financially, politically and in the media, and a rise in the number of awakening symbols, Sheikh Salman Al-Uda as an example. All of these were in the Eighties.

كنا نترصد حياة الناس للتعرف على مكامن العفن ثم نجتث المنكر باليد

We were keeping a close watch over people's lives in order to know the secret places where decay had set in – and then taking out that evil by hand. (Al-Muzaini, 2004: 117)⁸³

Their numbers were many, but the abolition of the individual and dependence on the arbitrator community system put all their activities under the control of those who were running them. Al-Muzaini also has narrated that,

نستقطب أكبر كمّ ممكن من الشباب الذين نجد لديهم الرغبة للإنضمام إلينا، كانت انتصاراتنا سريعة وحاسمة وتشجع الجميع للإنضمام إلينا. لا يتطلب من المنتسب إلا أن يكون ممتثلاً لما نقول ونعمل. نشترك في تفكير واحد وصوت واحد... أصبحنا كعمال المصانع لا يتعارفون إلا بوجوههم عدا القادة.

We attract as many young people who have the desire to join us as possible, and our rapid and decisive victories were encouraging everyone to join us. New members are required simply to be in compliance with what we say and what we do. We share one way of thinking and one vote. We were like factory workers who know each other only by their faces, except the leaders. (Ibid: 136, 144)

On the other hand *Sharq Al-Wādī* presented rapid and nonviolent religious conversion by its hero in the seventies, who traveled from village to city and faced there for the first time Shia Muslims who agreed with him and then Christians who worked in the oil company and not only agreed with him but became his friends. Finally, he married a Christian woman in America – and all this under the influence of the city, from the viewpoint of the novel (Al-Ḥamad, 2006).

With the spread of the Awakening movement locally and externally under the impact of oil, there was increased attention to the new religiosity, which is a combination between the Salafis and the thought of some contemporary Islamic movements. The impact of that remained constant and strong between 1980 and 1990, partly because of other

⁸³ Furthermore, see these novels: Thābet, 2006: 117); and Al-Ḥamad, 2006: 78.

factors, such as the incident of "Juhayman" and the effects of the Iranian revolution and the Iran-Iraq war, as well as the support for the jihad against communism. All of these events and religious currents underwent several changes after 1990 towards rationality, calm and acceptance of the Other. These are shown clearly in the context of the last chapters of the novels discussed here. According to them, there was no strong influence in the seventies and early eighties of the contemporary cultures of nationalism, secularism, socialism and so on; most of these have in fact appeared since the end of the eighties.

2.11 Religious Transformations from 1990 Onwards

One of the most important books nowadays is Abdulaziz Al-Khidr's *Al-Saūdiya, Sīrat Dawlah wa Mujtama': Qirā'ah fi Tajrobat Thulth Qarn min Al-Ttaḥawwulāt Al-Fikriyya wa Al-Siyāssiya wa At-tanmawiya* (Saudi, *A Biography of a State and a Society: Readings in a Third of a Century's Experience of Intellectual, Political and Developmental Transformations*, 2010). Al-Khidr has read about a third of a century of intellectual, political and developmental transformations in Saudi Arabia, including those conflicts, debates and views that were never celebrated by the media. The book also presents some of the details that formed the religious mind and talked about the components of the Wahhabi and Salafi thought and discusses the most influential religious figures. Despite the fact that this book has had a strong influence on the Saudi street, the author deals with these subjects through the historical method. Other books in this subject include Mohammed Ayoob and Hasan Kosebalaban' *Religion and politics in Saudi Arabia: Wahhabism and the state* (2009), Madawi Al-Rasheed's *Kingdom without borders: Saudi political, religious and media frontiers* (2008) and Tim Niblock's *Saudi Arabia: power, legitimacy and survival* (2006). These books devoted some pages to discussing the impact and transformation of religion, but mostly linked the religious transformations to political and historical influences. However, what the novel adds is its ability to detect these changes not only from the historical and political perspectives, but also from within the fabric of civil society and in terms of the psychological effects.

There was almost no tangible influence in the seventies and eighties on the contemporary cultures of nationalism, secularism, socialism and so on in Saudi Arabia because of the strict monitoring of outside intellectual products and “a sense of superiority to any jurisprudence or religious discourse coming from abroad, led to clear imbalance in the capabilities and culture of the next generation of awakening in terms of weak Saudi authoring” (Al-Khidr, 2010: 93).⁸⁴ However, those groups of young people who had been sent abroad by the state to study for higher degrees were influenced greatly by the difference of political, religious and intellectual ideas and doctrines and caused a stir in the intellectual and religious stagnation inside Saudi Arabia, which saw the society through the spectacles of a religious institution that adopted a unilateral view. Then in the nineties people witnessed a large open media, and satellite channels were invading most homes. The Internet had become fertile ground for the youth who were looking for something new. There was also a growing role for Islamic satellite channels, magazines⁸⁵ and sites on the Internet in the provision of contemporary Islamic discourse. Books competed with tapes in terms of proliferation. Some of the reasons for this religious movement were the Second Gulf War of 1990–1991, which changed the face of the media, and the events of 9/11, followed by the internal explosions that created a large media shift. Thābet’s novel has portrayed these transformations:

الكتب الجديدة، والقراءات الأخرى، والرياضة، والرفاق، والأسفار، والسيارة الأنيقة، كل هذه الأشياء
وغيرها كانت انفجارًا كبيرًا بداخلي.

New books, other readings, sports, companions, travels and a fancy car – all of these and other things caused a big explosion and change inside me. (Thābet, 2006: 149)

This new knowledge and religious revolution affected even the government, which requested some representatives of all four Islamic schools to join the Council of Senior

⁸⁴ My translation.

⁸⁵ Such as: *Al-Dāwa*, *Al-Bayan*, *Al-Mujtama‘* and *Al-’Islāh* magazines.

Scholars. Thābet confirms through his novel the efforts of the state and its intervention in a lot of changes, especially after the events of 11 September 2001:

وضعت الدولة في اعتبارها الكثير من التعديلات التي بقيت مثارا للجدل بين المتدينين وخصومهم.

The state has taken into account a lot of adjustments that have remained controversial between the religious people and their opponents. (Thābet, 2006: 181)

The official position was supportive of the Awakening movement in the nineties, because of there being, in the state's view, less tension and conflict between some Islamic movements, and the fact that this movement was supportive of the government since the beginning. However, the rapid transformations in the region curtailed this friendliness because there was strong opposition from some members of the Ṣaḥwa (Awakening) against the presence of foreign forces in Saudi lands for the liberation of Kuwait. Therefore, in order to destabilise the Awakening movement, the government supported other religious movements (Al-Jāmmiya)⁸⁶ which were opposed to the Awakening movement. Al-Jāmmiya was not widely popular and therefore did not have a significant impact. Despite the attempts of some Awakening leaders to appeal for calm (e.g., Safar Al-Ḥawāly [1950-] and Salman Al-Ūda [1956-]), the margin of disagreement between the opposition and the government was expanded because of the occupation of Afghanistan and then Iraq, and so a radical way of thinking that admired Al-Qaida and its symbols appeared. Furthermore, the expression 'infidel' was reused to describe the Saudi government:

بالطبع كنا نعتقد بكفر الحاكم، وكفر الدولة كلها. لا سيما بعد استعانة الملك و إخوانه بالقوات الأمريكية وقوات التحالف الكافرة لإخراج العراق من السعودية والكويت.

Of course we believed that the governor and the government were infidels, especially after the King and his brothers sought the help of the U.S. troops and

⁸⁶ A group of people within the general configuration of Islamists which is characterized by many features, one of them being hostility to any political orientation of an anti-establishment nature, and perhaps this explains also the state's support for this group.

infidel coalition forces to remove Iraq from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. (Thābet, 2006: 98)

Significantly, this panel was representing the minority of the Awakening members.

On the other hand, the majority of the Ṣaḥwa members were more peaceful. Their discourse was more systematic and organized, and they made a conscious decision in terms of educating the Muslims, and reviving the role of all the aspects of Islamic law in the mosques; while there was no official interest in this aspect. Good illustrations of that are Sheikh Salman Al-Ūda and Mohammad Al-Munajjid (1960-). But the issue was at the local level.

Once again the city has witnessed violent shifts; the bombings of 2003 in Riyadh increased the gap between the ideology of Al-Qaida and the jihadists and the Ṣaḥwa movement that rejects the jihad, including in Iraq, until the real break happened between them. Additionally, there was a convergence between the symbols of the Ṣaḥwa members, who condemned the bombing, and the state, which felt the interests of both parties in the convergence.

After the events of 9/11, and in the name of the "war on terror" and the so-called "reform of religious discourse", it was no longer a local matter, but became an urgent need to renew and develop the religious education curriculum. Charities run by religious people often also have been prosecuted in the name of 'drying up the sources of terrorism'.

2.12 Conclusion

Overall, the novels analysed above were able to visualize the fine details of many factors that have helped to accelerate the transformations in the city, and these transformations occurred in an unusually quick amount of time. “[T]he renewal term is not new to the ancient Muslim scholars, what is known as Fatwa changed with change of time and place” (Ibn Al-Qayyim: 376),⁸⁷ but there is now a fear of the Americanization of religious curricula that is product of the rapid changes that have been produced by oil in the city, and this fear is increased by the fact that the Americanization has received support from Saudi liberals. Additionally, there is no longer support from the government for the Islamists as there was before, and there has thus been a loss of some of the privileges that the Islamists acquired in the early nineties (and indeed before then), and so there are more opportunities for other religions and ideas to be expressed and thus to gain a foothold in Saudi.

Under the global tendency after 9/11 to focus on the Islamic direction in Saudi, the spread and popularity of that Islamic direction has now diminished, and young people have turned to the research of the more moderate Maghrebi Islamic researchers, who include Mohammed Ābed Al-Jabiri, Abdullah Al-Arwi and Mohammed Arkoun.

The split of the Islamists into several sections and the emergence of other trends that are against the Islamists, such as the modernists, the secularists, the liberals, and the enlighteners, in addition to the media’s celebration of these trends, have all led to a decline in the position of the Islamists, which has been seen by some observers as a temporary setback until the security balance of Saudi Arabia is restored.

⁸⁷ My translation.

The success and failure of the rapid religious transformations that have occurred in the city have been helped by several factors, including the exploitation of young people's religious passion, and supporting them through enthusiastic religious expressions and

دعم المدارس الدينية و نفوذ المعلمين الذين يديرونها .

The support of the religious schools and the influence of the teachers who run them ... (Thābet, 2006: 115).

There has also been an absence of the family role in terms of the attention that youths have received from their families and the cruelty that was formerly directed towards them, which sometimes occurred because of the ignorance and illiteracy of parents at that time, and which sometimes occurred because of the difficulties of economic life in those days. Thus, the family name is mentioned only in the beginning and at the end of Al-Muzaini's novel *Mafāriq Al-'Atamah*. This was a sign that families only attended to their offspring in childhood and adulthood and not in their adolescence.

Poverty and the beginning of the economic boom because of oil also led to a change in the religious face of the city. Even though Islam prohibits the killing of innocent people, there has been a killing of a brother by his brother in the city, and only for the sake of money (Al-Muzaini, 2004: 170,171).

The failure to interact with other cultures that came to Saudi Arabia, especially from Asia, was due to language differences and those people working in manual jobs, and this led to some religious extremism in the seventies, eighties and the first half of the nineties.

The spread of the *Ṣaḥwa* in the eighties was due to the strong official proliferation of members of the Awakening through lectures, seminars and tapes, which occurred in a society that is not diversified, simple in its consciousness and fed from a single source – generally from the form of religious books (see Thābet, 2006: 136–137).

Engaging in the activities of advocacy early, before achieving a sufficient amount of knowledge and consciousness of their new ideas, led to rapid changes of views, hasty convictions, and the transition from one idea to another before either idea had had time to mature. The absence of the individual mind and a reliance on the collective mind also helped propel these transformations. Openness to reading other books has helped to restore the balance between changing views and only having one view from the late nineties onward. This has been represented by the character Zahi Al-Jebāli in Thābet's novel, who returned to a normal life after opening his mind to other currents of thought, and although he became more conservative, it was in the manner intended by the individual mind, not the collective one.

It is also clear from the above that the words "civil" and "civilization" in Arabic are intrinsically supported by and linked to the city and not with the desert or the countryside. The religious sources have encouraged and inspired the life of the city and have influenced writers.

The Saudi city is an extremely sensitive location in which to broach religious issues, and the resultant limitation and narrowing of the area of discussion of religion has led the city to suffer from terrorist bombings. Some people took advantage of that young society, with their enthusiasm and religious passion, and began explaining religious texts in accordance with their own (terrorist) interests.

Mosques, Holy Qur'an Memorization Schools, Islamic Awareness Societies and then Summer Centres in Schools and Youths Camps have all received acceptance and credibility among the residents of cities, and so that has led them to play very significant roles in these transformations.

The period of the eighties was a remarkable stage in terms of radicalism for many reasons, including, for example, the incident of "Juhayman" and the impact of the Iranian revolution and the Iran-Iraq war, as well as the support for the jihad against communism in Afghanistan.

The above novels have also shown that Saudi society upholds the religious option in most of the details of daily life. In the nineties and onwards there were many transformations in cities towards conciliation, rationality, and the accommodation of other views. There was a genuine emergence of new trends in the nineties, such as the contemporary cultures of nationalism, secularism, socialism, and so on. Everything mentioned above shows the importance of the city and its role in containing these transformations; and it also illustrates the strong impact of religion on the Arab city, particularly the Saudi city, which became not only a place of rapid religious transformations but also a fertile ground for both freedom and alienation – a topic that we will proceed to discuss and analyse in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

The City as a Site of Freedom and Alienation

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3 Introduction

Nowhere has the call of the city been more insistent during recent decades than in countries of the so-called developing world. The attractions of cities and the opportunities, both real and imagined, that they offer have increased urban populations at a relentless pace from South America through Africa and the Middle East to South-East Asia. However, this process has undoubtedly been at the expense of traditional lifestyles and family units and has affected communication patterns between men and women and has tended to break down the collective mind-set of the rural communities. It has led to both greater individual freedom and to feelings of alienation. There is a correlation between freedom and alienation, and this is a phenomenon which has imposed itself on the novel across linguistic borders. Camus' *The Stranger* (1946), Buzzati's *The Tartar Steppe* (1940), Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and the psychological works of both Kafka and Dostoevsky all being cases in point. The contemporary Arabic novel, for instance, *Azzahra Aṣṣakhriya (The Rocky Venus, 2003)* by Mohammad Al-Rawi, *Al-Ṭarīq Ilā-Balḥārith (The Road to Balḥārith, 2008)* by Jamal Najī, *Women of Sand and Myrrh* (2010) by Ḥanān Al-Shaykh and *Barāri Al-Ḥummā (Mainlands Fever, 2010)* by Ibrahim Nsir are also concerned with the content of this humanitarian issue which belongs to all lifestyles, particularly in the cities where all the various manifestations of alienation are to be found. Often the novels, short stories, poetry and plays also present the city as the location of freedom. The various Saudi novels which I have selected for this study include real and imagined cities, male and female writers and different cities and times as follows: *'Unthā Al-'Ankabūt, (Female Spider, 2000)* by Qumāsha Al-'Ulayyān, *Jurf Al-Khafāyā, (Cliff of Secrets, 2004)* by Abdulhafiḍ Al-Shammari, *Kā'in Mu'ajjal, (Deferred Object, 2004)* by Fahad Al-'Atīq and *Al-Qārūra, (Munira's Bottle, 2010)* by Yousef Al-Mohaimed.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the environment of the city as contrasted with that of the village, especially in terms of its implications for traditional family life. For example, amongst Saudi citizens who have migrated to Riyadh or to other cities from the countryside there have been noticeable changes to patterns of communication within the family. Women especially are now much more able to express their thoughts and feelings in the presence of their parents, whereas previously the Saudi father particularly had always the last word on all matters. The novels vividly illustrate how city life often causes family tension on account of this greater freedom of communication and can also disappoint and alienate those who fall victim to its initial allure; and yet they also portray the city as a site of greater freedom and creativity. This chapter will highlight the following points, relying on the above cited Saudi novels: freedom and alienation in the Saudi city from the perspective of the Saudi novel, social, psychological and cultural freedom and alienation in the Saudi city, the role of language in emotional and linguistic emancipation.

3.1 Literature Review

There is a correlation between freedom and alienation. Perhaps one of the most important motives for exile is the search for ‘freedom’, under its general concept, which integrates all types of freedoms. Finifter argues that “Yearning for freedom leads to alienation” (Finifter 1972: 63), and the opposite might also be true as is perhaps the excessive habit of using the concept of freedom and then infringing the freedoms of other people in its name, or fear of freedom itself, has led some to avoid it, and as a result of this, fear of freedom has become one of the reasons which lead to alienation. As Brookfield suggests, “People are alienated because they fear their freedom”(Brookfield, 2005: 52).

Feelings of alienation and estrangement have been and remain natural to human beings ever since they first set foot on this earth, moving from the first created home as is

“believed by the Sufis and as is evidenced by the three monotheistic religions”⁸⁸ (Zamil, 2003: 20). The term alienation has evolved to include all of those who are “facing situations where they lose themselves and become strangers to their activities and their works and almost lose all their humanity” (Madkūr, 2004: 50-51).⁸⁹

There are several kinds of alienation, but the following particularly are the most important types: spatial, psychological, religious, social, political, moral, intellectual, cultural, emotional, historical and financial alienation which might be “leading the exile to either the absurd and mysticism or to the insurgency and revolution to finally realise his own identity, potential and achieve freedom as a human being” (Al-Khaṭīb, 1998: 19).⁹⁰ Spartacus,⁹¹ Muhammad Ali⁹² and Babak Al-Khurrami’s⁹³ revolutions are cases in point.

There are some critics who link the feeling of alienation with rapid technological development which “made some people unable to catch up and so they found themselves feeling lonely, as happened in Japan amongst those who refused modern technology and clung to their traditional ways” (Al-Khaṭīb, 1998: 21-22).⁹⁴ On the other hand, modern technology can be counted as a good way to escape to freedom from the pressures of life and the power of community over those who have already suffered from alienation:

Technology, in short, has come of age, not merely as technical capability, but as a social phenomenon. We have the power to create new possibilities, we give ourselves more choices, more opportunities... We can have more freedom and with more freedom we can be more human... We are recognizing that our technical prowess literally bursts with the promise of new freedom, enhanced human dignity and unfettered aspiration. (Leiss, 1990: 25)

⁸⁸ My translation.

⁸⁹ My translation.

⁹⁰ My translation.

⁹¹ Spartacus, (c.109-71 B.C), a Thracian slave and gladiator who led a rebellion against the Romans from 73-71 B. C. After many victories, he was finally defeated by Crassus (Shone et al, 2005: 4).

⁹² Muhammad Ali (1769–1849), a man who was to play a major role in the history of the Middle East and East Africa (Bulliet et al, 2010, vol. 2: 626).

⁹³ The leader of the Khurramdini uprising in Azarbayjan, who successfully resisted the 'Abbasids (Soudavar et al, 1992: 76).

⁹⁴ My translation.

The yearning for freedom often leads people away to a place where they may search for a human value and for areas of communication with the self and the other, in order to discover and feel the reality of existence and of being intellectual. There is also a need for space which allows for movement and improvement, for opportunities and areas that allow ideas to be created and developed without any controlling authority or appointed censors. There should be an appropriate environment for the mind to create and for the hand to work. So, “freedom is associated closely with alienation and it reveals its true mettle only through the ongoing process of conquering alienation” (Rajab, 1993: 20).⁹⁵

The contemporary Arabic novel is also concerned with the content of this humanitarian issue which belongs to all lifestyles, particularly in the cities where all manifestations of alienation are to be found. “The city occupies a great area of interest for contemporary Arab poets who expressed their lack of human spirit and the suffering of the mechanical nature, monotony and repetitive style of life” (Abdulfattah, 2011:82).⁹⁶ The Arabic novel is not free of the theme of freedom and alienation, as both of them are considered one of the most significant tributaries of human thought, and one of the most important rationales for writing fiction, which has a tendency to be present in almost every Arabic novel. Good illustrations of that are the following: *Aṭfāl Bilā Domu` (Children Without Tears, 1989)* by Alā' Addīb; *Al-Fayāfi (The Deserts, 1990)* by Saeed Baker; *Al-Ḥulum (The Dream, 1996)* by Abdussalam Al-Ojaili; *Al-Baldah Al-'Ukhrā (The Other Country, 2004)* by Ibrahim Abdulmajeed; *Najran Taht Aṣṣifr (Najran Below Zero, 2005)* by Yahyā Yakhluḥ; and *Bayā Nafs Bashariya (Sale Human Soul, 2008)* by Mohammad Al-Manṣi Qundīl.⁹⁷

There are various topics and a great deal of subjects that appear under the title of freedom and alienation, but the attention will be focused on the literary side – especially on the novel – as the writer or intellectual is a sensitive thermometer of the alienation phenomenon, with the result that he might “feel foreignness before the others” (Daste,

⁹⁵ My translation.

⁹⁶ My translation.

⁹⁷ Furthermore, see also *Azzahra Aṣṣakhriya (The Rocky Venus, 2003)* by Mohammad Al-Rrawi, *Al-Ṭarīq Ilā-Balḥārith (The Road to Balḥārith, 2008)* by Jamal Najī, *Misk Al-Ghazāl (Musk of Deer, 2010)* by Ḥanān Al-Shaikh and *Barāri Al-Ḥummā (Mainlands Fever, 2010)* by Ibrahim Nsir.

2009). Since the intellectual is naturally looking for freedom but does not find it, this is “leading his liberty and authority into collision with the authority of the community, which in turn leads to alienation” (Daste, 2009).

Alienation and freedom have appeared in literary writings on two levels, poetry and prose, and an example of the first is: *Al-'Ightirāb fī Al-Shi'r Al-Maghribi Al-Muāšir* (*Alienation in Contemporary Moroccan Poetry*, 2011), by Ali Al-'Alawi.

Here the author asked first about whether there are in fact any contemporary Moroccan expatriate poets, and what is it that has prompted their alienation. What are the features of alienation in contemporary Moroccan poetry? He also talks about alienation from the self and the place, social, emotional, cultural, mystic and economic alienation, and then he links all these things to self-alienation and also the relationship between the city and the Moroccan poet and his attitudes towards the city and the experience of prison and the alienation of prisoners.

However, there might be some who believe in the importance of all these manifestations separately without linking them to the aspect of self-alienation. In the ancient Arab heritage, alienation had been linked with financial matters. Ali bin Abi Ṭāleb (600-660) says; “Poverty in the homeland is exile and wealth in exile is a homeland” (Meqdādi, 2000: 90).⁹⁸

Alienation does not necessarily have to be spatial, as it can be experienced in one's homeland. Unlike migration which is essentially a change of place from one's homeland to a foreign land, this type of alienation is considered to be a much deeper sort of alienation, which makes you feel a blurry existence in your soul and in your own eyes, in or outside the home.

⁹⁸ My translation.

There is also another study entitled *Rumūz Al- 'Ightirāb wa Al-Ghorba fī Shi 'r Abdullwahab Al-Bayyāti (Symbols of Alienation and Exile in Abdulwahab Al-Bayyāti 's Poetry)* by Hasan Alkhāqānī. This book addresses historically the issue of terminology.

This is in order to convey the point that the Iraqi poet, Al-Bayyāti, was oppressed even among his own people, and therefore alienation appears in his poetry naturally. The writer also discusses the following:

- 1- The existential alienation which was experienced by the Arab generation of the mid-twentieth century;
- 2- Cultural and intellectual alienation, using much symbolism and
- 3- Political alienation in the twentieth century and its influence in Iraq, given that this is a country which witnessed conflict between many ideological, religious and political movements. Furthermore, the book addresses the psychological impact upon 'Al-Bayyāti's poems written in exile.

Turning to the domain of prose, there are some works about this subject such as *Alienation and Freedom* (2002) by Richard Schmitt. Here, the author investigates the issues of freedom and alienation. He also answers the questions of how and why alienation and freedom are experienced. He deals with love, friendship, work and those who do not trust themselves and rely on others. In order to understand what could be incorrect for the individual, the author looks at modern capitalist societies. He also mentions the perspective of Karl Marx, novelists like Dostoevsky, existentialism and the women's movement.

On the social side comes the novel *The Stranger* (1998) by Albert Camus, which tells of the social alienation of a young Algerian-born French protagonist who feels alien both in his country of birth and in France. On top of that he experienced financial alienation which led his family to disintegration, as the protagonist who was unable to care for his mother has had to place her in a nursing home for the elderly which his community did not appreciate ultimately leading to a sense of psychological and social alienation. This becomes more manifest when he is informed about the death of his mother. The novel shows the protagonist sitting in the same room where the body of his deceased mother was kept, and portrays his attitude as being devoid of any emotions vis-à-vis the loss of his mother – who could symbolise both the country of his birth and life in general.

In the same field, there is an analytical piece of research under the title: *Al- 'Ightirāb, Dirāsah Taḥlīliya li Shakhṣiyyāt Al-Ṭāher Bin Jalloun Al-Rewā'iya (Alienation: An Analytical Study of the Personality of Al-Ṭāher Bin Jalloun, 2005)* by Yaḥyā Abdullah.

Perhaps the importance of this research is its ability to detect multiple cases of alienation and their causes. It also answers some of the following main questions: What is alienation, and what are its forms? What are the reasons for the alienation of the characters? What artistic techniques are employed to build the characters? What is the characters' reaction to their alienation? The research also addresses spatial, linguistic, religious and sexual alienation.

Another study is entitled *Khayālāt Nūrā Al-Modhesha (Amazing Imagination of Nora, 2010)* by Majdi bin Issa, who has dealt with the issue of cities that are open to the new world, the cities of tourism and industrial investment and the transformations that drive these cities to exhibit the values of tolerance and acceptance of others. The author also dealt with the critical question about the ability of these cities and their traditions and values to accept pluralism and to allow it.

Also under the title "Alienation and Exile" comes *Season of Migration to the North*, by Tayeb Salih; Spatial Alienation appears in the novel by Tawfīq Al-Hakim *Uṣfūr min Al-Sharq (Bird from the East, 1938)*, and in Abdurahman Munif's *Ḥīna Taraknā Al-Jisr (When we Left the Bridge, 1979)*; and the estranged self is represented by Halim Barakat in his novel *Al-Raḥīl bayn Al-Sahm wa Al-Watar (Journey between the Arrow and the Bowstring, 1979)*. Linguistic alienation emerges in *Bab Al-Ḥayrah (The Door of Confusion, 2008)* by Yahya Al-Qaysī. At the level of political alienation, the novel *Ḥaythu La Tasquṭ Al-'Amṭār (Where the Rain Doesn't Fall, 2010)* by Amjad Nāṣir comes to reveal many of the thorny distances between Arab governments and their peoples.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ You can also see: *Riwāya Ghernāṭa (Granada, a Novel, 1994)* by Raḍwa `Āshūr, and the novels about low social status and its indicators, as appears in Naguib Mahfouz's works such as *Thartharah Fawq Al-Nil (Adrift on the Nile, 1965)*; while confrontation and individual rebellion appears in most of the novels of both Al-Qaṭānī and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra. Revolutionary change is illustrated in the works of both Ṣon'a

Although all the aforementioned titles dealt implicitly with freedom when they talked about alienation, there are several writings that have focused on the aspirations of the Arabic novel to freedom, such as *Mabāhej Al-Ḥurreya fī Al-Riwaya Al-‘Arabīya (Joys of Freedom in the Arabic Novel, 1992)* by Shaker Al-Nabulsi. He chose ten distinguished Arab novelists and seventy novels to find out that what are called the joys of freedom are missing in the contemporary Arabic novel, and he gave an example of both Ghalib Halsā’s (1932-1989) novels which deal with freedom of women, politics, culture and society and Al-Ṭāhir Waṭṭār’s (1936-2010) novels that hold out the promise of human freedom.

The critic Faisal Darraj (1943-) offered his vision¹⁰⁰ about the novel and civilians and the concept of freedom in the Arab city, and confirmed that civil society has left sectarian and tribal relations behind; “Civil society celebrated the city as the place of the broad spacious courtyards with different cafes, universities and unions, and all of this leads to a widening spirit and a greater breadth of horizon and perception. Also the city allows those who want to move about without control, unlike the case of the narrow world of the rural villages” (Darraj, 2004: issue 49).¹⁰¹

Often the novel, short story, poetry and plays present the city as the location of freedom; “The image of the city promised freedom and mobility on a personal, political and economic level” (Shiel and Fitzmaurice, 2003: 202).

In novel writing, *La straniera (The Exotic, 2001)* by Younis Tawfik also deals with the feeling of nostalgia and alienation which is experienced by the alienated. It looks, additionally, at the issue of immigration and the contrast between those who adhere to their roots and those who try to integrate into the new society. Then he concluded that the wound of nostalgia never heals. What increases the pain of alienation is the new

Allah Ibrahim, Ghassān Kanafāni and Abdurahman Munif such as *Al-‘Ashjār wa ‘Ighteyāl Marzouq (Trees And The Assassination Of Marzouq, 1973)*.

¹⁰⁰ In 2004 in Cairo, at the Conference on the Arabic Novel (see Darraj, F. 2004).

¹⁰¹ My translation.

society which does not accept an expatriate as he or she is, but rather presses upon them to become one of its members. Darraj has pointed out that, “Since the beginning of the seventies until today, the first subject is an intellectual expatriate who is surrounded by the authorities he does not want” (Darraj, 2007).

Younis Al-Ḥamadānī, who lived in Italy for over 30 years and holds Italian citizenship, writes using the language of alienation:

Despite my good relationship with everyone, the appreciation of and respect for my work by the Italian Cultural Foundation, and although I have had sixteen of the major Italian literary prizes, everyone here considers me an Iraqi writer and no one counts me amongst Italian writers, and even the publishing house that has published my works does not consider me an Italian author and puts me among the foreign authors. This is one of the reasons that I am reminded that I have my own home country and that the time has come to return, and that the feeling of homesickness will remain whatever I do. (Al-Ḥamadānī, 2011)

All of the above suggest that the novelist as an intellectual and the novel as the literary form closest to the city is better suited and most able, because of its scope and nature, to provide a clear picture of freedom and alienation in the city, as will be shown below.

3.2 Freedom and Alienation in the Saudi City from the Perspective of the Saudi Novel

The protagonist of *Jurf Al-Khafāyā* (*Cliff of Secrets* 2004) ponders on the city as an alienating space and asks:

لماذا يقولون عنها مدينة وهي المنفى؟

Why do they say it is a city, when it is a place of exile? (Al-Shammari, 2004: 103)

Conversely, 'Aḥlām, the heroine of *'Unthā Al-'Ankabūt (Female Spider 2000)* celebrates the city where she find her freedom, and says this about the freedom of the city:

أنا لم أخنك يا أبي أو أقل شرفك, كل ما فعلته أنني كسرت أغلالي و عدت حرة من جديد.

I did not betray you father, nor did I do anything to tarnish your honor. All I did was to break my shackles, and regain my freedom. (Al-'Ulayyān, 2000: 203)

The various novels which I have selected for this study include real and imaginative cities, by male and female writers and different cities and times: *'Unthā Al-'Ankabūt*,¹⁰² (*Female Spider*, 2000), *Jurf Al-Khafāyā*,¹⁰³ (*Cliff of Secrets*, 2004), *Kā'in Mu'ajjal*,¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Author Qumāsha 'Abd ul-Raḥmān Al-'Ulayyān. This novel won the prize for Arab women's creative writing in the city of Sharjah in 2000. Although the novel (208 pages) is dominated by an extreme tragic style, it is distinct positively from most Saudi novels for being away from exaggerating the issue of sex, women's bodies and repressed emotions. The city that provides the setting is Riyadh, and the idea of this novel is based on the injustice of a man (a father) to those men and women whose lives were under his control. Dealing with them arrogantly and severely, he also deprived them of their basic rights such as the right to choose a husband or wife, under the pretext of his rights in caring for them and bringing them up. This is a father who believes in unfair ideas and habits, such as that the wife should go only from her father's house to the house of her husband or to the grave. This leads to the disintegration of the family that lived in the shadow of alienation and marginalization and then began to search for freedom, but failed to find it.

¹⁰³ Author Abdulhafid Al-Shammari who wrote this novel in the language of alienation, loss and the pain involved in the search for freedom. This novel is based on the satire of an imaginary city which leads its people towards alienation - particularly the alienation of intellectuals; not only that, but it has a visible and an invisible face and it often attracts people by its charms to kill them or assassinate, as in the case of one of the most important heroes (Ṣaqer Al-Muānnā) in this novel. The name of the city is often mentioned negatively and also the title of the novel depends on the hidden, secret place which is the scene of more than half of the narrative language of the novel. It describes the secrets and contradictions of the cities and how these could lead human beings into madness. The intellectual fails to set the widespread corruption and devastation in the city which overcomes him, then leads him into alienation and then murders him, as in the case of its hero (Al-Mudāwi).

¹⁰⁴ By Fahad Al-Atiq (132 pages), and set in Riyadh. The author illustrates the individual mind's alienation into the collective mind and the absence of the individual freedom, and thus how the whole society goes to achieve the interests of certain figures, with the resulting corruption, and the death inside the city to which the Saudi society moved after the discovery of oil. Waleed, the hero of the novel, says:

هل تلاحظ...فسد كل شيء، فسدت علاقات الناس، وفسدت أماكن العمل، وفسدت العلاقات الأسرية، وغرقنا وسط تناقضات دينية وسياسية واقتصادية عارمة، ماتت الحارة الحقيقية، ومات المجتمع الحقيقي ومات الإنسان الحقيقي، ولم يعد باستطاعتنا أن نعيد أنفسنا للخروج من هذا الخراب العظيم.

Do you notice...how everything has become spoiled; people and family relations have been spoiled. The workplaces are spoiled and we have drowned amid huge religious, political and economic contradictions. Real neighbourhoods, real communities and real humanity are dead, and we have been unable to get ourselves back out of this great devastation (Al-Atiq 2004: 42).

Nobody knows whether this city is religious or decadent, but this city is full of talk and contradiction, until it became a boil from the inside for a long time.

(*Deferred Object*, 2004) and *Al-Qārūra*,¹⁰⁵ (*Munira's Bottle*, 2010). All of them were fully able to highlight the manifestations of both social freedom and alienation which often are to be experienced in the city.

3.3 Social Freedom and Alienation in the Saudi City

The Saudi novel often presents a male relative, particularly a father, brother, husband and son as a major player in the cause of social alienation, as he has the social power and thus is able to act according to what he believes. Whenever a man occupies a prominent position and authority, it causes alienation to those who are under his authority whether they are men or women, such as the case of the character Ali in the novel *Munira's Bottle* who wanted to take revenge on his boss who made him feel alienated among his companions and colleagues. The same thing applies to the male heroes in the novel *Jurf Al-Khafāyā* who suffered from the oppression of their society and have lived through an experience of alienation, or the female characters of the novel *'Unthā Al-'Ankabūt*. The daughter Badriyah suffers a great deal from her father's authority and control. She is physically and sexually abused on a daily basis and was forced to have an abortion by her drunken husband, and then she escapes to the authority of her father who scolds her, saying:

¹⁰⁵ Author Yousef Al-Mohaimed, *The Bottle or Al-Qārūra* 2004 (223 pages), translated into English by Anthony Calderbank under the title *Munira's Bottle* and published by the American University in Cairo Press, 2010. This novel deals with the story of a girl who is educated but naive and of the city in rapid growth; both the educated and uneducated in this environment are subjected to feelings of alienation and are then searching for freedom. According to the publisher's blurb:

"In Riyadh, against the events of the second Gulf War and Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, we learn the story of Munira—with the gorgeous eyes—and the unspeakable tragedy she suffers as her male nemesis wreaks revenge for an insult to his character and manhood. It is also the tale of many other women of Saudi Arabia who pass through the remand center where Munira works, victims and perpetrators of crimes, characters pained and tormented, trapped in cocoons of silence and fear. Munira records their stories on pieces of paper that she folds up and places in the mysterious bottle given to her long ago by her grandmother, a repository for the stories of the dead that they might live again. This controversial novel looks at many of the issues that characterize the lives of women in modern Saudi society, including magic and envy, honor and revenge, and the strict moral code that dictates male–female interaction" (Almohaimed 2010, cover page).

ليس عندنا مطلقات في العائلة ولن يكون...ستعيشين مع زوجك وتحملين معه كل الصعوبات ثم تموتين معه فبناتي اللاتي أُرَوِّجُهُنَّ لا يعدن أبداً إلى بيتي، هيا انهضي لتعودي إلى زوجك. عادت بدرية إلى بيت زوجها مطأطئة الرأس ذليلة ليمارس عليها شتى أنواع الإهانة والإذلال وسحق الكرامة... وبعد أن يموت زوجها يصدر والدها القرار الثاني الذي هو أشد قسوة وظلماً ولا أحد يستطيع معارضته فقد حكم عليها أن تبقى في بيتها مع أطفالها كل حياتها لأن الأرملة لا تتزوج ثانية في عرف هذا الأب و قوانينه الجائرة.

We do not have divorcees in the family and will not do so... you will live with your husband and bear with him all the hardships till you die with him. When I marry off my daughters, they do not return to my house. So come on, get up and return to your husband". So Badriyah returns to her husband depressed and humiliated only to experience all sorts of insults, humiliations and attempts on her dignity. After the death of her husband, her father announces his second verdict which is even more cruel and unfair, while no one can oppose him: he sentenced her to remain in her home with her children all her life without getting remarried because, according to the unfair custom and laws of this father, the widow may not remarry. (Al-Ulayyān, 2000: 13, 14, 21)

This persecution and abuse from some parents led to the question: how can women tolerate such gender segregation and social alienation, which are not part of religion but rather dictated by local customs which survived the advent of Islam. Such customs are perpetuated by the figure of the father as the patriarchal figure in Saudi families, most of which love and are proud to be described as conservative and strict Muslim families. Nonetheless, as previously mentioned, such actions are not part of religion, which in fact through certain Qur'anic verses has banned such practice:

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ الظَّالِمِينَ مَعَذِرَتُهُمْ وَلَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ

The Day when no profit will it be to Wrong-doers to present their excuses, but they will (only) have the Curse and the Home of Misery. (Q 40: 52)

I am inclined to believe that the power of customs, habits, lack of education and weakness of faith as a consequence of failure to understand the religion properly had all led the figure of the father to be able to overcome even the sense of justice, religious authority and simple humanity that ought to be displayed by parents in a country such as Saudi Arabia. Then there is also the question why women did not stand up for their rights. "Why have Saudi women not been revolting against their oppression?" (English, 2011: 251). However, it is a fact that the customs and traditions of the country affect the whole society including the men, who also suffer from social alienation. Based on inherent customs about the construction of masculinity, some men become so harsh that

they never play with their children, as they believe that this might reduce their status and prestige, and all of these things might lead to social alienation. A particularly good example here is this extract from the novel *Kā'in Mu'ajjal*:

فهذا والده الصارم يضحك مع الشيخ إبراهيم لأول مرة يراه يضحك بهذا العمق, يا الله كم أرى وجهه جميلاً وهو يضحك, لماذا يخبئ هذا الوجه الجميل عنا, هذا الأب الذي كان يقابل طفولتي عند باب بيتنا الخشبي بصلف دائم, حين كنت أريد الدخول, يرفع صوته وهو ينظر باحتقار إلى هيئتي.. أين كنت يا... خرجا من المكتب كان والده صامتا طوال الطريق الى المنزل الجديد في المدينة لكن قبل أن يصلا بقليل سأله دون ان يلتفت إليه لماذا استأجرت شقة!! لأنها قريبة من عملي... لم يكمل!! رفع الأب يده بأن يتوقف ابنه عن الحديث, وظل صامتا.

This is his strict father laughing with Sheikh Ibrahim. This is the first time that he sees him laughing so deeply. Dear God, his face is so beautiful when he is laughing. Why does he hide this beautiful face from us? This is the father, who would greet me in the days of my childhood at the wooden door of our home when I wanted to enter, with a persistent harshness, raising his voice and looking at me with contempt saying: “Hey, where’ve you been?” Then they came out of the office, and his father was silent all the way to their new house in the city, but a few minutes before they got there, he asked him without turning his face to him: Why did you rent an apartment? Because it is close to my work... But he wasn’t able to finish what he was saying! That was because his father raised his hand to stop him talking and so he remained silent. (Al-Atīq, 2004: 30, 31, 33)

This harshness and injustice visited upon women and children are not part of the moral code that their religion calls for, but a spectre rising up from the pre-Islamic period. Some critics attribute this matter to Arab tribal customs. Although the tribe is often viewed as a paradise of cohesion for the family, at the same time it has its own authority on the subject through severe customs which sometimes do not recognise the role of religion or politics and might strongly support parental authority in order to keep the men in power. Elamin states that “Saudi Arabian society is very patriarchal in nature, where a woman's primary roles are those of mother, wife, and daughter, whereas man's primary role is that of the breadwinner” (Elamin, 2010: 754). With the emergence of a strong religious trend in the late seventies, the tribe tried to exploit this trend by linking some of its traditions to religion in order to maintain its own interests. The exploitation of religion for personal interests is not new, but extends throughout history. “Since time immemorial both rulers and conquerors have been exploiting religion to serve their selfish ends. Rulers are in the habit of using religion to consolidate their hold on the levers of power” (Kakkar, 1998: 63). It may be that the tribe takes advantage of Islam’s respect for the status of parents, but some parents went too far in this respect, to the point of becoming guilty of exploitation and domination.

The Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) has forbidden such cruelty and injustice by his own actions and his statements. The following quotation shows the true Islamic perspective:

Once he (Prophet Mohammad) (PBUH) kissed his grandson, Al-Hassan, Fatimah's son, in front of a group of Bedouins, who were startled. One of them, Al-Aqra ibn Habis, expressed his shock and said: 'I have ten children and I have never kissed any one of them!' Then the prophet Mohammad (PBUH) answered him: 'He who is not generous [loving benevolent], God is not generous [loving benevolent] to him'. Thus, in the light of his silent example and his remarks, the prophet (PBUH) taught his people good manners, kindness, gentleness, respect for children and regard for and attentiveness toward women. He was later to say: 'I have only been sent to perfect noble manners'. (Ramadan, 2007: 132)¹⁰⁶

The city and its transformations brought about the disintegration of the family as a new urban phenomenon. These transformations led to further social alienation, so that even some events that were important and for which the Saudi community used to prepare well and to which it gives great importance, such as the occasions of marriage and engagement, became unimportant. The beauty and the rituals of these occasions have been abolished because of the city which strangely overcomes and influences all the currents and spectrums of society, which includes merchants, religious and cultured people and also traditional mothers. Al-Mohaimeed's novel comes to reveal such disintegration through its heroine Munira, who talks about the moment of her engagement ceremony and meeting with her fiancé Ali. Munira was tricked by her fiancé, who benefited from the status of the highly cultured family and its disintegration within the city.

After I had put on an embroidered caftan I felt sure that my brother would join us and sit with Ali, but much to my surprise he went out after welcoming my fiancé with a warm handshake. Unbelievable: even my religious brother was taken in by Ali Al-Dahhal, and saw him to be a man of trust and reliability... My mother seemed content to leave us alone together, and she never invaded our privacy... Even my younger brother Saad, when I called him from work to tell him we'd be going to Maxime's Lebanese restaurant for lunch, confirmed he'd be joining us later, but didn't show up... As for my brother Muhammad, he was

¹⁰⁶ The term 'a group' refers to a delegation from the tribe of Bani Tamim.

busy with his company, which had opened branches all over the country...Father stopped leaving the house after he was diagnosed with a mild thrombosis in this room and didn't care if al-Dahhal or anyone else came around. (Al-Mohaimeed, 2010: 62-64)¹⁰⁷

The rapid transformation of a Bedouin community into city/urban life after the emergence of the oil economy causes a fundamental shake-up and therefore, the novels of Munif (*Cities of Salt*) and Al-Ḥamad, (*Sharq Al-Wādī / East of the Valley*) came to confirm that. Simone explains, "To a large extent, the Saudis were looking for scapegoats to whom to attribute the negative dimensions of urban growth in the country's primary urban centre" (Simone, 2004: 131).

The city was not only the cause of poor family relations, but it was furthermore a cause of apathy, affecting the natural emotions among the relatives. The son and his father in the novel *Jurf Al-Khafāyā* are a case in point:

أصبحت الآن غير قادر على إشعاره بحاجتي إليه, ولم أعد أفرق بين أن يحتويني أو يبصق في وجهي كعادته, ماتت علاقاتنا ببعض, حتى المجاملة لم تعد ممكنة في ظل هذه القطيعة. رأني أبي قبل يومين في المستشفى وبكى, ولم أبك لأمر خلته أنه هو المسؤول في هذا الموقف عن البكاء. كيف يردده وبأي نغمة يبدعه لايهم... "جرف الخفايا" جعلتنا أشد تطرفا وأشد حساسية في علاقاتنا مع ما حولنا.

Now I had become unable to let him know how I needed him, and for me it no longer mattered whether he took me in his arms or just spat in my face as usual. Our relationship was extinct, and even simple politeness was no longer possible as a result of this rupture. My father saw me two days ago in the hospital and cried, but I didn't cry because he was the one who was responsible in this case for crying. However much he cried and kept on doing so was of no consequence ... *Jurf Al-Khafāyā* made us the most extreme and the most sensitive in our relations with those around us. (Al-Shammari, 2004: 191, 195)¹⁰⁸

The image of the father in these novels is merely a symbol of the authority figure that is shocked by the rapid transformations in the city which have made him disoriented to the point of losing control, even over his own family. The mentality and thinking of this man is typical of many other men, in this fossilized and male-dominated society and culture. He acts with arrogance, tyranny and injustice towards his wife, daughters and

¹⁰⁷ I relied on the English translation of this novel.

¹⁰⁸ The father cries as the son has a type of cancer, according to the novel. Later in the passage, '*Jurf Al-Khafāyā*' refers to the city.

sons. In consequence, he loses the love of all his sons and daughters, whose natural affection turn into hatred.

'Aḥlām, the heroine of *'Unthā Al-'Ankabūt* and the youngest daughter, expresses the relationship within one family:

أصبحنا نعاني الغربة في بيتنا...بدرية مع أيتام...وقضبان لا ترى, بدون بارقة أمل في مستقبل زاهر,
وصالح حياة باهتة بلا طعم ولا لون يعيش فيها مجبرا خاضعا كرجل يعيش على الهامش... وندى التي لم
تعرف السعادة طوال حياتها وماتت غيلة على يدك... وسعاد التي دفنتها مع رجل طاعن في السن دون
وازع أو ضمير فعاشت محنطة في بيت من لا تريد كسلعة لا ترد ولا تستبدل... خالد الذي فر من بين
أصابعك تركت طفله يموت أمام عينيه وأعيننا دون أن تمد له يد المساعدة, كنت قاسيا متحجر القلب حينما
أدرت ظهرك ليد الممدودة وقتلته ألف مرة قبل أن يموت ابنه ويرجوك بعينين بريئتين أن تنقذه من حتفه...
وحمد الذي غادرنا شابا يافعا هاربا من غربة تسكن خلايا جلده... ألم تلحظ يا أبي مواسم هجرة أولادك
اختيارا أو قسرا هربا من القسوة أم تعطشا للحنان! لقد قتلنا يا أبي وحن دورك لتتلقى الحصاد.

We came to suffer alienation even in our own house... Badriyah with the orphaned children... and the invisible prison bars, without a glimmer of hope for a prosperous future. Salih and his dull, bland life without taste or colour, forced to live as a man who lives on the margins. Nada who never knew any happiness throughout her life and then died in cold blood at your hands. Suād who was buried by you with an older man without any scruples or conscience. She lived mummified in the house of someone she does not want, like a commodity which is neither refundable nor replaceable. Khalid, who escaped out of your hands, you left his child to die in front of his eyes and our eyes without helping him. You were cruel and heartless when you turned your back on him and killed him a thousand times before his son died, imploring you with his innocent eyes to save him from the dead...And Ḥamad who left us when he was young, escaping from the alienation that was under his skin. Dad, didn't you notice the migration seasons of your children, chosen or forced, to escape from cruelty or because they were thirsty for love and tenderness. You've killed us, Dad, and now it's your turn to reap what you've sown. (Al-Ulāyān, 2000: 112, 113)

The collective thinking or mentality that Saudi society has experienced begins at home where the children and wives are subject to one opinion which is the opinion of the father, who draws his strength from the community faith in this role as the traditions and customs have helped to spread this concept. "The father is the authoritarian head of the household, and the wife and children are obliged to submit to this authority" (Kirk, 1994: 151).

Some fathers are using their authority to keep their families away from rapid social transformations, also feeling that if they do not do that, their families are going to be

destroyed; however, in the end this may lead to negative outcomes such as alienation. Sobritchea states: “Fathers who lose their authority often withdraw from family life. Their alienation is channeled toward alcoholism and the neglect of family responsibility” (Sobritchea, 2004: 84). Such is the case of the father in the novel *Munira’s Bottle*. This father, who left his son to go to join the jihad in Afghanistan and left his daughter to be victim of deception until she lost her honor and dignity, all of these occurred because he always kept himself aloof from his family responsibilities; he disliked any kind of confrontation and frankness:

I love my father. He is my only refuge and consolation. I feel that the faint traces of the smallpox on his face and around his eyes have led him to see the world differently, and even if Muhammad’s world or Saad’s behavior didn’t please him he rarely scolded them. Instead, he would resolve the matter with a long sigh accompanied by the phrase, “God preserve us”... her father never asked about her fiancé, or whether she met him. (Al-Mohaimeed, 2010: 95,163)

Lack of education in that generation may have led to these disorders. The novel *Jurf Al-Khafāyā* has one of its characters stating that:

الجرف يغني ولعه بتعذيب أهله والناس يعذبون ذواتهم بالجهل في حقيقة وجودهم

Aljurf (city) sings of its tendency to torture its own people, and the people torture themselves because of their ignorance of the fact of their existence. (Al-Shammari, 2004: 19)

Even the social questions in the city have become more severe. This is Waleed, who is the central character of Al-Atīq’s novel, facing this type of sharp questions when he wants to propose marriage to one of the urban girls from his city. These kind of questions might reveal and reflect the turbulence in the mind of the questioner and the disorder of the community as a whole; all the questions demonstrate the alienation of the urban community.

ذهبت إلى بيتهم مساء أمس وكنت في حال بهجة وملابس عريس لكن والدها فاجأني بأسئلة غريبة. سألتني عن العلاقة بين والدتي وخالتي. قلت ومابها؟ قال يقولون إن والدتك لا تكلم خالك الذي هو شقيقها.. قلت ربما هو خلاف بسيط.. قال: كيف خلاف بسيط، ثم هل خالك متزوج فعلا من (...)! قلت صحيح.. ضحك ثم سألتني: وعملك لماذا سجنوه العام الماضي. قلت له بحدّة: هل هذه محاكمة؟

I went to their house yesterday evening, and I was in a joyful mood and dressed as a bridegroom; however, her father surprised me with some strange questions. He asked me about the relationship between my mother and my uncle... And so I said: What about it? He said that people were talking about how my mother was not speaking to my uncle, who is her full brother. I said that maybe it was a simple dispute... He said: What do you mean, a small dispute?! Then he said: Is your uncle actually married to (...)?! I said that this was true... He laughed and then asked me: Why was your uncle in prison last year? I told him sharply: Is this a trial, or what? (Al-'Atīq, 2004: 40)

Not only were human beings the cause of alienation, but places also had a prominent role. After quickly moving to new neighbourhoods in cities which included massive houses and wide roads that went on to no-one knew where, neighbours who had all moved recently to this neighbourhood found that they knew nothing about each other:

لا أحد يعرف، لأن البيوت أسرار.

Nobody knows because homes mean secrets [quoted from the novel]. (Al-'Atīq, 2004: 95)

All these things brought about a new life to communities who were not used to it before, when social life had been an essential characteristic of such communities. However, it was this unexpected shift in people's lives because of improved living conditions in the cities that caused a disturbance which led to isolation and alienation. Eventually, the city exerts a more powerful force of attraction.

“The city might seem glamorous to a country visitor” (Beardwood et al., 2009: 3). And here indeed is a phenomenon recognized by the heroes of the novel *Jurf Al-Khafāyā*: Khalil, one of the heroes of this novel, says:

نحن الذين أتينا إلى هنا مدفوعين برغبات متناقضة وبطرق وأفكار لا تعرف منطقتها و مبرراتها. البيوت هنا تخفي أسرار لا حصر لها، شوارع المدينة رغم رحابها لا تعرف أين تتجه تتلاشى في الخفاء. أعرف أنكم ملقون ولا تعنيكم المدينة وما يحل بها فأهلها تفرقوا وأصبحوا أشتاتاً.

We who came here (to the city) have been driven by contradictory wishes, and motivated by ways and ideas whose logic and justification are unknown ... Houses here are hiding unlimited secrets. Despite there being spacious streets in the city, one does not know where to turn, and they fade into invisibility. I know, you are fabricated and this city and what is happening to it means nothing to you, since its people are dispersed and have become mere scattered fragments. (Al-Shammari, 2004: 105, 129, 169)

Because social changes took place very rapidly in Saudi Arabia and did not take a natural course of time due to the sudden emergence of the oil economy that accelerated these shifts, there were complications in these transformations; but once again the charm of the city prevailed and encouraged people to move, despite these drawbacks. “The history of urbanization is, however, more complex than the dominant rural/urban dichotomy suggests. Some rural dwellers have been forced to move to the city, and this was because urban areas were associated with new lifestyles, which were attractive to rural people...” (Gikandi and Mwangi, 2007: 171).

The four novels cited above indicate the negative role of the city as a place of social relationships, which in turn is reflected negatively on the psychological condition of the characters in these novels; one such character is Aḥlām, who states:

وقفت أستشعر غربة شديدة تهز كياني بعنف... أين أنا؟ وما الذي جاء بي إلى هنا؟ وإلى أين أسير؟ من
غربة إلى غربة. روابط هشّة مع زميلاتي، مقت شديد للمكان والرغبة في الفرار بأسرع وقت و بأي
وسيلة لكن متى وكيف؟

I stood and I sensed a severe alienation, which shook me violently... Where am I? What brought me here? And where am I going? From one alienation to another... Fragile links with my colleagues, a strong aversion to the place and the desire to flee as soon as possible and by any means, but when and how? (Al-‘Ulayyān, 2000: 53)

These new neighbourhoods in the cities were not like the ones in the villages. People have become like strangers in the city, each one looking at his neighbour with caution and apprehension. Unlike in rural areas, people in cities gather only to serve their interests. Skogan argues, “The city was almost a non-existent neighbourhood life...People did not know their neighbours at all, making it difficult for neighbourhoods to respond to problems with disorder and crime” (Skogan, 1992: 95, 96). In the novel *Kā’in Mu’ajjal*, someone asked Walid about a person who lives in Walid’s neighbourhood:

هل تعرف فلاناً؟ لا لا أعرفه, إنه يعمل سائقاً في إحدى الدوائر الحكومية وله بيت هنا في هذه الحارة
الجديدة, لا لأعرف.

Do you know someone who is called so-and-so? No, I don't know him. He works as a driver in a government department and has a house here in this new neighbourhood. He repeats his answer: No, I don't know him. (Al-'Atīq, 2004: 72)

Even the style of houses in the city encourages and leads to alienation. The large house may be a symbol of a huge city, as both of them tend to divide their people and hence lead to alienation. The novel *Kā'in Mu'ajjal* was able to portray many of these scenes:

وليد دخل البيت الذي كانت تحلم به العائلة ثلاثين عامًا وهاهو يتحقق، لكن بلا روح. يسأل نفسه عن هذا الملل الذي غرقت به العائلة جميعها منذ وطأت أقدامهم هذا الحي الجديد وهذا البيت الخرساني الثقيل. كان يظن أن حياتهم سوف تنطلق إلى فضاءات جديدة، لكن لا سبب واضح لهذا الإحساس الحاد بالملل والغربة والفراغ. هل يعود هذا لتشتت الأهل والأقرباء في عدة أحياء متباعدة بعد أن كان الجميع في أحياء صغيرة متجاورة أو يعود لتشتتهم داخل هذا البيت الواسع الموحش وانفراد كل واحد بغرفته وحياته الخاصة؟... هل يشعر والدي بالغربة أيضا في هذه الحارة الجديدة... هكذا نقلوا حياتهم وأحلامهم إلى البيوت الجديدة. حتى في مدخل البيت وضعوا مجلسًا للرجال ومجلسًا للنساء و أسوارًا عالية و أبوابًا للرجال وأخرى للنساء... لا يشعر بالغربة في بيت والده فقط بل لكن أيضا في هذه المدينة... انقطع الأقارب عن زيارة أمه إلا في المناسبات الهامة. بينما أخته عفاف حبست نفسها في غرفتها تقضي وقتها في مذاكرة دروسها أو النوم أو مهاتفة صديقاتها حتى تزوجت، هكذا عصفت بهم رياح التحول والهدوء والرتابة والملل.

Waleed entered the house, which had been the dream of the family for thirty years, a dream now come true. But it had no soul. He asked himself about this boredom, which all the family had sunk into since they had first set foot in this new neighbourhood, and this heavy concrete home. He thought that their lives would be launched into new spaces, but there was no obvious reason for this acute sense of boredom, alienation and void. Was this due to the dispersal of the family and relatives in several distinct neighbourhoods after they all had previously been in small adjacent neighbourhoods? Or due to the dispersal in this spacious dismal house, and separated each one of them in his own room and private life... Does my father feel so alienated in this new neighbourhood? ... So they transferred their lives and their dreams to new houses, in whose entrances they put one sitting room for men and another for women, and high walls and doors for men and women... Waleed does not feel alienation in his father's house only, but also in this city. The relatives cease their visits to his mother, except on important social occasions... while his sister, Afaf, has isolated herself in her room and spends time in the memorization of her lessons or sleeping or talking with her friends over the phone until she gets married. Thus, their lives were devastated by the winds of change, calm, monotony and boredom. (Al-'Atīq, 2004: 22, 26, 37 and 111)

The disjointed community of the city and the lack of interest in what is happening around it were, from the perspective of Munira, responsible for her alienation and her marriage to an elderly man, which was a kind of alienation and separation, as there are no links between the two. This community, which was addicted to social life, suddenly

found itself in the fast lane of city life, something that is not in accordance with the rituals of social life as people are used to it outside the city. “They often find the urban life-style difficult to adjust to. Some urban features like the fast pace of life, demanding jobs and indifferent neighbourhoods may lead to alienation, loneliness, dissatisfaction and low self-worth” (Panda, 2005: 215). Social alienation can be found in most of the cities, and the novel *Munira’s Bottle* comes to portray also the fictional city life through the words of its heroine who was moving between a real and an imagined city in order to verify that social alienation is a fact of life in most cities. Also, there is an indication of high tension here as alienation is not only in the real city but also in the world of dreams and the imagination:

The thrombosis will finish off father and the same red GMC that bore my grandmother before will take him to the graveyard. My mother will withdraw into herself, sad and alone. My brother Şāleḥ will return to his work, and will appoint another private to run his errands, as if everything that has happened means nothing to him. My brother Muhammad will see to his chain of shops that sell honey and incense and perfume and clothes and Islamic audiocassettes, and he will call them the Sheikh Muhammad al-Sahi group Limited. My elder sister Nura will drool after her husband like a house cat, and hug her little ones apprehensively. And my little sister Mona: she might marry an extremely handsome and cultured young man. The days will pass in slow monotony. An acquaintance of my father’s from the incense and carpet souk will appear, bringing with him my bride price and his sixty years. He will take me away as expressions of consolation from those around me ring in my ears, “Anyway, you are a spinster now. You are over thirty! (Al-Mohaimed, 2010: 199, 200)

The pursuit of freedom is often the cause of alienation, where the city is not a place of freedom and cannot be, even with the changes and transformations happening in the cities, which only serve to increase the alienation. One of *Jurf Al-Khafāyā’s* heroes (Şaqer Al-Muānnā) has moved to the city in search of freedom – like many others who are fooled by the lure of the city:

خدعتني الآمال الكاذبة حينما أشارت إلى أنني سأكون أفضل حالاً، لكنها لم تفب. أوهمني الواقع الزائف بأن أكون أكثر تعايشاً مع من حولي لكنني أرى خصامي يقوى وقطيعتي معهم تزداد.. ها أنا أسير - فيما يبدو - إلى الورا لأصبح وحيداً.

I have been deceived by false hopes, given that they suggested I would be better off, but they came to nothing. I was tricked by the false notion that I would have more real interaction with those around me, but I see my hostility strengthening

and my sense of rupture increasing. Here I am walking – apparently – backwards to become lonely. (Al-Shammari, 2004: 24)

Even the personal freedom with a social nature does not find a place in the city, and when the characters of *'Unthā Al-'Ankabūt* tried to break this rule they found themselves suffering a deeper form of alienation.

So, all the characters of this novel reflect the suffering that arises from a journey in search of freedom. When Ahlam's mother decided to seek her freedom, she found herself alienated and in the mental hospital until the time she died; "The social alienation associated with urban life led some doctors to think that the cities contributed to mental alienation or insanity" (Carter, 2007: 181). Khalid escaped from the alienation of the home and travelled in the hope to find his freedom in another city but found himself in a situation of financial alienation, which led him to be isolated from his society. Salih searched for his emotional freedom and declared his love for the neighbour's daughter, only to find himself compelled to live out his life with his cousin's daughter, whom he did not love. And so is the case with the rest of the characters.

Despite the harshness of the city which can be counted as the most prominent reason for social alienation, some novels indicate many transformations towards freedom as the city was able to break the collective mindset that was prevalent in the village or in the tribal community. Thus, the city has freed people's minds in such a way that they are able to abandon the group mindset or to meet with other minds that they might not encounter outside the city. Al-Tuwaijri explains: "Saudi society has moved in recent decades, from traditional to modern, and this moving included all aspects of the social construction" (Al-Tuwaijri, 2011: 3).¹⁰⁹ The transformations in the city have made people more liberal and rebellious against the authority of the tribe and the village system. So, it is natural that these aspects of the positive transformations within the city should have led, eventually, to the answer that came from the lips of the city girl, even if the older characters had surrendered to social alienation. Aḥlām, who is the main

¹⁰⁹ My translation.

heroine of Al-'Ulayyān's novel stood up, fought, and unmasked this father who appears in the novel as a source and symbol of alienation. She was able to resist the injustice of the city or of her father in the last chapter and to speak on behalf of her generation, when her father declares:

أنت تستحقين القتل غسلًا للعار و انتقامًا لشرفنا المهدر على يديك... عار... شرف... ألا زلت تتشددق بالمثاليات يا أبي وأنت أبعد الناس عنها. ألا زلت تتباهى بالقيم و المثل التي لاتعرفها؟ ألا زلت ترتدي رداء القديسين وتتمسح بمسوح الرهبان وتختفي خلف قناع الملائكة، ألا تدرك أن الحقيقة ظهرت و أننا لم نعد كما كنا ولا عاد الزمان هو الزمان... أمي ليست هنا لتركع تحت قدميك ولا أخوتي سيرضخون لك بعد الان ولا حتى زوجتك ستحني رأسها لك... لقد حطمت أسطورتك بيدي. وخلصت النقاب عن وجهك المزيف، لتتبدى كل الحقائق القابضة خلفه و بأنه لا يصح إلا الصحيح والحقيقة لا بد أن تظهر في النهاية... لم أخذك يا أبي أو أمرغ شرفك في الأوحال. كل ما فعلته أنني كسرت أغلالتي وعدت حرة من جديد... هل فهمت يا أبي؟

You deserve to be killed to wash away the shame, and in retaliation for our honor that has been tarnished by you! Then Ahlam responds: ...Shame... honor, do you still spout on about such ideals, Dad, while you are way beyond one of them? Do you still boast of values and ideals that you know nothing about? Are you still wearing a robe of the saints, touching monk's qualities and disappearing behind the mask of the angels? Do you not realize that the truth is out? And we are no longer as we were and things have not gone back to what they were... My mother is not here to kneel under your feet, and my brothers will not yield to you anymore, not even your wife will bend her head to you... I've shattered your myth with my own hands and I've torn the veil from your lying face, to expose everything that's really there, and to show what's really true since only the truth will come out in the end... I did not betray you, father, nor did I do anything to diminish your honour. All that I did was break my shackles, and regain my freedom. (Al-'Ulayyān, 2000: 203)

Positive media support, combined with very significant educational, religious and economic impact were part of the multiple methods in which this freedom came into being. There was first a recognition of the rights, and then a call for them. The beginnings were at the procedural levels, as argued by Jamal: "The democratization process in the Arab world is much more advanced at the procedural level than it is at the substantive level" (Jamal M, 2010: 3). Then there was a positive shift in women's rights. Omaima Al-Jalahma, a female member of the King Faisal Faculty and member of the Shoura (Advisory) Council wrote an article with the title 'As a Proud Saudi Woman I Speak': "I wish that women around the world could find a tiny bit of the pampering I receive here being a Saudi woman" (Ghanim, 2009: 68).

Perhaps these contexts may serve to clarify the picture of the social transformations in terms of social alienation and freedom that have occurred in the Arab city, and especially the Saudi city, from the perspective of the novel. For it is evident from them that the city was a fertile ground for a social alienation which was nurtured and supported by rapid shifts in the Saudi city with the advent of oil. At the same time, the city was also a more extensive field for social freedom – especially for women who have found themselves able to break away from social restrictions and from the shackles imposed by their menfolk within the city. Undoubtedly, such social alienation and freedom is often reflected on the psychological side as well, and this is the reality confirmed by the above novels, which have depicted the psychological scene as it affects the city population in terms of both freedom and alienation.

3.4 Psychological Freedom and Alienation in the Saudi City

From the novel *Jurf Al-Khafāyā*:

نرى أن هناك من يذلنا على هذه الأرض من أجل أن نبني له مملكته التي يرقبنا منها بعد حين و كأننا
أوباش صغار. أقزام لا نحسن الوصول حتى إلى أعتاب ما قمنا ببنائه بسواعدنا ونقلنا حجارته على
أكتافنا.

We see that there are some who humiliate us on this earth in order that we build for them their kingdoms from which they will watch over us. We are like small ragtag and bobtail dwarfs who can't even approach the threshold of the structures we ourselves have built with our own forearms and whose stones we have carried on our own shoulders. (Al-Shammari, 2004: 194)

The Arabic film,¹¹⁰ novel, story¹¹¹ and theatre¹¹² as well as poetry are replete with images that magnify people's sense of alienation. Literary works have always been able

¹¹⁰ Such as the film titled *Mudon Tranzait 2010 (Transit Cities)*. Directed by Muhammad Al-Hashki, this film deals with the issues of social, political, intellectual, educational and psychological transformation and alienation in Jordan. All these were presented via the perspective of a girl who returned from exile, and then found herself living under the impact of the pressures and problems of the transformations which were not expected.

¹¹¹ An example of this is *Hulm Yaqaḍah (Day Dream, 2011)* by Haytham Al-Wardany. This story shows the common structure of the cities which generate in its population a sense of alienation in space and

to portray the psychological alienation of their author, such as the Solaiman Al-Ḥozāmi drama, *Madina bilā Uqūl* ("A City Without Minds"), which reveals the dominance of the machine over its creator. This is also seen in the psychological alienation that appears in the poetry of Al-Sa'ālīk,¹¹³ and in Andalusian and Abbasid poetry and also in the poetry of Al-Mutanabbi (916-966).¹¹⁴

Such feelings can also be found in most of Amal Dunqul's (1940-1983) texts as a modern poet, and they can be seen in his tense feelings and restless temper as a result of the hustle and bustle in the city and his continuing fear of crime, which all led to the materialization of psychological alienation in his poetry.¹¹⁵

The hero (Khalid) in Ahlam Mostaghanemi's novel *Memory in the Flesh* had been forced by psychological alienation to return from France to his homeland Algeria where he could enjoy psychological association. Khalid saw everything in his beloved as an

time, and this may turn the human into a machine that does not stop working during the day, and is like a single grain of sand in the universe in the evening. This sense leads to all kinds of alienations, alienation in the place and in everyday language. With this extensive sense of the city, Haytham Al-Wardany offers his collection of short stories such as Amal Al-Ṣabāgh 1988 *Al-'Ightirāb wa Al-Ṣirāa bayn Al-Mādda wa Al-Ruḥ*, Ghadah Khalil 1997 *Al-'Ightirāb fī Adab Haydar Haydar* and Hāmed Abdullaṭif 1997 *Dāherat Al-'Ightirāb fī Al-Qiṣṣa Al-Miṣreya Al-Qaṣira*. There are also some chapters that come in different studies, such as the chapter entitled *'Ightirāb Al-Fannān* of the book *Āfāq Al-Ru'yah wa Jamāliyyāt Al-Tashkil* by Mohammad Al-Shinṭi and the chapter with the title *Alienation* of the book *Al-Qiṣṣa Al-Qaṣira Al-Muāṣira fī Al-Saudia* by Ahmad Al-Sāadani.

¹¹² Such as *Ghurba (Exile, 2010)* by Mustafa Ramaḍāni and directed by Mustafa Al-Barnūṣī. It addresses the problematics of alienation at the three levels of psychological, social and existential alienation.

¹¹³ Al-Sa'alik is the name given to "a group of Arabs tramps in the pre-Islamic era. They belong to different tribes, and they do not recognize the authority of the tribal governments constituting the Arabian Peninsula up to 622 AD. Feeling abused and outcast, these tramps would invade tribes with a view to taking from the rich and giving to the untouchables or the poor, and thus they lived a life of revolutionary fighting, poverty, persecution and seeking freedom in the form of rebellion. Most members of this group were poets, and their poetry was glorious from the perspective of Arabic poetry" ('Atwān, 1987: 3).

¹¹⁴ Al-Mutanabbi lived his whole life travelling between Arab cities, including Baghdad, the city of the Islamic caliphate, displays in much of his work a deep sense of alienation. Here this is exemplified in one line in one of his poems when he came out angry from Aleppo from Prince Seif Al-Dawla who, from the viewpoint of Al-Mutanabbi, did not appreciate him, and so he went to Prince Camphor Al-'Ikhshīdī in Egypt in 957, saying:

كفى بك داء أن ترى الموت شافياً *** وحسب المنيا أن يكُنَّ أمانيا

It suffices for you suffering an ailment that you view death as a cure
and it suffices that death has become a hope and a dream.

For further reading, see *Al-Mutanabbi bayn Al-Buṭūlah wa Al-'Ightirāb* 1982 by Muhammad Sharara.

¹¹⁵ For further reading, see *Al-Mawqif min Al-Madīna fī Al-Shir Al-'Arabi Al-Muāṣir* 1991 by Al-Sa'īd, (1991).

image of and link to his homeland. Even her name was inspired by and carries the meaning of life which he claims should only be in his homeland.

Additionally, the works of Ghalib Halasa further show the freedom associated with women, political power, social and cultural crisis which, according to Al-Nabulsi, “are a natural product of society and authority and the women oppressed by men who in turn are enslaved by power” (Al-Nabulsi, 1992: 124).¹¹⁶

Psychological alienation occurs in the city where interactions and dealings with human diversity are often not through the human relationships of friendship and love, but through those of common interests between the people of the city. Kendall argues that “urban residents are influenced by the quick pace of the city and the pervasiveness of economic relations in everyday life” (Kendall, 2010: 642). These raise the sense of alienation, indifference and the tension that might be caused by having to deal and engage with people in unnecessary and undesirable relationships only for specific goals. For example, establishing the relationships that are based on interests or business relations. “If you build relationships with other people, it makes the deal work” explains Ross (Ross, 2008: 74). Moreover, Isin claims that: “The city produces a kind of alienated sociality in the city dweller. Urban existence sunders social bonds and replaces them by a mass of impersonal relations; the city is the place where there are masses in close, almost paranoiac, contiguity, yet where interpersonal relations are cold and artificial” (Isin, 2000: 106). Those perhaps lead to the establishment of psychological distance between city dwellers.

From here the psychological alienation might appear and there could be some negative results such as vandalism, violence and corruption. In the city, dealing with people with whom we are not bound by deep ties might cause such disturbing issues. Jennifer Davis Michael illustrates how the city might cause this when she states: “Recently, the city has been portrayed as either the symbol of corrupt and inhuman capitalism or the cause of psychological alienation and anomie” (Michael, 2006: 27).

¹¹⁶ My translation.

As the person often feels that he is unknown in the city, this may lead him to make mistakes or commit some crimes that he could not do in situations where other people know him. This is the reason that might have led the hero of *Munira's Bottle* to commit all the atrocities that he did commit. When you have been ignored by your community and you feel like a stranger, you may live in a state of alienation and indifference which perhaps would take you to very violent ends. "Psychologically, social alienation can be a key characteristic of people who perpetrate brutal acts of terror" (Landis and Albert, 2012: 568).

The phenomenon of psychological alienation is not the product of a particular individual, but rather issuing from human nature and not the result of this particular era, but is deeply rooted in history and varies from person to person, and from era to era. However, the city is a constant element in the phenomenon of psychological alienation in general, "Alienation is exacerbated in cities, especially huge cities when individuals feel that they are suddenly swept out of those practices which they did in the village and thus found themselves strangers in the city's environment" (Shalabi, 2005: 49).¹¹⁷ The cities which have long lured and attracted simple people to suddenly become their enemy and thereby make them feel weak, poor, lost and alienated, are described in many novels and films. Typical examples of this may be seen in Juliette, the Heroine of the French film '*L'Atalante 1993*' and in the heroes of the Saudi novel *Jurf Al-Khafāyā* (2004).

The search for freedom often leads to the psychological alienation of the individuals as they try to get rid of the city's restrictions; however, they find themselves again in another state of alienation. This kind of alienation is expressed clearly in the case of the hero in the novel *Munira's Bottle*:

Muhammad gathered a few things and left. He roamed around for a while like a wild and a solitary wolf, befriending no one, taking no company... and after the

¹¹⁷ My translation.

vagrancy and homelessness had taken their toll, a middle-aged man advised him to go to the village of Mahd al-Ddahab, more than two hundred kilometers away. It was a quiet place, and safe. (Al-Mohaimeed, 2010: 54)

But the following pages of this novel show also how far the alienation of Muhammad went in the village, where he found himself a stranger to its owners. The *Kā'in Mu'ajjal* novel goes beyond this, as in his journey in quest of freedom in the city of Riyadh, the hero comes to describe the restrictions imposed even on speech:

كان يرى أن كل شئ يسير وفق قوانين صارمة حتى في (الكلام) مع الناس, يفترض أن تقول (كذا)... في الموقف كذا ولا تقول كذا في الموقف كذا... بمعنى يجب أن تحفظ لغتهم جيدا وتعرف كيف تردد كلام الرجال مثل الببغاء حتى لا يقال إنك لست رجلا.

He saw that everything is going according to strict laws, even in (speech) with people, it is assumed to say that (sic) in this situation and do not tell (such-and-such) in this situation... which means that you should memorise their language very well and know how to repeat the words of men, like a parrot in order not to be described as not being a man. (Al-Atīq, 2004: 89)

It is often seen that the opinion of the critic is in accord with the view of the novelist about the fact that the city, as an urban area, is a fertile ground for alienation. “The experience of the city is often an experience of alienation from nature, and also an experience of alienation from each other and from the self” (Vermaas et al., 2007: 335).

The city does not provide the freedom that city dwellers are truly seeking and the issue is not limited to Arab cities only, as shown from the perspective of some Arab novelists such as Al-Shammari, who expresses this through his novel:

ويحك يا جرفي. ألا ترى أنك الآن في مذبحه غير دامية؟! تغتال عقلك وفكرك وحريرتك. لم تعد هذه المدينة قادرة على القيام بواجباتها, فقد أنهكتها الهزائم المتلاحقة, وبان عجزها بعد أن نهبها اللصوص النظاميون حتى أضحت وكرا للخفافيش وملادا للمترة والمأجورين.

Woe to you Jurfis, do you not see that you're caught up in a bloodless massacre which assassinates your mind, your thoughts and your freedom...!?! This city is no longer able to carry out its basic duties, it has been weakened by successive defeats, and the deficit appeared after the thieves looted the city, until it became a haven for rats, mercenaries and hacks. (Al-Shammari, 2004: 141, 188)¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ 'Jurfis' is a metaphor for the city's people.

But even Western cities are not able to be ideal liveable places. “Research undertaken by the Henley Centre has shown that, although 80 per cent of British people are city dwellers, two-thirds of them would prefer to live in small towns or villages, were they are able to” (Henley Centre, 1995: 62).

The Arabic novel shows clearly that psychological alienation and lack of freedom are heading towards the worst in the cities, as the search for freedom may move beyond wishful thinking to the stage of practical application. Some heroes in Arabic novels appear to have something in common when their actions suggest that such freedom can be found outside the big cities; therefore some of them run away from the city to the village, such as the character of Ahlam who ran away from Riyadh to a remote village in the novel *'Unthā Al-'Ankabūt*.¹¹⁹ Additionally, some characters run away from the big city to a smaller town, such as Khalid and Ahmad in *'Unthā Al-'Ankabūt* who also ran away from Riyadh as a big city to Tabuk as a smaller city. Although the goal that the heroes of this novel went for was in Riyadh as well as in Tabuk (to join a Teachers' College), the characters of the novel had been forced by their psychological state to escape from the big city (Riyadh).¹²⁰

This does not mean, however, that the trend towards pessimism in attitude towards the city is general; there is a small amount of freedom felt by a few city dwellers, though even this freedom is limited, as explained by Worpole and Greenhalgh:; “few modern city dwellers truly feel that they have the ‘freedom of the city’, the freedom to walk, roam and wander where they want” (Worpole and Greenhalgh, 1996: 7). This type of city, whether it is real or fictional, expresses itself strongly in the stories of the Iraqi author, Jalīl Al-Qaisi.

But is freedom to be experienced only in these things?

¹¹⁹ See, Al-'Ulayyān, 2000: 25-33.

¹²⁰ See, Al-'Ulayyān, 2000: 80-81.

The case of psychological alienation which is highlighted by some novelists often leads the reader to feel that there is a psychological clash between the heroes and their communities. Furthermore, the environment of the city could clearly show the psychological alienation that may be born within the character of some novels as a result of a self-awareness which may be mixed with fear of the monster outside. This feeling forces the character either to choose total isolation which leads to alienation or to pursue the monster in which the character believes. The monster outside might be a symbol of the people of the city and not an imaginary monster that the character dreamed up. Perhaps the monster outside is lesser and nicer than the monster inside which makes the hero run away from everyone around him. Such a scene is clearly portrayed in the novel *Heart of Darkness* (1899) by Joseph Conrad, which eventually shows that the image of the outer monster is a human-specific image to reflect the internal monster of the character. Consequently, if the hero could be reconciled with the external monster (the people of the city), he would live free from alienation. After all, it is only human nature to seek social relationships and to wish to feel comfortable and secure, given that people are people and not wild animals hunting alone. So, because of all this the city could not keep the psychological feeling of alienation away from the hearts of its population, despite its success in offering them an acceptable degree of psychological freedom compared to the village or countryside. This space of psychological freedom and alienation might also be reflected by and affect the cultural life and the writers of the city.

3.5 Cultural Freedom and Alienation in the City

هاجت المدينة وماجت بعد أن عدد "السيد" موبقات الجريمة التي بدأت تنهش أوصال أهلها.. هؤلاء الذين دارت الغائلة المفجعة عليهم، مبتدئة بأهل الفن تحديداً...

The city was berserk after "the lord/Wali" counted abominable crimes which started eroding its people's parts... the tragic scourge struck them, beginning particularly with artists. (Al-Shammari, 2004: 200)

Many projects have been carried out by the people of the city, particularly the cultured people who adopted the issue of the crisis of modern humanity. "The intellectuals are

the ones who often represent the degree of awareness of the situation in their developing communities” (Hanafi, 1979: 137).¹²¹

The Arab intellectual believed that he would live in peace after the end of his crisis with colonialism, but he then found himself stuck in another crisis, which was the cycle of war and revolution continuing from the early sixties of the last century to the present day. Walid, who is the hero of the novel *Kā'in Mu'ajjal*, says to his friend Anas:

هل تذكر المثل الذي يقول: ذهبنا لاسترداد إبلنا المسروقة فأخذ الغزاة أغنامنا، وهذه حال العرب الذين حاولوا استرداد فلسطين فذهبت العراق، ولهذا كان الإرهاب الغبي رد الفعل القوي على الإرهاب الأمريكي والإسرائيلي وإهمال الحكومات العربية لشعوبها طوال نصف قرن.

Do you remember the proverb which says: “We went to retrieve our stolen camels, but the invaders then took our sheep”. This is the way it’s been for the Arabs, who tried to recover Palestine but then lost Iraq, and this was because of stupid terrorism, the strong reaction to the American and Israeli terrorism, and the neglect by the Arab governments of their own people for half a century. (Al-Atīq, 2004: 41)

Furthermore, the Arab intellectual has often been prevented from having freedom of speech and writing, to the point of being suffocated. This might be clearly shown in the dialogue between the doctor and the cultured protagonist of the novel *Kā'in Mu'ajjal*.

إننا في هذا الوطن نعيش في صندوق مغلق بعيداً عن العالم. قال للطبيب: أختنق برريقي و أنا نائم..

In this country we live in a closed box, removed from the world. He said to his doctor: I choke on my saliva while sleeping. (Al-Atīq, 2004: 18, 19)¹²²

The opinion of Foster is close to the view portrayed in the previous novel: “[They are] cultured and civilized on the way to eventually dying as partially attained potential”(Foster, 2007: 51).

Most Arab intellectuals strive to raise their society’s awareness and they are concerned about the high rate of ignorance that exists in their communities. This concern among

¹²¹ My translation.

¹²² “I choke on my saliva” is a metaphor which shows the intensity and the extent of the clampdown on intellectuals.

intellectuals is related to the rates of illiteracy in the Arab world, especially among adults. “Adult illiteracy rates in the Arab world are projected at 43 percent, higher than the average in developing countries, For instance, it is estimated that up to 60 percent of Egyptians cannot read and write” (El-Bendary, 2011: 146). This high illiteracy rate in a country like Egypt, which is considered one of the most important centres of knowledge and learning in the Arab World, reflects the extent of public ignorance among the Arabs. After all, the research here may not fully agree with this figure because this study is not subjected to a specified date, whereas some studies and novels here suggest that there has been a positive change since 1980 in terms of literacy, although performance is still below the international and developing-country averages. Stevenson indicates that “the Arab countries made tangible progress in increasing literacy rates during the 1980s and 1990s” (Stevenson, 2011: 52). Indeed, intellectuals may adopt and take as their starting point the essential meaning of the point expressed by the desert novelist, Ibrahim Al-Kawni (1948-), when he says: “Ignorance means alienation and knowledge means homeland”. So, they try to enlighten their civil societies, although most of their enlightening projects are doomed to be delayed:

كل مشروع في هذه المدينة مؤجل إلا مشاريع نمو غابات الأسمنت.

Every project in this city is delayed, except those to do with the growth of the cement jungle. (Al-Shammari, 2004: 153)

Or they might be ignored due to lack of confidence in the city, which ultimately led to the turmoil of city life. “Cities will not go away. But we live in the shadow of a series of legitimate fears that city life is out of balance” (Worpole and Greenhalgh, 1996: 9).

Moreover, it is surprising that there are some works that prevail in modern Arabic literature, particularly the literature of the city, where these works are unable, from my perspective, to integrate with the city's community due to the condition of alienation that compounded the gap between the intellectual and his society. “The experience of alienation extends beyond the family circle; the modern Arab intellectual is estranged from the masses” (Eisenstadt and Graubard, 1972: 32). I trust that this alienation might lead the intellectual to forget his first and most important mission, which is creating a text that can truly reflect the prevailing issues in his community and then criticise them,

rather than creating a text that is based on description only, “as is the style of most good Arab writers, it is very descriptive” (Al-Qarni, 2003: 22) Perhaps the intellectuals’ alienation is also a result of irrational material consumption by the city community, and therefore lacks the real significance of the human role. Without doubt this consumption in the city has led to the lack of social equality that is sought by humanity, and therefore it is one of the reasons that led human beings to alienation. As Gopal et al explain, “economic quantity and material consumption has met with criticism because it has led to social inequalities”. (Gopal et al., 2008: 318)

One of the main characters of *Kā'in Mu'ajjal* was carrying an enlightened project to the people of the city; however, it was constantly deferred until later then he suffered a time of great anxiety that could have led him to commit suicide because he could not adapt to the society which had a visible and an invisible life:

يفكر في أشياء كثيرة تحدث ولا يعرف معناها، فإلى سنوات مضت كان يطمح إلى شيء جديد يغير حياتهم وأفكارهم لينطلقوا بشيء جديد، بعد سنوات من الحياة في صندوق مغلق، لكن كل شيء ينهار دفعة واحدة والحياة تسير بهدوء و ملل يشبه الموت. انطفأ والده بالموت وشقيقه بالانتحار في أفغانستان، وشقيقته بالزواج ووالدته بأمراض الزمان وهو تحول إلى ذاكرة على وشك النسيان.

He was thinking of many things that were occurring around him, but he does not know their meaning. Years ago he had aspired to something new, to change the lives and ideas of the city's people and launch something new after years of life in a closed box. But everything breaks down at once, life goes calmly by and the monotony is like death. His father is extinguished by death, his brother has passed on through suicide in Afghanistan, his sister has disappeared by marriage, his mother is suffering the ravages of time and he was on the verge of being forgotten. (Al-Atīq, 2004: 47, 123)

The city is a fertile place for collision between contradictions, and therefore it can be understood as having a positive or a negative role. There is a permanent clash in the city between two opposites which leads to several negative aspects for the intellectual, two of the most important elements of which are psychological and cultural alienation.

There is psychological suffering associated with a place and such suffering persists for as long as the place exists and the city often takes this role. Arab intellectuals still feel sadness and alienation toward the city, where it bears the memory of the burning of precious Arab libraries throughout the history of the Arabs, for instance, Dar Al-

Ḥikmah (the House of Wisdom, 832) in the city of Baghdad established by Abu Ja'afar Almansūr, Dar Al-Ilm or bin Ardashir Library, established by Abu Naṣr bin Ardashir in the city of Al-Karkh (991), Dar Al-Ilm in the city of Cairo (1005) by Al-Ḥākim bi 'amri Allah, Al-Madāris Al-Nizhāmiyya in the cities of Baghdad, Asfahan, Basra and Al-Mosul (1066) established by Niḍām Al-Mulk, and the Library of Lebanon which was shelled and burnt down in 1981, and so on.

In addition to that, intellectuals are still feeling that they have some kind of authority which is the power given by knowledge, awareness and perception. These are, in their view, more valuable than the power of the state. What increases their pain and psychological alienation is when this power is removed and they are unable to implement their theories and enlightenments. Although Abdul Rahman Munif may have moved between several cities, including Arab and Western cities, these cities could not hide his feelings of both intellectual and psychological alienation, which he experienced throughout his life and with time turned it into one of permanent exile. Even if he tried to hide this feelings by relying on his nationalistic emotions, his novel *Al-'Ashjār wa 'Ighteyāl Marzoq (Trees And The Assassination of Marzouq, 1973)* shows how much he was suffering from psychological alienation.¹²³ “Many writers felt estranged from their city and alienated by what was on show” (Green, 2011: 14).

In the case of Saudi novels, the hostility between the city and the desert is abundantly clear in the novel *Jurf Al-Khafāyā*, and therefore the intellectuals who were coming from the desert feel that they are strangers, even if they offer what generally appeals to people of the city, such as music:

أهل جرف الخفايا (المدينة) الضجرون دائما، ينظرون اليك شزر، المدينة تحقد على الرمل وتعادي أهله
الذين جاؤا اليها فقط من أجل طلب الرزق.

“People of Jurf Al-Khafāyā (the city) are always weary, they look down on you. The city looks down on the sand and is hostile to these people who came to the city only to earn a living. (Al-Shammari, 2004: 31, 68)

¹²³ For more on this, see *Abdul Rahman Munif* (2008) by Fayṣal Darrāj.

But they found themselves alienated and powerless. Kendall explains: “People who live in urban areas are alienated, powerless, and lonely” (Kendall, 2011: 525). The main character of this novel (*Jurf Al-Khafāyā*) is nicknamed Al-Muānā (sufferer) because of the trouble and misery that the city has caused him before it eventually annihilates him. At the end of Chapter Eleven, all the heroes of this novel surrender to intellectual alienation. They wish to be only free from this repression which is preventing them from breathing and thinking. In most of the chapters of the novel *Jurf Al-Khafāyā*, there is a talk about the severity of the impact of psychological alienation on the intellectuals in the cities; therefore, I believe that this novel *Jurf Al-Khafāyā* is consistent with most of the views of the novelist Ahlam Mostaghanemi, such as:

الرواية مفتاح الأوطان المغلقة في وجوهنا... هناك حيث ينتظر العشرات من المبدعين موتهم حالمين أن يثأروا لغربتهم يوماً بالعودة في صناديق مفخخة بالكتب فيحدثوا أخيراً ذلك الدوي الذي عاشوا دون أن يسمعه، دوي ارتطامهم بالوطن.

The novel is the key to the door of nations which were closed in our faces, where there are dozens of creative people awaiting their death, dreaming to avenge their alienation days to return with exploding boxes of books¹²⁴, so that finally they make the bang that they lived for without ever hearing it, the bang they make as they collide with their homeland. (Bakri, 2004: 79)

There is no doubt that the alienation of the intellectuals is often psychological because they realise that the human beings' lives and rights have been controlled and restricted by the city and civilian life; whereas “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood” (Ignatieff and Gutmann, 2011: xxv). Therefore, intellectuals do not subject themselves to the power of the city or even accept it, in addition to the fact that they have continued in the confrontations against the authoritarian city and its modern life. Baumeister and Bushman argue that “Modern life makes people vulnerable to alienation and exploitation by giant social systems” (Baumeister and Bushman, 2009: 4).

¹²⁴ This is a metaphor for the desire to raise the awareness in their countries through knowledge exploding.

At first glance, this awareness and understanding of intellectuals and their reaction against the city and regimes of modern life, may seem attractive and perhaps can be counted as the striving and struggle of intellectuals who fight to maintain the human relationships that are based on the human element. However, many of them became psychologically alienated due to their preference for isolation and independence from their world. Most of them imagine that they could exercise their rights and freedom only in such atmospheres. Al-Zahrani explains: “ The first phase of the realisation of freedom and sense of self is to achieve self-independence and separation from the world, and then the character feels liberated and free from all external pressure” (Al-Zahrani, 2007: 155).¹²⁵

The broad sense of contempt of the city is one of the most important factors that led to the sense of freedom from the perspective of intellectuals who were initially isolated from their society, thinking that they were independent and liberated. The main character of *Kā'in Mu'ajjal* portrays this case clearly when he isolated himself and limited himself to just one friend and his books in a small flat within the city of Riyadh after being moved from the spaciousness of the village. The ways in the city may seem narrow in the eyes of cultured people and their noble objectives, which are inconsistent with the requirements of city life or the culture of its community. Hence they could only practice their culture secretly. The novel *Jurf Al-Khafāyā* confirms that:

الليلة ستكون مُميّزة لم لا ومساء الخميس يوم تمتد فيه ساعات السهر بقدر ما تسمح فيه نواميس المدينة،
سيجتمعون مع المفكرتين فاتنة و جوجة، ستكون ليلة من صور الإبداع الذي لا ينسى (أبدعوا بالله عليكم
لكن في الخفاء).

Tonight will be a special night, and why not? Thursday night is the night of extended vigil hours for a time that is permitted by the city laws. They will meet with the thinkers Fatinah and Jojah, and it will be a night of creative images that is not to be forgotten (in the name of God, be creative but in secret). (Al-Shammari, 2004: 78)

Al-Zahrani argues about what was so-called negative freedom, and linked it to the following:

¹²⁵ My translation.

The sense of exercising freedom on the pattern of isolation from the society, leads freedom to take a hostile trend, to negatively conflict with the society and rebel against most values that are common in the community. The educated person enters into the conflict with the world thinking that everyone is focusing their hostility against him, and thus there will be some barriers that will isolate the intellectual from society. After that he will have been in exile again, and this is a clear picture of what is called negative freedom. (Al-Zahrani, 2007: 155)

From the viewpoint of the novels that have been studied in this chapter, there is an agreement to some extent. They both agreed on the relationship between isolation and psychological alienation, between the city and its community and the intellectuals. Certainly there is a price for freedom that has to be paid, and this sometimes could be humiliation or loss of dignity. A typical example is Ahlam, the heroine of *'Unthā Al-'Ankabūt*, who was beaten by her father, who symbolizes the cruelty of the city, just because she enjoys freedom from restrictions and spoke the truth that she believed in. Her thoughts might symbolise freedom in the novel. Unlike the others, she was educated and therefore in the end she spoke her mind and tried to reform her society:

My father stiffened himself and said, "The widow remains only to raise her children after the death of her husband and to devote her life to them"...I screamed sharply after throwing caution to the wind: "but this is injustice, Dad, you are burying her alive"...Then I felt a strong slap on my jaw and lost consciousness...and then another and another. I fell from their impact and was unable to speak, scream or even cry. (Al-'Ulayyān, 2000: 49)

It is true that there is a price that has to be paid for freedom, for "sometimes freedom must be bought with blood and courage" (Foran, 2005: 48). The price can also be one or more of multiple types of alienations, most types of which abound in clear images in the characters and heroes of the novel *'Unthā Al-'Ankabūt*. Firstly, for instance, there is the character of the mother who has lived in psychiatric alienation as a price for her psychological and social freedom.¹²⁶ Secondly, there was the character of Salih, who was forced by his father to experience severe emotional pain and loss of dignity as a

¹²⁶ See Al-'Ulayyān, 2000: 16-19.

price for his intellectual freedom or freedom of speech.¹²⁷ Thirdly, there was the character of Nada, who paid with her life and committed suicide as a price for her social freedom.¹²⁸ Fourthly, there was Ahlam, the main heroine of this novel, who experienced existential, social and psychological alienation as a price for her emotional and financial freedom.¹²⁹ Fifthly, there was Khalid, who experienced psychological and existential alienation as a price for his financial and psychological freedom.¹³⁰ All these examples come to illustrate the extent of human beings' desire for freedom, whether they are educated or not. All of the novel's characters had to pay the price for freedom in their cities. It may be a message of a wide positive range of the novel's messages to make us aware of the value of freedom and of the need to keep fighting those who base their own interests on the restriction of other human beings; they must be defeated in order to preserve this freedom, even if it is a relative freedom as it has been built on the sacrifice of others. Moore makes this point:

To be born free is an accident, but to remain free and die free is a lifelong pursuit. Freedom should never be taken for granted. Freedom must be constantly renewed and preserved. Let us not forget that the freedom we enjoy today was bought at the cost of the sacrifices of many, who stood up to repel aggression and to defend our liberties. (Moore, 2012: 77)

However, the issue of alienation does not reach the level of the feeling of animosity, and then the barriers that might lead intellectuals to be isolated from their society, as was mentioned above in a citation from Al-Zahrani, are due to the feeling of hostility that might destroy the entire positive means of communication that can link intellectuals to their societies. However, the reality that is represented by most of the novels' characters confirms the opposite of Al-Zahrani's proposition. Most novels go to prove the positive role played by intellectuals in society despite the barriers of alienation. Intellectuals often try to take the initiative to increase the levels of freedom and awareness of their societies. Kelly argues that "Intellectuals pushed for freedom of speech and freedom of the press" (Kelly, 2009: 152). Even in the boredom and monotony of the city, the

¹²⁷ See Al-‘Ulayyān, 2000: 21-22.

¹²⁸ See Al-‘Ulayyān, 2000: 35, 111.

¹²⁹ See Al-‘Ulayyān, 2000: 53, 118.

¹³⁰ See Al-‘Ulayyān, 2000: 79-83.

obsession with change and reform remains at the forefront of intellectuals' interests. The novel *Kā'in Mu'ajjal* reported about its intellectual characters that:

في نوبة الملل التي جعلتهم ذات مساء، وهم مقهى شعبي يفكرون في كتابة أوراق يطالبون فيها بأشياء كثيرة.

In a fit of boredom one evening in a popular cafe they thought of writing papers demanding many things. (Al-Atīq, 2004: 89)

All the main characters of the novel *Jurf Al-Khafāyā* are intellectuals: Al-Izzi Fareqnā is a doctor and an artist in drawing and sculpture, Daḥām Al-Mudāwi is a poet, Ṣaqr Al-Muānnā is a popular singer, Dāhi Al-'Abraq is a thinker and Khalil Al-Muhābed and Khuwailid Al-'Amlas are teachers in the daytime and writers at night.¹³¹ They are all trying to reform and raise the awareness of their society. Their works are based on the principle that they believed,

الحقيقة دوما تنادي وبلا يأس بأن الإنسان حر وإن تسيدته أحد، أصيل وإن جهل نسبه.

The truth is always calling and – without despair – that, a human is free even if dominated by someone else, and genuine even if his significance has been ignored. (Al-Shammari, 2004: 21)

The heroes of the novel reform their city despite their alienation; one such example was the resistance which was reported by the character Al-Muānnā:

لحياتي وحيات من هم على شاكلي شكل النشاز في نعمة المدينة هنا. سأقاوم. وسأعيد تفاصيل جنونيات غناء وصور لمفاتن قديمة.

My life and the lives of others like me are a form of anomaly in the tone of the city life here. I will resist, and I will bring back the elements of mad singing and pictures of old-fashioned charms. (Al-Shammari, 2004: 31)¹³²

Al-Mudāwi was also talking to himself on his sick bed and brought back his memories of when he was fighting for his principles in his city:

¹³¹ See, Al-Shammari, 2004: 10).

¹³² When he says, 'the lives of others like me', he means intellectuals.

كيف كنت وكيف أنا الآن بعد هجمة هذا المرض الشرس؟ سؤال يجب أن أجيب عنه جيداً. كنت فيما مضى قادراً على قول ما يعنُّ لي وفعل ما تسمح به قبيلة الخفاء هنا .

How was I and how I am now after such a fierce onslaught of disease? A question which I must answer well. I was able in the past to say whatever came into my mind and able to do whatever I was permitted to do by the secret tribe here in the city. (Al-Shammari, 2004: 189)

Remembering the past is one of the images of alienation. Moreover, throughout the novel one can clearly see the impact of the time dimension in the alienation of the hero, as the length of his stay in the city did not satisfy him to seek a better life, but instead he remained alienated right up to his old age. Time here envelops the hero so he tries to get rid of its alienation by turning to the memory of the past in order to “assault time by time”¹³³ as Abdulfattah claimed (Abdulfattah, 2011: 55).

The character of Al-'Amlas says:

سأناضل يا أصدقائي حتى لو اضطررت إلى الإنقطاع عن الدنيا. لقد سئمت تلفيق التاريخ و تزيف الجغرافيا .

I will struggle, my friends, even if I have to drop out of this world. I am tired of this fabrication of history and falsification of geography. (Al-Shammari, 2004: 210)

In fact, most of the novels here pointed out in the end of their chapters that there was a good progress of transformation towards freedom. All this has been achieved because of the positive contribution of the intellectual, despite the injustice and the suppression by the power in the city. A good illustration of this is the recognition of transformation of freedom in the city on the lips of Munira, the heroine of *Munira's Bottle*, who tried to break the rigidity of the city. She was fighting for her rights until she made the man in the story, who represents the force and the power in most Arab societies, subject to justice, so that he would appreciate those who demand their rights. She confirmed that, whenever there is a serious striving for rights and freedom, the objectives will be achieved. She is raising here the transformations towards freedom that took place in the city, which were put in place by intellectuals:

¹³³ My translation.

Just before noon in court I saw Ibn al-Asi for the person he really was: his cajoling and conniving personality, his belief in superstition, magic, and nonsense. Hypocrite that he was, weeping at my feet in the chamber, asking me to release him from the binding spell I'd put on him... They used to tell us that a woman's fingernails are part of her beauty, and they said that with them she scratches the face of the truth. As for me, I used mine to scratch the judge's patience and his peace of mind. I scratched the silence of the city, with its certainty and tranquillity. I scratched the submissiveness of obscure and unknown women. (Al-Mohaimed, 2010: 181, 189)

Munira was reflecting on the transitions towards freedom in one city (Riyadh) where the writers were writing under pseudonyms, such as the novel *Wadda'tu Āmālī* (1958) by Samira Khashuqji, the first Saudi female novelist. She wrote this novel under the pen-name Samira Bint Al-Jazeera (Daughter of the Arabian Peninsula). “[A] pseudonym she adopted in the early period of her writing when women's visibility in public met with disapproval” (Attieh, 1999. Vol, 29: 50). And at the level of the novel, the city has forced Guga¹³⁴ to adhere to the city culture and to write her thoughts under a pseudonym.

Only a few years later, women whether writers or not were able to write whatever they wanted under their names. This was despite opposition from some relatives and an attempt to block the wheel of intellectual development, especially if it was for women who were at the start of multiple transformations. However, the strong power of the father and his influential position in the Arab family, and in the Saudi family as an example, is either an inhibitor, or supportive towards a positive transformation in intellectual freedom. As some of the negative roles of the father have been presented previously, the novel *Munira's Bottle* presents the positive role of the father in constructive intellectual transformation:

Because of her and her journalistic talent, he had lost his family and relatives, for he had resisted their demand that she omit the tribe's name from hers when it appeared in the newspaper. They had suggested she use a pseudonym, but she

¹³⁴ They are female characters in the novel of Al-Shammari. (See Al-Shammari, 2004: 86).

had stubbornly refused, and her father had stood by her, delighted by her courage and resilience. (Al-Mohaimed, 2010: 3)

Positive transformation towards intellectual freedom is also indicated by the sudden explosion of women's writing, especially in the field of the novel. There is a very significant shift towards the writing of novels which carry in them all the burden of the creator's memories, all of these being written under the real name of their women authors: "Over a period of more than half a century, from 1930 to 1990, only 30 novels have been written, three of them by women. By contrast, in one single year, namely 2006, there were 54 novels, half of which were written by women" (Al-Hāzemī. and Al-Yūsif, 2008: 51).¹³⁵ Furthermore, these female novelists publicise their work in public fora and do not shy from meeting their readers.

Despite the fact that the city has been portrayed as a dark place in several novels, it has a great capacity to forge many cultural links among those who are interested. It also appeals to writers, critics and intellectuals who did not abandon the city despite their sense of alienation, given that the city enables them to encounter other patterns of human life and activity – something which cannot be achieved other than in the city, which provides them with many sources of creativity. "At the level of the city, the term 'creative capital' denotes the ability of urban economic actors to generate scientific, technological and artistic innovation on the basis of relational assets which are socially produced within a city or urban region" (Krätke, 2011: 195). In addition to this, Tischler states that "Although urban areas may be described as an alienation place in which lonely people live in crowded, interdependent, social isolation, there is another side to the coin, one that points to the existence of vital community life in the harshest urban landscapes. Further, urban areas still provide the most fertile soil for the arts in modern society" (Tischler, 2006: 439).

There is also a natural correlation and consistency between the countryside and the city, and therefore whenever there is a defect in this link because of the wrong behaviour or actions of human beings, the sources of the beauty that the writers and intellectuals are

¹³⁵ My translation.

portraying will become scarce and faint. Therefore, any kind of conflict will not be in favour of the city in particular. One of the characters of Al-Shammari's novel criticises the abnormal relationship between his new city and the village when he declares:

لم يكن ثمة اتفاق مسبق بين المدينة والفلاة على توزيع أدوارها، فكلمما جاد الريف بالبهاء والجمال و الدعة انعكس – لا محالة – على المدينة التي تتأخمه، وكلمما صار الريف مفازة مهلكة سيكون رافدا لمدينة يفد إليها أهل الطباع الجافة...

There was no prior agreement between the city and the wilderness on the distribution of roles. Whenever the countryside provides generously its splendour, beauty and calm, this – inevitably – is reflected on any adjacent city. And whenever that countryside becomes a barren wasteland, it will become a tributary that supplies hard and dried up people to that city. (Al-Shammari, 2004: 37)

Moreover, we cannot ignore the positive role of education and the high degree of public awareness in terms of pushing towards freedom, as well as towards the life of learning and reading. The heroine of the novel *Munira's Bottle* has confirmed that all this would contribute positively towards achieving a high level of freedom:

I am a female. Just a female with clipped wings. That's how people see me in this country. A female with no power and no strength...for me to think and search and question, that meant I had begun to step outside, which was not what my mother wanted or what my father encouraged. He thought that if he submerged me in books as a child, I would not be curious to know about the outside world. He didn't realise that he was feeding an insatiable appetite. I devoured the pages but I did not venture out, remaining hidden until I eventually revealed myself through my column, "Rose in a Vase". My appearance to the outside world and the dissemination of my name was a curse on the family and the men of the tribe, but it did not stop me, and here I am, doing postgraduate research into the very shackles that bound me from the start. (Al-Mohaimeed, 2010: 72, 73)

As a result of the above, although the novels are almost unanimous in that the city is known for generating alienation, the novels' characters have shown that, unlike with the culture of the villages and the countryside, the city's culture is flexible, open to movement and change and interacting with other cultures. They illustrated also that the city is the primary tributary of cultural growth and it is the perfect place for intellectuals and writers, offering them all means of creativity, paying for more freedom and achieving for them a satisfactory space of freedom that they may not find outside the

circle of the city. What distinguishes the novels discussed in this chapter is that they also carry multiple images of the other manifestations of alienation which were found from the late 1980s until the present; for instance, linguistic, existential, spatial, religious, emotional and financial alienation.

3.6 The Role of Language in Emotional and Linguistic Emancipation

Sometimes, intellectual people may take negative initiatives which may push them towards the intellectual form of alienation. This kind of alienation might occur because of the gap that might be created by the intellectuals, especially the educated young generation who are trying to speak in a very high register of the formal Arabic language, or in different languages: the novel *Al-Hulm Al-Maḥūn* (Contested Dream, 1996) by Abdullah Al-Jafri, for instance, has included many English words in the dialogue between Adil and Sarah. Both of these practices – the use of both formal Arabic and a foreign language – could cause so-called linguistic alienation. The heroine of the novel *Munira's Bottle* lived in a society that did not appreciate the value of the word, so she was a victim of one of those few people who were only aware about the importance of language. One of them deceived her through language and then caused her to fall into many types of alienation later on. Munira says:

I wish I had not been at home alone on the night of 13 July 1990. If someone else had been there, none of this would have happened...That's when it rang again. The galloping white stallion had returned.

“Excuse me.”

“Yes!” I said brusquely.

“Am I taking up your time? Have I scattered your thoughts?”

“Excuse me? What do you think you're playing at?”

“I want you!”

“Who are you? Do you know me?”

“Of course I do.”

And that's how he trotted in on his white charger, moving on without further ado into the subject of writing, and the textures I wove with my words in my column, “Rose in a Vase,” every Tuesday in the evening paper. He turned out to

be an avid reader, intelligent, perceptive, with an ability to predict the future. He was a good talker and his voice made the bear's-paw handset heat up in my hand... He said many kind things. He offered his opinions of writers and journalists and recited romantic poetry by Nizar Qabbani. He took me by the hand like a blind girl and led me through the constellations and galaxies of another universe... (Al-Mohaimeed, 2010: 14, 15)

Furthermore, she adds:

On subsequent nights he told me that of all the writers whose words adorned the pages of the evening newspaper, I was the most beautiful. He said my words were like small moons. He said I could see the good things in the harshest of situations. "You are no normal woman," he whispered. "You are a wonder. You are depths unfathomed, a deed unexpected, a moment of blinding revelation, and with a flutter of your eyelash you shatter the moon into a million moons. He loved Nizar's poetry. He had it committed to memory, and when he recited it my body tingled and I was like a child who just happened to be in her early thirties. (Al-Mohaimeed, 2010: 16, 17)

Here we can easily observe that the strong influence of words and emotions on such a society suggests to us the extent of the linguistic and emotional alienation in it.

Despite the long and bright history of this community in terms of culture, language and emotions, the rapid transformation towards life in the city after the state of poverty in that region has made people live an unbalanced life, lacking due awareness of and attention to the value and the importance of words and emotions.

In addition, young intellectuals deal with their societies using higher knowledge than that which their communities are aware of or familiar with. This fact probably makes their language unintelligible. Eagleton has mentioned that "Formalism is the poetics of an alienated society" (Eagleton, 2011: 50). They are often carrying around in their minds ideas and concerns that are far above the level of their community's thinking. There was once a large margin between the intellectuals and the community at large, or perhaps between the young intellectuals and the older generation, as we have seen from the above citation which was only between young intellectuals, whereas the older generation was fascinated by the financial revolution after the abject poverty by whose harshness these young people were not squeezed, and thus could busy themselves mostly with literature and culture.

This gap may also lead the intellectuals to feel that they live in an ivory tower far removed from their nation and also to feel narcissistic and egotistical. Giraldo addressed the issue of symbol and imagination when writing about two basic steps of alienation: “The first one is the alienation into the ego and into the imaginary. The second one is the alienation into language, into the symbolic. Because it is through language that each one of us receives the desires of the Other” (Giraldo, 2012: 64).

It is noteworthy that linguistic and emotional alienation in Saudi Arabia were the result not of any foreign occupation or colonization, but rather of poverty. The novelist Fahad Al-ʿAtīq, for example, contrasts the lives of the younger Saudi generation with the hardship experienced by their parents’ generation:

عقود من الجوع، مرَّ بها أهلهم، في مدن وقرى نجد.

decades of hunger experienced by their parents in the cities and villages of the Najd region. (Al-ʿAtīq, 2004: 106)

Such hardship had preoccupied people and kept their attention away from what they used to love in the past; for it had been the destiny of this community to live in a barren land hugely lacking in natural resources before the discovery of oil. As Cooper and Alexander explain, “The poverty of Saudi Arabia before the discovery of oil can be attributed largely to the paucity of natural resources” (Cooper and Alexander, 1971: 441). Even the forms of greetings that were so abundant in old Arabic prose and poetry have become very rare or probably even non-existent in this society. And therefore, this has aroused the attention of the child in the novel *Kā'in Mu'ajjal*, who feels surprised that these words are not being used between the family members, whereas he hears these words among people of other countries on the television:

في المسلسل التلفزيوني يقول الناس لبعضهم صباح الخير.. ويستغرب لماذا لا نتحدث مثلما يتحدثون؟

In the television series, people say to each other: ‘Good morning!’ and so he wonders why we do not talk in the same way that they talk. (Al-ʿAtīq, 2004: 90)

In a country like Saudi Arabia one can clearly see the gap between the older and the younger generation in terms of linguistic alienation and notice the absence of dialogue between them, even at the level of the household. Naturally, the Arabic novel in general, including the Saudi novel, has addressed this issue of both linguistic and emotional alienation which has possibly developed as a result of the absence of dialogue at the level of family members, especially between parents and children. A good illustration of this is to be found in the novel *'Unthā Al-'Ankabūt*, the plot of which turns on the lack of dialogue between the father on the one hand as symbol of the older generation who has dealt with his family through cruel beatings and the brutal use of force or by ignoring the other in the dialogue, and his children, on the other hand, who represent the new generation. These children are bound together by strong ties and mutual passions that are evident through the messages that they are sending to each other, such as this message between two sisters:

أيا أحلام حبيبتي الصغيرة وزهرة الحزن الجميلة... أختاه لست وحدك غزالة جانحة بين أسوار الألم، ففي موسم اصطياد الغزلان تَنَحِّي كثير منها تحت أقدام جلاذيتها... وجلادنا شخص واحد يا أحلام رغم تعدد الأقنعة... الأب واحد والمصاب واحد... أرقبك من طرف خفي... كنت متفردة كشعاع نور انبجس من ظلام.

Oh Ahlam, my little darling... you are a beautiful flower of sadness, my sister, and you are not alone like a deer squeezed between the walls of pain. In the season of deer hunting, many deer bows at the feet of their executioners... and our executioner is just one person, Oh Ahlam. Despite the many masks, our father is that one person and the issue is a single one. I was observing you secretly, Ahlam, and you were unique as a beam of light or a spotlight appearing out of the darkness... (Al-'Ulayyān, 2000: 204, 205)

This absence of dialogue between parents and their children has led to mass alienation within the family. The problem is even greater in male-dominated families, a fact that was so obvious during the seventies and eighties of the last century. Zawawi illustrated in her report the views of both Maha Muneef, Executive Director of the National Family Safety Program, who said, "In such families there is no room for dialogue and especially for women and girls", and Nawal Al-Thanyan, a professor of Arabic Language at King Saud University, who explained that "The lack of dialogue among family members has led to the breakup of many families, if not physically then emotionally in divorces" (Zawawi, 2009).

Indeed, such social transformations may take a long time to sweep aside some customs and traditions which may not suit all generations, and some observers who are interested in the affairs of Saudi Arabia have predicted that there will be difficulties in achieving any significant change in Saudi Arabia. For instance, Wardak claims that “indeed, the social, political and legal transformations that lie ahead for Saudi Arabia are probably going to be very difficult” (Sheptycki and Wardak, 2005: 112).

I believe that the Middle East in general and Saudi Arabia in particular cannot be measured according to standards and studies of social transformations that may be applied to other societies, given that Saudi Arabia has undergone a rapid change as a result of the emergence of the oil economy, which in fact has affected the whole world and has impacted on all parts of its people’s life in very broad terms. “The Middle East experienced immense social transformations, due almost entirely to the sudden oil windfall” (Alcock et al., 2011: 449). We may add to this the fact that this country had already been lagging behind the rest of the world as a result of its isolation and poverty. Therefore, this rapid change and the accompanying yearning for freedom from social constraints are the factors that have been motivating the new generations.

لكن هذا الانتقال له ثمن باهظ، دفعوه من أوقاتهم ونفسياتهم المتعبة.

But these transformations had a high price which people paid with their time and their tired psyches. (Al-Atīq, 2004: 106)

As a result of this yearning for change, a good percentage of the social goals that have been stuck in the pipeline in Saudi Arabia for so many years have finally been achieved.

And because the city is a site of transformations it was natural to see also some dramatic new developments at the level of language. Several novels have combined classical and colloquial Arabic in order to get closer to realism. Most of the dialogues that relate to cultural and scientific affairs are presented in standard Arabic, while dialogues that take place between individuals are often presented in colloquial. Here the writers’ excuse for mixing up the language is to bring the language closer to the reader and to make the language of the novel identical to that of real daily life. One good illustration of this is the novel of Abdullah Al-Jafri *’Ayyāmun Māhā* (*Days with Her*, 2001). Sometimes the

matter is not the transformations of the language or being close to the level of the receiver as some intellectuals and novelists believe, but at the level of thinking and the way of handling a case. This is because the level of the thinking used by the intellectuals or novelists may not be compatible with the social and cultural awareness and thinking level of ordinary people.

3.7 Conclusion

To conclude, observers are clearly able to see the positive transformations that have taken place towards freedom in the Arab world, and especially in Saudi Arabia. Certainly, these changes did not reach the level of Western societies, as there is a conviction of the importance of privacy for each community. But on the subject of women, there is also satisfaction from Arab women on what has been achieved in the positive shifts in relation to women's rights and the security of having more freedom. Nydell states: "Most Arab women, even now, feel satisfied that the present social system provides them with security, protection, and respect" (Nydell, 2012: 45).

The woman and man who were forced to marry someone she or he did not know sometimes knew nothing about their marriage until the wedding night or perhaps just a few nights before, as has been illustrated by the novel *'Unthā Al-'Ankabūt*:

تزوجت أختي بدرية دون أن تدري سوى قبل زفافها بأيام... كذلك أخي صالح فقد أجبره أبي إجباراً على الزواج من ابنة عمه رغم ارتباطه بقصة حب مع ابنة الجيران ووعده لها بالزواج... صفع أبي على صدغ أخي و هو يهدر بصوته القوي: ستتزوج ابنة عمك شئت أم أبيت... فقد اتفقت مع عمك على ذلك ولن تكسر كلامي...

My sister Badria got married without knowing until only a few days before her marriage...My father forced my brother Şāleḥ to marry the daughter of his uncle, despite the fact that my brother had a romantic association with a neighbour's daughter and had promised to marry her...my father hit him on his jaw, and shouted at him, "You will marry the daughter of your uncle whether you want to or not, because I have agreed with your uncle that you will not break my word. (Al-'Ulayyān, 2000: 20, 21)

Ahlam said about herself:

وحدث ما كنت أخشاه منذ عدت لدار أبي، فقد اجتمع بي أبي ذات مساء وأنهى إليّ أمر زوجي وأنه بات مقررًا بعد أسبوعين... شهقت بهلع وقد اهتز كيائي- : ومن هو يا أبي... أقصد... زوجي القادم...؟ قال بحسم وهو يمد لي يده بصورة فوتوغرافية- : الشيخ أبو علي تاجر قطع الغيار... وقد طلب مني سرعة تجهيزك.

What I feared has happened since I came back to my father's house. My father met with me one evening and ended the subject of my marriage, telling me that it was scheduled two weeks later... I gasped with panic, and my whole being was in utter turmoil: "Who is it, Father... I mean... my next husband ...?" He replied firmly, as he handed me a photo: "He is Sheikh Abu Ali, a dealer of spare parts who has requested me to speed up your processing". (Al-'Ulayyān, 2000: 20, 21, 168)

A girl, who did not have any privacy, suffered her personal things being raided by others, whether in the name of religion, customs, and traditions or perhaps also in the name of morality, as Al-'Atīq notes:

أختي قالت لي أن شقيقها أحمد دخل غرفتها و أخذ جهاز التسجيل لأنه حرام كما يقول، ذهبت لغرفته وسألته: لماذا يا أحمد؟! قال لي بصوت صارخ: حرام يا أخي، قلت له: الجهاز في غرفتها وأنت اقتحمت أشياءها الخاصة، قال: نحن في قارب واحد إذا غرق فسنغرق جميعاً ...

My sister told me that her brother Ahmed entered her room and took the recorder because, as he claimed, it was forbidden. So, I went to his room and asked him: "Why, Ahmed?! Ahmed said in a loud voice: "Because it's forbidden, brother!" Then I said to him: "The recorder was in her own room and you went and raided her private belongings". He replied by saying, "We are in the same boat, and if it sinks we will all of us drown together". (Al-'Atīq, 2004: 41, 42)

A woman and a man who were once forced to write – if they were allowed to do so – under a pseudonym, as in the case of Daḥām Al-Mudāwī (a male character in the novel *Jurf Al-khafāyā*, and other examples) are now in a completely different position. The characters of these novels offer some models in the final chapters that suggest the good level of satisfaction with what has been achieved in the way of positive transformations. For example, the last two chapters of the novel *Jurf Al-khafāyā* show the level of satisfaction through the novel's heroes:

ظل الرفاق على الحياض يتأمل بعضهم بعضاً. يحتسون الشاي ويتناولون المكسرات. بين أيديهم طبق من الفاكهة. أثبت أهل "عرين السباع" أنهم قادرون على لجم الحياة المتمردة.

The comrades (heroes of the novel) remain on the fence contemplating each other, drinking tea and eating nuts. In front of them is a dish of fruit. The people

of “the city” have proved that they are now able to hold the reins of the rebellious nature of life. (Al-Shammari, 2004: 188)

Many of these transformations appear clearly in these and other novels, and the reader or observer can easily grasp them through the models that have been presented previously. “The people of Saudi Arabia were much healthier, better housed and much better educated than they had been in the past” (Cotterell, 2011: 336).

Although the city and its rapid though sometimes violent transformations have been portrayed negatively through several novels, and often contrasted with the image of the village as a beautiful and peaceful setting, the outcomes of the city's transformations have been very valuable and also very rapidly achieved, while the village, for example, has been unable to achieve any transformations at all. These positive transformations in the city appear from the novels referred to here, where the characters, all of whom had lived in the city, turn to it in order to express and practice freedom in a wider space in the final chapters of each novel, unlike in the opening chapters, and it has been demonstrated to the observer that the characters have achieved something of what they were seeking to find in the city, as in the previous examples. Indeed, some of these novels clearly indicate what great results have been achieved in a short space of time.

For example, the figure of the weak Saudi woman of the past is challenged by the fact that she now features amongst the 150 most fearless women in the world (in 2012). According to Newsweek, “two of them are Saudi”.¹³⁶ That weak woman of the Saudi past is now numbered among the 130 personalities who formed the Global Dialogue in 2011. Raja Alem is the first Arab woman novelist to have won the Arab Booker Prize¹³⁷ for her novel ‘*The Doves' Necklace*’ in 2011, while Thuraya Al-Urayid was the first

¹³⁶ The first is Hayat Sindi, whose career as a scientist began with a fib. Keen to continue her studies abroad after high school in Saudi Arabia, she told her father she had been accepted at a university in London. Her traditional father said it would tarnish the family name if she were to live overseas alone. Still she persuaded him, and off she went. The truth was that she hadn't been accepted at any university. But upon arriving in London she got herself into King's College, and later to Cambridge. Now the Saudi innovator is doing work that could save millions of lives in the developing world – and launching her Mideast foundation. The second is Manal Al-Sharif, who was arrested and jailed for nine days for driving a car. She has become the face of the women 2Drive campaign and recently announced that she was using the traffic police to get a license. (See Newsweek, 8-3-2012).

¹³⁷ This Prize belongs to the World Booker for her novel ‘*The Doves' Necklace*’.

woman in the Arab Gulf to gain a PhD in 1975. That weak woman of the past is honoured now in many international, Arab and local forums, such as when Dr Thorayyā Ubaid received the Japanese Sunshine Ribbon award in 2011. These are just some of the results that are the positive products of the transformative moves towards freedom in the city in that society which has struggled to overcome the limitations of the city as is clearly shown by the novels under discussion. At the same time, however, it could be said that, despite the negativity attributed to city living, the underlying indication suggests that the reality of the city provides unparalleled opportunities for personal development, independent flexible culture, self-realization and thinking, and individual freedom and contentment.

Finally, it is worth mentioning at this stage that there is another strong factor that has impacted every aspect of people's lives in the whole Arab world, but especially the Gulf region, and this factor has had an impact of no less significance than the impact of oil in this region. This is the event known as the Second Gulf War, which gave rise to many of the rapid transformations in the Saudi city. This major event and its consequences form the subject matter of our next chapter.

Chapter Four

The City and the Second Gulf War

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The City and the Second Gulf War

4 Introduction

Wars tend to come to an end, but their impact mostly does not end with them. As for Arabic literature, the Arabs have never dispensed with the war theme in all their historical stages, beginning from pre-Islamic eras onwards. On account of the long-running history of wars in the Arab world, several novelists have portrayed such a state of affairs in tones of frustration and disappointment.

This chapter will focus on the impact of the Second Gulf War, which has had a profound impact perhaps similar to that of the oil boom on the social composition of the Saudi city, seen through the lens of modern Arabic literature as represented by the Saudi novel. It will address the transformations that occurred in the city due to the war under the following headings. It will start with Arab Cities, Literature and War, and then continue with the following: The Political Earthquake of the Second Gulf War (1990/1991), The Impact of the War on Novelists and on their Style, The Impact of the Gulf War on the Intellectual and Literary Trends in Saudi Cities, The Economic Impact of the Gulf War on Saudi Cities, The Social Impact of the Gulf War on Saudi Society and Western Influence as Represented by the American Presence in Saudi Society.

The novels have had a strong presence in terms of monitoring the impact of war on that society. Among several prominent Saudi novels that have adopted the Gulf War as a fertile source of inspiration we may cite the following titles: *'Ūyūn Alā Al-Ssamā'*,¹³⁸

¹³⁸ This novel won first place in the Prince Khalid Al-Faisal Prize - the Abha Prize - for the novel. A lot of sufferings and social transformations in the Arab household before, during and after the Gulf War are presented in this novel through the language which is full of sorrow and grief. This novel also tells of the convergence of the Kuwaiti family with the Saudi family and the integration of the two families inside Saudi territory during the war. The novel has had six editions, the first one being in 1999. The image of the man in this novel is very negative, as he is the cause of all the problems of women, whether as

(*Eyes on the Sky*) (2000) by Qumāsha Al-‘Ulayyān, ‘*Awdah ‘Ilā Al-‘Ayyām Al-‘Ūlā*¹³⁹ (*Back to the Early Days*) (2004) by Ibrahim Al-Khuḍīr and *Al-Riyadh-November 90*¹⁴⁰ (2011) by Sa‘ad Al-Dūsarī. These novels will be studied in this chapter as they are noteworthy for providing a clear picture of the social transformations in the cities of Saudi Arabia just before, during and after the Second Gulf War.

4.1 Arab Cities, Literature and War

Wars bring with them a lot of tragedies and pain that do not end with them, and thus people who were suffering from them are often traumatised and sad even when they hear about the end of these wars. Khāl, the author of the novel *Nubāḥ* (*Barking*, 2003) observes, “When the war starts it does not finish with the ending of the sounds of cannon shots. We took many years to get to this point” (Khāl, 2003: 19).¹⁴¹ On account of the long-running history of wars in the Arab world, several novelists have portrayed such a state of affairs in tones of frustration and disappointment. Al-Dūsarī says:

منذ متى ونحن نعيش الحرب؟! منذ متى نعيش المهانة والمذلة!؟

How long do we have to live through war?! How long have we been living with indignity and humiliation!?! (Al-Dūsarī, 2011: 15-16)

husband or father or even as lover. The novel also describes the life of a divorced woman in a society which shows no mercy to this class of people.

¹³⁹ In this novel the Gulf War is monitored by a psychiatrist, and it is a very long novel - more than 520 pages. The most beautiful thing about this novel is its observation of reality in all its many aspects. The protagonist moves closely with the American soldier, Cook Fisher, among the streets of Riyadh and its markets and shops, mentioning them by their actual names, and this is what makes the novel close to the imagination of the reader, particularly the Saudi reader. It talks about the writer who lived and suffered all its details. This novel highlights the Iraq war and the advent of the American forces, and the post-war phenomenon of social and psychological changes.

¹⁴⁰ This novel was written twenty years before its publication, since the author had not dared to publish it at that time on account of it daring to criticize the constant, fixed features of his society. It was distributed and became very well-known through photocopying, thus becoming the most famous of unpublished Arab novels. Once it was published (in 2011), it won the book award of the Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information in 2012. This novel delves into the depths of social reality, searching for all that is prohibited and silent. The novel has a historical, social and artistic value as it was written a long time ago, but very close to the time of the Second Gulf War.

¹⁴¹ My translation.

The Arab world suffers abundantly from the perils of wars which have remained even after the wars have finished. This is true whether the wars are with Israel or were wars of liberation, and whether the wars were civil wars such as those in Yemen, Sudan, Algeria, Lebanon, or the current cold war between the Gulf countries and Iran and so on, or even the “Arab Spring” which replaced military coups, and “which enters the unprecedented shifts, and transfers the Arab world’s cracks and its problems and the contradictions from the private to the public domain” (Al-Khāzen, 2012).¹⁴² All of those continue to feed the Arabic novel, as a source from which to derive its energy and vitality. For example, most of the works of the novelist Elias Khoury (1948-) draw their strength from the effects of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). This began with his novel *Little Mountain* (1977), which was written in the opening phases of the Lebanese Civil War, and went on until his last work *Senallkul* (2012). The novel *Karrāsāt Kānūn* (*December Brochure*, 2004) by Mohammad Khoḍīr tells of the case of the Iraqi cities from the first hour of the Second Gulf War (1990/1991); it describes the isolation of the Iraqi cities after the violent explosions that the cities were exposed to during the war. However, Khoury and Khoḍīr were not the only writers to rely on the impacts of war for their literary material; there are a lot of other writers and novelists who do the same. In the most recent years (2011 and 2012) alone many works of fiction have been published in this field. Hoda Barakat in her novel *Malakūt Hadhihi Al-’Araḍ* (*The Kingdom of this Earth*, 2012), Jabbour Al-Duwaihy’s novel *Sherrid Al-Manāzil* (*The Homeless*, 2011), Rabī Jaber’s novel *Ṭuyūr Al-Holyday Inn* (*The Birds of the Holiday Inn*, 2012), *’Imra ’ah min Waraq* (*Woman of Paper*, 2012) by Rabia’Alam Al-Addin, *Lawāt Al-Ghāwiyah* (*Anguish Seductress*, 2012), by Abdo Khāl and *Shāhed Al-Zamān* (*Witness of Time*, 2012) by Najm Alldin Birgdār, are all cases in point.

As a result of war, there are new themes that have emerged, and a great number of novelists write about them, portraying, for instance, the devastation that befell them and the suffering of the Arabs in wartime atmosphere, along with both its psychological and life-threatening implications, such as depression, autism, deterioration of both physical and psychological health, economic fractures, moral decline, and the sadness that has become fully deposited and lodged deep in the soul. Good illustrations of this are the

¹⁴² My translation.

novels *Ḥikāyat Shamardal (The Tale of Shamardal, 2001)*, by `Ammār Ḥasan, and *Mudun Ta'kol Al-Ushb (Cities Eat Grass, 2008)* by Abdo Khāl.

Meanwhile, in Arab cinema, there have been several film offerings which have contributed to the embodiment of the impact of the Gulf War on the peoples of the region. One of them is *Sāher Al-Layl Waṭan Al-Nnahār (2012)* by the director Mohammad Al-Shammari, which tells the story of love under the hum of Iraqi aircrafts and the smell of blood, and also depicts the humanity of the Gulf society during that war. He also, through this film, confirms the existence of a large rift in Arab relations due to this war. Although the Gulf societies know already how the Gulf War ended, they have nonetheless been transfixed by the series of the film *Saher Al-Layl* which was introduced by Kuwait TV at the end of 2012, and they have followed it eagerly. The screenplay writer is Fahad Al-Aliwa, who wishes that this work may help the people of Kuwait to be united after suffering displacement and dispersal during the invasion. The series aims to remind Gulf people of past national unity at a time when Kuwait is caught in a near-endless cycle of troubles such as tribal bickering and political showdowns between conservative Islamists and the Western-backed ruling family.

Another film called *Ḍiyā fī f Ḥafr Al-Batin (Hospitality in Ḥafr Al-Batin, 2012)* is directed by Mahdi Ṭāleb and based on the novel of the same title (2009) by Abdul Karim Al-Obeidi. This film's subject is the crimes of the former Iraqi regime, and it tells the story of six Iraqi soldiers who were lost in one of the Saudi desert cities, which appears in the title of the film, and how its people dealt with those soldiers. It also describes the life of cruelty, injustice and poverty for young Iraqis after the war with Iran, and how they had been forced to enter the Kuwait war and the impact of all that on the relationships between neighbouring countries.

As for Arabic poetry, the Arabs have never dispensed with the war theme in all their historical stages, beginning “from pre-Islamic times onwards, as shown in the Hamasah collections, with their first chapter on war poetry” (Schippers, 1994: 329). This has been true up to the modern era, which has produced great poets such as Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008), a poet of the Palestinian cause and war, and the poet of exile and

resistance. He wrote several poetry collections, including *Then Palestine* (1999), and *Unfortunately, it Was Paradise* (2003). With regard to the poetry of the Gulf War, there are also academic dissertations on this subject, an example of which is *Saudi Poetry in the Gulf War* (2003) by Ali bin Ibraheem Al-Otaibi. There are also non-Arabs who are interested in the Gulf War poetry, such as Sr. William J. Simmons in his book *The Gulf War Anthology of Poetry* (1996). This book includes twenty-one poems, showing the feelings of the Poets before, during, and after the Gulf War and ending with a poem entitled *'Tis My Eyes to See*. So, Arabic literature did not ignore the war; rather, it was the most important source of inspiration for both poetry and prose. The Second Gulf War remains one of the most significant events that changed the face of the Saudi city and has been addressed by a considerable body of literature.

4.2 The Second Gulf War (1990/1991) as a Major Political Earthquake

The Second Gulf War was called the ‘earthquake’, as it was something not expected to occur, and its events started and unfolded rapidly.

The passage below is quoted from the novel *‘Ūyūn Alā Al-Ssamā’*, illustrating people’s confusion at the beginning of the war as they had not expected it at all:

وقبل أن تكمل ريم عباراتها.. دخل والد هدى مسرعا و صرخ فيهما: هيا.. أسرعا.. خذا كل مل تحتاجان إليه.. وهيا نغادر البلد فوراً.. الآن.. بسرعة.. نظرت إليه أم يوسف بهلع وهي تسأل.. ماذا حدث.. ولماذا نغادر البلد بسرعة؟ صرخ فيها مرة أخرى: أسرعي لا وقت للأسئلة.. إنها مصيبة.. العراق يغزو الكويت.. ألم تسمعا صوت الدبابات و الطائرات؟

Before Reem had finished what she had to say, Huda’s father entered quickly and shouted at them: “Come on.. Faster.. Grab everything you need... Come on, we’re getting out of the country immediately.. Now.. Quickly!”.. Umm Yusif looked at him in horror and asked him, “What’s happened? Why are we leaving the country so quickly?” He shouted at her once again: “Hurry up – there’s no time for questions.. It’s a disaster.. Iraq’s invading Kuwait.. Didn’t you hear the sound of tanks and aircraft?” (Al-‘Ulayyān, 2000: 42-43)

The impact of this war began before the actual war did, given that the Saudi government was embarrassed as to the choice between either allowing the foreign troops to enter its territory, or to satisfy the vast majority of people who feared that the presence of these foreign forces could damage the community. Ferguson notes: “Some worried that the Westerners' comparatively liberal and non- Islamic attitudes about everything from sex to alcohol to the role of women in society would corrupt the desert kingdom. A few hoped that the foreigners would prompt reforms such as more visibility and political rights for women” (Ferguson, 2003: 25). Even the Americans were aware of the feelings of the vast majority in Saudi Arabia until today. Doyle notes that “Anti-American feelings are strong in Saudi for two major reasons: 1. Our support of Israel. Saudis believe the United States gives Israel everything it wants and that our support signifies a hatred of Arabs and Islam... 2. Our supposed desecration of Saudi Arabia. During the Gulf War, American soldiers were on Saudi soil” (Doyle, 2008: 84).

This war has had severe psychological, social and political impacts on relations within the Arab world, and these have spread rapidly as demonstrated in the following quote from the novel *'Awdah 'Ilā Al-'Ayyām Al-'Ūlā* (2004):

الجراح الناتجة ستكون عميقة, ولن تندمل قبل عقود وعقود. هذه الحرب ستخلف دمارًا واسع النطاق...
للدول العربية... والخليج العربي على وجه التحديد.

The wounds resulting from this war will be deep, and will not heal for decades and decades to come. This war will leave behind it destruction on a wide scale... for the Arab countries... and for those of the Arab Gulf more specifically. (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 131)

The discovery of oil in the Arab Gulf region has been bringing dramatic wide-ranging transformations to these societies, and the impact of it came more rapidly than that of the other natural resources. Abnormal incidents, however, such as wars are usually faster and have exerted an equally huge impact on Gulf societies. This might be because wars are not subjected to any control and they are not taking a natural course of time. Consider the character of the mother in the novel *'Ūyūn Alā Al-Ssamā'*, who is supposed to be calmer than her young daughter, but shows herself more tense when she addresses her daughter during the Second Gulf War:

ألا ترين كيف حالنا..كيف كنا وكيف أصبحنا..هل يعقل أن نصبح مشردين بين يوم وليلة ومهددين أيضا؟.

Can't you see how things have turned out for us? How we were and how we are now?. Is it possible that we should become homeless and under threat overnight? (Al-'Ulayyān, 2000: 45)

The Second Gulf War had begun dramatically on 2/8/1990, when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, and its last chapters were written with the defeat and withdrawal of the Iraqi forces on 28 February 1991. The Gulf war or crisis is one of the wars that have contributed remarkably in the way of forming the image of the Arab Gulf societies, especially in the formation of the term ego and the other. Thus, the ego no longer means all the Arabs, as a result of the fact that the war caused a shock to Arab relations. Peretz states that "Gulf wars underscored deep divisions within the Arab world" (Peretz, 1988: 150).

The Arabs thought that they were one nation and they did not expect a war to break out between cousins, but more probably with some foreign party. They were close to each other, to the point that a critic such as Kafaji could describe them by saying, "Arabs are centred on themselves" (Kafaji, 2011: 68). In reality, this war was not only between Kuwait first and then Saudi Arabia against Iraq, but its impact had also spread to embrace those countries such as Yemen, Palestine and Jordan which were biased in favour of Iraq or voted against the decision of the Ministerial Council of the Arab States League, which included the explicit condemnation of the military aggression against Kuwait. This was just an indication of the weakness of Arab relations that was revealed by the war. Nanda confirms that when he writes: "there was the Gulf War in 1991, which exposed severe weaknesses and splits within the Arab world" (Nanda, 2008: 292).

As a result of this war, the terminology of the ego has come to the fore strongly and its concept has changed from what it was before. A typical example showing this point is the Saudi novel *Nobāh* (2003) by Abdo Khāl. The character of this novel emphasises the psychological factor affecting the Saudis, who were really surprised by the Gulf war. They thought that it might be a big joke, given that they could never even imagine that this war could be waged on them by other Arabs. But they were woken out of this notion by the sounds of Scud missiles dropping on their territory.

The consequence was that the shape of both the ego and the other began forming in the minds of the people of the Gulf. Jordanians, Iraqis, Sudanese, Palestinians and Yemenis became outside the circle of the ego. Not only that, but with regards to those Arabs who were supporting Iraq and working in some other Arab countries, they might be called 'The Fifth Column'. Al-Khuḍīr notes that:

البعض يرى أن العرب المؤيدين للعراق هم الطابور الخامس و يجب التخلص منهم.

Some believe that the Arabs who are supporting Iraq are the fifth column and should be got rid of. (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 134)

The novelist Al-Dūsārī highlights this issue by narrating the story of a Saudi youth who collided with a Jordanian man in his forties, and instead of the Saudi offering his apology, he says:

أنتم أيها الأردنيون جاحدون.

You Jordanians are an ungrateful bunch. (Al-Dūsārī, 2011: 186)

The novel furthermore portrays the complications that a Saudi traveller faces at the Jordanian border checkpoints. All this reflects the truth of the weak links between the Arabs, despite Arab politicians who always observe in their speeches how the Arab link is very strong. This Saudi traveller says, after a Jordanian passport officer has taken his passport and then insulted him:

كم أشعر بالمذلة في نقاط الجوازات العربية. يُعرونني بأسئلتهم.. تزبد الأنظمة على المنابر بأننا أمة عربية واحدة.. و في مراكز الحدود, تتهشم المنابر على بدلات العسكر الذين يفتشون في حقائبنا عن قوميتنا ليدوسوها بأحذيتهم.

How humiliated I feel at Arab passport checks! They strip me naked with their questions... Arab regimes chant from their podiums about us being one united nation... And then at their borders, all this comes to nothing as the men in the military uniforms search through our bags for Arab nationalism only to trample it with their boots. (Al-Dūsārī, 2011: 82, 83)

It should be noted that Arab people are emotional by nature, so that when the Saudis remember this war they directly recall the lined defeat, which means psychological

defeat as the Gulf people were not able to even imagine the attitude of those people and their policies, when they abandoned them. Kafaji confirms the strong presence of the psychological and emotional factor among Arabs: “Emotional expression in the Arab culture is very much intertwined with the entire psychological structure” (Kafaji, 2011: 68). Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in particular, besides their financial support to the countries in question, were very well known for their strong ties and common interests with those countries. The protagonist of the Saudi novel *Al-Riyadh-November 90* is confused, and wonders:

من كان يصدق أن دولاً ستتقلب علينا، ونحن الذين كنا ندعمها بمئات الملايين سنوياً.

Who would have believed that countries would turn against us, while we were supporting them to the tune of hundreds of millions annually! (Al-Dūsarī, 2011: 358)

This division among the Arab peoples and the resulting confusion felt by the novelist and his novel’s protagonist because of the effects of the Gulf War had also come to affect the style of the literary writing.

4.3 The Impact of the War on Novelists and on their Style

The entire crisis of this war caused a shock in all the affairs of the Gulf countries and their people, and this was to be reflected in their lifestyle, their thinking and their writing, particularly in the case of the Saudi novel.

Critics have discerned these transformations clearly through the type of discourse and ideas that are dominant in the intellectuals’ works in each of the stages of writing on the subject of war. Many Saudi writers were already influenced by the writings of some novelists in the Arab Maghreb and in the Levant who had already been affected by wars. The attitudes of the intellectuals have dominated their writings during their wars; for example, the Algerian novel dealt with the subject of the war of independence. Many of the novelists wrote about that issue and among them the great novelist Al-

Ṭāhir Waṭṭār (1936-2010) who revealed through his novel *Al-L āz*¹⁴³ (1983) his clear orientation towards left-wing Communism which led to the exclusion of the rest of the factions that were not leftist. This novel deals in some negative ways with the other factions that had contributed to the war of liberation. The novel reveals the writer's ideology, which describes everyone but the left-wing communists as enemies or traitors of that revolution.¹⁴⁴ So, the war novel possibly has a wider scope than others for settling scores with opponents.

Among the most prominent Saudi novelists who were following this approach are: Ghazi Alghosaibi, Turki Al-Ḥamad and Sa'ad Al-Dūsarī. Furthermore, the strong impact of the war also causes the novel to tend towards the realistic trend in literature, which is the closest approach to the historical novel as well. In such circumstances, the novelists tend to be closer to their readers by using a realistic style in order to highlight the virtues of what they in fact believe in. A good illustration of this is the character Abdulqader Mustafa, from the novel *'Ughniya li Al-Bard wa Al-Rimāl*¹⁴⁵ (*Song of the cold and the sand*, 2012) by A'āid Nabā, who confirmed that "the space, the time and the characters in this novel belong to reality, and even the protagonist is now sitting among you in this hall" (Awaḍ, 2012).¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ It is one of the most prominent novels that dealt with the theme of Algeria's liberation war.

¹⁴⁴ Moreover, it presents the left-wing Communist protagonist as a victim of the other factions, including liberals, Islamists and others, when it portrays its hero who was betrayed by his compatriots from other factions; plus it portrays the hero Zaydan as a victim who was murdered not by the colonizer, but rather at the hands of those factions. Badawī describes some parts of this novel:

In *Al-Laz* (the name of the hero, 1974) Al-Ṭāhir Waṭṭār broaches a problem which was typical of many post-revolutionary situations in the Arab world. *Al-Laz* is the illegitimate son of Zaydan, a communist who operates a guerrilla cell in the mountains. *Al-Laz*, who does not initially know who his father is, has been serving as an agent for the guerrillas in a French camp. He is betrayed and flees to his father's hideout, but discovers that, since his father has refused the demand of the Muslim members of the Nationalist Front (FLN) that he recant his Communist beliefs, he is about to die. Even after such a lengthy and bloody struggle for independence, there are still other scores to settle (Badawī, 1993: 207).

¹⁴⁵ This novel describes the events and the occupation of Palestine in the war of 1948 and how some people indeed put aside their patriotism to the extent that they got into Israeli army jeeps, working against their own people. No method other than the realistic method would be able to expose these traitors, from the point of view of the author.

¹⁴⁶ My translation. The novelist confirmed this at his book signing ceremony.

As a consequence of the Gulf War, the Saudi novel has also become more inclined to realism as it has suffered from the war. Hence, when someone reads the novel *23 Yawman or Al-Raṣāṣkūb* ("23 days" / *Operation Cast Lead*, 2012) by the young Saudi novelist Abdullah Al-Amri, they will definitely realise that the pen of the writer is fully compatible with the real vision of the camera that portrayed Israel's war on Gaza over the twenty-three-day period. Even the title of the novel corresponds to the reality of the type of weapons that were used by Israel in that war. As Alagha writes: "From 27 December 2008 to 20 January 2009 Israel conducted its military campaign 'Operation Cast Lead' in the Gaza strip" (Alagha, 2011: 91). Al-Amri depicts how the houses are demolished over the heads of their occupants, just like in the television images. Therefore, he believes that there is no place for narration under such psychological pressure other than through the realistic method. The following example is from the novel *Mudun Ta'kul Al-'Ushb* (2008), which shows how close the Saudi novel comes to a realistic rather than an artistic and fictional style during the war, not to mention the appearance of the ego:

أنا لا أعرف جمال عبد الناصر و أنتم لا تعرفون جدتي. جمال رفع شعار الوحدة العربية وفشل، وجدتي رفعت شعار إغاثة الملهوف وفشلت، و الإثنان أحمل لهما حقدا دفيناً وأحملهما مسؤولية ضياعي.

I do not know Gamal Abdel Nasser, and you do not know my grandmother. Gamal raised the slogan of Arab unity and failed, and my grandmother raised the slogan of relief for the needy and failed, and towards both of them I bear a deep grudge and I hold them responsible for my loss. (Khāl, 2008: 7)

Thus, the novels of the war stage were not so dependent on a great deal of artistic imagination, and therefore all the names of cities, streets, neighbourhoods and the events that relate to the war were very real. Not only did this war affect the artistic style, however, but its effects have also been seen in the intellectual and literary currents in Saudi cities.

4.4 The Impact of the Gulf War on the Intellectual and Literary Trends in Saudi Cities

The following words are from the novel *Mudun Ta'akul Al-Ushb* 'Cities Eat Grass' (2008):

اقرأه ولا تدع أحدا يراه. كان عنوان الكتاب عريضا، قرأت العنوان بتمهل (القومية العربية) وبدأت أقرأ..

Read it, and do not let anyone else see it. The title-page of the book was wide open, so I read the title slowly ("Arab Nationalism") and then started to read. (Khāl, 2008: 188)

Many Saudi novelists are highlighting their political, intellectual and religious orientations, which were both unclear and undeclared in their writings before the war. Al-Khidr demonstrates this point in Saudi Arabia during that time:

In reality, the Gulf war caused a real collapse and coup in the orientation of some intellectual elites, without it being declared in their writings as the local elites do not declare their intellectual orientation in a clear and specific way in their writing. However, the observer can detect these changes through the change in the language of discourse, and through the ideas that hold sway over the intellectuals in each stage. (Al-Khidr, Abdul-Aziz, 2010: 123)¹⁴⁷

Through the novel, and because of the city's disorder caused by the war, many of those who were in exile dare to enter the country and publish publicly what they believe to make an impact on their communities and their readers. A typical example of this is the character Al-Rudayni in the novel *'Awdah 'Ilā Al-'Ayyām Al-'Ūlā*, who plays the role of a political and intellectual activist:

استهوتني كتب الفلسفة.. تعرفت على مجموعة من الشباب فازددت إعجابا بكتب الكتاب اليساريين ثم انضمت إلى مجموعة ناصرية، ثم بعد ذلك ذهبت إلى بيروت.. كان معي مجموعة من السعوديين وآخرين من دول خليجية ودول عربية كنا نشكل مجموعة متجانسة.

¹⁴⁷ My translation.

The philosophy books fascinated me... I met a group of young people, and my admiration for books by left-wing writers increased. I joined a Nasserist group, and then I went off to Beirut.. With me were a group of Saudis and others from the Gulf and Arab countries, and we were forming a homogeneous group... (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 399)

Although over the age of 60, the hero revealed this information under the humming sound of warplanes over Riyadh. He concealed his own orientations during all this time because Riyadh's policy was against intellectual trends and political parties.

We cannot in any way ignore the Saudi intellectual's shock felt because of the Gulf crisis at the Baathist, nationalist, leftist and other movements in the Arab world, as the Gulf War brought a real collapse in the intellectual orientations of the elites. The Pan Arab nationalist and Baathist movement lost many of its supporters in the Arab Gulf. It is true that the state was already harassing those who adopted these ideas, but they had some secret gatherings which were attended by some interested parties and intellectuals, all of which were conducted underground, since the policy stance of the state was opposed to all such slogans. One of the heroes of the novel *Al-Riyadh-November 90* describes their secret meetings:

إنها الطريقة الوحيدة التي نستطيع بها أن نلتقي و أن نوجد موقفنا. ليس هناك اتحادات أو نقابات أو أحزاب
تجمعنا. كلها محرمة في هذا البلد. لذلك كونا شللا في منازلنا.

It is the only way that we are able to meet and establish a united stance. There are no federations, unions or parties to bring us together. All are prohibited in this country. So, we set up groups in our own homes. (Al-Dūsarī, 2011: 289)

The ego is furthermore no longer a subject, or applies to all the Arabs as it once did. Here is Iraq, for which the Arabs were crying during its war with Iran, and to whose glorification they wrote and sang so many stories and poems, which has now turned from being an ally to becoming an enemy. Al-'Ulayyān confirms that in her novel:

تبا للعراقيين.. لأنهم أنذال.. إنهم جميعا يستحقون القتل.

Woe to the Iraqis.. They are scoundrels... They all deserve to be killed.
(Al-'Ulayyān, 2000: 44)

In spite of all that, there are some voices that still call for Arab nationalism, promote leftist ideology and use slogans such as what the novel *Al-Riyadh-November 90* has observed:

ليتك يا وليد تقرأ مقالات الشاعر الكويتي "سليمان الفليح" ... لقد نشر بعد الإجتياح العراقي سلسلة من المقالات... يصرخ بالصحراء أن تغرس رملها في معطف الوحدة العربية.

Waleed, I wish you would read the articles by the Kuwaiti poet "Solaiman Al-Fellya"... he has published a series of articles after the Iraqi invasion... Screaming at the desert to embed its sands in the coat of Arab Unity. (Al-Dūsarī, 2011: 340-341)

Furthermore, the protagonist of the novel *'Awdah 'Ilā Al-'Ayyām Al-'Ūlā* says:

العرب يحرقون بعضا.. عشت حُلم الوحدة العربية.. حُلم القومية العربية: شعب واحد أرض واحدة. عشت حُلم عبدالناصر بكل النزوات التي ملأت قلوبنا, و أفكار الحُلم العربي الكبير الذي داعب خيالنا.. انظر إلى الصورة الآن.. القوات الأمريكية تقصف بغداد و بمساعدة من..؟ مساعدة من قوات عربية, سعودية ومصرية وسورية.

Arabs are burning each other... I've lived the dream of Arab unity... the dream of Arab nationalism: one people, one land. I've lived the dream of Abdel Nasser with every joyful spasm that has filled our hearts, and the ideas of the great Arab dream which has teased our imagination... Look at the picture now... U.S. forces bombing Baghdad – and that with whose help?...with the help of Arab forces, Saudi, Egyptian and Syrian... (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 475)

Waleed was disappointed with these slogans, like the majority of thinkers and writers who were shocked when these slogans failed them and those countries abandoned them too. Waleed has come to believe only this;

يا دكتور, العروبة أصبحت مومس.

Oh Doctor, Arabism has become a whore. (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 398)

The character that carries the name of Gamal, as a symbol of Gamal Abdel Nasser, in this novel is a very isolated character, and the novel here wants to point out that one of the cases of the Arabs' frustration is what was caused by Gamal Abdel Nasser, who was responsible for their divisions and their isolation (see Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 416). There is almost an agreement among the intelligentsia figures in the novels here, namely: *'Ūyūn Alā Al-Ssamā'* (2000) by Qumāsha Al-'Ulayyān, *'Awdah 'Ilā Al-'Ayyām Al-'Ūlā* (2004)

by Ibrahim Al-Khuḍīr and *Al-Riyadh-November 90* (2011) by Sa‘ad Al-Dūsarī, that the role of Abdel Nasser, from their own point of view, was negative and selfish towards the Arab nation, and so the novel *Mudun Ta’akul Al-Ushb* (2008) shows that Gamal (which means beauty) does not carry anything of his name’s meaning, and so does not deserve to be called Gamal (see Khāl, 2008: 301).

This crisis has changed many of the convictions of those who were advocating various movements and has led them to come back strongly to the national movement in order to participate in their country's cause. Al-Khidr noted that when he wrote on the Gulf war, “The strong changes began to appear through satirizing those ideas and increasing the sense of the national dimension and its importance” (Al-Khidr Abdulaziz, 2010: 446).¹⁴⁸ This appears strongly at the level of the novel, and a good illustration of this is seen in the following extract:

تعرف يادكتور منصور أن أغلب الذين كانوا موجودين في المكان كانوا يقولون: ليت الأمريكان يدمروا العراق! حتى لا يهددونا في المستقبل! كانوا يقولون: " بلا عروبة بلا كلام فاض.. الواحد ماله غير نفسه.

You know, Doctor Mansour, most of those who were on the spot were saying: “If only the Americans would destroy Iraq!. So that it does not threaten us in the future!. They would say: "Away with this Arabism nonsense!... People should only be thinking of themselves!.. (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 462)

This was not only at the intellectual level, but was indeed a popular sentiment; even the woman who used to strongly sympathise with the Palestinian cause here is showing her ego clearly during the war when she says to her husband:

لا يهمني ماذا يحدث للفلسطينيين، بقدر ما يهمني عالمي أنا، الذي هو أنت و أطفالك.

I don’t care what happens to the Palestinians, as much as I care about my own world, which means you and your children. (Al-Dūsarī, 2011: 196)

¹⁴⁸ My translation.

Furthermore, there were some writers and intellectuals who abandoned these slogans and moved instead towards lionizing the Americans, the Westerners in general and their supremacy. Perhaps all this is because of the fact that:

الأمريكان لعبوا على أوتار خوف هؤلاء الناس وقلقهم...

The Americans have touched a raw nerve, playing on the fears and anxieties of these people... (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 461)

So, the result of this is that some people may be tempted to utter something like Othmān's answer when he was asked by his friend, the protagonist of Al-Dūsarī's novel, to state his opinion:

بعد الإجتياح، سألته عن رأيه، فقال: أتمنى أن يكون لأمريكا قواعد عسكرية هنا. نحن لا نجيد إلا النوم والثرثرة. أما هم فكل شيء عندهم بدقة. أمريكا هي التي ستركل مؤخرة صدام حسين بعيدا عنا كي نعود إلى نومنا هانئين.

After the invasion I asked him for his opinion, and he said: "I hope that America has military bases here. We're good for nothing except sleeping and prattling. But they have everything, just so. It's America which will kick the backside of Saddam Hussein a long way away from us, so that we can happily get back to sleep. (Al-Dūsarī, 2011: 213)

The novel's opinion here might tie in with the view of Hussein: "Influenced by the impact of the Western press, some members of those elites believed that the crisis was an opportunity for change" (Hussein, 2012: 302).

On the other hand, the crisis has shown a historic turning point in the cities for the local Islamic tendency towards using exaggerated religious slogans which do not reflect rationality or even the real, authentic mercy and compassion of the Islamic religion. As Cordesman notes, "The visible presence of Western forces in Saudi Arabia during and after the Gulf War gave Islamic extremists new reasons to attack the "corrupt" Western influence over the Saudi government" (Cordesman, 2003, Vol, 2: 174).

The conditions of war have indeed allowed all parties enough space to move in and express themselves, unlike in the conditions that prevailed before. This space of freedom is clearly apparent through the dialogue between the hero Mansour and his manager when Mansour says:

كلامك كبير يا دكتور ميسرة.. خطير يمكن يسبب لك مشاكل.. لا تقوله لأحد
رد الدكتور ميسرة:

ياه يا دكتور منصور.. أنت والله اللي نايم وخبرك قديم.. هذاك أول الناس كانت تخاف.. الآن الشباب
المطاوعة (أقصد اللي طالعين جدد) ليل ونهار شغالين كلام في مواضيع ثقيلة.. شي على المنابر في
المساجد وشي أشرطة. وشي منشورات وكلها ضد الأمريكان اللي جايبين نافخيين صدورهم علينا!!!

What you're saying is huge, Doctor Maysarah.. It's dangerous and it can cause you problems... Don't say it to anyone...

Dr. Maysarah responded:

Well, well, Dr. Mansour... Really, it's you who've been asleep, and your news is out of date.. That was before, when people were afraid to say anything... Now religious youth (I mean those who have come forward now) are busy day and night discussing heavy topics, some from the pulpits of mosques... some in tapes... and some through publications, and all these are against the Americans who've come to strut around in our midst!!! (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 144)

The community was not aware of this, but only of the Riyadh bombings and the events of 9/11, and then this anarchy came as a shock to some of them who then returned later to the logic of politics and the national dimension. The common factor after this war, between the Islamic shift and before that the national transformation of the Saudi intellectual, is that they both became closer to political rationality and stronger in terms of the sense of patriotism. At the same time, this shift brought with it a reduction in the carefree reformist attitude, and personal interests took precedence over matters of public interest. This indeed has led the present researcher to study the impact of the Second Gulf War on the economic transformations that took place, and how this affected both the Saudi state and individual citizens.

4.5 The Economic Impact of the Gulf War on Saudi Cities

In his novel *'Awdah 'Ilā Al-'Ayyām Al-'Ūlā*, Al-Khuḍīr says;

الأمريكان غادروا الرياض.. عادت الأمور إلى ما كانت قبل الغزو و قبل الحرب.. لكن الرياض لم تعد إلى ما قبل الثاني من أغسطس 1990 !!! شيء ما تغير.

The Americans have left Riyadh.. Things have returned to what they were before the invasion and war.. But Riyadh has not returned to what it was pre-Second of August 1990!!!. Something has changed. (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 520)

We should note that the impact of this war on the internal society is not less than the impact of the Islamic awakening which is often referred to as the most important outcome of that period. One of the most prominent features of that phase is the financial and social shift.

On the financial side, the U.S. military reports and the media have exaggerated the event and then left the Saudi state financially drained. This point has been mentioned several times in the novel *'Awdah 'Ilā Al-'Ayyām Al-'Ūlā*, for example in this dialogue between the patient and his doctor:

دكتور.. أنا أكبر منك وأعرف منك بالحياة.. فكرك لو الشغلة ما فيها فلوس و أموال تجي كل هالأمم: أمريكان و إنجليز و طليان, إفريقيا وبنغلاديش.. كل واحد جاي و في باله يطلع له بكم فلس.. لا تقول لي أمريكان ولا نظام عالمي جديد.. إن الأمريكان من يوم ما وصلوا وهم داخليين بزنس على ثقيل.. استيراد معدات وبيع أدوات.. وجماعتك السعوديين طلوعوا والله شطار وناصحين.. بزنس إز بزنس الشغل شغل.

Dr... I am older than you and I know this life more than you do... Do you think that if this job didn't bring in good money these nations would be coming here: the Americans, British and Italians, Africans and Bangladeshis.. Each one came here intending to make some money.. Don't talk to me about Americans or a new world order.. since the arrival of the Americans they've been getting into big business.. importing equipment and selling tools.. and your Saudi community are smart and honest people.. Business is Business. He said that with a laugh. (Al-Khudīr, 2004: 136)

This view has been confirmed by the American attitude, as represented by Colonel Bazerbashi, who says in one of his meetings:

كما تعلم أن الأزمات العسكرية ليست كلها حروباً، هناك شيء اسمه "Business" الأعمال التجارية هي فرص و مناسبات لا تأتي إلا مرة في العمر! والذكي هو الذي يستطيع أن ينتهز هذه الفرصة.

As you know, military crises are not all wars, there is something called "Business", and such business opportunities and occasions come only once in a lifetime! The smart person is the one who can take advantage of this opportunity. (Al-Khudīr, 2004: 109)

Therefore, Saudi Arabia has suffered for a long time, especially at the level of the state, as a result of this war; not only financially, for there has been a reversal on social and psychological aspects as well. As Cordesman explains, "The cost of the Gulf War

placed a massive new burden on the Kingdom, however, and paying for the costs of war had to come at the expense of social and development investments and helped lead to chronic Saudi budget deficits for several years” (Cordesman, 2009: 135).

On the individual level, meanwhile, there have been great opportunities for substantial profits as the war has caused significant financial shifts affecting most Saudi families, which transforms the society in such a way as to make it an increasingly consumer society – indeed, to an annoying extent. Hammond explains that Saudi Arabia has hosted the large presence of American forces, and so it has been affected as well as Kuwait: “The American military presence in the Gulf after the 1991 war, though largest in Saudi Arabia, had more of a social effect in Kuwait than anywhere else. Saudi Arabia was already a Westernized society with strong links to the United States and a well-entrenched consumer culture” (Hammond, 2007: 108).

The protagonist of Al-Khuḍīr’s novel is a psychiatrist, and such dialogues take place between him and his patients. The doctor has asked his patient to stop drinking alcohol, which would lead him towards death as he was so weak, and the response he obtained was:

عندي نية صادقة لترك الشرب.. لكنني الآن داخل في كثير من الصفقات, والوقت الآن فرصة عمر
للصفقات.

I do sincerely intend to give up drinking.. But right now I am involved in doing several deals, and the time now is an opportunity of a lifetime for deals. (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 134)

Therefore, people there went out in pursuit of their own personal interests instead of the public interest. As an example of this, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had decreed that some Arabs must be deported from Saudi territory, such as the Yemenis because their state did not stand with Saudi Arabia during this ordeal, but rather supported the Iraqi invasion. As Lucassen observes, “A million or more Yemenis were forced out of Saudi Arabia, for example, because of the Yemeni government's stance with regard to Iraq” (Lucassen, 2008: 142). Rather than lose everything, the Yemenis gave all their own assets away at competitive prices. On the other side, the Saudis found themselves being

compelled to buy from them due to the tempting prices. The novel portrays how some people took advantage of this opportunity by buying the companies and businesses at low and competitive prices:

شراء المطاعم والمحلات من اليمنيين صار الحديث الذي لا ينتهي... كل واحد يقول فرصة.. اللي مايغتني ويصير غني هذه الأيام.. لن يصبح غنيا بعد ذلك.. الموظفون اليمنيون في المستشفى أيضا تم الإستغناء عن خدماتهم سواء كانوا أطباء أم فنيين أم عمال نظافة.

The purchase of restaurants and shops from Yemenis became the endless talk... Each one says this is an opportunity... that anyone who fails to get rich these days will not become rich later... Yemeni staff at the hospital have also been laid off, be they doctors, technicians or cleaners. (Al-Khufīr, 2004: 242, 272, 452)

This war has led to a visible re-arranging of the seats of social status. Properties are not selling, major companies have frozen their activities and that has encouraged some youths to play this game successfully. For instance, the novel *Al-Riyadh-November 90* documents the new citizens' life as a result of this war:

جاري الذي كان بالأمس جاهلا، مُعدما، يقطن حيا شعيبا، أراه وقد أثرى وصار يدير سلسلة من الشركات.

My neighbour who not long ago was ignorant, destitute, living in a common neighbourhood, I see him now rich and running a string of companies. (Al-Dūsarī, 2011: 97)

Hiro gives much detail about the Gulf War and displays some images of Yemenis being deported from Saudi Arabia, confirming that, “Most of those leaving were obliged to sell their property at a fraction of its value” (Hiro, 2003: 258).

At the same time there was public concern about the rapid social fluctuations and environmental effects that have been happening in those virgin cities which were damaged and distorted by modern weapons. “The Gulf War of 1991 was probably the first war in history that really made people consider the impact on the environment” (Owen, 1997: 146).

All these impacts of the Gulf War have eventually led to the social transformations within Saudi cities.

4.6 The Social Impact of the Gulf War on the Saudi Society

The novel *'Awdah 'Ilā Al-'Ayyām Al-'Ūlā* makes the following point:

ما يحدث في هذه المنطقة الآن سوف يغيّر الحياة الساكنة الوديعّة المستكينّة التي عاشها الناس سنوات طويلة.

What is happening in this region now will change the static, peaceful and quiet form of life which people here have lived for so many long years. (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 99)

Transformations are a feature of human life, and change is a continuous process that occurs in all human societies. The Saudi society is an important part of the global community and is influenced by all the variables around it. The changes indeed increase sharply when the cross-link or the reasons are abnormal, like in the case of a war which leads suddenly to regiments of people with their cultures, customs and their heavy media coming from both far and near countries to live and engage with a new community such as the Saudi society, which was taken by surprise by “ The presence of the U.S. military, and especially female American soldiers who do not follow the country's strict dress code”(Finnegan, 2006: 32).

With regard to the Gulf war and the magnitude of its impact, some critics believe that this effect has not really been evaluated as yet. For example, the Federal Research Division confirms that, “The major event affecting Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states in the early 1990s was clearly the Persian Gulf War. The effect of that war on the Kingdom has yet to be assessed” (Division, 2004: 40). Even if the financial losses of the Kingdom can be estimated, there are larger losses than those regarding finance, such as the dramatic transformations that have occurred in that land. Some studies try to get at the real figures, or at least to be close to the truth, in order to provide a picture approximating to the reality, but they mostly conclude their efforts by saying something like this:

Financially, the cost of the war for the area as a whole has been estimated by the Arab Monetary Fund at US \$676 billion for 1990 and 1991. ‘This figure does

not, however, take account of such factors as the ecological impact of the war', the loss of jobs and income for thousands of foreign workers employed in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Gulf, and the slowdown effect on the growth of the economies of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. (Division, 2004: 40)

The novel often tries to touch upon these cavernous areas in the life of communities, for this is what distinguishes the novel's mission. For example, a huge novel like *'Awdah 'Ilā Al-'Ayyām Al-'Ulā* begins with "The Americans are here" (in Riyadh) and ends with "The Americans have left Riyadh.. Things have returned to what they were before the invasion and war.. But Riyadh has not returned to what it was pre-Second of August 1990!!!. Something has changed" (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 5, 520). And over the pages of this novel he tells us what was going on, namely about the impact of the Americans on Riyadh rather than on the battlefields.

Many believe that the task of foreign soldiers is to fight outside the cities and on the borders, and this probably happen sometimes. However, in the Gulf War the facts were unlike that, as those forces who came to fight were confident about their own victory and strength and they were trusting in their tools, given that the war in fact was not an equal one. Therefore all these elements reflected psychologically on those forces and on their plans. As a result of that, their presence in the cities and neighbourhoods was commonplace and a familiar sight among Saudi citizens, who believed that those forces in the end had come to Saudi territory in order to defend Saudi people, which led to an acceptance of these forces among local citizens. Here the influence and transitions of these forces became quick and effective.

Those forces were not confined to the special military barracks, but instead were moving about so often in the streets of Saudi cities, and because of them the citizens came to witness the spread of the fast-food restaurants, which were not something familiar before. These latter did not leave with these foreign forces, but have indeed become to this very day one of the most important means of Saudi social entertainment. Those soldiers became involved with people over there in their rituals and their special occasions, bought from their shops, got treated in their hospitals, used their parks and appeared in their local media. Gold indicates that "Thousands of U.S. troops roamed Saudi cities like Riyadh. Americans went to Saudi supermarkets" (Gold, 2004: 159). All

these events are demonstrated and portrayed by the novels studied in the present chapter, unlike much research that discussed the Gulf War and then made declarations such as “military personnel tended to be assigned to remote border areas of the country and were little seen by the population as a whole” (Division, 2004: 40), the opinion of the novel *'Awdah 'Ilā Al-'Ayyām Al-'Ūlā* is entirely different as it confirms that the forces were everywhere, including in several cities such as Riyadh, Dhahran and so on. The novel depicts the American character as one who lives and moves in the depths of society and knows all its different groups and institutions. The character Mansour says:

رغم أنها أمريكية، لكنها تعرف الرياض أكثر مني!!.. علاقاتها متشعبة بمختلف الطبقات بالرياض.. تجار صغار.. رجال أعمال كبار.. مسؤوليين على مختلف المسؤوليات.. مثقفين.. باختصار أبهرتني بحجم علاقتها بالناس.

Even though she is an American, she knows more of Riyadh than me!!.. She's got all sorts of links with various classes in Riyadh.. Small traders.. And big businessmen.. Officials with various responsibilities..Intellectuals.. In short, she impressed me by the sheer number of connections she has with people. (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 285)

In the Department of Psychological Studies in one of the Riyadh hospitals, the novel describes in the words of the protagonist how the American presence was everywhere:

وأنا في طريقي من الإستراحة قابلتني ممرضة استرالية، بابتسامة عريضة و قالت: " كما ترى يادكتور، الأمريكان أصبحوا الآن في كل مكان.. على أية حال هم أصدقاؤكم".

On my way from the rest area, an Australian nurse met me and said with a broad smile: "As you can see, Doctor, the Americans are now everywhere.. In any case, they are your friends". (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 11)

Furthermore, one of the American female doctors insists on cooperating with the Saudi doctor who already wanted to work on a psychosocial research about the Saudi community. She says:

لا أحب فقط أن أعمل معك بل أعشق مشاركتك العمل سوف تكون فرصة رائعة وعظيمة لكي نعمل هذا البحث معا.

I don't want just to work with you, but I would love to share this work with you, because it will be a wonderful and encouraging opportunity to work on this research together. (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 16)

The novel here provides an image that is not provided by other sources about the other role that is represented by the Western soldier and the impact of this participation on the social changes in Saudi society. What is provided by the novel does not end there, but also it depicts the American women who visit the private places of men and meet them in their own places and homes. What is more, it confirms that this was not secret but was in the presence of the conservative religious male character, who in turn tried to invite her to embrace Islam. The dialogue here is between the main character Mansour, the religious character Fayeze and the homeowner character Zaid and takes place in the presence of an American female researcher and soldier in Zaid's flat:

فايز ابتسم وسألني: هل أدعوها إلى الإسلام؟ زيد نظر إلى فايز وقال: تدعوها للإسلام!! الحرمة جاية
تضرب الإسلام وتقول أدعوها للإسلام!

Fayeze smiled and asked me: Shall I invite her to become a Muslim? Zaid looked at Fayeze and said: Invite her to become a Muslim!! The woman comes here to strike Islam, and you talk about inviting her to become a Muslim! (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 200)

Not only this, but also the novels here portray the depth of Americans' integration into the Saudi society, where the character of Major Cook Fischer in the novel *'Awdah 'Ilā Al-'Ayyām Al-'Ūlā*, who came with the U.S. army to Saudi Arabia, shows us how the American character knows all about the country's various locations and community customs – almost more than what the local people know (see Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 121). An example of this is given when the American lady induces a Saudi citizen to get to know multiple locations in Riyadh when she directs her Saudi friend, who was driving the car every day, to accompany her (See Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 107). Furthermore, she encourages him to become familiar with the various strata of his own society that he does not know. She says to her Saudi friend:

أرجوك، شاركنا هذا الاجتماع، إنها فرصة لك أيضا لتختلط بأجواء الرياض الأخرى... أصبحت لا
أستغرب المعلومات الدقيقة والكثيرة التي تعرفها عن الناس وعن الرياض!... أنت جعلتيني أرى أشياء في
الرياض لم أتصور أبدا أنها موجودة!

“Please, join in this meeting with us, for it is also an opportunity for you to mingle in other social circles in Riyadh...” I've come not to be surprised at just how much accurate information she knows about people and Riyadh!.. You made me see things in Riyadh that I never imagined even existed. (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 102, 153, 203)

She is a key figure in the novel, where her name is mentioned on almost every page. Indeed, the Americans have penetrated to the very depths of the local society in order to analyze their psychology. The novel has confirmed this through the intelligence character Mr. Bazerbashi, who eavesdrops on domestic calls and collects their jokes and anecdotes in order to study the psychology of the Saudi people. Major Cook Fischer says to her friend:

إن السعوديين أظهروا مقدرة بارعة في تأليف الطرائف و الدعابات.. في السخرية من هذا الحدث. إن عشرات الطرائف قيلت منذ أن بدأت الأزمة إلى الآن.. إن المقدم بارزاشي من وحدة الإستعلامات بالجيش الأمريكي هو المسؤول عن تجميع هذه القفشات والطرائف وتحليلها.

The Saudis have demonstrated an outstanding ability to come up with jokes and funny stories.. to make fun of this new event. Dozens of anecdotes have been told since the crisis began until now.. Colonel Bazerbashi of the U.S. Army Information Unit is responsible for collecting and analysing these jokes and anecdotes. (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 100)

So there are substantial factors and an apparent integration within the cities between those forces and the local community. All those led to the Saudi social characteristics falling under certain influences, both positive and negative. In particular, it is the impact of the American presence in Saudi cities that is considered to be one of the most important factors that has affected local society.

4.7 Western Influence as Represented by the American Presence in Saudi Society

The following is a quotation from the novel *'Awdah 'Ilā Al-'Ayyām Al-'Ūlā*:

إن القلق الذي يملأ نفوس الناس هنا لا بد أن يقود إلى تغييرات كبيرة و كثيرة. هل هذا بسبب وجود الأمريكيان هنا؟ لا أحد يعلم.

The anxiety that fills the hearts of people here must lead to many major changes. Is this because of the presence of the Americans here? Nobody knows. (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 98, 99)

The number of American troops that participated in the Gulf War was enormous. Finlan mentions that “it was a significant number of reservists (approximately 200,000 from the United States) that also took part in the Gulf War” (Finlan, 2008: 84).

Some emphasize that the number of the U.S. troops alone who participated in the Gulf War was in the region of 700,000.¹⁴⁹ This perhaps may give an impression of the extent and strength of the impact of these forces on the social make-up in the Gulf, especially in Saudi Arabia, which was hosting these forces on its territory. Surbrug confirms that “President Bush deployed five hundred thousand U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia as the bulk of an international coalition to oust Iraq from Kuwait” (Surbrug, 2009: 256).

The fact that has been taken up by the novel, especially the Saudi novel, was that the impact of the war on Saudi society was clear, where the individual Saudi was not blessed with a sufficient space of freedom. Additionally, Saudi citizens lacked a basic knowledge or system that could protect them from strong Western influences, or even allow them access to other cultures, which could raise their awareness for several reasons, plus the fact that education in Saudi Arabia was a new phenomenon. The sources of knowledge were severely restricted, and the culture of women's ability to work was a weak one operating under severe limitations. Therefore, the citizen was by his nature prepared to accept the new changes. The impact of the war made itself felt through the whole spectrum of Saudi society and caused many social and political shifts. Hussein records this fact: “Certainly, the Gulf crisis had undeniable social and political impact. It was a national crisis, and from crisis change usually evolves” (Hussein, 2012: 302, 303). With regard to ethical and social freedom, as an example, the novel confirms and conveys the opinion of a Saudi man who was quite ready to accept the new situation:

صحيح أن فيه مشاكل وحرب واحتلال، لكن أيضا فيه وجه آخر للأزمة وهو الحرية! وقال بالإنجليزية: "Women" .. يا دكتور الرياض على مر العصور ما مر فيها كم هائل من الحریم كما هو الآن! سوف الحریم اللي جو للرياض من أصقاع الدنيا.. الكويتيات الإحتلال دفعهن للمجيء للرياض..

¹⁴⁹ Such as Saffer, who notes that: “Seven hundred thousand U.S. troops participated in the Persian Gulf War in 1991” (Saffer, 2004: 32).

الأمريكيات جنن مع الجيش الأمريكي هذا غير النساء اللي جايات مع القوات الأخرى...لابد للواحد أن يستفيد من النواحي الإيجابية.

It is true that there are problems, with war and occupation, but there is also another aspect to the crisis, which is freedom!. And he said in English: "Women!".. Doctor, Riyadh for so many centuries has never had such a huge number of women as it does now!.Look at the women who've come to Riyadh from all over the world.. Kuwaiti women have been driven by the occupation to come to Riyadh..the American women came with the U.S. Army, not to mention the women who came with the other forces!... and so one must take advantage of the positive aspects! (Al-Khufir, 2004: 227)

What demonstrates and confirms the strength of the U.S. presence and influence on all factions of the Saudi society is that a woman who some believed to be removed and perhaps insulated from the effects of the American tide and probably not particularly aware of this war can utter the following statement, which shows how strong this effect is:

حقا أنا مُعجبة بالأمريكان و أتمنى لو كنت أمريكية...نعم يا دكتور منصور.. الأمور تتغيرت.. هذه الأزمة لم تغير الأمور السياسية فقط لقد ذهبنا من تعامل الأمريكيان الرقيق. رغم قوتهم و مظهرهم الذي يبدو عليه الصرامة والجدية..إنهم رجال رقيقون.. يعرفون كيف يتعاملون مع المرأة.

Really, I am impressed by the Americans, and I wish I had been an American...Yes, Dr. Mansour..Things have changed..This crisis has not just changed things politically. We've been taken aback by the kindness and courtesy of the Americans, despite their strength and appearance which seems to suggest rigour and earnestness.. They are nice men..and they know how to deal with women!!!. (Al-Khufir, 2004: 470)

This admiration and speed of response by Saudi society perhaps emboldened the American character to call for social change in which such a conservative society does not believe at all. However, the American character eventually succeeded in getting her what she was asking for, beginning in some upper class homes. The novel here portrays the life of the aristocracy and conveys on the lips of the American woman in Riyadh that:

أنا أمريكية، أحب أن أحافظ على نمط الحياة الأمريكي، ثم إنني أريد أن أكون مع رجال و أنا أمارس الرياضة، هذا يشعرني بالسعادة. هناك أندية رياضية مشتركة داخل مساكن السيد ابن جعفر.

I'm an American, so I like to keep to the American lifestyle, and then I want to be with men when I am taking exercise, since this makes me feel good. There are mixed sports clubs within Mr. Ibn Jafar's residences. (Al-Khufir, 2004: 329, 330)

There were no areas that were off-limits between the Americans and the Saudi people, for they were both meeting in restaurants, parks, streets, government departments and military centres, training fields, checkpoints and hospitals. So, even “the Saudi state which was the Saudi government expected some cultural backlash to result from the presence of Western troops in the kingdom” (Hussein, 2012: 301). Indeed, there was satisfaction shown by the Saudis towards these forces. For instance, in hospitals, the novel of Al-Khuḍīr notes that:

الحضور الأمريكي الكثيف داخل المستشفى بد واضحاً. الترحيب بهؤلاء الجنود الغرباء أصبح أكثر حميمية. الناس يبتسمون لهم عند لقائهم، البعض يحاول الحديث معهم بلطف ويعبر عن امتنانه لما فعل الأمريكيون من أجلنا.

The heavy presence of Americans inside the the hospital seemed clear. The welcome shown to these foreign soldiers has become more intimate. People smile at them when they meet, some try to talk to them gently and express their gratitude for what the Americans did for us. (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 470, 471)

On the other hand, some Saudis believe that the Americans have abused this country and its social specificity. This can be seen in the response of one of the novel’s heroes to his friend who wanted to visit him accompanied by one of his work colleagues who happens to be an American lady. As the community is described as and known to be very conservative, however, a socially conservative man would be compromising his beliefs if he were to receive at his home the first woman who is not a blood relative to him. This has led some critics to classify this radical shift as a clear attack by American influence on the religious and cultural values of the community. In the end though, this comes over as a clear indication of the depth of Western influence on this community. The following passage in Al-Khuḍīr’s novel illustrates that:

اتصلت، أخبرته أن معي زميلة أمريكية تريد أن تأتي معي لزيارته، كان رده: - الله يا دكتور منصور.. الأمريكان ما بقوا شيئاً في هذا البلد ما خربوه!. حتى أنت وصلك خراب الأمريكان!. قلت له: إن الموضوع مختلف، هي زميلة عمل.. أجاب: - الله يحييها معك يادكتور.

I rang him and I told him that the female American colleague wanted to come with me to visit him, but his reply was: “For God’s sake, Dr. Mansour.. the Americans haven’t left anything in this country alone without corrupting it !. Even you’ve been corrupted by the Americans!.” I said to him, “It’s a different situation, she’s a work colleague..” He responded, “God bless her with you, Doctor!”. (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 191)

According to the perspective of this novel, when the Americans participated in voluntary work inside the hospitals, there was a difference in terms of the work culture among those workers who were in those places, especially Saudi women who have been well-represented in hospitals, schools and banks compared to other jobs. This is a working culture in which Saudi society accepts women as employees above all other women's jobs. Probably that was due to its historical dimension, given that these professions have been exercised by women since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) when female companions (may Allah be pleased with them) were participating in financial business, as in the case of his wife Khadija Bint Khuwailed. Some of them engaged in education, such as his wife Aisha, or treated patients, as in the case of Rufaydah Al-Ansaariyyah.

Abdul-Rahman points out the fact that “at the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), midwives used to attend women in labour,... It is also known that Rufaydah Al-Ansaariyyah used to treat the wounded in her tent, which had been set up in the mosque for that purpose” (Abdul-Rahman, 2007. Vol, 18: 169). Sultan also confirms that “during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, many women, known as Aslamiyah, practiced medicine in the Islamic community. Also, historically, women have served as Islamic scholars, judges, financial advisors” (Sultan, 2004: 318). When the Americans volunteered to work in the hospitals, the reaction of citizens was unbelievable, for a number of citizens went directly to the social service sectors, including training fields and hospitals, in order to serve in them, and that was an opportunity for a direct contact with the Americans. The novel portrays the quick reaction of Saudi citizens to work as volunteers; and although the reality was clear that many Saudi citizens led pampered lives, nonetheless when the strongest party, namely the Americans, took the initiative, the rest of the local population who had been influenced by their example tended to follow suit. A great number of people came, as the novel describes, to register for voluntary work, among them some women who came to their interviews with their maids as a kind of demonstration of social prestige. Here is a clear signal that the Western influence did not take its course naturally, as there was a kind of incompatibility between the target citizens and their actions, as the novelist Al-Dūsarī observes:

لقد أصابني الفزع في بداية البرنامج. انهمرت الهواتف بمطر من الأصوات التي تريد الإنضمام. خصصنا مكتبا خاصا لاستقبال الطلبات. ووضعنا شروطا صعبة لنحصر الموضوع في نطاق الجدية. صار مدير المستشفى يحيل إلي نساء وفتيات, وكل واحدة منهن تتصور أن التطوع نزهة مثيرة... تخيل يادكتور أنها جاءت للمقابلة الشخصية وبرفقتها خادمتان.

I got scared at the beginning of the program. There was a flood of phone calls from people that wanted to join. We had dedicated a special office to receiving requests, and we had laid down tough conditions to restrict the matter in terms of seriousness. The director of the hospital started referring to me women and girls, each one of whom imagined that volunteering was some sort of fun picnic... Imagine, Doctor, some came to the interview along with their servants. (Al-Dūsarī, 2011: 100)

It often happens that, in hospitals, both sexes are mixing and working together, males and females, foreigners and nationals; and this perhaps helped to make such work that includes both genders acceptable. Rivera confirms that “The only place that unrelated men and women are allowed to work side by side is in the hospitals”(Rivera, 2003: 41) In fact, it is not only in hospitals that men and women can work side by side, but in many other areas that bring together men and women, such as banks, the energy sector, the National Assembly, Consultative Council and others, as Keddie indicates: “ in hospital settings and in energy and several other spheres, women and men work together, and some women supervise male employees” (Keddie, 2007: 150).

Such places where the staff and public could meet people from different ethnicities, doctrines and religions were a reason why some types of inertia that affected certain cultures came to be removed. In the hospital, to take one example, the presence of a large number of Americans who belong to a different religion perhaps would help gently to remove a number of those differences that some citizens believed in. These images, plus some scenes of cooperation with each other by Saudis during the war, whether they were Sunnis or Shiites, were a reason for some changes. Thus, the novel depicts many scenes which depict a lot of concessions and rapprochements between different members of Saudi society. For example, the noble attitude shown between the Sunni director and Shiite employee who also marries a Sunni woman is an indication of that:

- المدير: أهلاً أيها الشيعي الوسيم.
 - ابتسم بتواضع, وقال وهو يجلس: قراركم بإلغاء الإجازات سيحرم هذا الشيعي من الزواج بخطيبته السنوية.
 - رددتُ ووجهي ينضح بالسعادة: في هذه الحالة سنمنحك استثناءً فورياً.
 - من أجلي أم من أجل خطيبيتي؟!
 - بل من أجلكما معاً. فنحن بحاجة إلى مؤسسات زوجية تلغي هذه الفوارق.
 - Director: “Welcome, my dear good-looking Shi’ite!”
 - He smiled modestly and said, as he sat down “Your decision to cancel vacations will prevent this Shiite marrying his Sunni fiancée.”
 - I answered, with my face exuding happiness, “In this case we will give you an immediate exception.”
 - “For me or for my fiancée?!”
 - “For both of you. We are in need of marital institutions which abolish such differences..” (Al-Dūsārī, 2011: 201)

The changes and the impacts brought by the Americans during the war were not only at the level of their acceptance by the nationals such as in the above matters; but rather the influence indeed went deep and came to affect the nature of the work itself. The Americans were integrated into a wide range of jobs which they sought to make compatible with their own agendas. They reached the stage at which they became able to appoint managers and staff or even dismiss them. They imposed their own views and pushed them in order to be effective, but all of these were implemented in a diplomatic manner rather than through confrontation. This is indicated through the following dialogue that takes place between the old Saudi employee and the Deputy Director:

عندئذ وجهت كلامي لنائب المدير: ما علاقة هذا الرجل بموضوع اختياري لرئاسة القسم؟. فرد عليّ: نريد أن نجعلك رئيساً للقسم لكن لا بد أن يبارك هذا الأمر العقيد جوناثان دي فوستر.

Then I addressed the Deputy Director: “What does this man have to do with choosing me as Head of the Department?” He replied: “We want to make you Head of the Department, but this obviously has to have the blessing of Colonel Jonathan de Foster”. (Al-Khudīr, 2004: 451, 452)

The Saudi hospital doctor in the novel *‘Awdah ‘Ilā Al-‘Ayyām Al-‘Ulā* recognises that reality and describes it on several occasions. A good illustration is seen in this extract:

عدت إلى مكنتي، أخذت أفكر في أحوال قسمنا هذا، منذ أن وصل الأمريكان إلى القسم و طبيعة العمل تغيرت... لم يطلبوا تغيير شيء في المستشفى أو القسم، لكن كانت لهم طريقتهم الخاصة في تغيير الأشياء. بعد فترة زمن - تمتد من بضع ساعات إلى بضعة أيام- نجد أن هذا الأمر تغير وأصبح وفقاً لرغبة

الأمريكان. طريقتهم في التغيير مؤدبة لكنها صارمة. وحقيقة الأمر أنهم نالوا الإستحسان من الجميع، كما أن الإعجاب بهم يزداد يوماً بعد يوم.

I went back to my office, and I started thinking about how things were in our department, for since the Americans arrived in the department, the nature of work had changed...They had not asked to change anything in the hospital or in the department, but they had their own way of changing things. After a period of time – ranging from a few hours to a few days – we find that some change has taken place according to the wishes of the Americans. Their way of bringing in change is polite but decisive. And the reality is that they have won plaudits from everyone, and admiration for them increases day by day. (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 102, 103)

The impact of the Americans comes across particularly strongly on those who have worked with them closely, such as when working on the military bases. A typical example of this is the case of Othmān, who works with the American forces. His brother in-law describes one of his attitudes when he says:

على سفرة العشاء، أخرج عثمان زوج أختي، مفاتيح سيارته، و مدها لي. قال بجدية وهو المعروف ببساطته:

- خذ. أعط أختك هيلة مفاتيح سيارتي، ودعها تأخذنا إلى البيت. والذي سيمسها، سأفجر رأسه.

At the dinner table Othman, my sister's husband, got out his car keys, and gave them to me. He then said in a serious tone of voice, for one who is known for his simplicity:

- “Take them. Give your sister Hila my car keys, and let her take us home. And whoever lays a finger on her, I’ll blow his head off!” (Al-Dūsarī, 2011: 118)

Despite the reluctant attitude of many Saudi people, whether men or women, regarding women being allowed to drive, this war was probably one of the reasons that have induced some Saudi women to drive during the days of the war when they saw American women driving their cars in the streets, neighbourhoods, airports, schools and hospitals of Riyadh. The reaction of the society was swift, especially from females, some of whom would say:

لماذا تقود المجندات الأمريكيات السيارات في شوارعنا؟! نحن أولى منهن.

Why are American female soldiers driving cars on our streets?! We come before them! (Al-Dūsarī, 2011: 101)

As American women continued driving in Riyadh, this issue has moved on from simply complaining to taking the initiative and action, when Saudi women actually drove their cars:

اتفقت أربعون بنتا و امرأة، أن يجتمعن عصر اليوم أما مركز "فال" بشارع "صلاح الدين" وقُدن من هناك سيارات أزواجهن و إخوانهن باتجاه شارع العروبة.

Forty girls and a woman agreed to gather late this afternoon in front of the "Val" centre on "Salāh Al-Din" Street, and from there they drove cars belonging to their husbands and brothers towards Orūba Street. (Al-Dūsarī, 2011: 74)

Critical opinion here agrees with what is depicted in this novel when Keddie confirms that, "In late 1990 during the buildup to the Gulf War, when U.S. soldiers, including women, were present in large numbers in Saudi Arabia, some women with international drivers' licenses and their husbands' permission, decided to test the ban on women drivers by driving in the capital, Riyadh" (Keddie, 2007: 150).

All the novels here are inclined strongly to believe that the global media which were present in order to cover the war had a prominent role in those transformations. The women in particular have benefited from this great media momentum. They went out to drive before the eyes of the whole world. They might have intended to put their government in a difficult position if it wanted to suppress them. Even President Saddam Hussein could perhaps have exploited this event in his own favour in the eyes of public opinion if the Saudi government had proceeded to oppress its women. The questions that are posed by the novels here indicate that women indeed benefited from the circumstance of war. Here is one instance of such speculation:

إنني أستغرب التوقيت؟! لماذا خرجت هذه المظاهرة الآن؟! إن الظروف هذه الأيام عصيبة!.

I am just surprised at this timing! Why has this demonstration come out now?! Things are tough at the moment!. (Al-Khudīr, 2004: 425)

This surprise, as expressed in this novel *'Awdah 'Ilā Al-'Ayyām Al-'Ūlā*, has been answered by another novel, *Al-Riyadh-November 90*:

ربما اختارت البنات هذا الوقت بالتحديد نظرا لتواجد محطات التلفزيون العالمية، لكي يضمن وصول مطالبتهن إلى الخارج... لا أحد يستطيع أن يمسهن بسوء بعد ذلك، لأن العالم كله عندئذ سيعرف.

The girls probably chose this particular time because of global TV stations being around, in order to ensure that their demands reached the outside world...No one could harm them afterwards, because the whole world would then get to hear about it. (Al-Dūsarī, 2011: 110, 354)

But even the Saudi government was aware and recognized that such a large presence of foreign troops on its territory would lead to a cultural collision. Hussein emphasises that point: “The Saudi government expected some cultural backlash to result from the presence of Western troops in the kingdom” (Hussein, 2012: 301).

When the protagonist asked his American woman friend about the U.S. role in social change, and whether America really had supported women driving cars in Saudi Arabia, she replied:

لا أستطيع إعطاءك إجابة قاطعة، لكني أظن أن لا شيء يحدث أو سوف يحدث إلا ويكون المقدم بازرباشي و إدارته لديهم العلم إن لم يكن الأمر مفصلا!.

I can't give you a definitive answer, but I think that nothing is happening or will happen unless Colonel Bazerbashi and his administration have knowledge of it, if not the whole details!. (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 429).

Overall, this was the war, and these were some of the reactions of Saudi women as a result of the impact of the war.

This war and its effects did not in fact only make Saudi men allow women to drive their cars, but they also forced men to allow women to speak to and deal with non-related men, both in the workplace or over the phone, as in the case of the character Tahani and her father in the novel *Al-Riyadh-November 90* (see Al-Dūsarī, 2011: 375, 376). In the same novel, the husband also allows his wife, who is a pediatrician, to wave at and greet her male work colleague when they were all in their cars at the traffic light (see Al-Dūsarī, 2011: 9, 11). Indeed, such images which emerged in the city during the war indicate a fundamental shift in the relationships between men and women in a conservative city like Riyadh. However, the novel *Mudun Ta'akul Al-Ushb* (2008) which is set in the city of Jeddah presents some images of women who shake hands

with strange men on several occasions in the novel (for examples, see Khāl, 2008: 250, 251, 252, 296, 297).

The strong media influence does not have an effect only on Riyadh, Dhahran, Hafr Al Batin and some other places, but on most Saudi cities as well. Thus, the whole Saudi society has been subjected to media pressure. Hussein notes that “The Gulf crisis opened the kingdom to more than 500 journalists and media professionals, mostly from the United States” (Hussein, 2012: 301).

This effect is not just to do with women, but even the youth and children have become fascinated by the American way of life, including their eating habits. This is because there was a large presence of Americans in the cities’ restaurants mingling with the local population. The character Mansour says:

أخذت أتأمل الذين في المطعم. إنهم خليط من أناس يمكن أن يتواجدوا في أي مطعم في الرياض... هناك بعض الأجانب وأغلب الظن أنهم أمريكيان. إلا أنه في أي مطعم في الرياض قد يكون عددهم ضعف ما هو موجود حالياً في هذا المطعم.

I started to think about the people who were in the restaurant. They were a mixture of people who could be there in any restaurant in Riyadh...There were some foreigners, and most likely they were American, except that their number in any restaurant in Riyadh could be double the number currently seen in this restaurant. (Al-Khudīr, 2004: 88)

The little girl who is studying at primary school abandons her usual food at school, refuses to eat at home and insists that her father buy her food from an American Restaurant. The exchange between her and her father goes as follows:

لِمَ لَمْ تشتري بمصروفك شيئاً تأكلينه؟!
- الفطائر في المقصف غير لذيذة...
- لا بأس يا حبيبتى. الآن تتناولين غداءك.
- قالت بدلال: لا- أنا أريد فطائر همبرغر. أرجوك بابا. همبرغر من مطعم الفطائر الأمريكية. لقد شاهدت إعلاناً عنه في التلفزيون.

“Why didn’t you buy something to eat from your pocket money?!”

-“The Fritters served in the cafeteria are not very tasty...”

-“Never mind, my darling. Now you are going to eat your lunch.”

-She replied in a pampered tone: "No - I want hamburgers. Please, Dad. A hamburger from the American restaurant. I have watched an advertisement for it on television". (Al-Dūsārī, 2011: 39)

The consumer culture has grown, and the circle of U.S. restaurants has expanded in this country to include numerous American franchises operating in the various cities, including McDonalds, Burger King, Little Caesars, Cinnabon, Pizza Hut, Subway, and Dunkin' Donuts. In Dhahran,¹⁵⁰ for example, there were a number of places to shop for a variety of choices, and "the troopers visited Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut, and other American-style restaurants. At the mall they could buy velveteen paintings of tanks and helicopters, T- shirts, gold, and Arabic clothing" (Bourque and Burdan, 2007: 236).

Besides what happened on the ground, there was a very strong Western media broadcast operation from multiple locations. The U.S. media were set up principally to reach those soldiers, but at the same time they targeted the local society. Included were non-stop routine messages and tips to American soldiers on how to deal with the local people of the Gulf, and that perhaps helped a lot in the interests of cultural convergence. Al-Dūsārī in his novel confirms that;

صنعت نورة كوبين من القهوة ثم تمددت على الأريكة. أدارت مؤشر المذياع على صوت "درع الصحراء" الذي كان يبث أغاني أمريكية هادئة تتخللها توجيهات للجنود الأمريكيين عن كيفية التعامل مع الناس في منطقة الخليج.

Noura made two cups of coffee and then laid down on the couch. She turned the radio knob to the sound of "Desert Shield," which was broadcasting quiet American songs interspersed with some instructions for the U.S. soldiers on how to deal with people in the Gulf region. (Al-Dūsārī, 2011: 100)

There was a large-scale tendency on the part of nationals towards listening to international channels during the war, for several reasons, including, for example, the fact that people were very concerned because of this new war for them in their own land; whereas, the local channels and radios were delayed in their communication of the

¹⁵⁰ A city located in the eastern region of the Kingdom which is considered a major administrative centre for the Kingdom's oil industry.

news of the events, not to mention sometimes failing to communicate it at all. All of this forced the local people to turn to the Western stations, whether broadcasting in Arabic or English. Those in turn were one of the new sources that Saudi citizens got to know for the first time because of the war and which then became one of the influential sources, sometimes taking on an official character. Hussein points out that, “Some American journalists turned to focus on the Saudi society... And pressing the US congress to pressure the Saudi government to follow a Western-style democracy” (Hussein, 2012: 301, 302). Not only was the local community disturbed during the war and in a high state of anxiety, but also they were looking for the news everywhere, and their concern helped to accept the influences and speed up the social changes. The protagonist notes that:

كان الناس خلال هذه الأيام في قمة القلق, كنت أقول إن الناس هذه الأيام جميعها تعاني من ارتفاع كبير في درجة القلق... مصحوبا بتشويش في الفكر..

The people at this time were in a state of deep anxiety, and I used to say that everybody nowadays was experiencing a significant increase in the degree of concern... Along with this came a confusion that affected their thinking. (Al-Khudīr, 2004: 62, 63)

There was concern and there was fear too, so that everyone was in fact concerned to know the truth, and their spokesman declares through the novel:

الحرب الآن تدق بابنا المباشر. لن نرثي الشهيد كما كنا نفعل دائما, بل سنتلقى الشظية. لن نعد حقائب الهجرة, بل سنخيط الكفن.

War is now knocking on our front door. We will not just lament the dead as we always used to do, but we will be getting shrapnel wounds ourselves. We will not prepare our bags ready to flee away, but we will sew the shroud. (Al-Dūsarī, 2011: 15-16)

The novels display a number of images about the states of anxiety and anticipation among all the strata of society, such as the case of the old woman who often sits next to the radio to listen, the picture of the patient at the hospital who is hearing the war news and the image of the young man in both his workplace and his home who is following the international news. Everyone could find a variety of information materials that they wanted because of the heavy presence of foreign stations. Hussein makes clear that “the major element of strain in the Saudi-US alliance under the Gulf multinational coalition

was the exposure of Saudi society to the Western media, especially the American press, during the seven months of the crisis” (Hussein, 2012: 301).

Local stations were still following the outdated habit of hiding and censoring the news in the belief that this would dispel the fear among the people, but what happened was that a great number of people turned away from the national channels to follow the international news. They found greater credibility in the global stations, which seemed to be closer to the truth than the local stations regarding this issue. Consequently, the global stations gained more credibility among the vast majority of people. The character of Doctor Mansour tells us:

خرجت سريعاً فتحت مذياع السيارة، استمعت الأخبار. الأمور عادية، ليس هناك ما يوحي أن شيئاً من هذا القبيل حدث أو يحدث في الوقت الحاضر؟! توجهت إلى سكني، وأخرجت جهاز المذياع الذي أستمع به الأخبار العالمية، استمعت إلى الإذاعة البريطانية الناطقة باللغة الإنجليزية وإذا الأمر حقيقة!! يا إلهي.. ما الذي يجري؟!.. لبضعة أيام كان الأمر مشوشاً، وسائل الإعلام عادية.. الأخبار في الإذاعة والتلفزيون كأن شيئاً لم يحدث، الصحف لم تكتب أي شيء عن هذا الحدث.

I got out quickly, turned on the car's radio and listened to the news. Things were normal, and there was nothing to suggest that anything like this had happened or was happening at the present time! I went to my house, and got out the radio on which I listen to world news, then I listened to the BBC in English and I found the event was real!! Oh my God!..What is going on?!... The matter was disorienting for a few days, while the local media carried on as normal.. The news on radio and television was as if nothing had happened, while newspapers wrote nothing about this event. (Al-Khuḍīr, 2004: 62)

This massive media pumping, plus the foreign presence on the ground, gives an impression of the strength of the impacts and speedy changes on that society. This has caused some critics to become unable to visualise these transformations in the cities of Saudi Arabia. Division indicates that; “More difficult to measure, however, was the social impact of the war. Many foreign observers had speculated that the arrival in the Kingdom of more than 600,000 foreign military personnel, including women in uniform, would bring about significant changes in Saudi society” (Division, 2004: 40).

The novel says more than that, since it describes the Americans as having exerted influence even at the religious level, which some critics believe is a red line that can not

be crossed, especially in the religious communities. The novel *'Awdah 'Ilā Al-'Ayyām Al-'Ulā* confirms this:

الأمريكان غيروا كل شيء حتى الفتاوى غيروها! الأمريكان لعبوا على أوتار خوف هؤلاء الناس وقلقهم
..صوروا لهم أن العراقيين يرتكبون أعمالاً لا إنسانية في الكويت!

Americans have changed everything – they have changed even the fatwas !. Americans have played on the fears and the anxieties of these people.. They've shown them pictures of how Iraqis are committing inhumane acts in Kuwait! (Al-Khudīr, 2004: 270, 461)

This war and the speedy transitions on the ground, and the American direct intervention in some specific areas of society; the spread of greed and the emergence of the consumer culture, as well as the American takeover of positions of leadership in most state institutions: all these have made people more troublesome, and may have driven many of them to the other side in order to get back a sense of assurance that has been lost, or to recover stability and to be away from this social unrest resulting from war. Such issues have bothered even the social elites there, as it has caused several social conflicts. As Hussein argues, “This orientation of the American press toward the Kingdom almost created social conflict among Saudi social elites” (Hussein, 2012: 302).

Many members of the community have come to prefer staying in the mosques and accompanying religious people as a reaction to unrest over social issues. The main protagonist of the novel *'Awdah 'Ilā Al-'Ayyām Al-'Ulā* makes that point:

الناس صارت جشعة.. كل واحد يتكلم عن الصفقات والمكاسب والثراء.. من أجل هذا التف عامة الناس
حول المتدينين يستمعون للأشرطة التي تنال من الأمريكان.

People have become greedy.. Everyone is talking about deals, profits and making money.. Because of this the public have rallied around religious people, listening to the tapes that have undermined the Americans. (Al-Khudīr, 2004: 453)

Some of those forces have set up jointly with local people in many types of trade such as running shops. As Bourque and Burdan put it, “A number of army-approved vendors had set up shop in the Khobar Towers area, selling T-shirts, swords, costumes, brass,

gold, and watches” (Bourque and Burdan, 2007: 236). All of these things demonstrate the power of the integration of these armies with Saudi society; they also serve to emphasize that the war was being fought only from one side, and that therefore its cultural, social and religious impacts were much more powerful than its actual military impact.

With regard to women, some of their feelings of opposition towards the social unrest because of the war were about not emulating the foreign women in everything; regardless of whether their menfolk gave them permission or even encouraged them to do something, Saudi women believed that some practices amounted to incivility. For example, one of the types of behaviour that have not been accepted by Saudi women is when the foreign lady is jogging in the street semi-naked. Saudi women feel disgusted by such scenes, and although they came out in protest to drive their cars, they do not go further so as to adopt such behaviour. The husband says to his wife in the novel by Al-Dūsārī:

- تستطيعين أن تمارسي رياضتك في نادي المستشفى أو في المسبح
- ياويلي. أتريد أن أفعل مثل الأمريكيات؟! هؤلاء، فسخن الحياء عن وجوههن. لا أدري كيف يتجرأن و
يظهرن أجسامهن أمام الآخرين.

- You can do your exercise in the hospital club or in the pool.

- Oh no! Do you want me to act like the American women?! These people have got no shame at all! I don't know how they dare to show off their bodies in front of others. (Al-Dūsārī, 2011: 369)

There were other factors that have helped to move and change some of the social habits and helped the spread and strengthening of Western influence on the Kingdom. Even though such huge changes cannot be attributed to one reason alone, nonetheless these factors also fall under the heading of the war: for example, the displacement of many Kuwaiti families to Saudi Arabia before and during the war and their subsequent long stay in Saudi Arabia has led to the entry of new habits to Saudi society which had not been seen there before, as the Kuwaiti families had already been influenced by the West before the Saudi people. Hammond has confirmed that “Kuwait had more of a social effect and also became Westernized when U.S. troops were in town, and their presence was all the more obvious in the tiny state” (Hammond, 2007: 108).

Indeed, what has increased this effect and made it faster and stronger is that most of those Kuwaiti families came to live with Saudi families under a single roof. Unlike with the rest of the families of the Gulf states, there are extensive family ties between Saudi and Kuwaiti families. This is true not only at the level of ordinary people, but also at the official level since the Saudi government had received the Kuwaiti government during the Iraqi invasion and had opened the Saudi border for the Kuwaitis displaced during the war to meet their relatives inside Saudi Arabia. Cuhaj highlights the fact that “Following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Saudi Arabia accepted the Kuwaiti royal family and 400,000 refugees” (Cuhaj, 2011: 840).

The novel confirms the strength of this presence, and provides portrayals of those families who lived with their relatives in Saudi Arabia, such as the heroine of the novel ‘*Ūyūn Alā Al-Ssamā*’ who is a Kuwaiti girl who has moved to Saudi Arabia with her family.

في العاصمة السعودية "الرياض" وفي بيت عمها الأكبر حيث البيت الواسع الكبير والحديقة المترامية الأطراف، حلت هي وأهلها ضيوفا على أهل البيت.

in the Saudi capital "Riyadh", and in the larger house of her oldest uncle, where there was the large spacious house and sprawling garden. She and her family lived there as guests of the household. (Al-‘Ulayyān, 2000: 44)

One of the social habits of the Saudi family is that gender space is highly segregated; there are designated areas that are prepared for adult males and the some that are designated for women in one single house where only blood relatives could be reunited in the same space. Ferraro and Andreatta make the point that the Saudi home “is gender-segregated with males living in one part of the house and women in another” (Ferraro and Andreatta, 2009: 218). However, this perhaps does not exist in some Kuwaiti houses, and so when they arrived to be with their relatives in Saudi Arabia they stayed together in one room during the crisis. The novels here portray a lot of scenes featuring such families, as it was an abnormal situation. The novel ‘*Ūyūn Alā Al-Ssamā*’ describes how

في لحظة واحدة.. تجمع أفراد الأسرة في حجرة واحدة... وهناك وصل جميع أهل البيت... حتى الرجال منهم.

in one moment.. members of the family gathered together in one room... There arrived all the people of the house... including the men (Al-'Ulayyān, 2000: 50, 52).

This was something surprising during the war, and this change was probably mostly for the Kuwaiti families. During these days most Saudi families were meeting each other in both the home and in the streets.

All of the above could not have been achieved if there had been no acceptance and quick response from the community that was poised to accept this change. Many chapters of the novels discussed in this thesis depict how those forces are accepted and how, when such acceptance takes place, the effects and the transformations will be very quick. The novel of Al-Khudīr confirms this:

عندما وصل الأمريكان و أصبحت أرى سياراتهم تسير وهم داخلها بزيمهم العسكري... كثيرون ألفوا المنظر و أصبحوا يلوحون مرحبين حين يرونهم, آخرون من الذين كانوا يتكلمون اللغة الإنجليزية يقولون باللغة باللغة الإنجليزية "ليبارك الله أمريكا... البعض يشعر بزهو وفخر حين يراها تسير في شوارع الرياض... أحسست أن هناك تغييرا سوف يحدث في هذا البلد, لا أدري ما هو!! ثمة إحساس كبير داخل نفسي أن رياح التغيير سوف تهب لا محالة.

When the Americans arrived and I came to see their cars travelling around with them inside them wearing their military uniforms... Many citizens became familiar with these scenes and took to waving and welcoming whenever they saw them, while others who could speak English would say in English "God Bless America"... Some feel a certain pride and vanity when they see the cars going around in the streets of Riyadh... I felt that there was a change that would occur in this country, but could not tell what it was !! I feel a great sense within myself that the winds of change will blow, inevitably. (Al-Khudīr, 2004: 65, 98)

4.8 Conclusion

Overall, war itself and its circumstances are often valid and sufficient reasons to change a lot of social customs, since war leads people to do things that were not known or not part of the community's practices before this particular circumstance arose. It is true that the coming of the Westerners to the area in question may have led to many obvious changes, and that it has formed a new social map of the Saudi family with the assistance

of the local conditions that made those citizens ready to accept the change which has shaped the face of the Saudi city.

Moreover, the Second Gulf War has had an additional impact on the intellectual and literary trends in Saudi cities, as well as on the style of literary production which has seemed to be based not so much on a great deal of artistic imagination, but rather has made a realistic use of the names of cities, streets, and other locations which are familiar from this war.

Furthermore, this war has exposed the Islamic and nationalist transformations and how they both became closer to political rationality and stronger in terms of the sense of patriotism. At the same time, however, the war also has caused a reduction in the carefree reformist attitude, with personal interests taking precedence over matters of public interest – a phenomenon which necessarily has led to economic transformations at the levels of both the Saudi state and the individuals. All those led to a visible re-arranging of the seats of social status and economy and to the influence brought to bear on the Saudi social characteristics, whether for better or for worse.

In particular, it is the impact of the American presence in Saudi cities that is considered to have been one of the most important factors that has affected local society, and especially in the case of the women of the cities who were fully influenced by this war and its transformations, which may be seen as a milestone in the history of Saudi women and the changes in their lives.

Chapter Five

The City and Women

Chapter Five

The City and Women

5 Introduction

There is an overwhelming volume of publications on the status of Arab women in general, and of Saudi women in particular, and this is probably the most discussed topic at all levels and in all forums across the Arab world.

This is not only because Arab women are a controversial topic in academic research and media debates but also because “Women are central in many of the processes constructing masculinities – as mothers; as schoolmates; as girlfriends, sexual partners, and wives; as workers in the gender division of labor, and so forth” (Inhorn, 2012: 47). Therefore, everyone, both male and female, feels that they have a right to be engaged in this issue. Some claim the Enlightenment and Liberation of women, while others call for protecting women’s modesty and chastity and for them not to be drawn into the process of Westernization. There are, however, some objective studies based on these issues, and these present their results to the readers with the main objective being to raise social awareness about the subject. Notably, there are several contributions which have been written on the Arab woman during and after her journey to the environment of the city, both from home and abroad. This particular research, however, with the backing of all the many studies that are available in the public domain on women’s issues, is concerned with the study of Arab women within the city and the representation of Saudi women by the Saudi novelists male and female who write about their own society. There is a significant number of Saudi novels that could serve generously to highlight this aspect of women’s transformations, and among the best of them are those that have been chosen for this study, such as *Al-Bahriyyāt (Ladies from over the Seas, 2007)*, by ’Omaima Al-Khamis, and *Al-Ferdaws Al-Yabāb (A Barren Paradise, 1999)*, by Laylā Al-Johani. These novels delve into the women’s world, being

steeped in the study of civil transformations inside the city, and are able to provide a clear overview of women's issues that are manifested in cities and to address some of the core issues affecting women, which will be analysed under the following sections: Women and Religion in both Village and City, The Beginning of Modern Writing on Arab Women's Issues, Academic Contributions, Participation and Role of Women, The Saudi Novel and its Role in Changing Society and Advancing the Condition of Women, The Role of the School and Learning, The Position of the Women in the City.

5.1 Women and Religion in both Village and City

Although much writing, including academic work, has approached women's issues from diverse and multiple angles, it has almost always focused on the position of religion in relation to women, whether they are to be found in the city or in the village. Nielsen *et al.* argue that, "The position of women is one of the currently most contested topics in Muslim societies, both in outsiders' approaches to Islam as well as among Muslims themselves" (Nielsen et al., 2010: 7).¹⁵¹ Saudi women are a part of Arab women; however, the environment of Saudi women has its own special characteristics which have made them different in many respects. For instance, even if the other Arab women can travel from city to city, walk without a veil and drive their cars, Saudi women cannot do so for several reasons. First of all, there is an internal factor acting upon Saudi women from within which prevents a significant number of them from

¹⁵¹ There are also other authors who have dealt with the social role of women, their participation in public office, in politics and the position of Islam on these issues, such as: *Al-Mushārakah Al-Ījtimāyya wā Al-Siyāssiya li Al-Mar'a fī Al-Ālam Al-Thālith (Social and Political Participation of Women in the Third World, 2007)* by Mohamed Fahmy, and *Al-Āthār Al-'Usariyya wa Al-Ījtimāyya Al-Motarattiba 'Alā Al-Amal (Khārij Al-Manzil) li Al-Mar'ah Al-Mota'allema Al-Mutazawwiġa (Family and Social Effects Resulting from Work (Outside the Home) of Educated Married Women, 1993)* by Badriyya Al-Otobi. Some others have written about the major weakness of women and their place inside the Islamic movement in terms of taking responsibility and making decisions in it. Examples are *Al-'Islām wa Al-Mar'ah, Tajdīd Al-Taḥkīm Al-Dīnī fī Mas'alat Al-Mar'ah (Islam and Women: Renewal of Religious Thinking on the Issue of Women, 2008)* by Zaki Al-Milād. There is also the book *On Shifting Ground: Muslim Women in the Global Era (2005)* by Fereshteh Nourae-Simone. Some writers were interested in writing about the dominance of men over women in such a way as to hinder their early years, development and self-reliance, and thus to include the role of tribe, customs and traditions. Examples are *Al-Wajh Al-'Āri li Al-Mar'ah Al-'Arabīya (The Naked Face of Arab Women, 2005)* by Nawal Al-Saadawi and *Women, Gender and Language in Morocco (2003)* by Fatima Sadiqi.

doing such things, as they are a part of their society, and thus they believe in and adhere to what their society believes in terms of culture, habits and customs. Morrison points out that, “There are many professional and independent women in Saudi Arabia who adhere strongly to traditions and the Islamic code of dress and behavior, including ‘obeying’ the husband” (Morrison, 2004: 171). Secondly, there are external factors affecting Saudi women and making them different from their other Arab counterparts, an example being the religious status of Saudi Arabia that makes this country distinct from all other countries of the world. It is considered a beacon for all Muslims because of the Two Holy Mosques being situated in its territory. Additionally, the Hanbali doctrine is dominant and has been adopted by both the Saudi government and the vast majority of the Saudi population, including women. Besides that, there is the Wahhabi movement, which adheres to the Prophet’s Tradition and follows the Salafi and Hanbali tendency. As Otto explains:

The ideas of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab formed the ideological basis of the Saudi kingdom. He sought to return to the time of the Islamic forefathers (salaf), a return to pure Islam... Ibn Abd al-Wahhab based his ideas on the works of the Salafi tradition within Islam, particularly as propounded by two legal scholars, namely Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780-855), founder of the Hanbali school of law, and Ahmad ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) one of the most prominent scholars of that school. (Otto, 2011: 142)

This religious influence has permeated the lives of Saudi women in both village and city; however, the women in the village are arguably suffering a great deal because of the weakness of the religious awareness there which leads them to mix their Islamic worship with customary practices.

People in the village suffer from a lack of education and religious culture, and therefore the rural women continue to face a formidable number of obstacles and constraints due to the confusion that their society makes between the religion on the one hand and the customs and traditions on the other.¹⁵² Saudi women who have moved to the city,

¹⁵² These negative phenomena in women’s issues have also been criticised both from the viewpoint of Islam and from outside the scope of religion. Additionally, they deal with the position of women in terms of their chastity, marriage, divorce, inheritance, mandate of the man and polygamy. The following books

however, have managed to overcome several such obstacles because of their education and their awareness of the religious texts which protect them from many of the customs, traditions and habits that prevent them from getting their rights. The move to the Saudi cities is often accompanied by a number of changes and by the abandonment of many of the village habits; and therefore, the migration to the city was an urgent need for Saudi women not only for the sake of education and the ability to function with freedom from those habits that control the life of the village, but also to obtain justice and respect. As Adler and Gielen point out, “Many rural girls 'escape to the city' where they find more freedom and a less strenuous life” (Adler and Gielen, 2001: 109).

In the Saudi city there are better options and opportunities for women in terms of learning, working and enjoying freedom of movement. Furthermore, there is more attention paid towards religious teachings in the city. There are religious institutions, and some of their concerns are to ensure the application of religious teachings,¹⁵³ and so for example they request the women of the city to wear Islamic dress such as the *abaya* and veil in public places and markets; and at the same time most women prefer to do so since they feel convinced that this is part of the teachings of their religion.¹⁵⁴ So, when they travel to some foreign countries some of them keep wearing their Islamic dress, veil and *abaya*, although they can remove it if they want. The religiosity of women, especially of Saudi women, has led a number of observers to consider the strong correlation between religion and women’s issues.¹⁵⁵

cover these issues: *The Rights and Duties of Women in Islam* (1996) by Haffar Hasan; *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation* (1996) by Barbara Freyer Stowasser; *Al-Islām wa Hoquq An-nisā' (Islam and Women's Rights, 1998)* by Rifat Ḥassān; *Al-Hoquq Al-Āmmah li Al-Mar'ah (Public Rights of Women, 1998)* by Ṣalāh Abdulghani; *Women in Muslim Family Law* (1882, 2001) by John L. Esposito, Natana J. DeLong-Bas; and so on.

¹⁵³ An example is the so-called General Presidency for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.

¹⁵⁴ The Arab peoples are either inherently religious or sympathetic towards religion, so this has encouraged all of those who are interested in women’s rights to use the religious texts in order to influence the readers and support what they are calling for, and this indeed includes feminism. Afkhami and Friedl make the point that, “Muslim feminists also use Islamic texts, but their aim is to show that the discourse of total equality between men and women is islamically valid” (Afkhami and Friedl, 1997: 22). Moreover, in the case of those who are calling for women to remain as they are, these people are also trying to strengthen their position by interpreting the religious texts as they understand them or in terms of what they want.

¹⁵⁵ Thus, the Nineties saw the emergence of so-called ‘enlightening Islamic books’, whose main aim was to go beyond what was written before and which did not depend on the previous accumulation of knowledge but attempted to read the position and rights of women from different angles, such as a woman’s rights to power and to prove her rights from religious texts. They offer a different vision from

Women of the Saudi village do not have to encounter such religious institutions; however, in return they face the strict control of the tribe and radical rural community. In the village, everyone knows who any particular woman is, and also knows her family, her home, and her relatives, so that the women are always under the eyes of everyone.

Overall, the migration of Saudi women to the city has raised their religious awareness, and enabled them to protect themselves from those who were exploiting them in the name of religion or traditions. Women's rights organizations and those who are interested in women's issues have realised the correlation between religion and all of the Saudi women's affairs, and that has led them to consider this correlation before they go further into the Women's Affairs. Worden and Amanpour emphasize that,

Women's rights activists must arm themselves with religious discourse so that they can stand up to and debate the reactionaries who want to trample on women's rights in the name of religion. They must be ready to show that injustice and discrimination against women is the result of skewed and wrong interpretations. (Worden and Amanpour, 2012: 82)

There is no doubt that, for such activists, writing about women and then linking their viewpoints to Islam gave them wide acceptance. Unfortunately, however, everyone wants to be a religious scholar in order to explain the religious texts in a manner corresponding with his own viewpoint; and thus matters of religion have become like women's issues, a field in which everyone claims to have a right to address all issues that come under these headings, especially in the modern era where generally speaking all the elements of writing, means of publishing and ease of authoring are available more than ever before.

what was found in most Islamic books. *Masa'il Ḥarija fī Fiqh Al-Mar'ah* (Critical Issues in the Jurisprudence of Women, 1994) in four volumes, by Mohammad Mahdi Shams Al-Din; *Al-Mar'ah fī 'Āsir Al-Risālah* (Women in the Age of the Message, 1990) in six volumes, by Abdulḥalim Abu Shoqqa, are typical examples.

5.2 The Beginning of Modern Writing on Arab Women's Issues

Women and their affairs are considered an important topic to be written about, and many have found it worthwhile to stand up for this world of women in order to make an extensive enquiry into all its perspectives. The women's world has attracted great numbers of those who are interested in exploring its various issues, and this in turn has led so many critics to try to pinpoint the beginning of the modern history of writing on women's affairs. A number of them saw the beginning of this process as being marked by Qasim Amin's (1863-1908) writings such as *Al-Mar'ah Al-Jadidah (The New Woman, 1901)* and his first book entitled *Tahrīr Al-Mar'ah (The Liberation of Woman, 1899)*, which is considered by some critics to be the beginning of the contemporary Arab writing on women's issues. Esposito points out that, "Qasim Amin was the first Arab to publish a call for women's emancipation, in his book *Tahrir al-mar'ah*" (Esposito, 2009. Vol, 4: 332). It is noteworthy that Saudi women were not influenced by this call, neither in general terms nor at the cultural level. This was so for several reasons – for instance because in the first place there was a strict ban on such books entering Saudi Arabia, and even when they did penetrate the country later on they were not able to gain the acceptance of Saudi society because they dealt with the characteristics of Egyptian rather than Saudi women at that time. Even those who are interested in women's affairs and the novels that have been written about women, including the novels that we cite in this chapter, have mostly mentioned nothing about the impact of Qasim Amin's books on Saudi women.

Another point to make about Amin's writings is that they were characterized by a tendency to be provocative, especially on matters that some believe to be integral to culture and religion such as the issues of polygamy and the veil, and to be confrontational, too much in a hurry and over-influenced by Western culture without taking into account the specificity of society, culture and religion, as Muru explains (Muru, 2005: 8). For this reason he was accused of being influenced by Western feminists' ideas of progress and modernity without regard to the particularities of his

own community (see Gorman, 2003: 140).¹⁵⁶ Consequently, several works were written to either support his ideas or respond to Amin's books.¹⁵⁷ Zayd refers to this as follows:

The writings of Qasim Amin (1863-1908): this graduate of the School of Law advocated the emancipation of women in social life. His writings, 'Emancipation of Women', *Tahrir al-Mar'ah*, (1899) and 'The New Woman', *al-Marah al-Jadidah* (1901), have provoked oppositional writings that totalled some 30 critical books and pamphlets. (Zayd et al., 2006: 38)

The wide-ranging reaction and opposition of those who did not agree with Amin's view and approach is probably why some observers tend to see this era as a milestone in the writings on women issues.¹⁵⁸ Murphy and Spear point out that "Qasim Amin is often inaptly considered 'the father of Arab feminism' because of his 1899 treatise, *The Liberation of Women*, that called for women's reform, which was believed to be written in part by his teacher Muhammad 'Abdu" (Murphy and Spear, 2011: 165). In addition to taking the lead in this way, Amin and the Turkish writer Ahmet Mithat (1844-1912) were also clearly influenced in their ideas by the culture of the West. Pryce-Jones confirms that "Under the modernizing influence of the West, one or two Muslims drew critical attention to the treatment of women in their societies. Among the earliest were a Turkish writer, Ahmet Midhat; and the Egyptian Qasim Amin" (Pryce-Jones, 2009: 134).

Naturally, the writings of Qasim Amin followed by those of Salāmah Musā (1887-1958) were just raising this topic; but from the point of view of some critics they did not provide any solutions in order to introduce their controversial views. Some indeed went further and accused Amin of dismantling and weakening the society: "Some blamed

¹⁵⁶ Gorman conveys the opinion of Bayumi in the following quotation: "Far from a call for the liberation of women, Bayumi sees in the writings of Qasim Amin the alien hand of Western influence" (Gorman, 2003: 140).

¹⁵⁷ For example, *Tarbeyat Al-Mar'ah wa Al-Hijāb (Education of Women and the Veil, 1900)* by Ṭalat Ḥarb Bāshā. *Qasim Amin, Iṣlāh Quwāmat Al-Mar'ah (Qasim Amin, Repair Trusteeship of Women, 1970)* by Ḥikmat Šabbāgh. *Qasim Amin, Tahrīr Al-Mar'ah wa Al-Tamaddun Al-Islāmi (Qasim Amin, Women Emancipation and Islamic Civilization, 1988)* by Muḥammad 'Imārah. *Qasim Amin, Muṣliḥan Ijtimā'yan (Qasim Amin, A Social Reformer, 2004)* by Munā Ḥussein Dusūqi.

¹⁵⁸ And there was almost a total consensus on the part of observers that the writings of Qasim Amin and his teacher Mohammed Abdu (1849-1905), in addition to those of some Turkish writers, were considered to be the first ancient contributions in this regard – regardless of the content of what they believe or even think on this issue.

Qasim Amin for weakening the social system. If the hopes of Qasim are realized, modesty will disappear, the loss of which will destroy religion” (Baron, 1997: 115). Lack of agreement on what was provided by those pioneers, including Qasim Amin, led some critics to trace the beginnings further back in time to the Ottoman era, mainly to *Al-Jawā'ib* newspaper and its owner Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq (1804-1887), or to some Arabic writings such as the works of Zeinab Fawaz (1846-1914) from Lebanon and the works of the Egyptian writer Ḥamza Fathallah (1849-1918). (See Al-Milād, 2008: 151).

In 1967, Aisha Abdul-Rahman (1912-1998) published a book entitled *Al-Mafhūm Al-Islāmi li Taḥrīr Al-Mar'ah* (*The Islamic Concept of Women's Liberation*), calling for the need for a new movement for the emancipation of women that stems from an Islamic point of reference. This book was received as positively as the works of Mohammad Mahdi Shams Al-Din (1936-2001), who had called for the liberation of women from the customs and traditions that placed unacceptable restrictions on them, while adding that this situation had come about not out of disrespect for their dignity, or the devaluation of their rights by Islam, but rather as a result of neglect and domination in our societies.

The critics often make a connection between women and the writings of Qasim Amin or those of his teacher such as Mohammed Abdu, and also it is often thought that the writings of Qasim Amin may have influenced Arab women in general. However, the fact is that these writings may have influenced Egyptian women, but inevitably did not influence the Saudi women. The explanation for this can be found in the huge difference between Saudi and Egyptian women with regards to their dress, social lifestyle, thinking and writing. However, there were other factors that have been successful in contributing towards the raising of public awareness of women's issues in Saudi Arabia, and amongst these are the Academic Contributions.

5.3 Academic Contributions

Current realities in the Arab arena have demonstrated that women's issues need to be studied dispassionately in order to be handled carefully. Academic studies are often a more mature and objective way to deal with such issues as they require key academic elements such as evidence and objectivity and must be far removed from emotion or subjectivity; in the end, they are also subject to review and still there is a superabundance of academic contributions in this field.

As can be seen, there were some tentative contributions by women, however, in the late twentieth century, while in this century they have come forward with many activities for the defence of their rights. These have included accessing the educational field, contributions in the form of studies, theoretical and practical participations in the women's world, establishing women's associations and their calling for women's conferences to be held (examples being the Conference on Religion, Culture, and Women's Human Rights in the Muslim World that met in Washington in 1994, the World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995 and in New York from 2000 onwards). Within the Arab region, meanwhile, there have been a great deal of women's activities, a good illustration of that being the World Conference on Women, held in May 2012 at Qassim University and sponsored by the research chair of the businessman Abdullah Salih Al-Rashid (1933-) under the auspices of King Abdullah ibn Abdulaziz, the King of Saudi Arabia.

According to the *Okaz* newspaper, the Al-Rajhi¹⁵⁹ Chair for Research on Saudi Women and their Role in Social Development has conducted a survey about the general trends of research on women in Saudi society. This study has dealt with 450 studies from only three universities in Saudi Arabia in the city of Riyadh. They are: the University of

¹⁵⁹ This belongs to the millionaire Sulaiman Al Rajhi and his family, which owns the Al-Rajhi banks and other assets

King Saud, Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University and Princess Noura University (Okaz, 2012).

More precisely, the research carried out in the case of Gulf women came to be crystallized in the form of several academic conferences that were “held in Kuwait, Bahrain and United Arab Emirates and treated many aspects of women's issues in the Gulf and their role in their societies” (Al-Najjār, 2000: 9-10). There was, indeed, a practical and urgent need for their participation after the oil boom and its economic revenues which have led to a high level of awareness among the members of the Gulf community. People there found that the new economy can easily enrich them and draw them away from such traditional crafts as agriculture and handicrafts, and therefore this generation replaced the plough and the hook with the book, moving from the field of agriculture to the field of knowledge. It is often stated that, ‘family circumstances are a reflection of the financial conditions’, and that is what has been achieved in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia in particular when each gender realized the importance of each member of both of them, and then this took mutual respect and appreciation between the sexes to a very advanced stage, compared to what was happening before the financial boom. “The oil boom temporarily helped to expand economic activity and public services, creating a good demand for Arab labour, including that of women, in the Arab oil countries, especially in education, health and government” (States and Programme, 2006. Vol, 4: 202).

Academic critics and authors are furthermore paying greater attention to the position of Arab women. A typical example of this is “Shabaan [who] is the author of several works that explore themes regarding Arab women in the twentieth century” (Sabry, 2012: 89). An example is her book entitled *Both Right and Left Handed: Arab Women Talk about their Lives* (2009) which was published in both Great Britain and the United States. This book, in fact, offers the reader insights into Arab women in their own words. The women who participated in this series of interviews were Arab women, highly educated and leaders in several areas. They are from several countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Algeria. The author deals with intellectual women to show the relationship between them and their husbands who sometimes ignore their intellectual abilities. The diverse academic contributions of women's affairs and

particularly these contributions which were accompanied by a supportive economy in Saudi Arabia and high percentage of educated and intellectual women have led to know their participation and role in next section.

5.4 Participation and Role of Women

Arab women have become more aware that their role is not limited to being a mother or wife, but that they are also responsible with men for building the universe and for achieving prosperity of life in accordance with their capabilities. The importance of each woman is further to be found in her being an active, productive and influential thinker in her society and the State. Such awareness by women of themselves and their existence is not a new phenomenon, but is the product of a long struggle waged during the twentieth century. Zeidan maintains: "In general, the struggle for women's freedom and national identity were being linked in a way they had not been before, they were no longer simply parallel, but were interdependent struggles" (Zeidan, 1995: 7).

Perhaps the contributions and efforts made by men are incomplete because the women did not make any positive efforts and they did not even show the slightest involvement with their own situation. It is very likely as a result of the authority of custom and tradition and because of the authority of the tribe that women came to believe that they are just created for men and they should have faith in fatalism. Women's issues are generally affected by the level of public social development in communities and the perception of women or men is necessarily a reflection of the overall situation of the community. Therefore, the initiative for change should start from the woman herself in order to promote positive change and then to change society's perception towards her. Thus, when they took the initiative and began demanding their rights, there was a rapid change.

In Saudi Arabia, for instance, most women have currently taken their roles positively. Lippman visited Saudi Arabia several times and pointed out that:

Touring the country in the fall of 2009 and again the following spring, I met and interviewed more women than I had during all my previous visits combined. These Saudi women speak English and are mostly well educated and well travelled and in the different ways all of them are changing the world into which they were born, and their impact is seeping through the country's ossified social structure. (Lippman, 2012: 160)

Although this text suggests a lot of changes, it shows also the extent of suffering through the stages of change.

Despite the fact that this evolution was unsatisfactory in terms of speed, and this allowed men to take the initiative, the hesitation by some women to take a more positive role probably encouraged the men to take the lead in discussing women's issues. Therefore, it is very likely that the works of many men and their results were incomplete and immature, apart from the fact that some of these perhaps showed a clear bias in favour of men who may benefit from the absence of those who should be speaking up for their own cause (i.e. women). Even if a man seeks to liberate women or safeguard them, the results of the work of man alone without the participation of those affected by the issue (women) is often not impartial and neutral and may perhaps veer towards extremism. The cause of women has come to be managed as a battle between the intellectual elite and political groups that have emerged in the region or in the Islamic world. It has been managed at high levels of impulsiveness, emotion and sharp criticism. This issue for non-Muslim elites is a battle for the Renaissance and Enlightenment, for progress, while for the elites of the Islamic tendency it is a battle for virtue, values and ethics. Among the dozens of movements, some of them appear more radical where there is a party that urgently wants to base itself on a Western intellectual reference, without any considerations of religion and culture, and then there is the other party which tries to maintain a very conservative ideological reference which it considers Islamic; examples are the Turkish case on the one hand and the Taliban case on the other.

Both of them have proved contradictory, immature, immoderate and radical. The Turkish experience was when people wanted to change things completely and then prevented veiled women from entering the Parliament. The case of Mervet Safa Kavakçı (1968-) on 18 April 1999 is a typical example. They were even banning them

from attending university. Beaman compares the arbitrary political situation in Egypt with that of Turkey and says that, “Similarly, the ban against Turkish women wearing head scarves when attending university, taking official exams or sitting in Parliament stemmed from the recognition that their presence represents a rejection of the state ideology” (Beaman, 2006: 207). Then there is the experience of the Taliban, which wanted to stick to its values and beliefs and therefore prevented women from enjoying their rights and education. As Rostami indicates, “Many women involved in education were caught by the Taliban” (Rostami-Povey, 2007: 35). Away from this extremism and this negative conflict, there are on the other hand great results which can be achieved when women take the initiative. Whenever they have moved forward they have found a wide support and assistance from all strata of society. They had encouraged the men positively to be aware of their rights and then they benefited from their involvement. In fact that was not only at the individual level, but rather at the level of representatives of religious and political movements and other elites.

For instance, there were positive contributions calling for women to insist on their rights and to expose many outdated allegations arising out of traditions and customs. Several followed a moderate Islamist trend which was revived by several scholars, whereby they adopted the religious discourse that shifted from a passive to an active defensive position and became more understanding of the aspirations, views and future of women, and thus it became more acceptable even to the woman herself. The influence of the religious discourse on the women and then the acceptance of the women towards this discourse about their issues have made it something of a phenomenon. It has induced a number of critics to initiate and embark on the analysis of this discourse, one such being Lamoureaux, who states that after his description of the gendered nature of social space nowadays with its historic precedent, “I then discuss the influence of the new Islamist Discourse on women in the last two decades” (Lamoureaux, 2011: 110).

The positive interactions by women which stimulate the elite and make them care about women's affairs should not stop at this point, but indeed women must continue to contribute to the formulation of religious and social discourse and correct some misconceptions and make them more valid and acceptable through their entirely positive participations in this regard. “All the women have, to various degrees,

participated in or contributed to a process that has made Islamic discourse and discussion about Islam's role more acceptable in the public square” (Bennett, 2010: 7).

Some of the most prominent contributions of this moderate religious trend that has spread widely are the books of Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1917-1996) such as *Qadāya Al-Mar'ah: Bayna Al-Taqālid Al-Rāqida wa Al-Wāfida* (*Women's Issues: between Stagnant and Incoming Traditions*, 1990). This book deals with published thoughts that brought together science, literature, criticism, history and opinion, all related to women's issues, family and the community. There are also the contributions of Al-Sheikh Yusuf Al Qaradawi (1926-), who encourages women to stand up for their rights and defend their religion by

Reformulating the discourse and action of the women's movement to be rooted in Islam (*Muslimatu Al-Ghad*, 2001) The ‘Muslim woman of tomorrow’ as he calls her, should be outspoken, active and reach out to her history and heritage, as well as be aware of her era and its challenges in order to play her expected role as an advocate of a global faith. (Bayes and Tohidi, 2001: 242)

In addition we have the views of Hassan Al-Turābi (1932-), who called for reform that would revolutionize the reality of women in Islamic society, and called for the renewal of religious thought on women's issues. Those scholars may have tried to be closer to the Qur’anic form, which portrays women as fully respected and presents them as bright models of peace, as portrayed by the Virgin Mary (peace be upon her) and the Queen Bilqis.

Women themselves have made numerous contributions both as individuals and groups. For instance, in *Al-Mar'ah Al-Arabiya wa Al-Mujtamà‘ Al-Madanī* (*Arab women and civil society*, 2011) by Wafā’ Abdulgādir, the author emphasises that the issue of women does not need laws, new legislation, or establishing several associations and organizations, but rather her cause needs the woman herself: it needs her to know and understand her real role. In 1998, a group of Muslim academic women announced the establishment of the field of scientific studies on modern Muslim Arab women. Al-Milād states:

This group is known as a 'group of the chair of Dr. Zahira`Abdeen for Women's Studies' at the University of Islamic and Social Sciences in the United States of America. The group released a book called 'Arab women and society in the century,' which is one of the most important intellectual works on women's issues. (Al-Milād, 2008: 169)

Women were not working just on one, but rather on many aspects of their cause, and some of them adopted the literary approach, taking advantage of the Arab heritage over the centuries in order to provide an integrated work in this field of knowledge regarding women. The Arab women writers are often distinguished from others by their ability to read the old literary product and employ this to their advantage; unlike the foreign writers, who often based their contributions on the contemporary reality when dealing with a sensitive issue such as this particular cause. Ashour et al, illustrate this point as follows: “Radwa Ashour, Mohammed Berrada, Ferial J. Ghazoul, and Amina Rachid Unlike many other women writers, Arab women writers draw on a rich, ancient heritage, which stretches back to civilizations that flourished in the region” (Ashour et al., 2009: 1).

In the end, then, this issue does not concern women alone, but is shared by men and also by political, religious, social, cultural, and other spectrums. The observer may have come across many commentaries that see ongoing writing about Arab women as it is a vital issue, with universal meaning and of concern to everyone. These massive productions on Arab women and their affairs demonstrate the importance and the value of this topic. When women were absent from participating in discussion of their own affairs, leaving the field for men alone, productions on women remained immature and far from neutral. Once they themselves contributed, after being educated, their issues have come to be dealt with in a more moderate and mature manner. By means of their own contributions, women forced men also to recognise their rights. All of this invites us to examine the extent of literary participation as represented by Saudi novels on the women's movement, especially in Saudi Arabia.

5.5 The Saudi Novel and its Role in Changing Society and Advancing the Condition of Women

Perhaps it is recognized that the novel has become nowadays one of the most radical of literary phenomena with a presence in the literature of the world and especially Arabic literature, enabling novelists to write and criticize whatever they want, hiding behind their characters so as to avoid the strict authority of the censor.

At the present time, Arab women's creativity can be considered as a positive and comprehensive phenomenon, given that their creative productivity throughout history has been negligible. Rashid points out that, "Creative women across the world and in Arab history were exceptions" (Rashid, 2009: 49).¹⁶⁰ But today, manifestations of women's creativity have become a clear phenomenon. Someone can easily find in every Arab country, including the Gulf States, the influential contribution of women in the fields of poetry, stories, novels, art, theatre and cinema.

As far as novels are concerned, *Al-Bahriyyāt (Ladies from over the Seas, 2007)*¹⁶¹ by 'Omaima Al-Khamis is a typical example, as is *Al-Ferdaws Al-Yabāb (A Barren Paradise, 1999)*¹⁶² by Laylā Al-Johani. These two novels, in addition to some novels discussed in the previous chapters and also relevant to this chapter, have been written by Saudi women, and have proved quite able to provide a clear picture of Arab women in

¹⁶⁰ My translation.

¹⁶¹ It is published by the cultural centre and publishing house Al-Mada in Syria. This novel combines sea moisture and desert dryness. It also combines white girls of the sea who found themselves in the hot plateaux and deserts of Najd. It brings together Arab women in Saudi Arabia and Saudi women in Najd in the house of Āl-Māabal Al-Najdi where they both meet and live through the beginning of the emergence of the city and the emergence of oil, based in Riyadh. The novel has 268 pages and is made up of 23 chapters, with beautiful language and very precise language usage.

¹⁶² It is published by Al-Jamal Publications, in Germany, but before that it had won first place in the Sharjah Prize for Innovation in the Novel, and been published by the Ministry of Media in Sharjah in 1988. It was subsequently nominated to be published in "book in the newspaper", which aims to reach ten million readers. This novel is a good example of the new narrative discourse that has been taking shape over two decades in Saudi Arabia. This novel, with its simple language, is dealing with tragic paradoxes, based in Jeddah. A romantic adventure turned into a scandal, which then led the educated girl, (Şaba) to face her sad fate and unexpected destiny.

the city as represented by Saudi women. Although the Saudi novel has focused on women's issues, the fact here is that the Saudi literary contribution mostly does not concentrate on the so-called literature dealing with women and that type which is sometimes called the feminine literature that is written by women only, but actually focuses on the literature that deals with women's issues, whether written by a male or female author, where the creative input draws on one literary source.

Perhaps Saudi participation is more focused on women's language,¹⁶³ which can characterize the women's writings that regularly raise women's issues. However, this does not mean that women's creative writing differs from the output of men.

From my own perspective, the literature created by women on the subject of men has occasionally perhaps been of better quality than the men's work, and the poetry of Al-Khansā' (575-664) is a typical example. In fact, the characters of Naguib Mahfouz such as Ḥamida in the novel *Ziqāq Al-Midaq* (*Midaq Alley*, 1963), Karimah in the novel *Fī Al-Ṭarīq* (*The Road*, 1964) and 'Amina in the novel *Tripartite* (1972), and those in the novels of Hanna Mina such as '*Al-Maṣābīḥ Al-Zurq*' (*Blue Lamps*, 1954), and *Baqāyā Ṣowar* (*Remnants Pictures*, 1975) and those of Ihsan Abdul Quddus, for instance, '*Anā Ḥurra* (*I am Free*, 1954), *Fī Baytinā Rajul*' (*A Man in our Home*, 1957) and *Al-'Anf wa Thalāth Uyūn* (*Nose and three Eyes*, 1964), and the novels of Abdo Khāl, for example, *Fusūq* (*Debauch*, 2005) and *Tarmi Bisharar* (*Spewing Sparks*, 2008) do not differ in terms of their literary features from what has been produced by women, for example in Zaynab Ḥifni's *Lam 'Aud Abkī* (*I Do not Cry Anymore*, 2003) and Rajaa Al-Ṣanea's *Girls of Riyadh* (2005). As Ḥusein points out, "The craft of literature has bases that have been developed by the critics, and the chapters of Arabic criticism do not carry any such division between the literature written by women and that written by men...because literature does not belong to gender" (Ḥusein, 2003: 132, 134).¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Note the beauty of this figurative language in the novel *Al-Ferdaws Al-Yabāb* (Al-Johani, 2006: 69).

¹⁶⁴ My translation.

Therefore, the literary contribution of both genders in the Saudi city is mostly positive in terms of advancing social transformations within the city toward greater women's rights, and especially the contribution of the female novelists who put their own great capacity for language to the service of the novel. The women are more concerned when they notice some of the social errors that are still stuck in those urban communities, as they were once suffering from the cruelty of these errors, so they have great skill that can help them to highlight the errors through their literary language, in order to make literature a tool for building a more just society. The literary language sometimes identifies the gender of the author through certain stylistic features. When the reader examines wonderful feminine language such as that used by Khālidah, heroine of the novel *Al-Ferdaws Al-Yabāb* in describing the hands of her friend Ṣabā when she was kneading so-called ceramic paste, such an examination will naturally lead a person to believe that such language is quite difficult for a man to write in such a style within the context.

The novel by its nature is interested in exploring the micro details by which women may often be characterized, where they are consistent with those female skills in terms of highlighting the small details. So while this is considered a positive contribution, nonetheless the thing which probably undermines particularly women's participation in this regard in the cause of the Saudi women's rights in the city is their determination to repeat the success to the point where it becomes failure. The success of the novel *Girls of Riyadh* (2005) at the popular level, for example, has prompted a very large number of others to write similar novels, which have tended towards the breaking of taboos, and therefore their results are very close to each other and have all been going in the same direction.

Furthermore, the problem of the novel is not only one of redundancy but probably also of the exaggeration demonstrated by displaying or tackling a single issue, such as the issue of sex. In other words, in spite of the significant progress for Arab women, and especially Saudi women, within the cities, and the large number of positive contributions made by women's novels to the civil social construction, it should nonetheless be noted that several of these novels have engaged exaggeratedly in the matters of sex and religion. The critic and researcher Shams Al-Mu'ayed confirms:

“Women in the Arabic novel appear in the margins, and in secondary roles, and often it is their bodies which are at the centre of events. Therefore the local novel has failed to portray women correctly” (Al-Mu’ayed, 2008).¹⁶⁵ This might be expected of such a society, which was closed for a long time and then has suddenly found all the doors opened in front of it. However, the matter is clear, namely that the sexual issue is often crammed into the novel, not for any purpose but only because it needs to be included in the novel, as most novels do not carry solutions to these issues, rather than merely a tempting description. It is hard for the readers to neglect the issue of sex and the image of persecution when they read an Arabic novel, particularly women’s novels. Golley observes this when she writes: “The reviewers either have not read or choose to ignore that whole body of Arab texts by authors such as Nawal el-Saadawi, Tayeb el-Salih, Hanan al-Shaykh, and the later works of Najuib Mahfouz that unhesitatingly deal with issues of Arab women’s sexuality” (Golley, 2007: 147).

These kinds of novels, which emphasise only the negative aspects of women’s life, are most likely providing a picture of their city-based society as either very conservative, meaning with attendant forms of persecution, or as a completely liberal society with no moral restraints. This type of literary production is what is increasing the foreign reader's ignorance of the actual status of Arab women, particularly the Gulf women, who as a result of those negative and dark images are thought by some people living outside the Arab world to be still living in tents and tying up their camels in front of them.

This is what has upset many of the critics¹⁶⁶ who are looking forward to seeing great women's novels which are compatible with their aspirations and encouraging to women’s future literary output. It has indeed led several critics to complain sometimes about the use of such negative types of slang language such as in *Girls of Riyadh* (2005), the theme of sadness for instance in *’Unthā Al-’Ankabūt* (2000) and other

¹⁶⁵ My translation.

¹⁶⁶ Such as Shams Al-Mu’ayyad in her lecture entitled *’The Image of Women in the Women's Novel’* (2008).

subject-matter such as excessive sex in the works of Zaynab Ḥifni, since they see in it something negative that may prejudice women. Paulston *et al* state that:

For instance, many critics have complained that in recent literary translation from Arabic into English there is a predilection for novels by Arab women which portray negative aspects of Arab women's lives, such as forced marriage, violence towards women and female circumcision (Amireh 1996; Shaaban 1999; Gabriel 2001; Ripken 2004; Halim 2006). Amireh (1996) and Faiq (2004) are skeptical about the West's enthusiasm for the translated novels of Nawaal Elsaadawi, suggesting that, as Amireh puts it, "she is acclaimed not so much because she champions a women's rights but because she tells Western readers what they want to hear" (Paulston et al., 2012: 371).

Despite the recognition of Arab women through their literary and critical writing as having achieved good progress and their being recognized for obtaining their rights, through the official statistics that indicate the great success of this issue, this negative image on the other hand may deny all these successes and may affect the reader, especially those readers from outside the area. As Burke and Yaghoubian affirm, "So many Westerners were surprised to see Arab women taking an active part in street politics" (Burke and Yaghoubian, 2006: 326).

The image of the primitive Arab might appear strongly in the European and American media. Hollywood movies often depict Arabs as nomads dwelling in tents (see Al-Shir, 2012). But the truth is different and is known only by those who have spent time living in the Arab cities. According to *Al Arabiya.net*, there are many novels that have illuminated for their readers the fact of Saudi women's status in the city, among which are the three novels that have been written by American women about their lives in Saudi Arabian cities during different periods, and these serve to illustrate the reality of the status of Arab women as represented by Saudi women (Al-Shir, 2012). These novels are: *Kingdom of Strangers* (2012) by Zoe Ferraris, *In the Kingdom of Men* (2012) by Kim Barnes and *The Ruins of Us* (2012) by Keija Parssinen.

By providing a space for a large number of novels which have negative images, some publishing houses have been contributing to the dissemination of these sexual and dark images of women, and thus they weaken the positive role of novels such as highlighting

other women's issues and reforming their communities. This mostly happens because the outside community likes such images, and there is a demand which has become widespread, especially when the writer is an oppressed woman in the eyes of some. As Zeidan indicates; "Some publishing houses have discovered the commercial value of publishing women's works, especially novels revolving around love affairs" (Zeidan, 1995: 313).

Moreover, despite the many changes undergone by women, and their great literary contribution, especially in the form of the novel, the fact remains that even when they have entered the world of the city, they are still facing some challenges as to how they may escape from the ruts created by the old habits which perhaps also impact psychologically on their literary participations in the building of their city. For instance, there are those practices to which women were subjected to by either men or other women such as the husband's mother, elderly women, another wife, society around her, the husband's family, education, honour, love, marriage and the veil. The positive side of these subjects, on the other hand, is that they stimulate female novelists to raise these issues and write about them. So, for example, all these issues have been displayed in the novel *Al-Bahriyyāt* and *Al-Ferdaws Al-Yabāb*, in addition to other related novels which have succeeded in detecting and weakening these negative images and practices exercised by some against women because of women's ignorance of their rights and consequent inability to claim these rights. Thus, it was imperative for women to learn and know their rights and then to contribute by literary means to changing urban society for the better. All of these positive transformations in women's lives made through novel-writing contributions would not, however, have happened without the positive and effective role that has been provided by schools and other means of education in the city, as we go on to see in the next section.

5.6 The Role of the School and Learning

The history of science and knowledge in the Arabian Peninsula, including Saudi Arabia, which has had a plurality of schools of different nations within the two holy mosques throughout history, has despite all this not been one in which there was satisfactory provision for women's schools in Saudi Arabia from the outset, so that they might be able to arise and grow naturally. This was because there was opposition from some parents who feared that this may lead later to the mixing of the sexes or may cause some immoral behavior. Bahgat states: "In Saudi Arabia, granting the right of public education to women took longer and caused serious debate. Objections from concerned parents and 'Ulama (religious scholars) to girls' schools, based on the fear that they might have undesirable effects on girls, delayed the establishment of these schools by the government until 1960" (Bahgat, 1999: 52).

In the context of novel-writing, we may see how the novel *Al-Bahriyyāt* narrates the stance taken by the opposition,

انتظم أولاد بهيجة في المدارس, لكن اللولو بنت (مريما) رفض أبو بعثها إلى المدرسة, عموما رفض آل معبل بعث جميع بناتهم إلى المدارس التي كانت قد افتتحت حديثا بعد معارضة شعبية عارمة أدت في بعض المناطق كالقصيم إلى حرقها. ولم تنتظم الفتيات إلا في أواخر الستينات, بينما كانت بعض العوائل المقتدرة تجلب مدرسات إلى وسط الدار لتعليم فتياتهن الدراسة.

Bahija's children enrolled in the schools, but the father of Lulu, who is the daughter of (Maryama), refused to send her to school. The Al Mabal clan generally refused to send any of their daughters to the schools that had recently opened following vehement popular opposition, which had led in some areas such as Al Qassim Province to their being burnt down. It was only in the late sixties that girls became enrolled in the schools, while some families were able financially to bring female teachers into their homes in order to give their daughters lessons. (Al-Khamis, 2007: 92)¹⁶⁷

The school, however, is a beacon that appeals to almost everybody, especially to women who "have essentially won the battle for education in the Arab world today"

¹⁶⁷ Al Qassim Province is located at the heart of both Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Peninsula. According to the 2004 census it has a population of more than 1,000,000 and an area of 65,000 km squared.

(Zeidan, 1995: 39). They find in the school a place where they are able to express their identity during the day, after having been known for so long by their ‘night’ identity in the manner that has been immortalized by the aesthetics of Arabic literature. Arab poetry and prose are full of yearning, aspiration and wishes to meet a loved-one at night and talking with her away from the eyes of the censors. Şalih, the protagonist of the novel *Al-Baḥriyyāt*, is presented by the novelist as an example of the lover in the desert; but this love is expressed and shows itself at night, sanctifies darkness and then goes missing as soon as daylight has appeared. Indeed, even so great and famous a story as the *One Thousand and One Nights* is consistent with this night pattern in both its title and its content. The novel *Al-Baḥriyyāt* states that:

كانت المدرسة في ذلك العام هي البنيان الذي نهض فجأة في وسط صحراء الذكور كالجَنَّة... هذا البنيان
نو الأسوار العالية الذي يعلن صراحة هويته الأنثوية البحتة.

The school in that year was the structure that rose up suddenly in the middle of the male's desert as a paradise... This structure with its high walls, which expressly declared its purely feminine identity... (Al-Khamis, 2007: 138, 139)

The school has social and cultural dimensions that have been instilled within the culture of the Arab generations, especially for women who reverence this profession with the blessing of their menfolk who believe that it is the safe place for women, especially for women of the Gulf. Therefore, it is not surprising that the results of surveys that have been conducted on many women, especially women of the Gulf cities, are consistent with this vision, whether these are older or more recent studies. For example, one study conducted in 1975 in Kuwait City testifies that “66.1% of a sample study on female students at Kuwait University in 1975 found that the type of job best suited to the nature of women and to their psychological and biological make-up is teaching” (Al-Najjār, 2000: 52).¹⁶⁸

It was through the city school that the Saudi girl was taught to know her rights and to achieve her goals. The school was not just the window of opportunity that the girl could use in her teen years, to flirt with her boyfriend or even to identify or meet her White Knight, as is the image of the lover Aḥlām in the novel *‘Unthā Al-‘Ankabūt*, and the

¹⁶⁸ My translation.

picture of Qumasha, the teenage mother, who is always talking about her charms, penchant and passion in the novel *Al-Bahriyyāt* (p: 146-150). For not only does the school add to the cognitive make-up of a woman, but it is also a social structure which enables Saudi girls to discover another side to Arab women. A Saudi girl knew her Arab sister only as a second wife – to a rich man – fleeing from her poverty, as shown in the role of the characters of Bahija, Maryama and Souad in the novel *Al-Bahriyyāt*; but she did not know her as a director of a school, such as in the character of Ms Wafiqa from Iraq, or as a counsellor and a teacher such as in the character of Rihab, a Palestinian girl whose only identity in the novel *Al-Bahriyyāt* comes through the school. The novelist Al-Khamis explains this as follows:

تعلم رحاب أن الهوية قوة وتميُّز واسترداد للملامح وسط الحشود، وهي فاقدة الهوية، لاجئة فلسطينية
بوثيقة لاجئة دون أوراق رسمية... كانت تتوقف عند تفاصيل الطالبات، تفككها بلطف وتنقب فيها بنعومة
وتتحدث حولها، أتقنت ترجمة النظرات والوجوه... أعادت رسمها بدقة وعناية بعد أن أذابها أسيد الإهمال
والجزر والنهي.

Rehab knows that identity is the power to stand out from the crowd and to reclaim one's distinguishing features, and she is devoid of identity, a Palestinian refugee, with a refugee document and without official papers... She would study the features of the female students, disintegrate them gently, explore them gracefully and talk about them. She mastered the translation of looks and faces... Re-drawing it carefully and precisely after it dissolved in the acid of neglect, isolation and denial. (Al-Khamis, 2007: 147, 148)

So those schools, which opened in the city centre, have become a symbol of emancipation from the ignorance which had oppressed girls and indeed a source of light for the Saudi girl who will be seen later having high positions of leadership, knowledge and so on, with a number of servants and drivers working for her because of the leading role of the school. Varghese confirms that:

By education it is proved beyond doubt that men are no longer 'Gods' for women and women no longer 'dolls' for men. As a result of the reawakening of women, men's supremacy becomes a thing of the past. The spread of education makes them aware of their rights and privileges in the society (Varghese, 2012: 47, 48).

However, before that, there was undoubtedly a price that had to be paid by some girls who may have delayed their marriage due to their concern for their studies in a society that does not appreciate this new situation or the dreams and aspirations of its women.

Let us consider the drivers of Ṣabā and Khulud in the novel *Al-Ferdaws Al-Yabāb* or the women of Al-mabal family in the novel *Al-Baḥriyyāt* and the great position enjoyed by Ahlam in *‘Unthā Al-‘Ankabūt* and Rehab in the novel *Al-Baḥriyyāt*; these prices were all paid by those who took the initiative and paid the price even if it was very high, such as the sacrifice of Munira in the novel *Al-Baḥriyyāt* when she accepted the idea of being a second wife as there was nobody wanting to marry her due to her preoccupation with her studies in a society which did not appreciate that at the very beginning, so that she was one of those who paid the price in order to open the door for women to take up their right for education. Al-Khamis states:

لكن منيره دخلت عليه (وهي في أواخر العشرينات) وهي تحمل ذنبا كبيرا، فكانت طوال الوقت تحاول أن تستغفره عن خطيئة تعليمها و تحاول أن تثبت له بأنها ليست سوى امرأة مثل الأخريات.

But Munira accepted him (while in her late twenties), carrying a great feeling of guilt, and continuously tried to pray for forgiveness for the sin that was her education, while trying to prove to him that she was just a woman like the other women. (Al-Khamis, 2007: 174)

But with the passage of time the balance has swung and educated women hold the right to compel a man to respect them, and indeed also to desire them. This is the case of the character Sa‘ad, who went mad searching for an educated wife. Rezvani presents the views of both Rosslyn Kleeman and Katharine Weymouth. Rosslyn states, “A woman, especially a young woman, is given more respect if she's educated. Katharine Weymouth also suggested that advanced education plays a role in getting credibility and respect” (Rezvani, 2010: 84).

Certainly there is a difference over the past where the men were looking for educated women for the best food and sex, especially in the beginning of the 1970s, something which is reflected in the novel *Al-Baḥriyyāt*, (p: 173). But the present goal of the educated wife is to be a partner in building an educated family sharing in love, rights and respect. Al-Malki et al. have described this in the following terms:

Education is a driver pushing Arab girls and women ahead in their societies. We nevertheless maintain that an Arab woman who is open-minded about her situation will see education as a way to attract improved life chances. And because of the inequalities between men and women, it will be reasonable for

her to perceive that her life chances will improve with education to a greater extent than men will expect to be the case for them. (Al-Malki et al., 2012: 145)

The school was also able to give distant Arab women a chance to reach beyond the closed world of Saudi women, not only at the level of education in schools but also through the establishment of relationships outside the school walls, as in the case of Ahlam from the Levant with the large family of Al-Mabal in the city of Riyadh in the novel *Al-Bahriyyāt*. Besides that there was attractive financial income which might be enough for them to come as a teacher and not as a second wife, as portrayed in the thinking and beliefs of Mr. Abu Ṣāleḥ who is the head of a large family and the decision-maker with the expatriate teacher Rehab, and the case of his son Mr Ṣāleḥ with his wife Bahija from Syria in the novel *Al-Bahriyyāt*, (p: 158). There is even Sa‘ad’s wife Souad who came from Syria as the third wife of a drunken husband, and her life was mediocre. This was all driven in some cases by the pressure from some Arab wife's family so that they can get the money, as in the case of Souad, which is narrated by the novelist:

حينما يقدم العريس من السعودية لا يسأل الأهل كثيرا عن التفاصيل، لكن خالها إبراهيم وهو يراهم منهمكين في إعداد حقائبها للذهاب كان يقول يا جماعة (اسألوا عنه اسألوا عن وضعه... لا ترموها هالرمية) أخوها سامر كان يقول متهمكماً: (ها... الصياد يبسأل عن ذكريات السمكة حين يصيدها، هي سمكة خليجية كبيرة...) بينما ظلت أمها... تذهب وتعود الى السوق لتبتاع لها ألبسة سهرة.

When the groom comes from Saudi Arabia, the bride's family does not ask a lot about the details. But her uncle Ibrahim, seeing them engrossed in the preparation of her bags for going away used to tell them: “Ask about him, ask about his situation, do not just throw away her like this!” Her brother Samer was saying sarcastically: “Ha... the fisherman does not ask about the memories of the fish when he catches it. It is a big Gulf fish...”) Her mother, meanwhile, kept going to the market to buy her daughter clothes for the evening ceremony... (Al-Khamis, 2007: 172)

Alternatively, they might be driven by their desire to increase their financial income and then enjoy a better life, such as in the case of Rehab. Her relatives in the Levant say that she reaps money from the trees in Saudi Arabia and erects her own buildings. This view by the relatives of course is not true, but they were not completely in error either, given that there are no doubts that the funds that she received were the best support in her expatriate life and continued to grow right until her death. Al-Khamis tells us:

لكن هذا النهار المحتشد والرصيد الذي أصبح يتكاثر في البنك بدأ يجعل ملمس الأيام أقل قسوة, ولاسيما بعد أن أصبحت تصلها رسائل من أقارب متعجرفين يعيدون الأواصر مع (رحاب).

But this busy day and the bank account that was getting ever fatter in the bank, began to make the days feels less harsh, especially after she received messages from presumptuous relatives who wanted to re-establish family ties with her (Rehab). (Al-Khamis, 2007: 166)

Unlike the previous generation of women, educated girls not only wish for their rights but have learned about their rights and then learned how to call for and stand up for their rights and have become qualified to criticise the surrounding errors, whether political, social or legal. Zeidan confirms that, “Early advocates of women's emancipation realized that education was necessary to create women able to articulate the reforms they wanted and to fight for those reforms, and that any reforms achieved without education for women would be useless” (Zeidan, 1995: 39).

Here is where lies the difference in the generations from before education became widespread and after the popularisation of education, as seen from the context of the novel *Al-Ferdaws Al-Yabāb*, which is based on the educated imaginary protagonist and her expectations of the uneducated and who did not know their rights. Şaba says:

لم يحتف أحد بالبكاء مثل احتفاء العرب, وما أنا فيه مبك بل مخز. كان يجب علي أن أخرج اليهم في الشوارع الأنيقة النظيفة. استصرخهم. أتشبث بأطراف ثيابهم كي يلتفتوا إلي ويحسوا بي. (وا عرباه. وا عرباه. أدركوني أغيثوني). غرناطة جديدة ستهوي. قدس آخر ستسلب. التفتوا إلي. أغيثوني لا تضيعوني.

Nobody celebrates weeping like the Arabs, and what I am in is a crying shame. I had to go out to them in the neat, clean streets. I cried out to them, clung to their clothes in order for them to notice me and pay attention to me. (Oh where are you, oh Arabs? Oh, where are you? Catch me, help me. Another Granada will collapse, another Jerusalem will be taken by force. Turn to me, help me, do not let me go to waste! (Al-Johani, 2006: 33)

And the response of the uneducated people was:

(أيش بها هادي اتجننت؟! (ول, ول. فين أهلها؟ مفلتيتها كدا في الشارع ليه؟! (والله ما أدري ياخويا!) (أخصروكم منها). واحدة ملعونة جاية تشبه نفسها بالأندلس والقدس. تفوه. إيش جاب لجاب يابنت ال... روجي أرمي بلاويك على غيرنا) هادا اللي كسبناه من الدش... بناتنا اتقلتوا في الشوارع... لا و أنت الصادق. هذا اللي كسبناه من تعليمهم. علم بنتك ولا إختك عشان تطلع بكره في الشارع تنادي: وا عرباه) ياعيني أمها أغمي عليها من الصدمة. قال تبغي تحرر القدس والتانية الأندلس ما أدري إيش قلعتها؟ سألت البنات عنها قالوا: اسمها دحين أسبانيا.

(Has this woman gone mad?!) (Oh, oh! Where is her family? They let her go out like this into the street, why?) (I swear to God I do not know, my brother!) (Ignore her). Cursed woman, she came likening herself to Andalusia and Jerusalem. Pff. What do they have to do with it, Oh Daughter of..., go and throw your burdens on others) (This is how we have been rewarded by Satellite T.V. ...our daughters go out onto the street corners...) You are right, but it is what we have earned by their education. Teach your daughter or your sister to come out tomorrow and call out: Oh where are you, oh Arabs)... (Oh I am sorry for her mother who fainted from shock. They said she will free Jerusalem and then Andalusia, when I don't even know where it is.) I asked the girls about it and they said it is known as Spain. (Al-Johani, 2006: 33)

This reaction from the uneducated women toward the educated protagonist displays the gap which separates the two generations. This is offset by the awareness and city-centeredness of the new generation of educated women when they replied to the question from the old woman telling her that Andalusia is now Spain. All these demonstrate the extent of the difficulties which are faced by educated women, and the fact that these difficulties were not from men alone, but from other women as well. This is so when educated women use classical language (scientific language) or recall historical events or even when they demand their rights in 'clean streets', which signifies that the community was interested in the luxuries while ignoring the rights of those women, who eventually were accused of being crazy.

The novelist does not stop at this, but goes deeply in search of what was around her in the city of Jeddah, and then starts in her fiction to make connections between things that have existed in her hometown for quite some time, but which have hitherto gone unnoticed. Şabā, the heroine of the novel *Al-Ferdaws Al-Yabāb*, who represents an educated generation, narrates:

في الحادية عشرة ليلا يبدو شارع فلسطين مثل أفعى سوداء طويلة عريضة تركت ذيلها في الطرف الشرقي من جدة و أطلت برأسها على البحر. على جانب الطريق الجميل المزروع تتراعى الأحياء: الرويس الحمراء, الشرفية, الرحاب... وعلى جانبه أيضا تتناثر المطاعم والفنادق والمكتبات والمراكز التجارية حتى القنصلية الأمريكية اختارت موقعا يتقاطع فيه شارع فلسطين مع شارع الأندلس لتقيم مبناها. ها ها ها, روعة لايفكر بهذه الطريقة الا الأمريكان. الأندلس وفلسطين وعلم أمريكي يرفرف فوقهما! منتهى الروعة ها ها ها, كيف لم أنتبه لذلك من قبل؟

At eleven at night Palestine Street resembles a long memorial black snake that has left her tail at the edge of eastern Jeddah and reared her head on the sea. On the side of the beautiful inset road, neighbourhoods extended: Al-Ruwais, Al-Hamra, Al-Sharafiyya and Al-Rehab... And also on either side of it are to be

found scattered restaurants, hotels, libraries and shopping centres, with even the U.S. consulate choosing a location which intersects Palestine Street with Al-Andalus Street to establish its premises. Ha ha ha! Remarkable, how nobody thinks that way, except the Americans. Andalusia, Palestine and the American flag flying above them! Most fascinating, ha ha! How come I didn't notice that before? (Al-Johani, 2006: 48)

Here, it is obvious that the observer may distinguish the extent of cognitive and cultural awareness among the educated generation and the preceding generation, and how schooling positively affected language, thinking, political and cultural awareness. Al-Najjār observes:

There is a clear change in the status of women in Arab society, as well as in the practice of some of their social rights, which include: women's access, especially urban ones, as much as a multitude of education in terms of both quality and quantity. This was thus reflected in the constituency that might be called feminist pressure groups claiming wider rights for the Arab women. (Al-Najjār, 2000: 64)¹⁶⁹

In the cities of the Arab Gulf, the school has played a significant role at all levels and highlights the women's achievement of many of their rights, and therefore they adhere to their right to study, which guarantees other rights to them. Therefore the fact of women's control over the universities in the Arab Gulf should come as no surprise. Al-Najjār confirms this by saying that, "And in the Arab Gulf communities it is sufficient to say that the majority – and probably the vast majority – of students in university education consists of women (from 60% to 65%)" (Al-Najjār, 2000: 64).¹⁷⁰

Women have found that the most effective way to gain salvation from the repression of men is through education. Even if a woman has been subject to men's oppression for many years, it is no longer so in the city after she has been educated. The novels offer many models by which they suggest that the man has respected and appreciated the position of educated women and that sometimes it is the man himself who is subject to

¹⁶⁹ My translation.

¹⁷⁰ My translation.

the educated women. This was true in the case of Omar, when he looked up to Rehab and asked her to teach him the English language (see Al-Khamis, 2007: 163).

The positive role of the school is recognised by many critics, such as Groth and Sousa-Poza, who state: “Over the last two decades, the Arab region has achieved remarkable progress in all educational indicators...” (Groth and Sousa-Poza, 2012: 253). In addition to this, there is the openness of the Arab cities to the international community: “The friction in the history of the evolution of Arab society is not hidden, as most of its prominent coastal cities were in contact with various European cities” (Al-Jamayyel, 1997: 69).¹⁷¹

Saudi Arabia and its economy has emerged as one of the major sources of influence in the Arab region after the discovery of oil and its rising prices, or what has come to be called the oil culture. This has played a significant role in terms of forcing the Gulf society to give up its isolation and to play an important role in the region, and the women of course have gained a share in these roles; all these factors have contributed positively to the women’s transformations in terms of both education and work. “In the university 60 percent of the students are women, and the government plans to promote women's employment to replace some foreign workers as they diversify away from oil” (Nydell, 2012: 45).

This new reality is forming both new actions and new patterns of thinking, along with new and more tolerant types of relationships. As writer Latifa Al-Zayat states: “ The reality is governed by thousands of economic and political imperatives, and by ethical behaviour, customs and traditions” (Rashid, 2009: 50).¹⁷²

The character Nawal in the novel *Al-Bahriyyāt* embodies this fast boom in education and finance and illustrates how these transformations led to a cultural blend between home and abroad, most of it being in favour of women, who found that the character of

¹⁷¹ My translation.

¹⁷² My translation.

the man who is afraid and fears her is also kind and trying to help her when she takes the initiative and moves forward so as to be his partner rather than his slave. The character of Nawal confirms that:

بدأت نوال تتحدث عن شهاداتها التي نالتها من بريطانيا، وعن كونها أول سعودية باستطاعتها تصميم ميزانية لمؤسسة تجارية كبيرة، وعن الشهادة التي حُضيت بها من الأكاديمية الملكية البريطانية؛ وعن رغبتها في التوظيف في بنك، ولا ترغب في التدريس لأنها مهنة لا تتوافق مع طموحاتها... وتشجيع متعب (زوجها) لها و إصراره على إدماجها في البعثة الخاصة بزوجات المبتعثين. وكيف أنه كان يعتني بالأطفال عندما كانت تذهب إلى فصولها المسائية في جامعة لندن.

Nawal began to talk about the certificates that she had got from Britain, and about how she was the first Saudi girl who is able to design a budget for a large commercial institution, and the certificate that she received from the British Royal Academy; and about her desire for employment in a bank, and how she did not wish to go into teaching as it was a profession not consistent with her ambitions...And about how Motib (her husband) had encouraged her and had insisted on making her a member of the special mission for wives of the male delegates, and how he took care of their children while she used to attend her evening classes at London University. (Al-Khamis, 2007: 233)

When women knew their rights and responsibilities, after the positive contribution of the school in this regard, they understood also that what had been holding back their mothers and grandmothers were customs and traditions, rather than religion.

The women of the city achieved high levels of education and became more aware of their own religion and culture. They discovered that their religion was not against them or their rights. In order to clarify the reality of religion about their issue and to remove the ground from under the feet of those who outwitted them in the name of religion for their own interests, many of the university graduates came out and spoke their mind and urged the rest of the women to do likewise. Hanan Al-Ahmady, head of the women's department at the Institute of Public Administration, is a case in point. She says, "You have to prove that participation in public affairs and taking leadership positions doesn't jeopardize Islamic values and Saudi identity" (Nydell, 2012: 156).

It is not just women and impartial critics who have become tired of seeing women's issues linked to religion in every sphere, but even political leaders have publicly referred to this as an error. The President of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan, stated publicly: "Women have the right to work everywhere. Islam affords to

women their rightful status, and encourages them to work in all sectors. This is as long as they are afforded appropriate respect” (Al Abed et al, 2005: 20).

Now that the city school has taken on the scientific, knowledge-providing, social and moral roles, and all this has reflected positively on the role of women, the parents are convinced that the school has to remain, and an educated girl has a place of honour and pride as far as her family and her parents are concerned and perhaps is blessed with advantages which are not bestowed on others. The Arab Human Development Report 2005: Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World states that; “Fathers, particularly the educated, support the education of their daughters and wives, encourage them to advance in their professions and provide them with means to do so” (States et al., 2006: 175).

All of the above may give a clear indication of the status of women in the city before, during and after their learning, and how there can become an integrative process in the city between men and women in order for both men and women to enjoy their just and legal rights. When the characters of the novels act at this positive level of awareness, those who are interested in women's affairs cannot notice any big difference between Saudi women and their Western counterparts. Furthermore, unlike the point of view expressed in the novels discussed in the previous chapter (Freedom and Alienation), which portrayed the city as an almost negative entity, here, by contrast, the novels demonstrate and draw a positive image of the city and present it as a space which affords women better status than the countryside. Chant has confirmed that, “Cities afford women enhanced opportunities in labour markets, in education and in access to services” (Chant, 2010: 157).

There are some novels and media reports that are still presenting an unreasonably bleak and dark image of the status of women while at the same time claiming that they are defending and standing up for them. However, in fact, they are diminishing the value of Arab women, especially of Saudi women who have got most of the positive transformations in their favour. Moreover, this melancholic view of Saudi women may also downgrade the value of their actual achievements, for which they have fought for a

long time. This may serve to undermine the reasonable status that the women have reached in the current era. Al Abed et al, illustrate this point: “Although women's advocates might argue that there is still much to be done, the achievements have been remarkable, and the country's women are now increasingly playing their part in political and economic life by taking up positions at all levels in the public and private sectors” (Al Abed et al, 2005: 20). In fact, the schools have played a key role mainly in terms of correcting the concept of Women's Rights via arming both men and women with knowledge so as to know their rights and share them with mutual respect and justice. This positive role that has been provided by the school and other means of education appeared clearly in the case of the women of cities more than in that of the rural women, and these manifestations will be shown in the following section.

5.7 The Position and Status of Women in the City

Despite the rapid social transformations of the city, it is still granting women more than the village, providing them with some of their rights and standing up for them to prove their literary status and showing the importance of their contribution in terms of building their society's culture. In return, women's respect for and love of the city have increased, especially in the case of educated women who are the majority in the city, despite its cruelty. The heroine Khālidah speaks to the spirit of her friend Ṣabā who has died:

لم أدرك إلى أي حد كانت جدة موعلة في أعماقك حتى قرأت أوراقك...ها أنتذي قد رحلت قبل أن تدعيني
أكتشف معك جدة المدينة التي كشفت لحبك عن وجه...جدة إلى أي حد يمكن لهذه المدينة أن تكون
مغوية?...أجل، ما تكون هذه التي حين تفكرين بها و بالكتابة عنها تدفعك دفعا غير هين لأعماقك
المضطربة؟ أي سر يكتنف هذه المدينة ويجعلك مولعة بها؟

I did not realize just how deep Jeddah was in your heart until I read your papers...Now, you have left before you let me discover Jeddah with you, the city which revealed to you a face of love...Jeddah, just how alluring can this city be ...Yes, this is why when you think and write about it, it pushes you really quite hard to the troubled depths of your heart? What mystery envelops this city, that makes you so fond of it? (Al-Johani, 2006: 70, 71, 81, 85)

Certainly, and through the portrayal of the Arabic novel which tackles the case of women in both village and city, the girl of the city is unlike that of the village, as the city girl is stronger and braver. She does not accept social error, even if it comes from her parents, who are the closest to her. The previous stance of the heroine Ahlam, the Riyadh city girl who appears in the novel *'Unthā Al-'Ankabūt*, in front of her father's cruelty and her standing up for her rights and her rejection of the oppression was just one example of the position women found themselves in when faced with men's cruelty. This young woman of the city blames her mother as well for having surrendered to the injustice of men, and because she did not take the initiative to assert her rights. The heroine Ahlam, the girl of the city, addresses her mother, saying:

كنت أشجع منك يا أمي فلا تغضبي أو تبصقي علي.

I was braver than you, Mom, so do not get angry or spit on me. (Al-'Ulayyān, 2000: 197)

The novelist Al-Johani presents a full image of the social space and freedom enjoyed by men, compared to that of women before they became educated. Her application of this occurs across multiple images, such as her selection of names for her heroes and then the way she makes these names symbols expressive of what was existing in that period of time. Further, she highlights any error when it is committed by women and compares that to the case of men when they did the same thing, and shows how Arab societies are so forgiving of the man's fault only. The novel here presents all that so as to urge women to continue seeking to educate themselves in order to maintain their position and rights. The novel in my opinion has succeeded when it named the heroine (the beloved) Ṣabā which is “the East Wind, it is a soft wind, and has the ability to seed rain-laden clouds, and thus with fecundity” (Stetkevych, 1993: 125). This name is given to the beloved in order to show how long her stay is in the life of the hero – which is not more than a short stay, despite her importance, and like a passing wind. However, when the fiancée's character played the role of an educated woman who knows her rights and avoids a lot of mistakes due to her education and awareness, the author granted her the name Khālidah, which means immortality, to prove that the period of her survival is longer than that of the character of Ṣabā. Indeed, despite the conflict that there was between these two characters (Khālidah, Ṣabā) and one man ʿĀmer, Khālidah has

remained alive in the novel, while Ṣabā has committed suicide. The hero has been awarded the name of the `Āmer (اسم الفاعل) from the active participle in Arabic grammar, and “the basic meaning of an active participle in Arabic is "doing," or "having done," the English equivalent of an adjective or verb ending in "-ing.”” (Al-Khalesi, 2006: 154).

All these devices are used in order to indicate the regeneration, continuation, renewal and survival in his life as compared with an uneducated woman's short life. Although the key figures in the novel are only three, one man and two women, nevertheless the observer may note that the novelist wanted to distinguish between the character of Ṣabā, who is deceived by her lover who leaves her after a long relationship and then chose to commit suicide as a way to escape from the bitter reality and her grim prospects in society, and Khālidah the educated character who was more aware and discovered the trick before it occurred. Khālidah articulates this in the context of a rebuke to her friend Ṣabā, whose choice was escape through suicide rather than to stand up to the man who deceived her and hold him accountable for his betrayal:

الناس لا تموت من الحب, وهذا الذي مُتَّ بسببه ليس حبا, إنه ليس أكثر من دودة نخرت قلبك وعلمتك
الإستسلام.

People do not die of love, and what you died of is not love, it is nothing more than a worm that rotted in your heart and taught you to surrender. (Al-Johani, 2006: 64, 65)

Women's literary contributions in the way of social criticism are mostly positive, often highlighting the social errors in an explicit way in order to avoid them. An example is the social acceptance of man's mistakes only. This novel addresses this issue through the woman of Jeddah city who is addressing the man in the language of resentment:

من أبسط حقوقك إنك تكشف على المرأة اللي حنتزوجها عشان ما تكون لعبت, الإحتياط واجب وهذا حقك. أنت تلعب ما يهمش! لكن هي يهم ويهم قوي. هي الدنيا فوضى وإلا الدنيا فوضى. وإلا أنت هتخط تعبك وشفاك في بضاعة معطوبة؟ (وفي حديثها للمرأة تقول): لن أزعج الحياة بالكلام عن المرأة ولن أزعجك لكن ألم تعي هذه المأساة بعد؟ ألم تدركي أنك كيان ناقص غير جدير بالثقة ولا يحق له أن يجرب؟ المرأة التي تجترئ على أن تخوض التجربة سيسقط عن رأسها تاج الفضيلة وستهوي في الدرك الأسفل من جهنم.

It is one of your basic rights to examine the woman whom you are going to marry to ensure that she did not play around before and that she is still a virgin. Caution is a duty, and this is your right. You play around, and that is acceptable!

But when she plays around that's a really big deal! Is this life a mess or what? Or are you going to waste all your effort and misery on damaged goods?... (Al-Johani, 2006: 51)

And here she is addressing the woman:

I will not bother people by talking about women, and I won't bother you; however, are you not aware of this tragedy yet? Don't you realize that you are a deficient entity which is not trustworthy and has no right to try? The woman who has the audacity to experiment will lose the virtuous crown from her head and will descend to the lowest depths of hell. (Al-Johani, 2006: 62)

The city has not only given birth to the novel, but also brought forth the woman and has provided her with a good position and space to distinguish herself through the writing of literary texts, especially novels, and thereby to participate in the construction of modern literature. Ashour et al state that, "Women's literature in the Arab world has clearly evolved and many new writers have made fine contributions" (Ashour et al., 2009: 172). Furthermore, even "most of the community in the Gulf is naturally happy to celebrate the writings of Gulf women" (Rashid, 2009: 49)¹⁷³ and a good status for women authors which is provided by the city's environment; there are, however, those who sometimes claim that women have got all these privileges in the village, and some claim that women have more freedom in the village than in the city, despite the education it offers. This is because women can drive cars in the village, as in the case of Saudi Arabia, and she could practice the commercial and agricultural activity alongside men. A good illustration of this view is provided by Al-Najjār: "According to many studies, the Bedouin and rural women in more conservative areas of the Arab Gulf enjoy the freedom that may not be enjoyed by women of the city, sometimes driving in communities which still prevent women from driving" (Al-Najjār, 2000: 26).¹⁷⁴

But the bitter truth is that any space of freedom that may be owned by women in the village is in reality nothing more than an increase in her enslavement at the hands of men. She is doing everything in the village on behalf of the men: she is the worker, the housewife and the merchant, and she is a farmer and a driver but it does not mean that

¹⁷³ My translation.

¹⁷⁴ My translation.

she is more liberated than urban women. As time goes, man's greed expands to give her more space to move where some think that it is a kind of freedom, whereas it is no more than a little movement inside a man's prison. All these circumstances may lead to the fact that "Many rural girls 'escape to the city' where they find more freedom and a less strenuous life" (Adler and Gielen, 2001: 109). This harshness is described by the critic Zainab Juma, who has analysed the image of the woman in the novels of Emily Nasrallah, portraying the village in a completely negative way that combines "The cruelty of nature, severity of poverty, and cruelty of traditions" (Jumaa, 2005: 112).¹⁷⁵

How do some people think that women have gained a kind of freedom in the village under the auspices of mostly uneducated men? How can they call it freedom? For this type of man mostly does not give a woman even her right to choose her husband, but indeed some of them also marry her to another man whom she does not know at all until the night of her marriage, and she does not have the right to ask because this can be classified as a shame or lack of modesty. This is the case in the novel *'Unthā Al-Ankabūt*:

تزوجت أختي بدرية دون أن تدري سوى قبل زفافها بأيام...

My sister Badria got married without knowing until only a few days before her marriage". (Al-'Ulayyān, 2000: 20)

Moreover, Maryam has been forced under the authority of her village-dwelling father to marry someone whom she does not know until the night of her marriage:

تزوجت مريم قسرا. لم تعلم إلا في ليلة الزفاف.

Maryam has been married by force and she was not aware of that until the wedding night. (Al-Muzaini, 2004: 61)

By contrast, "these days the selection of prospective spouses in the city is done primarily by the young people without parental involvement" (Adler and Gielen, 2001: 109). Certainly there is a role for the parents with regards to the marriage, but the main right nowadays is for the bride to decide whether to accept it or not, while the role of parents is to be confirmatory and supportive to the opinion of the girl. This is so in the

¹⁷⁵ My translation.

case of Rihab and her fiancé Omar and the case of Qumasha and her fiancé the royal Prince, in the novel *Al-Bahriyyāt* (see Al-Khamis, 2007: 138, 251-252).

Would a rural man, who often marries off his baby daughter to another baby boy to condemn her to be a slave to that male child since her childhood, going to be collaborating with a woman or giving her respect and consideration, or even sharing with her emotionally? After all this, can such a man be expected to give the woman any freedom? Al-Najjār indicates that when he makes this observation about the social life of the village:

The marriage is usually early on in life, and parents are often associated with a promise of marriage for their children while they are still in their early years. Or even at birth... And marriage is an agreement between the parents. The husband is not allowed to see his bride before marriage. The girl usually is married to her cousin and she does not have the right to marry someone else unless her cousin has refused to marry her; also, the girl is not to know the name of her husband except on the actual wedding night. (Al-Najjār, 2000: 28, 29)¹⁷⁶

However, the status of women in the city is quite different, although there are some who may see that the women's status in the city is worse than in the village and desert, an example being the opinion of Joseph, who offers the following view in the context of vilification of the city:

Women in the city rely heavily on their husbands for companionship and emotional exchange and support. City life limits the woman's daily contacts, to a large extent, to members of the nuclear family or to her work associates if she happens to work outside the home... Love-based marriages are certainly more emotionally fulfilling. (Joseph, 1999: 160)

But the positive side of this can be seen more than the negative. The fact is that women are more integrated with men in the city in most matters, and this integration is compatible with human nature. When Adam felt alienated, God created the woman to integrate with him, and to prove that the fully integrated relationship is to be between

¹⁷⁶ My translation.

men and women. Furthermore, women in the city seem to be more organized in their relations, time management, work and even their passion with the men as in the previous opinion. Individual work, whether of man or woman, mostly does not mean fulfilment and perfection, and so in order to have a balance, it is necessary for there to be complementarity between the sexes, and that is what women have achieved in the city, as Joseph stated above. Women did not seek to work separately from men; otherwise they would run the risk of repeating the errors that men had made in the past. What makes the city a better environment for women is that; often women in the rural areas have many children without any family planning. This is only an extension of the life of the tribe, which boasts of and depends on the abundance of its members, and this probably leads them to spend most of their life only for their children. This is mostly because some women have been taught, and then have become convinced, that perfection and happiness for women can only be in the upbringing of their children. In the case of the city life, however, Elkington notes that “Urban women tend to have fewer children, partly because they have better access to family planning, and partly because they generally have better employment prospects, too” (Elkington, 2012: 93). Not only that, but also the city has changed most of their concepts and made them more aware of these issues. “Women in cities stay in school longer, have better access to contraceptives, get married later and have their first child later”, explained Jocelyn Finlay, based at the Harvard Center of Population and Development Studies (Elkington, 2012: 93). This has been shown several times in both the ideas and language of the Arabic novel, which deals often with the issue of children when it comes to the village. For instance, the novel *Al-Bahriyyāt* portrays the children of Al Mabal¹⁷⁷ in the evening when they were gathering around the TV in a space which could barely accommodate them. Furthermore, this novel shows that the wife called Turfa has got five children in the village, while the wife called Suad has only two children in the city (see Al-Khamis, 2007: 107, 108).

In the city, women have found justice, and so the enslaved rural girl is now the girl who is fascinated by the charm of the city which has granted her warmth and justice and forced her to sing about its allure and splendour, like the heroine Şabā in the novel *Al-*

¹⁷⁷ It is a name of large family

Ferdaws Al-Yabāb, and all the characters of the novel *Al-Baḥriyyāt* who moved to the city of Riyadh and celebrated the city including the old woman 'Om Ṣāleḥ'.

In the city women enjoy the rights that even the man might not have had.¹⁷⁸ While the rural women only ate the leftover food of the man and his children as they do not deserve even to eat with the man, as is portrayed in several novels (see Al-Khamis, 2007: 46), she finds herself in the city in the care of all those around her. The novel *Al-Baḥriyyāt* describes the family life after their move to the city and how the status of women has changed:

غادر (أل معيل) بيوت الوادي...بيوت النخيل إلى فيلا صغيرة في الرياض الحديثة... وبعد أن كان الرجال جميعا يتناولون الغداء سويا, استطاعت النسوة أن يسحبنهم إلى عشاء منزلي مشترك و مستقل عن الجميع.

After the (Al Mabal) left the houses of the valley...the houses with the palm trees... and moved to their new villa in the neighbourhood of Al-Malazz of the modern Riyadh. After the men were all having lunch together, the women were able to withdraw with the men to a home dinner which was shared and independent of all. (Al-Khamis, 2007: 170)

After the woman might have been given as a gift to the man who would sometimes divorce her on the wedding night only because she could not fascinate him, as shown in the case of the character of Abu Ṣāleḥ and his wife Ḥaṣṣah, as portrayed in the novel *Al-Baḥriyyāt* (see Al-Khamis, 2007: 52), in the city almost everyone cares about women's affairs and desires, including servants and drivers. The heroine Ṣabā says, quoting her driver who has grasped her by his forearms after waiting for her for hours:

سلامتك يا ست صبا. سلامتك ياستي. مالك؟ جراك إيه؟ إنت مش طبيعية النهار ده. وشك مصفر وعينيك دبلانة.

Are you OK, Miss Ṣabā? My lady, what is going on? What happened to you? You don't look normal today, your face is yellowish and your eyes are dull. (Al-Johani, 2006: 25)

In addition to that, the other novel *Al-Baḥriyyāt* also narrates the story of pampered Saudi women within the city, through the portrayal of the small details of the lives of

¹⁷⁸ For more information see (Rashid, 2009).

women with those around them, whether they were servants or drivers who are always of the male gender. The novel wants her to indicate the return of man to serve the female within the city.

عندما أتقن عمر (الحضرمي) القيادة، أصبح يحضر بعض الأغراض للمنزل، وكان يقل أحيانا بعض الزائرات إلى بيوتهن... وظلت (رحاب) تذهب وتحضر كل يوم (وعمر الحضرمي) السائق هو الذي يجلبها من منزلها... فتفتح رحاب باب شقتها كل يوم في تمام الرابعة، فتجد عمر هناك مطأطئ الرأس على وجهه ابتسامة ود، ثوبه أبيض نظيف، وغترته بيضاء مكوية بعناية، يقف هناك بانتظارها.

When Omar (Al-Hadrami) had learned to drive properly, he began delivering some shopping to the house, and he sometimes used to take some of the Al-Mabal female visitors to their homes... (Rehab) has been coming and going every day and (Omar Hadrami) her driver is the one who brought her from her home. She opens the door of her apartment every day at 4 exactly, and finds Omar there, his head bowed and with a friendly smile on his face, his clothes white and clean and his white head cover ironed carefully, standing there waiting for her. (Al-Khamis, 2007: 156, 159, 161)

It is not only the Saudi women who have celebrated the city, but many other Arab women also do so. Mona, the heroine of the novel *Ṭuyūr 'Aylūl* (1993) (*Birds of September*) says:

شمس جديدة أشرقت في ظلمة حيرتي. في المدينة تبقى القمصان بيضاء لا يغمسها العرق والغبار. في المدينة تزول الشقوق من الأنامل والأقدام، شمس المدينة لا تحرق، وشتاؤها لا يجمد الأطراف... في المدينة أدفن قلقي وحيرتي وأودع وحدتي القاسية. هناك أتعلم معنى الحياة.

A new sun shone in the darkness of my confusion, in the city the shirts stay white and are not affected by sweat and dust. In the city cracks in the fingers and feet disappear, the sun does not burn in the city, and the winters do not freeze your fingertips... In the city I bury my confusion and my concerns and I put aside my bitter loneliness. There I learn the meaning of life. (Jumaa, 2005: 227)¹⁷⁹

Even the relationship between a man and his wife within the city is much better than it is in the village. The character of Bahija, an urban woman, tries to present this idea and adopt it through that wonderful relationship with her husband Şāleḥ, but the character of the old woman Om Şāleḥ, the village woman, could not understand how such a soft, strong and reliable relationship could occur between husband and wife, in the novel *Al-Baḥriyyāt* (see Al-Khamis, 2007: 63). This rural woman is accustomed to cruelty, and to

¹⁷⁹ My translation.

estrangement, and thus there are many other images in the series of short stories that demonstrate that. One of them is that of the rural mother who is urging her son to keep some distance between him and his wife, in order that this wife should stay fearful of his power over her. She says to her son: “If your wife sits next to you, keep an arm’s length distance between you and her” (Hussein, 1993: 77).

The woman of the village used to go to her polygamous husband when her turn came round, to sleep with him on the same bed that he slept on with his other wife; whereas the woman of the city persuaded her polygamous husband to provide her with a private accommodation and then to come to her, as in the case of the character Bahija with her co-wife Mudi in the village and then in the city (see Al-Khamis, 2007: 95).

Om Şāleḥ, Modi, Sheikha, Al-Bandari, Munira and Nawal, the six women in the novel of *Al-Baḥriyyāt*, were representing different generations, from the fifties until the end of the seventies. All of them were women of that place where the village rules were shaping their lives as to what the village community wanted, and not as to what each one of them wanted. They have no life except through their bodies.

Religious freedom was also lacking in the village, not only at the level of practice but even at the level of attendance. The novelist Al-Khamis seeks through the character of Maryama, who hides her Cross in the village, to illustrate the absence of religious freedom there, which is one of the fundamental human rights.

The village environment is harsh not only to uneducated rural women or toiling women, but also even to those women who had gone to the village to work as doctors, teachers and so on, some of whom were poets and critics. Nobody could escape from the mill of village life, which cruelly ground down all comers equally. The critic, poet and social worker, Madiha Abu Zeid, announces her surrender when she went to work in Ayat (in the countryside of Giza, in Egypt), and tells of her suffering:

I bumped up against the reality which was full of conflict and suffering, on account of the routine and the rotten bureaucracy, and I found myself

surrounded by concerns which were greater than any human being could endure. I failed to address these problems because the situation there was weighed down by all the symbols of corruption in the Egyptian village. I found myself on the verge of collapse and the with a fit of depression coming on. (Abdulmajid. et al., 2003: 439-440)¹⁸⁰

This was unlike the village where the incoming Arab woman needs a long time in order to settle down and to merge with her husband's family, and that time frame indeed may be estimated in years; the city is completely different, where a woman does not need more than days or months to consider herself as one of the family members. Good illustrations of these are the characters of *Al-Bahriyyāt*, Bahija who moved from her city to live with a village man for a while and moved later to the city of Riyadh, and Souad who came to the city directly. Both of them came from Syria to the same family; however, the second was able to integrate and cope with family life and city society faster than the first wife.

The Saudi girl who used to be deprived of her studies and publishing under her real name because this might be considered as a sort of shame and defect is now there in the city as a great author. According to Rashid (2009: 49), some men may write and present their works under female names in order to be accepted and become more popular. A Saudi girl of the city is a worker and postgraduate researcher not only under the supervision of females but under both sexes. In the city of Riyadh, the character of Munira gathered all these together:

Until 13 July 1990 I was spending all my time between my job at the Young Women's Remand Center and studying for my master's degree, which at that point entailed compiling surveys to be distributed among the relevant university professors. I was assisted in this task by a number of undergraduate students in the sociology department at the university, who had been appointed by my Jordanian supervisor, Dr. Yasser Shaheen. (Al-Mohaimed, 2010: 66)

After all, this is more or less the status of Saudi women in the cities, which might cause some observers to believe that the city has provided its positive aspects, such as stability

¹⁸⁰ My translation.

and security to women more than to men. In return, the women were aware of the virtues of the city, and therefore they exchanged love with the city and celebrated it more than men. Many of the female characters through multiple novels show, through their role, their celebration of the city. A good illustration of this is the case of Khālidah and Ṣabā. Khālidah says to her friend Ṣabā:

أنت و أنا فتننتا المدن. وضعنا قائمة بأسماء المدن التي سنتسكع في طرقاتها بحثا عن تفاصيل موعلة في غرابتها، عن الناس، عن الحزن و أحيانا عن الحب. بيروت، روما، دمشق، موسكو، برلين، بكين، جنيف، القاهرة، صنعاء، مدريد، نيويورك،...،... وأخيرا كنت تقولين الإسكندرية ليمنحك الحب فرصة اكتشافها موجة موجة، بناية بناية، شارعاً شارعاً، عصفورا عصفورا، و قلباً قلباً.

You and I are fascinated by cities. We have drawn up a list of cities in whose roads we will wander, searching for deeper and stranger details, about people, about sadness and sometimes about love. Beirut, Rome, Damascus, Moscow, Berlin, Beijing, Geneva, Cairo, Sanaa, Madrid, New York, ..., ... Finally, you say Alexandria, for love to give you the opportunity to discover it wave by wave, building by building, street by street, bird by bird and heart by heart. (Al-Johani, 2006: 70)

Seham, the bourgeois girl who is the heroine of the novel *Al-Rahīna* (*The hostage*, 1992), shows also an incredible love towards her city, the city of Beirut: “Seham” loves her hometown of Beirut, and loves its sea so much”. (Jumaa, 2005: 248)¹⁸¹

Most of the novels that rely entirely on the transformation of women between the village and the city, such as the novel *Al-Bahriyyāt*, do not record any moment of nostalgia towards the village experienced by women after moving to the city.

It was natural for women to love the city and to find themselves, their feeling of being well regarded and also their comfort in the city, as the fabric of modern, civil society which respects the women's entity as much as it appreciates their rights, something which has been confirmed by Al-Jamayyel, who states that, “In the environments, in the capitals and in the Arab cities, has formed the fabric of contemporary and modern Arab society”¹⁸² (Al-Jamayyel, 1997: 61). This civil society, which is made up of individuals and groups, has granted women their public rights. Moreover, the political leadership

¹⁸¹ My translation.

¹⁸² My translation.

had a clear contribution in support of women's political rights and others in order to enable them to participate with men in the building of a modern society. Dr. Maha Almuneef, one of six women appointed in 2009¹⁸³ to the King's consultative council (Shura), said: "The King and the political system are saying that the time has come. There are small steps now. There are giant steps coming" (Nydell, 2012: 157).

Several novels show that women are working for themselves in the city, as in the cases of Ahlam in the novel *'Unthā Al-'Ankabūt*, Rihab in the novel *Al-Baḥriyyāt* and Munira in the novel *Munira's Bottle*, unlike the case of the village where a woman works for the group such as her family and may not obtain any financial reward for her efforts. In the city, if the women could not go out to work in the public sphere for any reason, they will be able to run their own businesses from home. As Nydell points out: "Many women do not work publicly but own their own businesses, often computing companies and retail stores" (Nydell, 2012: 157).

Apart from that, the Saudi government has also set up giant industrial projects called industrial cities which are reserved for women only. These projects will start from Riyadh and Jeddah and spread into other regions in the country. Ramady indicates "Apparently a 600,000 m² site has been allocated for this purpose in Riyadh and a site of similar size has been allocated in Jeddah" (Ramady, 2010: 202). One of these cities may allow thousands of opportunities of employment for women to work in a suitable atmosphere which is commensurate with the nature of that society. Weston refers to an "all-female industrial city near Jeddah, where companies from China and Malaysia will train twenty thousand women to work in more than eighty factories" (Weston, 2011: 128).

It may suffice to say that women in the city have worked, gone out, led, possessed, learned, employed, written, and participated in all affairs of life just as men have done. Nydell puts it in these words:

¹⁸³ Whereas now, in 2013, women comprise 20%, which is a very large number compared to what it was in 2009, and this is a result of the move to the city.

This is a dramatic change from the poverty of the past. The traditional sources of income had been trade, herding, fishing, pearling and piracy. Everything has been turned upside down in the last fifty to sixty years. Although this is the most conservative region of the Arab world (along with Saudi Arabia), women serve as ministers in the governments. This is the situation in 2011. (Nydell, 2012: 157)

The city is no longer described simply as a place which women can sing about, but it has become a body of feelings that is always there in the consciousness of a woman after she has discovered herself and her rights. And this is what is being described by the character of Khālidah when she addresses her friend Ṣabā:

حبك لجة كان أيضا يدفعك للحماقة، وأي حب ذاك الذي يخلو من حماقة؟ كنت تصرخين: إنها أجمل مدينة! وإذا مر العمر تعلمت أن ليس هناك أجمل ولا أقرب ولا أنعس، هناك فقط حبنا الذي يمنح الأشياء ملامحها وأسماءها وألوانها. نضج الحب وصار يستحق الكتابة عنه الآن. يستحق أن تسجل أن جدة ليست طرقاتها المكتظة، ليست جسورها ولا مبانيها، ليست أسواقها ولا نوارسها ولا بحرها ولا بشرها، لا بل هي أعمق إلى حد أن تكوني عاجزة عن احتوائها... أنها الروح التي تملوك.

Your love for Jeddah was also driving you crazy, and what love is free of folly? You were screaming: 'It's the most beautiful city!' And as time passed by, you learned that there is no such thing as 'most beautiful', or 'nearest' or 'most miserable'. There is only our love which gives objects their features, their names and their colours. Love has matured and has become worth writing about now. It deserves that you should be clear about how Jeddah does not consist of its crowded roads, or its bridges or buildings, or its market or its gulls, or its sea or its human beings. No, it is deeper than all that – to the extent that you are unable to contain it. It is the spirit that fills you. (Al-Johani, 2006: 70)

The standard of value of women in the village was based on their beauty, their bodies and their ability to withstand the hardships and cruelty of the life of villages and deserts, as in the case of the character of the romantic wife Bahiga and the beautiful body of Sheikha as portrayed in the novel *Al-Bahriyyāt*. The criterion used in the city, on the other hand, is the value of the women themselves in terms of being human beings and as significant partners in building the life alongside men. The city indeed has raised public awareness, including that of women themselves, of the value of women, which then allows them to raise more of their issues in order to deal with them in a realistic and objective way, especially via literary writing and an intimate narrative language which have made women the leading lights of the literary scene nowadays (see Al-Hāzemī and Al-Yūsif, 2008: 55, 61).

The horizons of social life in the Arabian Gulf have widened after the emergence of the oil economy, which has coincided with the advent of the new technologies and means of communication which have accelerated the process of social transformations in the Gulf society. All these elements have been reflected in the life of the city, which indeed has celebrated women by not only allowing them real political, social, economic and cultural participation but also by weakening the social attitudes that dominate the Arab world, which has often believed that the main priorities for women are to raise and look after children.

5.8 Conclusion

It is clear from the above that there is a very strong link between religion and women who strongly trust and believe in the rule of religion, while at the same time they are mostly unaware of their rights regarding this religion. Thus, there are many people who try to take advantage of that strong emotion felt by women towards their religion by exploiting them in the name of religion.

At the same time the number of novels which address women's issues has increased as a result of several factors such as the availability of modern technology that has facilitated the means of printing and publishing. Saudi women, have been much affected by that wave of publishing as the number of novels published by Saudi women in the last two decades has reached an unprecedented level. Equally, Saudi academic writings and women's participations in spreading awareness on the importance of education and the great role of the school, which originated in the heart of the cities of Saudi Arabia, have had a clear positive impact on the level of social transformations in favour of women. These factors, moreover, have pushed women to participate in the running of their own affairs, a situation which in turn has led to more positive results.

The literary phenomenon of the novel in the Arab world, and especially in Saudi literature, has been one of the most important literary devices used by women when they moved to the city, where novelists can write and criticize the society by hiding behind the characters they create and thus avoiding the strict authority and control of the censor.

For women, the city is forever something sublime. Women fall in love with the city, whether in its prosperity and beauty or in its times of war and cruelty. Therefore, when the Palestinian novelist Mai Al-Şā'igh, in her novel *Be Intedār Al-Qamar (In the Waiting for the Moon, 2002)*, looked for the most precious gift in order to provide it to her relative, she found it only in her own city of Gaza, despite its war, siege and displaced people (Abdulmajid. et al., 2003: 458). The city has fascinated women and made them fall in love with it, even when they are there as strangers. This image appears clearly in most of the characters of the Saudi novels such as the case of the character of Şabā, and in the works of Hala Al-Badri, where she shows her love both of her home city Alexandria and of Athens, the city she has migrated to (Abdulmajid. et al., 2003. Vol, 4: 496).

Women in the city have wanted to live unrestricted lives and not to allow anyone to take away their identity, and that is basically what has been provided by the city to every woman who wanted to see herself as a human being and had this purpose in mind. Even the image of the old woman in the village who was controlling the family life (such as the character of Om Şāleḥ in the novel *Al-Baḥriyyāt*) has been made to disappear, thanks to the city, in order to give everyone fair opportunities and not let them be condemned by the impact of worn out customs.

Conclusion

Conclusion

Large-scale industrial revolutions have fuelled the emergence of cities over the past two centuries, specifically during the late 19th Century with the rise of the middle class (Al-'Alim, 1993). Some cities may have missed the industrial revolution, yet have retained the features and characteristics that classified them as cities, examples being Jerusalem and Mecca as religious cities, Fez and Damascus as historical heritage cities, and Dubai as a modern commercial city, in addition to most of the modern cities in the Arabian Gulf which have been created by the oil revolution.

Although there is a continuing debate as to the relationship between the real and the fictional Arab city, this research was able to rely upon, and then present its findings through the actual city. These findings, based on many kinds of evidence, may help the reader not only to realize that the Arab city does exist in reality as well as in fiction but also to become much more aware of how the words for "civil" and "civilization" in the Arabic language are essentially concepts that have been developed and promoted by cities; a fact which has also been supported by Islamic religious sources, which have encouraged and inspired the life of the city, meaning that the Arab city is hardly to be classified as being outside the circle of cities in general.

On the whole, both the city and the urban civilization contained in it have developed in a phenomenal manner that has provoked either irritation or outright hostility on the part of a number of writers. This has been so because of the destruction of human freedom, the exploitation of resources, the wars that have destroyed much of human civilization and, not least, the enormous social transformations that have been caused by the city – which is moreover, portrayed as a bastion of corruption, extravagance, greed, arrogance and parasitism. At the same time, this process has been accompanied by the emergence of the novel, a literary genre which describes human relations in an unprecedented manner.

Although the novel is regarded as the most recent of the Arabic literary genres, it is also one that is distinguished by the enormous advantages it has and the features it exhibits.

These include imagination, accurate description and a free space for its characters to move within. We may add to these the high capacity and ability that the novel has to penetrate the privacy and complexities of human communities, especially those dwelling in cities, enabling it to expose the minute details of its characters and to monitor rapid transformations in more than one aspect of their lives clearly and boldly. The novel furthermore, enjoys the exceptional advantage of allowing its characters and fictional vision to discuss most of the issues that might be forbidden to many other literary genres and areas of knowledge. Moreover, the extent of the link between a novel and the city in which it is set, and indeed their mutual interdependence, makes the two effectively inseparable, as has been confirmed by Richard Lehan when he writes that “the city and the literary text have had inseparable histories” (Lehan, R. D. 1998: 289), meaning that the novel is a daughter and product of the city; in addition to that comes the notion that “The novel form is representative of everyday life” (Goldmann, 1975: 7). All these special features and advantages have caused the novel to gain the approval and trust of most people and then to become a vehicle for their opinions.

This thesis has relied upon and taken advantage of all the above-mentioned special features of the novel and of the special relationship between the city and the novel. The purpose of this has been to study and monitor those extraordinary social transformations taking place in one country which has suddenly found itself at the forefront of the oil-led economy – a country in which all areas of life have been subject to change at an astonishing speed after remaining basically unchanged over so many centuries.

This research contribution, then, has endeavoured to bring to light many new findings that should appeal to everyone who is interested in the issue of transformations, and especially social transformations. The thesis has also aimed to contribute to a whole range of areas of knowledge such as the psychological, social, linguistic and literary, economic, religious and geographical fields as a result of its reliance on the novel, a literary genre that many other disciplines have not made sufficient use of, despite its special resources that enable it to reveal more details about the realities of the life transformations in so many areas experienced by those communities in question.

Two decisions have definitely helped the research to apply multiple approaches such as the use of linguistic, sociological and psychological tools. The first was the choice of the time-frame 1980-2011 as the specified period for this research, coinciding as it does with the beginning of the fifteenth century AH and moreover being considered a revolutionary period for both the modern novel and the city in the context of Saudi Arabia. The second was reliance on the thematic approach, with all its multidisciplinary ramifications, as the overriding methodology for the research. All these factors have provided real help and enabled this research to arrive at a balanced description and analysis of the Saudi novels under consideration and to corroborate the reality of the modern Saudi city.

Many people may realize just how valuable the city and its environment has been to the novel; however, this research has also illustrated how significant the novel has been also in creating the idea of the city and its survival and providing a deep sense of belonging to it. So many cities not only have remained immortal on paper, but in fact have also remained eternal (see Lambert, 2008), so that they have become a landmark and destination for lovers of literature and for writers from around the world: examples are those depicted in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *The Divine Comedy*, and in the case of Arabic in *The Doves' Necklace* and *Alexandria*⁴⁷.

Despite the negativity generally attributed to city living, this research has proved that the underlying indication suggests that the reality of the CITY provides unparalleled opportunities for wider religious knowledge, personal development, self-realization and individual social contentment amongst various other benefits.

This study has described many rapid transformations occurring in the city which often did not take place over a natural course of time, whether because of the discovery of oil or as a result of wars that erupted unexpectedly, such as the Second Gulf War. Among the most prominent transformations to be seen was the absence of the role of families, which had previously been known for their concern regarding their children; thus, the family name was mentioned only in the beginning and at the end of Al-Muzaini's novel *Mafāriq Al-'Atamah*, as a sign of that full care and concern being absent. This absence

combined with the ignorance, illiteracy and the difficulties of economic life at that time, and then led to the passion and enthusiasm of some young people being exploited by certain other groups, whether they were intellectual, politically modernizing, secular, liberal or religious groups. With regard to religion, after the huge migration of rural folk to the city and their encounter with other religious spectrums, the fear of Westernization has appeared and as a result there have occurred some violent confrontations initiated by some followers of those religious groups in the city, causing the bombings in the cities of Riyadh, Al-Khobar and Jeddah. Consequently there no longer is support from the government for the Islamists as before, and in turn there was a loss of some of the privileges that they had acquired in the early nineties, and indeed before then.

In addition to that, the global trend towards an Islamic orientation in Saudi Arabia after 9/11 has affected its spread and popularity, and has induced young people to turn away and look at the dissenting opinions of those they had not been used to considering before, namely the Francophone school of the Arab Maghreb: we may cite Mohammed Ābed Al-Jabiri, Abdullah Al-Arwi, Mohammed Arkoun and Abdulmajeed Al-Sharafi as typical examples of this. This has split Islamists into several factions and led to the emergence of other trends that have gone their own way, such as modernists, seculars, liberals, and enlighteners; supported by the media, all have led to deterioration in the Islamists' position.

The present research has further demonstrated that the language and background of the people living in the cities were an obstacle to meeting other cultures and religions that came to Saudi Arabia, especially in the case of those people who came from Asia to work in manual jobs. Indeed, this eventually was one of the causes that produced some religious extremism in the seventies, eighties and the first half of the nineties.

The characters of the novels *Mafāriq Al-'Atamah* (*Parting of Darkness* 2004) and *Al-'Erhābī 20* (*The Terrorist 20*, 2006) have served to show that some of the main factors that helped the spread of the Awakening in the eighties were the reliance on the collective mind and the strong official proliferation of members of the Awakening through lectures, seminars and tapes in a society that is non-diversified, simple in its

level of consciousness and fed from a single source such as the religious book. However, openness to the idea of reading other books has helped to restore the balance from the late nineties onward.

The novels have also pointed out that the most prominent elements that affected the religious transformations in the Saudi city were mosques, Holy Qur'an Memorization Schools, Islamic Awareness Societies and then Summer Centres in Schools and Youth Camps, all of which have had an acceptance and credibility among residents of the cities, thus leading them to play very significant roles in these transformations. However, the developments that were most instrumental in driving some youths to be more religious during the eighties were the "Juhayman" incident in Mecca, the effects of the Iranian revolution and the Iran-Iraq war, and also the general support for the jihad against communism in Afghanistan.

Through many of the scenes and transitions in the selected novels that reflect the life of society in the Saudi cities, readers have been able to appreciate the rapid changes that took place in the nineties and onwards. For indeed there were many religious transformations in the sense of a movement towards conciliation, rationality and accommodation of other views in cities which played a significant role in containing these rapid transformations. The novels have also illustrated the strong impact of religion on the Arab city, and particularly the Saudi city, which is in turn considered the most powerful and fertile ground in which religion may grow, flourish and become transformed. Contrary to what others may have known or expected, this study has also revealed that the people of the cities are in fact more religious than the people of the villages, demonstrating how the religion in the villages is a virtual and superficial religion. This study has also confirmed that, although there was a genuine emergence of new trends in the nineties and onwards such as some accommodation of the contemporary cultures of nationalism, secularism, socialism and so on, Saudi urban societies continued to uphold the religious option in most of the details of daily life.

With regard to the city as a site of both freedom and alienation and of the changes they have undergone, this thesis has clearly enabled observers to see the positive transformations that have taken place towards greater freedom in the Arab world, and especially in Saudi Arabia. Even when we take into account the differences in the concepts of freedom and alienation between Eastern and Western societies and the conviction regarding the importance of privacy for each community, there has certainly been an improvement and a greater degree of satisfaction in a range of social aspects, and particularly in the case of women, thanks to the positive shifts in relation to women's rights and the security they have gained through having more freedom. As Nydell states: "Most Arab women, even now, feel satisfied that the present social system provides them with security, protection, and respect" (Nydell, 2012: 45).

The present research has aimed to prove that, although there were many types of alienation in the city, such as linguistic and emotional alienation in the Saudi city, that were the result not of any foreign occupation or colonization, but rather of poverty, the city was nonetheless a fertile ground for all kinds of freedom.

Although the events depicted in these novels and the developments in the lives of their characters often make them appear miserable and oppressed, the chapters of these novels have nevertheless ended showing more stability in the cities, and the margin of personal freedom in general and the level of satisfaction generally have widened in the same way as have certain aspects of alienation in the city. Cases in point are the characters of the novel *Jurf Al-Khafāyā*, who have been enjoying the freedom that they have achieved during the journey of their lives in the city, and Ahlam, the main heroine of the novel *'Unthā Al-'Ankabūt*, who has become able to run and manage her own businesses in the city and to write under her real name with the encouragement of her family after being used to hiding her name under a pseudonym. Moreover, through the beneficial space of freedom that has been provided for women by the city, the weak Saudi women of the past are honoured nowadays in many international, Arab and local forums. They are now among the 150 most fearless women in the world (in 2012) and are numbered among the 130 personalities who formed the Global Dialogue in 2011; and they have also been receiving numerous awards, as in the case of Raja Alem, the first Arab woman novelist to have won the Arab Booker Prize.

As a whole, unlike in the case of the village, the positive outcomes of the changes brought about in the city towards providing greater freedom have been very valuable and also very rapidly achieved, and indeed have taken place on several levels, for instance in education, health, and so on. This is confirmed by Cotterell: “The people of Saudi Arabia were much healthier, better housed and much better educated than they had been in the past” (Cotterell, 2011: 336).

Most Arab novelists have been trying intentionally to portray the city as a dark place where all kinds of manifestations of alienation are to be found and as a place where freedom is violated, as many writers have been affected negatively by the public’s black vision of the city. However, the underlying texts of novels have indicated that the positive transformations in people’s freedom are apparent from the novels referred to here, where the characters, all of whom had lived in the city, turn to it in order to express and practice their freedom in a wider space in the final chapters of each novel, unlike in the opening chapters, and it has been demonstrated to the observer that the characters have achieved something of what they were seeking, as in the previous examples.

It is noteworthy that, in the midst of the quest for more spaces of freedom that could be granted by the city, there took place a sudden and dramatic event which has affected the whole of people’s lives in the Arab world, especially in the Gulf region led by Saudi Arabia, and this event has had an impact of no less significance than the impact of oil in the Gulf region. This is the event known as the Second Gulf War, which gave rise to many of the rapid and unbalanced social and other transformations in the Saudi city. This was because war itself and its circumstances are often valid and sufficient reasons to reshape and change rapidly several social customs, since the abnormal circumstance of war often forces people to do things that were not known or not part of the community’s practices before this particular circumstance arose.

Furthermore, this research has clearly highlighted the main reasons why Saudi society has been subjected easily to change even though it is often thought that this society is a

static and unalterable society. There was the heavy presence of the Westerners who arrived in this part of the world that had already been prepared for change in many respects, because of several local factors such as political, geographical, financial, cultural, educational and psychological considerations, all of which had a strong influence on citizens and made them ready to be influenced. These factors, moreover, had led to many obvious changes, which have shaped a new social map of the Saudi family and reshaped the face of the Saudi city.

It is worth mentioning at this point that the novel has been able to reveal many manifestations of the transformations that took place during the Second Gulf War related to, for instance, thought, language and literature. For it has had an additional impact on the intellectual and literary trends in Saudi cities, as well as on the style of literary production which has seemed to be built not so much on a great deal of artistic imagination, but rather under war circumstances had been forced to make realistic use of the names of cities, streets, and other locations which are familiar from this war.

Furthermore, the advent of the modern Saudi city has been accompanied by the emergence of several political, intellectual and religious currents which were mostly incompatible with the official point of view of those in authority. However, this study has shown that there were violent shifts during the war toward rapprochement with the official position. For example, this war has opened wide the gates to the Islamic and nationalist transformations, as a result of which they both became closer to giving priority to political rationality and stronger in terms of the sense of patriotism. Notably, and at the same time, however, the war also has led to a reduction in terms of the carefree reformist attitude, with individual benefits taking precedence over matters of public interest – a phenomenon which certainly has led to economic transformations at the levels of both the Saudi state and of individuals.

Although many critics and writers who have been mentioned in this research believed that the war was not fought in the cities but rather was on the border, this research has clearly revealed and proved that the Gulf War and all of its heavy military, media and

psychological impact was experienced in the city more than anywhere else because of several factors that have been indicated at the appropriate points throughout this study.

It is true that the research study has exposed how this war led to a visible re-arranging of more than a few aspects of daily life, the seats of social status and the economy and the influence brought to bear on the Saudi social characteristics, whether for better or worse, being cases in point. Furthermore, it has also been revealed through this study how the American presence in Saudi cities has caused a radical shift in the above areas and mainly in the affairs of women, who were wholly influenced by this war and the violent transformations it brought in its wake. This was a phenomenon which may perhaps be seen just now as a milestone in the history of Saudi women and the changes in their lives, although some thought that Saudi women were far from the impact of war because of their distance from the theatres of war and therefore their disconnection from those foreign forces.

Given that many women are religious by nature and as a result have strong religious sentiments, one significant contribution of this thesis has been to examine as clearly as possible the strong link that exists between religion and women who strongly trust and believe in the rule of religion, while at the same time being mostly unaware of the rights afforded to them by this religion. Thus, they have been generally exploited in the name of the religion for a long time, not only by the religious currents of the day but also by many other movements and tendencies which try to take advantage of that strong emotion felt by women towards their religion by exploiting them in the name of that religion. Remarkably, when they moved into the city they changed their whole outlook and realised their urgent need to raise their religious awareness in order to protect themselves from many of the issues that had damaged their lives for some time past.

Throughout this study the novels we have selected have highlighted many features of women's growing awareness after they went to live in the city, where they have become able to differentiate between mere habit or custom and religion. For example, they came to demand their rights strongly in areas such as employment, education, leadership, personal freedom and so on. At the same time the novels have illustrated their firm

refusal to follow the example of those American women who were to be seen semi-naked in public in such hot weather while doing their daily exercise, because such an act violates Islamic religious precepts.

As a result of this increasing religious awareness on the part of women after their migration to the city, the moderate movement for writing about women's affairs in recent times has been on the increase and has been supported by several factors such as the ability of modern technology to facilitate printing and publishing and making such writings generally more flexible when coming up against the strictness of official censorship. However, Saudi women have been seen in these novels to be not much affected by that wave of religious publishing, especially because of the strong control exercised by the Saudi censor in this area and because women have been satisfied that local religious authoring is a rich enough source in this respect.

In contrast, the novels have presented other factors that have had a clear influence on the progress of Saudi women. Good instances of such factors are the awareness of the importance of education, the contributions in the form of academic writings and the great role of the school and its output, which is something that originated in fact late in the heart of the cities of Saudi Arabia and served as a beacon of opportunity for those girls. These factors have had a clear positive impact on the level of social transformations that have favoured women, through being close to the needs of Saudi women who have trusted and accepted them.

Novelists and critics have agreed that amongst the most important factors that led women towards positive social and cultural transformation were their own contributions and their strong entry into the field of women's studies along with men. That in turn has eventually led to more mature, impartial and beneficial outcomes.

These rapid shifts towards the awareness of women's rights have passed through several stages, all of which were impelled and supported by the positive contributions of a number of elements such as those mentioned above. All of these have in turn had as their positive outcome on the literary phenomenon of the novel in the Arab world, and

especially in Saudi literature. Saudi women in the contemporary city have been using the most important literary tools in order to express themselves and articulate their views through the wide literary portal represented by the novel. The novelists can write with confidence and with a wide margin of freedom, and can also criticize whatever they want by acting through the characters that they create, thus avoiding the strict authority and control of the censor.

In general, this study has illustrated some of the difficulties which have been faced by women in the city, and especially by Saudi women, because of the rapid and violent transformations that did not occur over a natural course of time and because of the fact that women are by nature inherently vulnerable. However, through the connotations and subtexts of these novels it becomes apparent that women have benefited greatly from the city. The present research has provided a considerable body of evidence to prove that most of the transformations that occurred in the city were to the advantage of women. For women, the city is eternally some kind of sublime phenomenon. Women fall in love with the city, in both good and bad times.

One of the manifestations of the way women have celebrated the city can be seen in how they have regarded the city as the most valuable of things that they could offer as a gift to their lovers as a symbol of its exalted status. So, when the Palestinian novelist Mai Al-Şā'igh, in her novel *Be Inteqār Al-Qamar (In the Waiting for the Moon, 2002)* looked for the most precious gift in order to provide it to her relative, she found it only in her own city of Gaza, despite all its negative connotations such as war, siege and displaced people (Abdulmajid. et al., 2003: 458). The city has fascinated women and made them fall in love with it, even when they are there as strangers and exiles.

Through the device of reflecting in the narrative the actual changes occurring in city life, the events in the novel have seemed to be constructed deliberately to diminish the role of any leading figure gradually in the novel, because such a role is incompatible with the new life in the city that seeks to give everyone a chance without relying on the collective mind-set, which often is controlled by a single dominant mind. So, even the image of the old woman in the village who used to control the family life (such as the

character of Om Şāleḥ in the novel *Al-Baḥriyyāt*) has been made to disappear, thanks to such a new urban environment, in order to give everyone fair opportunities and not let their destinies be determined by the opinion of one person. Finally, women in the city have wanted to live unrestricted lives and not to allow anyone to rob them of their identity, and that is basically what has been provided by the city to every woman who wanted to see herself as a human being and had this purpose in mind. The city has often been portrayed and presented as a negative and dark place, whether in works of art or through other media; however, the underlying message of the novel has offered to us a more positive image of the city as a place which is interacting with its inhabitants in order to serve everyone.

In view of this conclusion, I would offer these recommendations regarding the study of the social transformation of the Arabic city:

- 1- Arab literary criticism has unfortunately not paid sufficient attention to the notion of comprehensive methodologies such as the thematic approach. This has led to a significant lack of such an integrated type of approach that has long been needed to deal with many of the issues arising in Arabic literature. Such an approach has the capacity to highlight many significant issues of modern literature, and to point out those issues that dominate the topics of Arabic literature that are associated with the city, for example women and discrimination, class snobbery, the proliferation of material on sexual themes in the city's literature and women's propensity for novel writing in Saudi Arabia.
- 2- The impact of the discovery of oil on both the Arabic literature represented by Saudi literature and on the Saudi city needs more careful study. Although the novel form has great inherent qualities and features that enable it to follow the micro details of the city and its society and although there are many novels that have undertaken this task, the case of the Saudi city is an entirely different one as it has faced an extraordinary stage of development as a result of the sudden emergence of the oil-based economy.

One example of a novel that strongly indicates the need for the kind of further research mentioned above is *East of the Valley, 2006*, which has struggled to track the rapid changes and social transformations that have overtaken the Saudi city. The novelist has crammed his story with the rapid events and changes

which have occurred within just 30 years; however, such dramatic changes could surely not have happened within less than a period of several decades in a natural course of time or under natural circumstances in any other country. The novel relates the rapid shifts in the life and fortunes of the hero of this novel who, after first being a simple, illiterate farmer in a village near the city of Buraidah, then quickly moves to the city of Riyadh to find work. Then suddenly the reader finds him in the city of Dhahran working for an American oil company; then he becomes a fluent English speaker and unexpectedly goes off to America to study for a Master's degree and then becomes a lecturer at a university in America. All these rapid transformations that happen within the space of about twenty years are used to refer in a symbolic way to the manner in which the huge changes in Saudi society have been and continue to be supported by the rapid and often crazy impact of the oil boom. This story also serves to illustrate the fact that these transformations undergone by the Saudi city and its citizens have seemed abnormal. Therefore, even the outcomes they produced were not mature or natural, and it is this which in the end confirms the urgent need to study such transformations in Saudi society and to evaluate them by paying more attention to this aspect.

- 3- Arabic literature, and in particular the Saudi novel, has been much influenced by the use of new technology. If it is true that the oil boom has taken over the Gulf region and had an obvious impact on the evolution of those societies, and especially in the case of Saudi society with its transformations and literary output, the new technology has also at the same time exerted a remarkable influence on that closed society in several respects – and not least on its cultural and literary life. Unlike with the more traditional literary forms that have come up against many obstacles, the new technological revolution has served as a purveyor of literature which has invaded every home and reached into the life of almost every single citizen. This in turn has led to a rapidly developing interaction between literature as represented by novels and Saudi society. Modern technology has narrowed the gap between literature and society, and as a result the interaction between them has become stronger. Further in-depth study, then, is needed of the impact of this new technology on the transformation of Saudi society, particularly in the cultural and social domains that have been the most influenced by this new technology.

- 4- There has also been a need for socio-cultural, demographic, psychological, geographical and historical studies to approach and to take advantage of the possibilities presented by the novel in terms of monitoring societies' movement and transformations in a way that can in fact be achieved only through the novel. Cooperation between these disciplines and that of literature has remained very rare, and therefore the capabilities and effective tools offered by novels in this regard have not so far been adequately exploited. I am looking forward to there being in future such cooperation going on between the literary work of the novel and such other disciplines as those mentioned above for the purpose of monitoring the changes and developments in Saudi society in all their multifarious aspects.
- 5- Finally, I believe that the subject of this study is new and original in a number of respects, namely the selected research sample, the timeframe and the underlying methodology provided by the thematic approach, for I have not found in the available sources of information any other study that addresses this kind of topic. It is therefore, my strong recommendation that this type of research needs to be extended and to receive more attention in order to offer further studies and investigations into the society in question and its transformations through the insights provided by literature.

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