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The Jordanian Novel in Postmodern Context

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies

by

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Abstract

As the Jordanian culture is gradually impacted by the globalization process of late capitalism, this study argues that many Jordanian novels exhibit a number of postmodern characteristics, such as blurring boundaries and disrupting hierarchies, the use of pastiche as a compositional technique, formal fragmentation, and the weakness of utopian imagination. Adopting Fredric Jameson's theory of postmodernism as a framework, the study explores ten Jordanian novels written between 1986 and 2016 to demonstrate that the modernization process and the cultural changes in the Arab world, in general, and in the Jordanian society, in particular, have increased the density of postmodern features in the Jordanian novels. Therefore, the conventional categorization of Jordanian novels as postcolonial works is challenged by the proliferation of postmodern features in such works. The study also attempts to illustrate that the novels that are written toward the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century display more postmodern characteristics. For comparison purposes, Arab and non-Arab postmodern novels are engaged in this discussion.

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Dedication

Dedicated to my late parents who left this life before seeing the outcomes of their struggle and devotion.

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Note on Transliteration and Translation

Arabic quoted texts were translated by the researcher from their original resources. As needed, transliteration is applied using the below symbols.

أ a ب b ت t ث th ج j ح h خ kh د d ذ th ر r ز z س s ش sh ص s	ض dh ط t ظ zh ع a' غ gh ف f ق q ك k ل l م m ن n ه h و w ي y	أ a أ u أ l أ aa ي ei و oo ء'
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Introduction

Although the Jordanian novel emerged around two centuries after the emergence of the novel in the West, the cultural changes in Jordan, and the entire region, helped the Jordanian novel to achieve a great deal of progress towards catching up with the Western counterpart. A quick comparison between the first Jordanian (and Arabic) 'hypertext' novel, *Shadows of the Amorous* (2001), which blurs boundaries between text, images, videos, and hyperlinks, and one of the earliest American 'digital' novels, *afternoon, a story* (1987; published in 1990), reveals that what was once a wide 'gap' between the rise of the Jordanian novel in the twentieth century and the flourishing of the novel in the West in the eighteenth century is shrinking rapidly. Even though the hypertext fiction is considered by many as marginal (or even gimmicky), it still provides us with a vivid hint about the convergence of Jordanian and Western fiction and culture.

The swift development of the Jordanian novel might be taken as an example of the development of the Arabic novel, in general, as it is noticed by some critics. Edward Said, for instance, notices the progress that the father of the Arabic novel, Naguib Mahfouz, has achieved through the life of his career. According to Said, Mahfouz's work "from the late Thirties on compresses the history of the European novel into a relatively short span of time. He is not only a Hugo and a Dickens, but also a Galsworthy, a Mann, a Zola and a Jules Romains" (*London Review of Books* 10/11).

In the age of globalization and technology, when boundaries are crossed and space (and time) is diminished between cultures and societies, the need to explore the development of Jordanian cultural products and their influence by the global milieu becomes necessary. This study is an attempt to contribute to the discussion of the Jordanian novel and its development in the light of global changes and the impact of the Western culture. More precisely, it examines the Jordanian novel in the context of postmodernism.

Jordan, Modernity, and the West:

Modern Jordan (Transjordan) was established as a British Protectorate under the local rule of King Abdullah I in 1921, a few years after Arabs revolted against the Ottoman Empire. The dream of the Arab leaders to establish an independent Arab state in the Levant, Iraq, and the western side of the Arabian Peninsula was not completely fulfilled. Instead, Britain and France agreed during World War I to divide the (Arab) territories of the Ottoman Empire between them in the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916), and, thus, Jordan fell under the British mandate until its independence in 1946. Shortly after the assassination of King Abdullah I, King Hussein ascended the throne in 1952. Such changes in the Middle East coincided with important changes in the West; like the rise of the United States of America after World War II, the beginning of the Cold War, and the beginning of the postmodern era.

During the reign of King Hussein (1952-1999) and his son King Abdullah II (1999- present), the region and the entire world witnessed a great number of changes. One of the most important of them is the escalation of the modernization process that started in Europe and began to affect profoundly other parts of the world, like the Middle East, through globalization. In addition to some internal factors, Jordan's modernization has always been affected by its direct and indirect contact with the modern world, i.e. Western civilization. As a relatively small Arab society that shares its language and culture with neighboring Arab nations, Jordan's modernity (as well as its history and destiny) has always been related to the modernization project in Egypt and the Levant that was triggered in the nineteenth century under the influence of the West.¹ For decades, students, newspapers, businesses, novels, inventions, and so on have played important roles in boosting the Arab modernization project and spreading Western Enlightenment values and principles in the Arab World.

In the age of globalization, the unprecedented transnational flow of cultures increased the reciprocal influence between nations and societies. Although the Jordanian (and Arab) culture is not an exception,

Western culture (especially American) has been affecting the Jordanian society more than any other culture. In fact, there are two aspects of this effect. First, due to many reasons, the reciprocal influence between Western and Jordanian (and Arab) cultures is unbalanced i.e., Western culture exports more than it imports from Jordanian culture. Second, the rapid spread of Western influence in the Jordanian (and Arab) culture might be attributed, at least partially, to the willingness of many Jordanians to accept this foreign culture, not as an invading force that threatens to reshape their culture and society (as was the case in the colonization era), but as an opportunity that helps improve their condition and modernize their country. Therefore, the impact of Western modernity on the Jordanian society is profound and multifaceted. In almost every aspect of life—including political, educational, cultural, and economic—Jordan has been directly influenced by the West.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, Jordan's modernization project began to come to fruition. Like other Arab countries that shared much the same experience, Jordan began to reach an advanced level of modernity that made it very similar to Western countries in many aspects of life. In health care, for example, Jordanian doctors who graduate from Jordanian and Western medical schools conduct many advanced surgeries (like open-heart and eye surgeries) on Jordanian and Arab patients. They also participate in global research and conferences. In education, the expansion of public and private universities and schools and the local as well as international scholarships raised Jordanian literacy to some of the highest ranks in the World. In addition to educational institutes, television, free satellite service, and the Internet contributed effectively to educating Jordanians and connecting them with the West. The new technology also increased their consumption of national and international commodities, especially after Jordan opened its doors to multinational corporations and businesses and joined global entities and treaties like Free Trade Agreements. In short, the wide gap that once existed between the advanced West and the less advanced Jordan has been shrinking rapidly in the last few decades, and Jordan has become

part of the global capitalist system (both economically and culturally), even with certain aspects of Jordanian life remaining vividly rooted in certain traditional ways.

Postmodernism and Globalization:

Postmodernism emerged (or began to emerge) in the West in the second half of the twentieth century. According to many theorists (such as Ihab Hassan, Fredric Jameson, Jean Baudrillard, and Jean-François Lyotard), postmodernism is an expression/terminology that is widely used to describe Western societies in the era that follows or comes *after* modernism. Although there is a slight difference between critics regarding the exact starting point of such a phenomenon, they agree that it started sometime after World War II when the Western side of the world began to experience profound changes in many spheres such as economic, cultural, social, political, etc. For instance, the advancement in science and technology, growth of economy, hegemony of capitalism, and the emergence of civil rights movements, pop culture, the Cold War, television, and consumerism (to mention just a few) increased and reached unprecedented levels in the last decades of the twentieth century. Such changes, that permeated almost every aspect of life, according to critics, have an impact on people and their culture. For instance, the postmodern subject became more fragmented, and the commodification of cultural products intensified and increased.

To scrutinize the swift changes of postmodernism and to reflect on its reality and impact, literary critics and novelists (like many other intellectuals and researchers) endeavored to understand this phenomenon and its symptoms. For instance, Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) is one of the most important fictional works that echoes many of the postmodern characteristics like the blurring of boundaries between things and the fragmentation of time and subject.

On the theoretical side, Terry Eagleton is one of many critics who studied this new phenomenon. He, for example, defines "postmodernity" as a historical period that is described as:

a style of thought which is suspicious of classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, of the idea of universal progress or emancipation, of single frameworks, grand narratives or ultimate grounds of explanation. Against these Enlightenment norms, it sees the world as contingent, ungrounded, diverse, unstable, indeterminate, a set of disunified cultures or interpretations which breed a degree of skepticism about the objectivity of truth, history and norms, the givenness of natures and the coherence of identities. (*Illusions of Postmodernism* VII)

Eagleton's description that amalgamates positive and negative attitudes reflects the various opinions of theorists and critics who perceive postmodernism differently, as we will see in the first chapter. Beyond the debate over the nature of postmodernism and its symptoms is the debate of its scope and areas of influence.

For Jameson, postmodernism is the cultural logic of late capitalism that emerged in the West after World War II. Adopting a historical materialistic approach, Jameson maintains that late capitalism (also multinational capitalism) is the third stage of capitalism that crossed the boundaries between states and countries.² In this stage, people, goods, knowledge, labor force, technology, students, and inventions flowed (in both directions), in unprecedented ways between the West and the rest of the world. Further, some of the Western cultural aspects also spread, including consumerism, popular culture, and television, which is considered by M. Keith Booker as "a crucial factor in the gradual transition in the second half of the twentieth century between modernism and postmodernism" (*Strange Television* 22)³. Toward the end of the century and with the invention of the Internet, the influence of capitalist culture and technology became inevitable as the entire world became like a small village, and the spatial and the cultural boundaries between nations blurred. In Edward Said's words, "all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogenous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic" (*Culture* xxv).

Since the last two decades of the twentieth century, globalization has become an important characteristic (or a stage) of late capitalism. Especially with the escalating hegemony of American economy, culture, and power, globalization manifests, according to Jameson, in five important levels: technological, political, the

cultural, the economic, and the social. Some of the major features of globalization that are addressed by Jameson are advanced technologies that impact production and marketing, weakening of nation-states by a new form of imperialism, the standardization of world culture, proliferation of the free market across the globe, transnational corporations, and the culture of consumption (*Globalization* 49-57).

Postmodernism and Arab Culture:

There is no doubt that Arab countries have changed drastically in the last few decades. Since the 1970s, the pace of modernization has increased rapidly in the Arab World, and Arab societies became more influenced by both capitalism and global culture, though some modernist and premodern forces (like Islam) continue as a presence.

Among the many signs that demonstrate the fast growth of capitalism in Arab countries are the escalation of private ownership and income, increasing rate of privatization of public services and state-owned resources, the proliferation of local and international companies and corporations, and the emergence of cosmopolitan and Western-style cities like Dubai in the U.A.E. Further, the open-door policies, the participation in international free trade agreements, and the adaptation of Western democratic, administrative, educational, and security systems played a key role in escalating the influence of Arab nations by global culture. Among the important changes that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century is the incredible progress of Arab nations that played important roles in the world capitalist economy through the exportation of oil and other raw materials and through the importation of goods and technologies. Therefore, one can say that the economic factor has played an important role in accelerating the involvement of Arab life in postmodernity and consumer culture. In different ways, the Arab world became a part of the global capitalist system.

Over the years, the affluent life of many Arabs became very close, even identical, to the materialistic life that is associated with postmodern culture, especially in wealthy Gulf countries where citizens have

enthusiastically adopted consumer culture. Cars, cellphones, air conditioning, laptops and other devices, chains of Western restaurants, and international brand-name clothing (to mention a few) became normal in these countries. The same culture is noticed in other non-Gulf countries especially among the rich and even middle-class people. In addition to that, international corporations have also invested millions of dollars in the local economies of Arab countries and the hegemony of postmodern culture increased by the modernization of many administrative, educational, and cultural fields in Arab countries. One of the recent examples is the purchase of the Arab-based transportation network company Kareem in March 2019 by the American-based Uber Technologies Inc. for \$3.1 billion; and thus, the number of Arab millionaires continues to increase.

The modernization of the Arab world can also be noticed in the progress of the educational system that relies profoundly on advanced countries' standards, curricula, and policies. In fact, thousands of intellectuals and graduate students, from almost every educational institute in the Arab world, graduated from international universities. Many of these graduates continue to teach at these institutions and/or conduct research with their peers from different institutions around the globe. For many reasons, (such as advanced research and inventions, better opportunities and conditions, freedom of speech, etc.) thousands of Arab professors, scholars, and professionals have settled in the West and continue to contribute in the latest economic and scientific projects. Such intellectuals, who usually are very influential in the Arabic milieu, have been exposed to all aspects of Western culture, including the cutting edge theoretical and cultural views and philosophies. Furthermore, thousands of books have been translated and hundreds of scholarly journals have been circulated among Arab intellectuals and researchers who speak the languages of the West and work hard to transfer Western modernity to their societies at large scale. Further, it became common in the last few decades for Arab children to learn Western languages, like English and French, from the first grade. Indeed, due to the influence of American and British popular culture (Disney

films, television, etc.) it is not uncommon for Arab children to learn English well before first grade. In fact, it is becoming more and more common for young Arab children to know English better than Arabic.

The more the educational field is saturated with the cultural impact of the (postmodern) West, the more the popular culture of the West becomes popular in Arab societies. For instance, parents (and children as well) are now more immersed in television culture and the Internet, which are also rapidly bridging the gap between the Arab World and the West. Hollywood movies that are broadcast freely on many Arab and non-Arab television channels (such as MBC, CNN, and BBC) are watched intensely by Arabs. Pop music, fast-food chains (like McDonald's and KFC), fashions, etc. became very accessible to Arab consumers in a short period of time. In short, Western postmodernist lifestyle is increasingly adopted in Arab countries.

One of the latest popular culture tendencies in Arab countries is the Hip-Hop music and electronic video games that also found their way to many Arab youth.⁴ Perhaps one of the few up-to-date critical studies that address the relationship between East and West and explore the shrinking gap between American and Arab popular cultures is that of Booker and Isra Daraiseh, entitled *Consumerist Orientalism: The Convergence of Arab and American Popular Culture in the Age of Global Capitalism* (2019).

According to Booker and Daraiseh, as the transnational flow of culture in the age of global capitalism has reached an unprecedented level, Arab and Western (especially American) cultures have influenced each other tremendously especially in popular music (such as music videos) and television programming (such as singing competition, talk, and game shows). Under such transnational flow of many postmodern elements (cultural, technological, etc.), similarities between the two cultures increase and the gap between them is bridged to the extent that previous dichotomies such as Orient and Occident become obsolete (9).

As a crucial postmodernist phenomenon, Western television culture has impacted Arab societies profoundly. In addition to the similarities between Arab and American television programming that are discussed by Booker and Daraiseh, it is worth mentioning that Netflix and the Arabic television and media-service provider 'Shahid', which is an Arabic emulation of it, are quite popular in the Arab world. Every year, thousands of Arabic television shows, movies, programs, and commercials are continuously watched by millions in Arab countries. As noted by Marwan M. Kraidy, the last decade of the twentieth century witnessed the "commercialization of Arabic television ..., and the growth of satellite television" (4). According to him, the Arab television that started as an official media outlet in the 1950s, began "unofficial" broadcasting in 1985. Similar to Booker's conclusion regarding the influence of commercial television in American postmodern life, Arabic television began to play an important role in the economic life in the 1990s, and "the satellite industry" became "the prime engine of the regionalization of marketing and advertising" (Kraidy 7). It is worth noting that Arabic television played a key role in the Arab world for decades. Even before American presidents, John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan, who was originally a movie actor before he utilized television to communicate directly and effectively with the masses in the 1980s, the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser was (perhaps) the first president who himself became a television icon and phenomenon. In the 1960s, President Nasser utilized this mass media outlet to promote his social and pan-Arabic agendas. As a charismatic leader and distinguished orator, Nasser appealed to Arab masses, who used to wait eagerly to see him on the screen and to listen tirelessly to his long speeches.

Among the most important postmodern cultural aspects that have been adopted widely in Arab countries are the Internet, electronic devices, and social media. Not only adults, but almost every Arab in high school, middle school, and in college has at least one personal electronic device (smart cellphones, tablets, laptops) and at least one account on Facebook or on other social media outlets. Such new technology reshaped the present and the future of Arab nations at all levels. For instance, Facebook posts played a key

role in inciting Egyptian millennials and young adults to rebel against their regime during the Arab Spring in 2010. Although the skyrocketing of electronic device usage is another sign of bridging the gap between Western and Arab people, it reflects the hegemony of consumer culture that penetrates all aspects of the Arab lifestyle. Some of the latest novels that take as their theme the impact of social media on people are the Saudi *Girls of Riyadh* (2005) and the Egyptian *Haris al-Fisbook* [The Facebook's Guard] (2017).

Arab countries have also been affected by Western postmodernism through wars and military activities; as Jameson states, "postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: ... the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror" (*Postmodernism* 5). In many ways, as Arab societies were once influenced by Western modernity via expeditions and invasions like the French invasion of Egypt and the cultural impact that resulted from such contact, they have also been influenced by the postmodern Western societies in the Gulf War, the invasion of Iraq (supposedly to establish Western style democracy in 2003), and the War on Terror. Even before that, the occupation of Palestine in the last few decades by the Israelis who came from the West (as well as from Eastern Europe) and have always been supported and backed by Western powers, indicates that Arab societies have been influenced by the West either directly or indirectly. In addition to the failure to liberate Palestine and other Arab lands, the destruction of Arab countries by foreign invasion or civil wars engendered a sense of despair and suspicion of national, religious, communist, and pan-Arabic projects.

In sum, Jameson's understanding of postmodernism as a global phenomenon does not contradict the fact that Arabic culture has been affected deeply by the postmodern culture in many aspects of life. In fact, Arab countries, like other non-Western countries (China and South Korea, for example) have been slowly (but surely) absorbed by Capitalism. Although it is a bit of a challenge to claim that Arab societies have reached a complete stage of postmodernity that makes them identical to the American and European societies, especially with the strong local culture and the frequent fits of radical Islam, it is difficult to

ignore the cultural changes and the growth of postmodernist symptoms in Arab culture. It is even harder to neglect the increasing influence of multinational capitalism on Arab culture and literature. As this study focuses on the Jordanian novel, a closer look at Jordanian postmodernist symptoms is needed.

Postmodernism in Jordanian culture:

On June 13, 2019, *Jinn* was premiered on Netflix as the first Arabic television series originated and sponsored by an American corporation. The supernatural drama was created and directed by a mixed team of Arab and American directors, producers, and writers. The events of the program take place in two Jordanian cities, Amman and the ancient city of Petra, where a group of Jordanian teenagers are exposed to the world of Jinn. The thriller tackles a number of themes and motifs like friendship, bullying, trust, and the relation between fantasy and reality.

Jinn stirred controversies in the Jordanian society mainly because of the untraditional scenes of sexual conduct (kissing and hugging between a girl and a boy), drinking, and smoking marijuana. Although many Jordanians (like the Royal Film Commission, which permitted the production and shooting on Jordanian soil) welcomed *Jinn* as a tremendous effort and opportunity that engages Jordanian society and culture in the global cultural arena, many others (like the grand Mufti who considered it “a moral degradation”) saw it as a trite imitation of Western culture and as a liberal attempt to change Jordanian values and culture (Ruymbeke). The oppositional reaction echoes the co-existence of postmodern and premodern impulses in the Jordanian culture. Interestingly, the debate over *Jinn* did not change anything. Netflix did not take *Jinn* off its list and many Jordanians continue to watch it, as they watch American movies via Internet streaming and satellite services.

Jinn is distinguished by many features that critics (like Booker) usually examine in postmodern horror films and dramas. For instance, *Jinn* blurs boundaries between oppositions like entertainment/estrangement and reality/fantasy. It also epitomizes the unprecedented market power that turns almost everything

(including cultural products) into a commodity that is devoured by consumer societies. It is worth noting here that *Jinn* is, in many ways, like the Emirati (U.A.E.) film *Djinn* (2013) which, according to Booker, exhibits a number of postmodern features like blurring boundaries and pastiche (*Horror Film Project*).

Netflix is a good example of cultural globalization in which boundaries between national and international cultures are blurred. In the example of *Jinn*, the giant corporation (Netflix) that is motivated basically by making profit, seeks any opportunity to invest and increase its revenues. As *Jinn* involves Arab actors and Arabic cultural elements, Netflix manages to benefit from at least two things. First, it diversifies its programming by incorporating new flavors and elements from other cultures to please its audience. Second, it increases the number of subscribers/customers especially from the Arab world.

Away from political involvements and fading colonial/postcolonial connotations, such as the dichotomy of East-West, Netflix introduces *Jinn* to its global audience in the same way it introduces other Western and non-Western series and films. In fact, all cultural products are equal in the eyes of capitalist corporations that turn almost anything to their advantage. In different ways, Jameson's notion of the commodification of cultural products by late capitalism in the postmodern era is very essential to understand the cultural globalization of all nations, including the Jordanian/Arab nation.

Television and film, according to Booker, are the primary postmodern cultural products that are accessible to the general public of a postmodern society (*Postmodern Hollywood xv*). Booker's remark concerning the emergence of postmodern characteristics in mass-media outlets is very relevant to our discussion in the sense it reflects, in different ways, the cultural changes in Jordanian society and the emergence of postmodern characteristics in its cultural products.

Generally speaking, *Jinn* signifies many issues that are related to modern Jordan like the hegemony of late capitalism on Jordanian society, globalization and the convergence between Western and Middle Eastern cultures, the multinational investments of big corporations, and the commodification of cultural products.

Such issues are very important to contextualize the Jordanian novel in the light of postmodern global changes in the last few decades.

Jordanian culture is inseparable from its Arabic surrounding. In addition to what was mentioned above about the modernization process of Arab countries and their influence by late capitalism and postmodern culture, Jordanian culture has other particular characteristics. In almost every level and discipline of Jordanian life, Western style, especially British and American, is adopted to modernize the country and to secure a place for it among the most advanced nations. This might be attributed to many factors like the unshakable commitment of the Jordanian leadership, that is exposed thoroughly to Western culture, to modernize their country with the continuous support of Western powers (mainly U.S.A. and U.K.) for the Jordanian government and people. In fact, the importance of Jordan as a Western ally rests mainly in its strategic location that always played a crucial role in the region's wars and peace. The close relationship between the British and the Hashemite dynasty that began with the Arab Revolt (1916-1918) continued to grow during the British Mandate era and after. For example, the mother of King Abdullah II is British, and he spent many years living and studying in the U.K. (as well as in the U.S.A.).⁵

There are many examples of the direct impact of the advanced West on Jordanian culture. Jordan, for instance, has been adopting (instead of traditional khalifate/sultanate) a form of government that is similar (though with some differences, like the capacities of the monarch) to the British model, (i.e., monarch, prime minister, ministers, parliaments, parties, and elected representatives). The adaptation of Western models can also be noticed in other systems, including educational (especially universities), administrative, military, security, financial, and economic. Although Jordan always preserves its identity as an Arab and Islamic country, its eagerness to benefit from the modernization project of the West is more than a fleeting desire. Indeed, it is a strategic objective and a detailed plan that has been adopted for decades. Taking advantage of its strategic location and resources, Jordan always seeks to play an important role in the modern world.

The presence of Jordan as an important player beside other countries in the world political and economic affairs cannot be denied. For instance, in April 2019, Jordan hosted for the tenth time the World Economic Forum on the Middle East and North Africa, an “International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation” (*World Economic Forum*). Such a forum hosts hundreds of business, political, academic, and other international leaders who represent businesses, governments, and corporations. Further, Jordan is the main host and sponsor of another international event called The Special Operations Forces Exhibition and Conference.

The engagement of the Jordanian economy in the world economy and the capitalist system is multifaceted. Despite its relatively small size, the Jordanian economic system is built on capitalist principles and is always adopting global capitalist standards. For example, the Jordanian bank system that basically follows the Western model and the supervision of the International Bank over the Jordanian economy are some of the adaptations of the capitalist system. The interest-based transactions that are widely adopted in Jordan is a Western practice, though it is prohibited in traditional Islam. Further, following Western standards, the Jordanian Social Security started in the late 1970s and the Income Tax Law (not the Islamic mandatory almsgiving) has been applied for decades in Jordan.

As boundaries blur in the postmodern era, Jordan has been strongly affected by the multinational capitalism that is spreading with globalization. The Jordanian currency (dinar), for example, is affected by the American dollar. It is officially pegged to The International Monetary Fund’s special drawing rights. Like many other basic commodities, oil prices in Jordan fluctuate based on the global supplies and demands. Jordan’s economy was affected profoundly by international and global issues such as the market crash in 2008, wars, and Covid19 that caused a slow-down in the growth of its economy. The privatization plan that started in 1989 managed to carry out several deals that generated millions of dollars (*Oxford Business Group*). In addition to that, the free-zones and the free-trade agreements with the United States and other countries allowed international corporations to invest millions of dollars in the Jordanian economy. Such

corporations invested in numerous sectors, including the oil industry (Total in Jordan Inc., for example), construction (Foster + Partners), telecommunication (Zain Group), clothing, and technology. Cheap foreign labor (from Bangladesh, for instance) is imported to Jordan to work at factories by such corporations and their products are sold in international markets. The increasing rate of alienation between factory workers and their products (and their homelands) indicates the flourishing of capitalist principles in the Jordanian economy.

Although the rise of capitalism in the Jordanian economy in the last few years increased the economic inequality among its people, almost all Jordanian people participate in consumerism. According to “consumer behavior experts,” Jordanian people are “over-spenders that rarely budget their expenses” (Omar Obeidat). Some of the Jordanian behaviors that have been highlighted by experts are “shopping addiction, competitive behavior by trying to copy or follow others, not distinguishing between necessities and luxuries, show-off or flaunting behavior, frequent visits to malls and shopping centers, and lack of planning to balance between income and expenses” (Obeidat). The excessive buying of optional or luxurious items (especially electronics) is noticed not only among the wealthiest people but also among low middle-class and less fortunate ones. For example, a 2014 report reveals that “around 95% of Jordanians own mobiles” (Mohammad Ghazal). While the Jordanian economy is still suffering from challenges such as the reliance on foreign financial support, unemployment, corruption, and the budget deficit, it is evident that consumerism became a culture especially with the rise of materialism that replaces social values in the last decades (Talib Awad). In short, it became clear that commodity fetishism increased drastically in the Jordanian society in the past two decades especially with the widespread use of electronic devices that facilitated online shopping. Interestingly, Jordan was listed (by Pew Research Center) among the highest “smartphone penetration” countries of the world (in 2015/16 surveys). Further, Jordanians became regular customers of local and global online/electronic and commerce companies like AISooq ALMaftooh (The Open Market) and Amazon.

In addition to the export of raw materials like potash and phosphate, the Jordanian economy is advancing in fields such as service, tourism, solar energy, and technology. As Jordan celebrates very advanced rates of literacy, degree holders, and researchers, its involvement in technology and the Internet is not unexpected. Many statistics reveal that Jordanians are among the highest users of social media and highest contributors to the Arabic content on the Internet (Nouha Belaid). As a postmodern phenomenon, the Internet penetration of the Jordanian society has reached a very high percentage in the last few years. For instance, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, Irbid, a city in north Jordan, "holds the Guinness world record for "the most Internet cafes in a single kilometer" (Lee Gomes). The commitment of King Abdullah II to turn Jordan into the Middle East's "Silicon Valley" explains the increasing investment of many technology companies in Jordan. According to William Cohan, "Amman is ranked as the 10th-best city in the world to launch a tech startup, according to a 2012 list compiled by Finaventures, a California-based venture-capital firm" (*Jordan Mideast Silicon Valley*).

The television penetration of the Jordanian society started with the broadcasting of Arab national television channels and the official Jordanian television channel in the 1960s. The acceleration of television penetration increased rapidly in the 1990s with the emergence of private channels and free satellite service. In addition to a dozen local channels, Jordan currently hosts a number of free-to-air satellite channels' headquarters. Hundreds of Arab and Western television channels are watched by millions of people in Jordan without paying any subscription fees. Television broadcasting on the Internet has been growing too, and the culture of images is saturating the Jordanian society more than ever. Between the many television channels and the social media, Jordanians are more exposed these days to different cultures and to local and international commercials, thanks to Netflix, YouTube, and the free satellite services such as MBC.

Yet, the strong cultural impulses that are rooted in Arabic culture and Islam continue to challenge the imported cultures. In many cases, popular culture and consumerism are viewed by traditionalists as a

cultural invasion that must be resisted. Taking in consideration the American support for Israel against Palestinians' (and Arabs') rights, American culture, in particular, is rebuffed by many Jordanians.

The local resistance to the modernization project can be viewed in different ways. One of them focuses on the rejection of local people to the modernization project, especially when it is connected, by traditionalists, to America, in particular, and to the West, in general. In other words, if this (pocket of) resistance should be considered the only factor that overrides other factors in determining the postmodernity of Jordanian culture, then it will be easy to argue that although Jordan is in the process of becoming postmodern, this process remains incomplete because it is uneven. This means, while some aspects of Jordanian culture are thoroughly postmodern, some are still almost entirely traditional.

But this argument is not accurate for a few reasons. First, it neglects some facts such as the inevitable existence of pockets of resistance (like minorities) and cultural residues of previous periods in almost every society. Even in Western postmodern societies, such residues and resistance continue to survive, and, thus, play an important role (in addition to other factors) in determining the level of postmodernity in such societies. Second, it does not pay close attention to the percentages of traditionalist vs. postmodern elements/forces in the Jordanian culture. Although some traditionalist elements continue to exist in Jordanian culture, they are much weaker than postmodernist elements that weaken, outnumber, and even replace traditional elements in almost every aspect of daily culture. In fact, many capitalist cultural habits (and values) are adopted voluntarily, even enthusiastically in many cases, by most Jordanian people. In addition to this, the remaining traditionalist elements become, in many cases, strange or even undesired in Jordanian and Arab countries. For example, as stated by Booker and Daraiseh, "severe-looking Muslim men in flowing beards and robes walking down the street in an American town might make many nervous, but many Arabs would be made uncomfortable by this sight in their own towns as well" (*Consumerist Orientalism* 2). Thirdly, to focus on the marginal rejection of the modernization project neglects the particularity and the complexity of Jordanian culture that affects and is affected by the diverse

cultures of the world. Although it is almost impossible to expect a Jordanian postmodernist culture to be identical to the Western one, the convergence between the two cultures blurs many boundaries and makes them very close, even identical, in many aspects. Taking into consideration other factors such as the level of education, background, income, and place of living, the complexity of the Jordanian milieu produces some unexpected scenarios. For example, many Jordanians are closer in their culture and style of living to (postmodern) Westerners than to their local fellows.

In sum, in the age of globalization, television, and the Internet (when late capitalism absorbs any local culture and dismantles any resistance), it is more accurate to argue that the Jordanian culture is postmodern, (but at an early stage that is still affected by its local flavor), than to claim that it is not. This point will be revisited in the conclusion after exploring postmodernist characteristics in Jordanian novels.

Postmodernism and Non-Western Novels:

Postmodernism has been discussed from different points of view. One of them is its impact on non-Western literature. Perhaps one of the most important questions here is: Can we consider non-Western novels postmodernist due to the increasing influence of postmodernism on their context and characteristics?

Indeed, many Western critics, such as Linda Hutcheon, are inclined explicitly (or implicitly) to restrict postmodernism to the Western side of the world, which experienced the project of Enlightenment from the beginning and eventually reached, over centuries, the highest level of modernity (*A Poetics of Postmodernism* 4). Based on that, it is not expected to describe non-Western societies that did not reach (yet) a complete stage of modernity as postmodern, nor is it expected to include their cultural works within the postmodern category, even if some postmodern symptoms appear therein. More specifically, since the Arab world is conventionally categorized within the developing countries (as opposed to the more advanced developed countries), it is less likely, according to many, to be classified as postmodern or to have real postmodern features in its culture or literary works. Hence, describing any postcolonial society, like

Arab countries, as postmodern seems odd or even unrealistic to many critics like Faisal Darraj and Muhsin al-Musawi.

Jameson also appears to exclude Arabic novels from the postmodern category. In “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism” (1986), non-Western literature and, more precisely, Third World literature was excluded from the discussion of the postmodern works. In the essay, which was written decades ago when Arab countries were far less modern than they are now, Jameson argues that “Third-World texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic — necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*” (69; italics in original). In this quotation, Jameson considers the existence of powerful political subversions in Third-World literature, in comparison to the loss of subversive energy in Western postmodern literature, a profound evidence that the former does not belong to the latter’s category. According to Jameson, the reason behind this political energy in Third-World literature is the absence of the “fragmented subjectivities” that exist in Western societies (86).

Yet, although Jameson found much “Third-World” literature not to be postmodern back in 1986, he has also imagined that postmodernism would, by definition, eventually be a global phenomenon. Over time, Jameson’s view on nationalism, which is entirely historical, coincided with his analysis of the global changes of capitalism. For instance, in “Globalization and Political Strategy” (2000), Jameson maintains that with the expansion of globalization, international capitalism (its “motor force”) dismantles and gradually subsumes the nation-state (in general) and the postcolonial nations (in particular) (65). Therefore, Jameson concludes that national resistance gradually loses its potential to resist capitalist globalization (50/66). In different ways, Jameson suggests that with the standardization of world culture, national literature and other national/local cultural elements have been retreating and, even, begun to be displaced by global literature and culture (66).

What supports Hutcheon's perspective and Jameson's early observation of the national allegory is a number of practical studies that took as their main topic the issue of the postmodern in non-Western settings. Gregory Jusdanis, for instance, focuses on postmodernism in Greek culture as an example of non-Western cultures. Jusdanis's argument is related to our discussion here because it is pointed out in Meyer's discussion of Arabic novels in the Levant that will be mentioned after a few pages. Jusdanis maintains that because "Greece's development differed so much from the European... it would make little sense to expect the presence of a postmodernism in Greece" (88). In other words, because modernity in Greece is "belated," it is not possible to consider its culture postmodernist (in comparison to Western countries that reached a complete modernity). Maintaining that postmodernism is a reaction to modernism, he concludes that "it would be meaningless for a movement to emerge in order to negate what did not exist or is not complete" (89). Therefore, it would make more sense to talk about "Greek modernism and avant-garde only" than Greek postmodernism. However, although Jusdanis's argument that was posed one year after Jameson's argument is well presented, it appears that it is limited in its scope, application, and time. For instance, it excludes the economic factor and restricts postmodernity to a mere cultural resistance; apparently influenced by Hutcheon's view that will be discussed in chapter one.

Indeed, having a "critical distance" (especially from an Arab-American researcher who lives in and studies both cultures) makes it necessary to re-visit such an argument and scrutinize it again within the context of the modernization process outside Europe and North America. In fact, the whole view of the post-coloniality of Arabic and Jordanian literature must be reviewed within the growing influence of global capitalism and the noticeable growth of postmodern features in Arabic novels and culture. Hence, the title of this study has been carefully chosen to indicate a need to examine the above-mentioned claim within the context of global and cultural changes that have been swiftly spreading in Jordan and in other Arab countries since the end of the 1960s.

In many ways, the categorization of postmodern and postcolonial works is not always as easy a task as it may appear. It has been, for quite some time, a debatable topic between many critics and researchers, who prove to have differing conclusions and various perspectives on both phenomena. Perhaps some of the novels that are discussed in this study fall into that debatable topic.

Salman Rushdie's novels are a good example of this dispute. As Booker explains, while Rushdie's use of "irony, parody, and exuberant carnivalesque imagery and language have for many critics made him a paragon of postmodernism, ... his particular cultural roots and the particular subject matter of his fiction have led many critics to see him as an exemplary postcolonial writer" (*Salman Rushdie 2*). Further, Booker's discussion of Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939) and Mario Vargas Llosa's earlier works tempts one to claim that the entire postcolonial literature must not be excluded unequivocally from the postmodernist category. In "Postmodern and/or Postcolonial?: The Politics of *At Swim-Two-Birds*" (2002), Booker examines the novel as a postcolonial work that contributes to the construction of the "Irish cultural identity" that stands against the legacy of British colonization (1). Although the novel addresses "important political issues," Booker suggests that because "the structure and the tone of the book are consonant with the logic of late capitalism," it appears that its subversive nature has become "less effective," in comparison to the conventional postcolonial novel. Therefore, he concludes that *At Swim-Two-Birds* should be considered as a "postmodernist novel."

In one of his earliest works, Booker reads the earlier works of Vargas Llosa "within the framework of postmodernism" (*Vargas Llosa Postmodernists 183*). Some of the main postmodern characteristics that appear in the Peruvian author's works are skepticism toward absolutes like the utopian vision of history, undermining the author's authority, involving readers, challenging elitism by involving pop art, etc. (184). One of Booker's main points is the differentiation between the cultural products of modernism and postmodernism based on their political power or their subversion. Briefly speaking, modernist art is subversive

while postmodernist art is not. Therefore, Booker suggests that Vargas Llosa's earlier works belong to the former category, while the lack of subversion in the later works put them in the other category.

Among the important novels whose categorization in the postcolonial or postmodern category has been a subject of debate among critics is Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). Brian McHale, for instance, considers this novel a postmodern text that is distinguished by many fantastic elements that involve "face-to-face confrontations between the possible (the "real") and the impossible, and the normal and the paranormal" (75). The oscillation between the world of fantasy and the world of reality (of the text) develops a sense of indeterminacy that serves as a distinctive feature of postmodern works.

Even encyclopedias are not safe from this debate. In an interesting *Encyclopedia Britannica* article, entitled "Postmodern Literature in Latin America" (1995), Raymond Leslie Williams maintains that "[t]he writing of the 1990s in Latin America exhibits a trend toward postmodern experimentation." Williams lists the names of "a group of postmodern writers" from Mexico, Puerto Rican, Argentina, and Chile (Salvador Elizondo, Ricardo Piglia, and Diamela Eltit) whose postmodernist works are still carrying political agendas. His interesting observation that the "[s]igns of early postmodernism were evident in Mexico as early as the late 1960s" brings to the discussion the experimental tendencies that emerged in Arabic novels (like Tayseer Sboul's *Anta Munthu AlYawm* [You as of Today]) in the same period of time.

All these examples demonstrate the difficulty of sorting out many postcolonial novels. More precisely, although numerous critics consider many Third World novels postcolonial (and/or modernist), their argument has been challenged by other critics who prove the same novels to be postmodern. Further, the gradual incorporation of many societies and cultures in capitalist globalization, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, necessitates a reexamination of many works and cultures. Here, one would paraphrase the question of this study, is it also possible to include (some) Jordanian and Arabic novels in the postmodern category? To answer this question, some novels will be

examined in the following chapters of the study, and Arabic and Jordanian cultures will be discussed in the postmodern context.

Postmodernism in the Arabic and Jordanian Novel:

Similar to the dispute over the postmodernity of many non-Arabic novels, many critics (like Edward Said, Stefan Meyer, Mustafa Jum'ah, and Faisal Darraj) have debated the classification of the modern Arabic novel. According to most critics, the Arabic novel is a postcolonial novel that differs in its development, environment, and characteristics from the postmodern Western novel. For example, Muhsin Al-Musawi's *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel* (2003) concentrates on the post-coloniality of Arabic novels. More precisely, Al-Musawi highlights the centrality of the socio-political dimension of Arabic literature that takes "coloniality as referent." According to him, the latent political subversion of the postcolonial Arabic novel is compared allegorically to the subversion of the famous Shahrazad of the *One Thousand and One Nights*. That is, to the authority of the King whose desire to know the rest of the story defeats his other desire of killing the narrator. But to what extent is the Arabic novel related to the West, modernity, and postmodernism?

The journey of the Arabic novel began in the first decade of the twentieth century by Arab intellectuals who tried to emulate the Western novel and/or to modernize the Arabic tradition of the *Maqamah* and the *Arabian Nights*.⁴ Perhaps Farah Antun's *AlDen wa Allm wa AlMal* [Religion, Science, and Money] (1903) and Hafiz Ibrahim's *Layali Sateh* [Sateh's Nights] (1906) are good examples of the two views that have circulated among critics concerning the emergence of the Arabic novel, its relation with Arabic heritage, and its influence by the Western novel.⁵ However, in a short period of time, the Arabic novel achieved a noticeable degree of maturity and recognition that culminated with the publication of Muhammad Husayn Haykal's *Zaynab* (1913), which is considered by many as the first Arabic mature novel (Roger Allen, *Arabic Novel* 58). Nevertheless, some other critics seem to belittle the achievement of the

Arabic novel. Faisal Darraj is probably one of the most pessimistic critics who laments the growth of the Arabic novel and repudiates its modernity.

The titles of Darraj's articles "Ma Ba'da AlHadathah fe 'Alam bila Hadathah"[Postmodernism in a World Without Modernism] (1997) and "Mina AlNahdah Ila AlHadathah AlMabtoorah" [From Renaissance to the Incomplete Modernity] (2013) reflect his pessimistic views concerning the modernization of Arabic culture and novels. In an open comparison between the emergence of the novel in the West and in the Arab world, Darraj argues that the conditions and factors (like freedom, equality, and the awareness of history) that facilitated the emergence of the European novel are missing in the Arabic milieu. Therefore, as a modern product, the novel "was not successful in Arab societies which could not adopt modernity" (*The Novel and the Hermeneutics of History* 40). Although Darraj gives some credit to Arab novelists who managed to develop their skills to write the "unwritten history of the oppressed," he emphasizes the failure of Arab societies to create the necessary environment for the growth of the Arabic novel that was originally born "crippled" (78 and 365). In other words, the failure of Arabs to achieve an ideal modernity that is similar or equal to that of the Europeans' deprived the Arabic novel of the progress that was achieved by the European novel. Therefore, the Arabic condition entails the impossibility of having postmodern Arabic novels.

Darraj's argument has at least two major shortcomings. First, his limitation of Arabic modernity to the European modernist values (like freedom and equality) in their European context without including other factors such as globalization and the increasing hegemony of capitalism in the Arab world. Second, the weak consideration of the particularity of the Arabic culture that differs in many ways from the European one and the increasing postmodernist aspects in the Arabic culture.

Close to Darraj's argument is that of Stefan Meyer in *The Experimental Arabic Novel: Postcolonial Literary Modernism in the Levant* (2001). In the last chapter of the book, Meyer discusses the possibility of having

postmodern works in non-Western societies. Drawing on Darraj and Gregory Jusdanis (who was discussed earlier), Meyer concludes that the Arabic novel in the Levant is modernist, but “at a later stage” (257). Although Meyer brings to the discussion very important issues like the need to revise the categorization of postcolonial literature and the dichotomy of East and West, he does not elaborate enough on globalization or on the spreading hegemony of Western culture and capitalism.

But what do other critics say about the aesthetic and thematic changes that began to appear in the Arabic novel in the second half of the twentieth century? Moving away from Western standards, some Arab critics are inclined to avoid Western categorization of modernism and postmodernism in their analysis of Arabic novels. Instead, they use different categories and terms like, “Traditional Novel” for the novels that were written in the 1940s and before, and “Modern Novel” for the 1950s and 1960s novels (Shukri Al-Madi *New Arabic Novel* 9-13). It is worth noting here that “modern” means “new” in its general sense rather than Western modernism. What is more important for us is the third category that carries a number of names like *AlRiwayah Al'Arabiyyah AlJadedah* (The New Arabic Novel) and *AlHasasiyyah AlJadedah* (The New Sensitivity). This category reflects the *new* changes that began to appear in Arabic novels after 1967, which marks a critical point in modern Arab history. In this year, Arab armies were defeated and many territories in Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon were occupied by the Israelis. This catastrophe—what is called AlNaksah (the Setback)—put an end to many dreams and projects (like pan-Arabism), affected Arabs tremendously, and left a deep scar in their memory and culture. For example, many subsequent Arabic novels take the plight of Palestine and the post-war Arabic life as their main topics (Allen 69). Therefore, negative feelings such as disappointment, suffering, loss of hope, and the suspicion of pan-Arabism and socialism (which were promoted by Arab leaders and parties like Gamal Abdel Nasser and left/communist parties) permeated many Arabic novels and influenced their structures. Similar themes appeared in Western literature after World War II and the nuclear bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, though the situation is not exactly parallel since the West was victorious in this encounter.

Perhaps Shukri AlMadi is one of the leading critics who has investigated the new characteristics in the Arabic novel. AlMadi chooses the word 'new' in the title of his book, *Anmat AlRiwayah Al'Arabiyah AlJadedah* [The Patterns of the New Arabic Novel] (2008), to include all various types of Arabic novels that were written after 1967 and to distinguish them from the 'modern' Arabic novels which were written before that date (15). AlMadi does not adopt any specific approach, especially from the Western literary theory, to conduct his study. Instead he adopts a more "flexible" approach that stems from the Arabic literary tradition and experience (19). He explains the need for such an approach to study the *new* Arabic novel since the old "standards of the Modern Novel are not adequate to tackle critically the new Novel" (19).

In this study, AlMadi lists a number of factors that made the *new* novel violate the conventions of the *modern* novel and rebel against it. At the top of the list is the defeat of 1967 that is considered by the author the most important factor behind the emergence of the "new" novel (17). Other factors are the shaking of national and historical principles, the replacement of the 'liberation' project (of Palestine) by the compromising 'peace' process, the retreat of global movements of liberation, the end of the Cold War, the fragmentation and confusion of ideologies, the deterioration of democracy, the lack of the role model and effective leadership, and the increasing gap of economic inequality that resulted in much pain and deprivation (17). It is worth noting that while AlMadi gives a great deal of credit to the 1967 war as the main influential factor in the emergence of the "new" novel, he does not elaborate enough on the economic factor. He, for instance, does not focus on the rise of capitalist tendencies like consumerism and multinational capitalism, let alone discussing how they are related to the development of the Arabic novel after 1967.

Some of the aesthetic and thematic aspects of new Arab novels as noticed by AlMadi are non-linear narrative, the excessive use of descriptive segments (at the expense of events), loss of historicity, blurring boundaries between genres, pastiche, metafiction, involving the reader, irony, anarchy, and the

fragmentation of time, text, events, and characters. Most of these characteristics are explored in the Western postmodern cultural products. One of the main authors whose works are discussed in the book is the Algerian writer Tahar Ouettar (1936-2010). Although Ouettar was one of the 1970s novelists who started his career by writing 'modern' novels, he became in the last 15 years of his life one of the leading authors who successfully managed to write some of the well-received 'new' novels. As AlMadi notes, the density of the experimental or new elements in his last novels (written in 1995, 2003, and 2004) increases over time. Some of these elements are death of metanarratives, blurring boundaries, absurdity, illogical connection between events and sections, disappearance of characters from the text, lack of genuine elements like time, place, progress of events, and the excessive number of news reports and political declarations (207-234). In addition, the complete disconnection between the title and the first section of the book from the main subject of the text is a distinctive feature of the last novel, *AlWali AlTahir Yarfa' Yadayhi bi AlDu'a* (The Pure Saint Raises His Hands in Prayer) (2004) (*New Arabic Novel* 231/2).

Very close to AlMadi's argument is that of Edward AlKharrat in his book *AlHasasiyyah AlJadedah* [The New Sensitivity] (1993). In this important book, AlKharrat suggests that the destruction of the social and national reality by the 1967 war coincided with the rise of the New Sensitivity and the decline of old realism in Egypt and other Arab countries (11). According to him, there are other factors that also played important roles in the emergence of this phenomenon, including the growth of consumer culture, shrinking of ideologies and socialist activities, the brain drain, and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism (10).⁶ In a very brief comparison between the social-political factors that influenced Western new sensitivity (both modernism and postmodernism) and Arabic new sensitivity, AlKharrat suggests that the creativity of the author also plays an important role in the emergence of this type of writing (12/13). AlKharrat's comparison highlights the failure of the bourgeoisie and the political regimes in Egypt in contrast to the European experience and the commodification and weakening of art in the West (12). It is obvious that AlKharat, like AlMadi, attempts to investigate the factors that stand behind the new changes in the Arabic

novel. Although AlKharat seems more accurate in diagnosing the political and economic factors (like the growth of consumer culture), AlMadi's list of the aesthetic changes appears to be more developed.

Although the previously mentioned authors do not elaborate enough on the postmodernity of Arabic novels, some other critics are more vocal about it. For instance, in 1989, Edward Said wrote that Elias Khoury, the author of the Arabic novel *Little Mountain* (1977), "has forged (in the Joycean sense) a national and novel, unconventional, fundamentally postmodern literary career" (xvii). Said's comment, that is quoted from his foreword to the first English translation of the novel, relies on some factors that played an important role in the style of the Lebanese novelist and critic (Khoury). The most important of such factors are Khoury's personal "paradoxes" that distinguish him from other Arab writers, his exposure to "Arabic translations of major postmodern Third World classics (Fuentes, Marquez, Asturias, etc.)," and his style that is distinguished by "repetition," "comedy," "irreverence," and (most importantly) "formlessness" (xvi- xix). Therefore, Khoury's career proves a literary departure from the Arabic conventional style that is connected to Naguib Mahfouz, a Nobel Prize winner and the most prominent Arab novelist.

Said compares Khoury, Mahfouz, and other novelists who seem to fit in a middle category between them. To Said, Mahfouz's long literary journey that lasted for more than half a century (1930s-1980s) seems to represent the trajectory of the modernist Arabic novel (and to an extent the pre-modernist novel) (xviii). Khoury's career, on the other hand, represents a shift from modernism to postmodernism in the Arabic novel. Emile Habibi (and to an extent Ghassan Kanafani) is an experimentalist rather than a traditionalist as it appears in his experimental novel *The Secret Life of Saeed: The Pessoptimist* (1974) (xv). Contrary to the stability in Mahfouz's life (in Egypt) and style, Said states, Khoury's style reflects the instability of Palestine under the occupation (1948 and 1967) and Lebanon during the Civil War (1975- 1990) (xvii).

According to Said, the Lebanese and the Palestinian struggles appear to play an important role in changing the conventions of the Arabic novel. Before Khoury, the Palestinian novelist Kanafani and the Palestinian-

Israeli novelist Habibi started a slight change in the traditional Arabic novel. Although the Arabic novel was distinguished from the very beginning from the Western novel due to the colonial experience rather than the nation state, that experience went a step further in the “fragmented realities of Lebanon” and the Palestinian predicament. In short, the fragmentation of the aesthetic “form” of some Arabic novels and that of the Arabic political life is the base of Said's view (Meyer 257).

The roots of blurring boundaries/formlessness is deep in Arabic literature. According to Said, the “formlessness” of Khoury is a “special brand” that is different from the formless works that appeared in the first half of the nineteenth century (like that of Taha Hussein’s *Stream of Days* (1943). Such early Arabic works do not adopt exactly the traditional Qasedah (poem) or the Western novel style. They are distinguished with postmodern characteristics that, according to Said, “cannot be found in the more traditional fictions produced by conventional novelists” (xviii). Such Arabic works consist of a “combinatorial amalgam of different elements, principally autobiography, story, fable, pastiche, and self-parody, the whole highlighted by an insistent and eerie nostalgia” (xviii). Said’s argument is another example that shows us the importance of considering the particularity of each culture in the postmodernism discussion and the complexity of the classification of literary genres.

Postmodernist characteristics are not limited to Lebanese novels. Indeed, other modern Arab novels are also described by some researchers as postmodernist. For example, Mustafa Jum’ah explores in *Maba’da AlHadathah fe AlRiwayah Al’Arabiyah AlJadedah* [Postmodernism in the New Arabic Novel] (2017) five postmodern Arabic novels that were published in the 21st century in three different countries. Jum’ah focuses in this study on self, homeland, and identity in these novels. He concludes that the most prominent postmodern characteristics in Arabic novels are the mental, cultural, and political fragmentation of Arab subjects and countries, disbelief in Arab nationalism, withdrawal of Arab intellectuals from public life, and the increasing dystopian feeling. Some similarities are noticed in Magda AlNowaihi’s exploration of the Moroccan Muhammad Barrada’s *The Game of Forgetting* (1987) which highlights some postmodern

features like the fragmentation of the self, multiplicity of voices and narrators, disbelief in all ideologies and philosophies, and the lack of linear narrative and plot (*Committed Postmodernity* 379-388). AlNowaihi, however, concludes that unlike the “total relativism” that permeates Western postmodernist texts, the Arabic text is more committed to improve its political and social surrounding” (388).

Fragmentation of Arabic fiction (and poetry) is also explored by Kamal Abu-Deeb who connects the fragmentation in language, structure, and imagery with the evolving of personal, anti-ideological, non-ideological art (*Collapse of Totalizing Discourse* 336). Although fragmentation in Arabic literature has existed since the 1970s, Abu-Deeb suggests that it intensifies over time due to political and social factors such as wars and the “emergence of consumer society” (338/9). It appears that Abu-Deeb’s diagnosis of the aesthetic and cultural changes in the Arab novels and culture is similar to other researchers (AlNowaihi, Jum’ah, and AlMadi) in some ways especially the negative impact of wars on the Arabic psychic fragmentation.

Instead of focusing on the political conflicts and wars, Mohammed Alshammari gives more weight to the influence of late capitalism on the Saudi novel in his unpublished dissertation *The Postmodern Novel in Saudi Arabia and America* (2017). Alshammari demonstrates that due to the economic status of Saudi Arabia and the fact that it was never colonized, Saudi novels after 2001 are postmodernist. He concludes that the main postmodern features that are noticed in these novels are the instability of personality, weak historical thinking, and weak utopian imagination. With regard to the modernity of the Saudi culture, Alshammari compares the conservatism of some Saudi people to some American traditionalist (or less modern) minorities and concludes that Saudi society is “simultaneously... modern and traditional” (7). He further argues that the hegemony of late capitalism is more important than the “completion of modernization” in determining the postmodernity of the Saudi novels (8). Because of his study and exposure to postmodernist theories and lifestyle in the US, Alshammari’s analysis offers a better understanding of postmodernism and its connection to modernity and late Capitalism.

Like other Arabic novels, the new changes in the Jordanian novel have been studied as 'experimental' or 'new' features that are disconnected from Western postmodernism by many critics, like AlMadi in *AlRiwayah Al'Arabiyah fe AlUrdun wa Filisten fe AlQarn Al'ishren* [The Arabic Novel in Jordan and Palestine in the Twentieth Century (2003)]. Nevertheless, there are a few studies that scrutinize the new changes in the Jordanian novel through postmodernist lenses. For instance, Ahmad Majdoubeh examines the Jordanian novel *Anta Munthu AlYawm* (You Since Today) (1968) by Tayseer Subul "in the context of postmodernism" (284). He highlights many similarities between the Jordanian novel and *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969). According to him, the novel displays postmodern features like fragmentation, "deconstructive modes of representation", and "metafictional overtones" (284). Although Majdoubeh's discussion introduces new avenues to view the Jordanian novel, his heavy reliance on the early observations of Ihab Hassan and the metafictional elements weakens his discussion as it mixes modernist with postmodernist elements and (it) excludes some other important elements such as capitalist modernity and its relationship to the Jordanian cultural context.

Ibrahim Nasrallah's *Prairies of Fever* (1985) is another Jordanian novel that is introduced in the English translation as postmodernist. According to the translator, the novel exhibits postmodernist features such as "metafiction, or self-conscious narrative" (Meyer 261). Lately, the author himself remarks that while Arab critics debated the modernity of the novel, "it was received in the West as postmodernist" (Mansorah AbdulAmir). Apparently, relying on metafictional elements only is not enough to determine the postmodernity of the novel especially when previous Arabic and non-Arabic novels that exhibit metafictional elements are not involved in the discussion.

The existence of postmodernist features in the Jordanian novel is also confirmed by Muhsin AlMusawi in *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel* (2003). According to him, the Jordanian novels of Subul and Munis AlRazzaz utilize "postmodernist poetics," such as irony and ambiguity, to "inscribe political engagement to undermine neo-patriarchy, the evils of the modern police state, along with the New World Order and its

globalization strategies” (56). Although AlMusawi’s view is helpful in the sense it reflects the new elements that began to emerge in the Arabic novel, it does not give more details nor does it explore other postmodernist characteristics in these texts.

The previous studies maintain that a number of new features began to emerge in Arabic novels since the 1960s. Some critics like AlMadi, AlKharat, and Meyer avoid using the term “postmodern” to describe such features or to describe the works that display them. Instead they prefer to use either non-Western terms like the “New Novel” and the “New Sensitivity” or a (conventional) Western term like the “Experimental Novel”. On the other hand, other critics and researchers like Said, Jum’ah, Alshammari, AlNowaihi, Abu-Deeb, and Majdoubeh appear to use “postmodern” vividly to describe the same features and works. It is worth noting that although the latter group of critics and researchers is very diverse (regarding their background, age, and exposure to Western literary theory and culture), their findings seem very close and related to one another.

For instance, the loss of hope and the disbelief in ideological, political, and national narratives is a shared finding among the researchers. Further, the majority of those researchers agree that the fragmentation of characters and styles reflects the fragmentation of the Arabic political condition. Generally speaking, it is noticed that new/postmodern Arabic novels are still engaged, in one way or another, in their political and social surroundings. With regard to the aesthetic side, it appears that metafiction techniques are dominant features in the new/postmodern Jordanian and Arabic novels.

Yet, having a variety of researchers means having different perspectives. Darraj, for example, expresses a great deal of disenchantment with the whole project of Arab modernity and its cultural product (Arabic novel). He solemnly rejects any possibility of postmodernism in the Arab world. AlMusawi, on the other hand, considers the postmodern features that appear in some Arabic novels as subversive energies. As he adopts Hutcheon’s view (that will be discussed in the next chapter), he connects such features to the

reaction of de-colonized nations against the post-colonial repressive conditions. Closer to that is Said's perspective on the postmodern fragmentation as a reflection of the political and societal fragmentation of Arab countries (mainly Lebanon and Palestine). Needless to mention here that this study ignores some inadequate and shallow views of some Arab writers, whose theoretical background and knowledge about postmodernism appear to suffer a great deal of deficiency.⁷

Although Arab critics and researchers attempt to analyze the political (and to an extent the social) contexts of Arabic novels, it appears that they, in general, pay less attention to other important factors like the impact of multinational capitalism, globalization, consumerism, and mass media. Perhaps AlKharat, Alshammari, and Abu-Deeb are among a few researchers who vividly involve the economic factor in the discussion of the new Arabic novel. While AlKharat and Abu-Deeb list the growth of consumer culture among the major factors that played important roles in the emergence of the new features, Alshammari considers the hegemony of late capitalism as the main factor that caused the postmodern Saudi novel to emerge.

Said seems more accurate than Darraj (and other researchers) when he highlights the particularity of the Arabic novel. Instead of measuring Arabic novels by Western measure sticks and standards (as Darraj seems to do), Said reminds us that the Arabic novel, which was distinguished from the Western novel from the very beginning (i.e., being influenced by Arabic heritage and the colonial experience rather than the nation state), continues to have its own unique features. This perhaps justifies the need to adopt a "flexible" approach in discussing Arabic novels. Indeed, espousing such an approach that does not stick rigidly to one theory (or master-narrative) reflects, in some ways, the emergence of postmodernist symptoms in Arabic theory and cultural studies.

In sum, although a number of important political and societal changes have been addressed by the researchers, other factors must also be engaged in the discussion to account for the Jordanian novel

accurately. Some of these factors that are addressed in this study are the global growth of capitalism and the expansion of consumerism, television, and the Internet in Jordanian (and Arab) culture. In addition, the impact of late political, social, and economic changes like the Arab Spring, war on terrorism, and the ups-and-downs of radical Islam enrich this discussion with more avenues and perspectives. Indeed, examining the Jordanian novel via a holistic approach that includes all aspects of culture and society is able (more than other approaches) to provide a full and accurate account of the changes that the Jordanian novel has experienced in the last few decades.

As a final word, the uniqueness of each culture must always be kept in mind when comparing cultural aspects of different societies. This study embraces this principle while investigating the Jordanian novel. Although it adopts Fredric Jameson's understanding of postmodernism and involves other accounts in the discussion, it always takes into consideration the particularity of the Jordanian novel and culture.

The Goal and Scope of the Study:

This study investigates postmodernist features in Jordanian novels from 1986 to 2016. More specifically, this study attempts to investigate the impact of postmodernism on the Jordanian culture by examining the aesthetic and thematic features of Jordanian novels within a postmodern context. By doing that, it challenges the conventional classification of the Jordanian novel as postcolonial (and/or modernist). For that purpose, the study adopts Fredric Jameson's analysis of postmodernism as its framework while it draws on other approaches as needed. In general, the study tries to answer questions such as: If postmodernism appeared and flourished in the West, did it also emerge in other societies? More precisely, did postmodernism emerge in the Arab world in general and in Jordan in particular? Did the hegemony of multinational capitalism reach Jordan and change its economy, social structure, and culture? Is it possible to find postmodern features in Jordanian novels? If yes, what are they and how are they related to the

postmodern features in other postmodern works? Is Jordanian and Arabic literature (especially the novel) best understood as postcolonial/modernist and/or postmodernist?

This study attempts to demonstrate that Jordanian novels in these three decades display several postmodern features that reflect the impact of capitalist modernization on Jordanian society. The main postmodern characteristics that are investigated in Jordanian novels are blurring boundaries and disrupting hierarchies, the use of pastiche as a compositional technique, formal fragmentation, and the weakness of utopian imagination. Although these characteristics appear to be similar to the postmodern characteristics that emerged in Western postmodern novels, they differ from them in some ways, such as political and social engagement. The emergence of postmodernist features in Jordanian novels, I argue, is attributed to the cultural and economic impact of the globalization process of late capitalism on the Jordanian culture. Therefore, there will appear to be proof that the more the local culture is exposed over time to capitalist modernization and globalization, the more postmodern features permeate its novels.

The close similarities between the Jordanian and Arab societies that share, in general, the same language, religions, culture, and historical progress (colonial, postcolonial/modern, and postmodern condition), make it very necessary to engage Arabic novels in the discussion for comparison purposes. Such novels are involved to enrich the discussion and to add more depth into it. To broaden the scope of the study further and to widen its comparative dimension/sense, some postmodern Western and non-Western novels are also engaged in the discussion.

In addition to my interest in postmodernism, my familial and cultural background motivates me to conduct a study on the Jordanian novels that are compared in this study to their Arabic and global counterparts. Indeed, the involvement of many literary works in this study gives the study an opportunity to investigate the subject and to diagnose its symptoms more accurately and efficiently than studying a sole work separately. Further, it does not seem that there has been a previous major work that has investigated the

Jordanian novel in a large scale through a postmodernist perspective and connected it to regional and global postmodern novels. Therefore, I hope that my research will fill this gap, widen the scope of postmodernist studies, bring new perspectives to the Jordanian novel, and participate in engaging the Arabic novel in the wider realm of comparative literature by placing it in its appropriate rank among Western, postmodern, and postcolonial novels.

This study attempts to be informative to at least two types of audience, namely Western and Arab researchers, critics, and intellectuals. In general, there would seem to be a knowledge gap between these two cultures. Therefore, Arabs need to know more about the theoretical part of postmodernism and Westerners need to know more about the literary and cultural changes in the Middle East. For that reason, the next chapter discusses postmodernism and the views of its critics and theorists. By doing so, I hope that this cross-cultural effort will bring both audiences closer together, bridge or minimize the research gap between them, and blur more of the cultural boundaries that keep them apart.

Sections and Novels of the Study:

This study examines ten Jordanian novels as main texts. All quotes are translated by the researcher from their original Arabic text. Some of the novels that are discussed are: Hisham Gharaybah's *AlMaqamah AlRamliyyah* [The Sandy Maqamah] (1998), Samiha Khreis's *Khashkhash* [Opium Poppy] (2000), Ibrahim Nasrallah's *Shurfat AlHathayan* [The Balcony of Delirium] (2005) (2016), Sahar Malas's *Matarih* [Places] (2013), Mo'nis AlRazzaz's *Sultan AlNawm wa Zarqa AlYamamah* [The Sultan of Sleep and the Blue Eye of Yamama] (1997) and Matahat AlA'rab fe Natihat AlSahab [Arabs' Maze in Mirage Skyscrapers] (1986), Mohamed Sanajleh's *Thilal Al'ashiq* [Shadows of the Amorous] (2016), and Muhammad AlQaisi's *AlHadeqa AlSirriyyah* [The Secret Garden] (2002).

The first chapter of the study establishes the theoretical basis of the remainder of the study. Here, postmodernism's roots, nature, scope, and manifestations are discussed. The main critics and researchers

whose related works are discussed are Ihab Hassan, Fredric Jameson, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, Brian McHale, Linda Hutcheon, and M. Keith Booker. Jameson's model is compared to other theories and adopted as the framework of the study. Its advantages are mentioned. Booker's practical view on the television is engaged in the discussion as an update to Jameson's model.

The second chapter focuses on the blurring of boundaries and disruption of hierarchies. In this chapter, blurring boundaries are explored in six Jordanian novels and compared to other Arabic and non-Arab novels. Jameson's model of postmodernism is adopted as a framework and some other views such as McHale's and Hutcheon's are subsumed and involved in the discussion to expand the study's scope and depth. This chapter demonstrates that in Khreis's *Opium Poppy* and Gharaybah's *The Sandy Maqamah* the boundaries between fantasy/reality and narrator/character are blurred. It also illustrates how the lines between different genres are crossed in Khreis's *Diary of the Flood*, AlQaisi's *The Secret Garden*, Nasrallah's *The Balcony of Delirium*, and Malas's *Places*. Among the topics that are also covered are magical realism and metafiction techniques in Arabic novels.

The third chapter tackles "pastiche" as a compositional technique that distinguishes the works of postmodernist artists and novelists. Briefly, the pastiche is a haphazard recycling of previous works without engaging them effectively in the new text. According to Jameson, the postmodern subject resorts to this technique due to the lack of creativity. This chapter discusses the use of pastiche in four Jordanian novels that are compared to other Arab and non-Arab novels. In Gharaybah's *The Sandy Maqamah*, AlRazzaz's *The Sultan of Sleep and the Blue-Eyed of Yamama*, and Malas's *Places* the pastiche elements are borrowed mainly from Arabic culture. More specifically, in Gharaybah's and Sahar's novels, childhood stories appear to be the main source of pastiche. In addition to Arabic traditional literary sources, different styles and elements are borrowed from literary and non-literary genres such as travel literature, poetry, magazine/journalism, and anthropology as in Khreis's *Diary of the Flood*, Malas's *Places*, and Nasrallah's

The Balcony of Delirium. This chapter also discusses the playfulness of pastiche and the lack of its subversive nature.

The fourth chapter is designated to discuss fragmentation and the weakness of Utopian imagination in AlRazzaz's *Arabs' Maze in Mirage Skyscrapers* and *The Sultan of Sleep and the Blue Eye of Yamam*. Based on Jameson's analysis, due to the fragmentation of the self, the postmodern subject loses his ability to envision an alternative utopian project to his condition. Therefore, this novel explores the strategies that are adopted by the author to suggest the instability of the postmodern subject and the loss of utopia. Some of these strategies are the overlapping between characters, mixing names, the playful style, pastiche, equivocal phrases, and the unreliability of narrators. Skepticism towards master narratives is also discussed and connected to the retreat of the Left, Pan-Arabism, and the Islamic project.

The conclusion presents an overview of the postmodernist characteristics in Jordanian novels. It also elaborates on the postmodernity of Jordanian and Arab culture(s). The main point in the discussion is the proliferation of postmodern features in Jordan (and in the Arab world) and the impact of that on the categorization of the Jordanian novel and culture. Since the Jordanian culture has a particularity that requires an extra consideration when its postmodernity is discussed or compared to that of the West. In short, due to the fundamental differences between Jordanian and Western societies, their cultural development from modernity to postmodernity differ profoundly. Although there are many similarities in their postmodernist characteristics, dissimilarities continue to play an important role in distinguishing them as two different cultures. In other words, while the gap between these societies shrinks rapidly under the hegemony of late capitalism and its global culture, Islam and Arabic culture, that lurk in the background, continue to give a local flavor that distinguishes Jordanian postmodernism from the Western postmodernism.

Chapter One: Postmodernism

This study targets at least two groups of people. First, it intends to familiarize Arab researchers with the postmodern theory, its nature and manifestations, and its critics. Second, it attempts to familiarize Western researchers with the cultural changes in the Jordanian (and Middle Eastern) society, and, thus, to expand the scope of postmodern studies to new areas and cultures. For that reason, this chapter tackles, with some detail, the theoretical part of the postmodern theory. After introducing in the first part the main characteristics of postmodernism as they emerged and were observed in the West, the remainder of the chapter discusses the views of major theorists whose ideas continue to influence this and other postmodernist studies. Some of those critics are Fredric Jameson, Ihab Hassan, Jean-François Lyotard, Linda Hutcheon, Brian McHale, Jean Baudrillard, and M. Keith Booker.

Since Jameson's theory is adopted as the framework of this study, it is explained in detail. As the strengths and shortcomings of other theories are discussed, some perspectives are subsumed within Jameson's model. In the final section, Booker's practical updates of Jameson's theory are included. This chapter serves as a theoretical background for the next three practical chapters that explore postmodern characteristics in the Jordanian novel.

Postmodernism and Its characteristics:

There is no doubt that the world after World War II is fundamentally different, in many ways, from the world before it. Among the major changes that our planet experienced, especially the Western side of the world, in the second half of the twentieth century are the emergence of the United States as the major world power, the rapid progress of technology, science, inventions, the unprecedented flow of information and the easy access to it (television and the Internet). Concurrently there was the increase of individual wealth and the production of goods, the easy moving of people and products, the exploration of space, the skyrocketing of consumerism and popular culture, the advancement in education, the

medical field, and welfare, along with the expansion of capitalism and international corporations. Such changes were intended or at least were (and still are) viewed by many as a continuation of the modernizing project that began with the European Renaissance and Enlightenment (and/or Bourgeois Revolution) to improve the human condition by moving away from the darkness of the Middle Ages (i.e., feudalism, ignorance, poverty, diseases, and the oppression of political and religious authorities). Nevertheless, modernity proves to always carry with it many drawbacks that continue to find their way even in the post-war era.

Parallel to the rapid progress that humanity experienced in the last seven decades is the regress of the condition of many people and things. For instance: inequality, poverty, crime, exploitation, wars, nuclear weapons, pollution, and exhaustion of resources are some of the negative outcomes of modernity. Such undesirable outcomes created a sense of insecurity, fear, and an uneasy feeling, in which a large number of people eventually realize that modernity is a whole package of pros and cons. Whether the above-mentioned changes are perceived positively or negatively, the terms “postmodernism” and “postmodernity” gained, over time, more popularity among many theorists and critics who began to use it to identify the cultural milieu or the new era that began after World War II. The difference between the two expressions “postmodernism” and “postmodernity” is attributed usually to the cultural and historical connotations that are connected to the former and to the latter respectively. Eagleton, for instance, suggests that ‘postmodernity’ is a style of thought” while “postmodernism” is “a form of contemporary culture” (*The Illusions of Postmodernism* vii). The prefix “post” indicates, in its generic sense, something that follows and comes after something else. In our case, postmodernism, in its literal sense, is what comes after modernism which can be defined as an art (and philosophy) movement that emerged as a “radical break with the past” from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century (Kathleen Kuiper, *Britannica*). It is worth noting here that by maintaining that modernity, in general (not the temporary modernism), is about a “continual and never-ending change,” postmodernity “is still modern... even if it does

differ from previous stages of modernity" (Booker, *Strange TV* 30-31). In this sense, the post-modern should be considered as another stage of modernism since it "does not lie after the modern, but within it" (31).

In sum, the social, cultural, and economic changes that began to occur in Western societies after World War II define the beginning of the postmodern era. Although there is no specific definition for this post-industrial phenomenon, many theorists agree that the emergence of postmodernism coincides with the proliferation of capitalism, consumerism, media, communication and transportation, standardization, and mass culture (Jameson, *Cultural Turn* 19).

The impact of such changes on cultural products has been a debatable issue between many theorists and critics who attempt to scrutinize postmodernism and identify its main characteristics. Before exploring the points of views of some of these researchers, it will be very helpful to mention, in general, the main characteristics of postmodernism that attracted the attention of many critics and informed much of their debate. It would seem that M. Keith Booker's list that is mentioned in his introduction to *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War* (2001) serves our purpose here as it focuses on postmodernist art. Quoting a phrase or two from each point in the list should serve to summarize each characteristic briefly.

According to Booker, some of the "basic characteristics of postmodernist literature and film" are:

a crisis in faith ... (and) a suspicion toward totalizing metanarratives; instability of personal identity; a loss of any sense of historical continuity; a weakening of the utopian imagination; a collapse of the tradition of Aristotelian logic ... of polar oppositions (and) a radical relativism; a growing sense of doubt about the distinction between art and reality; a deconstruction of the boundary between high and low art; a general mode of playfulness and parody. (23-25)

Different Perspectives of Postmodernism:

To explore the positions of postmodernist theorists, the Arab-American Ihab Hassan comes at the top of the list for a few reasons. First, he himself is an epitome of the cultural flow and cross boundaries between East and West in the postmodern era. Second, Hassan is worthy of some space here to understand the

early observations of the emerging postmodernist characteristics since he is “one of the critics most responsible for initially promoting the idea of postmodernism in the 1960s” (Booker, *Strange TV* 32). Third, Hassan’s early observations are familiar to many Arab researchers who rely heavily on them in their diagnoses of the postmodernist phenomenon in Arabic texts.

Hassan’s main argument focuses on the subversive nature of postmodernism against modernism. As a literary critic, Hassan paid much attention to the aesthetic anarchy of postmodern texts versus the order and authority of modernism (33). In a way, Hassan, like other critics who will be discussed in the following few pages, views postmodernism positively, (i.e., as a liberating force and a subversive energy).

The starting point of Hassan’s investigation of postmodernism as a new phenomenon was with what he called “The Literature of Silence,” an avant-garde style the features of which he discusses through the works of Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett. According to Hassan, the styles of Miller and Beckett differ from other conventional literary styles in the sense that they incline toward outrage and apocalypse. Of course, Hassan is not inferring a literal meaning of the word “silence” but a metaphoric one that reflects the tendencies of this “new literature” toward violence, outrage, and the absurd “in the sense that no meaning or value can be assigned to it” (*Towards Postmodernism* 4).

As literature is conventionally considered a representation or a reflection of reality, the Literature of Silence, according to Hassan, mirrors the “contemporary imagination [of] a world... that nothing... can renew it..., a chaotic world...on the verge of transformation” (6). Although some traces are noticed in the works of Joyce, Stein, Kafka, Sartre, and Mann, Hassan gives more credit to Beckett as a pioneer author.

He explains:

The old principles of causality, psychological analysis, and symbolic relations, principles on which the bourgeois novel once comfortably rested, begin to crumble. Beckett’s *Molloy* may have been the first novel to be written in the new manner, though Sartre’s *La Nausee* attracted wide attention... we see a character convinced of universal irrelevance; things have broken loose of words, and no connection between subject and object can be made. (8)

In this quotation, Hassan lists some of the world's major changes that affected the literary norms, such as the logical connection between aesthetic and thematic elements. Some other characteristics that Hassan highlights in this new literature are self-parody, oblivion, obscenity, absurdity, anarchy, disruption, distortion, the superficial, and formlessness. In short, the tendency of literature to move toward antiliterature, or the "revolt against verbal discourse," echoes a "revolt against authority," or against the civilization that failed to fulfill its promises (19). In a general sense, "metafiction" and "playfulness" are probably the appropriate terms that combine all these aspects that distinguish postmodern works.

In "POSTmodernISM," Hasan presents a rubric that reflects postmodern changes of modernist concepts. Briefly speaking, postmodernism represents a higher level (in comparison to modernism) in technology, anarchy, deconstruction, dehumanization, and the destruction of boundaries. Hassan chooses "indeterminacy" and "immanence" ("Indetermanence") as two major "aspects" to reflect such changes of postmodernism (92). Hassan identifies "Indeterminacy" with deconstructive terms like ambiguity, discontinuity, heterodoxy, pluralism, randomness, revolt, deformation, deconstruction, disjunction, disappearance, decomposition, demystification, and detotalization (92). With regard to "Immanence," Hassan remarks that, away from any religious association, human beings have reached a sublime level as "superman" creatures who are able to constitute themselves and determine their universe "by symbols of their own making" (93). At least two major postmodernist characteristics are deduced here, namely, multiplicity of meaning and blurring boundaries.

Hassan's contribution to the study of postmodernism appears more vividly in the rubric of modernism/postmodernism that gained more attention by numerous critics. Although Hassan assures his readers that "the dichotomies" that he mentions are "provisional," "insecure," "overlap," and even "equivocal," he lists more than thirty aesthetic features that distinguish postmodernism from modernism. Although such features are broad in their scope, they participated in shaping the main postmodernist characteristics that were verbalized later by major critics. Some of Hassan's postmodernist features are antiform, play,

anarchy, intertext, surface, participation, antinarrative, schizophrenia, irony, and indeterminacy (91/92). It is worth noting that many of these features are related to the discussion in the next chapter on blurring boundaries.

Although Hassan tries to identify the starting point of postmodernism by tracing, in addition to its literary aspects, the early use of it as a term in 1934 by Federico de Onis and later on by others like in Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History* in 1947, he concludes that it is difficult to deal with postmodernism as a period of time or as a theoretical issue separately as it is a "diachronic and synchronic construct" (85 & 88). Further, whereas Hassan is inclined sometimes to consider September 1939 a distinguished time between modernism and postmodernism, he appears to avoid drawing a clear line between the two phenomena. He explains, "Modernism and postmodernism are not separated by an Iron Curtain or Chinese Wall... We are all, I suspect, a little Victorian, Modern, and Postmodern, at once.... And an author may, in his or her own lifetime, easily write both a modernist and postmodernist work (Contrast Joyce's *Portrait...* with his *Finnegans Wake*)" (88). Therefore, Hassan concludes that modernism and postmodernism "now coexist" (33), and that any new study that tackles postmodernism separately or as a new phenomenon is subject to be rejected in the beginning before it is established and recognized (86). Therefore, Hassan points out that the dominant view of literary criticism is still "ruled by modernist assumptions" (*Postmodernism* 13).

There is no doubt that the early diagnosis of Hassan is very helpful for other critics and theorists who came after him. Nevertheless, some conclusions (as is mentioned in the previous paragraph) seem to be a bit hasty, provided that many characteristics are yet to be crystalized. Perhaps the subversive energy of the 1960s (liberating movements) have much to do with that. Further, to expect postmodernism to be a severe rupture of previous epochs is not accurate as many residues of previous cultures usually continue to lurk in new eras. We will visit this point again when discussing Jameson's model.

After approximately two decades of scrutinizing and discussing the new phenomenon, Hassan admits, in his introduction to *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture* (1987), which contains about ten of his previously published articles, that postmodernism is more diverse and complex than what he previously expected, and that postmodernism appears to have "less technological optimism, less utopianism, than I first adduced" (xvii). Although Hassan's honest confession implies an incomplete project (and even quick judgment), his early observations of the emergence of postmodernism deserved extra attention in this section as they, somehow, marked or paved the road for the future discussions of other critics who were influenced by him.

Hassan's influence is noticed in the works of other critics such as Leslie Fiedler and Susan Sontag who view the political revolts of the 1960s as "irreverent, rule-breaking, populist challenge to the received conventions of the Western aesthetic tradition" (Booker, *Strange TV* 33). Interestingly, this positive view of postmodernism as a reaction to modernism and/or its values is also adopted by other theorists, though sometimes from different angles.

Lyotard, for instance, perceives postmodernism as a rupture from modernism. According to him, postmodernism is a reaction to the failure of modernism in fulfilling its promises. It mistrusts modernism and its attempts to bring prosperity to humanity. Instead of peace, equality, and affluent life, World War II, nuclear weapons, cold war, and inequality are just some of the negative outcomes of science and modernity. People, especially the younger generation in Western societies (mostly in America and France) became disenchanted with the whole project of modernity. Liberation movements in America and uprisings at French universities were signs of this reaction (Best & Kellner, *Postmodern Theory* 23). Suspicion of all ideologies, philosophies, ideas, and narratives of modernism is the main characteristic of postmodern time, according to Lyotard, who was partly inspired by the liberating ideas in France (148). The incredulity toward metanarratives or the "breaking up of the grand Narratives" indicates a postmodern sense of rejection of any ideology or philosophy or approach that assumes its ability to know the *truth* and/or claim

to have the *sole* approach for the prosperity of humanity (Lyotard 15). Perhaps Lyotard's desire to distance himself from his earlier flirtation with Marxism played an important role in his opposition to all master narratives (Perry Anderson 27-29). It is worth noting here that the suspicion of any meta-narrative is adopted by poststructuralism (which is a "sub-variety of the postmodern") and is also observed by other thinkers like Daniel Bell, as discussed in *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (1960) (Jameson, *Postmodernism* xvi). Even with the shortcomings of Lyotard's view, his analysis helps in understanding the loss of utopian energy in the Jordanian society, as will be discussed in the fourth chapter.

Lyotard's view has been criticized by a number of critics like Perry Anderson and Jameson. In *The Origins of Postmodernity* (1998), Anderson discusses different issues related to postmodernism. He, for instance, traces the development of the term "postmodernism" since it was first coined by Federico de Onís in "a distant periphery (Latin America) rather than at the center of the cultural system of the time" (3). In his book, Anderson also discusses influential books in postmodern architecture like *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972) and in postmodern philosophy (and theory) like Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* (1979). According to him, although Lyotard's book is very important as "the first book to treat postmodernity as a general change of human circumstance," taking it "in isolation, as it usually is..." is very problematic since it was originally posited to discuss "the epistemological fate of the natural sciences...about which, as Lyotard confessed, his knowledge was less than limited" (25). In addition to that, Jameson maintains that Lyotard himself adopts a master narrative to build his argument (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 7).

The connection between the incredulity toward metanarratives, that was mentioned earlier, and the weakness of utopian imagination is discussed further by Anderson, who notices that some postmodernist critics, like Lyotard and Hassan, are suspicious of any utopian alternative to capitalism (Booker *Strange TV* 34). Terry Eagleton seconds that and points out that the suspicion of any alternative to capitalism

coincides with the defeat of the political left in the West (Booker, *Post-utopian Imagination* 192 & *Strange TV* 33 & 34).

Linda Hutcheon is very close to Lyotard and Hassan regarding the subversive nature of postmodernism which she associates with the liberating movements of the 1960s (*Politics* 10). According to her, the subversion of postmodernism is epitomized by, and lies in, its challenges to the representation of the past or, more precisely, “the presence of the past” that is usually constructed by authoritative narratives of history. Therefore, she views postmodernism as “fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical, and inescapably political” (*Poetics* 4).

Hutcheon focuses on fiction and coins the term “Historiographic metafiction” to explain the strategy of postmodern historical novels in highlighting their nature as made-up and constructed entities. The term combines two elements, namely metafiction and historical fiction. According to Hutcheon, historiographic metafiction is “those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages: *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, *Midnight’s Children*, *Ragtime*, *Legs, G.*, *Famous Last Words*” (*Poetics* 5). This type of literature is distinguished with at least four characteristics: “theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs,” “it always works *within* conventions in order to subvert them,” it is “both metafictionally self-reflexive and yet speaking to us powerfully about real political and historical realities,” and “it does seek to assert difference,” (i.e. to challenge conformity) but not to deny it nor to offer “an exact opposite” (4 & 5). It is worth noting that the last aspect, Hutcheon states, is an important distinctive feature that distinguishes postmodernism from modernist art which although it challenges conventions, like what postmodern art does, it offers a “structure” or a “master narrative” (5). In different ways, Hutcheon’s whole notion of postmodernism, which is adopted by many Arabic researchers, directly contradicts Jameson’s view, and holds major shortcomings, as it will be discussed later.

For Hutcheon, historiographic metafiction uses different metafiction techniques like self-reflexivity, irony, parody, and ambiguity to draw attention to themselves. Such a *narcissistic* approach of postmodern fiction, which draws the readers' attention to its artificial, made-up reality, is supposed to draw the attention of readers to the reality of historical accounts and narratives (i.e., their claim to "truth") as made up and constructed (13). Therefore, our knowledge about the past as documented in history books or represented in historical novels, which are traditionally considered as accurate representations of the past, is explored, tested, and challenged by the postmodern (15). In this sense, the past is questioned and "being rethought," but not denied. In other words, returning to the past in such works is not a nostalgic return. Rather, it is a critical revisiting and "a critical reworking" (4). According to Hutcheon, such revisiting of the past appears obviously in the works of minorities like that of Afro-American and women artists who use parody and irony "to challenge the male white tradition from within" (16).

Obviously, the political dimension of this view of postmodernism can be detected easily; and Hutcheon does not deny that. Indeed, she asserts that "[p]ostmodern art cannot but be political, at least in the sense that its representations (its images and stories) are anything but neutral, however "aestheticized" they may appear to be in their "parodic self-reflexivity" (*Politics* 3). Never less, Hutcheon asserts that although the postmodern is political, it offers "no effective theory of agency that enables a move into political *action*" (3).

Parody, according to Hutcheon, "is a perfect postmodern form, in some sense, for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies" (*Poetics* 11). For here, there are different ideas to challenge like "the idea of origin and originality," "subjectivity and creativity," "notions of perspective as the subject is no longer assumed to be a coherent, meaning-generating entity" (11). The challenge to the "notion of perspective" manifests, according to her, in multiplicity, provisionality, heterogeneity, decentering, and the blurring boundaries between things like theory and practice" (11-15).

Although Hutcheon argues that “all forms of contemporary art and thought offer examples of this kind of postmodernist contradiction,” she focuses on two types of art, namely novels and photography, to be practical and to avoid the generalization of other theorists (*Poetics* 1&5). Surprisingly, Hutcheon admits that commercial television is less subversive as it relies heavily on realist narrative and representation (*Politics* 10).

Indeed, the lack of effective subversion in television, which is widely considered as a postmodern media, creates a kind of discrepancy in Hutcheon’s point of view about postmodernism. In fact, limiting postmodernism to just a mere treatment or reaction to the past is a major deficiency that restricts her analysis to just a few symptoms of the phenomenon, while excluding other parts. According to Booker, commercial television “does not match her (Hutcheon’s) vision of postmodernism”; and therefore, it calls into question her whole vision of postmodernism” (*Strange TV* 33). Further, Hutcheon’s focus on the works of minorities as subversive (as in the case of blacks and feminists that challenge the male white tradition) does not seem to give convincing explanations when other apolitical (or playful) works are involved like those of non-left white males. Of course, finding political themes in literary works or reading art politically is, in many cases, a relative matter that is affected by many factors.

Another persistent point in this discussion is Hutcheon’s observation that the postmodernism of the 1970s and 1980s is “less oppositional” (to authority and conventions) and some of its “strategies” are less effective (*Politics* 10 & 12). In other words, in comparison to the oppositional power of the (postmodern) liberating movements of the 1960s, the later postmodern is losing its power or it is watered-down. Hutcheon considers the passing of time and the commercial exploitation responsible for the retreat of modernist and postmodernist charge (10 & 12). This inverse relationship between the progress of time and the political power of the postmodern makes one question the validity of Hutcheon’s argument, especially as time passes and postmodernism gets more intensified. Indeed, it would be more reasonable to claim that the positive correlation between the intensity of postmodernism, on one hand, and the “commercial

exploitation" (to use Hutcheon's terminology) and passing of time, on the other hand, is vivid evidence that postmodernism, in general, is not a subversive energy. Moreover, some exceptions like the liberating movements in the 1960s, were absorbed by postmodernism itself (as will be discussed later). This point might be supported by future studies on the Internet which will prove that this new phenomenon is, in general, less political or less subversive than commercial television and Hollywood films.

As a final point in this section, Hutcheon's argument is challenged by Eagleton's observation that since capitalism proves that it is "the most pluralistic order history has ever known," blurring boundaries and pluralism "are hardly subversive of capitalist authority" because it (capitalism) can "transgress and dismantle opposition" (Booker, *Strange TV* 32).

Brian McHale is another critic who investigated postmodern features in literary works in *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987). The main argument of his book is how postmodern fiction questions the ontology (the existence and reality of the world) by questioning and confusing the ontology of the story. This ontological poetics or "dominant," according to McHale, distinguishes postmodernism from modernism whose dominant is epistemology.¹ For him, postmodernism "is the successor of, or possibly a reaction against, the poetics of early twentieth-century modernism" (5).

In McHale's discussion, the "ontology" means the projected world in a novel or in a literary work. In postmodern fiction, he explains, the ontology is "a description of *a* universe, not of *the* universe" (27). That means, postmodern works might introduce another (alternative) universe or multiple universes or they might create worlds that exist and do not exist and/or characters that are alive and dead at the same time (34). The purpose of creating such contradictions in postmodern works is to confuse readers and make them re-think and question the existence and nature of their own ontology (10). According to McHale, what distinguishes postmodern authors is their persistent tendency to question the existence and the reality of the projected worlds in their works. Instead of drawing separate and distinct worlds/ontologies

as in some modernist works, postmodernist authors mix the worlds (of their works) and confuse the reader who, in many cases, cannot reach a solid conclusion concerning the collapsed ontologies of the work.

To discuss the strategies of postmodern fiction to foreground the ontology, McHale organizes the chapters of his book into three main sections to reflect three different dimensions (ways) of confusing the ontology. The dimensions are worlds, words, and constructions (language, style, voices, etc.). According to him, intentional grammar mistakes, mixing pronouns, glossaries, unusual spacing between words and sections, conversations between authors and characters, untrue history, anachronism, etc. are some of the strategies that are incorporated by postmodern fiction.

Blurring boundaries between ontologies, according to McHale, is one of the postmodern fiction strategies that is traced in different genres (like science fiction) when the boundaries between the two worlds (the real and the imagined) are crossed; and thus, the world of the reader is questioned.

Another strategy of the ontological confusion is noticed in magical realism where real things are mixed with unreal things and possible things are mixed with impossible things in a way that confuses and crushes the boundaries between what can happen in the real world and that which cannot happen and between “the normal and the paranormal” (75). For example, McHale points out that what is paranormal in *Midnight’s Children* (1981) and *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) seems to be (or pretends to be) normal and “the miraculoué comes to appear routine” (77). Such a strategy is noticed in many Arabic works including some of the Jordanian novels that are discussed in chapter two (Blurring Boundaries).

In the final section of the book, McHale seems to be optimistic about postmodernism and its literary techniques. He, for example, explains why he began to love postmodernism after he learned to “stop worrying” about it. Regardless of this love/hate issue, what is related to us here is the example that McHale gives to explain the nature of postmodernism. According to him, postmodern fiction is an “illusion-

breaking art” that “disturbs the air of reality by foregrounding the ontological structure of texts and of fictional worlds” (221). It is similar to “the experience of being aware that you are dreaming in the midst of the dream itself, *while* you are dreaming it” (221). In different ways, McHale’s understanding of the ontological poetics of postmodernist texts can be compared to Hutcheon’s view on metafictional techniques, though Hutcheon’s model has more political connotation than McHale’s.

Although McHale’s account of postmodern fiction is very helpful to the discussion of the study in the sense it accounts for the aesthetic and literary features, it is worth noting here that McHale does not show any serious interest to investigate the real reason behind changes in the literary custom in postmodern texts. In other words, instead of focusing on the reasons behind the emergence of postmodernism and/or explaining its nature, he partially focuses on its superficial manifestations. In some ways, McHale’s model itself reflects a postmodern dimension.

Jean Baudrillard is an important theorist whose view is related to this study in that it focuses on new technology that penetrated immensely the culture of the world (including the Jordanian culture) since the second half of the twentieth century. As a sociologist who, in general, studies societies and their cultures, a great deal of Baudrillard’s studies concentrated on society and semiology, or, more specifically, how the culture of a certain society is influenced by signs, images, and codes. Being influenced by Marxism, Baudrillard directs his research towards capitalism, consumer culture, and the subject-object relation. He maintains that as capitalism intensifies over time, it involves more elements and strategies to increase its power and expansion. Among the factors that played an important role in late capitalism is the proliferation of images and signs to promote consumer culture.

Baudrillard’s focus on the theory of signs and his disenchantment with Marxism, since the students uprising in France in 1968, made him depart from traditional Marxism in different ways, though the realm of his studies remained the same (i.e., consumer culture). Further, he attempts to introduce a new theory to

understand contemporary culture apart from the traditional class-struggle. For instance, Baudrillard announces the “end of political economy” and the “death” of use value and exchange value (*Symbolic Exchange* 8). Instead, he argues that the ‘sign value’ is the most important value in the last phase of capitalism.

For Baudrillard, over time there are three ways through which societies have been organized and shaped. While pre-modern societies are organized around symbolic exchange, modern societies are organized around production (here he agrees with Marxism).² What is important for us here is the third way of shaping societies in the late capitalism era. According to Baudrillard, postmodern societies are constructed and organized by the simulacrum. By simulacra (plural of simulacrum) he means signs, images, copies, codes, etc. that do not represent real things or have no original forms which they imitate. In Baudrillard’s words, “The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth—it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true” (*Simulations* 1).

Baudrillard starts his important book *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) with an illustrative “allegory of simulation”. In the Borges fable, he explains, the mapmakers of an empire draw a vast and detailed map that covers up exactly the territories that it represents. The Empire begins to decline in a way similar to the fraying of the map (i.e., in the same rate and spots/places). Over time, the distinction between the two (the real and the copy) becomes very difficult to discern (1). According to Baudrillard, in a more advanced stage of the simulation, all “referentials” are liquidated to the point that the real “never again will ... have the chance to produce itself,” rather, the real will be made after the image (2).

Baudrillard’s focus on simulation in his analysis of the postmodern culture is tightly connected to many aspects of our contemporary culture that is saturated in technology more than ever. According to Best and Kellner, Baudrillard highlights the role of technology in making “models and codes ...the primary determinants of social experience” and concludes that the excessive use of images in postmodern time leads

to a state or condition of *hyperreality* in which the image is “more real than real” and “the real is produced according to a model,” instead of producing the model after the real (*Postmodern Theory* 119). Such development in postmodern life endangers our reality since the “simulation threatens the difference between the “true” and the “false,” the “real” and the “imaginary” (*Simulacra* 3).

Baudrillard becomes more extreme in his analysis, with an obvious influence of Nietzsche, to the point that he claims that Disneyland, as an imaginary place, gives us the impression that the rest of the world around us is real while, in fact, “all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation” (*Simulacra and Simulation* 12). In a very provocative argument, Baudrillard cynically posits that in the current age of media and technology the Gulf War did not take place. In addition to the slight military combat that is attributed to the advanced technology of war, which reduces the actual soldiers’ engagement on the ground to remote-controlled weaponry, the representations of battles (images) surpass and take the place(s) of reality (*The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (1991).

The growing power of simulacra, according to Baudrillard, makes people more attached to images and signs than to the meanings (*Stanford Encyclopedia*). This perspective is, to an extent, close to Jameson’s concepts of “depthlessness” and the “waning of affect” that distinguishes postmodern culture (both will be discussed later). Indeed, Baudrillard’s weak focus on real players (economic factors and social groups) who are responsible for the process of simulacra/hyperreality and the lack of solid alternatives and/or social projects make Baudrillard’s analysis *itself* fit very well in the category of postmodern depthless culture more than in the category of modernist theories and projects. Further, the implosion between the ‘real’ and the ‘image’ in Baudrillard’s analysis appears to be applied also to his own writings that blur the boundaries between many fields and disciplines like sociology, semiology, philosophy, etc. In a sense, Baudrillard himself is a postmodern figure who deconstructs and shakes the foundations of disciplines and modernist ideas and emphasizes a rupture from modernism. As the Jordanian society is profoundly

immersed in television, cellphones, and the Internet culture, Baudrillard's analysis brings more avenues to our discussion. As will be discussed later, the emergence of commercial television in the US is considered an important sign of postmodernism.

Before presenting Jameson's theory, a few words should be said about Steven Best and Douglas Kellner whose three major works on postmodernism are commonly taught and circulated. In the first two books, Best and Kellner appear to offer an analysis of the emergence of postmodern characteristics and culture. While they analyze in *The Postmodern Turn* (1997) "mutations from the modern to the postmodern in society, culture, the arts, science, and politics" and try to show "key commonalities across these areas," they discuss in *Postmodern Theory* (1991) "the genesis and trajectory of the discourse of the postmodern in philosophy and social theory (*Postmodern Adventure* 5). In the latter work, they call for a "multiperspectival approach that employs the best elements of modern and postmodern positions and politics" (5).

The "multiperspectivist approach" was eventually discussed by Best and Kellner in the *Postmodern Adventure: Science, Technology, and Cultural Studies at the Third Millennium* (2001). According to them, this approach avoids the shortcomings of previous postmodern theories because of the complexity of postmodernism, i.e., it "is a contradictory amalgam of progressive and regressive, positive and negative, and thus highly ambivalent phenomena, all difficult to chart and evaluate" (10). In other words, the complexity, swift changes, continuities, and discontinuities of postmodernism necessitate a need for a fresh theory that accounts for all aspects of this new phenomenon. The fresh theory that Best and Keller suggest to account for the "so highly complex" contemporary developments is a "multi-dimensional" and "multiperspectival" theory "that combines historical narrative, critical social theory, and cultural mappings" (13). As they stand against the absolute rupture of postmodernism, they adopt a strategy that benefits from both modernism and postmodernism, (i.e., both/and instead of "either/or" strategy) that is connected to the logic of modernism (6).

Adopting such a strategy that accounts for the “dialectics of the present” is reflected in the title of the book that combines between “the Third Millennium” and “Adventure,” (i.e., the premodern religious connotation of the former and the futuristic sense of the latter). This oscillation between two eras become even more vivid when the authors maintain that we are in a zone/interim between the modern and the postmodern, something similar to the Renaissance that “was a long period between the premodern and the modern” (9 & 12). According to them, this current “interim is between the modern era and a new era, the characteristics of which we do not fully know” (12).

The lack of full comprehension of the postmodern adventure does not prevent Best and Kellner from discussing the major characteristics of our time. They, for example, try to use the titles of their chapters to reflect the main categories of such characteristics: War (chapter 2), Science (3), technology (4), and society, culture, and politics spring forth (5). Among the many features that are discussed are the emergence of the postmodern adventure during World War II and the implosion of boundaries, i.e., the real and the artificial, humans and technology, and natural reality and simulation. Among the many other features are the proliferating image and media culture, advanced technology, deterioration of environment, the growth of the global arms market, and the dystopian feeling. Best and Kellner further discuss globalization and the disappearance of cultures, questioning the reality of humans, and the “contradicting forces” such as the assault against grand historical narratives, belief in science (instead of god), secularism and breaking from tradition and the past, a return to tradition, and a upsurge of religious faith.

Best and Kellner disapprove of Lyotard’s view and the postmodern attack on meta-narratives. They call for a postmodern theory and argue for its importance (13). They “advocate a sociohistorical approach that theorizes the interaction and coevolutionary developments of science, technology, capitalism, society, and human individuals....” (14). They maintain that the “transgressing boundaries between fields [is] a productive aspect of the postmodern turn in both theory and arts” (15). Indeed, Best’s and Kellner’s interdisciplinary view is another manifestation of postmodernism in the field of theory.

But Best and Kellner do not, in fact, propose any specific theory. Rather, they offer “a mapping, not *the* mapping” of the contemporary world. They also argue that such mapping requires “sustained revision and updating” (15). The purpose of Best’s and Kellner’s project (i.e., the need of a “transdisciplinary” theory) is to face capitalism. Convinced that postmodern adventure is “a contested field with competing groups struggling” and that capitalism has its “own reconstructive project,” Best and Kellner maintain that “it is necessary to keep up with and counter capitalism’s ever-changing tactics of conquest and domination with alternative projects of radical democracy” (274). Although the authors consider “Karl Marx’s call for a “ruthless criticism of everything” an appropriate slogan for such a project, they express their disappointment with the lack of any current “concrete action” that stems from it because it is currently limited to a mere academic critique (274).

Best’s and Keller’s project does not offer, so far, a solid account or analysis of postmodernism. It does not even believe that we are in postmodernism yet. Such gaps appear to promote a “wait-and-see” approach that does not quench the thirst of curious researchers who are eager to scrutinize new phenomena, nor does it fit the scholarly nature of research that evolves usually with changes around it, instead of being put on hold waiting for more changes. Further, to consider other approaches that strive to understand the changing world around us *incomplete*, under the impression that the world is still changing and that a future account will be more accurate, is a weak argument. Indeed, predicting future changes based on a deep understanding of late (and current) changes is more logical than waiting for future changes to account for the current condition. One is even tempted to claim here that Best’ and Keller’s approach will never come to light if the same strategy of wait-and-see is used again when future changes take place.

Yet, the approach that Best and Keller suggest seems very interesting for least for two reasons, namely for its holistic nature and for its call for an on-going revision/update. In fact, to broaden the scope of postmodern studies in order to scrutinize all changes (around the world) and to update our perspectives about it, are very important aspects for any successful approach that attempts to illuminate such a

complex phenomenon. In different ways, the discussion in this study is a response to these two suggestions. By engaging the Jordanian (and Arabic) novel and culture in the discussion of postmodernism, this study is expected to bring new perspectives and open new avenues to the current discussion of the postmodern.

Jameson's Theory of Postmodernism:

Perhaps Fredric Jameson is the most important thinker who devoted a great deal of his work to critique postmodernism aesthetically and ideologically. Contrary to other theorists like Lyotard and Hutcheon who consider postmodernism as a reaction to modernism, Jameson argues that postmodernism is a continuation of modernity rather than a break from it. More precisely, Jameson, who once wrote "Always historicize!", maintains that postmodernism is the result of another (historical) stage or phase of capitalist modernity. In other words, postmodernism "is not the cultural dominant" of a "new" social order. Rather, it is a mere "reflex" of a "systematic modification of capitalism" in which the shreds of realism and modernism continue to live on (xii).

Based on Ernest Mandel's economic model (market, monopoly, and postindustrial) which was posited in the 1970s, Jameson argues that capitalism is now in its postindustrial era which is distinguished by some features like its multinational corporations, its globalization, its blurring boundaries between low/high culture and between disciplines, and its mass consumption/commodification. According to him, postmodernism is the culture or, more precisely, the cultural logic of the last stage of capitalism (i.e., "late capitalism"). The connection between the economic and cultural dimensions is obvious in the alternative titles of his very influential book *Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late* (1991) that reflects the commodification of everything including culture and cultural products. In addition to some modified versions of earlier essays, *Postmodernism* contains new articles. It is worth mentioning here that although Jameson uses the term "postmodernism" widely to discuss this phenomenon and to communicate his ideas about

it with others, he maintains that “postmodernism” is an ambiguous, vague, and debatable concept (xiii & *Cultural Turn 1*).

In his introduction to *Postmodernism*, Jameson expresses his disappointment with the inability of the current (postmodern) age “to think historically” (ix). Drawing on Lukacs’s view on historical novels, he emphasizes the loss of history/historicity in this age and the difficulty to posit any theory to describe the postmodern in the rapidly changing present (i.e., “a schizophrenic present”) (xii). Yet, as a modernist, Jameson continues to use a dialectical historical approach to diagnose postmodernism.

In general, Jameson draws a major line between ‘modernism’ and postmodernism. According to him, while modernism is still connected to the beautiful past of “nature” and “being,” postmodernism is what we have “when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good” (ix). The completion process, he explains, starts after World War II, especially with the “afterwar shortages of consumer goods and spare parts” and the “radical break” toward the end of the 1950s and the early 1960s (xx & 1). However, he maintains that postmodernism “crystallized” in North America, which is the leading postmodern force, in 1973, for example, “the oil crisis, the end of the international gold standard, for all intents and purposes the end of the great wave of ‘wars of national liberation’ and the beginning of the end of traditional communism” (xx & xxi).

Jameson sees a major difference between modernist and postmodernist arts. According to him, what was subversive, explosive, and dangerous in modernist art which, in many cases, attempted to undermine the Victorian values, taboos, and conventions (“of polite society”), is “no longer weird,” “repulsive,” and subversive (*The Cultural Turn 18*). Instead, it has become normal, like the works of Joyce and Picasso who “have become classics and now look rather realistic to us” (19). According to Jameson, “even if contemporary art has all the same formal features as the older modernism, it has still shifted its position fundamentally within our culture” (19). In other words, even if some postmodern features appear in previous

modernist works, they should not be considered as postmodernist until their "social position" shifts from rejection to acceptance. Such a shift occurs in postmodern time due to the "canonization and academic institutionalization of the modern movement" in the late 1950s (*Postmodernism* 4). Further, for Jameson, the commodification of postmodern art and cultural products is a distinctive feature that distinguishes them from previous art, (like "the productions of the older high modernism"), which was not "commercially successful" (*Cultural Turn* 19).

Jameson began to be interested in postmodernism in the late 1970s and early 1980s through his experience with architecture (*Postmodernism 2 & Modernism to Postmodernism*). According to him, architecture "was undergoing a profound transformation" from modernism to postmodernism (*To Postmodernism*). The core of such change is "the effacement ... of the older (essentially high-modernist) frontier between high culture and so-called mass or commercial culture, and the emergence of new kinds of texts infused with the forms, categories, and contents of that very culture industry so passionately denounced by all the ideologues of the modern" (*Postmodernism* 2). From an architectural perspective, Jameson explains, the demolishing of the Pruitt-Igoe housing complex in St. Louis, Missouri in 1972 is considered as an emblem or an "iconic picture of the end of modernism" (*ibid.*). Although Jameson's investigation/analysis was triggered by architecture, it extended beyond that (*Postmodernism* 2). To formulate a comprehensive view, Jameson maintains that postmodern transformations and changes in society are not limited to architecture and literature only, but they take place at different realms and levels of social life (*Modernism to Postmodernism*).

Jameson does not diagnose postmodernism as a "stylistic description" that focuses on a specific style. Rather, he views it as a "periodizing hypothesis" or a "historical periodization" that includes different styles, other cultural dimensions, and historical "genealogy" (3). Such a strategy, according to him, must be adopted in every cultural analysis. In other words, he treats postmodernism as a "cultural dominant" that "allows for the presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate, features" (4).

It is worth noting here that Jameson, later on, expresses his preference to use “postmodernity” as a historical period over “postmodernism” to avoid the stylistic connotation of the suffix “-ism” since the new phenomenon, he explains, does not adopt a specific style (like in modernism, romanticism, etc.) (*Modernism to Postmodernism*).

In the introduction to *Postmodernism*, Jameson criticizes the deficiencies of other approaches and theorists, like poststructuralism, Lyotard, and Hutcheon, before he proposes his own model to explain the new phenomenon. He mentions two major features of postmodernism, namely, the domination of “a world capitalist system” that is distinguished from “the older imperialism” and “the emergence of new form of business organizations (multinational and transnational)” (xviii). He further mentions more features that are worthy of quoting here like:

the new international division of labor, a vertiginous new dynamic in international banking and the stock exchanges (including the enormous Second and Third World debt), new forms of media interrelationship (very much including transportation systems such as containerization), computers and automation, the flight of production to advanced Third World areas, along with all the more familiar social consequences, including the crisis of traditional labor, the emergence of yuppies, and gentrification on a now-global scale. (xix)

Although Jameson mentions the above features, he reminds us that his focus is on “the nature of postmodern texts” more than on its characteristics (xvii).

Postmodern texts, according to Jameson, reflect the impact of late capitalism on the subject. According to him, postmodernism is centered on “a new depthlessness” which “finds its prolongation both in contemporary ‘theory’ and in a whole new culture of the image or the simulacrum” (*Postmodernism* 6). This depthlessness manifests in a “weakness in the aesthetic feeling/expression” (11). To clarify his point, Jameson compares two paintings, namely Van Gogh's *Peasant Shoes* and Andy Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes*. According to him, while the (modernist) *Peasant Shoes* painting does “talk to us” about the peasants' suffering and toil, the (postmodernist) *Diamond Dust Shoes* painting does not “speak to us at all” (6-8). Rather, Jameson elaborates, it is more distinguished with its “Flatness... superficiality”(ibid.). It is

centered on commodification without any deep “hermeneutic gesture” (9). Similarly, postmodern cultural products, according to Jameson, lack subversive energy and have strong commodity fetishism.

For Jameson, the postmodern depthlessness echoes the shallowness and psychic fragmentation of the (postmodern) subject (artist) who used to be creative in the past (modernism and before). Such a subject in postmodern time, Jameson explains, becomes unable to establish his unique style (that is full of energy and depth) because the aesthetic of expression (of modernism) has “vanished away”. As a result of this lack of creativity, the subject becomes more dependent on other art products (usually from the past) and no longer produces new art but begins to recycle previous art (11). In other words, postmodern artists resort to borrowing from previous styles of modernity and earlier to construct their works. This type of borrowing (pastiche) is one of the main characteristics of postmodernist art works.

The pastiche, according to Jameson, is a type of parody; but contrary to regular parody that was known to artists in the past, it is a mere “random cannibalization of all the styles of the past” without “satiric impulse” or sense of humor (17). In other words, it is a “blank parody” that is compared to “a statue with blind eyeballs” (17). Hence, postmodern art is playful and carries no political agenda or social value.

In addition to pastiche, Jameson argues that the postmodern image culture (simulacrum) disrupts the historical sense of the past. In postmodern culture where the temporal changes into spatial, the extremely quick changes of the present and the pastiche weaken the ability of the subject in the postmodern era to feel the past, or “to organize its past and future into coherent experience,” which is essential to project any utopian project (25). To Jameson, this “loss of historicity” is another symptom of postmodern culture that decenters the subject (i.e., “death” of the subject) and renders him schizophrenic, “free-floating and impersonal,” as the individual monad of modernism, who used to feel, express himself, create his own style, and is conscious of himself and his surroundings, has dissolved (x & 15).

The “disappearance of the individual subject” or, more specifically, the inability of the postmodern subject to create a personal style or to realize the “private temporality” results in “the waning of affect,” which is “the waning of the great high modernist thematics of time and temporality” (16). In the postmodern era, cultural products (like historical movies) isolate the fragmented subject from the past by way of stripping the past from its historical sequence (context) and presenting it in a spatial form (like the flat screen of a television). Such an approach that weakens/paralyzes the historical sense of a subject does *not* engage the past with the present nor does it help the subject to construct a historical narrative. Rather, it reduces history to mere images (like recreational films) that become commodities in themselves to satisfy the “addiction” of the postmodern consumer society (18).

In this new culture of images, in which “the past as 'referent' finds itself gradually bracketed, and then effaced altogether, leaving us with nothing but texts,” nostalgia for the past is reduced to a mere “stylistic connotation, conveying 'pastness' by the glossy qualities of the image, and.... by the attributes of fashion” that does not reflect a real “representation of historical content” (18 & 19). In other words, instead of having a genuine nostalgia, which reflects a “desperate attempt to appropriate a missing past,” the past becomes “a vast collection of images” or, more specifically, simulacra that have no originals and are not motivated by genuine nostalgia (19). This lack of historicity, according to Jameson, is not only restricted to the past. Rather, it is also observed in feeling the present time that is diminished by the rapid changings of the present(s) and by the proliferation of “aesthetic signs” and images that “distance the officially contemporary image from us in time” (20 & 21). Such changes prevent us from “experiencing history in some active way” and make us “increasingly incapable of fashioning representations of our own current experience” (ibid.).

This sense of schizophrenia, in its allegorical meaning, in postmodern time is echoed in the subject’s difficulty to map his location in postmodern space (buildings). Jameson gives the example of Westin Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles to illustrate his point. According to him, the mutation of the postmodern object

(space/building) is not accompanied “by any equivalent mutation in the subject” (38). Based on that, the subject who has “not kept pace with that evolution” is unable to navigate himself in postmodern spaces (like Westin Bonaventure Hotel) (39). According to Jameson, the subject’s failure to locate or to cognitively map itself in its surroundings stands as a symbol (and example) of the “incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects” (44).

Jameson also discusses new technology and machine power in postmodernism. According to him, technological development that began since the industrial revolution is associated with the development of capitalism. Adopting Ernest Mandel’s model, Jameson maintains that since the 1940s, the “multinational” and “consumer” capitalism is distinguished with the “machine production of electronic and nuclear-powered apparatuses” (35). In this era, the “aesthetic representation” of new machinery, like computers and television, becomes weaker and harder (36/37). Although postmodern architecture appears to be more creative in representing such “machines of reproduction,” Jameson suggests that Cyberpunk, as a quintessential postmodern genre, has the potential to represent postmodern technology more accurately, in the sense of ambiguity and complex “conspiracies of autonomous” (38).³ Such representation, with its “enormous and threatening” connotation, echoes the postmodern world system of “transitional corporate realities” and “global paranoia” (38).

Jameson chooses *Ragtime* (1975) to discuss postmodern (historical) novels. According to him, E. L. Doctorow’s novel does not celebrate subversion, as claimed by Hutcheon, but it laments the defeat of the Left in the early twentieth century (21-25). Jameson concludes his discussion of the novel with an important paragraph that summarizes his position on postmodern cultural production, in general, and on postmodern historical novels in particular. He states that the,

historical novel can no longer set out to represent the historical past; it can only “represent” our ideas and stereotypes about that past (which thereby at once becomes “pop history”). Cultural

production is thereby driven back inside a mental space which is no longer that of the old monadic subject but rather that of some degraded collective "objective spirit": it can no longer gaze directly on some putative real world, at some reconstruction of a past history which was once itself a present; rather, as in Plato's cave, it must trace our mental images of that past upon its confining walls. If there is any realism left here, it is a "realism" that is meant to derive from the shock of grasping that confinement and of slowly becoming aware of a new and original historical situation in which we are condemned to seek History by way of our own pop images and simulacra of that history, which itself remains forever out of reach. (25)

What is important for us in this paragraph is not only the difficulty of constructing an accurate representation of the (real) past, but the emphasis on our inaccurate projection of that past that is constructed by our stereotypes (about it) and by random eclectic images (25 & 31). As a result of such "schizophrenic" representation, the past becomes a mere commodity that is subject to change and alteration to please thirsty consumers whose unsatisfied thirst for the entertaining pop culture (here, pop history) and "image addiction" will never be quenched (25/46). Although this appears to be another negative side of the postmodern culture, Jameson maintains that one can also see a positive dimension in it. According to him, postmodern cultural products create a certain type of "euphoria" (i.e., "a high, an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity") that are attractive and enjoyable (28). This, in a broader sense, echoes Jameson's view of capitalism as "at one and the same time the best thing that has ever happened to the human race, and the worst" (47).

As a final word, Jameson seems to be unsatisfied with the cultural products and theory of late capitalism for at least two reasons, namely the lack of subversive energy and the absence of solid alternatives (or even a specific style). To him, having subversive energies and an alternative program are very necessary to envision a utopian alternative to capitalism. According to him, as we are all now "submerged" in late capitalist culture that has reached an unprecedented level of density to the point that it abolished any "critical distance" and swallowed "pre-capitalist enclaves," it is very difficult to offer a complete "theoretical basis for understanding a situation in which we all" are in (48/ 49). In other words, although it seems difficult to grasp postmodernism completely without having a critical distance, let alone without using its tools, Jameson offers his own model depending on the potentiality of "the earlier features of the

postmodern” which have already emerged to account for this phenomenon at large (49). Jameson ends his discussion with some hope that a “new political art” will achieve a “breakthrough” and will bring about an “unimaginable new mode of representing” postmodernism (54).

It is obvious that Jameson’s analysis of postmodernism that accounts for its nature and characteristics like pastiche, blurring boundaries, the waning of affect, loss of historicity, etc. illustrates his astonishing ability to successfully incorporate different elements and perspectives in his holistic model. He, for instance, involves different approaches and views such as Walter Benjamin’s perspective on the decline of the “aura” of artwork in the age of mechanical reproduction; Lukács’s view on the loss of historicity in historical novels; Plato’s conception of the simulacrum; Baudrillard’s perspective on simulacra; and Lyotard’s incredulity of meta-narratives in his holistic approach.

Undoubtedly, adopting Jameson’s comprehensive approach which views postmodernism holistically and dialectically is more accurate (and compelling) than other approaches that limit their understanding to one single aspect or symptom of postmodernism. The holistic nature of such an approach gives it even more credit, as it is supposed to be far away from error that is usually associated with any single approach that treats one or two symptoms solely. Further, it appears that Jameson’s wide-ranging analysis proved to be very reliable to analyze the postmodern changes that emerged after it was posited. This tempts one to say that it is less likely to fall short to account for future characteristics that are yet to appear. This prediction becomes more likely to be true when someone notices the compatibility and accuracy of this approach, which was posited before decades, to describe consistently the current era. Indeed, the increasing intensity of capitalism over a number of years coincides with an increase in the density of postmodern characteristics that have been suggested by Jameson. Even with the expansion of the television culture and the proliferation of electronic devices and the Internet, Jameson’s account appears to be more accurate than ever. To illustrate this point and to add more depth to the discussion of postmodernism, Booker’s account of postmodern television is going to be mentioned here with some other related issues.

Booker's Practical Updates:

Although Booker tackles postmodernism from different angles in different works such as *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War* (2001) and *The Post-Utopian Imaginations* (2002), the focus here is on his discussion of television programming and culture. In *Strange TV: Innovative Television Series from The Twilight Zone to The X-Files* (2002), Booker argues that (American) commercial television is the "quintessential postmodernist cultural form" that emerged in the 1950s, as the most important mass media, when most critics were "canonizing modernism as the dominant paradigm of high cultural aesthetics" (22). Booker adopts Jameson's model, as a framework, and argues that although some television programs have subversive energies, they are, in fact, commodities that promote economic consumption and political confinement (3). The reason behind the weakening of the subversive energies of such programs (i.e., waning of their affect) lies in being in the context of the commercial television, which is, in its current status, inherently a medium of consumerism, controlling masses, and numbing the minds of its audience (ibid.).

After comparing television with the novel, as a bourgeois genre, Booker concludes that television is "a crucial factor in the gradual transition in the second half of the twentieth century between modernism and postmodernism as dominant modes of aesthetic innovation in American culture" (22). He also maintains that "realism remains the dominant aesthetic mode of all postmodernist culture, which consistently violates the conventions of realism, but which thereby depends upon those conventions (and on audience familiarity with and expectation of them) in order to achieve its effects"(24). This explains Booker's usage of "strange" in the title of his book to describe television (24).

In an important move, Booker suggests a media-based model of Novel-Film-Television instead of the conventional historical model of Realism-Modernism-Postmodernism to discuss cultural phenomena (44). According to him, as film once supplanted (and swallowed) the novel, television supplanted (and swallowed)

film and became the "most powerful cultural medium in America" (ibid.). For Booker, postmodernism began to form in the "long 1950s" (around 1946-1964) by many local and global changes that distinguish it from previous eras. Booker discusses these factors and characteristics with some details in the introduction to *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War*. It suffices us here to mention a few of them briefly. According to him, the "long 1950s" is the era of the Cold War, anti-Soviet paranoia, "Golden Age" of science fiction genre, nuclear fear and faith in science (i.e. doubleness of utopia and dystopia), canonization of modernist art, defeat of the left, and the increasing hegemony of capitalism. In addition to that, Booker discusses more features like the loss of utopia and historicity, suspicion in master-narratives, schizo-texts, simulacrum and pastiche, blurring boundaries, social and human rights movements, standardization and homogenization, alienation and routinization, and transnational corporations. Interestingly, Booker explores more postmodern characteristics that are tightly related to the discussion of postmodernism in Jordan like the global modernization and capitalism and the diminishing distance between the cultures of the First and Third World.

One of the issues that Booker raises in his discussion of television is subversion vs. conformity in postmodernism or, more specifically, its cultural products. After discussing the position of Jameson, Eagleton, and Teresa L. Ebert, Booker concludes that postmodernism, in general, and television programming, in particular, is less subversive and more ludic, to use Ebert's term (*Strange TV* 45). He further argues that, although television appears to be subversive in its very nature of creativity and violating conventions, which in its modernist sense expresses resistance and challenge, it became more ludic over time (i.e., from the 1950s to the end of the century (48). It is worth noting here that Booker devotes a whole book (*The Post-Utopian Imaginations*) to illustrate that the emergence of postmodernism goes hand-in-hand with the retreat of the American Utopian imagination (even utopian energies in the leftist novels) which became "extremely weak" in the "long 1950s" (29). He does not forget to remind us that utopian energy is crucial to any type of subversion or resistance to capitalism (195).

With regard to the modernist utopian and subversive impulses that continue to exist in postmodernist works and culture, Booker maintains that such forces lose their energy due to at least three reasons. First, the exhaustion and ineffectiveness of modernist “subversive” techniques which were intended to defy bourgeois culture (*Mushroom Clouds* 23). Such forces, he explains, have been normalized over time, even though they sometimes take “more radical forms” in postmodern works (*Strange TV* 32). Second, drawing on Raymond Williams’s argument that “cultural and historical phenomena do not appear (or disappear) overnight,” Booker maintains that some of the residues of a previous culture (modernism) continue to live, though in a weaker form and rate, in the next culture (i.e., postmodernism) (*Post-Utopian* 193). Such residues continue to live even, after decades, in the twentieth century (*Strange TV* 40). Third, Booker agrees with other critics, like Andreas Huyssen, that “advertising and other forms of commodified culture” (e.g., commodification of art) also played an important role in absorbing all political energies (*Strange TV* 38). Booker gives a practical example of the 1960s avant-garde art whose subversive power was absorbed by capitalism and “appropriated as popular entertainment with no critical power” in the 1970s (38/39). Indeed, Booker’s argument that the “hegemony [of late capitalist culture] does not imply *total* control” reminds us with Jameson’s conclusion that a number of “competing impulses” (i.e., conformity and subversion) continue to coexist in postmodern works, though their subversive side is absorbed by capitalist culture (*Strange TV* 39 & 40).

The “competing impulses” do not only exist in cultural products of postmodernism. Rather, they reside in the capitalist culture itself (*Strange TV* 39 & *Post-Utopian* 195). Similar to the resistance of some pockets (like marginal groups) in local American culture, anti-capitalist forces (as in the Middle East) continue to resist the global capitalist culture (*Strange TV* 40). Booker concludes his discussion in *Post-Utopian Imagination* by encouraging critics to search for such impulses in postmodern works instead of lamenting the lack of resistance. He further expresses his hope that such subversive impulses might evolve and join other resisting forces of the Third World to “produce new constellations of utopian ideas” (195/6).

Finally, in one of his recent studies, Booker discusses Hollywood's films in the context of postmodernism. According to him, postmodernism "has gained a reputation for complexity and inaccessibility" (*Postmodern Hollywood* vii). Further, as postmodernism "is still evolving," he explains, it is "difficult to define" (vii & xii). Although Booker's main focus is on American films, he also discusses some other postmodern films (like those of the Mexican director Alejandro González Iñárritu) which "are more politically motivated than is typical of American postmodern films" (xvii). The main postmodernist characteristics that Booker addresses in this work are fragmentation, nostalgia, and pastiche. In the conclusion, he focuses on the creativity and the commodification of postmodern art, the loss of individual style, and the lack of effective utopian alternative.

Focusing on the recent changes of global capitalism, Booker and Isra Daraiseh expand some of Jameson's theorization of postmodernism to include the Middle East in *Consumerist Orientalism: The Convergence of Arab and American Popular Culture in the Age of Global Capitalism* (2019). According to them, with the unprecedented transnational flow of culture in the age of global capitalism, many aspects of Arab culture became immensely saturated by Western (especially American) popular culture, such as popular music and television programming. This recent study is extremely important to this discussion for at least two reasons. First, it explores the gradual growth of postmodernist manifestations and characteristics in the Arab world, and this provides us with a practical evidence that postmodernism is surging strongly in the Jordanian (and Arab) culture. Second, by suggesting a new perspective and description (consumerist Orientalism) to replace the obsolete "Orient vs. Occident" dichotomy, it supports indirectly the argument of this study that the old categorization of the Jordanian novel as post-colonial has to be updated.

Before moving to the next chapters that explore postmodern features in Jordanian novels, the position of Terry Eagleton on postmodernism should be pointed out, briefly, as it is related tightly to the works of Jameson and Booker. In *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (1996) Eagleton differentiates between postmodernism and postmodernity. For him, postmodernity "is a style of thought which is suspicious of classical

notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity," while postmodernism is "a form of contemporary culture that is distinguished with its "depthless, decentred, ungrounded, self-reflexive, playful, derivative, eclectic, pluralistic art which blurs the boundaries between 'high' and 'popular' culture, as well as between art and everyday experience" (vii).

Apparently, Eagleton is disenchanted with postmodernism which, according to him, gained much of its strength from the defeat of the political left by the end of 1960s and the disappearance of "any 'other' to the prevailing system [and the absence of] any utopic space beyond it" (18). In other words, Eagleton maintains that postmodernism is ludic (not subversive) because it is not adopting a serious socialist project that provides any utopian alternative (*Post-Utopian* 192). Even with the existence of some subversive impulses in postmodernism, Eagleton states that since "capitalism is the most pluralistic order history has ever known," it dismantles and absorbs postmodernist subversive energies that potentially come from postmodernist boundary crossing, pluralism, etc. (*Illusions* 133 *Strange TV* 32).

In sum, Booker's analysis of American television and consumerist Middle Eastern culture seems to provide a practical update of Jameson's theory of postmodernism that was posited previously. As television (and the Internet) culture became dominant in Jordanian (and Arab) society since the 1990s, the media-based model (novel-film-television) that is suggested by Booker appears to be very helpful in analyzing the convergence between American and Jordanian cultures and the spread of postmodernism out of the Western societies.

Chapter Two: Blurring Boundaries and Disrupting Hierarchies

Unlike the elitist modernism, postmodernism tends to blur boundaries between high and low culture and between genres and disciplines (Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism* 152 & *Cultural Turn* 2). This is attributed to several factors, such as the “democratization of culture” and the “psychic fragmentation” of the postmodern subject (*Postmodernism* 152/ 90). According to Jameson, the psyche of the postmodern subject becomes fragmented under the impact of the late capitalist culture (such as, its quick changes, images, technology, and consumerism) that flattens his historical sense and weakens his creativity. In addition, the negative outcome of modernity (wars, inequality, fear of the machine, etc.) appears, along with some other factors, to contribute to the postmodernist erosion of boundaries as they play an important role in the postmodern crisis in belief, the disenchantment in totalizing metanarratives, and the collapse of belief in binary logic. Among the postmodernist characteristics that reflect such changes is blurring boundaries between established entities, such as high/low arts, culture/economy, fantasy/reality, genres/disciplines, and fiction/nonfiction.

As the Jordanian culture is gradually subsumed in the global culture, this chapter attempts to explore the erosion of boundaries in Jordanian novels and compares them to other Arabic and non-Arab novels. The main categories of blurring boundaries in this chapter are related to the narrative, genres, and ontologies. For example, in Samiha Khreis’s *Khashkhash* [Opium Poppy] (2000) and Hashim Gharaybah’s *AlMaqamah AlRamliyyah* [The Sandy Maqamah] (1998) the lines between narrator/character and fantasy/reality are blurred. In Khreis’s *Dafatir AlToofan* [Diary of the Flood], Sahar Malas’s *Matarih* [Places] (2013), and Muhammad AlQaisi’s *AlHadeqa AlSirriyyah* [The Secret Garden] (2002) the lines between different genres are crossed. The discussion extends to include more novels and more examples of boundary crossing.

Although Jameson’s model of postmodernism is adopted as a framework, some other views such as Linda Hutcheon’s, Brian McHale’s, and Jean Baudrillard’s are also involved in the discussion to expand the

study's scope and depth. Among the topics that are also covered in some detail are metafiction techniques, the political dimension, the commodification of the Jordanian novel, magical realism, and Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of dialogism.

Culture and Economy: the Commodification of the Jordanian Novel:

The commodification of the Jordanian (and Arabic) novel itself may reflect its postmodernist turn. According to Jameson, "even if contemporary art has all the same formal features as the older modernism, it has still shifted its position fundamentally within our culture" (*Cultural Turn* 19). When Jameson says "shifted its position" he means the commodification of cultural products in postmodern time. Similar to Arabic television channels, Jordanian (and Arabic) novels proliferated, shifted their position, and became very prominent in the market as commodities, though they continue to express a number of conventional features.

In addition to the noticeable growth in the fiction market in Jordan and other Arab countries, that reflect the role of the economic factor in promoting even poorly written novels, the adaptation of novels in television programs and films, the proliferation of commercial publishing houses, and the multiple prizes for fiction that emerged in the Arab World, (such as The International Prize for Arabic Fiction and The Katara Prize for the Arabic Novel) expedited the commodification of the Arabic novel (Mujahid 331 & Zaidan). Although such prizes were originally created to recognize genuine aesthetic achievements, they have degraded the aesthetic position of the Arabic novel. According to Jordanian critic Ibrahim Khalel, the fiction prizes in the Arab world are partially responsible for the proliferation of hundreds of immature novels which (although they do not deserve to be called novels due to their poor language and structure) compete for these prizes that are distributed in some cases to please authors and committee members, rather than to promote genuine works. For instance, around 1114 novels were nominated in 2016 for The Katara Prize (*To Where?*). According to Zaidan, many publishing houses attempt to increase their profit by

printing any available novel (regardless of quality or literary value) hoping that some of these novels will win one of these prizes (*Commodification of Literature*).⁶

Even reputable novelists complain of the commodification of novels. For instance, in the Jordanian novel *Khashkhash* [Opium Poppy] (2000), the narrator expresses her jealousy of a novelist who appears on television talking about her novel that recently won a literary prize. The narrator thinks that the winning novel has nothing special to qualify it to win the prize or to be promoted by interviewing the author on television. Out of jealousy, the narrator decides to write her own novel (23). Although this shallow competition between lay-people to write novels, win prizes, and appear on television might be considered as a sign of the democratization of art, it reflects several postmodern features: the commodification of the Arabic novel; the power and influence of television as a mass-media; and the erosion of boundaries between genres (novel/TV), the writings of skillful novelists and amateurs, or between professionalism and unprofessionalism. In other words, winning thousands of dollars became the motive for many people to write paperback novels that are circulated widely between people regardless of their aesthetic quality. Some of these novels, however, have become even more immersed in popular culture after they have been adapted in movies.

The Opium Poppy:

Samiha Khreis's *Opium Poppy* (2000) is a typical example of a Jordanian novel that blurs boundaries and disturbs hierarchies between different elements such as fiction/nonfiction, fantasy/reality, narrator/author, and author/character. The novel is about a female narrator who is haunted by a strange character that grows out of an opium poppy plant. The novel is confusing in different ways as it does not follow regular novelistic conventions and it mixes characters.

The story begins with a nameless character who is driving her car before she stops suddenly to buy two green plants to decorate her apartment. Before she leaves, a man gifts her an extra plant that has a lilac

flower. Later, the weird plant begins to form a repulsive lump of pollen/seeds that produces a very tiny girl (the size of a hand). The plant's girl (or plant's daughter) grows up in different shapes (lizard, woman, and half-fish-woman (fish)). She begins to haunt the narrator and converses with her about writing a novel about her (the creature). The fish-woman becomes more involved in the life of the narrator and she begins to appear to her while she is awake or sleeping. Tired of her, the narrator decides to return the plant. But she cannot find the man who gave it to her, nor does she find the place. Later, in an art gallery, the narrator sees a picture of the same man who gave her the magical plant. She becomes very confused, and she decides to run away to new places that she has never been before. She decides to run to the last pages of the novel and across the back cover. By disappearing, she thinks, she will be finishing the novel.

Obviously, the novel is meant to confuse its readers, and the previous summary is just an attempt to summarize its events and make sense of them. Many confusing details and phrases have been omitted. In fact, the author (Khreis) herself is fully aware of this deliberate confusion. One can easily notice the self-awareness of such disorientation in the below quotation, that is taken from the narrator's response to the creature's suggestion to write a novel about her. These lines, which are quoted on the back cover of the novel, seem to challenge readers who are expected to get confused when reading the novel:

That will be interesting [to write a novel that mixes elements like author and character]; and let observers go to hell. Let them mix between me and her [creature]. Let them discover whatever they want of truths and meanings. Let them get confused and let them miss the path [of understanding the novel]. I do not care about them. Let them invite their rational and foolish ones to judge me. To crucify me or to grant me their indulgences, it does not matter! All of us play on papers. (37)

This quotation is an obvious example of the metafiction which is noticed in postmodernist novels that take different forms and techniques to allude to the artificiality of themselves.

In postmodern texts, metafiction is a technique that is used intentionally to make a novel refer to itself or to the fact that it is made up or created by an author. In other words, instead of giving the impression that it is an accurate mimesis of reality, a postmodern text disrupts or "de-naturalizes" such an order and draws

the attention of readers to itself as a made-up, and, in some cases, distorted, imitation of reality (Hutcheon, *Politics 2* & Patricia Waugh 22). Such a technique blurs boundaries between what is supposed to be fiction and what is supposed to be non-fiction or reality.

The metafiction technique is playful in nature and it can be used for many reasons. At least two of them are related to our discussion, namely, to entertain readers and to try something new, especially after the exhaustion of many previous literary techniques, as discussed by John Barth in his important essay *The Literature of Exhaustion* (1967). The first phrase in the previous quotation "that will be interesting" indicates the playful sense of the novel, even though other phrases like "let them get confused and let them miss the path, I do not care about them" seem to challenge critics or even censorship. The last phrase "all of us play on papers" weakens the political charge (if there is any) and negates the possibility of any serious message (or subversive political project) that might be intended by the author to her readers or official censors. Indeed, contrary to modernist and postcolonial literature, playfulness and the lack of subversive energy are among the distinguishing features of postmodern cultural products, as discussed by many critics like Jameson and Keith M. Booker.

Here one would disagree with Hutcheon's understanding of postmodernist metafiction as a potential tool of resistance. In *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (1980), Hutcheon argues that metafictional strategies are intended to involve the reader in a "freedom-inducing act" (155). According to her, the ambiguity and confusion of a certain literary text which is created through metafictional strategies and techniques involve the reader to construct the text and to make sense of it (29 & 155). In other words, unconventional texts involve readers and turn them into co-authors as they try to reconstruct untraditional narratives to make sense of them. Such an act, according to her, is an "incitement to revolutionary activity" (155). Although Hutcheon does not fully adopt this argument in the entire book, she designates the last pages to prove her point. After a few years, a full version of this (assumed) political drive in metafictional texts is adopted in her later works. At least two of them (*A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988) and

The Politics of Postmodernism (1989)) tackle what she calls “historiographic metafiction” in postmodern historical novels, as discussed (and refuted) in the first chapter. One would emphasize here, building on Jameson’s understanding, that metafictional techniques help create more fun and euphoria in postmodernist texts rather than subversive agendas. The same conclusion is also noticed by Waugh who maintains that the language of metafictional texts is used “playfully” and “aesthetically” (36).

But metafiction has been noticed in many works that came before postmodernism. Indeed, this is the reason why Hutcheon does not use “postmodernism” to describe metafictional works in her 1980 book. Nonetheless, she builds her theory of “historiographic metafiction” on the “newer” metafiction and makes it the distinctive feature of postmodernist texts. According to her, postmodern metafiction is different from previous self-reflexive texts because of its excessive use and its “obsessively recurring presence” (*Poetics* xi).

Metafiction has also been noticed in Arabic novels for decades. According to Ahmad Khreis, *AlQasr Al-Mashoor* [The Enchanted Palace] (1937) by Taha Hussein and Tawfiq AlHakim is considered by some critics the first Arabic novel which expresses such a technique (105). In the novel, the reader is addressed, as in 18th century English novels, by the authors directly “My dear reader” (11). Further, the author also appears in the novel in a courtroom with some other characters from the novel to debate the author’s right to decide the destiny of his characters. Interestingly, Khreis does not include this novel in the metafiction category for a number of reasons. According to him, the work is close to being an essay or a literary correspondence because it is not clear what literary narrative (or genre) the author(s) is intending to challenge (107). Here, the influence of Hutcheon is obvious. Khreis also mentions that the authors are not fully conscious of metafiction as a literary technique because they do not adopt it further in their future works and because of the limitation of their text to Shahrazad (106). Further, according to Khreis, the short period of time between the emergence of the Arabic novel in the first decade of the twentieth century and the time of the novel (1930s) makes one think of the exhaustion of Arabic traditional

storytelling more than the exhaustion of the new genre (the novel) (107). Therefore, *The Bewitched Palace* is close to being a critique of Arabic storytelling and an advocate of the novel, taken into consideration here that metafiction, according to Khreis, is intended to criticize the genre of the novel (107).

According to Khreis, metafiction began to emerge in Arabic novels in the late 1960s (99). In this sense, it is connected to the emergence of the New Arabic novel (New Sensitivity), a point of view that is promoted by Arab critics such as AlKharat and AlMadi, as discussed in the Introduction. Agreeing with such critics, Khreis maintains that the defeat of 1967 and the students' revolt in France in 1968 are behind the emergence of the New Arabic novel and the new metafiction (100). However, he further adds one more reason. According to him, as Western metafiction emerged as a reaction to the "realist tradition," Arabic metafiction is a reaction to the seriousness of the "socialist realism" novels of the 1950s (101). Khreis means here Arabic novels that flourished in the era of pan-Arabism and socialism, when many Arab writers were committed to produce works "with a conscious and deliberate political meaning," such as Abdelrahman Al-Sharqawi's *Al-Ard* [The Earth] (1954) and Hanna Mina's *AlMasabeh AlZurq* [The Blue Lanterns] (1954) (Roger Allen 57).

Drawing on my argument that the few Arabic novels that express postmodernist characteristics before the 1990s are early impulses of Arabic postmodernism, one would argue here that, as a postmodern characteristic, early Arabic metafiction continued to develop until it reached its full maturity in the 1990s. Indeed, Khreis himself maintains that Arabic metafiction, which began to emerge in the late 1960s, progressed over decades under the influence of Western metafiction (16/17).

The *Opium Poppy* (2000) expresses in many ways an advanced level of metafiction that distinguishes it from previous Arabic metafiction. Indeed, the excessive use of metafictional techniques, which permeate the entire novel, indicates, to use Waugh's words, "an awareness both of language and metalanguage, of consciousness and writing" (24). For example, the use of bold font is one of multiple strategies that

intensify the novel's metafictional quality, though it is intended to reduce some of the confusion that is created by the deliberate mixing between the novel's characters and creators. In the novel, the narrator uses bold font to help readers navigate easily through the ambiguous dialogues that mix between the real author, the narrator (fake and embedded author), and the creature. This takes place when the narrator/author reflects on her writing and says, "I must find a trick to help the reader distinguish between me and her [her character that also creates the text of the novel]" (37). Although using a bold font reduces the confusion somewhat, it does not eliminate it completely especially when the ontologies (worlds) of the two are crossed and when proper names are not used in the text.

In many ways, metafictional techniques that are employed in postmodernist texts mix and confuse the worlds (ontologies) of postmodern texts. One of these techniques is blank spaces which are created thoughtfully by authors. According to Brian McHale,

The introduction of blank space has the effect of foregrounding the presence and materiality of the book, and of disrupting the reality of the projected world, Spacing, we might say, allows the book to show through the fiction.... [The art of] a book whose materiality cannot be ignored, and which uses this foregrounded materiality as leverage against metaphysics..., in short, is postmodernist art, the art of an ontological poetics. (181)

As McHale explains, a blank space disturbs the reading of the novel and disrupts the perceived "reality of the projected world". In Khreis's novel, the narrator/author decides to hide with her character to "disturb" the author. As the reader turns two empty papers with his fingers and scans three blank pages with his eyes, looking for the continuation of the story, the temporary pause and the mental interruption that he experiences cause, what McHale calls, the "flickering" of the ontological structure. Such a flickering draws the reader's attention to the *process* of writing (or, storytelling) more than the story itself.

Foregrounding ontologies in the novel appears to take different forms in the text. Several of these forms have been discussed in detail by McHale. According to him, postmodern novels belong to the category of "illusion-breaking art" which "systematically disturbs the air of reality by foregrounding the ontological

structure of texts and of fictional worlds” (221). In Khreis’s novel, there are at least four types of ontological questioning/disturbance which will be discussed here, namely: crossing boundaries between fantasy and reality, narrator and character, author and protagonist, and diary and novel genres.

In the text, the creature, or the plant’s daughter, that appears to take different forms, oscillates between fantasy and reality. In many places in the novel the reader is given the impression that she is a real creature who can talk, laugh, and moves, while other sections convey the idea that she is not real; such as when the narrator mentions that the creature is a bubble of ink or a mere imagination (52 & 73). The narrator herself is confused in some other places, such as when she decides to return (or throw away) the plant to get rid of the creature. Towards the end of the novel the narrator expresses her inability to understand the nature of the creature. She says, “every time I solve a puzzle, things get even more complicated” (106). The unconventional way of ending the novel by running to the last pages and passing the back cover illustrates the ambiguity of the whole notion of the creature and the impossibility to decide for certain the real nature of the plant’s daughter or even the narrator (107).

The narrator attempts to understand the reality of the creature. She first thinks that she is just a plant’s daughter that has nothing to do with her novel. However, later on, she realizes that she is a character (in her novel) who takes the form of a female whose lower part is that of a fish (she does not use the term ‘mermaid’). But that creates more doubt as the narrator thinks, “if she is just a bubble of ink that I pour out of my pen, how could I see her shaped in the lilac plant by the window? That was before I began to write the novel!” (64). As the puzzle is unsolved, the narrator continues to converse with the creature as a plant’s daughter and as a character that she created or as a real entity that exists by itself in its own world. In any case, evidence in the text alludes to the worlds of fantasy and reality. In McHale’s words, “postmodern ontology creates worlds that exist and do not exist. Characters that are alive and dead at the same time” (75).

The character appears to the narrator many times when she is sleeping and while she is awake. Contrary to regular nightmares, while the narrator sometimes sleeps without being disturbed by her (creature), her appearance while she is awake is more confusing to the narrator. In one incident, she (narrator) asks her to leave before her child walks in the room (68). In another, she leaves the room with her lest her sleeping husband wakes up and sees her (44). In short, the narrator's conversation and interaction with the character/creature as a real person is very obvious in the text, especially when she touches her physical body (that is formed of flesh and blood) and when she is forced to write the story from her perspective (not the author's perspective), i.e., after debating and discussing, as a rival author, the creature dictates what the narrator should write (33 & 56).

In different locations, the creature oscillates between physical and non-physical existence, or, more accurately, real and imaginative existence. For example, pushing the creature off the bed by the narrator strongly supports the argument that she is a real being that has a tangible body which aches after falling on the floor (52/4). On the other hand, however, the temporal and multiple evaporations/disappearances of the creature demonstrate her non-physical (and probably her imaginative) nature (i.e., the narrator imagines her existence) (105). The oscillation of the creature between reality and fantasy is similar in some ways to the paranormal creatures of magical realism which is considered by McHale as a postmodernist feature that exists in global novels such as *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). Close to these supernatural beings is Ahmed Saadawi's creature in *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (2013) which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Even if one would agree, for the sake of argument, that the plant's daughter is an idea (or a thought) that develops into a fictional character that eventually finds herself on the page of a novel, it seems that dealing with her in this sense is still problematic for a number of reasons. One of them is the ambiguous relation between the narrator and the creature, which is the second type of ontological questioning in this discussion. For instance, when the position of the narrator (who is supposed to be the author) is degraded

to that of her character (as when they both hide from the author), the ontologies of the text are foregrounded, and the creature's/character's existence becomes ambiguous. This happens when her creator, who is supposed to be different, shares with her the same destiny (level and nature), i.e., both are words of an author. One would wonder, who is supposed to be real or fictional? Are they both real or unreal? Different readings of the text prove both.

In the text, the narrator/author, for instance, does not only socialize and discuss the process of writing her novel with the character that she creates, she is also convinced and, even, forced to adopt the character's version of the story i.e. the novel becomes about the character on her own terms, rather than being about the narrator/author or, at least, under her control. As the character dictates the novel, she takes the role of the author or a role that is equal to an author. However, the fact that both the narrator/author and the character are created by an author (higher level) just adds to the confusion. And this leads us to the issue of fake and real authors, which will be discussed later.

The hierarchical levels of the narrator and character are disrupted obviously when both of them decide to play a game and hide after three pages to confuse the author (87). Although this reminds us of McHale's observation that "postmodern text intentionally tries to confuse readers in its levels," it takes us back to the original point i.e., mixing fantasy and reality as the author in the novel (who is supposed to be higher than her characters) not only occupies a position similar to her character (fictional and lower), but becomes a character herself (115). In other words, if the plant's daughter is a mere idea/thought, then being at the same ontological level with the narrator/author (who is supposed to be her creator) introduces more confusion not only about the creature, but also about the narrator/author who hides from another (higher) author. Indeed, one would wonder if this chain will continue (i.e., is there another author who has created this higher author?).

According to McHale, the recursive structure (or Chinese Box) takes place when the primary story (diegesis) is interrupted several times by secondary worlds and stories (i.e., hypodiegetic) to create “representations within the representation” (113). In this case, he explains, the “fiction’s ontological “horizon” is effectively lost” (114). In *Opium Poppy*, the ontology of the narrator/author is interrupted repeatedly by the ontology of her story (her character) and new events emerge from the convergence of the two ontologies in a way that blurs the boundaries between their ontologies.

As a postmodern feature, the oscillation between reality and fiction is also intensified when we come to know that the narrator is embraced by a star (that comes down to her) and she flies with it to the galaxy and when she shatters into pieces, and then collects herself (49 & 104). Not only do these incidents seem to be allegorical or symbolic, they occur to a narrator, in a novel, who is writing the (same) novel about a character that she shares and does not share with her the same ontology. According to Waugh, “[s]ometimes overt frames involve a confusion of ontological levels through the incorporation of visions, dreams, hallucinatory states and pictorial representations which are finally indistinct from the apparently “real”” (31). In Khreis’s novel, the multiple dreams, imaginations, daydreams, hallucinations, and allegorical language add to the density of the ontological foregrounding.

But is the narrator a real person (in the fictional world of the novel)? In other words, does Khreis write about a *real* person who, in turn narrates and writes about an imaginative creature, or does she (Khreis) write about an *unreal* (paranormal) narrator who breaks down into pieces? In fact, both readings are possible. If the narrator is a supernatural person, then she is like the mystical creature who has the ability to change her shape whenever she feels like it. In this case, boundaries between reality and fantasy are crossed. On the other hand, if the narrator is to be understood as a real person (in the fictional world of the novel), then her fragmentation into pieces must be metaphoric. Although a number of incidents in the novel allude to the former reading, there are others that give us the impression that the narrator is a real person who does not physically break down and whose voice overlaps with Khreis’s voice. This takes

us to the third and fourth types of ontological questions, namely author/protagonist ontologies and diary/novel genres.

Samiha Khreis overlaps with the main character in many ways; and thus, the *Opium Poppy* is an autobiographical fictional narrative. In fact, there are different parts that are problematic in the relationship between the author and her character, such as the act of writing the novel, creating the paranormal creature, hiding inside the novel, destroying the novel, and exiting the novel by running through the back cover.

Not only Khreis and her protagonist are novelists, they also use the first-person pronoun in the entire novel. Especially when the protagonist (who is also the narrator and the fictional author) writes about another character (the creature), her writing is, in fact, the author's writing. In other words, if the voice of the imbedded author is not distinguished from Khreis's voice, then Khreis is probably writing about herself, her life, and, most importantly, her experience (or diary) while she is writing the very novel that we are reading. Although the incidents in the novel are not supposed to completely cover Khreis's entire life, many of them appear to be about her childhood, adulthood, and the process of writing. This makes the novel overlap with the genre of diary (and to an extent, autobiography). In fact, one can find more hints in the text that support this reading.

The metafictional sections in the novel, for instance, express in many ways the life of a normal person who performs regular activities of a real author. She sleeps beside her husband, wakes up, leaves the room lest she disturb her sleeping husband, and goes to her papers to write the novel that we are reading (44). She is a real writer who writes in her diary how she buys plants and takes care of her family who distract her sometimes from her writing. Perhaps the most important parts, that make us believe that Khreis's voice overlaps with that of her character, are those which highlight the narrator's ability to create characters and the text that we are reading. Khreis (or the protagonist), for example, tells us about the

real processes which she follows to write the novel. She consciously reflects on the writing of the book (22). She then decides to write down some of the ideas that she formulates (24). After that, she begins writing (25). So, Khreis and her character are possibly doing the same thing. However, the fictional author, who tells us about the creature that she creates, does not maintain her position as an author for a while because her character begins to enter her world and takes over the writing of the novel. After mixing between her and her character (as discussed earlier), we get surprised when we discover that this fictional author is degraded to the level (ontology) of her character and she is controlled by another “higher” author. So, in this sense, the fictional author cannot be Khreis herself, though the dilemma is not completely solved because the mysterious relation between this embedded author, her character, and Khreis continues to confuse us.

Although the narrator who writes a novel is controlled and forced to write what her character dictates, she seems to control the higher author and the course of the novel. This appears clearly when she decides to hide with her character (literally) “to confuse” the author. She makes the author leave three blank pages, and this is very problematic because if she (protagonist who hides) is a mere character who is the shadow of another author’s words, how is she able to influence her author (at a higher level) and decide what is written and what pages to leave blank? Who is controlling who? In other words, as we come to know that the character (creature) compels the narrator (lower author) to write a novel about herself, the blank pages show us that the higher author does what her character wants her to do (i.e. leaving blank pages). One would wonder: why did she not (higher author) express any kind of resistance to the hiding-game? Here we have a situation of overlapping between the higher author and the protagonist (who is also a lower author). Similar overlapping can be noticed in other situations such as when the protagonist decides to tear and destroy the novel and when she decides to run to the last pages and cross the back cover (105 & 107). If the novel that the protagonist is writing has been destroyed, then how could we read the novel (that still exists)? How could she do that if she is a character in it, and how could she resume her

writing and add more pages to the same novel? And why did not the higher author continue the novel after a character decides to leave the novel's last pages and back cover? Are they the same? Did the higher author or the lower author leave the novel?

Further, the novel displays more similarities between the life of Khreis and that of her character. For instance, the novel takes place in Abu Dhabi, where Khreis once lived and worked. Further, as stated in the novel, Khreis's previous novel *Shjarat ALFohood* [The Leopards' Tree] (1997) triggers the narrator to write her novel (23). Although the narrator's jealousy of the novel's author (Khreis), who is being interviewed on the television, distinguishes between the two, Khreis's writing about herself (her novel, its critique, and the interview) does not only give us more information about Khreis's real life, but it also provides us with another example of the overlapping between the novel (as fictitious work) and the diary or autobiography (as a real one). Indeed, mixing between a novel and a personal diary is highlighted by Khreis herself in the novel. When the narrator begins to write the novel she ponders, "even when I mix between writing my diary and writing a novel... I should not panic [i.e., it is a normal thing that should not disturb me]" (25). In fact, mixing between fiction and the life of a real author is noticed in many American literary texts, such as Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1976) and Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* (1984), as discussed by Alfred Hornung. According to him, "boundary-crossing techniques," especially between real life and art, are common in postmodern autobiographies especially in the 1970s and 1980s" (222).

Interestingly, an interview with Khreis reveals some similarities between her life and the novel. Khreis mentions, for example, that she began the habit of writing since she was a child (AlRabei). The same information is mentioned in the novel when the narrator tells us that she used to write when she was a child (35). Indeed, the fusion between the author and her character that permeates the entire novel and gives it its postmodern metafiction tone is echoed vividly in the interview. According to Khreis, "when I write, I often fuse with the characters of my novel to the point that I am lost from my real surroundings"

(AlRabei). Further, when the creature suggests that the narrator is not real and that they should hide in the pages of the novel, the narrator hesitates because she does not want to lose her children, husband, and social life (85/87). Similarly, in the interview, Khreis mentions similar things while she is talking about her literary career.

The overlapping of Khreis and the protagonist is also echoed in their symmetrical views on the experimental style that breaks away from the customs of a traditional novel. This is vividly noticed in the novel itself and in the interview as well. In the interview, Khreis who belongs to the older generation of writers (born in 1956) tells us that she does not belong to any literary school that restricts her creativity to a single style. She explains that in addition to writing classical and historical novels, she also wrote fragmented and experimental novels. Interestingly, the same rejection of being categorized in any specific literary school and the experimental tone of Khreis are also expressed in the *Opium Poppy*. According to the creature who shares her ideas about writing a novel with the author (narrator), "I do not belong to any category" (55). She even expresses her dissatisfaction with the classical/traditional style (55). Instead, she suggests (in the novel) to write a formless novel that does not belong to any style: "creativity chooses its shape/form ... set it [the novel that they are writing] free [and let it be] like water poured on the ground, there is no expected shape of it" (83). Indeed, this allegory echoes the novel itself and the overlapping between Khreis's experimental style and that of her character(s). Interestingly, Hornung points out in his discussion of postmodern autobiographies that postmodernist writers are "self-conscious with respect to the process of narration and its relation to the author" (227).

In different ways, the quote on the back cover that was discussed earlier regarding critics (and, probably, censorship) demonstrates another overlap between the voice of the narrator and that of the author since both of them are trying something new that might be rejected by some critics. But they "do not care," and Khreis and her narrator continue their writing, and they produce this new unprecedented novel that

does not belong to the traditional novelistic category. Here, one would wonder how many times Khreis takes over the voice of her character to express her literary choices.

Yet, many other parts of the novel reveal that the protagonist is made to be distinguished from the real author (Khreis) especially when the artificiality of the protagonist is highlighted. For example, when the fictional character reveals her jealousy of the novelist who is interviewed, one would argue that Khreis, who appears on the TV talking about the *Leopards' Tree*, is different than the fictional author, who decides to write her own novel (23). Further, when the protagonist informs the creature that there is another author who wrote *Orchestra* (1996), she means Khreis's short story collection, and thus, she sets herself apart from her (40). Having discussed that, one would wonder whether Khreis is writing about herself and/or about her experience while she is writing a novel, or she is writing a pure fictional work that has nothing to do with her personal affairs. As a distinctive postmodern feature, it appears that "the fluid boundaries of the subject" is also noticed in postmodern autobiographies that "acknowledge the fictive character of any narrative description of personal experience" (Hornung 221/2).

The mixing between theory and application adds another example of blurring the boundary in this novel. According to many critics, postmodernist texts mix between theories and practices and between the center and the margin (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 9). This can be traced easily in this novel in many sections that demonstrate serious theoretical discussions between the protagonist/narrator and the creature about the choices that they make (like choosing the novel's form, role of characters, plagiarism, etc.) to write the novel itself. This type of mixing (which is also, in this case, a metafiction) brings to the mind McHale's comparison between postmodernist fiction and a dream. According to him, the experience of postmodernist fiction is like "the experience of being aware that you are dreaming in the midst of the dream itself, while you are dreaming it" (221).

In sum, in *Opium Poppy* the boundaries between fantasy/reality, narrator/character, author/protagonist, and diary/novel are crossed repeatedly. There are a number of reasons behind such crossings. Perhaps the author intends to entertain her readers and deliver a message about the social construction of reality. Or perhaps she is experimenting with something new. In any rate, taking in consideration the cultural and societal changes that are sweeping through the Jordanian (and Arab) society, as discussed in the introduction, this discussion confirms to us that the *Opium Poppy* should be included in the postmodern literature category, rather than the postcolonial literature. This comes true especially when it's noticed that traditional postcolonial issues (such as subversion, anticolonialism, nationalism, etc.) are absent from the text.

Before leaving Khreis, it is worth noting that the same argument can be extended to Samiha Khreis's other novel *AlQurmiyyah [The Tree Stump]* (1998) which questions ontological boundaries through its magical realism tone. The story is about a Bedouin tribe that participates in the Arab Great Revolt in the second decade of the twentieth century. Many supernatural powers and elements are involved such as the Wiseman's magical power that makes ghosts run away and the blessed child who hatches from a hawk's egg and brings blessings to his people. Time shifts and characters disappear or oscillate between existence and non-existence, similar to what happens in postmodern novels such as Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969). In one scene, a woman from the tribe goes to Petra and travels in time. She watches the ancient Neptunian King who leads his people against the Israelites (52). Among the postmodern features that are noticed in the novel are overlapping between reality and fiction and blurring boundaries between history, fiction, religion, and myths.

Diary of the Flood:

The mixing between genres is also noticed in Khreis's novel *Dafatir AlToofan* [Diary of the Flood] (2009) that blends short story, novel, travel literature, anthropology, and history genres together. The polyphonic text is a collection of about 23 anecdotes or stories that are entitled after objects (train, sugar, silk, rain, cigarettes, rain, etc.). Many of these stories are told by the objects themselves. Although the focus of each narration is the object itself, the stories of the early dwellers of Amman, who came from different backgrounds, are embedded in each chapter to provide a narration about human characters. We read, for example, the story of Najmah who gets married to the merchant Taqiyudden and the story of the Christian nurse (Asmahan) who marries an attorney (AbduRazzaq). While these characters are connected by a thin thread of events that "move slowly," most of the text describes the culture of Amman and the journeys of inanimate objects (Sami Ababneh 306). Hence, the main theme that ties these objects and characters together is the history of Amman in the 1930s.

To support the documentary purpose of the book, Khreis often describes excessively the cultural milieus and the objects of that era. At the same times she quotes different books (traveler's diaries, religious, etc.) to give more information about Amman and its dwellers. Although the work, which is saturated with nostalgic feeling, is closer to an anthropological study of Amman's 1930s life, it is considered by the author, who is well-versed with literary genres, a novel. Mikhail Bakhtin would probably consider it a good example of dialogic novels.

According to Bakhtin, the novel is a privileged genre that, due to its unique format, has the ability to incorporate different genres without losing its identity as a novel. In different ways, this incorporation "serves the basic purpose of introducing heteroglossia into the novel" (*Dialogic Imagination* 110). Heteroglossia is the diverse languages (with their social and ideological connotations) of a certain era that interact dialogically in a text (Booker, *Practical Introduction* 110). For Bakhtin, the multiplicity of such

languages and voices is an essential element that distinguishes the novel from other genres that are not flexible enough to incorporate multiple voices or different genres in their texts. In Khreis's text, this multiplicity is manifested vividly in different ways such as, the combination of different genres, the journeys of its eclectic objects, and the stories of its diverse characters.

Yet, even if a novel engulfs and ingests other genres, it should not lose its main features. In other words, all incorporated genres should be subsumed and organized to fit and blend in the general structure of the novel that should not lose, but maintain, its identity. In successful novels, incorporated elements, such as a poem or a letter, do not confuse the type of the novel by altering its main structure as they become fitting parts of it. In other words, they (the inserted/varied genre) should not stand out jarringly in a way that makes them overtly distinctive of other parts or independent of the narrative. In addition, the author of such novels does not intend to confuse his readers regarding the type of the genre they are reading. Instead, he always attempts to maintain the general structure of his novel (plot, characters, etc.) even when he incorporates other genres in his text, or even when the entire novel is structured in another format, as in the eighteenth-century epistolary novels, such as, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), in which the atmosphere of the narrative prevails over the formal structure. Even when a novelist integrates other genres, the author does not intend to break the flow of his narrative or the ontology of his characters. Rather, he inserts other genres skillfully and smoothly, and the "authorial speech" blends them in the text in a "refracted way" that makes them a part of the new text, though they continue to carry some connotations of their original resources (i.e., "double-voiced discourse"), as explained by Bakhtin (*Dialogic Imagination* 324).

In Khreis's *Diary of the Flood*, however, something remarkable happens. Instead of maintaining the general elements of a novel (such as, a plot, human characters, events, etc.), some main characteristics are transgressed and confused with other genres, especially short stories, travel journals, and anthropological studies. Such genres are included in a jarring and noisy way. They maintain their original features and

refuse to blend in the new text easily; and thus, they stand out distinguishably and, to an extent, independently.

The “Traveler’s Narration” chapter, for instance, would serve better as a traveler’s or an anthropologist’s diary or notes, rather than a section in a novel. Unlike the (usually short) sections of other genres that might be incorporated smoothly in the body of a novel, this long section (pp. 177-202) stands out distinctively. It is an independent chapter that breaks the flow of the narrative in its structure and content. It begins with five quotations from different old Arabic book as follows,

AlMaqdisi said in *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions* “I visited three cities that look similar to Makkah: Amman in the Levant, Istakhr in Persia, and the Red Village in Khurasan”.

Abu Ubaid AlBakri describes Amman in the *Roads and Kingdoms* as one of the Levant’s bordering provinces that consists of great quarters and honorable villages. No one can encompass it except its creator”.

Al-Haraqī said in...

And Abu AlFida’ said in...,

and Ibn Tameem AlMaqdisi narrates that... (177)

After these quotations (the completion of last three are not mentioned here due to the space), the narration of the fictional traveler (The servant of God, Saifu Den AlGhassani) begins “When I intended to write down my story on papers...” (177). Such lines have nothing to do with the previous characters or the line of their narrative. They belong to a traveler who is writing about his journey. It is worth noting that the traveler is not involved in other parts of the novel since his role is limited to this section in which he merely informs us about Amman and its history (by narrating what he sees and knows and quoting previous books). In other words, AlGhassani has a place in the text only for documentary and non-fictional purposes, rather than participating in the event or narrating for us what happens to the other characters.

Although the AlGhassani visited Amman in the 1930s, which is still relatively in the modern time, his name and style are a pastiche of old travelers’ names and style. Even though he frequently uses modern Arabic in different sections, he adopts the ancient style of Arab travelers in the Middle Ages and before.

AlGhassani's narration focuses on different historical periods and peoples, such as the ancient dwellers of Amman, early Muslims, the Romans, the Gypsies, and the Circassians. He also describes the buildings, marketplaces, bathrooms, and the ruins. Further, he talks about the political condition and the social and religious habits of Amman's dwellers (192-196). Interestingly, the main characters of the novel are absent from the entire section, with the exception of a secondary character (Mas'ad) who is mentioned briefly in just three events in which his marginal participation does not serve the narration or help construct the plot (180/1 and 202). Based on the content and style of this section, it can be removed without affecting the novel. In fact, it can be read independently as an educational article in an anthropology book or magazine or as a traveler's observations of Amman's culture and history. In short, *Diary of the Flood* is a unique novel in the sense it blurs boundaries between fictional and non-fictional elements in an unconventional way. It is an eclectic mixture of different genres, namely, novel, anthropology, history, short story, and travel literature.

Before bringing this part to an end, it is worth mentioning that boundaries between humans and objects are crossed. Although characters and plot are essential elements of a conventional novel, they are tackled differently in the *Diary of the Flood*. Khreis, for instance, does not center her novel on human characters. Rather, she chooses inanimate objects as the main characters and narrators. Therefore, the lines between humans and objects are crossed since the narrations oscillate between the life of human characters and the journeys of these personified objects, with more importance and weight given to the latter, as echoed in the titles of chapters (silk, train, perfume, etc.).

Further, the plot does not reflect a genuine development of events and characters for at least two reasons: the weak connections between characters (both inanimate objects and human figures) and the excessive (and unnecessary) descriptions of culture and customs that compete for the space inside the novel with the lives of human and non-human characters. As a result, the chapters of this experimental novel can

also serve as short stories or diaries of an anthropologist or a traveler. In short, the novel is obviously a mixture of fictional and non-fictional elements that belong to different genres.

Places:

The blurring of boundaries between fiction and nonfiction genres in Khreis's suggests Sahar Malas's *Matarih* [Places] (2013), which describes in detail the life of people in Homs, Syria. Like Khreis, Mala's anthropological documentary includes historical, cultural, and mythical information about the city and its people.

The main story in the novel is about Waled and his family. As a child, Waled is neglected after his father gets married to a young girl after the death of his mother. Waled resorts to the world of jinn and begins to communicate with them. As he gets older, he pursues a life of vice and he begins to hunt for treasures and to attempt to turn coal into diamonds (with the help of his jinn relatives). When his father is forced to get him married to a playful human wife, his jinn lover prevents him from consummating his marriage until he marries her first. Waled does so and continues to live a double life with his human and jinn wives. Eventually, he shoots and kills his brother, who accidentally interrupts him and destroys his rare attempt to know the secret of turning coal into diamond.

There are other stories in the novel that are weakly connected to the main narrative. The story of the (Turkish) Basha, for example, consists mostly of a nonfiction narrative. Although the story begins briefly like a fictional narrative, it changes its scope and content. In the beginning we come to know that the Basha comes to live in Homs because of its healthy atmosphere that suits his sick wife. However, the rest of the narrative has more to do with the city itself than with the Pasha or with Waled's story, that forms the main narrative of the novel. In fact, the Basha's role in the novel appears to be limited to telling us about the city's history, atmosphere, bazars, buildings, and geography. Similarly, the story of 'Abdu, the Hamam's keeper, has more to do with the traditional culture of public bathing in Turkish public baths than the story of Waled, with the exception that Abdu is convinced by Waled's wife to marry her sister-in-law.²

Both stories can be removed completely without affecting the main story, though much of what the author wants to say about Homs and its tradition will be omitted.

The description of Homs's culture, space, and history is over-done in this novel. By doing so, the non-fictional anthropological knowledge is mixed with the fictional narrative and events. In other words, contrary to conventional realistic novels that inject some non-fictional elements in a constructive and engaging way that adds more depth to the narrative, Malas gives more weight to the cultural side of people rather than the development of their characters. Therefore, in many cases, the lengthy descriptions of cultural events or places do not develop the plot or engage its characters in a constructive way. It seems that the author is interested in seizing any opportunity to tell us how the people of Homs live and what kinds of activities they do, rather than telling us about what happens to her characters. This is done excessively to the point that the novel can be considered, in many parts, an anthropological work rather than a literary one. Perhaps this is what makes some critics, such as Ibrahim Khalel, less interested in calling *Places* a novel (*Critic Ibrahim Khalel*).

For example, the culture of the traditional Hammam (public bath) is described thoroughly in the novel. In the story of Abdo, Malas's focus on the rituals of the Hammam more than the character of the Hammam's boy is obvious (46/7). Indeed, the role of Abdo in the story is ultimately employed to educate us about the customs and habits of the Hammam, rather than utilizing the Hammam's culture to tell us about the character, especially the impact of that culture on him, as in literary conventions of realistic novels. Even when a main character, such as Waled's sister who is married to the judge, goes to the Hammam, the cultural habits continue to be dominant (165). For instance, when the judge's wife leaves her private room, she receives a special gift from her husband called AlTurabah AlHalabiyah. Here the author adds a footnote to inform her reader about AlTurabah AlHalabiyah, i.e., a substance that was used some time ago to soften hair (165). Adding a glossary or a footnote to a novel, according to McHale, underlines the

ontology of the text (191). More of the Hammams habits are mentioned such as singing, socializing, and celebrating the recovery of a lady after giving birth (164-166).

The religious sessions of Islamic mysticism (Sufi) that are mentioned in the book, in detail, do not serve the plot of the novel in a constructive way, though they educate readers about the old religious habits of the people of Homs. For instance, about five pages of the novel are designated to the Sufi celebration which Waled attends with his father when he is a child (36-40). Briefly, different bands and groups come to the location while they are wearing their special clothing and carrying their flags and banners. They sing their religious songs and hit their flat drums (dufof) (37/8). The main Sufi (mystic) is welcomed and miracles are performed (38- 40). Another female Sufi party is also described in detail in an anthropological style without affecting the plot of the novel or contributing to the development of characters or the progress of the plot (191/2). Similarly, other religious habits are included in the novel in a documentary style such as the customs of praying for rain (119-120). Other social and cultural issues such as baby-circumcision and traditional food-cooking are also mentioned in detail (83 & 56/7).

Yet, someone might remind us that it is normal to include different types of information in a novel in order to know about the novel's setting and the culture of its characters. So, what is unusual about *Places*? In fact, the amount of such information and the way it is presented in the text are important factors to decide what is normal and what is abnormal. Similar to what was mentioned earlier concerning Khreis's *Diary of the Flood*, the excessive incorporation of non-fictional elements in a fictional narrative (a novel) and the lack of engagement of these elements in the plot and characters (of that narrative) make us think of blurring boundaries and mixing of genres. Perhaps a closer look at Malas's quotations will shed a better light on this issue.

Much of Malas's knowledge about Syrian culture, history, and place can be attributed to what she saw, heard, and read during her Syrian and Jordanian life. Although she lived most of her life in Jordan, Malas

was born in Syria (in 1958) and pursued her studies at Syrian University in the 1970s. She also had the habit of travelling and visiting Syrian cities, as she was impressed with places. In addition to Malas's first-hand experience in Syrian culture and cities which can provide her with the necessary knowledge that she can employ in her novel, it appears that Malas depends heavily on her readings. Take for example the statue of Abu Riyah (the Wind's Father) that is described in the novel (118). According to Malas, the people of Homs go to the statue to find out the direction of the wind. In the marketplace there stands "on a high dome a brass statue in the form of a human riding a fish.... His fingers are folded except for the index that points ... to the direction of wind" (118). In fact the statue never existed in modern time, and the author never saw it. However, the exact description (in detail) that Malas mentions in the novel can be found in traditional books as quoted and discussed by contemporary researchers, such as Mustafa Sufi and Khadr Hamud (*Weather Talisman & Nickname* 77). Obviously, Malas quoted such books to compose her text.

The celebration of the Khames AlNabat (The Plants' Thursday) takes up a few pages in Malas's text (98-100). It is an old traditional celebration which used to take place in the spring when the people of Homs (especially older boys and girls) leave their houses to enjoy the green meadows and beautiful flowers of the spring. Girls would soak the flowers that they collect before washing their faces with the water on Thursday morning for beauty purposes. The rituals of this celebration also include the young men's parades and throwing rocks in an old well to discover the luck of marriage (a deep sound means a good and near marriage) (99-100). According to Mustafa Sufi, this practice came to an end many years ago, obviously before Malas was born, with the spread of artificial make-up products (*Spring Festivals*). Although the Plants' Thursday celebration is one that Malas has most likely never experienced, she includes it in her text. Comparing the detailed and similar description of the celebration in both the novel and Sufi's book, one can conclude that Malas incorporates different passages of non-fictional (anthropological) books in her novel. Such incorporated parts, that are meant to educate readers, consist of extra information that is not engaged in the narrative constructively, since much of it can be removed without

affecting the fictional part at all. In other words, such extra and lengthy information is not intended to add more depth or to shed a light on the characters.

In addition to the social habits and cultural events of the people of Homs, Malas describes many places in a documentary style that gives much detail without affecting the fictional side of the story. For instance, the author gives descriptions of The Arabs' Bazar, Homs' old residential houses, Orontes River, AlBazar Bashi Marketplace, and AlQaisariyyah Bazar (148, 162, 79, 104, 105). The details are excessive in general and they reflect the documentary nature of the text that depends on tourist observation and book reading. They would fit comfortably in a traveler's magazine or a visitor's diary. For instance, when the Basha decides to take a tour in the city of Homs, we read that he walks to AlQaisariyyah Bazaar where he saw:

a wooden wide gate that rises to five meters. It was fortified with metal sheets and facing the West. When he entered from it, he found himself in an open space that has in its center a tall tree beside a small lake with running water. He moved forward and read on a stone "AlQaisariyyah was built in 1300 CE. He admired the Bazaar and its goods. He ascended the basaltic rocky stairs to the second story. In front of the Bazaar stores, there were some pillars made of white rock supporting the roofs. He stood by the iron barrier and began counting them. There were around forty stones ... (106)

This detailed description of the Bazaar provides us with good information about the city, but not about the Basha, with the exception of his fascination with the place. Similarly, the detailed descriptions of many other locations are inserted in the story to tell readers about the ancient city's structures and buildings. Much of these details can be removed without affecting the original story of the novel.

Similar to the place and geography of Homs, its history is also mentioned to educate readers about the city and its people. For instance, the author inserts unnecessary information about the history of Homs and its people. Some of these historical facts are related to the life of famous characters such as the poet Dek AlJinn and the Muslim commander who conquered the city in the 7th century (81 & 94).

Although *Places* is not a historical novel, it draws heavily on history, obviously for documentary purposes. Sometimes a whole section is assigned to historical events and incidents, such as the chapter entitled

Safahat Mina ALTareikh (Pages from History). In this section, the Basha reads an old book (a collection of diaries) which describes Homs during the Mongolian invasion of Timur to the Levant that took place in 1400/1 CE. According to the book, the people of Homs played a trick to protect their city from the invading armies. They pretended that they were mad/crazy because they drank from the Al'Asi (Orontes) River. Spreading the rumor of the diseased river and behaving like crazy people (wearing weird clothes, decorating their houses in a funny way, etc.), Timur did not attack the city (130). Here Malas adopts the traditional version of what happened on that day. However, similar to a historical book that mentions more than one narrative about some incidents, Malas mentions the real historical narrative: "It was said that 'Amr bin AlRrawwas' [one of the leaders] welcomed Timur and gifted him a precious gift" (132). The weight of this incident swings towards the traditional version, and thus historical facts appear to be less important to Malas if the inaccurate historical narrative fits better in her text. Interestingly, the Basha (as a character) is barely mentioned in this section. He appears in the last three lines of this chapter: "The Basha raised his head. Impressed by what he read; he began to imagine what happened on that day. He admired the intelligence of the dwellers of the city and their tactic to drive away the troops of Timur" (133).

In short, it appears that, in addition to Malas's personal experience, she quotes anthropological and historical books to write her novel. The lengthy documentation of the Syrian culture (social habits, history, buildings, religion, etc.) blurs boundaries between fiction and non-fiction. It also renders the text a heterogeneous collage of different genres that are not integrated in the fictional narrative without any intention of blending them to become fitting parts. Rather, they prefer to maintain their full identity and to be distinguished from the fictional text. Therefore, they stand out independently of the novel's plot and do not contribute to the progress of its events or the development of its characters. Although some critics, such as Ibrahim Khalel, are hesitant to call Malas's work a novel, one would argue that this eclectic work, that is constructed thoughtfully, fits well into the category of postmodern texts because it shares some of

their distinctive features, such as, blurring boundaries between genres, mixing fiction and reality, and the lack of serious political subversion.

Magical realism is another style that is deployed in Malas's *Places* to blur boundaries between normal and abnormal. The author injects magical realist elements like the stories of jinn that she heard when she was a child (born 1958). As we will see in the discussion of pastiche in chapter three, Malas mixes between the life of humans and jinn as one can see in the *Arabian Nights*. Waled, for example, gets married to a jinn wife (134-6). His jinn relatives communicate with him and exchange visits, as if they are real humans (71/177). Other characters are exposed also to the world of jinn, such as Waled's stepmother (141). Waled is also involved in other abnormal events, such as meeting a historical poet from the past (Dek AlJinn) while he is asleep, awake, and drunk (112, 150, and 176).

The Sandy Maqamah:

Hashim Gharaybah's *AlMaqamah AlRamliyyah* [The Sandy Maqamah] (1998) is another interesting novel that exhibits a number of postmodern features such as blurring boundaries between genres, fantasy/reality, and narrator/character. In addition to that, *The Sandy Maqamah* is distinguished with pastiche and blurring boundaries between historical eras; and both will be discussed in chapter three.

The novel includes in its title the word "Maqamah," which is a literary genre that emerged in the 10th and 11th centuries in the Arabic culture. It is a rhymed prose anecdote that revolves around the adventures of a gifted and funny protagonist who uses his eloquence and wit to gain something or to rescue himself from a problem. The real purpose behind the Maqamah is to entertain and educate people and to reflect the author's sublime rhetoric skills, such as in rhymed prose and poetry.

The novel is about the life and adventures of a Bedouin chief named AlKhames bin AlAhwas, who lives in the desert in an unspecified time in the past. The narrator begins with a short introduction about narrating what he heard from AlKhames bin AlAhwas. The narrator reflects on the importance of being AlKhames

(himself) and having the same experience in order to write what AlAhwas has told him (9). Knowing that he is not AlKhames, he points out that since “there are inside each author a narrator, listener, actor, spectator, author, scribe, creator, critic, a person who speaks, and another who responds, they occasionally exchange roles” (9). It is worth noting that the mixing between the narrator, the main character, and the scribe begins here and continues throughout the book. This mixing is different than Bakhtin’s understanding of the relation between the author’s and the narrator’s voice, as will be discussed later.

The story starts when the narrator hatches out of a Hanzhalah (desert plant) and the voice of AlKhames begins to emerge from inside him. AlKhames was ten years old when his mother (Thurayya) ran away with her lover (AlRawwajj) after he killed her husband (and his father) and stole his horse. AlKhames decides to leave the tribe to take revenge on AlRawwajj. But instead, he accepts compensations from the murderer. Later, he becomes the chief of his tribe and gets married to different human and jinn wives (50).

Bishr AlHafi (originally AlKhames) leads his people to win different conflicts and wars. The flow of the narrative changes when the scribe informs us that he interrupts the narrator, gets involved in the story, and decides to end it by writing the rest of it (167). We come to know that AlKhames abdicates the throne to his son who kills himself or is killed. Then, AlKhames tells us that Hashim Gharaybah (the real author of the novel) is going to write in the future in his book about what currently happens. Here AlKhames literally quotes a paragraph from the book that will be written in the future and puts it between brackets (191).

The last part of the book is about the prosperity of life in AlKhames’s area after he becomes a king. He finally takes his revenge by killing the son of his father’s killer. Eventually he is stabbed by his enemy (Hammam) and he falls dead while bleeding white blood (255). But he is not dead because it is “time” that dies. He walks in his own funeral and goes back inside the Hanzhalah that once gave birth to him (255/6).

The last paragraph is a disclaimer from the scribe for any mistake or change that he, as a human who is subject to forgetfulness and error, committed.

In this unconventional Jordanian novel (*The Sandy Maqamah*), blurring boundaries emerges as a main feature from the very beginning. It appears in the title of the novel that mixes its genre (the novel) with another traditional Arabic genre (the Maqamah). Drawing on this Arabic medieval tradition, Gharaybah involves many of the Maqamah's elements such as rhythmic phrases, style, traditions, names, animals, myths, etc. which he blends in the text with novelistic elements such as plot, theme, conflict, and character. The outcome is a mixed product that is reflected in the combination of the two words "Maqamah" and "Novel" on the front page of the book.

The author is not trying to trick us, nor does he mix the two genres unintentionally. Indeed, this mixture was created consciously by an author who is well-versed in the traditions of each genre. This important point distinguishes this text from early Arabic novels (like Hafiz Ibrahim's *Sateh's Nights* (1906)) whose similarity with the Maqamah is attributed to different reasons such as the emergence of Arabic novel as a new genre and its influence by both Arabic tradition and the European novel. Perhaps the desire to Arabize the imported genre or to modernize Arabic Maqamah was an important motive behind the early mixture of the two genres. Such a reason has nothing to do with the current novel which is written after the Arabic novel becomes well-established in Arabic literature and culture.

What supports this claim is Gharaybah's experience, which is totally different from early Arab novelists. He, for instance, has written several short stories and novels before and after *The Sandy Maqamah*. Further, he is a critic who is well-acquainted with literary genres. Therefore, his work should be distinguished from early Arabic novels, treated differently, and scrutinized with postmodern lenses.

Yet, according to Bakhtin, mixing a novel with any other genre still results in a novel. Based on that, the *Sandy Maqamah* is a novel even if it includes other elements from the Maqamah. However, what distinguishes this novel is the excessive mixing and borrowing from the Maqamah in an unprecedented way. In other words, the author does not quote a short passage of the Maqamah in a constructive way that

enriches his text without changing its main novelistic features. Rather, he deploys many elements of the Maqamah in the new text, and even adopts its style (i.e., pastiche) to ensure that the reader is always reminded that he is reading a Maqamah and a novel at the same time.

Among the obvious elements that illustrate the Maqamah side of the novel are the rhythmic phrases with their poetic style. For instance, Bishr responds to the voice of Shabeb describing himself after drawing his sword, “Bal Qawiyyu AlBunyah, hadedul Basar, Hazimu AlRa’i (but I am strong in my body, having powerful sight and solid opinion)” (32). He also adopts the Maqamah style also when he describes Hammam as “Kalimatun Nafithah, wa Ra’yun Saib, wa Saifun Battar (his command is always obeyed, his opinion is always right, and his sword is always sharp)” (56). In another longer section, Bishr employs the same traditional rhetoric style to comment on the poem of Ibn Abi Salma (an early Arab poet) that he recites in the peaceful reconciliation between the Bedouin tribes (66). In such quotations, phrases are selected carefully to emulate the Maqamah and to re-create its ancient flavor and taste. Here Gharaybah uses short phrases that end with rhythmic words. Such phrases are distinguished with old vocabulary that is not commonly used in daily Arabic speech. Further, they are mostly descriptive phrases that describe settings, people, and situations more than describing actions. In this rhetorical style, a number of seemingly repetitive phrases are employed to describe one thing (a person, situation, etc.). Such a repetition increases the depth and density of the situation since synonymous and repetitive phrases (and words) that are used have slight differences in their meanings. Although it is difficult to translate both the literal meaning and the impact of the rhythm, the following example will convey some of what is meant.

Instead of using a few Arabic words such as “Thakara Manafi’ AlNakhlah wa Al Ibil” [he praised the palm tree and camels] to tell us that he mentioned the blessings of the palm-tree and camels, two rhythmic phrases are used, i.e., “Fahamada AlNakhlat wama Atat, Wa Shakara Al Ibila wama Tawat [He praised the palm tree and what it gives, and the camels and what they contain]” (67). In addition to rhythmic phrases that give us that ancient taste that we experience when we read a traditional Maqamah, both old words,

which are selected carefully, and the subject matter (desert, sand, tribes) intensify that experience and increase the feeling and connotation of the past.

Yet the novelistic part in *The Sandy Maqamah* is also made to be obvious through different conventional elements of a traditional novel. For example, more than half of the text is written in contemporary standard Arabic that is used by other Jordanian (and Arab) novelists. In addition to that, other elements of a conventional novel such as characters, dialogues, settings, and plot make the text fit in the category of novel. Nevertheless, the text is not limited to these two genres (Maqamah and novel) only.

The Sandy Maqamah is divided into sections like a book. It has references and also footnotes of difficult terms (174). In addition, the trees of lineages and lists of names make it closer to an autobiography that tackles the life of a historical or important character. Further, the novel includes other parts (poetry, religion, history, mythology, and literature) that add more elements to the mixture of genres of the text. Such parts will be discussed in chapter three on the pastiche.

Blurring boundaries between reality and fantasy pervades *The Sandy Maqamah*. One part of this blend, which will be discussed later, is related to the existence of a protagonist, a narrator, a scribe, and an author. The other part is the combination of real and the non-real events and/or what takes place and what does not.

In magical realism, paranormal events and creatures exist or take place, but they are dealt with as if they are normal. The main character, AlKhames bin AlAhwas, is the central locus of this category. He, for example, is born by emerging from a Hanzhahah (Colocynth). He is half human and half nebula, and he lives three lives. He appears as a sandy column and converses with animals, jinn, objects, and stars. Despite the abnormality of such characteristics, the text makes them look real and deals with them as normal things. On the other hand, AlKhames appears also as a normal person who has parents, rides a donkey, gets married, fights enemies, searches for his mother, and becomes a leader of a tribe. Further, he tells

his story to a narrator who listens to his words and reports them to us as if they are real events that happen to a real person.

What is important here is that this oscillation (of AlKhames) between a normal and paranormal figure or between reality and fantasy, is made to appear ordinary. While some characteristics make one think that he is not real, other characteristics make us think that he is a real person (in a work of fiction).

Similar to other magical realist works, such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Midnight's Children*, the combination of the normal and paranormal is not limited to the main character. Rather, other characters and other events are subject to the same rule. In *The Sandy Maqamah*, Gharaybah writes about a human who cannot be harmed by fire and people who live thousands of years and others who are able to stir and control sandy storms (159, 152, 74). He also tells us about animals and objects that talk and converse with humans (74/5, 175 & 211). Further, paranormal incidents take place. For instance, when Hermas (the Monk) passes away, wind and sands become uncontrolled, blazing fire attacks people, and cool water springs turn into boiling acid water (192/3).

The uncanny creatures are among the elements that blur the boundaries between what is real and what is non-real, in the sense they are dealt with as normal although they are paranormal. For example, we read in the novel about a Marid (giant creature or jinn) that comes out of a fruit (a date) and about the jinn(s) who built a palace for Bishr (107 & 89). Further, AlAzarijah are strange creatures that come out of snakes' bellies and occupy the desert (194). They are described with some details: eyes are vertical, and their ears are wide and long to the point that they are used by these creatures as mattresses and blankets. They finally get eaten by whales coming from the sea on a full moon night (195).

The owl (Hamah) is another paranormal creature that haunts the main character repeatedly through the book. According to Arabic myth, the Hamah comes out of the head of the murdered to incite his family (especially sons and brothers) to kill the murderer. In *The Sandy Maqamah*, the Hamah continues to haunt

AlKhames until he kills the murderer's son (244). Despite its mythical sources, the Hamah is made to look like a real creature that appears to the main character while he is in his full consciousness, as when she appears before him after he wakes up from sleeping (33). Dealing with it in this way makes it oscillate between reality and fantasy. Further, this oscillation is emphasized in other ways. For example, while the Hamah creature appears physically, it seems sometimes to be a ghost that appears only to AlKhames or, perhaps, an imagination inside his head (33 & 244).

The entirety of events of the novel are crafted skillfully to make us believe in two things at the same time, namely the real and the imaginary existence of AlKhames and his world. Although people and creatures that he deals with appear to be real (within the fictional context of a novel), some interruptions, such as the Hamah and the scribe's intrusions, make us doubtful of their reality. Interestingly, the narrator tells us from the very beginning that he pretends to believe in AlKhames's existence (19). He further tells us toward the end of the novel that everything disappears as he quits imagining AlKhames's existence (261). Although this can be considered as a solid proof of the non-existence of AlKhwas even in his imaginative world in a novel, it can also refer to the imagination of the narrator and/or the imagination of the author himself (Gharaybah) who is writing a fictitious work in the first place. In other words, if AlKhames and his world is a mere imaginative world that Gharaybah (and /or his narrator) is creating (which is true), then what is the point of telling us that he is imagining something to write about? Is it a metafictional hint or is it there to make readers doubtful of the existence of such paranormal characters and worlds, which might allude to an allegorical writing and reading? We will come to this point later after discussing the relationship between the character, narrator, scribe, and author.

The mixing between narrator, character, scribe, and author in *The Sandy Maqamah* disrupts hierarchies and crosses boundaries. In many places in the text the four persons overlap to the point it becomes difficult to distinguish between them, or to maintain the conventional hierarchy between them. Such a mixture goes beyond the dialogic interactions between voices in the text.

For example, from the very beginning, boundaries between AlKhames and the narrator are transgressed. The introductory phrase “To AlKhames bin AlAhwas” that is used as an introduction to the narration, makes AlKhames the addressee to whom the story is written (or told) (5). But shortly after two blank pages the narration starts with a conflicting phrase: “AlKhames Bin AlAhwas told me” (9). Here AlKhames is the narrator or the source of the narrative. This strange beginning makes AlKhames both the teller and the recipient of the story at the same time. Perhaps the quotation (entitled “The Joy of Narration”) that is inserted between these two controversial phrases reflects the deliberate mixing which may epitomize a playful objective of the whole book. Even if the introductory phrase is intended to be a gift (i.e., gifting the novel to AlKhames), the playful sense is not changed as the book is gifted to a fictional character rather than a real person. Interestingly, other critics, such as Nabel Hadad, emphasize the playful sense of the novel and the lack of any serious message intended by the author. According to Hadad, the story of *The Sandy Maqamah* revolves around itself, and that suggests that the author is not interested in anything but writing without any serious attempt to communicate with the real world out of the world of his story (168).

The mixing between the narrator and AlKhames is further emphasized in the first page of the narrative. This occurs when the narrator talks to himself: “To be able to write what Bin AlAhwas related to me, I must be that man in the same condition. And because I am not that man, there is no escape from affirming the following remark: (inside each author there is a narrator and a listener... an actor and a spectator... an author and a scribe... a creator and a critic, one who speaks and another who responds... it happens that they take each other’s roles)” (9).

These puzzling phrases that demonstrate the overlapping (and even contradictory) roles of different entities may serve as a disclaimer and a self-reflexive tool which reflect the metafictional nature of the text. More importantly to this discussion, however, they serve as a vivid evidence that the narrative hierarchy of the text is disturbed, i.e., the narrator can be a character, the character can be a narrator, the scribe

can be a narrator, the character can be an author, and so forth. But before we explore some examples from the text, it is worth mentioning here Bakhtin's dialogism and the relation between the voices of the author and the narrator.

According to Bakhtin, the author is different from the narrator. While the author is a real person, the narrator is a fictional person that uses a real language. They cannot be the same, and their voices always interact dialectically. In addition to other elements, the narrator's speech is very essential to the dialogism and multiplicity of voices in the novel. According to Bakhtin, "authorial speech, the speech of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (always more or less dialogized)" (263). However, even when the narrator (or any other character) has his own voice that carries its social connotations, the authorial speech retains its presence in the text in different ways, such as, the tone, word choice, the subject matter, etc. As a result, every word in a novel is "double-voiced," since it "serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author" (324). Hence, it is difficult to reach a final interpretation and the meaning remains unsettled.

Yet, in *The Sandy Maqamah*, the narrative hierarchy of the text is disturbed overtly and confused intentionally in a way that goes beyond Bakhtin's dialogism. For instance, in the opening scene, AlKhames appears to be both a real person who is independent (and outside) of the narrator and an imaginative character who is inside the mind of the narrator. Although he stands in front of the narrator and takes his cloak from him, he speaks from inside the narrator's skull (18). In the next page, the narrator informs us that he decides to pretend that AlKhames is a real person to whom he opens his memory to pour his memory therein (19). To increase the density of this mixing, we read the next confusing phrase: "We said together: Let that be, for my memory is not me" (19). The phrase "*We said together*" indicates the

intentional mixing between the two (AlKhames and narrator) while the phrase “my memory is not me” intensifies the ambiguity of the text.

The closing two sections of the novel do not remove this ambiguity since they demonstrate that the character and narrator are two separate and mixed persons at the same time. In the first section in the last page we are told by someone who appears to be the narrator that he, at one moment, “quit believing in the existence of AlKhames bin AlAhwas and the man [AlKhames] disappeared,” obviously as a result of that (261). Although this might support the conclusion that AlKhames is just a mere thought or idea that is located in the head of the narrator (in a fictitious work), it contradicts other evidence (such as the first sections of the work) and it creates more doubts when one scrutinizes the position of the narrator. For instance, the next phrase that tells us that the “desert mite began to eat the script,” in which the narrator *is*, makes us think of the disappearance or nonexistence of the narrator himself (261). Having mentioned that, still there are some signs in the text that demonstrate the existence of the narrator as an independent person who is different from the author and the scribe, such as when he addresses the scribe (or author) with “ Oh! respected writer” in the end of his narration (258).

If we should believe that the narrator is not the main character (AlKhames), then this conclusion does not make sense because AlKhames seems to be *the* narrator who talks about himself (not about someone else) and uses the first-person pronoun. This becomes more obvious when he talks about his life “between the two covers of this book” or when he addresses the scribe or author, as mentioned earlier (196 & 258). One would ask: Is the whole book a “narration” which is related to us by a narrator about AlKhames or is it AlKhames who talks to us about himself? Although using the first-person pronoun to relate to what someone else said falls within literary customs (i.e., narrator quotes what AlKhames said exactly without changing the speaker’s pronoun), being aware of his life inside the book is problematic since AlKhames is telling his story orally to a narrator who is writing a book or relating it to an author (or scribe) who is writing a book. When one attempts to untangle the threads of this complex knot he fails as these (and,

actually, more) phrases continue to contradict themselves. What intensifies such contradictions (of narrator/character) is the involvement of another layer/level that involves the author. In addition to the overlapping with the role of a narrator, AlKhames (character) takes the role of an author, though he is supposed to be created by an author.

In the second section of the last page, for instance, we read “This is *The Sandy Maqamah* book as it was imagined by the seeker of himself, Hashim Gharaybah son of Bdeiwi AlMustafa from Huwwarah [city]” (261). Here the real author (Hashim Gharaybah) appears to be different (and distinguished) from the narrator and the main character. Yet, this conclusion appears to conflict with other incidents such as when the narrator relates to us what AlKhames tells him concerning what Gharaybah is going to write about the events of his story, i.e., the desert’s mite and the difficult years (191). In other words, instead of making the (real) author write what a character says (or writes), the character is the one who tells us what the author writes. In a sense, AlKhames decides what the author is going to write about in the story that he is telling the narrator who relates it to us. One would wonder who is the real author and who is the creator of the events and the words?

Perhaps the clearest distinction between the people of the novel is that between AlKhames and the scribe. Yet, the scribe himself overlaps with the author and the narrator. Although the existence of a scribe might partially help us distinguish between the narrator and the character, it keeps us in darkness in different ways.

For instance, the narration is interrupted at least two times by the intrusions of the scribe who seems to be different from the narrator. He tells us: “I am the scribe... I interrupted the narrator’s progression and [I] spoke. I liked the game and I entered it... trying to push away the narrator, telling the story in a similar manner, and suggesting a conclusion that somehow abrogates the narrator, affirms the writer, and ends the story!... I, the scribe wrote:...” (167). The scribe continues the narration to the end of this section (a

few pages). He also resumes his intrusion after an epigraph in a new section entitled "Continuation" where he writes: "AKhames Bin AlAhwas continued his speech as if his second life did not finish and as if I did not interfere or change the line of his story- I mean his life- [and] he said:..." (179).

In these two quotations, the scribe's intrusion distinguishes between AlKhames and the narrator and it also distinguishes him from them. In addition to using "I" in "I am the scribe," which is the title of that section, to introduce himself and to put himself apart from other people that he is talking about (i.e. narrator and AlKhames), the scribe bluntly makes it clear where he starts and ends his intrusion. There is no mixing here between him and the narrator or character. However, later on the scribe intrudes again but with some puzzling phrases. Under a new title "Annotation" he writes: "Talkative is AlKhames... he cannot distinguish clearly between using reason in a good way and [using] constructed descriptive images. Therefore, my intrusion (I, the scribe) in wording the text's dialogue was always obvious. Indeed, it was always the case in all the texts [of the novel]!" (225).

In this quotation the scribe creates doubts about the authenticity of the entire narration of AlKhames whose inaccuracy is also underlined in other places, such as when AlKhamis narrates while he is "drunk" and when he reminds us with Arabic proverbs about neglecting the stories of a talkative old man whose peers have passed away (so there is no way to verify his stories about the past) (207). Although this self-reflexiveness is another sign of the (postmodernist) metafictional side of the text, what is important for us here is the mixing between the character, narrator, and scribe. This becomes obvious when we read the final phrase about the intrusion of the scribe not only when he notifies us (as discussed lately), but in the 'entire' narration. In the question "Indeed, it was always the case in all the texts!," the scribe admits that he mediated and intervened in the whole narration which is supposed to be narrated by a narrator who tells us what AlKhames has told him. An experienced reader would pause here and wonder: is the scribe the narrator himself or someone else? If the scribe has been wording and rewording what AlKhames has said, then where is the voice of the narrator? And why was he interrupted by the scribe (who made

us aware of that) if the scribe has been rewording and mediating what he (narrator) has been saying from the beginning? Indeed, this ambiguity becomes more complicated when we recall the early discussion concerning the overlapping between the narrator and the character. Here one would wonder whether the scribe, who is confused with the narrator, is also confused with the character who, as we discussed before, overlapped with the narrator. But the scribe is not the character! In short, the oscillation and the overlapping between the scribe, the narrator, and the character whose narration is distrusted by the scribe underlines the ontology of the whole novel and disturbs its hierarchies.

The relation between the scribe and the real author is also puzzling. As mentioned earlier, the scribe appears (in general) to be a separate and distinguished entity who interrupts the narrator and reports to us what happens to AlKhames (167-179). But here arises a question about the relation between the two accounts. Is the scribe's narration (when he intrudes) consistent with AlKhames's narrative? As we read, we come to know that after the scribe intrudes for the first time, AlKhames resumes his story, which is supposed to be reported to us by the narrator (though the scribe is the one who writes it down). But this narration has some different details such as the death of Wahj (AlKhames's king son) that make it inconsistent with the scribe's version. While in the scribe's narration the king kills himself deliberately by drinking alcohol, he is killed in the narrator's narrative by impaling his body on a sharpened palm-tree by his enemy (Abbass) (176 & 180).¹ Here the narration of the scribe is totally different than the narration of AlKhames which he related to his narrator. Interestingly, the scribe does not intervene as he did before. One would wonder whether the scribe is the real author (Gharaybah) or the scribe or the real narrator who narrates everything.

It appears, tentatively, that the author is the one who adds the epigraphs and tree diagrams that interrupt the flow of the narration. While the epigraphs at the beginning of sections consist of quotations from different genres, the tree diagrams list the names of kings, poets, judges, wisemen, as well as the names of AlKhames's wives, daughters, sons, and grandchildren (182-185). This understanding of an author, who

is different than the scribe, clarifies and makes sense of what was mentioned previously concerning the inconsistency between the scribe's and the narrator's accounts (about the death of the king) as the author is supposed to write all of that. But this understanding also makes us doubtful of the identity of the scribe and his role. If the scribe is not supposed to be the author (who adds diagrams and epigraphs) nor the narrator (whom he interrupts) nor the character (whom he writes about), then who is he? If he (scribe) admits that he had intervened in all of the texts of the narration, as discussed earlier, then what is the role of the author (Gharaybah)? Another visit to the last page might clarify this point.

In the last page the narrator, scribe, and author seem to overlap. However, our focus now is on the relation between the scribe and the real author (Gharaybah). In the first paragraph of the last page, we are told by someone that, "In one moment I quit believing in the existence of AlKhames bin AlAhwas and [thus] he disappeared " (261). Here one would assume that the scribe writes down what the narrator tells him since the narrator is the one who has been telling us about AlKhames. However, the next phrase, ("The desert mite ate the script"), makes this conclusion inaccurate because the narrator has nothing to say and do with the script which is expected to be written by a scribe or an author, not a narrator who is supposed to relate orally to someone who writes it. Further, if the script has been eaten by the mite, then who reports that to us? the narrator? or the scribe or the author? Indeed, telling readers about what happens to the script appears to be beyond the scope of the story of the narrator. Was it eaten completely? Then who rewrote it for us? The scribe or the author? And who made AlKhames disappear after he quit imagining him?

The next section in the final page entitled "To proceed," (a phrase which is used in Arabic oral tradition of sermons after the introduction and before handling the main topic) brings to the discussion the real author. Here we read, "This is *The Sandy Maqamah* as it is imagined by the one who seeks to know himself, Hashim Gharaybah" (261). This phrase and the title of the section, which breaks the flow of the narration, introduce the real author and also gives a possibility that the previous part (and the entire novel) belongs

to someone else (i.e., the narrator) while this part is written by a scribe or an author (who is imagining the narrator and the narration). If this section belongs to the scribe, then the first section belongs to the narrator, and this puts us back in the previous ambiguity (narrator or scribe) of the previous argument. In short, in the last two paragraphs, we have contradicting conclusions regarding the one who makes AlKhames disappear when he “quit(s) believing” in his existence and the one who writes the script. Needless to remind here that all of what we are discussing is a fictional world that has been written by a *real* author (Gharaybah). This point takes us to the final paragraph that intensifies the overlapping between the author and the scribe.

In the last paragraph we read: “Furthermore, the scribe presents his apologies for what has preceded in this book of forgetfulness if it happened, or distortion or changing if it occurred, [while] we are aware of what would affect us of human’s forgetfulness and what would accompany us of human’s inability to attain the ultimate goal or reach the end. And always for you [readers] are the best wishes” (261). Here it is not clear who wrote this conclusion. Is he the real author or the scribe? Although one might incline to assume that the writer of the last paragraph is the scribe who writes down what the real author has been imagining, the other option (that the writer is the real author) should not be excluded unequivocally because if the closing two paragraphs are attributed to either the scribe or to the author, the confusion remains when other portions of the book are involved such as when the scribe intrudes and when AlKhames tells us what Gharaybah is going to write about in some of the events of his story.

If we agree, for the sake of argument, that the last two paragraphs are written by the scribe, then the role of Gharaybah in imagining the whole book (as stated in the last page) or in adding diagrams and epigraphs in the whole book becomes problematic. This is so because he (Gharaybah) takes the role of a scribe and deals with himself as a third person who imagines the whole story of AlKhames, which contains what AlKhames mentions concerning what Gharaybah writes about some of its events. Indeed, going in this ambiguous cycle that makes an author a scribe who writes a narration in which the author himself writes

about its events serves at least three purposes, namely disrupting hierarchies (of author, narrator, character), blurring boundaries between fiction and reality, and intensifying the ambiguity of the text. Indeed, all of these three features are connected to postmodernist novels.

On the other hand, if we assume that the last two paragraphs are written, like the whole novel, by the author (not scribe or narrator), then one would wonder why would the author take the role of a scribe and make sure that his readers are aware of his interruptions of the narrator's story. Needless to remind that he does not interfere when the narrator's and scribe's narrations contradict. Indeed, Gharaybah is the real author in the first place, and he can interfere and enter the world of the story without taking the role of a scribe. Further, if the whole book is imagined by Gharaybah, then how can we explain the intrusion of the scribe in the writing and paraphrasing all sections of the text as he plainly asserts (225). Here one would connect this to the Chinese box which, as McHale explains, is used by postmodern authors to disturb hierarchies and underline ontologies. The Chinese Box is about creating multiple (embedded) layers of events/worlds/characters, etc. inside one another. Such a "recursive structure" distinguishes postmodernist texts from previous ones (modernists and before) such as *Wuthering Heights* and *Hamlet* "that foregrounded the epistemological dimension not the ontological (as in PM)" (McHale 113). According to McHale, recursive structure in postmodern works have "the effect of interrupting and complicating the ontological "horizon" of the fiction, multiplying its worlds, and laying bare the process of world-construction" (112). It is worth noting that the boundaries of structures/levels in modernist works that involve such a strategy are clear and solid while they are ambiguous and/or crossed in postmodernist works. Hence, according to McHale, the Chinese Box is used as a "tool for exploring issues of narrative authority, reliability and unreliability, the circulation of knowledge, and so forth" (113). The blurring boundaries between author and character is also noticed in other Jordanian novels that mix between novel and autobiography, as will be discussed later.

The final issue that should be mentioned in this section concerning *The Sandy Maqamah* is the allegorical reading of the novel. According to some researchers, such as Mahdi Naser and Raed Jaradat, the novel is an allegorical work about Arabs and Arab history. For instance, according to Jaradat, the dry and barren desert as well as its terrains are an allegory of the Arab's current misery condition (771). For Naser, AlKhames is an allegory of authority and leadership (*Transformations of AlKhames*). Although such readings can provide us with logical interpretations to some places, people, and events, to many others they fall short and cannot offer convincing interpretations. Further, they do not tie together all parts of the story in a convincing way. Take for example the intrusions of the scribe, the supernatural events (like when his daughter shrinks and gets inside the wine cup), and the random adaptation of Arabic, Islamic, and non-Arabic events, phrases, names, and myths.

In addition to the haphazard intertextuality with Arabic traditional religious and cultural heritage that pervades almost every page in the text, there is no logical chronological order for the events nor is there a logical connection between many of its events. Instead, the text is obviously distinguished with its random recycling of many bits and pieces of Arabic and Islamic cultures that cannot construct a coherent picture of it, though, if done separately, it is possible to read them allegorically. And this is, perhaps, what makes critic Ibrahim Khaleel feel uneasy about it. According to him, Gharaybah's experimental sense makes his novel (*The Sandy Maqamah*) "loaded with useless materials" (*Critic Khaleel*).

Indeed, much of what Khaleel considers "useless materials" and what Naser reads allegorically is simply a pastiche from Arabic and Islamic mythology, literature, and culture. In an interesting interview, Gharaybah explains that the seeds of this novel came from the many stories that his grandfather used to tell people when Gharaybah was young (*Sahrat*). Of course, Gharaybah randomly added many other elements to what he still remembered from the original stories of his grandfather. In fact, the "work cited" page at the end of the novel and the final disclaimer reflect this random recycling of previous books and heritage.

According to Hadad, references in *The Sandy Maqamah* are to show that the text is just a combination of

different texts (170). Gharaybah introduces the thirty-one references with a disclaimer written in traditional rhythmic phrases: “This is the intertextuality list of what I referred to of books and what the storyteller has narrated. I do apologize for whatever my senses have missed and whatever my memory has unfaithfully recalled” (263). This quotation is loaded with many issues like intertextuality, metafiction, and pastiche. What is more relevant to us here is that it highlights the conscious cannibalism, to use Jameson’s term, of previous books and stories. It is as if Gharaybah is notifying his readers that all of what you read is a mere collection of what I read and heard. In other words, as a postmodernist author, Gharaybah “does not *originate* his discourse, but mixes already extant discourses” (McHale 200). The next chapter entitled “Pastiche” discusses this postmodernist feature with more details.

Even if we agree that the novel is possibly an allegorical work, which does not contradict Jameson’s notion of allegory, the hesitation between a literal and allegorical reading (tug-of-war, to use McHale’s term) is an important feature of its postmodernist sense.

According to Jameson, all literary works carry hidden messages, whether they are postmodern or not. Such messages, which are related to the style and form more than to the content, are usually supportive of the dominant ideology of the society. Further, these messages usually exist without the knowledge of the author (i.e. “political unconscious”). Therefore, even if we agree that *The Sandy Maqamah* is an allegorical work that is informed by political agendas, a number of factors, such as, playful tone, lack of historicity, etc. weaken its political connotations.

The oscillation between a literal and allegorical reading is contingent on McHale’s explanation of the metaphor’s role in postmodern texts. According to him, “all metaphor *hesitates* between a literal function and a metaphorical function [and] postmodernist texts often *prolong* this hesitation as a means of foregrounding ontological structure” (134). For example, while it is possible to consider the introductory phrase “all of them” that is mentioned in the gifting phrase “To AlKhames Bin AlAhwas... all of them” a

proof that AlKhames is an allegory of all Arabs, one would argue that the same phrase refers to AlKhames who, as a supernatural creature, lives different lives, goes through different stages, and adopts different names (5). The emergence of AlKhames from the desert's plant Hanthalah (i.e., Colocynth) is another example of the possibility of two readings, literal and metaphorical. Perhaps AlKhames's phrase "I am trying to find my way between reality and fantasy" can summarize this point (190). In addition to that, the metaphorical phrases that are scattered in the text might affect the literal or allegorical readings.

Through the text, we face some phrases that, more than others, encourage us to read them metaphorically especially when they are used in real context. For instance, during his prayer for rain, Hirmas, the temple's custodian, supplicates the Lord of palm-trees to rescue his sons and daughters whose "veins are made of milk and sun" from the drought that destroyed their animals (135). In this supplication real things (cattle animals with "hooves," drought, rain, palm-trees) are mentioned beside humans whose "veins are made of milk and sun." As these humans occasionally express supernatural potentials such as controlling sandy storms, one would wonder if the custodian's phrases are literal or metaphoric. This reminds us of magical realist works. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, for example, one would experience similar hesitation when he reads that Father Nicanor's bones "began to fill with sounds" after he exhausted himself in the fundraising (85). According to McHale, while such a phrase would most likely be read metaphorically in a normal text, in Gabriel García Márquez's novel, there is "a strong possibility" that it is not "metaphor but literal" (135). In sum, the hesitation itself between literal and allegorical readings in *The Sandy Maqamah* makes it fit very well among postmodern texts. Needless to remind here that even an allegorical reading is still problematic when other issues are involved such as the metafictional nature of the text (e.g., mixing between narrator, author, scribe, and character, as discussed earlier).

The Secret Garden:

The blurring boundaries and disrupting hierarchies are not limited to Gharaybah and Khreis. In recent Jordanian and Arabic novels, the boundaries between the novel and other literary genres are crossed. According to Khalel, the mixing between literary genres is a wide-spread trend that distinguishes recent works from old writings (*Critic Khalel*). Among the Jordanian novels that are worth mentioning is AlHadeqa AlSirriyyah [The Secret Garden] (2002) by Muhammad AlQaisi. In this novel that revolves around two lovers who travel to different capitals (Amman, London, Baghdad, etc.), the author, AlQaisi, mixes his own life with the life of the protagonist who is the narrator. The result of this is an overlapping of two genres, the novel and the autobiography. Many critics, like Khalel and Mohammad Shaheen, highlight this mixture, though with different views. According to Shaheen, who wrote the forward to the novel, *The Secret Garden* is a novel “that is written from an autobiographical point of view” (11). Khalel, on the other hand, argues that the novel is an autobiography since it would be considered so by any reader who would read it after the word “novel” is omitted from its outer cover (*Asasiyat* 157). Khalel demonstrates the overlapping between the novel and the biography of the author through several similarities between the life of AlQaisi and his character (158-160). Further, another researcher, Khaleel Shukry Hayas, traces the overlapping between the life of AlQaisi and his poetry and his novel (80-84).

Similar to postmodern metafiction that has some traces in older novels, the overlapping between fiction and autobiography is observed in a number of early works which appeared before the postmodern era such as James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and Charles Dickens’s *David Copperfield* (1850). However, as a new genre, the non-fiction novel became more popular in the second half of the twentieth century especially after the publication of Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* in 1966. Interestingly, the mixing between the two genres (novel and autobiography) is also noticed in some early Arabic fiction such as Muhammad Husayn Haykal’s novel *Zaynab* (1914) which is considered an autobiography

by certain critics (Khalel, *Asasiyat* 149). However, Khalel disagrees with the hasty classification of some critics who put some works in the wrong category (149-151).

To avoid such confusion, one must always recall that in the early development of the Arabic novel, it was not distinguished vividly from other genres such as Maqamah, autobiography, and diaries. As a new genre, one would expect to find some overlapping between different literary types in the early works of Arab writers. However, now that the Arabic novel has become more mature and its boundaries and conventions more established, deliberate mixings between genres, as in *The Secret Garden*, must be studied more carefully. Further, Khalel reminds us that the classification of any literary work such as early Arabic novels usually stems first from the reader's perspective; and therefore, critics have different views about such novels (152). Adopting Northrop Frye's view in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Khalel explains that even if an author includes some real events in his fictional work, they must be considered as fictional ones (150). Based on that, Khalel does not consider early Arabic works that mix autobiographical and novelistic elements together to be among the new category of overlapping genres that gained momentum since the last few years of the twentieth century (*Critic Khalel*).

Perhaps the earliest Arabic novel that mixes autobiography & novel genres deliberately and vividly is the Moroccan novel (*AlKhubz AlHafi* [Bread Alone], 1972) by Mohamed Choukri (Abdallah Ibrahim). One would argue here that the overlapping between autobiographies in Arabic novels began to gain its noticeable momentum since the late 1980s (as in AlRazaz's *Itirafat Katim Sawt* [Muffler Confessions] (1986)) and it flourished in the 1990s and after. Among the Jordanian and Arabic novels which are recognized with their overlapping with autobiographies (as well as diaries) are Monis AlRazzaz's *Jumah AlQafari* (1990) & *AlShathaya Wa AlFusaifisa* [Fragmentations and Mosaics] (1994), Emile Habibi's *Saraya Bint Al-Ghol* [Saraya, the Ogre's Daughter] (1991), Ibrahim Nassrallah's *Mujarrad 2 Faqat* [Just the Two of Us] (1992), and Hussein Barghouthi's *AlDaw AlAzraq* [The Blue Light] (2001). It is important to remember that the overlapping between real and fictional characters in some novels requires a certain amount of effort

from readers who should carefully read the author's real biography and his literary works. According to McHale, the "transworld identity" that mixes real-world persons (without reproducing proper names) and fictional characters requires "of the reader an act of decoding or decrypting" (206).

Khalel questions the desire of many writers to call their narrative and prose works, even works which can be called autobiographies, diaries, reflections, etc. due to the many similarities that they share with such genres as a novel. Agreeing with French critic Jean-Marie Schaeffer, Khalel maintains that the reason behind such a tendency is the marketing of such works since a novel is more profitable than other genres (*Asasiyat* 153). Indeed, drawing on Jameson, the commodification of cultural products that crosses the lines between economy and culture in the Jordanian (and Arab) society is an important sign of the spreading of late capitalist values and features therein.

Boundary crossing in *The Secret Garden* is not limited to the autobiography genre. Indeed, poetry and travelling journals and diaries are also overlapping with the fiction genre. According to Khalel, AlQaisi's work can be easily categorized within the Travel Literature category (161). For instance, the author records in detail, in a documentary style, the places that he visits and his impressions about them (161). He even names many chapters after the cities that he visited, and he mentions the days and months of his visitations. All of that is written in a style similar to the diaries of travelers or even to tourist booklets (162). In one page, for instance, he mentions how they (protagonist and his lover) roam around in Rabat (capital of Morocco) where they pass by a coffeehouse, buy tickets, enter the high gate of Shalah, walk around for hours, socialize under fantastic trees and greenery areas, listen to birds symphonies, etc." (*Secret Garden* 114). In addition to all of that, the author, who is also the narrator and protagonist, recalls much of his memories in such places that trigger him to remember other places, poetry, stories, etc. (Khalel, *Asasiyat* 162).

In *The Secret Garden* the line between poetry and novel is also crossed. Perhaps this is attributed to the fact that AlQaisi was mainly known as a poet before he wrote *The Secret Garden*. Therefore, obviously his immersion in poetry affected his book to the point that poetic elements pervade almost every page and even every paragraph of his novel. According to Khalel, the poetic style is more dominant than the prose style in *The Secret Garden* (163). He further explains that in addition to the emotional side of the narrative, the author's vivid overlapping with the narrator and protagonist makes the text closer to Lyric poetry that focuses on personal emotions and feelings rather than to fictional narrative that "should be independent from its creator" (i.e., should be about a fictional character) (163). Among the poetic devices that are observed in AlQaisi's novel are the dominant use of tropes, metaphors, and allegories, the flexible alteration of the sentence structure (to fit the rhyme), and the involvement of musical tunes and rhythms (163/4).

For example, we read in the novel "Behold she is untangling the threaded ball that is entangled inside me, thread by thread, and she is spreading them in front of me. She melts what is frozen inside me of water-springs and stages. So, I diffuse as butterflies in the place" (33). Here, like in many other locations, the poet/author uses metaphors (butterflies and threads) to express his feelings and emotions. Interestingly, there are no developed polyphonic voices or genuine development of events in the text (Khalel 166). In short, *The Secret Garden* is a combination of different genres (novel, poetry, autobiography, travel literature, diaries, and letters) whose boundaries are blurred continuously (Nawal AlSweilim 55).

The Shadows of the Amorous and Moviola:

The blurring between genres takes on new forms among younger authors who are more familiar with new technology and computer programming. For instance, in the Jordanian digital/hypertext novel of Mohammad Sanajleh, *The Shadows of the Amorous* (2016), the lines are crossed between texts, hyperlinks, images, music, films, videos, and video games. Film and cinema technology appears also to influence Arab

novelists such as (the Syrian-Palestinian novelist) Taissier Khalaf whose novel, *Moviola* (2013) is heavily influenced by movie-making and culture in both content and style (Khalel, *Asasiyat* 144-148).²

The Balcony of Delirium:

In Ibrahim Nasrallah's *Shurfat AlHathayan* [The Balcony of Delirium] (2005), the lines between different genres are crossed. For instance, one can easily notice elements of the Theater of Absurd, poetry, songs, newspaper excerpts, diaries, and visual art such as paintings, drawings, caricature/cartoon, and images. What is remarkable about this novel is that it inserts such genres to draw attention to the presence of these genres in a playful way, rather than engaging them in a critical way. Such elements of pastiche will be visited again in the next chapter on pastiche (chapter 3). However, one would here point out that in addition to crossing boundaries between genres in this novel, the lines between high and low culture are crossed in at least two ways.

In the last page of the novel entitled Tanweh [Notification], readers are told that the author's two teenage children contributed directly to the novel by writing some of its pages. The numbers of these pages are not mentioned. Further, the notification adds that the children contributed indirectly by "witnessing" the writing of other pages. Such a vague statement hints at consulting them or allowing them to choose some of the events of the story. At any rate, although involving more than one author in writing the same novel is noticed in some other novels (such as *World Without Maps* (1982) by Munif and Jabra), involving teens in writing adults' novels and participating in choosing its events crosses the line between professional and amateur writings or at least between adult and children's novels or stories. For instance, the picture of Tom and Jerry is possibly suggested by such teens who are helping their "daddy" in his work (13).

The other way of crossing boundaries between high and low culture in Nasrallah's novel is the employment of scenes from television and film, such as *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) and *Tom and Jerry*. The

involvement of film culture is also noticed in other novels of Nasrallah such as *Harb AlKalb AlThaniyah* (Dog War II) (2016).

Dog War II:

In *Dog War II* a number of postmodern features are noticed. One of them is the permeation of movie culture in the novel. For Jameson, movie culture reflects at least two manifestations of postmodernism, namely, the commodification of cultural products and the blurring boundaries between high and low culture. Almost in every section in *Dog War II* something related to movies is mentioned such as recalling a scene, critiquing an event in a movie, comparing people to actors and actresses, and talking about new technologies of movies (for instance, watching characters in four dimensions (151)). Further, the line between films and real life is crossed in other ways as when fictional elements from a movie (e.g., blood and a bomb) come out (literally) of screens and affect those who are watching (311 & 15).

The movie culture in Nasrallah's novel is also associated in many ways with Baudrillard's argument on simulacra and hyperreality as the main features of postmodernism. For instance, when Rashid kills a group of people in the hospital, we read, "the blood splashed from them as it splashes in modern movie scenes" (311). Here a reality incident is compared to a fictional scene, not the other way around. In a way, the film becomes the original and reality is a copy of it. Further, the culture of images that, at advanced levels, blurs boundaries between the original and the copy has another manifestation in the novel. For example, facemasks in Nasrallah's *Dog War II* become the real images of people. They are used by authorities to issue official IDs and to identify people (325). The exact similarities between people's real faces and the masks that they wear make them overlap sometimes to the point that people cannot distinguish between one another (the original and the fake) when someone wears another person's mask or does not wear his own mask (295, 319 & 327).

Even the barriers between humans and other objects and creatures are crossed in *Dog War II*. For instance, people adopt some skills from animals like seeing at night (Owl's Power) and animals begin to adopt humans' habits (24 & 266). In movies, the line between the past and present is also blurred since new movies which are mere reproductions of older movies draw their "pastness" from the "present" to suppress the past and to make the "present" the origin (123/4). The barriers between author and audience are also crossed through the generous usage of a metafictional technique that involves readers in the texts (as when he tells them that "maybe you are shocked to know that all of these ideas are Rashid's") and allows the author to comment on his own writing (as when he explains that all of what was written was just an introduction to what comes next (71 & 48).

The commodification of humans, objects, and services is also an important postmodern feature that is skillfully crafted in *Dog War II*. As the hegemony of capitalism penetrates many layers of society, almost everything becomes a commodity, such as people themselves (for instance, the protagonist is conscious that he is a commodity that has to be advertised), prisons, and ambulance service which becomes like real estate businesses for Rashid and his friends. (47, 51, & 70). It is worth noting here that the number and density of postmodern characteristics in Nasrallah's novels increased over time as we see in *Dog War II* (written in 2016) and *The Balcony of Delirium* (written 2005). Such an increase is attributed to the gradual saturation of Jordanian culture with the global culture of postmodernism.

Frankenstein in Baghdad:

Blurring boundaries between real and unreal in magical realism is also noticed in other Arabic novels such as in Ahmed Sadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (2013). The novel's focus is on the Iraqi life after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. Briefly, a homeless liar (Hadi AlAttaq) collects the fragmented pieces of the victims' dead bodies to build from them a new creature which is completed by adding a nose which he finds on the ground after the last explosion in Baghdad (34). Although people at the coffeehouse who

always listen to AlAttaq's lies out of entertainment do not believe his story about the creature that he creates, however, an officer from the Tracking and Pursuit Department believes that the (ugly) creature is responsible for the death of many people in Baghdad.

It is obvious that *Frankenstein in Baghdad* exhibits a number of postmodern characteristics. One of them is the questioning of the ontology. From the beginning to the end of the novel, the anonymous creature oscillates between existence and non-existence. Every time the reader feels that he has solid evidence that the creature exists, a new phrase or word proves him wrong. The unreliable narrator makes it clear from the very beginning that AlAttaq is a liar. He always composes stories to entertain the customers of the coffeehouse and to entertain himself. What makes his story true this time? Is it the testimony of the old lady or the recorded messages or the investigation of the Tracking Department? Each one of them has its own loopholes. Take for example the old lady, Elishva. She has lived by herself for a long time. She is waiting for her son that all the people around her think was killed. She talks to the saint's picture on the wall of her room. Does she hallucinate? When the saint informs her that her son will come, his body and arms do not move, though his eyes move to look at her and she does hear his voice (24). Even when she meets her son (perhaps the creature), the scenario is equivocal. The room is dark, she is wearing her thick glasses, and his face is wrapped and covered. She does not hug him, as expected from a mother who has missed her son for years. He does not get closer to her or show any kind of feeling. Was he her real son or someone else or no one at all?

The recorder is another equivocal evidence. AlAttaq agrees to record the creature's voice after being convinced by a journalist. However, we come to know that AlAttaq is drunk when he takes the recorder and perhaps when he brings it back, as he is usually drunk. Is he reliable? The journalist is not sure if AlAttaq recorded his own voice or the voice of one of his drunk and homeless friends. Further, when the journalist is forced to sell the recorder to the "author," the new owner maintains the same doubts. The identity of the "author" is also ambiguous. And when the "author" listens to the recorder, he thinks that he heard

this voice before on the TV. When he goes to the hospital, he hears the same voice. He walks in and meets AlAttaq's neighbor who gives him more information about the creature. The "author" remains in doubt, like the reader, but he decides to write a novel about it. Is it the same novel that we are reading? Yes and No. Some evidence indicates that it is another novel which is confiscated by the interrogation committee while other hints indicate that it is the same novel. In short, the creature, recorder, author, and novel remain ambiguous.

Interestingly, for a while the most reliable knowledge about the creature seems to come from the astrologists who are hired by the Tracking Department. However, we discover toward the end of the novel that they are fake. What intensifies this ambiguity are the contradictory pages that open and close the narrative. The novel opens with a report about the Tracking Department explaining that the department has been suspended by the Interrogation Committee because it performs duties beyond its responsibilities. In the final page of the novel, a disclaimer indicates that the Tracking Department that is mentioned in the novel does not exist in Iraq. Further, it tells us that the names and duties that are mentioned are not real. The novel's first page includes quotations from real people and from the creature himself. This mixture of real and fictional characters intensifies the ontological gaps of the novel. In sum, the many contradictions and discrepancies make it hard for a reader to decide whether the world of the creature and the Tracking department is real or not. Similar to the plant's creature of Khreis and AlKhames of Gharaybah, the creature of Sadawi reminds us of McHale's point that in postmodern works "characters are both dead and not dead, and their world both exists and does not exist" (34).

In sum, as postmodern features, blurring boundaries and disturbing hierarchies are noticed in several Jordanian novels that were written in the 1990s and after. It appears that this phenomenon intensifies over time as it is adopted by more authors. Therefore, it seems to be the most postmodern feature that permeates Jordanian and Arabic novels. In general, blurring boundaries is vividly manifested in the structure of narratives (narrator/character/author), genres (non-fiction/travel literature/autobiography), and

ontologies (fantasy/reality and magical realism). The position of the novel in the Jordanian culture reflects also the boundary crossing between art and economy. Over time, more elements of pop culture, especially film culture began to emerge as in Nasrallah's *Dog War II*.

In Samiha Khreis's *Opium Poppy*, boundaries between different elements such as fiction/non-fiction and fantasy/reality are blurred, and structural hierarchies of narrator/author and author/character are disturbed. Similarly, in Hashim Gharaybah's *The Sandy Maqamah* lines between genres, fantasy/reality, and narrator/character are crossed. In Muhammad AlQaisi's *The Secret Garden*, Khrei's *Diary of the Flood*, Sahar Malas's *Places*, and Ibrahim Nasrallah's *The Balcony of Delirium* genres are mixed. Mixing low and high culture is also another postmodern characteristic that is noticed in Jordanian novels such as in Ibrahim Nasrallah's *Dog War II*. Similar characteristics are also observed in other Jordan and Arab novels in the same period of time.

Since Jameson's theoretical discussion of postmodernism does not focus on the practical side, the views of Hutcheon, McHale, and Baudrillard on the metafiction, ontology, and simulacra, respectively, are involved in the study to explore the postmodern characteristics in some detail. Further, as some of the postmodern features overlap, at first glance, with Bakhtin's view on the novel, the discussion distinguishes between dialogism and the authorial/narrative voice, on one hand, and the mixing between genres and the overlapping of narrator/character/author, on the other hand. Simply speaking, the first category belongs to the general features of a novel while the other is specific to the postmodern works.

Weak Political Drive:

Before leaving this chapter, it is worth noticing that the political dimension is present in Jordanian and Arabic novels that exhibit postmodern characteristics. For example, according to Karema Ghitri, the main topic of Nasrallah's *The Balcony of Delirium* is the suffering of Arab nations under authoritarian regimes (167). Although such reading is possible since it reflects people's struggles to improve their life's condition,

it is weakened by many factors such as the prevailing of postmodern culture, the playful tone of the text, and the retreat of metanarratives (as will be discussed in chapter three and four). Therefore, the emergence of capitalism and the progress that it achieved in Jordanian society especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union (and the retreat of communism) should not be neglected at all while discussing political impulses. One would argue here that the capitalist values and characteristics that powerfully and swiftly began to spread through the region in the 1990s have influenced the Jordanian (and Arab) novels which were written in that era and weakened their political drive.

After a few years of the capitalist penetration of the Jordanian society, its impact on the Jordanian novel becomes more noticeable. Samiha Khreis's *Opium Poppy* (2000), for instance, lacks any significant political energy or project. This does not mean in any way that the political energy has already disappeared, or is going to disappear, from the Jordanian novel completely when capitalism reaches advanced levels in Jordanian society. Rather, it will be losing its subversive energy for varied reasons, such as, the lack of a collective socialist project, its involvement in the issues of "subgroups and ethnicities," and the appropriation of such energies by capitalism (Jameson, *Allegory* 214 & *Globalization* 66).

As we discussed before, the particularity of Jordanian (and Arabic) heritage and culture will continue to play an important role in shaping its cultural products. Further, as Jameson and Booker point out, competing forces continue to exist even in advanced Capitalist societies, and the residuals of previous cultural movements will always exist in subsequent cultural milieus. As political energy is vented out occasionally even in advanced capitalist societies, such as the Occupy Wall Street Movement in the U.S. and the Yellow Vests Movement in France, one would expect some political energies in Jordanian (and Arabic) culture and novels. We will leave this point for the final discussion after examining more postmodern features in Jordanian novels. The next chapter explores pastiche as a compositional technique, and the final chapter tackles fragmentation and the weakness of utopian imagination in Jordanian novels.

Chapter Three: Pastiche as a Compositional Technique

According to Fredric Jameson, the instability of the postmodern individual flattens his aesthetic feeling/expression and weakens his ability to develop or maintain his own personal style. In comparison to the modernist artist who was distinguished with his own individual style, postmodernist artists rely on previous styles and works to construct their own works (*Postmodernism* 14-16). In other words, instead of having the ability to create something original, postmodern artists resort to borrowing from the works and styles of the past (of modernism and before) to create something that continues to carry within it the elements of previous works. Jameson names this process, and its recycled product, “pastiche”.

This strategy of borrowing (or “cannibalism”) is essential in creating postmodernist cultural products. It takes place randomly without paying much attention to the historical and cultural context. It is, in many ways, similar to the recycling of plastic bottles, cans, toys, bags, etc. to produce something new (let us say, a chair) which has nothing to do with the original object. Hence, what distinguishes the postmodern pastiche from previous types of parodies and intertextualities is the lack of any real intention of pastiche to engage seriously the original works of the past with the new work (17). In other words, pastiche lacks any “satiric impulse” or sense of humor (17). It is a “blank” parody that does not intend any critical dialogue with the original source. Therefore, it does not carry any serious message or oppositional energy.

In addition to the lack of a distinctive style, the nostalgia to the past (or to its works) is, in some cases, another motive behind the pastiche in some cases. However, such nostalgia in the postmodern era is not genuine since it does not stem from the pain of missing the past and attempting to recreate it, as it is the case in non-postmodern works (19). Rather, it is flattened by the desire to generate profit from it i.e. commercial art and taste turn it into a commodity.

A number of Jordanian novels use pastiche as a compositional technique such as Hashim Gharaybah’s *The Sandy Maqamah*, Sahar Malas’s *Places*, and Mo'nis Al-Razzaz’s *The Sultan of Sleep and the Blue Eye of*

Yamama. This chapter demonstrates that Jordanian novelists rely heavily on Arabic literary genres and culture to compose their texts. While the main styles and genres that are emulated in these novels are the Maqamah, the Arabic traditional storytelling, and the *One Thousand and One Nights*, other genres, such as, travel literature, anthropology, poetry, and magazine/journalism are imitated in Samiha Khreis's *Diary of the Flood*, Malas's *Places*, and Ibrahim Nasrallah's *The Balcony of Delirium*. The remainder of the chapter explores the lack of political engagement and the playful nature of pastiche in Al-Razzaz's novel. For comparison purposes, the political dimension of Gamal Al-Ghitani's *Zayni Barakat* is discussed.

The Sandy Maqamah:

In *The Sandy Maqamah* (1998), which was discussed in chapter two, Gharaybah borrows from Arabic culture to structure his text. More specifically, he imitates previous literary genres and styles, such as, the Maqamah and the traditional storytelling. The main sources of Gharaybah's pastiche are Arabic tradition and his grandfather's storytelling (*Sahrat AlAdab*).

Perhaps the pastiche of the genre of 'Maqamah' is the most noticeable type of intertextuality with old resources. The pastiche of this genre, which emerged in the 10th and 11th centuries is reflected from the very beginning in the title of the novel (*The Sandy Maqamah*). It is also noticed in the content which draws, though loosely, on many aspects of the traditional Maqamah. Among the main characteristics of the Maqamah genre that is noticed in the novel are the subject matter that revolves around the adventures of a gifted hero who lives in the past and adopts old lifestyles; using rhymed prose to reflect the author's sublime rhetoric skills; having a narrator who narrates the hero's adventures; inserting poetry and proverbs in the prose. The Saj' (rhymed prose), which is perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the traditional Maqamah, adds an important (and special) flavor that makes the text closer in many ways to the Maqamah than to the historical novel genre.

Although the Saj' does not pervade the text comprehensively, as is the case in traditional Maqamah, the author's conscious attempt to use it frequently is apparent. For instance, after AlKhames listens to his assistant's ('Imwas) description of the "Other Land," he asks him: "Akhabirun Am Saji'?" [Are you reporting real news (i.e., a person who knows) or do you just speak Saj' (i.e., caring about the rhyme of phrases more than their content)? (88). Here the very fact that Gharaybah mentions Saj' as a literary technique which can be misused (by unauthentic content) indicates the familiarity of the author with this style. This becomes more convincing when one comes to know that Gharaybah is well-versed with Arabic literary genres and traditional books of Arabic literature.¹ The point here is that Gharaybah is reviving the Maqamah genre (and its techniques such as Saj') consciously and he mixes it with the genre of the novel intentionally.

Among the rhythmic phrases that the author narrates are the ones which were composed by an ugly man who invites his people to follow his call to rescue them from their tribulation. He says, "Wa AlNoor wa AlZhalma'... Wa AlArd Wa AlSama'... Wa AlRaml Wama Khaba mina AlMa'... Inna AlShajara la Talif... Wa AlMawashi Lanafiqah... Wa AlMabani La darisah..."[By the Light and Darkness... and the Earth and Sky... and the sand and whatever is hidden in water... all trees are going to perish.... And all animals will die... and all buildings will disappear] (191). In these phrases at least two rhymes are noticed (i.e., [a'] at the end of the first three phrases and [ah] in the last two phrases). More rhythmic phrases are noticed in other locations (51,54, 66, 96, 107, 132, 239).

In addition to the emulation of the genre of the Maqamah, Gharaybah's style is, in many ways, a pastiche of Arabic traditional storytelling of epics and folk stories. In different ways, the author imitates the style of the *Hakawati* i.e., a storyteller who entertains people at coffee houses or social gatherings by telling folk and traditional stories including the old stories of Arab wars/epics, such as the War of AlBasoos, Dahis and AlGhabra, Antarah bin Shaddad, Saif Bin Thi Yazan, and AlZer Salim). It appears that the author emulates his own grandfather's style of telling Arabic stories and epics (*Sahrat AlAdab*).

To maintain the storytelling style, it is obvious that Gharaybah recycles many Arabic stories while retaining their motifs and elements. He, for example, deploys the jinn's stories as an important element/motif in his traditional narrative in the same way it is employed in the *Arabian Nights* and in other folk stories. In many cases, one can easily detect the similarity between the original and the pastiche, as in the emergence of the Jinn from a tiny place. For instance, similar to the jinn that is released from Aladdin's magical lamp, the jinn in *The Sandy Maqamah* is released from a giant fruit (Talh) (107). In both cases, the jinn appears first as a column of smoke that eventually coalesces to form the Marid (giant jinn).

Other jinns are also mentioned in the story. AlKhames gets married to a female jinni and, as in the traditional story of Solomon, the jinns are employed to build certain buildings (89). In another location, the Marid, which seems to be a different genie or giant, replies to the greetings of AlKhames with "Lawla Salamak Sabaq Kalamak La Raddadat Janabat hatha AlWadi Sarer 'izhamak" [Had not your greeting come before your speech, the sides of this valley would have heard the cracking sound of your bones, i.e., would have been eaten (98). This phrase that is used in Gharaybah's novel is quoted from AlShatir Hassan's traditional story which is probably told by a grandmother to her grandchildren before they go to bed. Of course, the context in *The Sandy Maqamah* has nothing to do with the original story since there is no obvious message or engagement with the original source to be noticed. In fact, it appears that Gharaybah utilizes any opportunity to pick and choose, as if he chooses from a food menu in a restaurant, whatever he finds fitting of Arabic traditional stories and history to construct his text in the storytelling style. In many cases traditional stories are mixed together and/or are mixed with other elements in an unpredicted way.

What clarifies more obviously the random eclectic sense of the pastiche is the mixing of two different historical periods to produce a new context that has nothing to do with the original ones. In the Story of Dek AlJinn (which literally means the Cock of Jinn) AlKhames mixes the time of an Arabic poet (8th and 9th centuries) with the contemporary Arabic time by mixing the story of Dek AlJinn and the poetry of Talal

Haydar (born in Lebanon in 1937). According to AlKhames, after Dek AlJinn kills his wife, he burns her body and makes a wine clay-pot of her ashes. Every time he yearns for her, he kisses the pot, drinks from it, and recites the poetry of Talal Haydar, instead of reciting his own poetry that is still preserved within Arabic tradition and books (195). Here Gharaybah borrows two different elements (historical story and contemporary poetry) to construct a new story that does not engage the original sources in any serious message in the text. In other words, Gharaybah does not care about the historical context or the accuracy of the information that he uses so long as he can make an interesting story. This new story is just one element among many other heterogeneous parts that are borrowed from different historical and cultural backgrounds to form the aesthetic atmosphere of the Maqamah-novel of Gharaybah.

The random cannibalism of Arabic culture is an ultimate approach that is adopted to enrich *The Sandy Maqamah* with the style and flavor of the past, as one can see in the story of AlKhames's son and the Ibn AlSama' king. When Sinwu Allat visits the king, he delivers a powerful speech, praising and flattering him (237). The king replies with nice statements before AlKhames's son recites a poem to celebrate their drinking and friendship. This scene would seem normal if someone does not know or does not pay attention to the historical speeches, poetry, and the names that are used. The conversation between the king and the Sinwu Allat is in fact a real conversation that once took place between different people (i.e., the historic king of Yemen [Saif Bin Thi Yazan] and AbdulMuttalib, the leader of Makkah and the grandfather of the Islamic prophet Muhammad). Such a conversation occurred during AbdulMuttalib's visit to the king in the 6th century. The poem, however, that is recited before the king in the novel has nothing to do with that historical visit. It was actually composed by Abu Nuwas who lived in the 8th and 9th centuries. Interestingly, the name of the poet is not accurately spelled. Instead, a slight change that does not eliminate the identity of the poet is used (i.e., Abu Nu'as instead of Abu Nuwas). The issue of names will be discussed later.

Among the Arabic cultural elements that are deployed heavily in the novel to maintain the traditional style of storytelling are the culture of revenge and the Hamah. As discussed in the second chapter, the Hamah is a thirsty owl that cries out for the blood of the murderer. According to Arabic myth, the Hamah comes out from the top of the head of the murdered to demand the killing (revenge) of the murder, especially if the murdered is killed unjustly. In *The Sandy Maqamah*, the main character (AlKhames) is always haunted by the Hamah after his father was killed by AlRawwajj. Although AlKhames sets out to find and kill the murderer, he strikes a deal with him. When he returns, he claims that he killed AlRawwajj, so he can gain his honor in the tribal society. As the murderer is still alive, the frequent haunting of the mystic bird continues. Eventually the Hamah's problem comes to an end when AlRawwajj's son is killed (244).

In some cases, the author recycles a traditional story and retells it after he changes some elements. For example, in the Arabic historical War of AlBasoos, King Kulaib kills a camel that trespasses on his protected territories (Hima). That is, he prevents other camels and sheep from coming closer to his pastures and water-wells. Jassas kills the king for his transgression and the king's brother, AlZer Salim, determines to take his revenge. He gathers his people to fight after he abandons alcohol and women and cuts his hair and clothing. He refuses any proposal for peace. Similar events take place in *The Sandy Maqamah*, but with different names and slight changes to some of the events. In Gharaybah's novel, AlKhames's son kills the son of Hammam (Bisham) because he prevents his camel from grazing in his protected territories (61). Hammam gathers his people to fight after he abandons alcohol and women and cuts his hair and clothing (62). He refuses any proposal for peace even when AlKhames offers to compensate them with camels. The answer of Hammam was "AYasoomuna Allaban min Dam Bisham (He wants to give us milk instead of the blood of Bisham [his son]!)" (62). This phrase (replacing blood with milk) is a replica of a real historical statement which was said in the War of AlBasoos when the killer's family proposed camels for peace. Further, more traditional phrases are reused or recycled by the author.

In Arab culture, some phrases were preserved (letter by letter) in oral and written tradition from the War of AlBasoos. Some of them are related to the negotiation that took place after the killing of the king. The moderators, for instance, offer three solutions to the killer's father to avoid the war of revenge. The same offer (with slight change) is read in our novel (62). Similarly, the reply of the killer's father (AlKhames) in the novel is almost an exact replication of the original reply of Jassas's father (in the War of AlBasoos). AlKhames replies "To bring their dead son back to life [is not a possible solution], I cannot do it. To hand AlAkhnas [the killer] over to them [is not possible], [for] he is a young man who stabbed [with a spear and killed] and ran away. I do not know which land he headed to. To offer myself [to be killed in retaliation is also not possible], perhaps I will be the first one to be killed when forces meet [to fight]. Why should I hasten my death? But I offer to pay the blood-money: one hundred camels..." (62).

These phrases are well-known to be connected to the War of AlBasoos which is recycled in the novel. Yet, some poetry from another war is inserted in the novel in the same story. Historically speaking, the War of Dahis and AlGhabra' (names of two horses) took place around a century after the War of AlBasoos. In the War of the Two Horses, which was triggered after a horse race, peace was accomplished after years of war. An important poet (Zuhair bin Abi Sulma) composed a poem to praise the two gentlemen who made the peace. In the novel, the poet Ibn Abi Salma recites the same poetry that is supposed to be related to the War of Two Horses in the events of the War of AlBasoos. By doing that, the incidents of the two wars are mixed together and around 100 years have been eclipsed without any clue in the novel.

Although many parts of the original stories are recycled, some details have been altered to fit in the new context of the story of AlKhames. For instance, the names of tribes and people are changed: Huthail tribe instead of Taghlib, AlKhames instead of Murrah, AlAkhnas instead of Jassas, and Hammam instead of Alzeer Salem. In addition to that, a religious phrase related to the story of Mary and Jesus' birth is quoted from the Holy Quran and is thrown randomly in the midst of the ancient Arabs' fighting. When Hammam begins his preparation for the fight of revenge, AlKhames decides to abandon the area, obviously to avoid

any clash. He says, “so I withdrew from my people to a remote place” (62). This phrase is a combination of two phrases (“so I withdrew from my people” and “to a remote place”) that can be read in the Quran: “so she withdrew from her family” and “she withdrew with him to a remote place” (19:16 & 22). In both situations (in the novel and the Quran) the words ‘Intabath’ [withdrew] and ‘qasiyya’ [remote] are rarely used in Arabic in the same context unless the story of Mary and Jesus is involved. Hence, using these specific words and phrases to talk about a Bedouin tribal war that has no direct or indirect connection with the birth of Jesus, which took place many centuries before, is a good example of the random cannibalism of previous resources from different historical eras.

Among the historical incidents that are re-used in *The Sandy Maqamah* to construct its traditional storytelling style, after stripping them of their historical context, is the ancient pacts of AlMuttayiben and La’aqat AlDam (perfumers and blood-lickers) that took place in Makkah in the 5th century. Briefly, the clans of Quraish tribe (in Makkah) were divided over leadership positions (feeding pilgrims, military and banner, house of discussion, etc.) into two groups. The leaders of the first coalition (of five clans) put their hands in oily perfume and wiped it against the walls of their holy building to show their solidarity and commitment to their cause. The other five clans put their hands in the blood of a cow and licked it. In Gharaybah’s novel, a treaty takes place between a number of tribes (including AlKhames’s) to divide properties and lands (139). When opponents come to an agreement, the judge asks them to insert their hands in perfume. A tribe’s chief emphasizes the use of blood instead. Eventually, their hands are inserted in blood and the perfume is poured on them (140). And the day and the pact become known as “Yawm AlTeb” and “Hilf AlDam” [‘The day of Perfume’ and ‘The Pact of Blood’] (140). Here the recycling of the Arabs’ older incidents (argument and pacts) are recycled inaccurately (both historically and contextually) in the modern novel. Interestingly, the involvement of such old stories is not intended to write a historical novel or to construct a specific argument in the new text. Rather, they are mentioned here to maintain the style and flavor of traditional storytelling. In different ways, AlKhames’s story is an epic that is

composed of the recycling of Arabic traditional epics, stories, and historical incidents. Many elements in the text hints in this direction.

For instance, in this dispute, that ends with the Pact of Blood, the names of the tribes have nothing to do with the original tribes/clans that were engaged in the original pacts. Instead, other Arabic tribes are involved such as the tribes of Shayban, Huthayl, Bany Sulaym, AlHin, and the Oases' knights. Some are fictional (last two) while the first three are real Arabic tribes. Further, some of the names that are mentioned in the novel are connected to a different Arabic war that took place many years after the Pact of Blood, between the Persian and Arab armies. In the battle of Thi Qar (c. 609), the family and wealth of the Arab King AlNu'man were entrusted to the Shayban tribe which refused to hand them over to the Persian emperor who asked for them after he killed the Arabic king. Here, Gharaybah digs into the Arab tradition and culture to bring some names (King Ibn Ma' AlSama' and the Shayban tribe) to involve them in another context. In other words, the novel mixes different names and incidents from Arab 5th and 7th centuries to form a new story that draws on other cultural and historical elements before and after these time periods. Indeed, going back and forth in Arabic history to pick and choose whatever would help to form an *interesting* story (regardless of historical context or accuracy) is the strategy that is adopted to construct this Maqamah-novel.

To maintain the traditional storytelling style, Gharaybah randomly uses many cultural themes, motifs, customs, and elements to construct the ancient Arabic setting of the novel. We find in the novel, for example, morning greetings ('imta Sabahan), burying young daughters alive (Wa'd), protected pastures (Hima), idols, wisemen, myth (the earth is on a bull's horn), proverbs (the staff was hit for a wise man), music (Tanboor), king's entertainer (Nadem), and punishment (blinding eyes). Such elements, themes, and motifs are mentioned without any historical sequence or any serious attempt to build a specific argument. As mentioned earlier, Gharaybah's main objective seems to be retrieving and reviving old stories of Arabic culture that he heard from his grandfather or he read in traditional books. By changing and

mixing events, names, and cultural elements, his composed text is like a plate of salad that one would recognize its diced content (ingredients) without knowing how they got there or where they came from. It is as if Gharaybah has opened the fridge of old Arabic history, picked up some vegetables, diced them, mixed them together after adding some elements (salt, oil, vinegar, etc.) from the cabinet of Arabic-Islamic culture. We will revisit the Islamic elements that Gharaybah re-uses in his work.

The pastiche in *The Sandy Maqamah* is not limited to Arabic literary styles or to Arabic wars and customs. It extends to the names of famous Arabic personalities who are thrown into the text haphazardly. Not only does Gharaybah include in his text the names of famous Arabic poets, judges, tribes, chiefs, kings, etc. who, in real history, have never been together in one incident, place, and time, he occasionally changes their names by switching, omitting, and adding parts such as in Wael Suhban (instead of Suhban Wael) and Abu Nu'as (instead of Abu Nuwas) (116 & 237). Sometimes historical nicknames are granted to fictional characters such as Shaibat AlHamd (given to Hermas) and Um AlBanen (given to AlShayma') (136 & 183). Here one recalls Brian McHale's view that the appearance of real names in a fictional context is a postmodern strategy that undermines the ontological stability of the text (206). Interestingly, Gharaybah lists around 33 names of real and fictional poets, kings, judges, etc. that he uses to construct his novel (184/5).

The intentional (and misleading) mixing of people in Gharaybah's recycled texts appears vividly in an epigraph of one of the chapters. Instead of referring two lines of poetry to the real poet (AlShanfara), Gharaybah mentions below the two verses the name of an Arab scholar of Arabic language (Khalaf AlAhmar) (111). This mixing is apparently intentional, why would Gharaybah, who is well-versed in Arabic literature, mention the poetry and the name of the poem, then attribute it to another scholar (not a poet)? What strengthens this argument is the historical gap between the two men (i.e., the poet lived in the 6th century and the scholar in the 8th century). Attributing speeches falsely to other speakers, whether real or fictional, has been discussed earlier. It is also noticed in the attribution of the famous sermon of Qis Bin

Sa'dah Allyadi (who lived in the 6th century) to a fictional character (Usamah, son of AlKhames) in a different context, and for a different purpose (143).

Similar to his treatment of Arabic culture, Gharaybah picks and chooses from previous religious traditions whatever might fit in his story. One of these examples is the chapters of the book that reflects his usage of pastiche as a compositional technique. In the first pages of the novel, the list of contents displays around 12 chapters that are introduced as "Nass" [text] instead of "chapter" (3). This unconventional usage of the phrase "Nass of" to refer to the contents of the novel (Text of Darkness and Confusion, Texts of Loss and Mirage, Text of Disappearance, etc.) brings to mind the biblical books (Book of Genesis, Book of Exodus, Book of Numbers, etc.) Recalling that Gharybah has the habit of changing and altering names, one would claim that his unusual way of introducing the chapters of the novel is meant to emulate the biblical example. The biblical (as well as Quranic) influence does not end here. There are more direct influences that appear in the text such as the creation of the idol Allass.

When AlKhames opens the bag that his mother gives to him before she departs with her lover, he finds some gold nuggets (24). He mixes these nuggets with the desert sands and makes an idol which becomes a goddess for his people (24). Apparently, this story is borrowed from the biblical story of the golden calf of the Israelites (*Exodus* 32:4). Still, the name that is used for this goddess (Allass) is borrowed from the Arabic idol Allatt, which was the main goddess in the pre-Islamic Arab culture. Mixing different religious traditions together is another sign of the random cannibalism of previous resources. Perhaps mentioning some examples of the Arabic-Islamic heritage that is utilized by Gharraybah (to build his text) will expose the random cannibalism of previous resources.

The Arabic-Islamic historical events are among the recycled materials that are used in *The Sandy Maqamah*. According to history books, two major incidents took place during the expedition of the Al-Mustaliq tribe. In the novel, similar incidents take place with some changes. The first of them took place

when two young men from two Arab tribes quarreled as they were fetching water for their people. The two tribes were about to engage in fighting before Muhammad stopped them. An angry tribal leader takes an oath that when they return to their city, the honorable tribe (his tribe) will drive out the humiliated tribe, (the other tribe that immigrated earlier to live with them), out of the city. Muhammad made his people travel immediately and continuously for a day and a night without a stop to make them forget their dispute. A similar incident takes place in the novel when AlKhames's grandson quarreled with a chief's son (116). The chief (Zuhair) took an oath that when "we return to the Red Mountain, the honorable tribe (his tribe) will drive out the humiliated tribe from the mountain" (116). AlKhames interferes and stops the clash before it starts.

The other incident that took place in Arabic-Islamic history and was recycled in Gharaybah's novel is the Ifk (slandering/accusation). In the same expedition the wife of Muhammad was left behind accidentally because she was away looking for her missing necklace. A man found her alone in the desert and brought her back on his camel. Some people accused them of adultery. Interestingly, a similar story takes place in the novel. The wife of AlKhames (Najmah) goes missing too. We come to know that she did not notice that her tribe left because she was making a necklace from the meadows' flowers (115). After three days she comes back riding on the camel of a man who found her (115/6). Because some people accused them of adultery, AlKhames travels with his tribe continuously for five days, to make people feel tired and, thus, forget the shameful issue of his wife (117). Although both incidents in the novel display many similarities with the historical ones, the context is different. For instance, many parts of the novel (such as drinking alcohol and other social habits) indicate that AlKhames and his people are supposed to live in a pre-Islamic time. Therefore, adopting real events from the Muslims' history reflects that sense of pastiche that does not pay much attention to the historical accuracy or the cultural context. In fact, the only thing that puts all these stories together is Gharaybah's desire to tell an epic story that is similar to traditional stories that

are told by Hakawati. For that reason, he does not mind borrowing and mixing whatever he finds, without paying attention to their historical context or authenticity, to construct an interesting story.

There are other less important pastiches in the novel. One of them is the shrinking of AlKhame's daughter, swimming in a cup, changing back to her original size, and communicating with animals. Such incidents appear to be a pastiche of the children's book and cartoon *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Mrs. Pepper Pot* or *Old Lady Spoon*. Both are known to Arab children (and even adults) after non-Arabic children's books and television cartoons were translated from English (and other languages) into Arabic. The theme of stealing from the rich to give to the poor by good-hearted outlaws, as in Robin Hood's tales, is also noticed in the novel (194). However, this theme is most likely borrowed from the ancient Arabic culture of Sa'alek, (i.e., poor tribesmen who were disowned by their families and tribes, and so began to steal from the rich).

Before bringing this section to an end, one final point related to the history of Arabia in *The Sandy Maqamah*, which was aroused in chapter two, must be discussed. Briefly, it was mentioned earlier that some researchers, like Mahdi Naser, claim that the novel is about the progress of Arabic history and that AlKhames is an allegory for corrupted authority and leadership. Although this claim was already discussed and refuted by practical evidence from the text itself, it is worth another visit in the light of the recycled materials from Arabic and non-Arabic cultures.

As discussed in the previous pages, Gharaybah adopts the Maqamah and storytelling genres and uses a plethora of historical events, names, phrases, and other elements from Arabic culture, seemingly without any intention to engage them seriously in the discussion or to construct an obvious argument. Rather, apparently his desire to cannibalize previous resources has much to do with his nostalgic feeling for his grandfather's stories and, probably, to Arabic literature and culture. Although it might be argued that Garaybah has chosen a suitable topic (Arab Bedouin life) and adequate historical and cultural elements

(such as Maqamah genre, rhythmic phrases, and ancient Arabic atmosphere (i.e., desert themes, camels, wars, and myths)) in order to make his novel about the real history of Arabs, there are factors that prove this argument inaccurate. Some of these are the haphazard cannibalism of different Arabic and religious elements that eliminate their cultural and historical contexts: the erroneousness of the novel's historical sequence, the absence of any obvious political message; and the failure to abide accurately by the conventions of the (traditional) Maqamah (such as length, sublime rhetoric, brilliance of the hero and his tricks and eloquence). These features make Gharaybah's novel more of a partial and playful imitation rather than a serious engagement of Arabic history or even Arabic Maqamah. In many ways, the novel is a representation of what one would think about Arabic history, literary genres, and culture.

In sum, although Gharaybah uses different elements related to Arabs of the past and their culture, the eclectic elements and stories that are reproduced in the text do not follow, in many cases, any chronological order. For instance, the real sequence of these historical events that have been recycled in the text (as discussed before) is as follows: the Pact of the Blood-Lickers, meeting the king of Yemen (Thi Yazan), and the Incident of Slander. In the novel, the sequence is totally different. The Incident of Slander comes first, followed by the Pact of the Blood-Lickers, and finally, meeting the king of Yemen (Thi Yazan) (124, 140, 237). All these stories are cut and removed from their historical sequence, bracketed without their cultural context, and reproduced with a special flavor from ancient times to fulfil our desires to be entertained with something new that is seasoned with older literary styles and stereotypical representations of the past. Such a practice of pastiche in literature and history is similar to the combination of different architectural elements from different eras of the past to produce a new eclectic building or design. Indeed, *The Sandy Maqamah* is a Jordanian exemplification of Jameson's argument that the "historical novel can no longer set out to represent the historical past; it can only "represent" our ideas and stereotypes about that past (which thereby at once becomes "pop history") (*Postmodernism* 25).

Places:

Sahar Malas's *Matarih* [Places] (2014) is similar to *The Sandy Maqamah* in two ways. First, the style of the stories in the novel is a pastiche of the *Arabian Nights* and the Arabic traditional storytelling. Second, it is also inspired by the nostalgic feelings toward childhood stories and memories (*Critical Reading*). Although the main pastiche of the novel is related to traditional literary genres, Malas also imitates anthropological and historical authors in some sections of the novel.

The novel is a combination of at least seven stories that focus on the life of the city of Homs (Syria) in the past. In addition to the main story of the novel (Waled and his family) that is mentioned in chapter two, all substories are constructed in the traditional style of the Hakawati and the *One Thousand and One Nights* (i.e., each story is mentioned in episodes in order to be told or read in more than one session). Since each story can stand by itself independently, the "Hakawati/storyteller" can be discussed separately.

The story of "The Hakawati" is a serialized story that is, in many ways, an exemplary model of traditional stories that one might hear from a Hakawati at a coffeehouse or read in the *Arabian Night* book. Adopting the same traditional style, Malas's story is told by a Hakawati in a coffeehouse in Homs. Before narrating the story, the author introduces briefly the Hakawati and his sitting (i.e., describing his audience and the setting in the coffeehouse). Further, the story is divided into seven parts entitled "The Hakawati". The number of each episode is mentioned after the title, except for one title ("The Hakawati's Coffeehouse"). These parts are distributed in the novel (first part pages 53-55 and last part pages 217-219). By doing that, the author emulates the style of the serialized stories of Shahrazad. In different ways, the author makes her reader wait for the next part of the story, exactly as the audience at the coffeehouse waits for the next session of the Hakawati. Here Malas becomes the Hakawati who tells the story. Further, adding the numbers of these chapters (in the novel) is similar to the numbers of Shahrazad's nights, as one can see in the collection of the *One Thousand and One Nights*.

The subject matter of the Hakawati's story in *Places* is also similar to that of the real Hakawati in a real coffeehouse. In many cases, a prince gets married to a princess after solving problems or defeating some difficulties. Briefly speaking, a king asks each of his three daughters before he leaves for his pilgrimage to name a gift that he will bring for her. The youngest princess eventually asks her father to bring her an ambiguous thing whose name consists of perplexing words that she heard from an old lady. After the king searches for the meaning of that bizarre phrase, he discovers that it is the name of a prince who lives in a very far land. He decides to travel for the sake of his daughter. He meets with the prince who refuses to marry the king's daughter. The princess disguises herself and travels to meet and trick him, as the prince does the same. After exchanging a few tricks that prove the wit and intelligence of the princess, he eventually marries her. Interestingly, the witty tricks that are used by the prince and princess in the Hakawati's story are similar, in different ways, to the tricks of Dalelah AlMuhtalah and Zainab AlNassabah in the *Arabian Nights*.

The style of the story in the novel is, in many ways, a pastiche of the *Arabian Nights*. One of the most obvious examples is the story of the Hakawati (storyteller) who, following the example of Shahrazad, tells an episode every night to his audience. That episode usually ends at a critical and fascinating point that makes the audience (either King Shahryar or customers at the coffeehouse) very eager to listen to what will happen next. While in *The Thousand and One Nights* the king's desire to listen to the rest of the story prevents him from killing Shahrazad, the audience's desire to listen to the Hakawati's story make them come back to the coffeehouse the next night. In Malas's novel, the desire of a genuine reader (of *Places*) to know what will happen next to the prince and princess, in particular, and to Waled and other serialized stories in general, motivates him to continue his reading. Indeed, the similarity between *Places'* stories and *The Arabian Nights'* cannot be easily overlooked. One of these similarities is the embedded substories and the stories of the supernatural creatures such as the jinn.

In addition to blurring boundaries between fantasy and the real (as discussed in the previous chapter), the jinn stories play an important role in adding to the atmosphere of *Places* the ancient flavor of *The Arabian Nights*. Throughout the novel, the jinn is always present such as the jinn that appears as a lizard to Waled in the first pages of the novel when he is a child (26). Later on, the lizard turns into a female jinni to whom Waled gets married when he gets older (134-136). Waled's relatives of the jinn (his in-laws) appear several times in the novel, especially when they host him under the sea and when they appear in the incident of changing coal into diamond (71/177). In addition, there are other supernatural incidents which are usually attributed to the jinn such as the Marid (giant jinn) of the windmill and the strange incidents that happen to Raefah, Waled's stepmother (141). Raefah, for instance, sees the face of Waled's dead mother when she gets married to Sheikh Darweesh and sleeps with him in the very room of his deceased wife. The angry face appears at night and breaks the window while she has intimacy with her husband (20). Later, Raefah is pulled by the strange branches of the fig tree that grows up very quickly in a magical way after it was cut off by Waled's father (34). Such stories are, in many ways, similar to the stories of Shahrazad and the traditional stories that the author used to listen to when she was a child.

The embedded substories are another element that connects the novel to *The Thousand and One Nights* and the old storytelling style in Arab culture. Such stories that traditionally used to be told by older generations to the younger ones (grandmothers to grandchildren) are disappearing in the Levantine culture due to many reasons such as electricity and new technologies (e.g. cell phones and televisions). Malas is doing a great job in preserving some of that tradition, recycling it, and profiting from selling it in her novel, which is composed of traditional styles and recycled stories. At least two postmodern features are noticed here, namely, pastiche and the commodification of cultural products.

The description of Homs's culture, space, and history might be considered a type of pastiche in the sense that the author copies the style of anthropological and historical authors, as discussed in chapter two (i.e., the Pasha story and the description of people's culture and celebrations). Although all novels involve

materials from other texts, Malas does not seem to engage the anthropological/historical style and content in a positive dialogue. Therefore, readers are not encouraged to reformulate their ideas about the original texts. Rather, it seems that Malas involves a lot of information only to familiarize her readers with the culture and history of Homs. One would claim here that this desire is triggered by her nostalgic feeling of the old days of Homs. The problem with this approach is its excessiveness (i.e., too much information) that goes beyond the customary knowledge that is utilized in a conventional novel to construct its setting or to be engaged in its events.

Similarly, Sameha Khreis's emulation of the old style of the traveler's journal, as discussed in chapter two, is inspired by a nostalgic feeling. In different ways, the "Traveler's Narration" chapter in *Diary of the Flood* belongs in its style and content to the travel literature genre. We elaborated enough in chapter two on the difference between the conventional and the unconventional insertion of other genres in a novel (i.e. what Bakhtin considers novelistic technique vs. pastiche). However, we emphasize here that Khreis's and Malas's emulation of other genres' styles is performed in a jarring and loud way that maintains the main features of original works and makes them distinguishable (rather than blending them smoothly in the new text by engaging them in the story). Similar practice is noticed in Nasrallah's pastiche, which will be discussed next.

In sum, Malas adopts pastiche as a compositional technique to write *Places*. She adapts different genres and styles to create her fascinating text that attracts its reader and urges them to complete the reading of it. From literary works, Malas adopts the style and conventions of storytelling and *The Thousand and One Nights*. Many of these stories are similar to the *Arabian Nights* and the traditional epics, as they have been circulated orally for many generations in Arab societies. Involving jinn and supernatural events, episodes, and traditional cultural habits and customs are among the important elements that make *Places* similar to the old styles of the past.

It appears also that Malas adopts the style of anthropological and historical books to write her novel. The documentation of the culture of Homs (social habits, history, buildings, religion, etc.) makes the text a heterogeneous collage of many elements. Malas's familiarity with literary conventions (she authored many short story-collections and novels) makes one argue that this eclectic work, that is constructed thoughtfully, fits well into the category of postmodern texts.

The Balcony of Delirium:

Ibrahim Nasrallah's *Shurfat Al-Hathayan* (The Balcony of Delirium) (2005), exhibits another example of the pastiche in the Jordanian novels. In many parts of the novel, Nasrallah emulates the styles of magazine, newspaper/journalism, poetry, visual art, and diaries. In almost every part of the novel, one faces an unconventional segment of these genres. Such eclectic elements are used randomly to construct the text. Perhaps the most important of them are recycled from magazine, newspaper/journalism, poetry, and diary.

For instance, the pictures and the short chapters of the *The Balcony of Delirium* remind us of magazines and newspaper articles. One, for example, can see President Bush's picture after seeing an image of Tom and Jerry (11 & 13). Later on, one can see a picture of the Hollywood actress Ashley Judd (55). Other pictures of a sparrow, a hawk, a cage, etc. are also included (29, 39, and 72). Although some pictures appear to be playful such as the one of Tom and Jerry, others seem to be more serious as they are connected to political issues such as the pictures of the Twin Towers in 9/11, American soldiers torturing prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, Guantanamo prisoners, and the Palestinian child Muhammad Al-Durrah who was shot repeatedly along with his unarmed father by Israeli soldiers (88, 130, 141, and 135). Such pictures appear to be borrowed from online sources such as news websites and children's cartoons before they are inserted in the text of the novel. In addition to images, real excerpts, in their original formats from Jordanian (and/or Arabic) newspapers are also noticed in the novel (63, 124, & 138). It is

obvious that the author intends to make his reader aware that the text imitates the style of magazines and newspapers.

In addition to images and newspaper excerpts, *The Balcony of Delirium* borrows other elements that help Nasrallah build his eclectic text or, perhaps more accurately, his collage. Such borrowed elements blur the boundaries between different genres as mentioned in chapter two. In an interesting study, Karema Ghitri traces and discusses these genres such as the Theatre of the Absurd, poetry, journalism, visual art, songs, and diaries (185-198). The emulation of the poetry style would probably serve our purpose here.

In a chapter entitled “Rafefu Ajnihah” (Fluttering of Wings), one can read lines of poetry, instead of prose:

Those who never heard before the flapping of the birds’ wings,
 Never chased the wind in the alleys of the city, when they were little,
 Never experienced the taste of a kiss before they reached thirty,
 Would have felt happy like him!

Those who do not know the time of sunrise,
 Or the critical moment of the roaster’s cry,
 Or they never asked about the secret of loneliness that a lonely hawk suffers on an abandoned balcony,
 Would have felt happy like him!. (12)

The free verse poem covers four pages that also include two pictures and a conventional paragraph of prose. The poetic language is obvious in both the style and content. While the form of the lines is similar to that of a poem, the last line of each stanza (“would have felt happy like him!”) is another sign of the poetry genre. Similar to the title (Fluttering of Wings), there are other phrases (like, “chased the wind in the allies of the city” and the “loneliness that a lonely hawk suffers”) that indicate the poetical taste of these lines. Interestingly, the whole section does not develop the plot or events of the novel, though it stirs emotions and feelings.

The multiple sections of poetry in the novel are not presented in a conventional (or even a convincing) way that makes them blend into the novel and become a part of it (such as, being a poem written by a lover to his love, that might be inserted smoothly within the events of the text). Rather, such fragmented sections of poetry are inserted jarringly to be distinguished from the rest of the novel, similar to the pictures and newspapers excerpts. As mentioned earlier, the difference between the pastiche and Bakhtin's view regarding the ability of a novel to incorporate other genres is discussed in chapter two.

As a final word on Nasrallah, although some of the genres are emulated and written professionally, some others, such as the Tom and Jerry pictures, appear to be included playfully, even childishly, especially when one reads the author's final note that his teen son and daughter (14 and 12 years old) contributed in the writing of the novel (196). In many ways, the playful tone of the novel, and the contribution of the author's children in the writing, weaken the political engagement of the text. The fragmentation of the Jordanian novel and the political dimension will be visited again in the next chapter.

The Sultan of Sleep and the Blue-Eyed of Yamama:

Mo'nis Al-Razzaz also borrows different elements from Arabic culture to compose the *Sultan AlNawm wa Zarqa AlYamamah* [The Sultan of Sleep and the Blue-Eyed of Yamama] (1997). Adopting the style of storytellers, Al-Razzaz's text is a collection of at least eight anecdotes or stories that intersect and overlap in very odd ways.

The two main stories, which are divided and distributed through the text, focus on two characters, namely, the Sultan of Sleep and the Blue-Eyed of Yamama. Both characters have abnormal powers that reflect a mixture between reality and fantasy. While the Sultan of Sleep controls people's sleeping and dreams, the Blue-Eyed of Yamamah has the ability to read the minds and thoughts of people. She also can predict the future. The Sultan of the Sleep falls in love with the Blue-Eyed of Yamama. He takes her to his kingdom to protect her after the Well of Secrets (Ber AlAsrar) is killed. The Blue-Eyed oscillates between dreams and

reality and she meets historical and fictional characters. She eventually gets married to the Sultan of Sleep, but later, he returns her, upon her request, to her hometown (city of AIDad). A sandy storm attacks her city and an American film crew records the scene. Although the Sultan of Sleep passes away, what seems to be his ghost continues to appear to the Blue-Eyed to take her with him. The novel ends with the Blue-Eyed looking for her seashell that makes melodic sounds while the Sultan of the Sleep is waiting for her.

The tone of the novel is like that of traditional stories and fairy tales. As a storyteller, the author actually retells some traditional stories. He reproduces, for example, the stories of Aladdin and Cinderella in a new way. In the novel, Aladdin, is introduced as a citizen in the city of AIDad. Like the traditional story of Aladdin, he once rubs his late mother's old lamp and talks to the genie that is unleashed from it (18). While he is at a night party, he talks to Cinderella who requests his attention before the final stroke of midnight and before she leaves her shoe behind (19). Aladdin also talks to the Hasna AlShatirah, who is a twisted female name of AlShatir Hasan, who is known, in traditional storytelling of Jordan and the Levantine, as a smart (and lucky) hero.

In addition to the previously mentioned names that Al-Razzaz recycles from Arabic traditions, he further borrows more elements from the *Arabian Nights* such as the hiding-hat, Sindbad, and Shahrazad. All of that is blended together with the author's own fantastical inventions (Sultan of Dream and the city of AIDad).

To explain some of these traditional names, in Arabic (legendary) tradition, the Blue-Eyed of Yamama was a girl who, due to her strong sight, would see riders from far distances; and thus, she was able to warn her people of invading armies before they drew near them. The name 'Sultan of Sleep' is taken from a saying "AlNawm Sultan" [Sleeping is a Sultan] which shows the ability of sleeping (when someone is tired and sleepy) to supersede any other activity (socializing, studying, etc.). The city of AIDad is a fictional city

that seems to be invented by the author to refer to the Arab world whose inhabitants speak the language of Dad, a distinguished sound in Arabic language that is darker and heavier than the regular sound of 'd'.

In the same traditional storytelling style, the story of Aladdin continues with more recycled materials, though in a playful mode. Briefly, we come to know that Romeo tries to kill himself via a pistol, but he survives the injury that destroys his hearing (26). Juliet does not find the bottle of poison and, therefore, she does not kill herself (26). The narrative goes back to Aladdin in a mental hospital with Hasana' AlShatirah, which is borrowed from Arabic tradition. Aladdin listens to his visitor's adventure with the Ber AlAsrar (Well of Secrets), which is also derived from an Arabic statement about keeping a secret. The Arabic saying "Sirak fe Ber" which means "your secret is in a well" indicates that your secret will never be disclosed since it is in a deep well. It is about entrusting someone with your secret as AlShatirah does with Aladdin when she tells him about her adventures with Ber AlAstar.

According to the story, AlShatirah has the habit of wearing the hiding cap (also from Arabic tradition) and living in secret with the Well of Secrets (30). Aladdin upsets her when he informs her that the Well of Secrets knows all of that (38). Although Aladdin wears the hiding hat to be able to leave the hospital in secret, he is spotted by a security guard who can see him, but she allows him to leave and takes AlShatirah instead of him (37). At this point Aladdin and Hasna Alshatirah exit the narration (like Cinderella) and they are never mentioned again.

In many ways, Al-Razzaz is more interested in using as many traditional elements as he can to build his novel and decorate it. According to Abdallah Ridwan, Al-Razzaz uses such elements only as a means to extend his narrative (303). In other words, the stories of Aladdin, hiding hat, Cinderella, Romeo and Juliet etc., are not intended to engage the original resources and their issues with the current text, but to construct and adorn the new text with some previous elements which are severed, bracketed out of their historical context, and re-used in a new way.

The Political Engagement and Playfulness:

Perhaps the first impression that an ordinary reader gets from *The Sultan of Sleep and the Blue-Eyed of Yamama* is a sort of political engagement that is expected to render the novel a subversive attempt to undermine dominant powers in the Arab world. This view might be supported by some evidence such as the Sandy Storm and the topics of freedom and dreams. For example, when someone reads the introduction that emphasizes the right to dream and the potentiality of dreams to make people break boundaries, he might conclude that the lack of freedom in the Arab world leads people to vent their suppressed thoughts in their dreams. Yet, a careful reading of the novel will prove the weakness of such a political reading due to the novel's playful tone, resistance to interpretation, and the lack of authenticity and unreliability of the narrator.

The Sultan of Sleep and the Blue-Eyed of Yamama is in many ways a playful, rather than a serious, postmodernist text. In fact, some of its postmodern characteristics were already discussed by some critics such as Muhsin Al-Musawi. According to him, the 'mocking irony mode' of the text is not intended "even for one time to solve any real issue or to tackle any true matter" (*Procrastination of Interpretation*). Rather, the novel is "a mere narrative that is shaking, contradicting, and changes [its elements and positions]" (ibid.). Obviously, Al-Musawi's reading of Al-Razazz's novel depends mainly on Linda Hutcheon's perspective that focuses on the subversive nature of postmodernist texts that challenge dominant narratives without offering alternatives. In some ways, there are elements in the text that might encourage such a political reading. There are frequent bits and pieces of political remarks that appear randomly here and there in the story.

Yet, the playful style of the text prevents any serious (political) interpretation, as it, rather, weakens it. For example, according to Al-Musawi, the novel does not abide by the conventions of an allegorical reading (ibid.). In other words, the purposeful inconsistency, contradictions, and interruptions which permeate

the text, make any logical reading of the novel's allegories almost impossible; or at least unconvincing. What intensifies this is the novel's tendency to implement what Al-Musawi calls a "deconstructive (Derridean) strategy" that prevents any solid or final meaning to names, terms, and ideas (ibid.). In Al-Musawi's words, "every time a unit (or a part) of a narrative reaches a conclusion (on a specific meaning or reading), contradicting ideas and readings intersect and challenge it". Therefore, instead of having decisive readings of the text's elements, ultimate interpretations are always delayed or, to use his term, "procrastinated" [Mumatalah] (ibid.). Such strategies bring to the mind Ihab Hassan's early observations of postmodernist texts, or what he calls "The Literature of Silence," which is distinguished with indeterminacy, disruption, deconstruction, anarchy, superficial, and formlessness (19 & 92). In Al-Musawi's reading, the text is postmodern in the sense it challenges official narratives and the concept of truth while it (at the same time) does not offer any alternative.

One would argue here that the instability and procrastination of the meaning (as observed by Al-Musawi) is also applied to the pastiche of stories in the novel because of at least two reasons, namely, the pastiche does *not* maintain an accurate context or connotation of the original sources nor does it engage them (in their new context) in serious discussions of social or political issues. In fact, the playful mixing of the stories of Aladdin and the magical lamp, Cinderella, Romeo and Juliet, Hasna' AlShatirah, and Ber AlAsrar appear to render any consistent reading impossible, and thus, diminish the text's political engagement, rather than strengthen it. Further, in addition to the playful tone of the text, the lack of authenticity and the unreliability of the text are among the strategies that are implemented to weaken the texts allegorical and political reading. Let us delve more into the text to explore these strategies.

In the story of Aladdin, for instance, we come to know that after he comes home drunk, he discovers that the electricity is disconnected (16). He searches for an old lamp and rubs it, as his mother used to do, and the genie is unleashed (18). Aladdin addresses the genie sarcastically "You are the genie (Marid) of Aladdin's lamp? Then where is your frightening laugh that we read about in *The Thousand and One Nights*,

and where is the thick smoke that should appear with you? ... are you not supposed to rise before me as a powerful and scary genie?" (18). In this part of the text, some elements such as the non-scary looking genie, Aladdin's sarcastic tone and comment, and his drunkenness, tend to give the reader the impression that something less serious is taking place.

When the response of the genie is read, the playful mode of the whole conversation is emphasized. Al-Razzaz writes: "The machinery voice [of the genie] laughs softly and said: We are in the era of technological revolution, O Mr. Ala' [short for Aladdin]. Life develops. People, jinn(s), ghosts, and magicians progress with the development of life. Also... why are you interrogating me. Order and ask me [for what you want].... And let us leave aside questions and answers" (18). Here the re-production of the *Arabian Nights* in a modern setting, (i.e., the development of jinn(s) and ghosts in the era of technology) reflects the playfulness of the text and diminishes the possibility of a serious engagement, as is the case in modernist works. In addition, the random recycling and embedding of more traditional stories in the story of Aladdin increases this playful tendency and undermines the authenticity of the narration and the unreliability of its main character. This happens when Aladdin's story takes a new turn as the author introduces a totally different story that has very little to do with the original story of Aladdin.

Starting in a new section, Al-Razzaz writes "In another narration, Aladdin wakes up the next day after alcohol [that he drank the night before] played with his memory ..." (19). Here the text does not tell us who said or wrote the first or the second narrative. Further, there is nothing in the text that indicates the authenticity of the first or the second narrative. Simply, the story of Aladdin begins with him being at a night party. While he is kissing a beautiful lady, "another woman patted his back and said playfully: Why did you do this to me... It is almost midnight... I am Cinderella, and I have to go to my house running when the clock strikes twelve... Since the very beginning of the party, you did not look at me even for one time... Is it not Cinderella's right to move in the last minutes before she leaves and forgets her shoe?" (19).

In this section, the author mixes (and recycles) two different stories to construct a new one i.e., Aladdin meeting Cinderella. This reflects, in many ways, the way the book is compiled, that is, the entire book is a combination of recycled materials that are rearranged, modified, and added to with some personal taste. The author does not care about the fidelity of Aladdin/Cinderella stories to the original sources. Further, he does not seem interested to communicate a certain message when he mixes these stories together. Apparently, there is no logical interpretation to inject Cinderella in Aladdin's story as it does not add anything major or minor to the structure or the theme of the story. It appears that the author's main purpose is to involve as many stories (or names) as he can from Arabic culture. However, Aladdin's story and the genie of the map seems more important than Cinderella, who disappears completely (and surprisingly) from the text.

The story of Aladdin with the genie is altered by adding something new that is not mentioned in the original tale. The author changes Aladdin's request to fit in his story. Instead of asking the genie to rescue him from the cave, Aladdin requests that the genie makes him an ordinary person who has normal eyes, instead of his magical black eyes that make people admire him (18). Aladdin discovers after he regains his consciousness from his intoxication, that he is an ordinary person (21).

The authenticity of Aladdin's story is questioned in numerous ways, such as its location (i.e., whether it is a dream or not) in the whole narration about the 'Sultan of Sleep' and the reliability of Aladdin's (contradicting) narrations in the book. For instance, before Aladdin regains his normal eyes, we come to know that he cannot recall at all what happened to him last night after Cinderella talked to him (20). Further, many parts of the narration are missing, or they contradict one another when both narrations are compared. From the first narrative, the narrator tells us that Aladdin cannot recall anything after midnight; and therefore, he cannot remember anything about the magical lamp or his wish (20). One would wonder, did he really see the genie or Cinderella? Did he become normal? Was he really abnormal before? If he becomes normal, was it the genie or Cinderella or something else that restored his normal condition?

The reliability of Aladdin is questioned in other ways. Indeed, his mental capacity is not dependable. For instance, after noticing some changes that resulted from restoring his normal sight, Aladdin walks in his company building while recalling Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. After reflecting, he concludes that contrary to Kafka's unreal world, he lives in reality (22). That makes one believe that his story is real (in the context of a literary work). However, all of a sudden, Aladdin discovers that people's eyes and heads rise to the roof and his brain flies in the air (22/3). This makes his story unreal again. Next, he is admitted into a mental unit and his brain comes back to him (23). Was he dreaming? Reality in a dream? Is he really ill or did people around him accuse him?... etc. Later, the story is interrupted by Romeo and Juliet's embedded story before it goes back to Aladdin in a mental hospital with Hasana' AlShatirah. Aladdin here seems normal (really?!!) as he converses with his visitor. Shortly, Aladdin disappears suddenly, like other characters, from the narration. This continuous mixing between existence/non-existence, rationality/madness, traditional/non-traditional narratives, etc. diminishes Aladdin's reliability and strips him of any serious or political representation.

Still, in the blend of these traditional stories that are used by the author, one can notice some ideas or hints that might allude to serious issues such as: the Sandy Storm, the City of Al-Dad, and the normalization of Aladdin's eyes that once provided him with a special influential power in his community. The Sandy Storm, however, seems to be more important as it is mentioned in the title of a chapter, noticed by some characters (such as Aladdin and Juliet), and connected to other stories such as the Blue-Eyed and the American film crew. Perhaps the discussion of the Sandy Storm and the deficiency of its political engagement will shed a light on the weakness of other (supposedly) political hints.

The story of the Sandy Storm is mentioned in different contexts. The first one is related to the Blue-Eyed of Yamama who warns the people of the storm before it hits the City of AlDad. This can be taken more seriously when it is compared to the second one that is associated with the story of Romeo and Juliet.

Later in the novel, we come to know that when the storm hits Romeo's window, a broken piece of glass

stabs him in his chest and he bleeds to death. The context of the Sandy Storm is playful here, especially when we take into consideration the whole story of Romeo and Juliet and Juliet's playful conversation with Richard about her love of Romeo i.e., difficulty of having marital intimacy, Richard's loss when he was a child, and the bad smell of Richard's socks (178-190).

The Sandy Storm is mentioned for the third time in more detail. When the Sandy Storm begins to reach a doctor's house who is interested in plants, a nameless professor thinks that the Sandy Storm is an artificial cinematic trick that is made by a Hollywood film crew to shoot a scene. Nevertheless, the doctor gets worried and begins to bring to his house his plants to protect them from the storm (65). The scene becomes more serious as the situation gets out of control. The professor runs away to a close shelter where he sees the doctor fighting with his plants for the air inside his house (66). The plants begin to beat the doctor and to crawl around his neck to kill him (67). The professor interferes at the right time and shouts at the three cameramen to stop recording and to rescue the doctor, and they do so (67).

Yet, the author undermines this narration. In another section in the novel, Al-Razzaz begins with a puzzling phrase "In another narration whose events are different from the previous one..." (79). It is noticed here that the narrators of these three accounts (M, Professor, and Sarhan) are scarcely known. Even if one would consider the letter M in the title of the first narration "Narration of M the novelist" to refer to the author himself, the first phrase ("It was said, and God only knows the truth") undermines that (47).³ In any case, the third narration is made to look different from the previous one in many ways. For instance, the Blue-Eyed is introduced first with other characters. Then the narration shifts in an odd way to the shooting of the film and the Sandy Storm (80). In the narration, the author continues his playful strategy of creating doubts and uncertainties. We read, for example, "It was said, and God knows the truth, that the director is going to name this city: the City of AlDad" (81). Further, the reader is involved in the events of the novel i.e., is addressed as if he is there watching the whole scene, "and you the watcher, you can see [and notice] that these plant creatures respond to him and love him" (82)

As the new narration goes on, we come to know that “modern cinematic tricks” that are used in the scene are “more real than real” (83). The narration continues describing the doctor who begins his struggle with the plants which are fighting him for air. In this version that contradicts the previous one, an old lady screams asking them to stop, but no one pays any attention to her (85). Eventually, when the doctor is on the edge of death, the spectators scream and command the film crew to stop the shooting. When they do not, a clash takes place and policemen interfere (86). The narrator comments that “Some cameras are shooting the clash. What is this? We do not know whether this is a real thing or a scene from the movie. We cannot recognize anymore the line between acting and cinematic tricks on one hand and the original reality from the other hand” (86). Eventually firefighters come, break the door, and rescue the doctor (86). The narrator tells us that different opinions continue to circulate whether what happened was a scene from the movie or not. Some believe that “the separating boundaries between Cinematic tricks and reality have been completely demolished” (86).

The shooting of the Sandy Storm is very important for our discussion for many reasons. One of them is the doubtful reality of the Storm, which echoes the undecided reality of the whole narration of the novel and the weakness of its political remarks. It is obvious that the author (Al-Razzaz) who lived in the second half of the twentieth century (1951-2002) is consciously adopting many postmodern techniques in his writing. Some of them are undermining reality and truth and creating many doubts about the story of the Sandy Storm, (and in fact, about the whole novel), in order to make it oscillate between existence and non-existence (i.e., real or unreal) within the boundaries of a work of fiction. To undermine reality/truth and to create doubts, Al-Razzaz uses perplexing phrases such as “In another narration, ... It was said, and God knows the truth,... more real than real, ... We do not know whether this is a real thing or a scene from the movie, ... the separating boundaries between Cinematic tricks and reality have been completely demolished”. Further, he intentionally blurs the boundaries between the acting and actors, on one hand, and real situations and ordinary people, on the other hand, as in the recording of the clash scene between

spectators and actors. Not only does the author embed discrepancies in his narrations to create uncertainties, (such as the interference of an old lady or audience), but he also blurs the boundaries between real and unreal situations (cinematic tricks or real situation) and between reality and fantasy as in the magical plants of the doctor which have paranormal characteristics.

What is of most concern to us here is the issue of reality and truth in the incident of the Sandy Storm. One would argue that if the reality of the Sandy Storm is not confirmed and the boundaries between a made-up movie and real life are blurred, then the whole narration is not real, or more accurately, its reality and truthfulness are undetermined. It is needless to remind here that all of what we are discussing is bound by the conventions of a fictional work. The point that one would emphasize is that the whole narration of the Sandy Storm should not be treated as a serious message that the author attempts to communicate to his readers. In other words, although a Sandy Storm might refer to a political issue (i.e., a catastrophe that is approaching), Al-Razzaz's playful style that he deploys, (dreams, doubts, pastiche, contradictions, and mixing between reality and acting), would weaken that understanding and ruin its effect on the readers. The same argument can be applied to other political hints that are scattered randomly in the text.

Further, the Sandy Storm is mentioned just a few times in the rest of the novel, and this weakens its engagement in the text as a political message that the author attempts to communicate. Towards the end of the novel, for instance, Romeo dies when the storm breaks a window and a piece of flying glass kills him. Here one finds it difficult to imagine a serious message being conveyed, especially when the whole context is taken in consideration, such as the artificiality of the Sandy Storm which is possibly created by the film crew, Romeo's relation with Juliet that focuses on their struggle to achieve a sound marital intimacy, and the ultimate alternations of the story of Romeo and Juliet that render it very different from the original. In addition to that, the whole notion of random recycling of other stories and materials from different resources and the whole atmosphere of dreams, which "blur all boundaries," emphasize the playful tone of the novel (7). It is worth noting here that the historical sequence of the novel's events and

characters is another factor that weakens its political engagement. We will discuss this specific point in the next chapter on fragmentation and the loss of utopia.

In short, there are many factors that reduce and weaken the political energy of the novel which might be claimed by some researchers. Some of these factors are the random cannibalism of previous works, the novel's playful tone, resistance to interpretation, and the lack of authenticity/unreliability. In sum, Al-Razzaz's novel has more to do with the "general mode of playfulness and parody" that is associated with postmodernist text, and it has less to do with the historical and political works of post-colonial literature (Booker, *Monsters Mushroom Clouds* 25). Therefore, dealing with the text as a postmodernist one will offer a more logical and complete interpretation to all of its parts without exclusion. Perhaps a brief comparison with another text will show the difference between the pastiche and intertextuality.

Zayni Barakat:

The Egyptian Gamal Al-Ghitani's *Zayni Barakat* (1974) displays a great deal of intertextuality/parody that distinguishes it from the previously discussed novels. The *Zayni Barakat* portrays the life of a 16th century Egyptian official (called Zayni Barakat). The story focuses on the deteriorating social and political condition of the Egyptian society and the advancement of Barakat in his career and corruption.

Although Barakat refuses in the beginning to take the market's inspector position out of piety and righteousness, he eventually accepts it after he is pressured by the ruler, people, and the grand religious figure (Mufti Abu Saud). After a while, it is discovered that Barakat is corrupted too i.e., he forms alliances with corrupted officials and rich merchants, and he builds an empire of spices to closely monitor the Egyptian people. The masses are too frightened to complain, and injustice, oppression, and poverty spread while enemies threaten to occupy Egypt. Barakat, who secretly sides with the invaders, is appointed as the Main Market Inspector by the new authority.

There is no doubt that the political theme is present in the *Zayni Barakat*. In fact, the author admits that he wrote the novel when he noticed the many similarities between the Egyptian condition in the 16th century and in the 1960s (*Marifah*). More specifically, the novel reflects the loss of hope that many Egyptian intellectuals have experienced in the last decades. But what is more important for us in this section is the intertextuality of the novel i.e., it is not a pastiche.

The novel's narrative is very polyphonic in the sense that it contains a traveler's diary, official announcements, religious texts, official declarations, letters, secret security reports, sermons, and the like. The most distinctive feature of the book is its old language. Although the Arabic language did not change drastically over centuries, the writing style of the 16th century is different than that of modern standard Arabic today. The author adopts the style of the Middle Age Egyptian historian Muhammad Ibn Iyas (died in 1524) to write a 20th century novel. Therefore, his writing is more rhythmic, has shorter sentences, loaded with Arabic proverbs and religious vocabulary and connotation, and colored with rare vocabulary from that era, especially in official and commercial milieus. By adopting the conventions of a previous literary era, the *Zayni Barakat* is, in many ways similar to John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) that adopts the literary conventions of Victorian literature. Still, Al-Ghitani's novel differs from Fowles's work in some ways, such as less employment of metafiction techniques and its apparent political engagement.

The political engagement of the *Zayni Barakat* is similar, in some ways, to E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* (1975), that displays some pastiche (like Ragtime music) and tackles a past historical era. Although *Ragtime* is considered a postmodern text, it involves social, historical, and even political issues, such as the workers' movement in the early 20th century. Jameson, contrary to Hutcheon, maintains that the novel is apolitical. According to him, the presentation of the past in postmodern art through pastiche and the mixing between reality and fantasy eliminate the historical context of that past i.e., "waning of the content" (25). As a result, *Ragtime* "can no longer set out to represent the historical past accurately. Rather, it can only

‘represent’ our ideas and stereotypes about that past (which thereby at once becomes ‘pop history’)” (25).

Obviously, Jameson’s concept of pastiche does not apply to the *Zayni Barakat* because of its vivid engagement of the historical past with the present (as the author apparently states) i.e., the deployment of intertextuality to compare the current deteriorating condition of Egypt to the deteriorating condition of the past. In short, although the style of the past is imitated in the *Zayni Barakat*, the political and historical dimensions continue to dominate the text. Therefore, the *Zayni Barakat* might be considered as a unique combination of the two eras, the postcolonial and the postmodern.

Conclusion:

In sum, a number of Jordanian novelists appear to adopt pastiche as a compositional technique to construct their texts. Generally speaking, Arabic heritage and culture are the main sources of such pastiche especially in Gharaybah’s *The Sandy Maqamah*, Malas’s *Places*, and Al-Razzaz’s *The Sultan of Sleep and the Blue Eye of Yamama*. Further, other Arabic genres (such as, travel literature, anthropology, poetry, and magazine/journalism) are emulated in Khreis’s *Diary of the Flood*, Malas’s *Places*, and Nasrallah’s *The Balcony of Delirium*.

Interestingly, the political dimension continues to find its way into some Jordanian novels. But this dimension is weakened by some factors and strategies such as, the playful tone, random cannibalization of traditional stories, indeterminacy, lack of authenticity, and unreliability. Therefore, it does not seem that these novelists are interested in communicating a serious message, nor do they intend to engage the original material in the new context for a political or social project.

Since Al-Ghitani’s *Zayni Barakat* was written earlier than the Jordanian novels, one can notice a sort of political engagement in its intertextuality, something that gradually disappears over years with the spreading of the postmodern culture. In addition, the political impulses that are noticed in postmodern

Jordanian novels can be attributed to two things. First, Jordanian postmodernism is still in its early stage, in comparison to American postmodernism, and this allows some elements from previous eras to survive and to emerge frequently in Jordanian cultural products. Second, the lack of a genuine stability in the political and economic condition in Jordan and in its surroundings continues to impact the progress of Jordanian society towards advanced stages of postmodernism. In the final chapter, the political dimension will be explored further when discussing the fragmentation and the loss of utopia in Jordanian culture and novels.

Chapter 4: Fragmentation and Loss of Utopia

For Fredric Jameson, psychic fragmentation is an essential feature of postmodernism (*Postmodernism* 14). Compared to the modernist subject (the autonomous bourgeois monad) who once suffered paranoia and alienation, the postmodern subject becomes fragmented and schizophrenic. In other words, while the modernist subject had a “solid and stable” self through which he battled to make sense of the troubling and changing world around him, the postmodern subject does not have a stable self to make sense with. In addition to the quick changes of the present(s), the growing fear that surged with and accompanied the spreading negative outcomes of technologies and wealth in the postmodern era plays an important role in the cause of this phenomenon.

The fragmentation of the self affects the postmodern subject in at least two ways. First, it paralyzes his ability to sense time or temporality (16). Second, it weakens his ability to express or to develop his own artistic style, as discussed in chapter three. Perhaps the most vivid consequence (or manifestation) of the loss of the historical sense in the postmodern era is the loss of utopian energy.

The loss of historicity paralyzes the subject’s ability to envision a different utopian future. This happens when the postmodern subject loses his potential to make sense of the historical processes of the past or the present, and, therefore, weakens his ability to figure out the alternatives of the future. In other words, in addition to weakening the subject’s capacity to realize the continuously changing present(s), the loss of historicity renders the postmodern subject’s ability to organize his past and future “into coherent experience” inactive (25). As a result, instead of having a strong “cognitive mapping” that involves the past in the process of envisioning the future, the past will be reduced to "heaps of fragments" and the future will never be imagined as a utopian alternative to the present (25). In other words, the lack of a real/genuine feeling and understanding of history and time leads to false beliefs in the status quo, and this cripples any desire or aspiration to utopia since utopia, in this case, has been already achieved. In fact, the absence

of utopia prevents any desire to search for other alternatives that are fundamentally different than the current one. Among the tools and techniques that are deployed in literary (and cinematic) works to reflect the fragmentation of the subject and the deterioration of his cognitive mapping are: the nonlinear narratives, centrifugal collage, relativism and indeterminate interpretations, fragmented characters, schizophrenia and loss of “temporal bandwidth” (Booker, *Postmodern Film*).

Parallel to the psychic fragmentation and the lack of utopian energy of the postmodernist works is the growing inclination of many of them to be more pessimistic. This can be attributed to a number of reasons such as the negative outcomes of technology and capitalism (e.g., nuclear weapons and the Cold War), suspicion of master-narratives, and the increasing hegemony of capitalism and its corporations. As a reflection of those fears and worries, cyberpunk, dystopian, apocalyptic, horror, and fantasy novels and films are among the distinguishable genres (and works) that emerged or gained a vivid momentum in the second half of the twentieth century. Perhaps Booker’s *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War* (2001) and *The Post-Utopian Imagination* (2002) are among the best works that discuss the decline of utopian energy and the rise of dystopia, anxiety, and suspicion in postmodernist (American) cultural products.

Psychic fragmentation and the lack of a utopian alternative are central to several Jordanian (and Arabic) novels. This chapter explores fragmentation and the loss of utopian energy in Mo'nis Al-Razzaz’s *Matahat AIA'rab fi Natihat AISarab* [Arabs’ Maze in Mirage Skyscrapers] (1986) and *The Sultan of Sleep and the Blue Eye of Yamama* (1997). Some of the fragmentation manifestations that are discussed here are the doubleness of the main character, overlapping between characters, mixing names, formal disjointedness, and shifting topics. This chapter also investigates some literary elements that echo and/or emphasize the loss of utopia, such as the playful style, pastiche, equivocal phrases, and the unreliability of narrators. Further, some of the major societal changes that affected the Jordanian (and Arab) society are also discussed. These include the decline of the left, the growing influence of the capitalist global culture, and the

emergence of the consumerist culture. To broaden the scope of the study, Jean-François Lyotard's incredulity toward metanarratives and Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulacra are involved in the discussion. The last part of the chapter examines the Jordanian novel's position regarding Islam (i.e., whether it is a master narrative that offers an alternative utopia or not).

Arabs' Maze in Mirage Skyscrapers:

The lack of a unifying identity is perhaps the most dominant feature of Al-Razzaz's *Arabs' Maze*, in which the dual nature of the main character (Hasanein) reflects, in many ways, the instability of the Jordanian subject since the last years of the twentieth century. The *Arabs' Maze* is a difficult and rich narrative that mixes characters, events, and times in a perplexing way. The novel begins with some disconnected thoughts before Hasanein turns to talk about his childhood and his leftist father, a doctor who used to treat poor patients for free. Hasanein then talks about his (ambiguous) death and his suffering from Hasan II who constantly haunts him. After that, the events of the novel revolve around three topics: the Usbah, the draft that Hasanein writes, and the ambiguous building that he visits. The Usbah appears to be the communist party (or the Left, in a broader sense) that began to deteriorate after its members (like everyone else in society) became immersed in the capitalist economy and the consumerist culture, and thus lost its drive and changed its approach to social change.

After losing hope in the Usbha, and with other challenges, Hasanein decides to hang himself. Just before that, he drafts a historical account about the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire in the second decade of the twentieth century. Later, he confesses that the draft's characters rebel against his will and refuse to take the roles that he assigns for them. Hasanein is taken (by a mysterious agent) to the Arabic Organization for Disease Prevention that is located in a "huge and luxurious building similar to the Holiday Inn hotel" (257). On one level he meets Shahrazad who blames him for writing an incomplete draft that is disjointed and missing important information (282). Shahrazad continues Hasanein's story that involves

in its events Lawrence (of Arabia) and the son of Christopher Columbus. In the last part of the novel the narration becomes more fragmented and complicated as events and characters overlap and the line between reality and fantasy is blurred.

Perhaps the most distinguishable aspects of the novel are its pessimistic tone and the fragmentation of its main character who oscillates between Hasan I and Hasan II. Although the name 'Hasanein' is used in Arabic culture to refer to one person, Al-Razzaz uses the literal meaning of the name (two Hasan(s)) to portray the duality of the main character.

Especially in the first part of the novel, Hasan I appears to be the narrator who relates the story and complains of Hasan II who haunts him all the time. Yet, Hasan I is not fully distinguished from Hassan II since he always overlaps with him. For instance, Hasan I explains (to a doctor) how his body and his absence are mixed with Hasan II's body and absence in a confusing way. According to him, and in a Kafkaesque tone, he one day wakes up in an abandoned house and begins to recall his own burial (33/4). After wearing his clothes and leaving his place, he discovers that people think that he is a ghost (36). He meets Hasan II who tells him that he (Hasan II) was sleeping in a cave for centuries (41/2). But then, Hasan I is told by Hasan II that he (Hasan I) was absent for years because he was unconscious in a coma (53). When Hasan I refuses to accept the idea that he was in a coma or dead, Hasan II eventually confesses to him that he (Hasan II) is the one who was absent, but he left his body in the house of Hasan I (53/54). The confusion between the two Hasan(s) regarding their character and their conditions is obvious. For example, both characters carry the same name (Hasan), both were absent (either sleeping or in a coma or dead), and both have a body that they can exist out of (Hasan II left his body in Hasan I's house and Hasan I was a ghost roaming around after his body's burial). The perplexing overlapping between the two continues throughout the novel. It is difficult to reach a solid conclusion regarding the reality of Hasan II and his world. Perhaps the (ambiguous) death of Hasan I and Hasan II explains this point.

As mentioned earlier, Hasan I was sleeping before he woke up and met Hasan II, who informed him that he was sleeping as well. Although there seems to be some differences between the two types of sleeping, (e.g., being asleep in an abandoned house or being asleep in a cave for years, or for centuries), one finds it difficult to decide who was sleeping and who is who. More specifically, one gets confused when he reads Hasanein's statement to the doctor that Hassan II is the one who was absent even though he left his body in Hasan I's house (54). This confusion intensifies when the narration adds some perplexing details such as when Hasan II tells Hasan I that "I left my body or your body laying and I left" (54). Similarly, more details in the testimony of Hasanein's wife add to the problem instead of removing the confusion. According to her, she saw his body both buried and in a coma. The narrator (who is supposed to be Hasan I) informs us that he (after the burial or coma) met his wife, who got scared because she thought that he was a ghost before she told him that he *was* in a coma (85/6). The narrator continues: "she emphasized to herself that she saw my body buried. Then a man came carrying another who was in a coma, and he said that the corpse was my body. She could not recognize my face" (88).

Here we have at least three possibilities: Hasanein (or Hasan I) is a ghost, in a coma, or dead. Perhaps other parts of the text would help to clarify. But the following paragraph in the text, for instance, does not help us at all. The narrator says "I screamed in the middle of the street that no one shot me, and that Hassan II mummified my body so that he can disappear and hide. But no one heard. The street was empty, and my wife disappeared as if she was a dream that disappeared after waking up" (88). The sudden and unexpected disappearance of the wife of Hasan I makes us think of him as dreaming or hallucinating or imagining her existence. But here arises a question: is it not also possible that everything else (such as Hasan II being a ghost, in a coma, and buried) is just a mere imagination?

The oscillation between these three possibilities (being dead, or in coma, or ghost) continues in other parts of the novel. This oscillation has an essential impact on the nonstop mixing between Hasan I and Hasan II who continue to separate, reunite, and overlap in the entire novel. Especially in the last portion

of the novel, it becomes almost impossible to distinguish between the two Hasan(s) or, even, to get an obvious message or unequivocal interpretation of what occurs to them. In short, the excessive mixing between Hasan I and Hassan II and between what happens to them emphasize the mindful attempt of Al-Razzaz to portray a fragmented character suffer doubleness, or more accurately, “schizophrenia” as Hasan I himself proclaims (61). Interestingly, psychic fragmentation and duality are distinctive features in Al-Razzaz’s other work, *Jumah Al-Qifari* (1990) in which the unreliable narrator (Jumah), who cannot distinguish between fantasy and reality, mixes between himself and the character (Numan) about whom he writes a novel.

Yet, there are some differences between the two Hasan(s). Generally speaking, Hasan I is a modern character who believes in science and progress while Hasan II is a backward traditionalist. Hasan I identifies himself as a “rational man” who believes that the problems of the Third World will only be solved through “secularism” (32/3). He speaks contemporary Arabic, believes in technology/computerization, and does not believe in the “Metaphysics and the un-materialistic interpretations” (55). On the other hand, Hasan II is a backward traditionalist who uses very traditional and medieval Arabic (43). Although it appears that we have two separate and distinguished identities of Hasanein’s doubleness, the boundaries between their thoughts and ideologies are blurred in a manner that reflects the overlapping of their physical characters. It appears that keeping track of the two is not only a challenge, but an impossible task. In fact, in many cases the overlying of the two Hasans confuses even a skillful reader, challenging him to re-read some sections or to flip pages to compare and contrast in an attempt to untangle the threads of the narration or to identify events and characters, so much so the reader seems to be a co-author who is involved in creating the meanings of the novel.

In an interesting scene that obscures the modern and traditionalist Hasan(s), Hasan I is convinced by his friend Fazza’ to attend a lecture about the techno-electronic age. While he is sitting as an audience in a corner of a hall, Hasan II appears suddenly and takes the seat of the speaker. Surprisingly, Hasan II uses a

traditionalist language to deliver an impressive speech, calling for a revolution of science, technology, and secularism (171). Here Hasan II maintains his traditionalist language, but he adopts Hasan I's progressive/modern thoughts. Contrary to this, in another situation, while Hasan I talks about his "secularist vision," "scientific approach," and "computers," he uses Hasan II's medieval language instead of using a modern one (158). Interestingly, the overlapping between the two characters appears obviously in the following perplexing (and odd) phrases that mixes plural and singular pronouns to refer to the two Hasans as separate and united persons: "We were I was talking (Kunnaa atakallam). Sweat was pouring off his forehead, but I did not dry it out" (157). In these peculiar phrases singular and plural pronouns are used to indicate the doubleness and/or the oneness of the two Hasans. Perhaps the first phrase which consists of two Arabic phrases "Kunnaa (we were)" and "atakallam (I was talking)" is an obvious example of the overlapping of the two characters. Further, in the following phrases, Hasan I uses traditional language to describe the reaction of his audience and, then, he resumes his speech in a modern, standard Arabic. Juxtaposing such scenes that permeate the text and reading them repeatedly prove that the duality of the main character and the fragmentation of his psyche are deliberately shaped by the author.

The fragmentation and overlapping of Hasanein has another manifestation in the novel. He, for instance, overlaps with others such as the Hakeem and Thyab. In an interesting section of the novel, Hasan I or Hasanein complains to the Hakeem about his problems with Hasan II, the Usbah, and people around him (93-99). The explanation goes on for a few pages before he (Hasan I) discovers that he was talking to someone who looks like him,

When I turned to him, his face was my face, and he was dreaming about me. Out of my fear I thought I was nothing more than a spectrum that passes in the dream of the Hakeem or in his daydream. Or [I was] a ghost that visits the dreams of the dwellers of caves.

The Hakeem was shivering. I covered him with my cloak, and I did not tell him: O Hakeem! O Savior! O Hasan II: get up. I did not tell him goodbye while I was leaving his cave-clinic to the street where I found Hasan II waiting for me on the opposite sidewalk, carrying a cloak to cover me with and laughing. His satanic laughing shook the dunes of the miragelike buildings and the neighborhood houses. (99)

In this quotation Hasan I (or Hasanein) complains to someone whom he addresses as the Hakeem. He spends some time complaining to him about the intrusion of Hasan II in his life and about his excommunication by the Usbah. One would assume that the Hakeem is a different and real person who acts independently of Hasan: he listens to Hasan I, breathes heavily, walks, and points to Hasan I to sit down. Surprisingly, however, in the end of the above quotation Hasan I reveals to us that when he turned to the Hakeem, he discovers that he looks like him. Did he not notice that before?! Further, he tells us that he did not address him as O Hakeem, O Savior, O Hasan II. One would wonder, was that person supposed to be three in one? Nevertheless, Hasan I continues to deal with him as another human being, so he covers him with his garment before he leaves. But surprises never come to an end. When Hasan I leaves the clinic, he sees outside it Hasan II waiting and carrying a cloak to cover him. One would wonder, is Hasan II carrying the same cloak or a different one that is supposed to replace the original one that was granted to the Hakeem? Did this happen by chance or does Hasan II know about the cloak and the Hakeem? Further, why does Hasan II laugh at Hasan I and how does his laughing shake the mirage like buildings? Were the buildings real or it was Hasan I's imaginations? Did he fantasize the Hakeem, Hasan I, and Hasan II? In fact, there is nothing solid in the text that indicates that it is a dream, unless if we consider the whole narration (as) a dream. And such an option, though it might be possible, is still confusing as it does not hold for the entire narrative because the text itself includes different dreams (and sometimes with different layers) that mix fantasy with reality.

Thyab is another character that overlaps with Hasanein. Toward the middle of the novel we come to know that Hasan I writes a draft of a historical account (he calls it a play) about the Arabs Revolt against the Ottomans (198-252). In the draft, Hasan I names Adam AlHasanein, who is "the Savior and the awaited Mahdi," Thyab (217)². Interestingly, later in the novel, Shahrazad appears before Hasan I and introduces herself as the granddaughter of Thyab (280). She comes to complete and to correct the story "that Hasan I did not finish". Surprisingly, Shahrazad informs Hasan I that Thyab does not have four children as he

mentioned, but only “one whose name is Hasanein” (281). Further, she informs Hasan I that “Hasanein has fragmented into two when Thyab fragmented into a thousand Theeb and Theeb” (281).

Some elements in this quotation are troubling. For example, how a person is split into two parts, or a thousand parts, unless we consider it a metaphorical fragmentation? But this reading does not solve all issues. For example, how can a fictional character (i.e., Thyab) have a real granddaughter (Shahrazad) who visits the author and corrects (and completes) his information? How is it that Thyab, who is also Adam AlHasanein, is related to Hasanein’s early confession in the beginning of the novel that he is “Hakeem AlHasanein, Adam AlHasanein, Hasanein Adam AlHasanein”? (6) Is he writing about himself as the main character of his own novel? How is it that Adam AlHasanein turns out to be Thyab while he, (Adam AlHasanein) is, as mentioned in the beginning of the novel, chased by Thyab who breaks down into a thousand Theeb and Theeb (6). More reading of the text brings more confusion, and more details emphasize the inconsistency in portraying the novel’s characters.

When Shahrazad shows up to complete and correct Hasanein’s story, she tells him, “Let me narrate to you the truth of what happened after the dream or after the alternative world slipped away from between your fingers” (283). Here one would argue that, based on Shahrazad’s words, all of the novel that Hasanein (Hasan I) wrote was just a dream or a fictional (literary) work (i.e., a novel in a novel). But this is not accurate as it contradicts many parts of the original novel such as the relation between the author, Shahrazad, and the characters of the embedded novel. For example, Shahrazad turns out to be a real person who is the granddaughter of a fictional character. Interestingly, in the next page, Shahrazad tells Hasanein that Thyab AlAdam or Hasanein AlAdam was not a dream. Rather, he and his people (Saaleek) were real and “perhaps you [she addresses Hasanein] were Thyab himself or maybe you were one of the Theebs who broke away from him” (284). Here boundaries are blurred between dreams (or fiction) and reality, and Hasanein becomes doubtful of his own reality. Therefore, he decides to make sure that all of what he is experiencing is not a dream. He says: “I looked around to make sure that I am awake and not sleeping...

I pinched my cheek to make sure of my awakening. I screamed out of pain and she winced from that [scream]" (284).

In many ways, the mixing between reality and fantasy intensifies the mixing between the novel's characters and elements. For instance, the information that is added by Shalan and Iskandar about Hasanein adds more layers of confusion to the reality of Hasanein himself and his death. In an interview about the *deceased* Hasanein, Iskandar claims that he knew Hasanein very well as he raised him since he was a child (292). He further explains that Hasanein named himself Adam or Thyab after he decided to live in the desert like his father (292). The names that are mentioned by Iskandar to refer to real people are the same names that Hasanein gives to the fictional characters in his novel. The same names are considered to be real by Shahrazad who thinks that Hasanein is one of them. But Hasanein, who is still *alive*, listens to the recorded interview of Iskandar and Shalan and gets frustrated because of the excessive lies that he has just heard. Iskandar's narrative becomes uncertain as Hasanein rejects it. Although one might be inclined to believe that Hasanein is still alive and that his narrative is true (in comparison to Iskandar's and Shahrazad's), other clues in the novel such as his shady meeting with Shahrazad, his doubleness, and his entire narrative that is overflowing with discrepancies render this view equivocal. Perhaps writing such a novel in this random manner is easier than identifying its elements or trying to make sense of all its events.

The reality of Hasanein and the relation between Hasan I and Hasan II remain unanswered. Even when Hasanein attempts to explain the relationship between his reality and the characters of his story, his explanation does not help us. He, for instance, explains to a mysterious lady, who wears a white garment in a mysterious building, that he "most likely" lived a previous life with Thyab in the Desert of Mirage (289). Using "most likely" makes us doubtful of the existence of Thyab and the accuracy of Hasanein's testimony. In any case, Hasanein wants to prove to the lady that he lived a previous life by mentioning the novel that he wrote. He tells the lady: "Then how can I write a fictional work that turns by chance into reality?!" (289). He then proceeds,

I think that (the heroes) did not want a finalized text. A finalized text makes them get bored. They wanted a special text about them. But_ at the same time_ they complained of the disjointedness of the text. They said they never knew what they wanted or what they intended to do. They said that I made them live only one life. They said complainingly: we cannot compare our current life with other previous lives nor can we fix their trajectories in future lives. What is the value of life if the “rehearsal” of a life is the life itself!

I do not know. Maybe they are right. [In fact] What I wrote was just mere drafts. Even I mixed up the names [of the characters] in a very strange way. Ghafari, for example, in one scene becomes Mustafa in another. And thus, in short, I could not control my work anymore. (289/90)

In this lengthy, yet important, quotation, Hasanein (or Hasan I) is not certain about the reality of his story that mixes names and complicates the relation between reality and fantasy. He thinks that he “most likely” (i.e., not fully certain) lived with Thyab, who is a character in his work. He does not mention here or in any other place anything that clarifies the reality of Shahrazad or elucidates his conversation with her (i.e., was she really the granddaughter of Thyab? Was Hasan I really dreaming and writing about an alternative world? Was he Thyab himself or one of his sons?). Many questions remained unanswered. Perhaps the last two phrases in the first paragraph shed more light on the reality of Hasanein and his world/characters.

According to Hasanein, his characters complained because they could not compare their “current life with other previous lives”. This means, their lives in the draft of a fictional story is not distinguishable from their previous real lives (this is just in case we assume that Hasanin is writing about the lives of real people). Furthermore, they wonder “What is the value of life if the ‘rehearsal’ of a life is the life itself!”. Here the boundaries between the characters’ real and fictional lives are blurred. This becomes even more true when the other layer of ambiguity is taken in consideration (i.e., it is not clear whether Hasanein was dreaming and writing about an alternative world or he was writing about reality and real people).

Mixing up the names is another layer of complexity that undermines the reality of Hasan’s narrative and his entire world. In the same quotation we read, “I mixed up the names [of the characters] in a very strange way”. This phrase makes us think, if Hasanein admits that he mixes the names in his draft, to what extent can we trust Hasanein’s whole narration, (i.e., the events and the names of the novel itself?). In fact, the

reality of Hasanein, his death, and his relationship with other characters (Thyab, Theeb, Hasan II, Hasan I, Shahrazad, and Adam) continue to cast a shadow of vagueness over many sections across the whole narrative. Every time one thinks that he is about to reach a conclusion, another section or phrase proves him wrong. Even the last pages of the novel do not help at all as they become extremely confusing (i.e., it is difficult to make sense of conversations or to distinguish between characters). Apparently, Al-Razzaz does not intend to make his novel cohesive or coherent, nor does he want it to denote unequivocal meanings to all its elements. Rather, he deliberately creates all of its uncertainties and contradictions. In fact, relativism and the indeterminacy of interpretation are among the postmodern characteristics that permeate this novel and remind us with Ihab Hassan's early observations, and the term "indeterminacy," that he coined to describe postmodern works (92).

As a metafiction technique, the fragmentation of the style of the novel is another dimension that should not be neglected when talking about the fragmentation of its characters and the discrepancies of its events. In fact, the combination between psychic fragmentation and the fragmentation of the text is an important feature that distinguishes postmodernist texts from modernist works. Although AlRazaz develops this style earlier in the *Alive in the Dead Sea* (1982), the fragmentation of the text in the *Arabs' Maze* is deployed abundantly and more vividly. Moreover, it corresponds to the fragmentation of its character.

In the previous quotation, for instance, Hasanein explains that "the heroes did not want a perfect text. A perfect text makes them get bored. They wanted a special text for them. But_ at the same time_ they complained of the disjointedness of the text. They said they never knew what they wanted..." (289). The phrase "a perfect text" means a text that is complete and precise in its meaning and indications. It also means a conventional text that does not mix its elements (chronologically or semantically). According to the author, such a text is not good because it brings boredom. Therefore, Hasanein admits that he made his text disjointed. Although he means by the "disjointed text" his "draft" in which he mixes the names of its characters, it reflects in many ways the whole novel and its characters.

Although one would find some sections and phrases that can be understood separately, the disjointedness of the text as a whole is very obvious. Al-Razzaz seems to use different strategies that render his style fragmented. One of them is shifting the topic at small and large scales. He, for instance, inserts unrelated phrases and uses different tenses in the same section and phrase. In a conversation between Hasan I and Balqees, whom he wants to marry, we read,

I stand behind Balqees, observing her very dark hair which is burning like fire and saying:

-Hello.

She does not hear me. The little headphones are in her ears.

She did not raise her head.

I tried again to incite her emotions. I said in a low voice and my hands were in my pockets:

-seven years passed since the disappearance of my family.

She removed the two headphones from her ears and said:

-do you like to play cards?

I shook my head negatively and flipped my lower lip. I said:

-I do not know.

And Fareed Shawqee said to the young actress:

-I love you.

And Um Sulayman said: damn your love O ...

And I said while I was walking in the room, my hands are in my pocket, and my back is bent:

-I am still without job or permission to travel. (63)

In this unconventional conversation each phrase or part appears to carry a complete meaning that makes sense when it is taken out of the conversation and analyzed individually. However, taken as a whole, the conversation lacks a sense of coherence. For instance, Balqees's reply to Hasanein's first phrase has nothing to do with what he said. While he tells her about the disappearance of his family seven years past, she replies by asking him about playing cards: "do you like to play cards?". This incompatibility between Hasanein's remark and Balqees's question becomes even clearer when we recall that Hasanein was absent from her for a long period of time. In a normal condition, one would expect from her a welcoming phrase

or some questions about Hasanein's disappearance and his current condition (health) or, at least, something related to his question (about the disappearance of his family). In any rate, Hasanein answers her question with an equivocal phrase ("I do not know") which carries at least two meanings: I do not know how to play cards, or I do not know whether I should play now or not. The conversation about playing cards does not resume at all.

The conversation is interrupted also by the next two phrases about an actor and an actress (i.e., he tells her "I love you" and Um Sulayman curses his love). Although these phrases can be inferred from the context when someone recalls that Hasanein mentions earlier that Um Sulayman was watching the television when he entered the room, inserting these phrases in the middle of the conversation between Hasanein and Balqees interrupts its flow, distracts the reader, and forces him to pause momentarily to reflect: does Balqees say that or someone else. At any rate, this pause seems logical when one takes in consideration the early odd reply of Balqees (i.e., asking the unrelated question about playing cards).

The grammar of the conversation is mismatched as well. Interestingly, the conversation starts with present tense (I stand, she does not hear, observing, saying) before it shifts to the past tense (she did not raise her head, I tried again, she removed the two headphones, etc.). In fact, there is no obvious reason for using the present tense in a narrative about past events nor is it clear why the author uses two tenses for the same sequence of events in the same conversation. Apparently, such unconventional interruptions are embedded in the text intentionally to disturb readers and to emphasize the disjointedness of the text.

The fragmentation of the text is not restricted to conversations. Rather, it has other manifestations such as the unexpected shift from one topic to another to form nonlinear narratives. In many cases the historicity of the text is diminished. In the introduction, for instance, a new section about a historical event is introduced in an unusual way. After the narrator uses poetic language to introduce himself in fragments, a new section starts after three asterisks as follows,

And behold! They are on their way. Some stirred dust appeared to them. Shortly, it revealed a huge army. So, the man with the green forelock steered his companions away from the path of the army. The commander of the army stopped him. The one with the green forelock continued to take his family and companions right and left while the commander of the army blocked and opened the path in front of them [to make them pursue a certain direction] until they reached Karbala.... so, he [the commander] allowed them to camp there.

And me how can I separate between me and my fathers and my ancestor in whose lineage I travelled a generation after another... (7)

The first paragraph in this quotation is a fragment that describes a short scene from the battle of Karbala (area in Iraq) in which the grandson of Muhammad (AlHusain) was killed with almost all his family and companions in 680 AD. But this scene has nothing to do with the previous fragmented paragraph about the Ottoman officer, a Sudanese president, Detroit, and Aden (in Yemen). Even if a genuinely attentive reader pauses to search for a connection between the two, he most likely will never find a logical and convincing one.

Although a skillful reader might somehow find a connection between the old tragedy of AlHusain and the current suffering of Hasanein in modern Arab time, the way the author presents the scene as an isolated fragment from a historical narrative is unconventional. For example, instead of starting the narration by mentioning something about the historical event's setting or characters, the first phrase "And Behold! They are on their way" is problematic for at least two reasons. First, this introduction serves as a rupture between the story and the previous text. Second, it is an ambiguous start that introduces important elements vaguely, such as ambiguous characters ("they" without names, time, and place) and an advanced point of a historical event without introducing first its setting and the gradual progress of its events.

To start a story without introducing its elements and settings means to disturb its readers and interrupt and isolate it from the context. In fact, even a trained reader who is familiar with Arab history must read the whole paragraph to the end (i.e., "they reach Karbala"), before he realizes that the narration is about a real historical incident rather than a fictional story or a poetic reflection on a certain concept. In addition to that, the sudden ending of the narration at a critical point before completing the scene, let alone

completing the whole story, or giving any sign or hint is very disturbing. Moreover, the unexpected shift from a historical event in the first paragraph to a reflective mode in the next paragraph without an obvious logical explanation is another sign of the fragmentation of the text. Interestingly, the beginning of the second paragraph is also troubling; “And me how can I separate between me and my fathers...”.

Unexpectedly, the author does not continue the story of AlHusein at all. Instead he visits other historical and religious stories to borrow from them some random elements in order to insert them haphazardly in his text. For instance, Shahrazad is involved directly in the events of the novel as a character (280). Further, some phrases and scenes of previous people, (Mary, Antarah bin Shaddad, and Moses) from different and unrelated historical periods are recycled (184, 233, and 10¹). This random recycling of previous texts brings to our mind Hashim Gharaybah’s style in *The Sandy Maqamah* (1998), as discussed in chapter three on pastiche. We will visit this issue after a few pages.

The sudden shifts between voices is another sign of the disjointedness of the text. In many parts of the novel, characters exchange their roles and their voices in a way that disturbs the flow of the reading. In addition to what was discussed earlier of the overlapping of Hasan I and Hasan II, the voice of Hasanein (or Hasan I) overlaps and gets confused with Balqees’s.

In an interesting section entitled “Like this Balqees Talked,” Hasan I decides to visit Balqees in her house.

We read in this section “I knocked her door” (185). In the following lines we read,

He was a chased fugitive. He was a game, and I was the cave of honey and milk... and I opened for him... He got up and said:

-I am going to bring pizza and hamburger. Are you not hungry? What do you think of bringing a bottle of wine also?

And I was thirsty to this lovely spectrum [Hasan’s ghost] ...

The ‘horse of death’ prepared today its saddle. This woman with her long hair...

Fear took over me completely... (185)

In this page Hasan's and Balqees's narratives overlap. While the page starts with Hasan, it ends with Balqees. And between them the voices are tangled.

The first phrase "He was a chased fugitive" in which Balqees describes Hasan's condition comes after Hasan's phrase about knocking on Balqees's door. Although Balqees's phrase is in a new paragraph, there is no sign or clue in the text that distinguishes it from Hasan's narrative except the content that has to be read first before discovering that the speaker has changed.

The same thing is noticed in other phrases in the same page. For instance, Balqees's phrase "And I was thirsty..." which comes after Hasan's suggestion to bring pizza and hamburger, is not distinguished from the previous and following texts by any clue or sign. Someone might suggest that the author probably forgot to add something to distinguish between the speaker(s) of his text, or, perhaps, he does not follow the customs of writing a conventional conversation or a text. The second option, which is more logical, is supported by at least three proofs: the author's usage of some writing customs somewhere else in the same conversation or text, to indicate the speech of another person; the notable prevalence of fragmentation everywhere in the text; and the awareness, of the author himself, of writing an unconventional text.

We notice that the author uses various writing conventions in parts of the conversation as in;

"He got up and said:

-I am going to bring pizza..."

Here Al-Razaz uses a pronoun (he), a colon, a hyphen, and a new line to demonstrate to his readers that the speech is changing from Balqees's to Hasan's. But here a question arises: Why does not the author use similar customs in the rest of this conversation and other conversations in the novel? The answer is

very simple: Al-Razzaz is consciously building his text in this way because his goal is apparently to create a fragmented and disjointed text.

Interestingly, Al-Razzaz goes a step further after a few years, when he is around 43 years old, and writes the *Fragments and Mosaic* (1994), which epitomizes an extreme example of a fragmented novel. The novel consists of short sections that are overwhelmingly entitled "A Fragment". While the majority of these fragments range from one half to two pages, some of them have just three or four lines. They are disjointed fragments. Apparently, they are not meant to form a cohesive or chronological narrative as they, in many cases, are some reflections or thoughts on the defeat of communism and the deterioration of the Arab World especially after the Gulf War (1990/1). In fact, the connection between the fragmentation of Al-Razza's novels and the fragmentation of the Arab condition is emphasized by a number of studies that investigate the experimental style of Al-Razzaz such as Nawal Masadah's *The Aesthetic Structure of Al-Razzaz's novels* (2000) and Maysoon AlQedah's *Monis Al-Razzaz in Critical Studies* (2013).

Societal Changes:

The reason behind writing the *Arabs' Maze* appears to be the societal, cultural, and economic changes that Al-Razzaz began to notice in the Jordanian and Arab societies in the 1970s and 1980s. Perhaps the most important three changes, as highlighted in the novel, are the decline of the Left, the growing influence of global capitalism, and the emergence of consumerist culture.

In different ways, Al-Razzaz points out the deterioration of the Left and criticizes its members. Perhaps the Usbah and its leader Shalan are good examples to elaborate on in this section. The Usbah appears to be the Communist Party, or the Left in general, which used to hold Hasanein's father among its prominent members. As a child, Hasanein witnesses the first challenges to the Usbah and to anyone who belongs to it: tribal classmates' bullying and official cracking down on the Usbah (14). As an active leader, Hasanein's father was imprisoned (21). At a young age, little Hasanein experiences the first betrayal of the Usbah's

members to their principles and to his father. This occurs when a math teacher (from the Usbah) demands a lot of money to teach the child of his imprisoned comrade (29).

The indulgence of Usbah's members, as well as the society at large, in materialism and consumerism begins and escalates as time passes. Shalan, for instance, who was among the prominent leaders in the Usbah, is now a wealthy businessman who lives an extravagant life and runs a big corporation. When he welcomes Hasanein into his luxurious office, he advises him to change himself (i.e. his views), since the world has already changed and a new era has emerged. Shalan explains to Hasanein that Abdel Nasser (the very influential socialist president of Egypt) passed away, and "with him passed over his era" (59). He further informs Hasanein that they are living in the era of "consumerism and service economy" (59). Shalan also talks about the fragmentation of the Usbah. The concluding statement that Shalan uses to describe the condition of the Usbah illustrates its decline and the drop down of its membership. According to Shalan, "the ex-members of the Usbah who are out are ten times larger than those who are still in" (61).

While the Left (Usbah) gets weaker, the influence of global capitalism increases, and this is the second factor that affects the writing of this disjointed novel. In different parts of the text, the author points out the advancement of the international capitalist culture and its symbols in the Jordanian and Arabic culture. Shalan's company that has a French worker, for example, seems to be run in a western style, or it is a branch of a western or an international corporation (57). Hasanein's friend (Sulayman) gives a vivid example of many Jordanians who lost their Arabic identity for a larger global culture. He, for instance, expresses his fascination with President Kennedy and repeats his famous sayings (74). He speaks in English because he cannot express himself in Arabic (ibid.). Further, he invites Hasanein to join him in a Jacuzzi and Sauna activity in a western-styled club before he goes to spend the night in the Intercontinental Hotel (ibid.). Such examples reflect the penetration of the capitalist global (especially American) culture at different levels of the Jordanian society.

Different parts of the novel exhibit examples of the capitalist modernization process in the Jordanian culture and society. Characters, for instance, adopt new habits, especially western ideas and lifestyle. Perhaps Hasan I is the most important figure who takes upon himself the responsibility of modernizing his society. He consistently pushes his people to get rid of their backward habits and to adopt the advanced culture of global capitalism. He himself abandons (and attacks) traditional habits and adopts newer views of secularism, technology, science, and knowledge. He eats non-traditional Arabic food (hamburger, pizza, etc.), drinks alcohol, and watches the American drama (*Dallas*), that “portrays the ugly life of a capitalist-family” (97)³. Although it is almost impossible to be freed entirely from the remaining residues of traditional Arabic culture, Hasan I strives very hard to get rid of backward remnants and to adopt modern values and technology.

It is not surprising to read English words (which are written in Arabic) such as business, supermarket, and headphones or the names of non-Arab (especially American) real and fictional figures such as Great Gatsby, Walt Disney, and John Wayne in the novel. Apparently, such names are not mere words. Rather, they represent a whole culture that became familiar to Jordanian people as it penetrates, perpetually, their daily life at multiple levels. Interestingly, the author portrays a group of Arabs watching *Dallas* in a “huge and luxurious building similar to the Holiday Inn hotel” (257). In different ways, this illustrates the relationship between the capitalist global (especially American) hegemony and the Arab world in the sense Arabic culture, economy, and politics cannot escape the spreading global culture of capitalism.

Consumerism is the third reason that appears to affect the writing of this fragmented novel. Apparently, the consumerist culture that began to emerge in the Arab World in the 1970s had reached an advanced level during the time of writing the novel in the late 1980s. Al-Razzaz tackles this issue from different perspectives. He, for examples, highlights the invasion of international corporations (such as Columbus U.S.A) to the Jordanian society and the local mass consumption of their commodities (312). According to

him, Arab consumerism is compared to the unquenched thirst to buy new products to stop the perpetual feeling of hunger and cold (ibid.).

Al-Razzaz criticizes the consumerist culture also for turning everything into a commodity, including people and principles. In a sarcastic way, Hasanein is considered a “commodity” that is utilized by Shalan and the Usbah to increase their wealth (396). As a prominent leader, Shalan utilizes the Usbah and its name for personal advantage. Sarcastically, Shalan takes advantage of his radio interview that is supposed to promote the Usbah and its principles to advertise (to sell) his land in which Hasanein is buried.

The host asked him:

Where did you Mr. Shalan bury AlHakeem?

- In my land. It is a rocky land that is very suitable to build on. Based on the governorate’s plans, a 10 meters wide commercial street is going to pass in front of it. Regarding its price, it is subject to negotiation. We can meet directly without brokers or realtors. And thank you to the radio station that give me this valuable chance and (292)

Here Shalan, who is supposed to be a man of dignity and principles, is corrupted by the sweeping consumerist culture that changes everything into a commodity. He takes advantage of Hasanein’s name (or brand), even after his death, to make business. He changes the speech from Hasanein’s legacy and his grave into a financial opportunity in which he promotes a commodity. In a way, this reflects the death of the Left and its sincere people (either physically or reputationally) and the surge and growth of business and materialistic values. Perhaps Hasanein’s frequent visits to the Amman Stock Exchange and his concluding phrase in his conversation with Balqees summarize the condition of the Usbah, its members, and the whole society at large. While they are eating hamburger sandwiches Hasanein says: “I emphasized to her that the only current values that are dominant are those of consumerism” (120).

In such a society in which consumerist culture (and capitalist hegemony) defeats anything that stands in its path, psychic fragmentation becomes a prominent characteristic that visionary authors, like Al-Razzaz, prophesize. Yet, because this type of fragmentation is denoted by the formal fragmentation of the text in

postmodernist works, it should be distinguished from another type of fragmentation that exists in previous texts (modernist and before). Perhaps the lack of distinction between the two types is the reason behind the (unintentional) mix of some writers between postmodernist and non-postmodernist novels.

The main difference between the two is the combination between the psychic fragmentation and the formal fragmentation of the text in the postmodernist works. For example, when Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) and Dostoevsky's *The Double* (1846) are compared, it might appear that the main characters of the two works suffer the same type of fragmentation. But in fact, there is a difference between the two regarding the type of fragmentation and the style of writing. Contrary to Dostoevsky's unified text, Pynchon's text is fragmented in a way that echoes the fragmentation of its main character (Slothrop). In other words, while the fragmentation of Dostoevsky's character can be understood as an early warning against the potential consequences of modernization in Russia, fragmentation in Pynchon's novel, that came after more than a century of this modernization, appears to be a fulfillment of that vision at an advanced stage (i.e. the fragmentation of the subject) when modernization is complete.

Even if Hasanein is to be read as an allegory of Arab people and culture, the formal and psychic fragmentations will continue to be distinguishing features of the text. According to the mysterious lady, Hasanein is like the building whose levels reflect different eras of the Arabic history (289). He is, for instance, a descendant of historical figures such as Adam and AlHusain (5). He has been living for centuries even "before the age of agriculture and writing" (6). As Hasanein lives in modern times, his split into two Hasans reflects the splitting of contemporary Arabic culture between its tradition and the proliferating culture of global capitalism. In this way, Hasanein can be considered a national allegory or, to use Jameson's words, "an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society" (*Third-World Literature* 69). It is needless to remind here that Jameson anticipated the spreading of global capitalism and the retreat of national resistance and local cultures.

Yet, this allegorical reading, as compelling as it seems, does not change the fact that both the subject and the text are fragmented. Moreover, such a reading of this text in particular is not accurate or consistent since it does not take into consideration important textual and contextual issues such as the perpetual oscillation between reality and fantasy, mixing between characters, the playful tone of the text, the chronological order of events, and the voluntary local acceptance of global culture. In other words, even if the allegory of Hasanein works very well in an older context and in some parts such as the mixing between traditions and new (modern) values in the Arab World (i.e. Hasan I is modern while Hasan II is traditionalist), the very allegory does not give convincing interpretations in other parts of the book, especially when global cultural changes are taken into consideration.

Any allegorical reading would not give logical and accurate interpretations to the events of the novel since many parts would remain equivocal, as discussed earlier in the death of Hasanein, Shahrazad and the draft, and mixing between Hasanein and other characters (such as Thyab, Balqees, and Hakeem). Although it is very possible to read a sole incident allegorically in isolation from other incidents, it is difficult to maintain the same allegory in the entire novel. For instance, one might assume that the absence of Hasan II for centuries when he was sleeping in a cave stands for the Arabs' backwardness in the last centuries that preceded the beginning of their modernization process in the nineteenth century. But such reading becomes less interesting and more confusing when other related absences are involved, such as Hasan II's sleeping in Hasan I's apartment (and leaving his body there), Hasan I's coma and/or death, Hasan I's burial by the Usbah, him being a ghost, him mixing with other characters, etc. It is worth reminding here that the psychic fragmentation of Hasanein weakens any allegorical reading because such a reading requires a solid psyche (of a person) that represents a postcolonial nation's identity and/or struggle against its colonizer. In fact, the once existing distinction between the literature of the Third and First worlds (having a unified and unfragmented character vs. "fragmented subjectivities," as suggested by Jameson) is gradually dissolving in the global culture of late capitalism (89).

Yet, here arises a question: Is Al-Razzaz serious about such an allegory? Actually, there is abundant evidence in the text that proves the opposite. In fact, Al-Razzaz's playful tone is easily detected in the text. In many ways, the frequent humorous situations and phrases that are deployed in the text undermine its seriousness. In the mysterious building, for example, Hasan I wakes up and searches for Hasan II (367). Because he thinks that he escaped, he runs to the scholars' office to search for Hasan II. On the roof, an archeologist uses a telescope to find Hassan II. A useless conversation takes place when Hasan I stands accidentally in front of the telescope before the archeologist declares, "I saw strange things" (368). We read,

The geologist lost his patience, so he pushed the archeologist aside and shouted:

-let me see... move away.

And when he peeked in the telescope using one eye while closing the other one, he screamed disagreeably:

-This is a microscope... not a telescope... damn you.

The paranormal expert raised his hands to his hair, and he was about to pull it out of anger and frustration. But he remembered suddenly that he is bald. Therefore, he turned to the archeologist whose hair is long/thick and pulled it instead out of frustration. (368)

In this absurd conversation, Al-Razzaz mixes serious matters with funny situations. Pulling the hair of the person who is standing beside you because someone is angry or frustrated is hilarious, especially when we recall that it occurs to two scholars who are supposed to be discussing a serious matter (the escape of Hasan II).

The whole section resumes in the same manner. For example, after the scholars decide to use an advanced computer, the conversation becomes confused, fragmented, and a mixture of serious and silly contents. In some sections, for instance, one can read, "maintaining the stability [of society]..., weakness of the infrastructure..., and technology in the Third World (369-370). In other sections, however, one can also read, "he left another box of cigarettes in her room. It is 'Marlboro' brand. And he scratched his head before he left the room... Do you have a battery [for the computer]? I searched my pockets and said: No.

But I have a headache. Do you have an aspirin tablet with you?" (ibid.). Although some political and serious messages might be inferred from such conversations, the playful tone, sarcastic remarks, and the disjointed texts destroy and deconstruct them. Therefore, what is considered by Khaleel as a "sense of humor" in Al-Razzaz work is in fact a manifestation of the playful tone of the text. In short, the *Arab's Maze* exhibits a postmodern feature (playfulness) that is typically noticed in postmodernist texts since Ihab Hasan's early remarks on the Literature of Silence (45). In different ways, the relativism, multiplicity of meaning, and the indeterminacy of interpretations of the text, as discussed earlier, contribute to the playfulness of the *Arabs' Maze*.

Loss of Utopia:

The playful style of Al-Razzaz that weakens the political messages contributes also to the lack of eutopia, which is the second distinctive feature in the novel. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the lack of historicity paralyzes the subject's ability to envision a different future or an alternative scenario to the status quo. In the *Arabs' Maze*, different techniques are deployed to weaken the historicity of the text. Some of the techniques that are deployed in the text (such as the pastiche and the lack of chronological order of events) will be discussed here.

The time of the *Arab's Mazes* is intended to be vague and fragmented in a way that makes it well-suited to the fragmented style and characters. Although there are many parts of the text that suggest a contemporaneity of the events (mainly in the late 1980s when the novel was written), others suggest different times. Indeed, attempting to makes sense of the time(s) of the work appears to be a challenging task. Perhaps the closest you can guess is to say roughly that there are three main times of the novel: the contemporary time, the childhood time, and the Arab Revolt's time. Yet, this does not negate the fact that these and other times float freely in a nonlinear manner and even get tangled in different parts in the story as in Hasan I's death/burial and Hasan II's disappearance.

In fact, the author does not seem to care that much about constructing separate and distinguished periods of time or maintaining a true chronological order of events. This is obviously noticed in the continuous mixing between characters, events, and quotes of different periods of time.

Although the mixing (and overlapping) between characters was discussed earlier in this chapter, it will be helpful to mention something new regarding the mixing of characters of different periods of time. Shahrazad, Columbus, Adam, Moses, Mary, AlHusain, and Lawrence of Arabia are just examples of the bizarre combination of random characters that are brought from the past to play a role and to interact with other fictional (or real) characters in the novel.

The involvement of such characters serves at least two purposes, namely, disturbing the historicity of the text and blurring boundaries between fantasy and reality. Shahrazad, for instance, visits Hasanein to continue his draft and correct its inaccuracies. Although she appears first as a column of light, she becomes a real person who converses with Hasanein (280). At one point, Hasanein becomes doubtful of her existence, so he pinches his cheek to ensure that he is awake. He feels the pain, winces, and screams (284). This emphasis proves that he was not dreaming or imagining. Further, Shahrazad asserts to him that Hasanein or Thyab is not an imagined character in his draft, but a real person (ibid.). She even informs him that “perhaps you are Thyab himself? And perhaps you are one of the Theebs who broke off him” (ibid.).

Here Shahrazad appears as a supernatural person who travels in time and space to appear before Hasanein in order to correct and complete a real historical narrative that begins as an imaginative fiction. However, Shahrazad who is supposed to correct the inaccuracies creates doubts in both the way she appears and in the information that she provides. Although a careful reader would first assume that Shahrazad’s appearance is a figurative one, Hasanein’s pinching of his own cheek to ensure his consciousness challenges this assumption. Further, the relation between Hasanein and Thyab (author vs. character) becomes problematic with Shahrazad’s words (“perhaps you are Thyab himself...”). One would wonder: Is

Thyab a real person from the past? Is he Hasanein in contemporary time?! Do we have here three people of different periods of time getting together and/or oscillating between reality and fantasy? Why did Hasanein tell us that his characters rebelled against him?

Shahrazad also talks about Lawrence of Arabia and his desire to abandon the war and to hide in the desert with Theeb I and his soldiers (298). Regardless of the accuracy of this and other historical information that is altered intentionally, the narration mixes 'Theeb I' with Hasan II and Adam I. In the beginning, Shahrazad tells Hasanein that Theeb I stood on the top of the castle. Then, she replaces him with Hasan II, "Once Hasan II appeared on the top of the castle surrounded by an aura of light ..." (299). Then, She changes the name again when Hasan II talks to the people: "I am Adam I..." (ibid.). The mixing between the three figures (Theeb I, Hasan II, and Adam I) gets even more intensified when one recalls that Shahrazad is talking to Hasanein who is also Hasan I who overlaps occasionally with Hasan II, as discussed before.

This mixture of characters does not only undermine the boundaries between the narrator (Hasanein) and his character. Rather, it also destroys the boundaries between the past and the present. Shahrazad from the past comes to present time to talk about the Arab Revolt/Lawrence (past) to someone in the present, who overlaps with characters of the past (i.e., he is Thyab or Theeb or Adam I).

Even Columbus travels in time and finds his way, similar to Lawrence, to the Arabs' desert in the twentieth century. In an interesting part of the novel, the American Satellites discover and take images of an unknown desert (305). Surprisingly, the nearest American military base that responds to the White House's request to investigate the desert by sending spy planes, does not find anything. American officials and scholars get confused regarding the existence of such a mysterious desert. Eventually they decide to send a special team to investigate the situation on the ground under the leadership of Christopher Columbus's son (Sam). Mr. Columbus keeps the desert a hidden secret and modernizes it by establishing factories and streets (311/2).

Even if one attempts to treat these names as symbols (Columbus= American Capitalism, Thyab/Theeb=leadership, Adam= Arabs, etc.), it will be discovered that his reading is not accurate because it does not hold when all events and elements are taken into consideration. In many ways, these symbols are not consistent in their representations nor in their historical sequences. Further, as discussed earlier, the playful manner of the author weakens the historicity and the political engagement that might have potential energy. For example, the author has the habit of inserting silly and unrelated events and phrases in many parts of his narrative, such as Columbus's humorous jumping off the Minaret that resulted in breaking his bones. He also adopts Shahrazad's style and famous phrases such as "[a]t this point Shahrazad saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent" that he uses to conclude some sections in a way that renders anything said before it fictional and entertaining (309 & 315).

The historicity (and the authenticity) of the text is also undermined in other ways. For instance, the author uses equivocal phrases that render all accounts unreliable. He sometimes uses phrases of suspicion to introduce different accounts or sections such as; "In another narration..., it was said ..., Here narratives differ. In one narration ..., The other narration says that ..." (207, 377, 384). Such phrases create doubts and reluctances in the reader and prevent him from adopting any accounts, especially when someone recalls the continuous mixing between reality and fantasy.

The author also asserts the unreliability of the narrators in different ways. For instance, the overlapping between Hasan I and Hasan II and the discrepancies in their narratives such as in their absence(s), as we discussed earlier, creates many doubts about them, and undermines the reliability of the text. Similarly, the narration of the mysterious lady in the mysterious building is uncertain as well. While the narrator is looking for the mysterious lady, another lady (there are no names but a title like "the bartender"), tells him while she is smiling sarcastically; "You mean that lady who has a long tongue and weak opinion?" (355). This phrase gives us an idea about the low credibility of this lady who chats with the narrator and provides him with important information such as the recorded interview of Shalan and Iskandar. In short,

she is a talkative and simple-minded (or stupid) bartender. Would anyone trust her information?! In fact, everything about this lady is shady. She disappears suddenly as she had once appeared by the narrator's bed in the mysterious building: when he opened his eyes, she was patting his hair (286).

We do not know how this lady appears or disappears. The narrator does not tell us or, more accurately, he does not care about that. All of what we know is that the narrator was talking to Shahrazad before we moved to a new section about this lady. But there is a small trick that is similar to other tricks that the author implements frequently in his text. In the beginning, one would think that the narrator is waking up from his death, or coma (based on previous knowledge about the narrator), when a nurse who "is wearing a white coat" is patting his hair. But this is not the case because after several pages we discover that she is a bartender and not a nurse. The reader has to always be alert and ready for any surprise or twist in the narration. In many cases, the reader is forced to flip pages back and forth to keep track of the story and to make sense of its fragments. It is needless to remind here that the involvement of the reader is a common practice in postmodern novels that blur the boundaries between the author and his reader.

Flipping and changing the names of famous characters is another strategy that the author uses to create doubts about the accuracy of his historical narratives. For example, we read in the text "Mr. Christopher Columbus or Columbus Christopher" and "Urwah Alwardi" instead of the famous Arab poet "Urwah bin Alward" (340 & 213). The author does not seem accurate in mentioning the names of his characters. Recalling previous issues such as the fragmentation of the text and characters, the narrator's blunt confession that the names of his draft overlap, the use of equivocal statements to introduce parts of his narration, and the overlapping between reality and fantasy, it becomes evident that the historicity of narrations is ambivalent.

Apparently, Al-Razzaz uses numerous traditional Arabic and religious elements as pastiche. Musa, Mary, AlHusain, Antarah, Shahrazad, the Bible, and the Quran are among the religious and non-religious figures

and texts that are brought together in the *Arabs' Maze*. One can notice from the first pages of the novel that the author uses the texts of the past after stripping them of their contexts. For instance, the phrase "there is nothing like unto him," which is mentioned in the Quran to show the uniqueness of God, is used by the narrator's mother to describe the beach of Gaza, Palestine (12). Similarly, the narrator's father uses the exact statement that Mary said when she suffered the pains of childbirth of Jesus, as mentioned in the Quran "Oh, I wish I had died before this and was in oblivion, forgotten" to show his disappointment with his son (31).

The randomly recycled texts that are stripped of their historical context are deployed individually and collectively in the *Arab Mazes*. In some cases, a combination of different religious stories of different backgrounds are put together in one specific time. For example, the author combines the stories of Moses and AlKhidr, Cain and Abel, Joseph and his brothers, the Dam of Marib together to form an eclectic collage. In the novel, the story of Moses and AlKhidr is adopted as the main line of Hasan II's seventh life as he tells it to Hasan I (101-109). The story revolves around the journey of Moses to learn from AlKhadr (Saint) whose miraculous knowledge and his desire to educate Moses qualify him to behave in an unexpected way (i.e., he makes a hole in a boat while in the ocean, kills a child, and fixes for free a collapsing wall in a stingy village). In the Quranic story, Moses agrees to accompany the Saint without asking any question, though he is warned by the master that he does not have the necessary patience for such a journey.

In the novel, Hasan II and his friends are told by "the master" that "Indeed, with me you will never be able to have patience ... And how can you have patience ..." (101). The exact words of these two (and other) phrases can be read in the Quran in chapter 18. After Hasan II sets out with his company, they reach a great dam that is surrounded by orchards. The description of the dam and the orchards is quoted from Islamic tradition, but from a different story (of the Dam of Marib). That means, the author is mixing two different stories (regarding time, place, people, etc.) together to make a new one. Unexpectedly, the Saint

destroys the dam and disperses the people in the land. Phrases from the two original stories are used to describe the events (102/3).

Hasan II's story that is parallel to the story of Moses and the Saint goes on with recycled elements from other stories of Josef and his brothers, and Cain and Abel. Some distinctive words and phrases from the original stories are quoted exactly, such as "shirt covered with blood, you have certainly done a grave thing, this is where you and I part company, to stretch my hand to kill my brother" (103-109). In a different way, the combination of such elements from different historical periods and molding them in an undetermined time, (Hasan II's seventh life that has no specific time), weakens the historicity of the text and makes it float freely and timelessly. Interestingly, the author adds more elements to demonstrate the randomness of his mixture. He uses elements from the *Thousand and One Nights* such as the description of the girl who is killed by the Master using a (modern) silenced pistol. Inserting the last two elements (non-religious elements in *Arabian Nights* style), and contemporary invention (pistol) complicates the pastiche/collage and destabilizes its religious and past connotation. It is worth noting here that using disturbing (and unfitting) elements after or inside cohesive parts/elements or sequel is common in Al-Razzaz's work. Such a strategy prevents us from reading the text allegorically or adopting one interpretation to all its sections.

The Biblical/Quranic story of the Seven Sleepers, who sleep miraculously for centuries in a cave, is brought from the past and mixed with other elements in a way that disturbs its historical and political context. In the novel, Hasan II draws heavily on this incident to construct a thread of his story. The adaptation/contextuality of the original story is easily noticed since some words and phrases are exactly repeated, such as in: "We have remained a day or part of a day, in a cave, three hundred and nine years" (46/7).

The author also quotes a verse from the Quran, that is related to the Seven Sleepers, to talk about the heedlessness of the people, "So We cast a cover of sleep over their ears within the cave for a number of

years”(142). Although he skips the word “cave,” the original story is recollected, and the meaning is obvious. Even though a serious political message is expected here, especially if Hasan II’s absence in a cave is considered as a metaphor of the Arabs’ backwardness in the last few centuries, the playful insertion of other elements of the past (in the same story) shakes it to the core. Some of these elements are borrowed from Muhammad’s life, the life of the governor of Iraq, and the Arabs’ conquest of Spain in the 7th and 8th centuries.

When Hasan II enters the cave, his parrots screams: “Monkeys are behind you... and monkeys are in front of you ... where can you escape?” (42). This part has nothing to do with the story of the people of the Cave. Rather, it is a famous statement that the Muslim leader Tariq bin Ziyad used when he arrived in Spain after crossing (from Africa) the Strait of Gibraltar and burning the ships to motivate his soldiers to fight by eliminating any hope of retreat. On the shores of the Iberian Peninsula he screamed: “Enemies are in front of You... and the Sea is behind you... where can you escape? (i.e., there is nowhere to go except moving forward and defeating your enemy)”.

Moreover, when Hasan II wakes up, he notices a spider web that was not there when he entered the cave. This brings to the mind the Islamic tradition of the spiderweb that protected Muhammad (camouflaged his place in a cave) from his enemies (43). Furthermore, the author mixes more elements from different historical texts such as Al-Hajjaj’s speech in Iraq (“heads are ripen and ready to be cut off”) and the remark of Abdullah bin AlZubair’s mother after her son was crucified (“Has not the time yet arrived for this knight to dismount?”) (45/6). Even the Epic of Gilgamesh finds its way in the text when the parrot brings up Gilgamesh’s name in an absurd argument with Hasan II (46).

Even with the faint similarities between these stories (such as a spiderweb in a cave and “where can you escape” phrase), there is hardly any convincing connection between them when their (full) original and new contexts are taken into consideration. In fact, one is tempted to claim that the author does not really

intend to encourage his reader to derive directly a serious political message from these specific intertextualities. The embedding of such recycled stories seems to be much related to the playful manner of the author rather than the content of the story. Take for example the absurd conversation between the parrot and Hasan II that ends in a strange way. Although there appears to be a political message to be communicated when the parrot “imitates the sound of a mother who lost her child hundred for years ago” and tells Hasan II that he is the crucified knight himself, Hasan II enters into a useless and incomprehensible argument with the parrot, who mixes Hasan II with Gilgamesh. The conversation ends with Hasan II saying “why? ... why?” while the parrot says, “What?... why” before both of them fall asleep again for years, and neither the conversation nor the topic is never revisited again. (46). In addition to the absurd, useless, and incomplete argument, Gilgamesh and the weak involvement of original stories in a constructive way are some of the strategies that are implemented to weaken the political position of this section.

The playful pastiche of Al-Razzaz is similar, in different ways, to Hashim Gharaybah’s random collections of his childhood stories, as discussed in chapter three on Pastiche. Although the fragmentation of Al-Razzaz’s text and characters distinguishes his work from that of Gharaybah, the events of the past in both works are mixed haphazardly without their historical context or chronological order. In this way, the historicity of the past and its engagement in the present (in order to help build the future) become less effective, or even paralyzed. As neither writer offers a distinctive and engaging chronological stream of previous events, their texts do not present a vivid project or a promising strategy for the future. In fact, the last pages of their texts offer vague, and even gloomy, conclusions rather than bright endings that might reflect a hopeful future or create utopian energies. In Al-Razzaz’s work specifically, the incomplete and ambiguous conversations that conclude the *Arabs’ Maze* echo the pessimistic views of the author and the dark tone of this and other novels (such as *Jumah AlQifari* (1990)). Even the potential hope that might be sensed in the *Usbah* (or the Left) is demolished by the author, who was witnessing the deterioration of the Left in the Arab world and, probably, foreseeing the coming defeat of communism globally. It is

worth noting that within a few years of writing the *Arabs' Maze*, the author witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the destruction of the Berlin Wall.

The death of meta-narrative and the lack of utopian energy are easily noticed not only in the pages of the novel but also in its gloomy title (*Arabs' Maze in Mirage Skyscrapers*), that does not suggest a promising future or offer an alternative project. Even the modernization project that Hasan I promotes seems to bring capitalist hegemony and American military and cultural hegemony instead of prosperity and liberty. In his speech, Hasan reminds his audience with the American powerful technology (such as Satellite, TV, and advanced phones) that has the potential to bring the world under American hegemony (156). Nevertheless, such a view seems very simplistic in the era of globalization when cultures flow freely in all directions and when capitalist global culture swallows up local cultures and nationalisms.

As discussed earlier, in different locations in the text, the author laments the regress of the Left (Usbah) and the progress of consumerism. In fact, the deterioration of the Left and the indulgence of its members (like Shalan) in materialist life and consumerist culture is an essential message that Al-Razzaz consciously points out in the novel. Perhaps the author's father's struggles with his comrades, that reflects the deterioration of the left, influenced the writing of this and other novels such as *I'tirafat Katim Sawt (Confessions of a Muffler)* (1992).⁴ If this debatable issue is proven to be true, this connection between the author's real life and his fictional work brings to the mind the blurring boundaries between autobiographies and novels, as discussed in the second chapter of this study.

With the deterioration of the Left and the fragmentation of the psyche the *Arabs' Maze* leaves us with a poor hope. The last part of the novel reflects the loss of utopian alternatives. In these pages, the absurd conversations between the Arabs who live in a dark cave, or a building, echo the loss of Arabs in modern times, as they become vulnerable to consumerism and capitalist global project. They talk about silly things that are mixed together to form incomprehensible dialogue. Moreover, Hasanein's final conversations

with Fazza' and Shalan demonstrate the final destiny of the Usbah. Instead of maintaining its drive that is supposed to lead to, or at least offer, a serious project, it ends up with weak, self-serving members and empty slogans. As money is collected in the names of its previous reputable members (like Hasanein's father), the Usbah's history becomes a "commodity" and a "business" that is marketed by its wealthy members for personal gains (392-6). In short, the utopian dream of change turned out to be a dystopia.

Yet, Al-Razzaz reminds us that the Islamization of the Arab World is on the rise. During his conversation with Hasanein, Fazza' talks about having a beard after he fails to fix the condition of Usbah (390). In fact, the rise of Islamists (having a beard) after the retreat of the Left is an important issue that should not be neglected when talking about the changes that took place in the Arab World in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Briefly speaking, as the Left and the Pan-Arabism projects retreated in the area (due to many factors including its global retreat), a wave of Islamization swept over many areas in the Arab World. Other external factors also influenced this rise such as the occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s and the emergence of Jihadism to liberate it from the (communist) Russians. With the approval of the American and Arab governments, thousands of Arab fighters joined the fight, and the rhetoric of Jihad became louder. But such rhetoric received a powerful blow in the 1990s after the Gulf War when Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia, began to crack down on the Jihadists.⁵ Over time, the voice of Jihadism is suppressed, though it vents out every now and then, but in a weaker volume. We will be visiting this point again in the last part of this chapter.

The Sultan of Sleep and the Blue-Eyed of Yamama:

The fragmentation of Al-Razzaz's style is manifested in his strategy that he adopts to compose *The Sultan of Sleep and the Blue-Eyed of Yamama* (1997). In this novel that is discussed in chapter three on pastiche, Al-Razzaz borrows different elements from Arabic culture and mixes them randomly together and with other elements from his personal experience and thoughts to compose a new story. The text is a collection

of at least eight anecdotes or stories that intersect and overlap to form an eclectic collage. In the novel, Sarhan's interesting account of the novelist's approach reflects in many ways the bizarre strategy that is adopted by the author to compile and construct his fragmented text whose eclectic elements can possibly be rearranged in different ways. In a separate chapter entitled "Sarhan Sarhan and Dr. NooruDeen" we read:

In another narration that differs in many ways from the first one, Sarhan knows how the author who is sitting there composes his novel. Indeed, that author carries with him [in his memory] four streets and three places from Amman: a coffeehouse, a library, and a government building. He then copies from Beirut: time, war, singer, two streets, and an apartment building. Then he breaks into a mental health unit and into a detention center and kidnaps four prisoners from different backgrounds and seven patients with different sicknesses. He mixes all of that with three images from Baghdad which he recalls from his memory, and with other images which are invented by his crazy imagination. He then picks up the elements of a tale from *The One Thousand and One Nights*, crushes it with the millstone of imaginations, and mixes parts of small events that occurred to him in New York, or Baghdad, or London, or Damascus. Then he pours all of these elements and mixtures again into the juicer of imagination after he uses raw materials that he digs out of the mines of reality. Then he takes whatever comes out from the juicer's imagination, or the imagination's juicer, from the other side...Then, behold! He takes out from the magician's hat which he is wearing on his head a novel. (79/80)

Despite the length of this quotation, it reflects in many ways the nature of this fragmented text that confuses its readers and forces them to pause frequently to reflect on what they are reading in order to make sense of it. The novel is a random combination of personal experience and thoughts and traditional elements that are mixed together. Perhaps the main two characteristics of the author's strategy, that he implements, are the very wide-ranging backgrounds of the novel's materials and the bizarre way of mixing them. As authors vary in their cultural and educational backgrounds, the first characteristic remains within the regular norms of writing. The other one, however, appears a bit odd as it reflects a random approach of structuring a novel from different elements. For instance, the repetition of words such as "mixes," "mixture," "crushes," and "juicer" around nine times (in the quotation) indicates an intentional goal of building a heterogeneous mixture or collage rather than a homogeneous text. As demonstrated in chapter three, the novel's playful tone, resistance to interpretation, and the unreliability of the narrator weaken any political engagement.

As a final remark on *The Sultan of Sleep and the Blue-Eyed of Yamama*, the incident of the sandy storm hints to the culture of images/movies that weaken historicity and blurs boundaries between high and low cultures. The fact that global (especially American) culture continues to increase its influence on Jordanian (and Arab) culture, especially with the widespread use of free satellite service that gave Jordanians, since the 1990s, an unprecedented access to the pop-culture of movies, is very obvious. Al-Razzaz's novel, which is written in the era of satellite television, reflects this influence in many ways. For example, many pages tackle the shooting of a movie by an American film crew from Hollywood. Some characters, such as the Well of Secret, listen to western music and "loves to watch movies" (30 & 33). Further, the Blue-Eyed's brother and husband always watch television and eat pizza (115 & 124). The hegemony of the capitalist culture (and power) over the world is noticed in the novel such as when Abu Ali, a real person who used to sell newspapers in Amman, talks to the Blue-Eyed (fictional character) about the instability of the world after the "Berlin Wall falls" and after the "sole domination of a one empire" replaced the "balance" of the "Cold War" era (118). Although the United States is the leading power of the capitalist world, it will be more accurate to point out the global hegemony of capitalism as the single force that dominates the world today.

The culture of movies is a vivid manifestation of the culture of images that distinguishes the postmodern time. In this novel, Jean Baudrillard's influence is obvious in the section that talks about the shooting of the movie, especially the recording of both the acting and reality scenes, as when cameramen continue to shoot even when spectators begin to fight actors and when the policemen interfere (86). The images of reality and acting got mixed up and people cannot distinguish anymore between the two. Interestingly, this mixing reflects, in some ways, the mixing between dreams and reality in the whole novel. Furthermore, the phrase that describes cinematic tricks as "more real than real" echoes Baudrillard's perspective concerning the density of the culture of images and its advanced level of penetration (83). It is worth

reminding here that the culture of images is considered by Jameson as a manifestation of the lack of historicity and the waning of affect.

Before leaving this section, it is worth noting here that Amjad Nasir's *Haithu La Tasqut AlAmtar* [Where Rains do not Fall] (2010) exhibit a number of similarities with Al-Razzaz's *Arabs' Maze*. In this novel (that takes as its main topic the return of an old communist to Jordan after spending twenty years in exile), psychic fragmentation and the retreat of the Left are portrayed explicitly. Briefly, the main character is split into two persons (Amjad and Adham) who overlap and get mixed while their old memories are mixed with their current events. The novel also focuses on the increasing influence of global capitalism and the rise of consumer culture.

Fragmentation and Loss of Utopia in Arabic and Jordanian novels:

The deterioration of the Arab World, the collapse of totalizing narratives, and the loss of utopian energy are very common in Arabic novels. As discussed in the introduction, some Arabic critics, such as Kamal Abu-Deeb, Magda AlNowaihi, and Mustafa Jum'ah, connect these features to the fragmentation of the subject and the decline of the Arabs' socio-political condition. Although fragmentation in Arabic literature has existed since the 1970s, Abu-Deeb suggests that it has been gradually intensifying since the second half of the 1980s due to political and social factors such as wars and the "emergence of consumer society" (*Collapse of Totalizing Discourse* 338/9). It is very important to mention here that the political dimension, especially the occupation of Palestine (1948/67) and the lack of freedom and social justice, is an essential reason behind the fragmentation and loss of utopia in Arabic novels. However, as the influence of late capitalism increases gradually in the Arab world, fragmentation in Arabic novels began to shift to another dimension i.e., fragmentation that is related to the postmodern culture (global capitalism, technology, quick changes of the present, culture of images, consumer culture, loss of the Left, etc.). Perhaps Al-

Razzaz, especially in the *Arabs' Maze*, is one of the earliest authors who detect the impact of postmodern culture on the Jordan/Arab subject.

Among the early novels (what is called by Arab critics the New Novel) that attempt to reflect in both style and content the early changes (especially political) that impact the Arab subject since 1967 onward is the Jordanian Tayseer Sboul's *Anta Munthul Yawm* [You as of Today] (1968). Interestingly, although the political side of the novel is obvious (occupation of Palestine), some critics consider the metafiction and the fragmentation of narrative of this novel as early impulses of postmodernist techniques (Ahmad Majdoub 284 & Shukri Almadi 104). Nonetheless, other critics, such as Ibrahim Khalel, who avoid the term "postmodernism," argue that Sboul's experimental style reflects the Arabs' condition after the occupation of Palestine in 1967 and the defeat of pan-Arabism and socialism (*Novel in Jordanian* 15).

In different ways, the plight of Palestine affected the Arab world immensely. Briefly, although Arabs had much hope to liberate the Palestinian lands that were occupied in 1948, Arab regimes, especially that of President Nasser and his Arab-socialist project, were very unsuccessful. In the 1967 war, Arabs did not liberate the occupied lands. Rather, they lost not only the rest of Palestine (including the Holy Mosque in Jerusalem), but also more Arab lands from Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. Such a catastrophe (the Naksah/Set-Back) stunned Arabs and shook them to the core. Arab intellectuals lamented this defeat a great deal. Among the earliest works that were produced in that era of sadness and loss of hope is Sboul's novel.

It is very important to point out here that the early fragmentations of such Arabic works echo mainly the melancholic political and social conditions only. Therefore, considering such fragmentation as a manifestation or sign of postmodernism is not accurate because it is not related to an accurate postmodernist context, especially the emergence of consumerist culture and its impact on the subject. More specifically, although such fragmentation is connected to the retreat of master narratives, it is more connected to the

political atmosphere of occupation (colonization), leadership, and wars of liberation i.e., colonial and post-colonial literature. Moreover, what distinguishes this type of fragmentation from the postmodernist formal fragmentation is that the latter is usually accompanied by the fragmentation of the psyche, as discussed earlier. Perhaps Al-Razzaz's *Arabs' Maze* is one of the best novels that mirrors the fragmentation of the psyche to the fragmentation of the style and connect them both to the deteriorating political condition, the retreat of the Left, and the spreading of global capitalist culture and consumerism.

Before bringing this chapter to a close, it is important to remind, as discussed earlier, that the retreat of the Islamic project that once replaced the Left in the Arab world is, in some ways, another side of the mistrust of master-narratives. Although Lyotard means mainly Marxism when he discusses meta-narrative, as explained in chapter one, the decline of the Islamic project is another symptom of the growing dominance of global capitalism in the Arab world. Hence, the retreat of metanarratives (and their subversive energies) in the Arab world in the postmodern era is connected not only to the socialist and pan-Arabic projects, but also to the Islamic one.

It is worth reminding here that Booker (drawing on Jameson and Terry Eagleton) connects between the emergence of postmodernism in the American culture in the 1950s and the retreat of subversive impulses and American Utopian imagination (*Post-Utopian Imaginations* 29). Therefore, he concludes that postmodernism is not subversive, but ludic (*Strange TV*). Extending this argument and applying it to the Arab condition that has different circumstances, one would argue here that the lack of any utopian project, let it be socialist or Islamic, in the Jordanian novels is in fact a sign of its postmodern turn.

Interestingly, a number of Jordanian (and Arabic) novels connect the loss of utopia not only to the defeat of the Left, but also to the retreat of the Islamic project, as in Jamal Naji's *Indama Tasheekh AlThi'ab* [When the Wolves Grow Old] (2005). In this novel, Islamic and left leaders (Janziri and Azmi) lose their religious and political drives gradually. Eventually, they are absorbed by consumerist and materialistic life.

Especially in the case of the Islamic figure (Janziri), the accumulation of wealth does not seem to contradict religious principles. In a way, this reflects the lack of Islamic resistance to capitalism as a whole (system) and the restriction of religious opposition to the moral side of it (modesty, homosexuality, abortion, etc.). Here one would agree with Jameson that the mere religious traditions cannot resist capitalism (*Globalization* 67). It is worth mentioning here that even Islamic conservative countries, such as Saudi Arabia that was established on fundamental Islamic principles, cannot escape, let alone resist, the proliferation of the global system of capitalism that dismantles oppositional politics, melts down boundaries between local cultures, and appropriates religious and national principles. Even with the existence of some pockets of resistance that are, in fact, continuously shrinking, Jameson maintains that Islam “can no longer constitute, as [it] may have done in its earliest days, a genuinely universalistic opposition” to global capitalism (67).

Conclusion:

Fragmentation and the loss of utopia are two distinctive features in Jordanian novels. In the *Arabs' Maze* and *The Sultan of Sleep*, psychic fragmentation is accompanied by formal fragmentation. Among the strategies that are adopted by the author to demonstrate these types of fragmentation are portraying a doubled character, overlapping characters, mixing reality and fantasy, shifting the topic, mismatching grammar, and shifting voices. The loss of utopia is illustrated in the novels in different ways, such as the playful tone of the text, random pastiche, unreliability of the narration, culture of image, and the lack of chronological order of events. The discussion also reveals that the societal changes that are related to the fragmentation and the loss of utopia in Al-Razzaz's novels are the growing influence of the capitalist global culture, the emergence of consumerist culture, and the decline of the Left. It seems that the doubleness of Hasanein has much to do with the cultural shifting from the traditional to the modern, or from tribal/religious principles to postmodernist values and habits.

Although the loss of utopia and the disenchantment with master narratives (especially the socialist left and pan-Arabism) were motivated mainly by political matters, the emergence of consumerist culture and the decline of Islamism are also connected to the loss of hope, the retreat of subversive energies, and the absence of utopian projects in Arabic novels and culture.

Although the postmodern culture continues to prevail in the region, the political dimension seems to negatively affect the cultural milieu of the Arabic world. Unfortunately, Arab societies experienced many wars and failures that did not bring much hope or Utopia. For examples, the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), the Gulf War (1991), the war on radical Islam (then, the war on terror after the 9/11 disaster), and the American invasion of Iraq (2003), fractured not only the Arabic unity but also the Arabic subject and made him vulnerable to disunity, foreign invasion, and dystopian imagination and feelings. Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (2013) remains an important work that reflects the horrible outcomes of wars in the area. Perhaps the failure of the Palestinian project remains the main cause of disappointment to many Jordanians and Arabs. Disappointments continue to be the fate of Arabs in the 21st century. The hope to establish a democratic and thriving life in some Arab countries such as in Iraq, Libya, Egypt, and Yemen after the collapse of repressive regimes, was lost as sectarianism and power struggles tore them apart. Such factors continue to haunt many Arabs (including Jordanians) and intensify their melancholy and despair. In short, fragmentation and loss of utopia in the Arab world are connected to global and local reasons. In addition to the proliferation of postmodern culture (technology and consumerism), the political unrest (especially political wars) seems to also play an important role in shaping the modern Arabic subject, who lost his utopian imagination and became immersed in the consumerist culture.

Conclusion

The third stage of capitalism that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century has reached unprecedented levels that threaten to eliminate enclaves and local cultures (Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism* 49 & *Globalization* 66). In this late stage of capitalism, the multi-directional cultural flows between nations and societies contribute to the convergence of all regional cultures toward a global culture. The Jordanian (and Arab) society is no exception. Especially in the last quarter of the twentieth century, the immersion of the Jordanian culture in the global culture intensified in a way that leaves the dichotomy of East vs. West outdated.

Postmodernism is the cultural logic of late capitalism that renders everything, including cultural products, a commodity. For Jameson, postmodernism (or more accurately postmodernity) is the historical period that comes after modernism when modernity is complete. Among the major features that characterize postmodernism are the advancement in science and technology, growth of international corporations, depthlessness, psychic fragmentation, blurring boundaries, incredulity toward meta-narratives, loss of historicity, and the lack of utopian energy. In order to place the Jordanian culture in its appropriate location among the cultures of the world, this study attempted to prove that the emergence of postmodern features in the Jordanian novel from 1986 to 2016 indicates the postmodernity of the Jordanian novel and culture.

The previous chapters demonstrated that the Jordanian novels exhibit several postmodern characteristics that are usually found in postmodern novels and cultural products. The major postmodern features that were explored in the Jordanian novels are blurring of boundaries, pastiche, fragmentation, and weakness in utopian energy. Such features were compared to their counterparts in other Arabic/non-Arabic novels.

Blurring of boundaries and disruption of hierarchies were explored in the second chapter. These postmodern features are attributed to such characteristics/factors as the fragmentation of the postmodern

subject, the democratization of culture, and the negative outcomes of modernity. The erosion of boundaries between entities appears to be the most prominent postmodern feature that intensifies over time and permeates the Jordanian novels. The lengthy discussion of this chapter exhibited different types of blurring boundaries. For example, the mixing between fantasy/reality and narrator/character were explored in Samiha Khreis's *Opium Poppy* (2000) and Hashim Gharaybah's *The Sandy Maqamah* (1998). Crossing lines between genres appeared to be the main feature that combines Gharaybah's *The Sandy Maqamah*, Muhammad AlQaisi's *The Secret Garden* (2002), Khreis's *Diary of the Flood* (2009), and Ibrahim Nasrallah's *The Balcony of Delirium* (2005). The boundaries between high and low cultures are blurred in Nasrallah's *Dog War II* (2016).

To expand the discussion, Linda Hutcheon's, Brian McHale's, and Jean Baudrillard's views were subsumed in Jameson's theory that is adopted as the general framework of the study. Such accounts provided helpful information to the aesthetic features of the postmodern culture, in comparison to Jameson's theory that gives a holistic analysis of the entire phenomenon within its historical context. More specifically, Hutcheon's and McHale's theories proved to give good explanations of the undermining of novel's ontologies, magical realism, and the metafictional techniques. Baudrillard's simulacra and hyperreality brought a new perspective to the discussion of the boundary-crossing between fiction and reality. To differentiate between postmodern characteristics and regular novelistic conventions, Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of dialogism and his perspectives on the relation between author and narrator were also discussed. The chapter concluded that although Jordanian novels exhibit some political impulses, they lack any serious project or drive that makes them subversive.

In the third chapter, pastiche, which is a random and superficial borrowing of previous styles and elements, was explored in several novels. In three of them (Gharaybah's *The Sandy Maqamah* (1998), Mo'nis Al-Razzaz *The Sultan of Sleep and the Blue-Eyed of Yamama* (1997), and Sahar Malas's *Places* (2014)), the main source of pastiche is Arabic literary heritage: Maqamah, the Arabic traditional storytelling, and the

One Thousand and One Nights. Further, it was proven that other genres, such as travel literature, anthropology, poetry, and magazine are emulated in Khreis's *Diary of the Flood*, Malas's *Places*, and Nasrallah's *The Balcony of Delirium*. In the remainder of this chapter, the discussion focused on the playful nature of pastiche and the lack of political engagement. To illustrate this, Al-Razzaz's style is explained and compared to that of Gamal Al-Ghitani in *Zayni Barakat* (1974). The discussion revealed that although both authors borrow from the styles of the past, Al-Ghitani's serious engagement in the political condition of Egypt excludes it from the postmodern category.

The last chapter explored fragmentation and loss of Utopia in Al-Razzaz's *The Arabs' Mazes in Mirage Skyscrapers* (1986) and *The Sultan of Sleep and the Blue Eye of Yamama* (1997). The first part of this chapter explained that under the influence of the quick changes and consumerism of the postmodern culture, the subject loses his ability to realize time and to map himself in the changing world. This loss of historicity flattens the subject's potentials to envision an alternative to his current condition. Hence, the suspicion toward master-narratives is perceived as a symptom of this type of fragmentation. The discussion investigated some of the techniques that are deployed by Al-Razzaz to reflect this fragmentation, such as: the doubleness of the main character, mixing characters, and shifting topics and voices. Further, the strategies that are used by the author to point out or to echo the loss of utopia were explored, such as playfulness, pastiche, lack of historicity, and the unreliability of the narration. The loss of utopia and the lack of the subversive drive were discussed in this novel in some detail.

The scope of the third chapter extended to the political and Islamic dimensions. The discussion revealed that although some political impulses exist in the novel, the political engagement is weakened by the playful style, proliferation of postmodern features, and the lack of the alternative social project. It is also argued that the fragmentation that appeared in the Jordanian (and Arabic) novels after the Israel-Arab war of the 1967, which is motivated by a political reason (the occupation of Palestine), is different than the later fragmentation that is connected to the emergence of postmodernism. Since the Islamic political

drive witnessed a decline that coincided with the rise of consumerist culture, the chapter concluded that the fragmentation and loss of utopia in the Jordanian (and Arabic) novel are also connected to the retreat of the Islamic project.

The theoretical part of the study (that summarizes, compares, and contrasts the main theories of postmodernism) was discussed in the first chapter. These include the theories of Ihab Hassan, Fredric Jameson, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, Brian McHale, Linda Hutcheon, and M. Keith Booker. Although Jameson's model of postmodernism is adopted as a framework, other views are subsumed and involved in the discussion to expand the study's scope and depth. For example, by adopting McHale's model that distinguishes postmodern texts from modernist texts, the study explains how Arabic novels mix the worlds (ontologies) of the story in a confusing way. This vividly appears in the blurring boundaries between reality/fantasy and narrator/character. Further, while Hassan's early observations of postmodern characteristics are helpful in surveying Jordanian novels in general, Lyotard's death of metanarrative provides a helpful background to the discussion of the last chapter (weakness of Utopian imagination). Baudrillard's and Booker's views are very helpful to understand the context of these novels and the Jordanian cultural milieu in general especially in the age of television and the Internet. Furthermore, as Jordanian novels tend to deploy different metafictional techniques and to rely extensively on Arabic historical and traditional elements, Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction is discussed. It was proven that, contrary to Hutcheon's findings, historical events of the past are recycled in Jordanian novels (such as Gharaybah's *The Sandy Maqamah* and AlRazzaz's *The Sultan of Sleep*) in a metafictional "playful" manner, rather than in a subversive way.

Yet even when this study demonstrates that Jordanian novels gradually (over time) exhibit postmodernist features, the best description of the Jordanian culture remains a controversial issue. Here we must elaborate on what was mentioned in the introduction and draw more on Jameson's, Booker's, and Baudrillard's views.

The Jordanian culture is postmodern, but at an early stage. In addition to being an inseparable part of the global capitalist system, the Jordanian culture exhibits a plethora of postmodern features. Nevertheless, the density of the postmodern culture in the Jordanian society that is yet to reach an advanced level makes it distinct. In other words, the particularity of Jordanian society makes its postmodernism distinguished from that of other societies, especially the West, in which postmodernity reached advanced levels (both in degree and density). The same argument can be applied to other Arab societies in general.

Although postmodernism started as a capitalist advanced stage in the Western side of the world, its density increased rapidly over time in north America more than in Europe. By now, the U.S. culture is more thoroughly postmodern than the European. Indeed, the crystallizing of postmodernism over time and the debate over its starting/ending point (and even its nature) can explain, in many ways, the gradual progress (in both degree and level) of postmodernism in the Arab World. It can be argued that the early debates (1960s to 1980s) that emerged among American critics over the postmodernity of American society is similar, in many ways, to the current debate (this study and others) over the same phenomenon in Arab societies. In fact, the emergence of cultural phenomena might take some time before they are crystalized and noticed by everyone. This brings to the mind Booker's remark that when postmodernism began to emerge in the West, it "was not yet fully developed or understood as a new cultural phenomenon" (*Strange Television* 41). Perhaps a few more years are needed to have a "critical distance" that will allow critics and theorists to diagnose this phenomenon more accurately.

Abstaining from describing a certain culture as "postmodern" under the impression that an ideal postmodern condition (similar to the Western model) must be achieved first (as Faisal Darraj seems to suggest), has a number of shortcomings: as this would involve ruling out the specificity of that culture, turning a blind eye to the many postmodern features that appear in that culture, neglecting the particularity of world cultures (even Western postmodern nations), and assuming that postmodernism does exist equally and at the same rate in each region and level in the West. Further, even those who try to avoid the term

“postmodernism” to describe the Jordanian (and Arabic) culture and prefer to use “modernism” instead (to describe the new emerging characteristics) do not usually require for their judgment an identical duplicate of Western modernism that manifests in all aspects of life. Rather, a loose comparison and general similarities are usually used to categorize cultural phenomena.

For different reasons, requiring an exact matching between cultures is not accurate as it would allow someone (perhaps like Darraj) to claim that the Arab World is still living in pre-modernity since many Western modernist aspects and values are still absent or incomplete in Arabic culture (like freedom, equality, industrial revolution, etc.). Further, focusing on the differences instead of similarities between the two cultures (i.e., focusing on what Arab societies miss to be an identical copy of the West) makes one wonder how long it will take someone to consider postmodernism in the Arab societies when they still continue to display modernist or even pre-modernist characteristics. In today's world, such a comparison is unfair, and, in different ways, outdated, as it is still connected to the older discourses of the Orient vs. the Occident. It is worth mentioning here that the obsession with the old dichotomies of East vs. West, “Us” vs. “Them,” and other concepts that dwell on the differences between cultures (rather than focusing on similarities) is challenged by the rapid convergence between the world's cultures. In different ways, Booker's and Isra Daraiseh's *Consumerist Orientalism* is an exemplary (and a cutting-edge) study that focuses on the growing similarities between Arabic and American cultures in the age of globalism.

To require an exact matching between Western and Arab cultures in order to describe the culture of the latter as postmodern has another deficiency related to the historical events and circumstances that shaped (and continue to shape) these societies and their cultures. Unlike European societies, Arab nations did not undergo many critical events that shaped the European modern history like the Enlightenment, bourgeois revolution, and the separation between state and religion (church). While Europe was suffering the darkness of the Middle Ages, Arabs' (and Muslims') civilization was advanced in different areas such as in Iraq in the 9th century and in the Iberian Peninsula in the 10th century. Therefore, Arabic culture did

not experience the Renaissance or Enlightenment in the European sense. Even the Western separation between religion and state, which should be considered when Islamic political parties or radical groups are brought into discussion, does not seem applicable in the overwhelming majority of Arab countries (even in the most advanced areas like Dubai) that state in their constitutions that Islam is their official religion and that continue to apply Islamic law in many aspects of life like family issues and ministries of Islamic affairs. In other words, there are many historical reasons why religion plays a much different role in the Middle East than in the West, some having to do with history, some having to do with fundamental differences in Christianity and Islam as religions.¹ In addition to that, the occupation of Palestine continues to play an important role in the particularity of Arabic culture. In short, many historical and cultural factors present numerous difficulties when attempting to establish an exact match between modernism and post-modernism of the cultures of the Arabic and Western worlds. In fact, cultural differences continue to exist in many postmodern nations due to these nations' heritages/backgrounds and the level/density of post-modernism in their societies. Ziauddin Sardar's understanding of diversity is worth mentioning here. According to him, the world today needs a postmodernist pluralism (i.e., "Transmodernity") that, although it is based on change and progress, includes all cultures and traditions (Sohail Inayatullah & Gail Boxwell 123/4). What Sardar is calling for is very helpful as it directs the attention to the particularity of the Arabic postmodernism that will continue to maintain Arabic (and Islamic) principles while participating in the global culture, both giving and taking new elements.

If "Postmodernism" should not be used to describe Jordanian (and Arabic) culture because of the difference between the Western and Arabic conditions, then, by the same token, one would claim that "modernism" also should not be used, as the circumstances of both cultures have never been identical. Further, it appears that some Arabic critics (Shukri AlMadi, for instance) tend to avoid non-Arabic (especially Western) literary approaches. Indeed, the rejection of some Arab critics to adopt any non-Arabic approach or categorization (like Modernism and Postmodernism) should be respected for at least two

reasons, namely, their Arabic pride (refusing to be followers and standing against orientalist discourse) and their sensitivity to the specificity and particularity of each culture. Nevertheless, avoiding globally (and scholarly) accepted approaches and terminologies (such as, modernism and postmodernism) is as difficult as the avoidance of many global factors (like late capitalism) that changed (and continue to shape) the cultural atmosphere of Arab countries. In fact, it would appear odd or even contradicting to avoid completely the non-Arabic literary theory in the discussion of Jordanian/Arabic novels while such novels have always been influenced by many global factors like economy, politics, technology, genre of the novel (itself), television culture, movies, education, etc. Yet, one must also remember that Arab critics should not copy and paste non-Arabic (especially Western) literary theories blindly and use them as the only yardstick to measure the type or degree of Arabic postmodernist culture during this time of globalization and blurring of boundaries. It would seem desirable to find a moderate way between the two extremes.

The subversive impulses that exist in the Jordanian culture are another issue that should be addressed when talking about the Jordanian postmodernity. Although non-Arab societies that experience advanced levels of postmodernism still have pockets of resistance like minorities and some religious groups, Jordanian culture has its exceptions as well, mainly Islamic radical and political groups. In other words, even subversive impulses, especially if they are not connected to an alternative social project, should not affect our judgement of a certain text (or culture) if postmodern features overshadow it. In this case, as in Jordanian (and south American) novels, what really counts is the hegemony of late capitalism and the domination of postmodernist characteristics even if modernist/postcolonial characteristics are still there. According to Jameson, "radical breaks between periods do not generally involve complete changes of content but rather the restructuring of a certain number of elements already given: features that in an earlier period or system were subordinate now become dominant, and features that had been dominant again become secondary" (*Cultural Turn* 18).

Jameson's argument is very helpful in understanding the existence of different characteristics in different time periods. Simply speaking, many of the features that were subordinate in modernist art became dominant in postmodernist art. This explains why some seemingly postmodern features are noticed in the works of some modernists like James Joyce and Gertrude Stein. Although such modernist features were subversive energies against the "Victorian moral taboos," Jameson explains, the "immensity of cultural changes" reduced that energy and rendered them to normality as they became "classics" in the postmodern era (18). By the same token, one would argue that the postmodern features (such as metafiction, pastiche, and fragmentation) that appeared at a low scale in Jordanian (and Arabic) novels after 1967 gradually increased and intensified in the later novels which were written in the (roughly) last thirty years.

Although some political energy continues to survive in Arabic novels as argued earlier by AlMusawi and AlNowaihi, such subversive impulses are challenged by the findings of other researchers such as Kamal Abu-Deeb who examines the gradual collapse of totalizing discourses in Arabic novels. As mentioned earlier, even when political subversive impulses continue to exist in the Jordanian novel, they are weakened by many factors such as the playful tone of many novelists and the gradual increase of bourgeois/postmodern culture. Further, such impulses should be understood in the light of the particularity of Arabic culture and *gradual* emergence of postmodernism in the West.

Booker's remarks on the competing impulses of modernism and postmodernism provide another explanation of the subversive impulses in Arabic culture. According to Booker, in the early stages of its emergence in the West, "postmodernism was a particularly weak dominant... in which modernist and realist impulses remained extremely strong" (*Strange Television* 41). In addition, as Booker reminds us that postmodernism itself is "a historical accumulation of competing cultural impulses," one can expect some subversive energies in Jordanian (and Arabic) postmodern novels (41). It is worth mentioning here that such energy or political engagement that permeated early Arabic novels appears to fade away over time, as postmodernism continued to intensify in Arabic culture. This is attributed, at least partially, to the ability

of postmodernism to appropriate (and dismantle) oppositional politics, as it did in the United States in the 1960s to the antiwar movement, the civil rights movement, and the women movement.

As highlighted in chapter four, the growth of the postmodern culture is parallel to the decline of the left, that was the embodiment of the culture of resistance for decades. Since the failure of the socialist and Arabic political projects and the occupation of Arab territories in 1967, the Arab Left (and the whole pan-Arabic project) began to lose its energy. In different ways, the retreat of the Left, as highlighted in Jordanian (and Arab) novels, meant the deterioration of subversive energies in the Jordanian society. With the increasing influence of the postmodern culture, especially consumerism and technology, Jordanian novels lost much of their political drive.

The radical Islamic oppositional energy/fits should not change our argument that Jordanian society is adopting a postmodern culture. In fact, Islam does not seem to be at odds with Capitalism, at least the economic side of it, as it tolerates many of the capitalist practices such as accumulating massive wealth, cooperation with non-Muslims (individuals or corporations) for economic gains, and developing/importing advanced technology (just to mention a few). Even in the holiest city of Islam (Makka, in Saudi Arabi), big corporations invest their wealth in many projects such as franchised Western restaurants (like McDonalds), Western-styled hotels, and religious tourism, which has been gaining more attention and investments in the last two decades.² In Dubai and other advanced areas in the Arab world such as in the western side of Amman, similar situations are noticed. The traditional reactions of conservative Muslims to such jarring changes can be compared in different ways to the rise of the right (religious) wing in the US even in the 21st century when late Capitalism is stronger than ever, though it is much more shocking to traditionalist Arabs and Muslims (a part of it is attributed to the quick and massive changes that took a longer time to take place in the West). Although the Islamic opposition is considered by many, especially the clash of civilization advocates, as a real threat to capitalism and its global culture, Jameson challenges that (*Globalization* 67). In fact, in many cases, the Islamic (and Arabic) rejection of global capitalism has much

to do with the morality and political sides (gay, abortion, American support to Israel, etc.) rather than to other capitalist/modernity issues such as economy, technology, education, etc. In short, the subversive impulses in the Jordanian (and Arabic) society should not change the fact that postmodernism has been dismantling pockets of resistance and taking over the Jordanian and the Arab world.

Perhaps the main two factors that took a direct and important role in shifting the Jordanian society to the postmodern culture are consumerism and technology. In addition to what was previously mentioned about these factors, a few more words still must be said about them. It is very important to remember here that, the consumer culture became a trend that affected most Arabs at all levels of society. Perhaps television and new technologies (electronic devices and the Internet) are the most important factors that enhanced consumer culture, shopping habits, and the commodification of cultural products. In addition, the involvement of multinational corporations and the retreat of Islamic and socialist values appear to have increased the rate of consumerism. Even with the slowdown in the Jordanian economy which was affected by the global economy (especially the Stock Market Crash in 2008 and the Covid19 pandemic), Jordanians continue to show many habits of consumer societies' habits.

In addition to other cultural factors, such as the increase in education and literacy, the technology that diminished time and space and erased boundaries between fantasy and reality seems to continue to play important roles in changing Middle East culture since the 1990s. Perhaps the widespread appearance of the television culture in the Arab world (due to the proliferation of satellite service and the emergence of private television channels in the 1990s) can be considered as the distinctive feature that distinguished the postmodernist Arabic culture from modernist Arabic culture. Here Booker's media-based model of Novel-Film-television seems very adequate to describe the Arabic culture (instead of the conventional historical model of Realism-Modernism-Postmodernism). Since the Internet subsumes (and swallows) the television and novel, as the television once subsumed the novel and film, it becomes very evident that the Jordanian culture is quickly experiencing advanced stages of modernity. Further, with the widespread

service of the Internet service in the Jordanian society, Baudrillard's connection between simulacra and the postmodernist culture is very important to categorize the Jordanian culture.³ It is worth remembering here that the previously mentioned factors that played a crucial role in changing Arabic culture drastically since the 1990s seems to be similar, in many ways, to the Western condition that resulted in the emergence of postmodernism after World War II, (i.e., television culture, oppositional political movements, The Cold War, Vietnam War, and consumer culture).

Yet, to acknowledge the differences between the two manifestations of postmodernism in the West and the Middle East and to address the relatively weaker domination of the phenomenon in the Jordanian/Arab culture, Darraj seems to be very helpful at this point. As Darraj once described Arabic Modernism as "crippled," one would argue that Arabic and Jordanian postmodernism that is still influenced by its environment and surrounding is also crippled. This means even when Jordan has become part of the global capitalist system (both economically and culturally), certain aspects of Jordanian life remain vividly rooted in some traditional ways. Further, there are still some characteristics that, due to their intensity and level, have been distinguishing Western societies from Arab societies for many years like freedom, peace, equity, and affluent life. Such differences in cultures are expected to continue to create different postmodern features that distinguish Jordanian from Western novels. Further, the instability of the political and economic condition in Jordan (and in some Arab countries) will continue to impact the density and characteristics of the postmodern culture in these societies.

In short, as once Booker considered *At Swim-Two-Birds* a postmodern text because its "structure and the tone ... are consonant with the logic of late capitalism," one can argue that many Jordanian novels are postmodernist for the same reason (*Postmodern or Postcolonial* 1). Nonetheless, it is very important to recall Fredric Jameson's notion of having a "critical distance" to be able to offer a complete "theoretical basis for understanding a situation in which we all" are in (*Postmodernism* 48/ 49). Even with the rapid changes that have occurred in Jordan (and the Middle East) and prevent us from diagnosing everything

thoroughly, we hope that this study at least presents a solid and stable understanding of the direction in which the Jordanian culture has been heading in the last and coming few decades.

Notes

Introduction:

1. Like the invasion of Egypt, Muhammad Ali's Modernization Project, and Levantines' journeys to the West. For more details about the impact of the contact between East and West on Arabic fiction check out Sabry Hafiz's *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse: A Study in the Sociology of Modern Arabic Literature* (1993).
2. According to Ernest Mandel's model (1975).
3. one of the latest Western influences on the Middle East is the emergence of pop singers in many Arab countries like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Jordan.
4. Maqamah is a collection of rhymed prose anecdotes that display the authors' eloquence and the antagonists' wit.
5. see for example Sabri Hafiz, Roger Allen, and Faisal Darraj.
6. Ten of Thousands of Arab intellectuals left their countries to live in the West, mainly to avoid political oppression or to improve their living conditions.
7. lack of theoretical background appears in the analysis of some writers like Mansorah AbdulAmir's comments on Ibrahim Nasrallah's *Prairies of Fever*. He, for example, considers sublime language and semi-legendary among the postmodern features.

Chapter One:

1. simply speaking, modernist works' focus is on finding and investigating (more than doubting) the truth that is confused, hidden, and ambiguous. E.g., detective fiction.
2. Baudrillard derives the term "symbolic exchange" from Georges Bataille's notion of a "general economy" that considers expenditure, waste, sacrifice, festivities, and sacrifices more important for humans than production and utility, as argued by Marxism. According to them, symbolic exchange is a "natural" way of life through which humans pursue pleasure, sovereignty and freedom, in comparison to the "unnatural" way of labor and utility of capitalism. Thus, capitalism stands against the very nature of humanity (See Baudrillard's 1988 [1967]).
3. According to Jameson, "the distorting and fragmenting reflections of one enormous glass surface [of a building] to the other can be taken as paradigmatic of the central role of process and reproduction in postmodernist culture" i.e., "stacked or scattered television screens" (Postmodernism 31/37).
4. Perhaps the Egyptian Mohamed Ramadan's hip-hop songs are a good example of the Western cultural invasion of the Arab culture. The *Mafia* song itself is a pastiche of the 1920s American gangster life. In addition to the musical part, Ramadan's songs are responsible for promoting bad elements from American culture like pornography, gangsters, and drugs which are strange to Arab culture.
5. King Hussein of Jordan met Princess Muna al-Hussein (formerly Antoinette Avril Gardiner) when

she was working in Jordan as a film crew during the production of the Lawrence of Arabia (1962) and/or when her father was working as an advising-officer in the Jordanian Army).

6. In addition to commercial advertising, false cases against some novels are arranged deliberately by publishing houses (and even by authors) to popularize some novels in order to increase profit. Such a corruption can also be seen as another evidence of the commodification of cultural products.
7. One of the basic differences between Christianity and Islam in the field of politics is that while Jesus never held any political position, Muhammad was the head of the state and the source of legislation.
8. In addition to what was mentioned earlier about the spreading of western/capitalist values at all levels in Jordanian and Arab societies, it became well-known that during the Arab Spring, many Arabs have lost their faith in Islam (as a religion) and, on a larger scale, in the Islamic project (as a metanarrative). The slogans of masses became less religious and their role model became Western culture (and its values). Indeed, many Arabs are looking forward to adopting the Western experience in their societies (more than Islamic or Socialist). Further, during the Arab Spring, many Islamic groups became less traditionalist and adopted more secular approaches and slogans. Masses adopted less Islamic slogans and stood against Islamic rulings and theocratic states. In some cases, as in Sudan, the Islamic government was toppled, and more secular (Westernized) forms replaced it.

Chapter Two:

1. The excessive drinking of unmixed hard liquor was an old Arabic style of suicide. A number of Arab leaders killed themselves in this way due to dignity, honor, and sad issues.
2. A Moviola is defined on Wikipedia as a device that allows a film editor to view a film while editing. It was the first machine for motion picture editing when it was invented by Iwan Serrurier in 1924.

Chapter Three:

1. Ghraybah explains in his interview that he spent all of his time in prison reading Arabic traditional books like *AlMustatraf Fe Kulli Fannin Mustathraf* [The Anecdote of Every Witty Art] of BahauDeen AlAbshehi (died in 1448).
2. In these traditional Hammams, specific hours are designated for men and women who bath separately. The Hammam provides hot water and workers who help scrub customers with special material. Customers usually socialize after taking a bath in a designated area.
3. In Arabic culture the phrase "It was said, and God only knows the truth" indicates uncertain news or a rumor that is spreading around. It is a phrase of doubt and possibilities rather than authenticity or accuracy.
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Chapter Four:

1. interestingly, the name of the main character (Ellenbi) in the Egyptian famous comedy film *Ellenbi* (2002) is taken from the name of the British Imperial Governor Edmund Allenby (died 1936) who led the British armies against the Ottomans in the Middle East in World War I. The film, that generated millions of Egyptians pounds, has nothing to do with the original Allenby. It does not have any serious engagement with the history of Egypt (or the Middle East) in World War I era. Further, the movie was criticized for the lack of any genuine plot or message. Using western names in new contexts that have nothing to do with original resources can be also noted in other aspects of life like naming a coffee-shop in a local area in Jordan B-52 after the American bomber that participated in some wars in the Middle East).
2. In Islamic tradition, the Mahdi is a holy man who is a descendent from prophet Muhammad’s lineage. He will appear before the Last Day to establish justice and support the oppressed.
3. drinking alcohol is prohibited in Islamic tradition which is supposed to be the (mainstream) culture of more than 97% of the Jordanian society. In many cases, consuming Alcohol especially by wealthy Muslims is a manifestation of adopting western culture as a lifestyle.
4. the author’s father (Munif Razzaz) was a prominent member in the Left (Ba’th party and the Arab front) in Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Iraq. He was imprisoned and died while in Home arrest. Much of his struggles came from his comrades.
5. The Saudi government realized the danger of radical Jihadists, so they imprisoned thousands of them and prepared a rehabilitation project to weaken their rhetoric and to eliminate their involvement in what is called ‘political Islam’. The Saudi government also cracked down on many preachers who promote political agendas. Of late, there are many changes that are taking place to the Saudi society including the reformation that is adopted by the Crown Prince. Such a reformation is intended to suppress radical and political Islam and to open up the country to the World.

Conclusion:

1. During the tension in France in the Fall of 2020, the media’s focus was on the killing of a French teacher more than on the stabbing of two Muslim ladies by racists, or other recurring killing crimes in France. Similarly, hundreds of terrorist attacks (and public shootings) that take place every year in the West remain unnoticed (or easily forgotten) by many due to the weak coverage of biased media outlets that pay less attention to crimes that are committed by non-Arabs. Further, many Americans are unaware of their troops’ atrocities in Iraq and Afghanistan while they are fully aware of the “Other’s” atrocities. Media (and political) biases have been discussed by various authors and critics like Edward Said in *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts*

Determine How We See the Rest of the World (1981) and Todd Green in *Presumed Guilty: Why We Shouldn't Ask Muslims to Condemn Terrorism* (2018) and *The Fear of Islam: An Introduction to Islamophobia in the West* (2015).

2. Even the religious pilgrimage became a commodity. In many cases, thousands of dollars are paid for extravagant religious trips that offer the utmost luxurious lodging, food, services, etc. Such a sector boosts the Saudi economy with billions of dollars and brings to the mind Jameson's remark on the rise of the Service- economy in Late Capitalism.
3. The Internet penetration of the Jordanian society at different levels is very similar in many cases to that in Western societies. In the Covid-19 era, for example, Jordanian students attend virtual classes like many American students. Tablets, laptops, and cellphones, even in small towns, are in widespread use by the younger generations. In Jordan virtual programs are offered for free by the telecommunication companies.

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