



# Modern Arabic Literature in English Translation

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# MODERN ARABIC LITERATURE IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines some of the issues involved in representing the cultural image of the Arab in translated novels from Arabic into English. In this domain two translation strategies are in use: Foreignization and Domestication. In Foreignization the translator are biased against the target culture and eager to show the cultural diversion which the source text implies. In Domestication the translators are biased against the source culture and are sensitivene toward the target reader's level of interaction. It is assumed that foreignization and domestication are two diametrically opposed notions that deal with translating cultural specifics and source text representations. This thesis aims to challenge the validity of this dichotomization and specifically to question the 'translator's invisibility' notion coined by Lawrence Venuti (1995). This notion emphasizes the need to make the translator's effort visible. In the course of this research, the thesis argues that cultural representations in the target texts require the adoption of both domesticating and foreignizing strategies, the latter being the default option unless there is a good reason to do otherwise. To demonstrate this, the translated version of Abd al-Rahman Munif's novel, *'Annihayat'* (*'Endings'*) and Mohammad Chouckri's novel *'Ashouttar'* (*'Streetwise'*) are critically analyzed. The thesis concludes that, while more often than not, domestication seems to be an appropriate strategy; it is uncritical domestication that can blunt the sensitivity of the translator in reaching the core of the cultural references in the source text. This plays a crucial role in the misinterpretation and the stereotyping of Arabs in literary texts and in distorting subtle Arabic source text cultural nuances.

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## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

Cultural references are assumed to be ‘untranslatable’ (Catford 1965), and can therefore stretch the very limits of translation. One of the greatest risks the translator faces in his/her crucial mission is reaching a foreign reader and being felicitously accepted. Certainly language and culture are deeply intertwined as language is considered one of the most important carriers of a nation’s culture. It is the tool through which a nation's inner and outer image is represented. Nevertheless, any link between language and culture must be subject to a number of crucial factors, including text type (rhetorical purpose), genre (style) and discourse (attitude). Literary texts, for instance, are loaded with cultural specifics, so translators should not approach literary texts as collections of individual words which are detached from the context, but rather as whole texts that embody cultural signs.

This process lends the translator's task a combination of complexity, resistance, and creativity. Disregarding cultural specifics may lead to a translated text which is unintelligible to the target reader. To achieve a better result, translators must take the issue of culture more seriously in the light of, among other things, the strategies of foreignization and domestication. Actually, the seriousness of the 'cultural transfer' issue makes the involvement of a series of translation steps inevitable, starting with the choice of texts to be translated and the ultimate aim of the translation, right up to measuring or studying how wide the target text is distributed and how far it can permeate the consciousness of the foreign readers.

In order to evaluate and explore this subject more thoroughly, two novels translated from Arabic into English have been analyzed, one by Saudi writer Abd al-Rahman Munif (*Annihayat*), the other by Moroccan writer Mohammed Chouckri (*Zaman Al-Akhttaa’* or *Ashouttar*). Personally, as I am an avid reader of a wide range of Arabic fiction, I have noticed that Arabic fiction is one of the most elegant and sophisticated branches of fiction in the world. Moreover, as a literary genre, serious Arabic fiction reflects our own dignity and culture, and our hopes and fears. When I started studying translation, I had the opportunity to examine some of the major translation theories and strategies. This in turn increased my desire to explore and study the role of translation as an active mediator between cultures and this granted me, meanwhile, the chance to make some comparative

readings between some source Arabic novels and their English translations. As a result, I realized the word *culture* itself is much wider and bigger than I and other ordinary people think. It is not just about identity, self, and the other. It is much more than that: It is about how an entire nation sees itself and then how others encounter and react to this perception. As Greenfield very rightly says, "although we all feel we know 'who we are', it is less obvious what criteria we might be using to define ourselves" (2008:119).

It has therefore concerned me as an Arab and a translator to know and to show how we represent ourselves and how others perceive us and that is what attracted me to examine how dominant aspects of culture, by utilizing certain translation models such as foreignization and domestication can, not only preserve, but also present a comprehensive and vivid image of who Arabs really are. In contrary to domesticating translators who advocate target reader culture, foreignizing translator are biased against the target culture and eager to show the cultural diversion which the source text implies. The domesticating strategy, by seeking acceptance it reveals its sensitiveness toward the target reader's level of interaction and to the enforcement of his own culture and language. Therefore, it depends on linguistic conventions that serve the target discourse and occupies its discursive tools to present the text in a way that match the readers' language structure. For example, it interferes with the semantic structure, the figures of speech or the level of colloquialism for the favour of target acceptance and readability.

With this in mind, the motivation of this research is to focus on the need to find a widely applicable translation approach to translating fiction, especially with texts that are loaded with cultural references. Through my reading of some translated works from English into Arabic and vice versa, I realized that any attempt wholly to join one camp, say foreignizing or domesticating, might be harmful not only to the source and target texts but also and more seriously to the main pillars of translation which involve genuine values such as loyalty and fidelity.

Certainly, foreignization has many advantages such as its great respect for the source text language and culture. However, pure foreignizing might give rise to some unintended effects that could stand in the way of readability and comprehension from the target reader's point of view. Hence, a great gap might appear and the bridge between the two languages and cultures would be huge. On the other hand, if the translator overly-respected his attachment to the target language and the target reader, i.e. totally domesticated the source text, the main stylistic and cultural elements of

the source text would simply vanish. In this case of pure domestication, translation can easily be open to misuse and thus turn into a tool for the promotion of cultural or linguistic hegemony.

Underlying this dangerous polarization is the general assumption that foreignization and domestication are two diametrically opposed notions that deal with translating cultural specifics and source text representations. In this thesis, this assumption will be questioned, the issue of foreignization and domestication is discussed and the translation of cultural features is analyzed, not in 'either-or' terms but in a context-sensitive manner, heeding such factors as efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness.

In Chapter One of this thesis, the introduction has thus argued that neglecting the importance of achieving a balanced approach between foreignization and domestication would most probably have a detrimental impact not only on the source language and culture, but also on the target language and culture, and on text producers and receivers on either side of this cultural and linguistic divide.

Chapter Two presents a selective review of the theoretical background to Translation Studies. It briefly examines Catford's "formal equivalence", Nida's "dynamic equivalence", Koller's "pragmatic notion of equivalence", and Hatim and Mason's model of "text type, discourse, and genre". Hence, the discussion of Translation Studies goes far beyond the boundaries of theoretical notions because, just like any reader, "the translator embarks on a journey from text to context and back to text armed with an important stylistic principle to do with the need to assess 'what one is given in the text' (e.g. fronting) against the background of 'what one could have been given but was not' (e.g. embedding)" (Hatim 2009: forthcoming).

Section one in Chapter Three attempts to examine the foreignization/domestication model and the relationship between the source culture which embodies the 'self' and the target culture, catering for the 'other.' The domesticating strategy tends towards fluent, idiomatic, and transparent translation that is concerned mostly with the target reader and hence may conceal foreign aspects of the source text. On the other hand, the foreignizing strategy is biased towards the source text and tends to preserve "linguistic and cultural differences by deviating from prevailing domestic values" (Venuti cited in Baker 2008: 240). Following the debate of Schleiermacher in his 1813 lecture 'On the Different Methods of Translating', and the claim that the foreignizing method makes the translated text "a site where a cultural other is not erased but manifested" (ibid: 242), my intention



is to study, in the light of Venuti's argument, the foreignization/domestication model as a conceptual framework used to transfer cultural objects and practices from one language to another.

Section two of Chapter Three examines the issue of serious and popular fiction and argues that some translation scholars and connoisseurs of literature are on firm ground when they suggest that serious literature has been marginalized and the golden days of the proper appreciation of fiction, when a serious piece of art used to be admired as an exemplary form of writing, are long gone.

In Chapter Four, I will analyze the translation of cultural specifics in two Arabic novels translated into English. The first novel is *Annihayat* by Abd al-Rahman Munif, translated by Roger Allen as *Endings*. The second novel is *Ashouttar* by Mohammad Chouckri, translated by Ed Emery as *Streetwise*. I will look at how far the translation strategies are consistent, to what extent the translator's 'visibility' is challenged and how the translators attempt to tackle the problematic linguistic and cultural issues. The research also endeavors to examine the applicability of the foreignization/domestication model in the two translated novels. However, it is beyond the scope of this research to deeply broaden the data due to time and space limitations.

Chapter Five concludes that the whole repertoire of translation procedures is used in the translation of the two novels. This implies that it is almost impossible to adopt one particular strategy in translation at the expense of others. Consequently, and as the analysis in Chapters Two, Three, and Four attempt to show, it is notoriously difficult to draw an absolute conclusion about the impact that the translation strategies used in translating fiction in general, and Arabic fiction in particular, may have on cultural representation. Concurrently, the research highlights that the translator's skill in reading the source text will grant the translator an amount of sensitivity towards cultural specifics and make them more able to reach the core of the cultural references in the text. The combination of using balanced strategies and stylistic tools can help the translator to avoid any misinterpretation and misrepresentation of culture when translating Arabic literature for the target English reader.

## Chapter Two

### TRANSLATION STUDIES

#### 2.1 Translation Studies: An overview

Although the study of translation is considered relatively new in comparison with older fields, it has advanced quickly in such a short time, and has developed some practical models and intriguing theories. Thus, from the pre-linguistics stage when the term 'translation' simply referred to transferring the message of a source language text to the target language text, we moved to a text-linguistics stage when a broader definition was adopted, with translation beginning to be considered, as Reiss put it, a "bilingual mediated process of communication which ordinarily aims at the production of a TL text that is functionally equivalent to a SL text" (cited in Venuti 2000:160).

One of the key traditional controversies that contributed to defining the main focus of Translation Studies is to do with the nature of the relationship between linguistics and translation. This revolved around whether translation was a subdisciplinary field of linguistics or an independent discipline in its own right. Scholars identified two major forms which this relationship took. The first is to apply linguistics to the translation of a text; the second is to adopt some linguistic theories and to use them selectively in the translation of texts in general.

According to Peter Fawcett, the first kind of relationship between linguistics and translation has not been at all helpful for translation. Unfortunately, it was looked at with suspicion and was considered 'inadequate'. Until the late fifties, translation was seen as a subdivision of linguistics. However, through the work of scholars like J.S. Holmes (1988), translation became a science independent from general and applied linguistics. He introduced the first framework of what we call "Translation Studies". It aimed to avoid confusion and sought a more communicative approach. The new framework of Translation Studies is divided into two major branches. The first one is what

he calls 'pure translation studies' and it refers to descriptive and theoretical studies. The second kind is 'applied translation studies' which includes translator training, translator aids, and criticism (Munday 2008: 9-13). Actually Holmes's contribution proved that the translation process is complicated, passing through different levels. Although Toury says that the translation paradigms are "remarkably heterogeneous" and sometimes considered to be "mere alternative ways of dealing with the same thing" (1995: 23), the map or framework Holmes presented made translation studies more systematic and it helped translators to recognize that while they are translating, the source and target texts have their own maps depending on their own linguistic and non-linguistic systems.

While recognizing that there are a number of serious controversies in Translation Studies, this chapter will only briefly review the contributions of some prominent scholars and theorists who have made advances in the field of translation and whose theories are related to the subject matter of this thesis.

## 2.2 The Notion of Equivalence: An Overview

Equivalence has always been an essential concept in Translation Studies. Nevertheless it has always been surrounded by controversy. The reason why this is so, is that in any textually-based field, one of the central problems facing translators during their actual practice is to find equivalents in the target text. It is generally assumed that the concept of accuracy is associated with how far the target text is similar to the original text. Therefore, the concept of 'sameness' was falsely associated with 'equivalence'. This concept proved to be misleading since it did not fully comprehend the depth of the translation process which goes through various levels and shifts in order to convey the most appropriate linguistic and non-linguistic values in the target text.

The term 'shift' has embodied negative as well as positive associations. The negative 'shift' performance occurs when translation makes unnecessary transformations of some 'source text values' that should stay untouched (Bakker, Koster and Leuven-Zwart cited in Baker 2008: 227). In such a case, the end product text will be considered a mistranslated version of the source text. In the case of positive 'shifts', these tend to make the required transformations of some 'semiotic levels, with regard to specific aspects of the source text" (ibid). These shifts ensure that the equivalences preserve the most important values embedded in the source text.

From a linguistic point of view, Catford was one of the pioneer scholars who paid close attention to the equivalence notion. In his theory, he distinguished between “textual equivalence” and “formal correspondence” (1965: 27). At more or less the same time in the sixties, Eugene Nida made a significant contribution to the field with a theory he developed from his experience of translating the Bible. Nida's theory is based on two types of equivalence. The first was “formal equivalence” which refers to the attempt of being as accurate and correct as possible in conveying the message from the source language to the target language. The second type was "dynamic equivalence" which “aims to complete naturalness of expression" (Munday 2008: 42).

In the late 1970's, Peter Newmark developed a similar distinction. He believed that approaching a “communicative” and “semantic” translation is the best way to solve a lot of the problems that even Nida's Equivalence Theory could not solve, such as the issue of the unbalanced emphasis between the source and target languages. His concept of translation has been considered to be influential since it seeks to duplicate the effect for the target reader that the source language reader felt and to achieve the 'exact contextual meaning of the original' via semantic translation (ibid: 44).

In his analysis of the translation process, Jäger (1975:107) distinguishes between “communicative equivalence” and “functional equivalence.” His concept departs from preserving 'the communicative value' of the original text in the target text and focuses instead on rendering the functional values since the linguistic signs of the original can be described by using the appropriate linguistic tools of the target language. In passing, we might mention that according to Susan Bassnett (2002: 27), equivalence owes a great debt to "signs":

Equivalence overall results from the relations between signs themselves, the relationship between signs and what they stand for, and the relationship between signs, what they stand for and those who use them

Bell, in contrast, suggests that 'formal equivalence' should be used if it preserves "the context-free semantic sense of the text at the expense of its context-sensitive communicative value". In the case of 'functional equivalence', it should be used if it preserves "the context-sensitive communicative value of the text at the expense of its context-free semantic sense" (1991:7). This concept helps translators key into the idea of textuality because they will not only be concerned with the meaning

of words and sentences in the text itself, but will also be concerned with comparing the text with other ones within its field.

Although Translation Studies has within its house diverging notions of 'equivalence', the varying perspectives have united under the aim of achieving one goal: that the translation should mirror as closely as possible the effect felt by the source language reader. This is the most ideal and noble goal as it makes the translation fit the most important conditions of translation which are fidelity and loyalty. Moreover, it gives the translator the freedom to choose the best translation strategy in order to achieve that goal. While we can acknowledge that it is true that 'equivalence' manages to generate an equivalent effect on the target text reader, this effect varies depending on the surrounding circumstances of each text, otherwise the translation will fail to be a successful translation.

### 2.2.1. Formal Equivalence (Catford)

J.C.Catford's theory is one of the pioneer contributions that focused on the notion of *shifts* in translation studies. His linguistic view of language considers language 'as a set of systems.' In describing the extent of translation, he differentiates between two types of translation: *full translation* which he defines as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by another textual material in another language (TL) and *partial translation* which he defines as "some parts of the SL text are left untranslated" (Fawcett cited in Baker, 2008:121). In fact, his notion of 'equivalence' is distinguished by his preference for a linguistic-based approach. He states two notions of equivalence: "formal correspondence" which is exchangeably referred to as 'formal equivalence' and "textual equivalence".

Formal correspondence points at "any TL category (unit, class, structure, element of structure) which can be said to occupy, as nearly as possible, the same place in the economy of the TL as the given SL category occupies in the SL" (Catford 1965: 27). Accordingly, formal correspondence could be said to exist between English and Arabic. For instance, in relations between parts of speech in the two languages which have approximately the same pattern, i.e., verb by verb, adjective by adjective, noun by noun, and so on. Given that, formal correspondence may solve some translation problems that are related to other mutually corresponding factors between the source and target languages, such as culture.

One of the critics who criticized the linguistic side of Catford's Formal Correspondence Theory is Snell-Hornby. She argued that Catford “invented sentences to exemplify his categories of translational equivalence and for limiting his analysis to the level of sentence” (Kenny cited in Baker 2008:78). Moreover, Snell-Hornby believes that the translation process involves more than “linguistic substitution or mere code-switching”, it rather involves a process of ‘cultural transfer’ (Snell-Hornby 1989: 319).

It is true that this formal notion is considered as a beneficial strategy, particularly in comparative linguistic studies. However, to his credit, Catford outlines another notion of equivalence that is more relevant to the notion of equivalence between the source and target texts. Catford dubs this notion ‘textual equivalence’. This refers to “any TL text or portion of text which is observed on a particular occasion to be the equivalent of a given SL text or portion of text” (Catford 1965: 27). Additionally, he applies this notion through a communicative process, whereby ‘a competent bilingual informant or translator’ can observe ‘what changes if any occur in the TL text as a consequence’ (ibid: 28).

According to Catford, translation shifts mean the departure ‘from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL’ (ibid: 73). He categorizes two main types of translation shifts; *level shifts*, where, for example, an item is expressed grammatically in the source language and lexically in the target language, and *category shifts* which include four types:

1. *Structure-shifts*, which involve mainly a grammatical change between the structure of the ST and that of the TT: e.g. *Edward loves Jane* becomes ‘Is love ate Edward on Jane’ in Gaelic;
2. *Class-shifts*, when a SL part of speech is translated with a different part of speech in TL , i.e. a verb may be translated as a noun and an adjective as an adverb: e.g. the adjective in *medical student* becomes an adverbial phrase in the Arabic equivalent ‘student in medicine’;
3. *Unit-shifts*, which involve changes in rank between the SL and the TL, i.e. units of sentences and clause: e.g. the English definite article is translated in the Russian language by a change in the word order;

4. *Intra-system shifts*, which occur when 'SL and TL possess systems which approximately correspond formally as to their constitution, but when translation involves selection of a non-corresponding term in the TL system' (ibid: 80). For instance, when the SL singular becomes a TL plural.

Catford's theory is considered one of the greatest attempts at theorizing in the translation field, especially in the field of applied linguistics. Nevertheless, some critics believe that Catford did not introduce sufficient examples from actual texts to apply his theory. They also criticized his point of view in that it failed to look at the text to be translated as a one whole unit. Delisle says that Catford's book 'A Linguistic Theory of Translation' is based on a 'static contrastive linguistic basis' (Munday 2008: 61). In his defense of Catford's theory, Hatim argues that Catford's approach "may include intercultural issues as how users of different languages perceive reality in different ways"(Hatim 2001: 17). Within this context, McElhanon argues that translation should be bound to culture rather than being considered as a merely an interaction between languages (Journal of Translation, Volume 1, Number 3 (2005)).

Bearing in mind that Catford's theory helps to deal with language shifts in a more systematic manner, the theory has shown that the process of transformation in translation does not happen in a vacuum. Understanding this helps one to manage many problematic areas and develop a better sense of justification for translator's choices. Moreover, the data analysis for this research proves that, despite the kind of strategies used in translating the two literary texts that aim to confirm cultural values either of the source or target languages, it is virtually impossible to achieve this aim without considering the linguistic input first.

Actually for some cultural issues, Catford's shift model is invaluable in the transfer of concepts and ideas to the target reader in a proper and precise way. Although formal equivalence is considered by many as purely linguistic, it underscores both literary and scientific translations because languages speak about nations and these shifts do not only affect the grammatical or lexical structures, but they affect the style of the whole translated text.

### 2.2.2. Dynamic Equivalence (Nida)

Eugene Nida's theory culminated years of hard work in translating the Bible into a diverse range of languages and cultures. In the two books which Nida published in the sixties, *'Towards a Science of Translating'* and, in collaboration with Taber, *'The Theory and Practice of Translation'*, he reveals his concern with the response of the receptor, i.e. the target reader. Nida's main concern is with the impact of the message in the translation process. He believes that what lends the message appropriateness is not primarily "the referential content of the words" because the "total impression of a message consists not merely in the objects, events, abstractions and relationships symbolized by the words, but also in the stylistic selection and arrangement of such symbols" (1964: 168).

Accordingly, Nida (ibid: 159) presents two different types of equivalence: "formal equivalence" which "focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content" and "dynamic equivalence" which focuses on the "principle of equivalent effect". Formal equivalence is almost always source language-oriented since it revolves around the closest equivalent target language item and aims to achieve the same impact on the target reader that the original text had achieved on its readers. This could be harmful for the target reader because, as Nida and Taber indicated, 'typically, formal correspondence distorts the grammatical and stylistic patterns of the receptor language, and hence distorts the message, so as to cause the receptor to misunderstand or to labor unduly hard'(Fawcett 1997:201).

To solve the problems found in an adherence to formal equivalence, dynamic equivalence is suggested as a strategy which can narrow the gap between the source and target languages. Nida describes dynamic equivalence as the "closest natural equivalence". This description is based on three important key terms: (1) *equivalent*, which refers to the source-language message; (2) *natural*, which refers to the receptor language; and (3) *closest*, which "binds the two orientations together on the basis of the highest degree of approximation" (1964: 166). He argues that naturalness of expression could be problematic to the target reader on the level of word classes, grammatical categories, semantic classes, discourse types, or cultural context (ibid: 168).

Nida and Taber (1982: 22-24) have argued convincingly that they are mostly concerned with the message. Thus, it is conceded that if a term is unfamiliar to the target reader and it is not crucial to the message, then a translator should cast around for another equivalent that can achieve the



same effect. In his famous example from translating the Bible for Eskimos, Nida substitutes the expression “*Lamb of God*” with the “*Seal of God*”. His justification is that the Eskimos are familiar with ‘seal’, while ‘lamb’ has no significant importance in their culture. This example illustrates that “dynamic equivalence” tends towards domestication but in a more constrained basis. He says that “no translation that attempts to bridge a wide cultural gap can hope to eliminate all traces of the foreign setting” (1964: 167).

However, some theorists opposed the notion of ‘dynamic equivalence’. Scholars such as Broeck and Larose questioned the possibility of measuring the notion of effect and the ability of achieving the same effect between different languages and cultures. (Munday 2008: 43) Admittedly, when tracking down the development of the concept of equivalence itself in Translation Studies, most of these studies seem to agree that the target text cannot achieve the exact similar equivalence. Indeed, as Eco (2001:9) argues, the translation success cannot depend on ‘word equivalence’ and definitely not a synonymy of the source text:

We cannot even accept the naïve idea that equivalence in meaning is provided by synonym, since it is commonly accepted that there are no complete synonyms in language. Father is not a synonym for daddy, daddy is not a synonym for papa, and père is not a synonym for padre.

Thus, although Eco agrees that translation should accomplish the same impact achieved by the original text, he believes that it should go beyond the linguistic level and be much more involved with the cultural, intertextual, psychological, and narrative competences (ibid: 14).

One of the advantages of Nida's formal equivalence is that it can achieve a high degree of accuracy in many dimensions and, of course, mainly on the linguistic side of the target text. However, when translators appreciate the true aim of dynamic equivalence and try to apply it practically in the process of translation, they invariably find that the product is by far more natural and closer to the target reader.

Dynamic equivalence directs the translator's attention to the importance of the target culture and improves their skills in dealing with a completely different culture from their own. It also directs the translator's attention to the importance of taking crucial decisions about how to deal with ‘sacred’ items in both source and target texts, especially in languages such as English/Arabic.

Hence, culture is of the utmost importance to this research and dynamic equivalence is one of the most commonly used strategies that the translators of the two novels have used. It is one of the means that help us discover the relationship between culture and language in the first place, since it aims to achieve the most natural effect on the target reader.

### 2.2.3. A Relational Approach (Koller)

Werner Koller has developed an interesting notion of equivalence. His perspective of equivalence depends on positing “a relation devoid of content” (1979: 186), i.e. this relation is formed according to linguistic, textual, and extra-textual conditions surrounding the text that would be translated. Koller (1978: 76) opposes many of his other colleagues and states the problem of equivalence within the sphere of *parole*, which refers to the level of language use, and not *langue*, which refers to the linguistic system:

What is translated are utterances and texts; the translator establishes equivalence between SL utterances/ texts and TL-utterances/texts (SL=Source Language, TL=Target Language), not between structures and sentences of two languages.

This sharp distinction between the language systems and active text elements became a core issue in translation studies and paved the way towards recognizing the role of pragmatics in the process of translation. Koller uses the term *korrespondenz*, which is known as formal correspondence, and the term *aquivalenz*, which is referred to as textual equivalence. The former is concerned with the common aspects between language systems, while the latter is associated with the equivalent relations between texts and utterances (Munday 2008:46-47).

Koller developed five ‘equivalence frameworks’ (1992: 214). These are:

1. *Denotative equivalence* or referential equivalence which occurs when lexis in the SL and TL refer to the same meaning. It is related to the extra linguistic elements of the text. For example, 'lion' in English is 'asad' in Arabic;

2. *Connotative equivalence* or stylistic equivalence which occurs when the lexis of the text has a near synonymy in the mind of the source and target readers. It achieves the same communicative value with respect to the style, register, evaluative, or emotive dimensions of the text. For instance, 'Ghost spirit' and 'Holy spirit' (Leech, 1981: 19) could refer to 'Arrou'h al-moqadasah' in Arabic;
3. *Text-normative equivalence* which occurs when the words of the SL and TL are used in other similar texts in their native languages. E.g. in letters 'sincerely yours,' is translated as 'almokhles';
4. *Pragmatic equivalence* or communicative equivalence and this refers to Nida's dynamic equivalence which occurs when the SL and TL text achieve the same effect on their readers;
5. *Formal equivalence* or 'expressive equivalence' which occurs when the word has similar orthographic or phonological features in the SL and TL. It is associated with the form and style of the SL and the way they are expressed. It is usually used in translating poems and songs (Koller 1979: 91-187).

The dynamism of Koller's concept of equivalence is revealed in its concern to distinguish between real translation and other text forms such as adaptations and imitations that exist between source text and target texts. He argues that even if the process of translation is dynamic, when it exclusively focuses on the source text, or on the contrary, on the communicative conditions of the target text receptor, then it is a problematic issue. That is because gravitating too far towards a source text will result in a literal translation that would be "illegible" and "incomprehensible". On the other hand, overemphasizing the communicative conditions of the text receiver might violate "the autonomy of the original text" (ibid: 2000: 21).

Koller's frameworks of equivalence relations are very interesting. However, some theorists sense that the model needs further elaboration and research. They question the relevance of these forms and how far they are applicable in actual translation. Moreover, although Anthony Pym (cited in the Translator, 1997: 71-79) agrees with Koller in locating the problem of equivalence within the sphere of *la parole* and not *la langue*, he criticizes many aspects of his concept:

What worried me at the time was that Koller didn't look closely at the equivalence relation itself, which simply became a synonym for 'translation': merely cutting up the cake tells us very little about what we are actually eating.

The five frameworks of equivalences, according to Pym, make it necessary for the translator to establish a hierarchy of different types of equivalences for each text by using 'translation-oriented text analysis.' Pym, however, believes that the main issue is the translator's ability to identify a suitable equivalent hierarchy for each translation situation and therefore the trick is to achieve the 'correct hierarchy' regarding the text values that should be preserved. Pym suggests that the continuation of avoiding the equivalence issue led many theories to expand the limits of the term 'translation' itself, which consequently made it includes any relationship that connects a source and a target language. Therefore, the problem revolves around the lack of a definition of 'non-translation'.

In actual fact, Koller was concerned with the concept of translation and non-translation. He was not content with the distinction that had been made by scholars such as Ammann (1989) who relates the issue with the source text's ability to stand as a 'model for the production' of a new text for the target culture. Ammann believes that the translator should 'propose to the client the production of a new text for the target culture' if the source text failed to be suitable for translation. The following extract (cited in the Translator, 1997: 71-79) sums up Pym's view point on these issues:

True, this problem is recognized in the Skopos distinction between 'translational action' (which includes everything translators can be called upon to do) and a 'translation' as just one kind of textual result of such action. True, Koller (1995:194) unfairly overlooks this terminological distinction when criticizing Ammann (1989). But still, the fact that a theorist carries around two or more different terms does not provide any procedural means for distinguishing between them. Doing translation theory is rather more demanding than multiplying names-for-things. None of Koller's critics, I repeat, has really come to terms with the problem of defining non-translation. Koller deserves praise for insisting that they should do so.

From this brief review and further readings, I find that Koller's types of equivalence tend toward communication and relativity. Hence they involve the interaction between the main elements in the translation process which includes the source text, target text, and the translator. Besides, Koller himself clearly encourages us to draw more attention to this interacting circle. For trainee translators, I believe that applying these types and concepts encourages us to improve the stylistic form of our translation. This is simply because Koller's communicative conditions help to clarify the values that should be preserved, and whether they are historical or cultural or other. Moreover, the system pushes translators to work with a more analytical eye since they should consider not only language features, but also the stylistic, aesthetic, and pragmatic features. In translating literary texts, for instance novels, it assists the translator in being more decisive about what values they should preserve and through which type of equivalence this should be done. For example, in translating Arabic novels into English, the connotative equivalence proves to be beneficial in translating dialects, slang language, colloquial idioms, or archaisms.

### 2.3. Discourse, Genre, Text (Hatim & Mason)

#### 2.3.1 The Non-Equivalence Issue of Cultural Specifics

Obviously, theorists have tried to deal with the non-equivalence issue in translating texts that have certain cultural references by employing cultural objects in the target text. Nevertheless, Basil Hatim and Ian Mason (1990) believe that cultural objects are insufficient if the translator does not pay attention to the socio-textual signs in the text. Among those who addressed the relationship between cultural objects and translation was Peter Newmark who categorizes culture into five categories:

1. **Ecology**, where the cultural term has no political or commercial significance but may revolve around more than one cultural reference, depending on its importance in that source language. For instance, the various names of camels in the Arabic language such as *qo'aud*, *naqah*, and *jamal*.
2. **Material culture**, which refers to the translation of popular cultural items from Arab culture and which have no equivalent. For example, there are many items of clothing unique to Arabs such as the *thobe*, the *abayah*, and the *kuffiyah*.

3. **Social culture.** The main obstacle in translating this category is the connotative cultural terms which translators usually attempt to solve by using especial social terminology. For instance, translating Arabic terms like *hammam*, *qahwah*, and *souq*.
4. **Social, political, or administrative organizations** which refer to the institutional terms used by each individual country. For example, the Arabic terms for religious institutions like *Al-Azhar* and *Al-Awqaf*.
5. **Gestures and habits** which could be problematic if the term is incorrectly delivered to the target reader since the term could mean something in the source culture that is different from the target culture. Notorious examples are finger and head gestures (Newmark 2004: 94-103) (Adapted).

Hatim argues that socio-textual practices, unlike socio-cultural objects, are sacrosanct items of the source culture that should be best approached by mastering the discourse, genre, and the text in order to achieve optimal communicative effect. (Hatim 2001: 121) The Hatim and Mason model is significant in this research field because these three elements (Text, Genre and Discourse) serve as the pillars of translation strategy in dealing with cultural texts, i.e. whether the translator should domesticate or foreignize the text's cultural references. It grants the translator a comprehensive view of the text in general with respect to the source text's cultural values.

In Hatim & Mason's model, 'socio-textual' practices are macrocultural signs and, in order to achieve effective communication, the translator should be able to deal with rhetorical purposes, such as counter argument, through *texts*; attitudes, like racism or feminism, through *discourse*; and standards of appropriateness and conventions, like cooking recipes or letters to the editor in newspapers, through *genre* (Hatim 2004: 188).

### 2.3.2 Discourse

Discourse is the element through which the target readers construct their representation of the source culture. Hatim and Mason (1990, 1997) define discourse as “the material out of which interaction is moulded as well as the themes addressed” and consider genre and text as “carriers of the communication act”. Munday argues that Hatim and Mason have presented the term ‘discourse’ in its most comprehensive sense as:

modes of speaking and writing which involve social groups in adopting a particular attitude towards areas of sociocultural activities (e.g. racist discourse, bureaucratese, etc.). (Quoted in Munday 2008: 99).

From an applied linguistics point of view, Hatim refers to two main types of discourse analysis. The first involves the text structure and mapping in the light of the product and form. The second type is concerned with how texts negotiate with each other and the 'social relationship' this interaction generates. The latter type is the more significant since it is more procedural in actual translation (Hatim cited in Baker 2008: 68). Moreover, there are some main linguistic features within the text which the translator should pay attention to in the process of translation, such as the issues of markedness, shifting, word play, and figures of speech (Hatim 2001: 203). Also, the selection of active/passive verbs can affect the translation of the discursive attitudes in the original text. In the case of Hemingway's novel '*A moveable Feast*,' the writer tended to use active form of verbs with males and passive forms with females, underlining the passiveness of women's role during the era of the American Dream. For example, in one scene (p.13) he used a series of verbs with the female character: A girl *came* in.. *sat* by herself..*placed* herself..*could watch* the street...she was *waiting*.. So *I* went on *writing*. But the Arabic translation (p.10) made the female more active by translating *placed herself* as 'wadha'at nafsaha' instead of simply use the past tense 'sat' (Hatim 2009: forthcoming book: 6.10.2). The text can involve many discursive practices. Within this context, discourse can refer "to the many different ways of speaking that are associated with different social contexts"(cited in Baker 2008: 70). That is because a text may have some inter-discursive attitudes and consequently presents various social aspects, such as the overlap between religious and political discourse.

In such cases, intertextual analysis plays a crucial role where the translator should analyze these discursive attitudes in light of other similar texts. Actually, Hatim (2001) argues that discursive practices are not only a part of political texts and so on, but are also found in literary texts as well. Moreover, this overall view of discourse makes it an inevitable factor of social practices since it determines the way speakers or writers express themselves, i.e. it becomes a way in which the 'self' and the culture are presented. Discourse analysis proves to be one of the most crucial stylistic tools the translator should obtain. There is now a consensus among translation theorists and practitioners

that discourse analysis is essential in deciding in the first place what is worthy of translation and how it should be presented.

### 2.3.3. Genre

In their critical linguistic study, Hatim and Mason (1990, 1997) define genre at its most general level as “the linguistic expression conventionally associated with certain forms of writing,” i.e. forms like literary, journalistic, and academic genres. Furthermore, as a macro sign, genre “provides translation with a framework within which appropriateness is judged and the various syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and semiotic structures are handled” (Hatim 2001:141). There are certain text elements, mainly lexical, that are essential in identifying the type of genre or genres within the text to be translated, such as collocations and figures of speech. What makes dealing with genre such a complex task for the translator is not only transforming it to a genre that fits the target reader’s language and culture, but also that some texts involve sub-genres as well.

In genre analysis, Translation Studies has distinguished two dimensions: the translation *of* genre and translation *as* a genre. Basically the former deals with the linguistic aspects of genre, whereas the latter is tangled up with the debate of considering whether translation itself is an independent genre. However, our discussion will be limited to the first dimension; ‘the translation of genre’ which is the origin of Genre Theory and the types of writing. For instance, is it a scientific article or a literary text? Within this context, genre becomes, as Carl James argues, a ‘purposeful activity’ that frames the conventions of certain types of writing. Hence, genre is a central device in the transfer of the original text to make it sound ‘like a translation’ or ‘sounding foreign or reading fluently’ (Hatim 2001:141).

James (1989: 32) argues that genre analysis focuses on ‘the conventional, formulaic, routine labour-saving aspect of language use’ (ibid: 142). He concludes from his empirical study on a translator training program that unprofessional translators made what he calls ‘genre violations’. They made some shift changes that distorted the original text. Therefore, he suggests, any translator, even beginners, should examine and experience a variety of genres in their translation practice.



Thus, according to Hatim (2001), genres are macro signs of culture which “carry traces of their identity and through linguistic devices signal and insist on their textual presence.” Furthermore, they assist in framing discursive interaction and “join forces with texts in ‘enabling’ discursive attitudes to acquire the necessary communicative thrust” (Hatim 2001:141). Actually, genre, as a main detection tool of socio-cultural practices, stands alongside discourse and text type, as the best strategy to translate cultural references. Hence, the relationship between the strategy of foreignization and domestication and genres evolve around cultural references and how an intended effect and other kinds of effect may be made more transparent in the target text.

The study of the English translation of one of former Iranian President Al-Khomeini's speeches which Hatim and Mason made, concludes that the translators mainly adopted a literal translation technique. That means they did not exert much effort to reconstruct the genre in a way that would serve the target text. For example, the images or collocations in the speech were presented literally. The result was that the imagery became unjustifiably sharp. The message could have been delivered much more faithfully by using familiar images that are more in keeping with this kind of political-religious genre in the English language. "Blood" (Hatim 2001: 120-121). This study proves the sensitive role of genre in translation, particularly in constructing the cultural element of the source text in the most stylistic and appropriate way that fits the target reader's form of writing and one which does not misrepresent or distort the original.

#### 2.3.4. Text

Hatim and Mason (1990, 1997) refer to text as ‘a sequence of sentences serving an overall rhetorical purpose’ such as the argumentative, the persuasive, the expository, and the academic. Most significantly though, without an insightful reading of the original text, the translator might commit serious mistakes. Therefore, translation practitioners should pay close attention to the semantic dimensions of the text (Hatim cited in Baker 2008: 668). As text linguists Beaugrande and Dressler argue, all texts are located in particular situations, with text as "a communicative occurrence" which meets seven standards of Textuality. The standards include: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, contextuality and intertextuality (1981:3). Thus, it can be understood that textual values, particularly communicative, pragmatic and semiotic

factors, play a crucial role in helping the translator achieve the highest level of communication possible. In the textual analysis of the original texts, especially literary texts, the translator is required to pay attention to the writer's stylistic tools since they are mostly used to serve rhetorical purposes, as for example, forms of passivity, depersonalization, and intransitives (Hatim 2009: forthcoming book: 6.8).

In line with Beaugrande and Dressler's definition, Hatim and Mason believe that the text is negotiated between the text producer and receiver through a contextual process which involves three main cornerstones. The first of these cornerstones is the communicative dimension that explores aspects of the text user, such as dialects, and the use of a text, i.e. mode, field, and tenor. The second dimension is the pragmatic dimension which involves factors such as intentionality, speech act, and implicature. The third dimension is semiotic based on considering the text as a semiotic sign regulated by three factors: discourse, genre, and text type. Moreover the process of the original text analysis allows the translator to spot intertextual relations in the use of some tools or strategies that are normally used in other texts. For example, in literary texts, the choice of 'transitivity' or 'passivity' is significant in English and should be preserved in Arabic, a language which has a tendency toward active transitivity. Therefore, the translator may seek other solutions instead of using the passive form through inanimate objects, e.g. her tears were shed on her cheeks *'inhamarat adomoo'u 'ala khadaiha.'*

Quite obviously, this makes the concept of intertextuality a significant factor in serving the general communicative purpose. Hatim argues that text users, within this context, have to choose either to 'monitor' or 'manage' the situation. The former refers to dealing with a situation in a 'fairly detached and unmediated fashion', whereas the latter refers to steering 'the text receiver in a direction favourable to the text producer' (Hatim and Mason 1990: 146).

However both procedures can emerge within one text. Therefore, according to Hatim and Mason's view of textuality, texts exhibit 'various degrees of involvement.' That is said it is understood that they unavoidably act and interact with each other. Hence, the importance of 'intertextuality' is unquestionable. This basically means that translators should use their experience of reading other similar texts so that they can polish the translation's conceptual structure and place the translated text in the appropriate form that fits its cultural circumstances.

#### 2.4. The semiotic level of context and discourse:

According to Hatim and Mason, (Cited in Hatim 2001:141) a ‘sign’ is divided into ‘local’ and ‘global’ types. The local level involves dealing with socio-cultural objects. At the same time, however, these objects may contribute to the ‘global’ level. In the second level, the socio-cultural features become more dynamic and include the genre, text, and discourse triad. If these features are mere objects, they would be included at the ‘micro’ sign level, but if the interaction is intense, they are no longer considered objects. They are called socio-textual practices and are considered as macro signs. Thus, the ultimate goal of these *signs* is to serve the ‘rhetorical purposes’ within the context of both the original and the target text (Hatim 2001: 98). Hatim states that the rhetorical purpose is “essentially a property of source texts, [which] encapsulate the intentionality of source text producers” (Hatim 2009: forthcoming book: 2.1). Therefore, if necessary, a translator might need to make certain adjustments in order to achieve acceptability and fluency in the target culture and language. Hence, socio-textual practices are bound by rhetorical conventions and the aim of the translator is to render the source text’s linguistic and cultural aspects into the appropriate context of the target text.

Within this context, macro-structures are sacrosanct icons in the source text. They should be adopted even if they sound alien to the receiver or jettisoned if they are intentionless. Hatim argues that proper domestication at the socio-cultural level can thus only enhance the quality of a translation through target text ‘fluency’. It facilitates access to the source text’s discursive thrust, genre integrity and textual coherence. This ensures that the socio-textual practices at work are preserved intact in the foreign language and will be foreignized. However, foreignization can misfire when it becomes blind literalism. We must always bear in mind that if it is not judiciously used, domestication of socio-culture is not a panacea (Hatim 2009: forthcoming book, chapter entitled by: Intercultural Communication and Identity: An Exercise in Applied Semiotics).

After this review of Hatim and Mason’s model of translation, I could claim that their model is essential in assessing the translation of the data in this thesis. For example, it has helped me to generate more suitable translation suggestions and alternatives, especially concerning cultural references. Moreover, since my analysis deals with two literary works, the semiotic dimension plays an important part in assessing and analyzing the data. The triangulation of discourse, genre

and text type allows us to get an overall view of the texts and to do justice to the ideology and identity of both text producers and receivers. However, this triangulation may not work effectively without the assistance of *intertextuality* which can prove how far translators were able to negotiate the text's message and reach a high level of readability and familiarity.

## Chapter Three

### CULTURAL STUDIES AND BEYOND

#### 3.1.1. Foreignization & Domestication: Overview

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an era that was distinct with the emphasis on the importance of fidelity and loyalty in translation, the German scholar Friedrich Schleiermacher was one of the pioneers to be concerned with the identity of the original text. His leading contribution is his 1813 lecture '*On the Different Methods of Translating*' where he presents the beginnings of the controversy of foreignization and domestication. In his famous lecture, he expresses his concern about the image of the German culture when German texts are translated into foreign languages. He argues that the German culture can only be preserved if the translated text read and sounded different, i.e. foreign. Moreover, he believes that the correct interpretation of a text results from a true understanding of the relationship between the author and his work. Actually, this proves the power of translation and the sensitive role it plays because, as Venuti points out: 'translation wields enormous power in constructing representations of foreign cultures' (1998: 67). Moreover, Schleiermacher believes that the translated text, in his case the German original text, should remain readable and intelligible in order to be understood correctly by the target reader. Schleiermacher says the translator has to choose to follow one of two strategies in his/her translation:

Either the translator leaves the writer alone as much as possible and moves the reader toward the writer, or he leaves the reader alone as much as possible and moves the writer toward the reader. (Schleiermacher 1992:42)

His reference to 'foreignization' is understood from his suggestion to move 'the reader toward the writer'. Here the translator is biased to the original culture where the main concern is to avoid any neglect or misinterpretations of the source language and culture, even though it is strange and does

not achieve a high degree of fluency in the target language. In this case, the reader makes the effort to understand and more importantly to accept the foreignness of the text. The second strategy depends on the writer making the effort to reach the target reader. This 'domesticating' strategy is biased towards the target culture and language. Here the translator attempts his/her best to naturalize and familiarize the text to the reader.

However, it is not an easy task to adopt one particular strategy from these two in actual translation, especially in our modern age where the race between cultures is at boiling point. Therefore, nations nowadays are much more aware about methods of representations and how they affect constructing their image in front of the world. In addition, communication devices are no longer limited to or only used by certain specialized people. So culture became the image that reflects nation's identity and translation is one of the most important carriers of these nations' beliefs and thoughts. Moreover, it is the canon through which target receivers build their opinions and attitudes about others. Nowadays, the publication freedom and cycling achieved an outstanding progress. But authorship and censorship are still a serious concern to translation scholars, such as Venuti who is the first to coin the terms Foreignization and Domestication. Actually, the two concepts are related to the issue of 'cultural hierarchy.'

### 3.1.2. The Influence of Cultural Hierarchy on the translator's Visibility

The term 'hegemony' can be defined as "a form of power based on leadership by a group in many fields of activity at once, so that its ascendancy commands widespread consent and appears natural and inevitable" (Hall, 2007:259). Thus, only texts that are heavily domesticated are accepted and the linguistic and cultural features of the foreign texts are transformed or sometimes concealed (Venuti 2002: 19).

Schleiermacher takes a stand point against culture hegemony. His preference of the foreignizing strategy starts from his belief that translation should expose the original text values and beliefs in the target language. However he does not deny the controlling power of hegemonic cultures as the main element which can define the strategy to be followed in the translation process. What he critically questions is the range of applicability of the domesticating strategy in texts and genres, since he considers extreme fluency an obstacle that prevents explaining the original

thoughts truly. Due to this, it doesn't only make the source text language lose its 'spirit' but it even makes the translation itself lose its role as an artistic carrier of culture values (1992: 39-53).

As quoted in Munday's book *"Introducing Translation Studies"*, Venuti refers to the sensitive role of cultural factors saying that they play an ideological role in 'serving the interest of specific groups. And they are always housed in the social institutions where translations are produced and enlisted in cultural and political agendas' (Cited in Munday 2008:143). However, in his historical overview of the translation movement, Venuti reveals that the seeds of domestication and foreignization were planted in the Rome age, when the 'censorship' of translation was an act of conquest that proves the power and authority. During that time, texts that are translated into Latin had to go through a naturalizing process that included making significant linguistic transformations like deleting or adding certain things to sound purely Latin. That is, the original texts were heavily domesticated in favor of the Latin censorship. However, as Venuti points, the concept of 'censorship' continued to be effective in the colonizing era and afterwards in the postmodern era, or what Venuti refers to as the 'post cultural' era. That is clear in French translations, particularly in translating texts in philosophy, psychology, or literature criticism (Venuti 2008: 16). This chronological study emphasizes the fact that translation has been always used as a double edged weapon in the ongoing struggle of constructing or reconstructing cultures representations.

In his book *"The Translator's Invisibility"* Venuti argues that publishers during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially in U.S after the World War II, transformed translation into a work that is 'made for hire' and not original works of 'authorship'. This concept controlled the translation movement severely to the extent that it marginalized the role of translation and affected negatively the legal rights and payment rates of the translators. Moreover, Venuti relates this controlling role of publishers to the Anglo-American tradition, where the colonizing countries which have the material and economic powers controlled the publication movement to achieve cultural hegemony.

Sociologists are aware of the cultural hegemony issue. *'Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices'* a book edited by Stuart Hall, discusses Foucault's model and its influence in exhibiting foreign cultures. Of course the same assumption could be applied to translation as a reflection of culture representatives just as media devices and arts. This model emphasizes the concept of the 'visibility' of the hegemonic countries that have the political and cultural powers. It turned cultures, as the author points out, into mere objects that are based 'on a belief in social control' (2007: 195-199). That is, cultural hierarchy could be visualized as a

continuum where the level of the translator's visibility varies until it reaches its opposite extreme, when the translator becomes 'invisible', at the end of the continuum.

### 3.1.3. Invisibility

One of the most controversial concepts that have contributed to the contradiction between the two strategies of foreignization and domestication is the '*invisibility*' of the translators. Venuti opposes the translation strategy adopted by the Anglo-American tradition, claiming that it mainly aims to achieve a transparent translation, which in turn, shadows the role of the translators by making them invisible. One of the drawbacks of this position is that it enhances the cultural marginality and economic utilization between the two cultures. Therefore, the main aim of Venuti's book *The Translator's Invisibility* is "to make the translator more visible so as to resist and change the conditions under which translation is theorized and practiced today, especially in English-speaking countries" (2008:13). It could be recognized from Venuti's concept of 'visibility' and 'invisibility' how crucial the role of the translator as a mediator between nations. The success of his/her translated work is now measured not only by the uniqueness of the style or the precision of the message but also by whether the translator surrendered to the political or economic powers of both sides - the source and target languages.

Venuti criticizes this phenomena of invisibility arguing that although translation had flourished in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that was achieved at the expense of the translation movement of the less hegemonic countries and made translators more invisible. Nevertheless, Pym points out that the translator, just like any other human being, is exposed to the pressure of political situations, ideologies, and culture hegemonies. He argues that the violent affects of extreme domestication, may not only underestimate the work of the translator but may also mislead the target reader. Actually Pym makes an interesting point saying that the issue of the visibility of the translator is a matter of how readers receive the translated text, so if it is below their expectation and if they feel it is too foreign, then the translator would be seen and blamed (Pym 2004:68).



#### 3.1.4. Foreignization Applied in Translation

In his translation of De Angelis's poems, Venuti says that, in his choice of syntactic structures and terminological terms, he deliberately used terms and techniques that are not only new in its style or unfamiliar to the writing style of the Anglo American tradition, but are also strange to the source culture itself. That is because he wanted to experiment with a challenging translation that may shock the hegemonic culture. But, as he argues, the original poems were shocking for any reader who doesn't treat them in a special way and who keeps expecting them to present the usual poetic voices and dictions. He refers to the strategy he used to translating these poems as refusing 'fluency' and an action of 'resistance' (2008: 239-259). His translation has been rejected by some English readers on the basis of violating fluency and intelligibility. However, Venuti's reply on these objecting readers is that his violations are justified and that those readers weren't able to understand these justifications. Interestingly, Pym says that while Venuti considers the matter of cultural hierarchy as a kind of serious threat, he himself turned it into a 'threat' when he rejects accepting readers' opinion; "That sounds like a threat: read me the way I tell you, or I'll name you in my book" (Venuti's scandals, Pym, 1999).

Ezra Pound, as Venuti mentions, is among other modernist scholars who concealed their preference of foreign texts by saying that they are only trying to be faithful to the original and to preserve the aesthetic values of translation. His choice of poems was conditioned by having a persona that can be reconstructed and other characteristics that match the standards of modernist translators. However, he made it clear, especially in his translation introductory note of Cavalcanti's work, that he is concerned with the way the target culture receives the original one in order to 'signal the differences of the foreign text' (2008:167-178). In that sense, foreignization could be achieved via different forms. It could be felt in any translation that adheres to the original culture and attempts to obtain much of its cultural features. This foreignness could be preserved mostly by preserving the dialect of the original culture, whether it is local or sophisticated. Thus, fluency is always required but in accordance with the translating culture in the first place. The domesticating translator, unlike the foreignizing one, tries to bring the author to the target reader in a way that applies to their values and acceptance as if the author is a native writer of their own language. Therefore, this strategy depends on presenting a translation that is not just fluent but most commonly used in the same context of original texts of the target reader's language.

The translation process goes through a series of stages before the final production that the unspecialized target readers do not recognize. The aim of translation could affect deeply the choice of the original text to be translated and which strategy should be used. For example, foreignizing translators mainly choose texts that have an influence on the target language through using some 'discursive strategies' that are unfamiliar to the target language such as the use of 'archaism'(Venuti 2002:186). Obviously then, if foreignizing translators fail to choose texts that implement in their own some foreignizing elements, then the strategy itself would not be able to achieve its aim no matter how hard the translator tried to do. Thus, to achieve the best level of interaction with the target reader, besides determining the aim of translation, the translator could picture the best strategy to deal with the text from the very beginning when he/she examines the linguistic and cultural elements of the original text.

### 3.1.5. Foreignization/ Domestication: The Controversy

It is assumed that foreignization is the ideal translating strategy that equalizes between cultures and avoids any form of hierarchies. Many scholars and socialists agree with this assumption, yet the strategy has been criticized by other translation scholars. For instance, Douglas Robinson (1997) disagrees with Venuti's claims and argues that what differentiates between foreignization and domestication revolves around the impact each of them achieves on the target culture because each translator has his/her own interpretation of the source text. Moreover, foreignization could harm the original culture by doing the exact opposite of its declared goals. Robinson suggests that 'fluent' language can be 'foreignized' by the simple act of reading it in a different tone of voice whilst a totally foreign expression can sound familiar if read by a good actor. Finally, Robinson introduces a series of questions to discuss. For instance, he questions the concept of 'abusive fidelity' which was introduced by Philip Lewis and asks: who is abused in translation? (Robinson 1997: xv) Actually this form of Foreignization that leans heavily towards the foreign language may lead to a blind literalism which instead of showing the uniqueness of the source culture and its identity, it would make the text ambiguous and artificial.

Nevertheless, the culture hegemony that Venuti believes the foreignizing strategy tries to resist, has a wider sense and includes any type of discrimination or feeling of priority economically or

politically (Cited in Baker 2008:306). For example, the model should be applied to texts that are discursively imperialistic, racial, feminist, or bureaucratic, so it seeks better understanding and more democratic relations among people (2008: 16).

### 3.1.6 Foreignization/ Domestication & Culture Identity

Many scholars working in the area of intercultural studies have been attracted to the debate about foreignization/domestication. They utilized it to search for a more beneficial strategy to deal with the translation of culture-specifics. The foreign culture deserves to be respected and given a status equal to that of the target culture. Therefore, the differences between the foreign and the target texts should be emphasized because that what makes translation a cross-culture mediator. The Anglo American tradition has been criticized severely because of its unfair tendency to heavy domestications that invisibly inscribes "readers with the narcissistic experience of recognizing their own culture in a cultural other" (Venuti 1992: 15).

Recently some scholars have begun to question if the issue is really the concern which strategy to be followed. In literary texts, for instance, it is never simply language transfer; here we infer a problem of identity. What counts for cultural studies scholars is the impact of the strategy on the culture of the source and target cultures. Moreover, their main concern as Alistair Stead (1999) states, relates to whether these strategies have caused any mis-understandings within the process of transfer and most importantly if they cause any problem of identity (Cited in Nikolaou 2006: 26). Here the debate between foreignization and domestication touches the core of cultural studies; shall we confirm the values and the needs of the receiver, i.e. the target reader, or be advocates to preserving the foreignness of the sender, i.e. the source author? Within the context of the cross-cultural translation issue of interference, Olk argues that translation embeds in itself sort of discursive practices that "influence the way the source culture is perceived in the target culture" (2001: 54-56). The argument continues regarding to what measure should neutralization and omission be dealt with and are they considered forms of domestication or foreignization? Ivir (1987: 38) claims that they are forms that attempt to reduce "the unknown to the known and the unshared to the shared". These arguments about the known and unknown or the formation of the self and the other are cornerstones of the identity conflict.

Said Faiq argues that the 'other', although 'often misunderstood and misinterpreted, is perceived as foreign, alien and different but at the same time strangely attractive'(2007:11). Attractiveness is a synonym of a world full of excitement, i.e., a world of exoticism. The perspective of this 'self' with regard to 'others' is what mainly created the 'stereotyped' characters of the 'self', i.e. the translating culture due to its power sets certain features that delineate the translated character, that is, from the less powerful culture. These features become consequently an abstract part of the way target readers perceive the difference of the other, whether historically, economically or socially. Moreover, it is very strongly associated with the idea of 'exoticism' which means the other is always in a state of suspense to discover the attractiveness that is hidden in the 'glamorous' worlds of the alien other.

Unfortunately, these stereotypes do not reflect the true image of their nations, since they are basically created by more powerful nations for racial purposes. As Hall indicates, 'stereotypes' present people with certain characteristics as if they were fixed by nature (2007: 258). But the problem is that the negative characteristics of these characters are exaggerated and become the norm through which the 'others' think about 'us'.

For example, there is no doubt that the famous '*Arabian Nights*', '*Ali Baba*', or '*Rub'ay'at Omar al-Khayyam*' are some of the most attractive works to Westerners because they present the image they expect, and want to see in the foreign 'other', i.e. the Oriental world. They indulge the readers with the most exotic and fantastic worlds that evoke a clichéd and probably non-existent image of the life in the desert with its secrets about *caliphs*, the *harem*, and *fortune*. So the danger of stereotyping is that it sets the boundaries of what is normal and accepted. Therefore Said Faiq (2007: 14) rightly argues that in translation:

..invisibility, appropriation and subversion can all be subsumed under manipulation, which not only distorts original texts but also leads to the influencing of the target reader. Translation becomes the site of conflictual relationships of power and struggle between the cultures being translated and those doing the translating

Within this context, it is recognized for most scholars that the notion of foreignization and domestication emerge in actual translation. Pym believes that although the translator is a mediator

between two cultures, the translated text sets in a point of intersection between cultures (Alternatives to Borders in Translation Theory, Pym, July 13 199). Hence, it could be argued that, the cross-cultural identities may be negotiated, yet, we should differentiate between the 'self' and the 'other' in a more specific way. The former refers to the translating culture, whereas the latter refers to the translated culture and is used to refer to all people the self perceives as completely different or alien.

For his part, as a naturalist Kwiecinski argues that these notions "tend to be used rather loosely and to refer to different phenomena potentially leading to terminological gaps and inconsistencies". In fact he disagrees with scholars who believe that exoticism/assimilation is synonymous with foreignization/ domestication (2001: 13 - 15). On the other hand, Zlateva claims that domestication and foreignization "refer to two different entities" and refuses this comparison since what is '*domesticated*' is the form and the content of the *source text*' and what is '*foreignised* and *exoticised*' is the form and content of the *translated text*" (2004: 2). Because they advocate opposite extremes, Zlateva believes that adopting either of them may require using various different translation tools. Translation then is not merely a transfer device between two cultures, but rather a mirror that reflects the awareness of what writers are involved in and should be further approached as a tool of literary creativity (Cited in Nikolaou 2006: 31).

### 3.2. Serious vs. Popular Fiction & Translation

Within this era of hurried lives amid the thrust of globalization, there is a great concern over translating serious literature. Some scholars and people who are interested in translation studies argue that serious literature used to be appreciated and discussed thoroughly by its receivers, but nowadays it has been marginalized and its glamour has vanished. They argue that audiences and readers in the contemporary modern age are mostly no longer eager to indulge themselves with fine works of arts yet race towards works which have an instant effect on their feelings and corresponds with their default way of thinking. Therefore, we can say that this transition in the take up of fiction has been created by many complicated factors which of course affect the translation of serious fiction. One factor would be the fallback in the production and distribution of

serious fiction. Most bestsellers in the book market have mostly achieved their success by following a tendency towards stereotyped representations. Of course, this rippled out into the field of translation and brought us to this very debate on domestication and foreignization.

The two terms 'serious' and 'popular' are considered opposites within the genre of fiction. The Canadian Encyclopedia defines 'Popular Literature in English' as a type of writing which:

.. has shown wide and continued acceptance, measured by sales, frequent imitation, adaptation to other cultural forms and general commercial success. The word "popular" is meant as a synonym for "successful," not as an antonym for "serious." Certain books are carefully tailored by authors and publishers to capture the attention of a wide range of potential readers

Interestingly, this definition links the term 'popular' with 'success' and the work is considered successful solely by its commercial achievements. Therefore, it can be understood that serious fiction became a sort of minority activity discussed by an elite type of intellectual readers. It is not popular or 'successful' because it does not achieve high sales in the book market. However, we cannot make general conclusions and claim that all popular or bestselling works are empty or totally shallow. There are some popular fiction bestsellers which also maintain the principles of real art. Actually, Maccracken advocates popular fiction saying that it is popular because it is cheap, 'disposable', a kind of reflection of the self in themes of everyday life situations. Therefore, it is being interestingly read in trains, airplanes, waiting areas and it takes its readers into a world in an adventurous journey (1998: 13-17). However, serious works can become bestsellers and reach a diverse range of readers if they are advertised and marketed well. There have been a lot of serious translated works that achieve great fame and are reprinted time and again such as translations of biographies and autobiographies. What really matters is why each of them, the serious or the popular, achieves bestsellerdom and consequently how this reflects on translation.

To get closer to the core of these issues, some views taken from the experience of literature writers, translators, and publishers are informative. Roger Allen, an American translator and a professor of Arabic literature at Pennsylvania University, agrees with the conception of relating

popularity with bestsellers and argues that the phenomena of 'popular literature' is not only a western domain but also surfaced in Arabic literature in the nineteenth century and is known as '*adab `ammi*' (1997: 245). He also believes that 'popular writers' are the ones who manage 'the highest levels of sale'. In order to prove his point of view, he referred to the Egyptian novel '*I am Free*' (*Ana Hurra*) by Ihsan Abd al-Quddus. It was published in the fifties and was so popular because it addressed an issue that was troublesome for that young Arab generation - the clash between local traditions and the impact of foreign elements on Arab societies. Interestingly, he believes that the main reason for its popularity is that it does not require any effort from the reader (Allen cited in Munif, H 1982: 98).

As a result, although the work discussed a serious problem regarding the clash of cultures, it was written in a way that focuses the readers' attention on an interesting issue that concerns a wide social layer of Arabs. Hence, it was an intelligent choice by the author and was considered successful in its original language because it succeeded in addressing contemporary youth issues in Modern Standard Arabic and was also successful in its translated versions because, for western readers, it visualized some of the 'unknown' features of the source culture and revealed the contradictions between (the 'other') and (the 'self').

In actual fact, the distinction between 'serious' and 'popular' is controversial to some extent. Serious fiction is considered to have a great mission to produce art that reflects reality and tries to solve its problems with a high standard of language. Allen says that it tends to focus on rarely discussed issues and chooses uniquely remarkable scenes (ibid). But 'success' should not be a synonym of either 'popular' or 'serious' literature. In his review of Denys Johnson-Davies's new anthology about Arabic modern fiction, (*One Language, Many Voices* November 26, 2006) [Robert F. Worth](#), the well-known writer, argues that achieving bestsellerdom could be a 'mixed blessing', because it contributes to creating a model stereotyped presenter of foreign cultures in general and the Arabs culture in particular. Moreover, it conceals the presence of other serious Arab writers and excludes the translation of their works like Munif and dozens of 'other lesser-known Arab fiction writer'. He mentions his experience with his first readings of Arab literature to illustrate his point of view:

I cannot be the only Westerner who, picking up the first volume of Mahfouz's "Cairo Trilogy" in my early 20s, abandoned it after a few dozen pages, finding its 19th-century realism slow going.

The concern about serious fiction is ongoing and it attracts specialists all over the world. According to Vaikom Murali, an Indian literary critic and a translator, this trend leaves serious writers and translators rather worried because translators of serious literature do not get sufficient support from publishers. Moreover, some translated works are neglected and do not reach many book shelves because they do not match the categories of popular fiction (Literature in translation seeks new markets, Anand Haridas, May 31, 2006). Hence, translators, just like many serious writers, suffer from low rates of pay. Of course, that can be related to Venuti's concern over the hegemony of western culture and its negative effect on the translation movement. The literary critic complains: "I have completed the translation of *The Reader* by German author Bernhard Schlink a couple of years back. It is yet to appear in print." (ibid) Moreover, Richard Curtis the famous American publisher, director and screen writer, draws an interesting opinion about the publishing industry:

When I went into the publishing business after graduating from college, I discovered a literary culture so vastly different from the ones I had studied that I could scarcely find any common ground between them. This world was populated by romance, science fiction and fantasy, and male action-adventure writers, by pulpsters, pornographers, and countless others who earn their living producing genre books....And I've concluded that we are all a little poorer for these gaps in awareness, appreciation, and communication. (*Publishing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 1990)

The quotation reveals that certain genres became the most beloved types of fiction to a majority of readers. Here the concern is that these genres became the ideal examples of successful works although they are full of fixed representations and stereotyped characters. Actually, it shows that these genres share some common characteristics which became the receivers' criteria for acceptance and popularity. For example, these genres all have elements of excitement, entertainment, and stereotyping through a simple standard level of language. But as Hall implies, although these genres have common characteristics, they are not totally similar, otherwise, the



receiver would get bored. However, the dissimilarities in their stories will be limited to a certain extent in the character types or the plot for example (2007:356). That is because fixed presentations and stereotyped characters are established by asserting their different qualities even if they are brought up repeatedly in these works.

Another concern over these genres are claims that they made literature move in the direction of 'entertainment'. Mr. Xu Chunping a Chinese editor of the *Literature Journal* expressed this concerns in a conference held in China. He believes that this tendency opened the door to new literary genres such as 'cell phone and online writing.' He says although writers have day jobs as professors, editors or in organizations such as writers' associations and cultural unions, most of them support the new wave and agree that there is 'good writing floating in cyberspace' (Cited in Literati: serious literature marginalized, 17-4-2008). In fact, regardless of the relationship between media technologies and entertainment, Stuart Hall believes that this concept of popular fiction as an entertainment genre is basically because it is considered as a type of imagination that does not reflect reality, but is used as a mean of enjoyment to pass time pleasantly, and, of course, as a way to spend money (2007: 340). The commercial sector, relying on this perception of literature, makes a profit out of it and directs various media to publicize and distribute these works widely.

Stereotyping and misrepresenting cultural icons or practices are the greatest disservice perpetrated by popular fiction, especially in translated versions. Some of these fixed representations shed light on racial attitudes that are created by the majority that dominates the hegemonic countries but are starting to vanish due to revolutionary movements that have grown over the years. For example, if we take the image of the African Americans and Britons, besides being marginalized as hard working "niggers", they were consequently presented as leaders of illegal practices in their communities. The same representation of Latin Americans can be found as well. As for Arabs, the works chosen for translation are mostly the ones that focus on ideas that echo old stereotypes like the *harem*, *Bedouins*, adventures in the desert, and sheikhdoms. Therefore, it is not odd that '*A Thousand and One Nights*' is honored in the West.

In his book 'The Arabic novel. An historical and critical introduction' Roger Allen (1983), argues that the Arab world is seared into the Western mentality with stereotypical images of the *kofeyyah*, *camels*, the *shemagh* and the *eqal*, and other traditional images. As Said Faiq implies, the phenomenon of 'exoticism' has always been the frame within which the 'other' is accepted to the 'self' and always framed in 'ready-made stereotypes and clichés' (2007: 20). Therefore, the image

of the oriental world is mostly fixed to appeal to the western reader's sense of excitement over these magical stories. Obviously, then, some Arabic works that perpetuate these negative images are among the first to reach foreign readers and this in turn guarantees fame and commercial success.

But recent Arabic popular fiction includes modern themes, beside the traditional ones. For example, themes that discuss matters of terrorism and the abuse of women. Books by writers such as Nawal El Saadawi, an Egyptian writer who moved to the USA in the 90s, are popular in the West and sell well. The main theme of her works is the 'Islamic mistreatment of women.' (One Language, Many Voices, Robert F. Worth, November 26, 2006). Certainly, as Arabs we should discuss our problems openly but this should be done by addressing ourselves firstly and not by exposing with exaggeration our weakness to others. Furthermore, Allen says that 'oil wells' are added to the list of modern stereotyped images and a lot of Arab writers have used this theme often in their works, such as Munif, who shows a serious concern about the social and economic gap the sudden wealth in the Middle East has caused. Edward Said describes Munif's works as the "only serious work of fiction that tries to show the effect of oil, Americans and the local oligarchy on a Gulf country" (Modern Arab Writers. [www.al-bab.com](http://www.al-bab.com). 2007).

Munif is considered one of the most influential writers and researchers in the Middle East. His works display great talent and a genuine concern about the position of Arab nation. In one of his interviews, Munif says that the truly challenging issues can only be introduced through serious writers. He justifies his view by implying that what serious culture really counts on is consciousness and awareness of the surrounding challenges. He says that real culture is supposed to have the ability to refuse or accept forms that appeal to their own identity because:

..its nation has the potential power to stand against any form of invasion or control  
and has a wide vision to predict its own future (Cited in Al-Qash`ami, 2004: 35).

In a speech he delivered in "The First Conference of Arabic Novel" held in Cairo, he argued that the novel has a serious and sensitive impact to the extent it has the ability to make changes within societies more than any other effective tool. He said: "Produce a great novel and I will grant you a prosperous future". (ibid: 37) That is achieved when a novel becomes the true reflection of its society defects as well as its powerful characteristics, but its best quality is that it does so without

being preachy or being instructive over its people. When a novel confronts its own nation in a sincere way, its humanity and feelings will move and will be more sensitive to its needs. However, according to Munif, serious fiction is not a magical tool but it acts and interacts with societies to push them forward in order to pass the stage of loss, failure, and fear. But approaching this aim requires honesty and true criticism in order to reach the widest range of readership (ibid: 66).

His ideal aim of serious fiction is to be able to draw: “.. a distinguished image of the third world, the Arab world in particular, that reflects its true identity and tells who we really are..” However, he implies that literature nowadays, is a mixture of ‘dead heritage and living foreignness’. Therefore, approaching this aim is an extremely difficult task, but these complications should never forbid writers from trying, searching, and experimenting with the best ways to achieve popularity without making any compromises within the content or the form of the novel (ibid: 90). Thus, serious Arab writers like him are aware of the controversy between popular and serious fiction, and their intellectual discussions always imply, even though indirectly, how Arabs should represent themselves to others.

What truly makes the process of translating serious fiction, in particular, a distinguished yet difficult task is that it is obviously not intended in the first place to be translated into another language and address foreign readers. In fact, the translator makes an effort equal to that of the original writer if not more, if we bear in mind that they take the original writer’s composition and explain it in their own special way. In this context, Munif says that if he knew that his works, especially ‘Cities of Salt’ ‘*Mudon Al-Melh*’ would be translated, he would have made the translators’ task much easier (Cited in Mahir Jarar, 2005: 95). Therefore, the translator's effort with serious fiction even if it is invisible, is more complicated and responsible than that of popular fiction or genre translators. Actually, what distinguishes brilliant translation is how the translator's effort becomes visible by brilliantly dealing with the cultural issues with the appropriate writing tools, but at the same time trying their best not to interfere.

Literary translation usually involves more than merely acquiring talent and linguistic tools, especially in translating serious fiction where the foreign culture is considered as alien to the target readers. Hence, foreignization and domestication, even now, are considered controversial strategies in translation studies and practices. The former strategy is closely related to ‘fluent’ and ‘familiar’ translation to the target language and culture, while the latter draws a closer ‘adherence’ to the source text and acquires the target reader to make some effort to move toward the source text.

The emergence of different social, economic, and cultural elements in the era of globalization has effectively contributed in creating this dramatic situation. Therefore, the gap between ‘serious’ and ‘popular’ literature has grown, and so, accordingly, the task of translation in transforming the source ‘foreign’ culture plays a more sensitive rule nowadays.

## Chapter Four

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### 4.1. Overview

Literature is a container of people's socio-cultural practices; it showcases their thoughts, gives a fairly accurate idea of their way of thinking, examines thoroughly their daily life style and challenges their fundamental attitudes. Above all, however, literature becomes emotionally attached to its people by tracing their stories and detecting changes in the bigger picture, i.e. their society. Thus, before it becomes a window through which 'others' observe them, it becomes a looking glass through which the 'self' sees itself and accepts its own identity and social changes. Therefore, translating literature plays a crucial role that helps people and cultures to approach each other. As Venuti (1998: 67) claims 'translation wields enormous power in constructing representations of foreign cultures'. It therefore becomes impossible to neglect the necessity of observing what kind of literary works are translated, and how translation strategies are used to preserve their cultural values and representations.

The present chapter examines the translations of two novels from Arabic into English of '*Annihayat*' - "*Endings*" and '*Ashouttar*'- "*Streetwise*". The thesis specifically chose these Arabic novels for their various different characteristics concerning their themes, the background of their authors, the writing style, and the way they introduce their socio-cultural signs. This is in order to observe how this difference affected the ways in which these signs are represented. The discussion revolves around the translation process and its reconstruction of the original texts' textual and cultural codes. It focuses on some of the linguistic and cultural issues encountered in the originals and how they were resolved in the translation. Bearing in mind the debate mentioned previously about identity representations, the chapter attempts to assess whether translation strategies such as domestication or foreignization are consistently used for translating cultural features and how they relate to other concepts such as the translator's invisibility.

In assessing the applicability of the foreignization/domestication model in translating Arabic fiction, we seek to make it evident that this model is crucial in achieving a better understanding of

how Arabic fiction reaches foreign readers and how it affects the Arabs' representations of identity. However, it is beyond the scope of this research to enlarge the data base due to time and space limitations. The two novels are chosen as sample representatives of translated Arabic fiction, one as a representative of serious fiction with lofty themes and high linguistic standards, the other as a representative of popular autobiography dealing with less serious, everyday subject matter and written in a rather simple Arabic style.

Actually, it appears from the two novels that the continuous debate over literal and free translation will always be a leading debate in Translation Studies. Formal equivalence was used in translating some linguistic and cultural references. However, the translators were also obliged in other situations to go beyond that towards more dynamic or pragmatic equivalences with regard to the significant textual practices in the original text.

#### 4.2. '*Annihayat*'-“Endings”

Abdul Rahman Munif (1933 - 2004) is one of the most important Arab novelists of the 20th century. His works are well known for closely reflecting the political, social, and economic atmosphere of his age in the Arab world. Munif's novels, represented here by '*Annihayat*,' offer a unique insight into the domestic life of simple characters and people who fight modern technologies, such as Bedouins and villagers. The general theme of Munif's novels records the economic, social, and psychological effects of the sudden promising wealth drawn from the oil boom Allen (1988: vi).

'*Annihayat*' is distinct for its focus on the issue of humanity, nature, death, and the relationship between human beings and animals. Moreover, it reveals how a small village like *al-Tiba* symbolizes the suffering of all other villages with nature's trials, while big cities enjoy modern technology. These concepts are discussed in '*Annihayat*' in a significant atmosphere of a folkloric world that depends, essentially, on the story telling technique. After the climax of the death of the main character *Assaf*, a series of short stories precedes the final ending of the novel. However, none of these stories is numbered and there is no division between chapters as the novel is designed in the shape of one very long story. Thus, it requires that the translator possess skills, creativity, and knowledge of the Arabic conventions of traditional literature in order to be able to reconstruct the

original text in fluent English that would also be able to show at the same time the uniqueness of the original text's style.

The significance of Roger Allen's translation of '*Annihayat*' is that it was the first work of Munif's to be translated into English. Actually, at the time, the translator was excited to introduce a Saudi writer to the western world whose themes were remote from the stereotyped themes that are regularly sown into other popular translated Arabic novels. In those days, most of the translated Arabic novels were written by Egyptian writers and mainly addressed the sorrows of the middle class and the society's eagerness to move toward democracy and liberty. In his introductory note of his '*Annihayat*' translation, Roger Allen explains vividly the reasons behind his choice of translating it. He argues that the contribution of translating a novel like '*Annihayat*' is that stereotyped themes were predominant; therefore novels which take place in the desert were left behind the scenes and were unheard of. But a narrator like Munif tried to bring these themes to a wider audience by inviting the reader to listen and explore the cultural traditions (1988: v). Therefore, it was culturally demanding to introduce Arab writers like him to the western world.

This is a case in point: the more translators show sensitivity for the process of assessing and approaching cultural specifics, the more their translations will reflect respect for the original text, exemplified by preserving its foreignness. Therefore, when the translator has an opportunity to contact the writer, it would be one of the most important steps in narrowing the gap between the original and the target texts. Allen had this opportunity and contacted Munif personally. The importance for translators of consulting with the original writers themselves is revealed by Allen's confession about his experience of translating '*Annihayat*':

I have made every effort to convey in the English translation the clarity and neatness of his style, ranging from the gnomic pronouncements about the community as a whole ...to the liveliest of arguments and discussions. I can only hope that, after this attempt to transfer these various facets of the original into English, other readers will share my admiration for this unique contribution to contemporary fiction (1988: x).

Hence, it is clear that Allen was keen to preserve the uniqueness of the original style and, most importantly, he was aware of presenting Arab culture in a positive, true and honest way that could counteract other representations which were harmful rather than reveal the culture's real

identity. Certainly, it is positive for the translator to be aware of these issues. However, nothing can guarantee perfection or the accomplishment of these goals. No matter how hard the translator tries, the contradictions inherent in the linguistic code between languages and in the cultural clashes among people, will always make it an unattainable task to make this dream come true.

#### 4.2.1. Linguistic Issues

Since Munif is a well educated writer who lived in the West for some time, his linguistic style is affected to some extent by his enormous range of reading and experiences. That is clear, for instance, in his use of punctuation or the argumentative strategy of *صحيح أن* 'saheehun anna' 'the endorsing counter argument technique' which is commonly used in English writing as a technical style to convince the reader of the writer's own point of view. This device is usually used in argumentative texts, such as newspaper columns, whereas in the Arabic language persuasiveness is usually achieved by the use of the 'thorough argument technique'. However, Munif's other stylistic tools match the conventions of typical Arabic literary tools. For example, he uses long sentences and complex structures.

The translator sincerely used his artistic tools to the utmost in order to preserve the literary style as well as the content of the original text. However, one can detect certain differences between the original and target texts due to the nature of the English language, its culture, and the translator's own style of writing. For example, the translator's 'interventionist' use may be illustrated by punctuation, parenthetical clauses, the passive form, and his tendency to use connectors which, in most cases, do not exist in the original text. This is understandable as connectors play an important role in inferring coherence.

Nevertheless, the selection of these connectives (e.g. However, Furthermore) can hugely define the shape of the text in both the original and the target text. In other words, the choice of connectives should be mainly constrained by the genre of the text, e.g., newspaper columns or scientific articles and so on. Therefore, it is crucial to use them in a justifiable manner, while constantly bearing in mind to preserve the original text's style and striving for fluency in the target text. Allen tends to use a variety of connectives which include conjunctions, some adverbs (e.g. firstly), and some prepositional phrases (e.g. in fact, of course). These observations, among others, are illustrated in the following examples:



### القحط القحط القحط 1-

وحين يجيء القحط لا يترك بيتا إلا دخله، ولا يترك إنسانا إلا ويخلف في قلبه أو في جسده أثرا. وإذا كان المسنون قد تعودوا، منذ فترة طويلة، لفرط ما مر بهم من أيام قاسية، على سنوات المحل وعضة الجوع، وكانت المخاوف تملأ قلوبهم حين يفكرون فيها، فالكثيرون غيرهم لا يقدرّون على مواجهتها بالتصميم نفسه، لأن الكميات القليلة من الحبوب التي توضع جانبا، بإصرار قوي أول الأمر، لتكون زادا في أيام الجوع لا تلبث أن تتسرب أو تختفي، كما يترب ماء النبع أو كما يجف ماء المجرى، وتبدأ بعد ذلك محاولات البحث المضني عن خبز اليوم، وخلال هذا البحث تتراكم الأحزان والمخاوف لتصبح شبحا مرعبا تظهر آثاره في وجوه الصغار وفي سهوم الرجال وشتائمهم، وفي الدموع الصغيرة التي تتساقط من عيون النسوة دون أسباب واضحة! ص 7-8

### “Drought drought drought

.....With the arrival of drought, no home is left unscathed. Everybody bears some kind of mental or physical scar.

During the course of their long lives the old people have witnessed many gruesome periods. **As a result**, they have long since become inured to **years of fatigue and the pangs of hunger**. **Even so**, the very thought of drought seasons can still fill them with forebodings. They are only ones who face the prospect with such resolution. **At first** people persevere doggedly and manage to put aside small amounts of grain so as to provide some form of sustenance during times of drought. But these small stockpiles soon run out or simply dwindle away. It is the same with spring water and the stream. At this point a frantic search for daily bread gets underway; **in the process** anxieties and premonitions start rearing their ugly heads and turn into horrible specters. **The phenomenon** can be seen in any number of different guises: expressions on children's faces; the glum looks displayed by men and the curses they use; and the tears which women shed for no apparent reason.” P.1 (Bold added in the presentation of examples to highlight the points being assessed).

Comment: The translator used various connectors and expressions that made this paragraph more informative and analytical than just purely literary exposition. For example, he used *as a result* ( a result connector), *even so* (an inferential connector) and *at first* (an enumerative connector). These weakened the text's literary image and transformed the context into one more suitable for a kind of informative historical text. The same negative point could be made about the phrase *in the process* and the term *phenomena*. All of these words can inhibit reading depth and interrupt the excitement of the reader.

The paragraph also reveals some of the dissimilarities between Arabic and English. The Arabic extract is one long sentence, whereas the English is divided into short sentences. In addition, the Arabic extract begins with a repetition of the word القحط since repetition is an exaggerating technique used in Arabic for achieving rhetorical effects, yet here the translator has preserved the style and repeated the word *drought*, although this is considered a redundancy in English. Although repetition in English could fulfill similar rhetorical effects as Arabic, in this context the text could hold the reader in suspense and expectation by using short sharp sentences. That is, instead of repetition, the translator could have used *Drought!* with an exclamation mark.

In his phrase *years of fatigue and the pangs of hunger*, the translator domesticated the image and used an appropriate equivalent figure of speech for the Arabic سنوات المحل وعضة الجوع. But then he used an archaic expression that I consider a literal translation for the Arabic expression خبز اليوم and translated it as “*daily bread*”. He could have used other English expressions such as *frantic search for a living* or *frantic search for food*. Although the translated paragraph is comprehensible, it could have been more effective had he avoided some repetition and made the sentences shorter.

I suggest translating the first two lines as:

*Drought!*

*It never leaves a home unscathed and a man without a mental or physical scar.*

حتى الرعاة الذين كانوا شديدي النزق وبيالغون في المقابل الذي يطالبون به ثمنا للخراف، وكانوا يفضلون العودة مرة أخرى -2 ومعهم دوابهم، دون شعور بالأسف لأنهم لم يبيعوا ولم يشتروا، حتى هؤلاء يتحولون في مثل هذه السنة إلى رجال مترددين متوسلين،.. إلخ ص.9

“Even if they did not buy or sell anything, they never seemed the slightest bit worried. **However**, during years of drought like this one, they too become tentative and ingratiating.” P.2

Comment: The translator used the connector '*However*' unjustifiably since it makes the context sound argumentative. In the source Arabic the rhetorical effect seems more expressive than the English version in this sentence.

To avoid *However*, I suggest translating the extract as follows:

*Even those nasty shepherds, who prefer to keep their sheep if they are not sold with very high prices, they too become tentative and ingratiating during years of drought like this one.*

فالتجار اللذين تعودوا على تقديم القروض الصغيرة للفلاحين، واستيفائها أضعافا مضاعفة في المواسم ، اتخذوا موقفا، بدا، أول -3  
الأمر، ملينا بالشروط والتعنت، ثم ما لبثوا أن امتنعوا تماما، واقتتلوا لذلك أسبابا وخصومات. ص.9

“**For example**, merchants who had normally been willing to make small loans altogether, maintaining, of course, that such regrettable decisions were occasioned by a variety of disputes and other factors.” P.3

Comment: The translator used an illustrative connector *For example* as an equivalent translation to the ‘faa’ ف which is used as an explicatory connector in Arabic. This choice is justifiable since it is almost the closest natural equivalent translation of the Arabic connector in this context.

وحتى أولئك الذين كانوا شديدي الإيمان ويعتبرون كل ما تأتي به السماء امتحانا للإنسان، لا يلبثون أن يصبحوا ضحايا وأكثر -4  
الناس شتيمة وتجديفا، حتى ليستغرب من عرفهم من قبل كيف كان هؤلاء الناس يخرنون في صدورهم هذا المقدار الهائل من  
الشتائم والأفكار الخاطئة المحرمة! ص. 12-13

“Even the most devout people who normally consider everything brought by the heavens as a test for mankind soon fall prey to these symptoms. **In fact**, they start swearing and blaspheming much worse than anyone else, to such an extent that people who have known them for ages **wonder to themselves** how such seemingly devout people can keep such a **staggering lexicon** of curses and wicked thoughts **stored up inside them**.” P.6

Comment: The translator used this prepositional phrase *In fact* to put more emphasis on the situation of *al-Tiba*’s people. However, the emphasis is rendered in *to such an extent that* which follows after a couple of lines. Also the structure of *people...wonder to themselves* is not a typical English structure and he could have said ‘*people...wonder*’ without ‘*themselves*.’ The same case is in *stored up inside them* which can simply be omitted since it is understood from ‘*how such seemingly devout people can keep such....*’. So, literal translation might not be the best strategies to deal with this extract.

I suggest translating the clause as:

*to such an extent that people who have known them for ages wonder how such seemingly devout people deeply conceal such a staggering lexicon of curses and wicked thoughts.*

The translator domesticated the expression الشتائم والأفكار الخاطئة المحرمة! by translating it as 'staggering lexicon of curses and wicked thoughts' and cleverly avoided literal translation by using an appropriate collocation. He also avoided literal translation in 'staggering' to express the intended effect of shock about the drastic change in the nature of *al-Tiba's* people.

إن هذه الأسباب ، وغيرها كثير ، خلقت طبيعة معينة، وجعلت الناس في الطيبة يتكلمون بطريقة خاصة، حتى ليظن من يسمع .. 5- الحديث ولا يفهم طبيعة الناس أو علاقاتهم، أنهم يتعاركون، أو أن الخلاف بينهم وصل إلى درجة من الحدة، لابد أن تعقبه أمور أخرى!ص.15

... “Many other factors could be cited as well. **As a result**, people in al- Tiba have a particular way of talking. **Someone hearing them speak for the first time** without being aware of the way they are and how they relate to each other might imagine they were squabbling or that a dispute had turned so nasty that something terrible was about to happen.” P.7

Comment: The translator used the conjunction *As a result* unjustifiably. He also added 'for the first time' in an attempt to express the strange way *al-Tiba's* people speak and used a sort of weak grammatical structure in 'Someone hearing them speak for the first time' to express the meaning of حتى ليظن من يسمع الحديث ولا يفهم طبيعة الناس أو علاقاتهم

I suggest the following translation:

*These factors and many others marked al-Tiba's people with a distinct nature and made them talk in a particular way. If someone hears them speaking without being aware of the way they are and how they relate to each other, they might think they are squabbling or that a dispute has turned so nasty that something terrible is about to happen.*

ومع كل صفقة جديدة كانت أثمان الأرض في القرى تتراجع، وكان التجار يزدادون تصلبا ولا يوافقون إلا بشروطهم، وبعد أن -6  
تتم جميع الإجراءات!ص. 10

“But, with every deal that **was signed**, the **prices for land** in the village dropped, and that made the merchants even more reluctant to offer any help. They **now refused** to make any agreements which were not on their own terms and insisted that all the required procedures had to be carried out.” P.4

Comment: In translating this sentence, the translator used the past tense and the passive form, although the original Arabic tense requires a past continuous tense, besides that, ‘*They now refused*’ is grammatically incorrect. I think ‘*the prices for land*’ would be better translated as ‘*the land prices*’. The translator added ‘*to offer any help*’ to ‘*even more reluctant*’ to render the meaning of يزدادون تصلبا. Instead of ‘*which were not on their own terms*’ he could have used a ‘restriction’ linguistic technique which is known in Arabic as القصر , *al-Qasr* technique.

I suggest the following translation:

*But, with every new deal, the land prices in the village were dropping, which made the merchants even more reluctant to offer any help. They now refuse to make any agreements unless they apply their own terms and insist that all the required procedures have to be carried out.*

صحيح أن الحياة كانت آنذاك في منتهى القسوة والصعوبة، لكن الرجال في تلك الأيام كانوا رجالا... وكانوا قادرين على أن -7  
يأكلوا الصخر. أما رجال هذه الأيام... "ويبتسم بعض المسنين، ويتذكر الآخرون. ص. 25

“Life was really tough, but **men were men** in those days...they might have **eaten solid rocks!** But the men today...! At this point some of the old people would smile. Others would reminisce.” P. 15

Comments: Munif used صحيح أن *saheehun anna* ‘the endorsing counter argument technique’ which is an infrequent argumentative strategy in Arabic whereas it is frequently used in English. However, the translator did not benefit from this advantage to render it directly it into English. It is worth noting that Munif’s style vis-à-vis such strategies make the translator’s task much easier. The expression ‘*men were men*’ seems to be a literal translation for الرجال في تلك الأيام كانوا رجالا and the same thing might be said about the metaphor ‘*they might have eaten solid rocks!*.’

I suggest the following translation:

*Life was very difficult to endure in those days, but men were real men:...they were tough as solid rocks! But men today..! At this moment some of the old people would smile. Others would reminisce.*

ومادام الأمر هكذا، فإن أمنية خفية تدفعه لأن يتمنى أرضاً من نوع ما يمكن أن تستقبل لحمه وعظامه، ويحس بنفس الخفاء أن -8 هذا الجفاء الذي تسرب عميقاً إلى الأرض، ثم تلك الرخاوة اللزجة التي جاء بها مطر آذار، لا يناسبان، ويتمنى أنه لا يغادر الحياة في مثل هذه الظروف القاسية. ص.44

“As long as that was the case, each and every one of them felt impelled by a **secret desire** for a **piece of earth** which could receive his flesh and bones when he died. The very same feeling made him realize deep down inside that the aridity which was gradually infiltrating the soil and the **slimy mud** which the March rains had caused were both unsuitable for his eventual plans. **As a result**, each one of the old people was anxious not to die in a harsh year like this one.” P.28

Comments: The translator has used some unnecessary connectors and expressions which did not add any value to the text, but rather may imply unintended meanings. For example, *as a result*. This translated extract contains some collocations that are either literal or imprecise, e.g. '*secret desire*' does not render the meaning of أمنية خفية because '*omniyah*' أمنية does not indicate desire '*raghbah*'. Also, '*a piece of earth*' is not an appropriate phrase for a literal context because it is usually linked to sciences, '*slimy mud*', and '*March rains*'. In the case of '*when he died*', it is grammatically incorrect.

I suggest the following translation:

*As long as that was the case, every one of them felt impelled by a hope to find a place that accepts his flesh and bones when he dies. With this same inner feeling, he realized that the aridity which was gradually infiltrating the soil and the light mud which the summer rains had caused were both unsuitable for his plans. As a result, each one of the old people was anxious not to die in a harsh year like this one.*

وأهل الطيبة الذين تعودوا نسيان السد والطريق والكهرباء في مواسم الخير، ولم يفكروا يوماً واحداً على الحصول على مثل هذه -9 الخيرات، فإنهم في مواسم القحط يتذكرون كل شيء، يتذكرون هينات الرجال الذين أتوا، والكلمات التي قالوها، ويتذكرون أن

“**When times were good**, they forgot all about the dam, the road and the electricity. It would never occur to them that they might be given such modern conveniences. But when drought came, they would remember every detail: what the men who had come looked like and what it was they said. **Something else jogged their memories too**. Friends of their children had come to al-Tiba as visitors in previous years when the soil had been fertile and produce was good. They had gone hunting in areas around the village and had come back so overjoyed that at some points they had behaved more like children. They had seemed sincere enough. Some of these people were now important serious officials in the distant city, so much so that their names were mentioned in the same breath as those of prophets and saints. However they no longer had any memory of al-Tiba; they had forgotten all about their friends who lived there. It was all over.” P.38-39

Comments: This extract once again shows Munif’s tendency to use very long sentences which are typical of structures in Arabic writing, but he used punctuation which is unusual in the classical Arabic style of writing and reflects the effect of his foreign knowledge and education abroad. The translator divided the sentences cleverly into shorter ones to match the English writing style and attain readability and acceptability. He also added one sentence '*Something else jogged their memories too*' which was intended in Arabic but was expressed only through the connector و (*and*). Also the adverbial clause in the original text في مواسم الخير was imbedded, whereas the translator fronted it to the beginning of the sentence '*When times were good*' to put more emphasis on the time.

قال أحد القادمين، وكان شاباً يدرس في مكان بعيد: ... ص. 60- 10

“**For example**, a young man who was studying far away started to **hold forth**.” P.40

Comments: Once again the sentence reveals the overuse of connectors by using '*for example*'. The translator added '*hold forth*' in an attempt to render the implicit meaning of the Arabic context which expresses the young man's attempt to attack the old people's strategy in dealing with al-Tiba issues.

إذا كان أهل الطيبة قد انتظروا طويلا، فقد خاب ظنهم تماما، حين رأوا عصر ذلك اليوم سيارتين غريبتين تدخلان الضيعة. - 11  
ص.64

“**Yes indeed**, the people in al-Tiba had been waiting for a long, long time. **But** on that particular afternoon, when they spotted those two strange vehicles coming into the village, their hopes were completely dashed.” p.41-42

Comments: The translator rightly used formal equivalence by shifting the original conditional sentence into an endorsed counter argumentative one by using the structure '*Yes indeed, ... But*'.

وبين انتظار وانتظار يموت الإنسان.. يتذكر، يقاوم، ينهار، يسقط. يموت مرة أخرى، ينهض من الموت، يتأمل الأمتار القليلة - 12  
التي يمكن أن ترى عبر الشبايك.. ص.95

“He **remembers**, he **resists**, he **collapses**, he **falls**. Yet again he dies, and rises again from death...”  
p.64

Comments: In this paragraph, Munif uses short sentences with many simple active present verbs separated with commas instead of the more usual connector و (and) which helps the translator. Hence, the translator does not have to make significant changes to avoid any obstacle that might interfere with fluency and readability.



ظل يمشي وبطير كما يريدون، وظل يعيش كما يريد. والمسنون الذين أبدوا إعجابهم بقوته ومكره لم يستغربوا كثيرا طريقته - 13  
في الحياة. كانوا يرون ذلك أقرب إلى الطبيعة، وكانوا ينظرون إلى أنفسهم! ص. 146

“He **strutted** and **flew** just as they wanted, but continued to live the way he **wanted**. Meanwhile, **the older people** admired the bird’s power and cunning. They found nothing about his way of life peculiar. To them it was all very natural, as though they were watching themselves!” p.96-97

Comments: The translator made a grammatical shift by using the past tense whereas the Arabic required a past continuous tense ظل يمشي. Also, والمسنون الذين is a joint sentence and in English it is more appropriate to join it with the next sentence by using 'who' rather than divide it into two sentences.

I suggest the following translation:

*He was strutting and flying just as they wanted, but continued to live the way he wanted.  
Meanwhile, the older people who admired the bird’s power and cunning, found nothing about his way of life peculiar. To them it was all very natural, as though they were watching themselves!*

ذات يوم، وكان الربيع مرة أخرى، شعر أن قواه تعاوده..ص. 147- 14

“One day (**in early spring once again**) he got the feeling that his powers were present...” p.97

Comments: The translator’s use of parenthetical sentence is justified since it conforms to the linguistic needs of English language.

إن أية كلمات لا تستطيع أن تعبر عن اللحظات الأخيرة، فعندما اقترب الرجل، ولم تبق إلا خطوة واحدة وامتدادة اليد، جنت - 15  
الدنيا وانقلب كل شيء. ص. 162

“Words cannot possibly describe the final moments. As the man got close to the nest – one step, a mere hand’s stretch, away – the whole world went mad; everything became a blur.” P.108

Comments: The use of punctuation marks and parenthetical phrases in the English sentence is commensurate with the demands of the English writing style. But the source sentence also illustrates Munif’s distinctive use of commas which narrows the linguistic gap between the two

languages and should help to make the translation smoother. The translator used the collocation '*final moments*', whereas '*last moments*' is more commonly used in such a context.

#### 4.2.2. Cultural issues

The novel is one of the most important literary genres through which nations' identities are revealed. It becomes a kind of a *Self* introductory tool to the *Other*. The style of the literary work becomes a carrier of the original work's cultural signs, products and practices. Munif's use of metaphors or similes is precise and the few that are used pose no significant problems in translation. However, they indicate implicatures and are strongly attached to cultural specifics. The following examples come with an analysis of the translation's use of some figures of speech and idiomatic expressions:

سمع أكثر من صوت يدعوهُ إلى صدر المجلس..ص. 67

“...heard several people urging him to **move into the middle**.” P.44

Comments: The expression صدر المجلس is a gesture of honour in Arab culture. The formal equivalent '*move into the middle*' is an appropriate foreignizing translation of this cultural sign since there is no idiomatic or phrasal equivalence in English.

عساف الحصان، عساف الغيمة، أبو الفقراء.. ص. 107-2

“Assaf, the **great stallion**, Assaf, as bountiful as a **cloud-burst of rain**; foster father of the poor,..” p.71

Comments: The translator added the adjective *great* in '*Assaf, the great stallion*' to render the intended rhetorical effect of the Arabic. He made some transformations on عساف الغيمة by shifting the image from an adjectival phrase into a metaphorical one '*bountiful as a cloud-burst of rain*' since to a western reader 'cloud' alone might have negative connotations, whereas for Arabs it is related to positive connotations.

إنه يقود خيمة الحديد بطريقة رنة، مرة يتركها تطير، مرة يتركها تدرج..ومرة يتركها تموت حين يطفئ محركها. ص.126-3  
“There he is driving the **landrover** like a **maniac**; sometimes he lets it take off, at others it rolls all over the place. Occasionally he’ll even let the engine die.” p.83

Comments: بطريفة رنة is translated idiomatically by 'like a maniac'. This is a frequently used English expression and it expresses the intended meaning effectively. He also used 'landrover' as an alternative to خيمة الحديد which literally means 'the mental tenet'. So he domesticated the image which although does not reflect the exact source image which is related to the early Bedouin lifestyle which rarely used cars, it is harmless to the source culture values and can even be praised for providing cohesive imagery.

فهم لا يتخلون عن الغناء أو عن تلك الآلات الشيطانية، كما يحب المسنون أن يسموها،..ص. 18- 4

“Shepherds are forever singing and playing those ‘**hellish**’ instruments (that is what the old people like to call them)” P. 10

Comment: The translator used the expression 'hellish' to translate الشيطانية which is appropriate to both the source and target contexts. But as a collocation, I think 'hellish musical instruments' is more appropriate than 'hellish instruments' since 'hellish instruments' might be misconstrued as instruments of torture in western society. It is noteworthy that Munif's metaphor here hints realistically to conservative Muslims, especially old people. This image is domesticated through its formal equivalent translation.

قد لا تكون الطيور هناك مضروبة، وقد نجد بعض الأشواك تستظل بها، ونحن وما قسم لنا! ص. 92- 5

“ ‘Maybe the birds here haven’t been shot at yet,’..’Perhaps there are some thorns they can use for shade! **Heaven help us though!**”” p.62

Comments: نحن وما قسم لنا is a typical Arabic expression which indicates a complete surrender to fate, especially if it is used in a passive form. The translator successfully preserved the intended effect by using the closest natural equivalent in the English language, *'Heaven help us though!'*

إكرام الميت بدفنه.. ص. 203-6

**“You honour the dead by burying them.” P.134**

Comments: The idiom إكرام الميت بدفنه is a common Arabic idiom and has no equivalent English idiom. After doing a search on the internet, I found that the most frequent translation of this Arabic idiom is *'Burial is the way to honour the dead'*.

..، لكن الفاجعة التي حلت بالمختار، بفقد ابنه الوحيد...، ثم وفاة زوجته المفاجيء.... وعودته إلى الطيبة ليجد البيت خاليا وليقول -7- له الناس بطريقة غامضة أول الأمر، ثم جارحة: "لقد أخذ الله وديعته". ص. 200-201

“But they all realized that Mukhtar had been through a whole series of tragedies. He had lost his son....Then his wife had died suddenly...He had come to al-Tiba to find his house empty. When **he** told people that **God has taken his deposit**, his attitude at first seemed peculiar but later on it had become more stinging.” p.131-132

Comments: The translator mixed the subject with the object *'When he told people'* which could radically change the meaning of the sentence. Also the expression *'God has taken his deposit'* sounds too literal and unfamiliar to the English reader, in addition to the fact that it does not reflect the intended meaning which implies accepting death in a peaceful way that reflects the unique relationship between God and humans in Islamic culture.

I suggest using a more natural spiritual phrase that fits the context and sounds more English:

*He had come to al-Tiba to find his house empty and people telling him in a rather peculiar tone at first then became stinging: 'Their souls rest now in peace'.*

تعال .. تعال يا حصان! ص. 68- 8

“**Hisan!**” he yelled defiantly, ‘Hisan, come . come here!’ The dog sprang to its feet,...” p.45

Comments: *Hisan* is the name of ‘Assaf’s dog. Definitely, naming his dog after a horse is a significant sign. The horse has been always the most preferred animal of Arabs in particular. It signifies beauty, usefulness and power. Therefore, I think it needs to be explained between parentheses as (*Hisan* means horse in Arabic) besides the transliteration ‘*Hisan*’.

اعذروني، أنا لا أقصد أي واحد منكم، أنتم على عيوننا ورؤوسنا.. ص. 71- 9

“Excuse me. I am not referring to the present company, of course! **You are our honored guests.**” p.47

Comments: The idiomatic expression أنتم على عيوننا ورؤوسنا is commonly used in Arabic colloquial conversation as a sign of honoring and welcoming guests. It literary means ‘*you are on our heads and eyes*’. The translator has successfully searched for the closest natural equivalence and preserved the meaning fluently.

!الحياة والموت بمشيئة الله يا جماعة، والآن انتهى كل شيء - 10

!عساف لن يموت، وهو الآن أكثر حياة منا جميعا - ...

قال رجل مسن:

لا تكفر يا ولدي، إن الملائكة ترفرف فوقنا الآن. ص. 115 -

“Life and death are **in the hands of God**. It’s all over now!’

“Assaf will never die.”...’He’s more alive now than all of us put together!’

‘Don’t **blaspheme**, young man! The angels are hovering above us at this very moment.’” P.77

Comments: On the one hand, I disagree with the translator's use of ‘Life and death are in the hands of God’ as an equivalent to the proverb بمشيئة الله which is rather unfamiliar in an English context. I suggest that it be translated as: ‘*Life and death are controlled by God's will*’. On the other hand, I

من ركب الطائرة أكثر: الصل أم الشيخ؟: "هل يستطيع المختار أن يدفع ثمن بطاقة الطائرة أم يأخذونه مع الصل؟". 11 - ص.152

“Which one’s ridden in an aeroplane more,’.. ’Viper or the **Shaykh**?’ ‘Can the **Mukhtar** afford the price of a plane ticket, or will they be taking him with Viper?’” p.101

Comments: The translator, through this example and others, has tried to preserve the ‘foreignness’ of the original text by transliterating some titles that are related to social ranks in Arab culture, such as ‘*Mukhtar*’ and ‘*Shaykh*’ which could indicate a formal rank or refer to the age of elder people in a respectful way. However, in this context, ‘*Shaykh*’ is used ironically, to avoid misinterpretation and preserve the irony; it should be translated and not transliterated. The transliteration of ‘*Mukhtar*’ is appropriate since the original indicated its formal meaning; formal rank that elderly people attain.

I suggest the following translation:

*‘Which one’s ridden in an aeroplane more,’.. ’Viper or the old man?’ ‘Can the Mukhtar afford the price of a plane ticket, or will they be taking him with Viper?’*

هل صليتم عليها في المسجد؟ ص.169- 12

“Did you **pray over her** in the big mosque?” p.112

Comments: The translator used a very literal translation that does not fit the context and sounds very unfamiliar to the English reader. صليتم عليها indicates صلاة الجنازة which is known in Islam as ‘*the funeral prayer*’.

I suggest:

*Did you perform her funeral prayer in the big mosque?*

وهذا الحديث من أحاديث النساء وأشباه النساء. ص. 171- 13

“This is the kind of tale which women and **people like that** will tell you.” P.113

Comments: The translator used the clause '*people like that*' to translate the expression أشباه النساء (literally means: *men as women*) but it is erroneous to the source text and does not reflect this formal traditional Arabic expression which is borrowed from an *Al-Jahiz* book '*al-Hayawan*' 'The Animal.' The translation neither rendered the meaning precisely nor is adjust to the context.

I suggest translating it as:

*This is the kind of tale which women and effeminate men like to tell.*

وفي لمح البصر وبطريقة بارعة قبل أن يصل، انقض عليه كلب واقتلع الجزء الأكبر من ظهره. ص. 177- 14

“In the flash of an eye (**or actually before that could even happen**) one of the dogs pounced on him and ripped most of his back wide open.” P.116

Comments: The translator made an unjustified intervention by using the adverbial clause *or actually before that could even happen*, and it is an over- exaggeration as he already rendered the meaning with: *In the flash of an eye* لمح البصر

وإذا لم يبدأ الحديث، لم يكن أحد يستطيع أن يفعل ذلك، كانوا يقولون "مزاج البيك معكر"، "الببيك يفكر بقضايا كبيرة ولا يريد -15  
أن يفسد عليه أحد تفكيره". ص. 187

“No one could strike up a conversation if the **Bey** didn’t initiate things. ‘Oh, the Bey’s feeling out of sorts, they would say, or ‘The Bey has lots of problems and doesn’t want people to distract him.’” P. 123

Comments: It was important to use the title 'Bey' since it indicates a special social rank and looking for equivalents as “Mr.” or “Sir” will not give the same meaning. The translator used an appropriate

English idiom 'out of sorts' مزاج متعكر which is rather colloquial and reflects simplicity of these people.

أما عن مهارته في الصيد..يقولون: "الببك لا يضرب إلا في اللحم". ص. 16-188

“...The Bey only scores **hits in the flesh.**” p.123

Comments: The translator used a formal equivalence to translate لا يضرب إلا في اللحم which is appropriate in this context.

للموتى حرمتهم ..الأعمار يا ولدي بيد الله، فإذا جاء أجلهم لا يستقدمون ساعة ولا يستأخرون. ص. 17- 199

““We must **show respect to the dead**’..Everyone’s **lifespan is in the hands of God**, my son, 'When someone's **final hour** comes, there is no way of either **advancing or delaying.**”” p.131

Comments: This extract contains some significant signs related to Arab culture and therefore should be preserved even if they seem unfamiliar to the target reader.

‘show respect to the dead’ : للموتى حرمتهم

‘Everyone’s lifespan is in the hands of God’ : الأعمار يا ولدي بيد الله

‘When someone's final hour comes, there is no way of either advancing or delaying’. : فإذا جاء أجلهم لا يستقدمون ساعة ولا يستأخرون

This is a part of a Quranic verse and with religious texts the translator is usually obliged to use the most accurate translation, even if it is a simplified translated script. I suggest using Yusuf Ali's translation of the verse: *'To every people is a term appointed: when their term is reached, not an hour can they cause delay, nor (an hour) can they advance (it in anticipation).'*



#### 4.3. Streetwise

This novel takes us on a journey that is completely different from Munif's '*Annihayat*'. It is a kind of autobiography that traces the events of the writer's life. What distinguishes Chouckri's work is its portrayal of human suffering in the form of poverty, illiteracy, and ignorance. His works have been widely translated and have been received well by western critics and publishers. By translating the novel *al-Khubz al-Hafi* '*For Bread Alone*', Paul Bowles, the famous writer and translator, was the first to take the initiative of translating Chouckri, which led to the writer's fame and popularity. Bowles admired Chouckri's story of success for studying after the age of twenty until he became a teacher and was 'finally being awarded the chair of Arabic Literature at Ibn Batuta College in Tangier'(Arab Literature, MEMRI 2007).

The American playwright Tennessee Williams described *For Bread Alone* (*al-Khubz al-Hafi*), which is the first work of a trilogy that includes *Ashouttar* (*Time of Mistakes* or *Streetwise*) then *Faces*, as: "A true document of human desperation, shattering in its impact" (ibid). Such admiration from a prominent foreign writer emphasizes that one of the most culturally transferable characteristics that nations share is the issue of human suffering in one's pursuit of happiness.

Moreover, the MEMRI article and other foreign literary references seem especially interested in the fact that the novels were banned in Arab countries for their 'sexual explicitness'. However, what really interests us here is to know that the translations of Chouckri's works were made almost three decades before the publication of the novels in the Arabic. Certainly, Chouckri wrote about his own experience and presented a true image of his social atmosphere. His works deserve the popularity they gained in both Arabic and foreign languages due to their humane themes and compelling narrative style.

However, from a translation prospective, there are other elements that attracted westerners in Chouckri's works. Besides being written in a rather simple style, which enables the translator to engage smoothly with the original text, his themes broach some of the Arab taboos like politics and sex. These themes are attractive to foreign readers who are eager to figure out how Arabs themselves deal with social issues in regard to these taboos. Chouckri's works have been translated into over 30 languages and sold very well.

#### 4.3.1 Linguistic Issues

There are writing conventions that constrain the structure of the English novel. Such conventions, along with the linguistic and cultural clashes between the source and target languages oblige the translator to make certain decisions and adjustments. For example, the translator has made certain adjustments in the structure of *'Streetwise'* regarding chapter divisions. *'Ashouttar'* has a title at the head of each chapter, and these titles are significant and hint at cultural or political events. The English version, however, simply substitutes these titles with numbers.

For instance, chapter two of the Arabic version was titled as: حين يفر السادة يموت العبيد (*'Heena yaferu al-sadah yamoot al-'abeed'* - 'When the masters escape, slaves die'). The English translation neglected this, just as it did with all of the other titles. It is true that translation should seek acceptability and adjust itself to the conventions of the English literary style of writing which uses chapter numbering and not titles. Yet, since the titles are symbolic and are meant to draw the attention of the readers, the translator could number the chapter and translate the titles as well.

Another distinctive feature is to do with the English version starting with a glossary that contains seven words which are used constantly in the novel and are explained briefly. The Arabic novel, however, not only includes a more descriptive glossary that is placed at the end of chapter one, but also uses the technique of footnotes throughout the novel. The abridgement of the translated version is perhaps justified since the novel is a literary genre and is neither an educational nor a historical document that needs to be informative and precise. What matters is to deliver the meaning in an appropriate style without harming the cultural signs of the source text. The following extract shows the difference between the Arabic and the English glossary:

(1) الشقف: يشبه كشتبان الخياط في حجمه وشكله تقريبا، مقوس ذو فوهتين، أو هو يشبه القشرة الملتصقة بأسفل ثمرة شجرة السنديان، وهو عادة يصنع من الفخار، وفي حالة نادرة من الألمنيوم، وفي حالة أندر من الذهب الخالص. ص. 14

“Shaqfa: the clay bowl of the kif pipe.

Kif: a type of hashish found in North Africa.” (from the glossary)

It is clear that the Arabic explanation is more detailed. Also worthy of note is that the English transliteration of the term *shaqfa*, although brief, requires adding another term, *kif*, into the glossary.

#### 4.3.2 Textual Noting

The following, is a brief textual noting of some idiomatic expressions, metaphorical images and some other culturally-bound sentences:

يسار مدخل القهوة حاجز خشبي معروضة عليه مأكولات: سمك وفلفل مقليان، بيض مسلوق وركام خبز أسود. قرب - 1  
الوجاق، ..... معظمهم يدخنون الكيف. ص. 5

“To the left of the **café** door stood a wooden counter with **falafel**, **fried fish**, boiled eggs and a stack of black bread.. In doors, next to the stove,.....most of them were smoking **kif**.” P.8

Comments: As a translation of القهوة *alqahwah*, the translator chose to use *café*, although it does not represent the same intended social atmosphere since the place intended is a more local or traditional café in a moderate-income neighborhood. I suggest including it in the glossary since it will be used repeatedly in the novel, and I recommend using instead the transliteration term *alqahwah*. However, in an attempt to render this atmosphere, he invented *falafel* which does not exist in the source text. *Falafel* is one of the most well known dishes of the Arabs in the western world. Hence, the translator, while foreignizing, is seeking to gain the target reader's interest. Otherwise, he could have used 'fish and chips' for سمك وفلفل مقليان, a traditional British meal, but that would have been so remote from the natural description of the Arab social setting. The extract reveals also that the translator preserved the foreignness in *kif* which is readable and unambiguous since it is illustrated in the glossary.

ذكرني بعفينة في قهوة السي موح في طنجة. اشتريت منه لفة. عمّر لي "شققا" من مطوية. كلما طلبت منه "السبي" يمدّه لي - 2  
عامرا بكيفه ثم أردّه له عامرا بكيفي. ص. 6

“..., who reminded me of Afiouna in Mr. Moh’s café in Tangier. I bought some. He provided me with a *shaqfa* from his pouch. Whenever I asked him for a *sabi*, he passed me the shaqfa, filled with *kif*...” p.8

Comments: The extract reveals that the translator tended toward using a foreignizing strategy. It contains many cultural signs such as *shaqfa*, *sabi*, and *kif*. Since all of these terms were explained in the glossary and repeatedly used throughout the novel, even if they are unfamiliar, they are gradually accepted by the reader and they preserve important cultural practices and signs.

من أين أنت؟-3  
من الريف. ص.8

“Where are you from?”  
‘The Rif’” p.12

Comments: *The Rif* (Berber: ⴰⵔⵉⴼ, Arabic: جبال الريف) is a mountainous region of north Morocco. The region's name comes from the Berber word *arif*. The people of the Rif are Berbers. (cited in [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org)) However, *Rif* most of the time is used to refer to the countryside or a rural area, so even for Arab readers of the original text, if they are unfamiliar with the geographical map of Morocco, they would not signify that it is a name of a specific region. Since names are mono-referential by nature, the translator took the right decision and transliterated it as *The Rif*. My suggestion is to use an explanatory parenthetical sentence for more clarification, since mentioning the description of this region signifies some important cultural information about the origin of the hero; that he comes from an illiterate naïve background.

إنه المختار الحداد الأعمى. ص. 33-34-4

“It turned out to be the blind *mukhtar*, **Hadad**.” P.39

Comment: It is insufficient to only transliterate المختار as: *mukhtar*. It is a title of respect that is given to elder wise people. It is important to signal to the reader its connotation, especially that the

لم يتلاعن مع أبيه. لا بد أن الله مسرور بهذا اللقاء....ردد علي مرات، بعربية فصيحة: - كل شيء يهون...-5  
ص.34

“He wasn’t forever having **slanging matches** with his father....Several times the Mukhtar declared to me, in good Arabic:  
‘Things are hard now, but they’ll **get easier as you go along..**’” p.40

Comments: The expression '*lam yatala'an*' لم يتلاعن literally means 'they didn't ever curse each other'. For Arabs, when two persons curse each other, it indicates that they have reached a most awful stage of disrespect in their relationship. The translator used the idiomatic collocation '*slanging matches*' in an attempt to familiarize the colloquial Arabic one. It means 'a heated exchange'. Usually this English expression is not used to describe the state of relationships, especially between family members. However, it is considered acceptable because sometimes for rhetorical purposes writers purposely borrow idiomatic images or metaphors that are used in very different contexts. '*kul shai yahoona*' كل شيء يهون is rather a colloquial expression that is used to provide relief or comfort to someone else during difficult situations. The translator made the right decision by using a rather explanatory sentence that reflects the same effect in the English context.

.. حبيبة ليست هلاماً أو طحلباً، أو بطيخة صفراء عفنة مطروحة في عز الشمس كما قال يوسف كاره النساء في مستشفى -6  
الأمراض العقلية. لقد فكرت أن الفاكهة الإنسانية إما أن تقطف في أوانها أو تتعفن، لكنني مخطيء. إن القطار لم يحن بعد.  
ص103

“Either way, I’d thought that Habiba was **a human fruit**, ripe and ready to be picked, or lying rotten on the ground. But I’d made a mistake. For me, at least, the fruit was not yet ripe.” P. 114

Comments: The translator has shortened the original Arabic metaphorical image. Usually Arabic rhetoric leans toward lengthy descriptions because it improves the poetic imagery, makes it more

interesting and effective, whereas in English extraneous detail and redundancies are considered stylistic defects. However, the image is still interesting to the western reader because it is not common to liken women to fruit in English, so it is one way for Arabic literature to reach out to target readers by showing one of its unique methods of symbolizing women's beauty.

بدأ يسكنني شيطان الأدب..... النصوص التي أعيرها اهتمامي هي اللغة العربية. أستاذها مقتدر فيها.. إنه جد مؤمن وجد -7- ماجن، الدنيا في يده اليسرى، والآخرة في يده اليمنى. يوم الجمعة... يؤم الناس ويخطب فيهم. يعربد ليلاً.. ص. 105

“The demon of literature had begun to take **possession on me**... My greatest interest was the Arabic language. We had a good Arabic literature teacher...He was **a practicing Muslim, but he had a good sense of humour too** – in his left hand he held the world, and in his left right hand the hereafter. On Fridays,...he'd lead the people in prayer and preach a sermon. In the evening he'd **go out for a night on the town**,..”p.115

Comments: شيطان الأدب '*shaitan al adab*' literary means 'the devil of literature' and is translated here as '*The demon of literature had begun to take possession on me*'. The concept is deeply embedded in the historical heritage of Arabic literature. Basically, it refers to the old traditional concept that poets and writers are always inspired by external powers like the beauty of their lovers, or being dictated by genies. Gradually it became an expression to explain the writer's obsession with writing. But the translated expression is alien to the English reader. Seen as domesticating, the image is not sensitive to the source cultural sign, and I suggest simply substituting it by: *I became obsessed with literature*.

The metaphorical collocation جد مؤمن وجد ماجن '*Jedu mo'men wa jedu majen*' is translated here as '*He was a practicing Muslim, but he had a good sense of humour too*'. This is really a misleading translation. The term ماجن '*majen*' is related to corruption and immorality and has nothing to do with a 'sense of humour' which has a positive connotation. The original figure of speech is based on showing the extreme contradictions within this Mukhtar, by showing his contradictory angelic and immoral characteristics. يعربد ليلاً '*yu'arbedu laylan*' indicates that he gets extremely drunk. It is translated here as '*he'd go out for a night*' which does not reflect the intended effect. Generally, Mukhtar's character represents a model of the damaging stereotyped characters in the Arabic translated novels. The man who appears to be religious but nevertheless he does not apply the

I suggest the following translation:

*I became obsessed with literature ... My greatest interest was the Arabic language. We had a good Arabic literature teacher...He was very faithful but very liberal too – in his left hand he held the world, and in his left right hand the hereafter. On Fridays,...he'd lead the people in prayer and preach a sermon. In the evening he'd get legless...*

To conclude, the data analysis has attempted to shed the light on some linguistic and stylistic translation issues that the translators encountered. These problems are assessed in terms of the foreignization/domestication model, as well as in relation to other translation methods and procedures.

In this translation assessment, foreignization and domestication are viewed exclusively in relation to the two novels as literary genres. Nevertheless, the study shows the extent to which the novel as a genre, exemplified by the autobiographical '*Ashouttar*' or the prose narrative '*Annihayat*', can be affected by the model of translation used, particularly with regard to the issue of whether to domesticate or to foreignize cultural signs. The findings presented in this study question two concepts. Firstly, they question the appropriateness of consistently using certain procedures and models to the exclusion of others, especially regarding the translation of culture-specifics. Secondly, they question the extent to which the purpose of publication can affect the selection of works and the techniques that are used.

My conclusion is that translating socio-cultural objects and textual practices cannot be successful if consistency of translation models is blindly resorted to, since what is involved is a diverse range of contextual factors. Furthermore, the translator's talent, especially in literary translation, plays a crucial role in countering their invisibility, in their knowing how to preserve the author's voice, and to what extent, and why they foreignize or domesticate certain elements of the original text.

## Chapter Five

### CONCLUSION

My initial hypothesis is based on the widely debated foreignization/domestication model suggested first by Schleiermacher, then developed and proposed from the perspective of Translation Studies by Venuti, alongside other scholars who are interested in culture and translation studies.

The introduction of this thesis set the goals of the research and pointed out briefly the purpose of the present thesis. This was followed by a selective review of the literature on translation theories that have contributed to the development of Translation Studies, particularly in relation to the main discussion of foreignization/domestication and the process of translating serious fiction. The review dealt with the contribution of Catford's formal and textual equivalence. It also dealt with the dynamic equivalence theory proposed by Nida which focuses on the "principle of equivalent effect" (1964: 159) and his views on translating cultural specifics. Furthermore, the review shed light briefly on Koller's pragmatic equivalence and his two notions: the "theoretic-descriptive concept equivalence" and the "translation-normative critical concept". Then, it dealt with Hatim and Mason's assumptions which illustrate how Translation Studies gradually moved towards pragmatic, discursive and cultural-semiotic studies.

The thesis also discussed in greater detail the foreignization and domestication model. Friedrich Schleiermacher insisted, in his 1813 lecture, that translations from different languages into German should read and sound different (Venuti Cited in Baker 2008: 240-244). His concept revolves around preserving the 'foreignness' of the source text. Venuti (2008:15) refers to the opposite notion of domestication as being "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to the values of the receiving culture, bringing the author back home." This is because a domesticating strategy tends to lean towards the target reader's contentment. However, as Franco Aixelá (Cited in Kwiecinski 2001: 151) indicates, the two notions can best be visualized as a continuum of various degrees of manipulation through which the two notions are put to contrasting ends where the process of substitution grows much greater the more the translation heads toward domestication.



Further, the thesis shed light on the concept of popular and serious fiction. Presented here are the points of view of literary critics and publishers about measuring the success of literary works, a process often equated with commercial achievements. The discussion attempted to explore to what extent the novel as a genre affects the translation models and strategies used.

The data analysis in this research is based on extracts from the translated version of Abd al-Rahman Munif's novel, *Annihayat*, "*Endings*", and Mohammad Chouckri's novel *Ashouttar*, "*Streetwise*." Although the comments on these extracts are not elaborate, they attempt to reveal that in order to accomplish the intended effect of the source language novel's socio-textual practices; the translation should follow the best contextual procedures that aim toward achieving pragmatic equivalence. The analysis questioned the wisdom of adhering to rigidly consistent translation strategies by revealing that, in actual translation, the two translators had used various strategies depending on the contextual elements of each situation. In actual translation, it seems that translators tend to choose translation approaches that best fit the general context of the situation.

The findings suggest that, although the debate over foreignization and domestication is crucial in the process of translating cross-cultural signs, literary translators need to balance the cultural demands of both the source and target readers. Literature in general and novels, in particular, are not only a form of art created to be enjoyed and stylistically criticized. In fact, literary forms go far beyond even the level of being a representative of the Self's cultural image. The process of literary expression becomes a matter of identity affirmation in the cultural battle between dominating and dominated nations. The conclusion of this thesis on this matter suggests that models of translation could be put to best effect in affirming the real identity of less powerful nations and in the attempt to stand against stereotypes and misrepresentations that harm national and international images.

An important conclusion of the present work is that translators of Arabic works should show more sensitivity toward the issue of cross-cultural encounter and should try to present the real identity of who we are and what we want to say. Despite the stereotyped representations which popular fiction projects into western readers' minds, we as Arabs should as far as possible adopt a more foreignizing strategy when we translate from Arabic into English, especially when translating serious fiction. This can only be accomplished by first improving our own inner image and convincing ourselves that our independent identity is worthy of being preserved.

However, since the aim is to make readers comprehend these cultural similarities and contradictions, it is equally important for Arab translators not to overlook the western reader's need

for readability and for the desire to enjoy, and be challenged by, a worthy and interesting piece of work. Therefore, the findings of the present research suggest that the translator should strike a balance by foreignizing socio-textual practices considered to be the core of the source culture and by domesticating harmless secondary cultural objects. However, this concern will not be addressed properly without the skillful mastery of stylistic tools.

This thesis advises translator trainees, like myself, to be perceptive and wide ranging readers, and to be skillful writers at the same time. This is simply because the writers of original texts always deserve better and to be represented in a way that truly showcases their talent and creative thoughts. It also, encourages Arab writers and translators to bravely adapt what Paul Gilroy (1997: 194) considers as a 'counter- hegemonic' way of thinking, a position which writers like Munif admirably adopt. In a nutshell, this is to resist any form of intellectual or ideological domination.

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## **Appendix**







عبد الرحمن منيف

عبد الرحمن منيف  
النهايات

إنه القحط .  
القحط . . مرة أخرى!

وفي مواسم القحط تتغير الحياة والأشياء، وحتى البشر يتغيرون، وطباعهم تتغير، تتولد في النفوس أحزان تبدو غامضة اول الأمر، لكن لحظات الغضب، التي كثيراً ما تتكرر، تفجرها بسرعة، تجعلها معادية، جموحاً، ويمكن ان تأخذ اشكالاً لا حصر لها. اما إذا مرّت الغيوم عالية سريعة، فحيث تترفع الوجوه إلى أعلى وقد امتلأت بنظرات الحقد والشتائم والتحدّي!

وحين يجيء القحط لا يترك بيتاً دون ان يدخله، ولا يترك انساناً إلا ويُخلف في قلبه او في جسده اثراً. وإذا كان المستنون قد تعودوا، منذ فترة طويلة، لفرط ما مرّ بهم من أيام قاسية، على سنوات المحل وعضة الجوع، وكانت المخاوف تملأ قلوبهم حين يفكّرون فيها، فالكثيرون غيرهم لا يقدرّون على مواجهتها بالتصميم نفسه، لأن الكميات القليلة من الحبوب التي توضع جانباً، بإصرار قوي أول الأمر، لتكون زاداً في أيام الجوع لا تلبث ان تتسرّب او تختفي، كما يتسرّب ماء النبع او كما يجفّ المجرى، وتبدأ بعد ذلك محاولات البحث المضني عن خبز اليوم، وخلال هذا البحث تتراكم الأحزان والمخاوف لتصبح شبحاً مرعباً تظهر آثاره في وجوه الصغار، وفي سهوم الرجال

وشتائمهم، وفي الدموع الصغيرة التي تتساقط من عيون النسوة  
دون أسباب واضحة!

إنَّه القحط مرة أخرى. وما هو يسوق امامه أشياء لا حصر  
لها، ولا يعرف احد كيف تتجمع هذه الأشياء وكيف تأتي.  
فالفلاحون الذين كانوا يحملون سلال البيض وينزلون بها إلى  
اطراف المدينة، ويتجراؤون بعض الأحيان ويصلون إلى وسط  
الأسواق المليئة بالبشر، والرعاة الذين كانوا يأخذون اجر سنة  
كاملة بضعة خراف، وكانوا يسوقونها في بداية فصل الربيع،  
ومعها الحملان الصغيرة، وكانوا يضعونها على صدورهم لأنها  
ولدت لتوها، لكي يبيعوها في المدينة، ثم أولئك الباعة الماكرون  
الذين يحملون على دوابهم العنب والتين والتفاح، ويحملون  
موازينهم البدائية ومعها قطع الحجارة المصقولة التي تعودوا  
استعمالها اوزاناً، وبيالغون اول الأمر في الأسعار التي يطلبونها.  
ان كل هؤلاء إذا جاءوا في مواسم القحط يجيئون بهيئات مختلفة  
شديدة الغرابة: كانت ملابسهم ممزقة وغريبة الألوان، وعيونهم  
مليئة بالحزن والخوف، أمّا اصواتهم القوية الصاخبة فكانت تنزلق  
إلى الداخل، وبدلاً عنها تخرج من الصدور اصوات غير واضحة،  
حتى انهم كانوا يضطرون الى اعادة ما يقولون بضع مرات، بناء  
على الأسئلة الفظة التي يوجهها لهم أصحاب الدكاكين في  
المدينة، والذين لم يكونوا ينظرون إلى وجوه هؤلاء الناس قدر ما  
ينظرون إلى الأيدي او إلى تلك الصرر الصغيرة المربوطة بإحكام  
في أطراف الملابس التي يضعونها على أجسادهم او على  
رؤوسهم. كان هؤلاء إذا جاءوا في مثل هذه السنين لا يبيعون  
البيض والفاكهة والزيتون والخراف، وانما يحاولون شراء أقصى

ما تسمح به نقودهم القليلة من الدقيق والسكر. حتى الرعاة الذين كانوا شديدي النزق وببالغون في المقابل الذي يطالبون به ثمناً للخراف، وكانوا يفضلون العودة مرة أخرى ومعهم دوابهم، دون شعور بالأسف لأنهم لم يبيعوا ولم يشتروا، حتى هؤلاء يتحولون في مثل هذه السنة إلى رجال مترددين متوسلين، لأنهم يريدون التخلص من الدواب الضعيفة المسنة، اذ أصبحوا يخافون خوفاً حقيقياً ان تموت بين لحظة وأخرى من الجوع والعطش.

اما الباعة الذين تعودوا المجيء في كل المواسم، حاملين من كل موسم ثماره، وبعض الأحيان للتجول والفرجة، فلم يعد أحد يراهم يحملون شيئاً في هذه المواسم، وكأنهم مجموعة من القنافذ تكورت وهربت أشياءها إلى باطن الأرض!

لو اقتصر الأمر على هذه المظاهر لما اثار استغراباً، لأن العلاقة بين المدينة وما يحيط بها هي من القوة والاستمرار بحيث لا يمكن لأحد ان يميز بسرعة التغير المفاجيء الذي أخذ يتكون، لكن مع تلك المظاهر كانت أشياء أخرى كثيرة تحصل. فالتجار الذين تعودوا على تقديم القروض الصغيرة للفلاحين، واستيفائها اضعافاً مضاعفة في المواسم، اتخذوا موقفاً، بدا، أول الأمر، مليئاً بالشروط والتعنت، ثم ما لبثوا ان امتنعوا تماماً، وافتعلوا لذلك أسباباً وخصومات. اما الذين استمروا في تقديم بعض المساعدات، فقد رفضوا ان يكون سدادها في المواسم القادمة، وأصرّوا على شروط جديدة، أصرّوا على ان تسجل أقسام كبيرة من الأراضي التي يمتلكها الفلاحون بأسمائهم وأسماء ابنائهم، وفي محاولة لإثبات حسن النية قالوا الكلمات التي يقولها الدائنون دائماً: «الدنيا حياة وموت، والانسان لا يضمن نفسه في اليوم

الذي يعيش فيه، فكيف يضمن حياة اولاده الصغار بعد موته؟» كانوا لا يكتفون بذلك، كانوا يضيفون: «وكما قال الله عز وجل في كتابه الكريم: ﴿إِذَا تَدَايَنْتُمْ بِدِينٍ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَاكْتُبُوهُ وَلْيَكْتُب بَيْنَكُمْ كَاتِبٌ بِالْعَدْلِ﴾».

والفلاحون الذين قابلوا اصرار هؤلاء الدائنين بإصرار أقوى، ورفضوا تسجيل الأراضي، أول الأمر، اضطر الكثير منهم إلى استخراج الحلّى الذهبية والفضية القديمة، والتي جمعت خلال فترات طويلة سابقة، وقدموها عوضاً من الطحين والسكر وبعض أمتار من الخام. وفي وقت آخر وافق بعضهم على التنازل وقدم الأراضي والبساتين التي طلبها الدائنون. ومع كل صفقة جديدة كانت أثمان الأرض في القرى تتراجع، وكان التجار يزدادون تصلباً ولا يوافقون إلا بشروطهم، وبعد ان تتم جميع الاجراءات!

ومع القحط تأتي أشياء أخرى أيضاً: تأتي الأمراض الغامضة وتعقبها الوفيات. كان الكبار يموتون من الحزن، والصغار تنتفخ بطونهم وتصيبهم الصفراء ثم يتساقطون. وإذا كان الناس قد تعودوا على الموت، ولم يعد يخيفهم كما كان الأمر في اوقات اخرى، رغم انه يتسبب كل الاوقات في تفجير آلاف الأحزان والأحقاد القديمة، فإن حالة أقرب إلى الانتظار اليائس كانت تحوم فوق كل بيت وتسبح في دم كل مخلوق. حتى الدواب في حواكير البيوت، او في اطراف البساتين، كانت تسيطر عليها حالة من العصبية واليأس.

وفي هذي السنين، ومع الجوع والموت، تأتي أفواج لا حصر لها من الطيور. ومثلما كانت الغيوم الخفيفة العالية تمر

كل ما تأتي به السماء امتحاناً للانسان، لا يلبثون ان يصبحوا  
ضحايا واكثر الناس شتيمة وتجديفاً، حتى ليستغرب مَنْ عرفهم من  
قبل كيف كان هؤلاء الناس يخزنون في صدورهم هذا المقدار  
الهائل من الشتائم والأفكار الخاطئة المحرمة!

هكذا كان القسم الأكبر من الناس في تلك السنة القاسية  
الطويلة. واذا كان لكل قرية ولكل مدينة في هذا العالم ملامحها  
وطريقتها في الحياة، ولها اسماؤها ومقابرها، واذا كان لكل قرية  
ومدينة مخاتيرها ومجانينها. ولها نهرها او نبع الماء الذي تستقي  
منه، وفيها مواسم الأعراس بعد الحصاد، فقد كان للطيبة ايضاً  
حياتها وطريقتها في المعاش، وكان لها مقبرتها وأعراسها، وكان  
في الطيبة مجانينها ايضاً. لكن هؤلاء المجانين لا يظهرون دائماً  
ولا يتذكرهم الناس في كل الأوقات، وان كان لهم حضورهم  
وجنونهم الخاص، بحيث كانوا كباراً وأقوياء في أوقات معينة،  
وكانوا حمقى وشديدي الغرابة في أوقات أخرى.

وكان للطيبة دائماً أعراسها وأحزانها. كانت الأعراس،  
أغلب الأحيان، بعد الحصاد، وكانت الأحزان حين ينقطع المطر  
وتمحل الأرض. واذا كانت الأعراس تعني بعض الناس، ولبعض  
الوقت، فإنَّ الأحزان، وفي سنوات المحل، تعني جميع الناس،  
وتمتد فترة طويلة.



مسرعة، كذلك كانت الطيور. فقد كانت أفواجها تعبر في كل الأوقات، حتى في الليل العميق، عالية صائتة، وكأنها ذاهبة إلى الموت أو إلى مجهول لا تعرف متى أو أين سيكون.

كان الناس ينظرون إلى الطيور نظرة مليئة بالحزن والأسى. تمنوا لو كانت قريبة، أو لو تتوقف قليلاً، لعلهم يظفرون بعددٍ منها يعوّضهم عن الجوع الذي يهدّهم، لكن الطيور تواصل طيرانها المتعب لعلها تصل إلى مكان ما، والناس لا يتوقفون عن النظر والحسرة، ويتوقعون شيئاً ما، لكن هذا الشيء لا يحصل أبداً، لأن أسراب الكركي والوز البري، وعشرات الأسراب من الطيور الأخرى واصلت رحلتها المجهدة دون توقف. أما أسراب القطا والكدرى فقد بدأت تظهر بين فترة وأخرى. والفلاحون الذين تعلموا أن هذا النوع من الطيور لا يترك أماكنه الصحراوية، ويقترب من المناطق المزروعة، إلا إذا عضه الجوع وأضناه العطش، ولم تعد واحات الصحراء أو الخوابي المتناثرة في أماكن عديدة تحوي قطرة ماء، فقد لاحظوا أن هذه الطيور بدأت تتخلى عن الحذر والخوف، أول الأمر، مدفوعة بغريزة البقاء، فتندفع إلى أي مكان لعلها تلتقط بضع حبات أو قطرات من الماء.

إنها المأساة نفسها تتكرر مرة أخرى أمام عيون الفلاحين، وهم قد تعودوا الصبر والانتظار، وتعودوا أكثر من ذلك أن يبذوا التشاؤم والتحفظ، وكانوا يرددون إذا سئلوا عن المواسم والزراعة: «المواسم لا تعني الأمطار التي تأتي فقط، وإنما أمور أخرى كثيرة». فإذا حصلت لجاجة في السؤال كانوا يختصرون كل شيء بالكلمات التالية: «المواسم تعني ما يقسمه الله وما يتركه الطير»، لأنهم في أعماقهم يخافون كل شيء، يخافون انحباس

المطر في الشهور التي يجب ان يسقط فيها، اما اذا جاء مبكراً  
ونما الزرع وارتفع شبراً او شبرين عن الأرض، فكانوا يخافون ان  
يأتي مطر غزير بعد ذلك الانقطاع، وعندها تغرق الأرض وتنمو  
الأعشاب الطفيلية ويفسد أو يقلّ الموسم. فإذا جاء المطر هيناً  
متفرقاً، وفي الأوقات التي يجب ان يأتي فيها، فإنّ الخوف يظل  
حتى الأيام الأخيرة من أيار، حين تشتد الحرارة فجأة وتحرق كل  
شيء، فتخب الآمال وتراجع الوعود التي اعطاها الرجال للنساء  
بأثواب جديدة، وللفتيان الذين تجاوزوا سن البلوغ وأصبحوا  
يطمحون إلى الزواج ان جاءت المواسم الجديدة بالخير. ان هذه  
الوعود تتراجع يوماً بعد آخر لأن «الشوبة» جاءت وقضت على كل  
شيء!

إنّ احداً لا يحب ان يتذكر أيام القحط. أما اذا جاءت  
قاسية جارفة، واذا تكرر مجيئها سنة بعد أخرى، فالكثيرون  
يفضلون الموت او القتل ثم الرحيل على هذا الانتظار القاسي،  
وآخرون يندفعون الى حالة من القسوة والانتقام لا يتصورها احد  
فيهم، بل ويستغربها هؤلاء الناس أنفسهم في غير هذه الأوقات،  
وفي غير هذه الظروف. واذا كان الانسان لا يستطيع ان ينتقم من  
الغيوم او ممن يرسلها، فلا بدّ ان تكون هناك ضحايا من نوع  
آخر. فالأزواج الذين أبدوا من السماحة الشيء الكثير، ولم  
يتعودوا الشتيمة أو الضرب، كانوا مستعدين لأن يغيروا هذه  
العادات بسهولة، ودون شعور بالذنب. كانوا لا يترددون في ان  
يضربوا ويصرخوا لأتفه الأسباب. والذين كانوا يبدون المرح  
ويظهرون التفاؤل، يتحولون فجأة الى رجال قساة بوجوههم  
وتصرفاتهم. وحتى اولئك الذين كانوا شديدي الايمان ويعتبرون



**الطبية** مثل أي مكان في الدنيا، لها أشياءها التي تفخر بها. قد لا تبدو هذه الأشياء خطيرة، أو ذات أهمية بالنسبة لأماكن أخرى، لكنها بالنسبة للطبية جزء من الملامح التي تميزها عن غيرها من الضيع والقرى. وهذه الأشياء تكوّنت بفعل الزمن، وبفعل الطبيعة القاسية، كما لم يحصل في أماكن أخرى. فإذا كانت الأصوات العالية تميز سكان عدد كبير من القرى، حتى لتبدو أصوات الفلاحين عالية الجرس صلبة المخارج، وبعض الأحيان سريعة، وتتخللها مجموعة من الحُكْم والأمثال، كما هي العادة لدى الكثير من الفلاحين في أنحاء عديدة من العالم، نظراً للعادة وللمسافات التي تفصل الناس عن بعضهم في الحقول، أو حين يضطرون للمناداة على الحيوانات الضالة، أو على تلك التي تذهب بمزاجها الغريب إلى أماكن بعيدة أو مجهولة، أو ربما للبعد الذي يفصل البيوت عن بعضها، وما يحيط بها من الحواكير والبساتين الصغيرة التي تزرع فيها أنواع عديدة من الخضروات، أن هذه الأسباب، وغيرها كثير، خلقت طبيعة معينة، وجعلت الناس في الطبية يتكلمون بطريقة خاصة، حتى ليظن من يسمع الحديث ولا يفهم طبيعة الناس أو علاقاتهم، إنهم يتعاركون، أو أن الخلاف بينهم وصل إلى درجة من الحدة، لا بد أن تعقبه أمور أخرى!

بعض الألعاب البريئة. وتلك الأمور تجري عفواً للحظة، وبلا  
تخطيط سابق. ومهما تشعبت وتباعدت، ومثلما بدأت بالغابات  
والأشجار والينابيع، فلا بد أن يجري الحديث أيضاً عن أيام  
القحط والصعوبات التي عاشتها الطيبة خلال تلك السنين. وإذا  
كانت اللذة والأيام الرائعة المليئة بالخصب تحرك المشاعر، فإن  
المصاعب التي عاشها البشر وتغلبوا عليها تحرك مشاعر أخرى،  
مشاعر تزخر بالقوة وبعظمة من نوع خاص، حتى أبناء الطيبة  
الذين سمعوا هذه الأحاديث مرات كثيرة، يلذّ لهم أن يسمعوها  
من جديد، وفي كل مرة تبدو لهم جديدة مليئة بالبطولة والعبر:  
«كنا نأكل الأعشاب وجذور النباتات. كنا نأكل الجرابيع. حتى  
الجراد الذي كثيراً ما كان يأتي في سنوات المحل، أو الذي  
يسبب المحل، كنا نأكله. صحيح أن الحياة آنذاك كانت في منتهى  
القسوة والصعوبة، لكن الرجال في تلك الأيام كانوا رجالاً،  
كانوا أقوياء وقادرين على الاحتمال والصبر، وكانوا قادرين على  
أن يأكلوا الصخر. أما رجال هذه الأيام...» وابتسم بعض  
المستئين، ويتذكر الآخرون. وينظرون في وجوه بعض، وينظرون  
في وجوه أبنائهم، ثم في وجوه الضيوف!

كونته الطبيعة والأيام الطويلة والمخاوف، وربما يتولد لأسباب غامضة مجهولة! وقد تكون له علاقة بالأرض ذاتها، اذ يشعر أي واحد من هؤلاء ان كل يوم جديد يقربه أكثر فأكثر من الأرض. وما دام الأمر هكذا، فإن أمنية خفية تدفعه لأن يتمنى ارضاً من نوع ما يمكن ان تستقبل لحمه وعظامه، ويحس بنفس الخفاء ان هذا الجفاف الذي تسرب عميقاً إلى الأرض، ثم تلك الرخاوة اللزجة التي جاء بها مطر آذار، لا يناسبان، ويتمنى لو انه لا يغادر الحياة في مثل السنة القاسية. وحتى لو بلغ اليأس مبلغاً كبيراً في قلوب المستئين وأصابهم الغم والسأم من هذه الدورة العاتية للطبيعة، فقد كان كل واحد منهم يريد ان يموت موتاً كريماً لاثقاً، ان يموت في الوقت الذي انهى كل ما يجب ان يفعله في هذه الحياة، وان يغادر الدنيا بهدوء وسلام، دون جلبة، ولكن باحترام يناسب عمره. اما ان يموت مثلما يموت الصغار، او مثلما تموت الدواب، بطريقة مفاجئة، ودون انذار من أي نوع، ان موتاً مثل هذا يدفعه إلى شعور عميق باليأس!

ومثلما توقع المستئون حصلت الأمور بعد ذلك: فالزرع الذي اهتز في أعماق التربة من الأمطار الغزيرة التي سقطت في نهاية آذار، ما لبث ان شق الأرض وبدأ ينمو. كانت الزروع بنموها الزاهي، رغم المسافات المتباعدة فيما بينها، نتيجة لهجوم العصفير وتقليب المحارث، كانت بنموها قوية واثقة، وما كادت شمس نيسان تحتضنها بالدفء حتى انتعشت وتحركت أكثر من قبل. وإذا كان الفلاحون، بتفاؤل موهوم، يرددون بإصرار ان ما يحتاجون اليه مطرة او مطرتين في نيسان، الأولى في النصف الأول، والثانية في نهايته، ثم مطرة أخيرة في منتصف أيار، رغم

الكبيرة المغلقة؟ كانوا يقولون لأنفسهم: «لقد قيل لنا مثل هذا الكلام مرات كثيرة، وتنقضي السنوات، سنة وراء سنة، ولا شيء يتغير» وأهل الطيبة الذين تعودوا نسيان السد والطريق والكهرباء في مواسم الخير، ولم يفكروا يوماً واحداً ان يحصلوا على مثل هذه الخيرات، فإنهم في مواسم القحط يتذكرون كل شيء، يتذكرون هيئات الرجال الذين أتوا، والكلمات التي قالوها، ويتذكرون ان بعض الذين جاءوا زائرين مع أبناء لهم الى الطيبة في سنوات سابقة، سنوات الخصب والمواسم الطيبة، وذهبوا الى الصيد ايضاً في المناطق المحيطة بالبلدة، ورجعوا وقد امتلأوا بنشوة، وتصرفوا في لحظات معينة مثل الأطفال، وبدوا صادقين، ان بعض هؤلاء أصبح في المدينة البعيدة كبيراً مهماً، بحيث لا يذكر اسمه إلا كما تذكر أسماء الأنبياء والأولياء. ان هؤلاء لم يعودوا يتذكرون الطيبة، ونسوا أصدقاءهم، وانتهى الأمر. والطيبة تعض على جراحها في مواسم القحط والجفاف. اما في مواسم الخير فلا تكف عن ان تبعث بسلال المشمش في بداية المواسم، ثم بسلال العنب والتين في نهايته، وبين الموسمين تبعث اللبن والجبن والبيض والخراف الصغيرة ايضاً، ولا تنتظر شيئاً من المدينة. تبعث الطيبة كل هذا برضى أقرب إلى الجبور، ويتصور الآباء والأمهات، وهم يبعثون بالسلال وأكياس اللبن في السيارة الصغيرة التي تذهب في الصباح الباكر، إنهم لا يقومون بواجب فقط، وإنما يحسّون بالمرارة والحزن ان تأخروا عن موعد سيارة الموظفين، او ان لم يستطيعوا قطف التين في الوقت المناسب!

والطيبة التي لم تتنكر ولم تتغير، وظلّت وفية لكل شيء فيها ولكل انسان عاش او مرّ في يوم من الأيام، خلقت هذا الوفاء

مثلما تغفر لأبنائها، فإنَّها تعرف الغضب في مواسم الجفاف، وهذا الغضب الذي قد يأخذ شكلاً هيناً في بعض الأوقات يتحول في النهاية إلى جنون لا يطيقه ولا يتصوره احد.

قال احد القادمين، وكان شاباً يدرس في مكان بعيد:

- الناس هناك لا يفعلون كما تفعلون انتم هنا، إنَّهم، هناك، يحوِّلون الكلمات إلى قوة. قوة منظمة ومحاربة، ويجب ان نفعل مثلهم شيئاً عاجلاً قبل ان يلتهمنا الموت.

قال رجل مسنّ، وهو يقلب شفّتيه باستنكار، ويقلب نظراته بين الأرض والسماء:

- وماذا تريدنا ان نفعل؟

وقبل أن يجيب الشاب تابع الرجل:

- يجب ان تعرف، لا أحد يستطيع مقاومة الحكومة. علينا ان نكون عقلاء ونفكر بما نستطيع عمله.

قال الشاب بعصية:

- القحط اذا جاء تنامون سنة كاملة، واذا لم يجرى ترسلون الدعاء والرسائل ولا شيء غير ذلك، وبهذه الطريقة لن تبقى الطيبة!

قال والد ذلك الشاب:

- الطيبة، يا ولدي، باقية، لقد مرّت سنوات صعبة كثيرة مثل هذه، تحمّل الناس تلك السنوات وعاشوا بعد ذلك، وظلّت الطيبة.

ردّ الشاب بسخرية:



ذلك، وسوف يلجأون إلى وسائل جديدة لإقناع الكبار هناك في المدينة، بمدى القدرة التي يمتلكونها.

إذا كان أهل الطيبة قد انتظروا طويلاً، فقد خاب ظنهم تماماً حين رأوا عصر ذلك اليوم سيارتين غريبتين تدخلان الضيعة. أمّا حين تعانق الآباء والأمهات مع أبنائهم العائدين، فقد طغت للحظات قوة الحب على قوة العتاب، وجاشت الدموع في العيون وغلبت جميع المشاعر الأخرى. ونتيجة ذلك تراجعت الأفكار والكلمات الغاضبة لتحل مكانها مشاعر المودة وكلمات الترحيب. والضيوف الذين لم يروا الطيبة قبل هذه المرة، لم يروا فيها شيئاً مختلفاً، ولم يحسوا بذلك الدوي الداخلي الذي يولده الجفاف. أمّا حين قابلتهم الابتسامات الواسعة والترحيب الحار فقد أحسوا بدفء داخلي وحسدوا هؤلاء الناس على هذا الرضى الذي يمتلكونه!

بهذه الطريقة تأجّلت أمور كثيرة وحلّت أخرى مكانها. فالأشياء التي حملها الأبناء من المدينة وُزعت بعناية، واختلى بعض المسنين لينصحوهم ان يتصرفوا بحكمة، ولكي يطلبوا من الشباب احترام الضيوف مثلما تعودوا دائماً، دون إثارة لأية أحزان أو مشاكل. وقالوا في أنفسهم: «سيبقى الضيوف يوماً أو يومين ثم يرحلون، وبعد ذلك سوف نقلب الدنيا على رؤوس هؤلاء الأبناء العاقين، الذين لا يعرفون شيئاً في الدنيا سوى ارسال بعض الحاجات في مواسم الجفاف، وكأن الطيبة أصبحت مأوى للمتسولين والجوع، ويجب ان تبقى كذلك». أما الوعود الكثيرة عن المياه التي ستدفق طوال أيام السنة، أمّا عن الأسماك التي ستزرع في البحيرة، عن القنوات التي ستمتد إلى مسافات

عساف عصبياً مخطوف الوجه، وبغمغمة لا تكاد تُفهم،  
دخل ألقى التحية، وجلس قريباً من الباب. وأهل الطيبة الذين  
تعوّدوا على عساف، وقبلوا جنونه، رفضوا بكثير من الإصرار ان  
يصطحب كلبه معه الى سهراتهم وإلى مجالسهم. وهذا الرفض  
الذي آذى عساف كثيراً، قابله برفض أشد قسوة وأشد اصرار،  
حتى انتهى الأمر الى ذلك الاتفاق الضمني بأن يدخل عساف إلى  
المجلس دون ان يصافح احداً، وان يبقى كلبه قريباً من الباب.  
واذا كان عساف قد قَبِلَ هذه الشروط مكرهاً، فإن علاقته بمجالس  
البلدة وأحاديثها قليلة إلى درجة ان الناس لا يرونه إلا نادراً. اما  
اذا جاء ضيف إلى البلدة من أجل الصيد، فقد كان أول الذين  
يجب دعوتهم وحضورهم هو عساف. وعساف الذي لا يحب  
حضور المجالس، يكره ايضاً هؤلاء الضيوف، ويعتبرهم، أغلب  
الأحيان، ثقلًا شديدي البلادة والخور، لكن مثلما علّمته الطيبة،  
كان مضطراً إلى مصاحبتهم وإلى مجاملتهم، ومن أجل ذلك كان  
يتحمّل الكثير!

في هذه الأمسية، وحين أتوا بعساف، أحسّ ان الأمر غير  
عادي. أمّا حين جلس قرب الباب وأجلس كلبه إلى جانبه، فقد  
سمع أكثر من صوت يدعوّه إلى صدر المجلس، وازاء رفضه،  
نهض واحد من أبناء الطيبة القادمين مع الضيوف، ومدّ يده يحيّي

عساف بحرارة أول الأمر، ثم يسحبه بقوة لكي يغيّر مكانه. استمر الأمر بعض الوقت، بين القبول والرفض، إلى أن اقترح أحد المسنين انتقال عساف وبقاء الكلب حيث كان.

ان في حياة كل انسان لحظات من الخصوبة لا يدركها، ولا يعرف متى او كيف تأتيه أو كيف تنفجر في داخله. إنها تندفع فجأة، تعربد مثل الرياح أو مثل الأمطار الغزيرة المفاجئة، وتطغى على كل شيء، ومثلما تأتي فجأة تنتهي كذلك، وكأنها مياه غارت لتوها في أرض رملية عطشى!

هذه اللحظات لا يخطط لها أحد ولا يدبرها أحد، حتى لو أراد. وعساف الذي جاء مكرهاً، ليلتقي ببعض الوجوه التي لم يرها من قبل، وقد لا يراها مرة أخرى بعد أن تغادر الطيبة، والذي أغضبه كلمة أحد المسنين حين طلب منه أن يبقى كلبه عند وصيد الباب، وجد نفسه فجأة في عالم من الوجد وأقرب ما يكون إلى التجلي، إذ ما كاد يُسأل عن الصيد، وعن عدد الطيور التي صادها ذلك اليوم، وكيف كان الموسم بصورة عامة، حتى أحسّ بالاختناق، وتمنّى لو أنه لم يأت، وتمنّى أكثر من ذلك لو يستطيع مغادرة المجلس. لكن كان يعرف أهل الطيبة، يعرف مقدار الود القاسي الذي يكتونه له، ويحس أن رابطة عمرها مئات السنين تربطه بكل ما حوله من أرض وبشر وأشجار ومياه، وأن هذه الرابطة تكون أشد وأقوى حين تمر سنة صعبة مثل هذه السنة التي تمر على الطيبة.

كان مصمماً، أول الأمر، أن لا يتكلم، فإذا حاصروه بالأسئلة، ولم يجد مجالاً للهروب، فلا أقل من بضع كلمات يقولها، لكن فجأة امتلأ بشعور الألفة والتحدّي معاً، وأحسّ أن



أشياء كثيرة ثم توزّتها إلى أولادها وأحفادها، وبهذه الطريقة تدافع  
عن نفسها وتواصل الحياة. أمّا الانسان...

وضحك بسخرية، وبلا مناقشات طويلة اختار عساف مكاناً  
جديداً، قال ليقنع نفسه:

- قد لا تكون الطيور هناك مضرورية، وقد نجد بعض  
الأشواك تستظل بها، ونحن وما قسم لنا!

وبالطريقة نفسها، وبالإصرار نفسه، حين وصل إلى المكان  
الذي يراه مناسباً للصيد، أوقف السيارة وأنزل كلبه، ثم نزل.

لم يتكلم هذه المرة أية كلمة، لم يركز بأية موعظة. أمّا  
حين قال أحد أبناء الطيبة بصوت عال لينبه الجميع:

- سنلتقي هنا بعد ساعة وأقصى حد ساعتين، لأنّ الطريق  
إلى الطيبة طويل، ويجب أن نصل مبكرين.

حين قال الرجل هذه الكلمات، هزّ عساف رأسه دلالة  
الموافقة، ولوّح بيده بطريقة دائرية، وقد فهمت تلك الحركة على  
أنّه سيبقى في منتصف الدائرة، وفهمت على أنّها تحية.

الجميع بنوع من الراحة. ولم يكتف سائق الفولكس فاكن بأن يبقى قريباً، بل أصرَّ على أن يمشي قبل الجيب، وعلى مسافة أمتار قليلة منها.

انتظار الموت في هذه الصحراء أصعب من الموت آلاف المرات. فالموت هنا لا يأتي فجأة، لا يأتي متكرراً، ولا يأتي بسرعة ويقضي على كل شيء، وإنما يكشر عن أنيابه في البداية ثم يقف على شبائك السيارات، وبين لحظة وأخرى يعربد، يصرخ، يلطم الوجوه، يسف حفنة من الرمال في الأفواه والعيون. وبعد أن يمل من هذا المزاح يتراجع قليلاً، ليقعي مثل ذئب، انتظاراً لجولة أخرى. والجولة الأخرى لا تنتظر طويلاً، اذ تصعد مثل البخار مسرعة جارفة قوية، فتولد يبوسة في الحلق، هلعاً في العيون، انتظاراً آخر قاسياً ممضاً، بالخشونة الكاوية نفسها، بالجبروت نفسه الذي لا يعرف التراجع، يدق الشبايك مرة أخرى دقات قوية متواصلة.

وبين انتظار وانتظار يموت الانسان، يموت الف مرة، يفقد الثقة، تتلاشى ارادته، يسقط، ينهض، يترنح، يمتلىء حلقة بأدعية خائفة لا يعرف كيف أتت، يصرخ دون صوت، ينظر في وجوه الآخرين ليرى وجهه، يتذكر، يقاوم، ينهار، يسقط. يموت مرة أخرى، ينهض من الموت، يتأمل الأمتار القليلة التي يمكن ان تُرى عبر الشبايك، يلامس حبات الرمل المتسربة في كل مكان، يملأ حلقة بجرعة ماء ويستبقيها لأطول فترة لعلها تمده بمزيد من القوة على المقاومة، على الصمود، يفقد القدرة على الحديث، يفقد القدرة على ابتلاع الماء، يتحول الماء إلى ملح، يتحول الزبد إلى زبد، يريد ان يصرخ، ان يموت تماماً، يريد أن تنشق

- هذا عساف... انه أمامكم، انظروا اليه.

وهزّ رأسه بلوعة، دون أن يلتفت، ثم تابع بلهجة يخنقها  
البكاء:

- عساف الحصان، عساف الغيمة، أبو الفقراء، الذي لا  
ينام ساعة في الليل من أجل أن تعيش الطيبة وتبقى... عساف  
الذي يحب الجميع، ويقتل نفسه حتى يستمرّ الناس... عساف  
زينة الرجال، ترككم الآن، ترككم وحيدين تحاربون الحكومة  
والعسكر والجراد، ولا أحد يعرف أية قوى أخرى، وماذا  
سيحصل!

كاد أن يواصل، خاصة وان كلماته نزلت إلى قلوب الرجال  
وكأنّها السكاكين الملتهبة، فحركت الرؤوس ودفعت حبات من  
الدموع لكي تتساقط بصمت، لكن فجأة تغيّرت أفكاره  
واضطربت:

- ما فائدة الكلمات الآن؟ يمكن أن نكرز من هذه اللخطة  
وحتى يوم القيامة، لكن كل يوم يسقط منا الرجال، وتسقط  
اليوت فوق رؤوسنا وتقطع الأشجار بأيدينا، ولا يتغيّر شيء!

قال رجل مسنّ يريد أن يغيّر الموضوع:

- حتى هذه الساعة لا أصدّق أن الرجل مات.

قال المختار:

- انتظر، وسوف ترانا، واحداً بعد آخر، نهوي على وجوهنا  
وتظمرنا الرمال، وقد لا نجد من ينقّط في حلوقنا قطرة ماء.

وقهقه المختار بطريقة تختلط فيها السخرية بالنشيج،  
وبالحزن الكاوي، ثم أضاف:

**وبطريقة** أقرب إلى الغموض والتحدي بدأت السهرة. بدأت  
بنوع من التكريم الذي لم تتعوده الطيبة من قبل، ربما  
نتيجة للخوف أو لبقايا قناعات ومواقف تجاه الموت. ورغم أن  
شعوراً بالرهبة خيم على الجميع، وأن عدداً من الناس، بمن فيهم  
الضيوف، كان يتمنى لو أن الأمر لم يأخذ هذا الشكل، لكن ازاء  
اصرار مبهم، وبلحظة من لحظات الانفعال الشديد، قال المختار  
بعصية:

- يجب أن تبقى معنا يا عساف لتشهد كل شيء.  
وأدار رأسه، وعيناه مغمضتان، ويداه ترتفعان بطريقة تحمل  
معاني لا حصر لها، وتابع كأنه يخاطب نفسه:  
- أنت لم تمت، يا عساف، وستبقى معنا.  
قال رجل من مكان بعيد:  
- الحياة والموت بمشيئة الله يا جماعة، والآن انتهى كل  
شيء!

قال شاب بعصية:  
- عساف لن يموت، وهو الآن أكثر حياة منا جميعاً!  
قال رجل مسن:  
- لا تكفر يا ولدي، ان الملائكة ترفرف فوقنا الآن.

فقد كانت أشبه بالأصوات المشينة، كان يسمعها ولا يفهمها.  
كانت فجأة تموت. اما عيناه اللتان تغزلان الفضاء بحثاً عن  
الطريدة فكانتا تمتلئان بشيء أقرب إلى الظلمة.

انه يعرف أماكن تلك الوعول القوية. وحين كان يربض بين  
الصخور، قريباً من الخبرة، كان لا يترك طلقة تغادر البندقية قبل  
ان تشرب تلك الوعول، ثم ترفع رؤوسها وتتشمم الهواء. كان  
يتخير أكبرها وأقواها، حتى إذا تملأ من المنظر تماماً خرجت  
الطلقة بتلك الطريقة العجيبة، لتقتل، لتقتل على الفور.

الآن، في هذه اللحظة تغير كل شيء بالنسبة له. لا يعرف  
متى يضرب، وهل ستتاح له لحظات التجلي السمحة المليئة باللذة  
والخطر؟ انه يخاطر ولا يعرف ماذا سيحصل.

قال لنفسه: العنزي هذه المرة لا يصيد، وإنما البدوي الذي  
أفسده الأجانب يفعل ذلك، إنه يقود خيمة الحديد بطريقة رعة،  
مرة يتركها تطير، مرة يتركها تدرج، مرة يتركها تجن، ومرة يتركها  
تموت حين يطفئ محركها لكي يخلق سكوناً للحظات لعلّ وعلاً  
ينفجر في هذه السكونية.

انقضى العصر كله، مالت الشمس نحو الغروب، هبت  
نسائم فيها رطوبة، تنفس العنزي ملء رئتيه، لكنه شعر ان الحزن  
يلقه تماماً. قال لنفسه: «مثل كل مرة، العنزي لا يخيب». قال  
هذا ليخلق ثقة أخيرة في نفسه، وليقاوم الشك والعذاب اللذين  
يتفتان في دمه.

ذات لحظة، قبل الغروب بقليل، في لحظة اتحاد كل  
الأشياء: الغبار والامتداد والشمس المتوهجة قبل سقوطها مع

لعينيتها شيئاً من المسكنة. وكانت رغم كبر جسمها، صغيرة  
وأقرب إلى الطاعة، أمّا عندما يريد منها شيئاً فكانت لا تعطيه إلا  
بعد أن يتعب ويلهث!

إن شيئاً ما حصل في هذه العروق المجنونة.

والناس الذين أحبوا طريقته في المشي والطيران، وبالغوا  
كثيراً في تصور قدرته، رفضوا أن يصدقوا طريقته في الحياة. وإذا  
كان الشباب في العصري، توقّعوا الكثير منه، زيادة على المشي  
بتلك الطريقة المتباهية والطيران الماكر، وتحدّثوا عن ذلك بصوت  
عال ليلفتوا نظر الصبايا، فقد أرادوا منه أن يتصرّف بفحولة  
جامحة، كما تفعل بعض الحيوانات والطيور، لكي يبالغوا  
بالضحك ويتكلموا بصوت عال كطريقة اضافية في الاغراء، لكنه  
أبى. ظلّ يمشي ويطير كما يريدون، وظلّ يعيش كما يريد.

والمستنون الذين أبدوا اعجابهم بقوته ومكره لم يستغربوا  
كثيراً طريقته في الحياة. كانوا يرون ذلك أقرب إلى الطبيعة،  
وكانوا ينظرون إلى أنفسهم!

جاء من نسله أفراخ بعد أفراخ، وهذه الأفراخ تعلّمت منه  
الكثير، وتوارثت عنه الكثير، وجاء يوم غيّرت القرية اسمها  
لتصبح قرية «برج الحمام» لأنّ الحمام في القرى الأخرى هجرها  
ليأتي إلى هذه القرية، وحتى الحمام الأزرق البري الماكر، الذي  
تحدّث عنه الناس بمرارة لصعوبة الوصول إليه في الآبار العميقة  
التي يسكنها، أو في الكهوف القاسية بين الصخور العالية التي  
يضع فيها بيضه، جاء أسراباً، واحداً بعد آخر، عن طريق هذه  
الأجيال الجديدة.



بيرة  
الأ

وإذا كانت الأيام بتواليها المستمر تجرف معها الصخور من  
أعالي الجبال، وتسقط أوراق الأشجار، وتقلع السكينة من  
القلوب، فقد جاءت مثل هذه الأيام على هذا الطير.

كان وهو يمشي في الشمس الدافئة وينظر إلى الأسراب  
الكثيرة الملونة الغنية المتداخلة الأجناس، تتملكه رغبة واحدة:  
ان يستمر في الطيران، وان يظل إلى الأبد معلقاً بين السماء  
والأرض. وكان يأبى أن يتخلّى عن عاداته، عن الطيران وعن  
الحياة بطريقته.

غوا  
وإذا  
شي  
وت  
حولة  
نوا  
تكنه

ذات يوم، وكان الربيع مرة أخرى، شعر أن قواه تعاوده  
أكثر من أيام ماضية، وشعر انه يريد ان يطير إلى أماكن بعيدة،  
وكان يريد لها هي أن تطير معه. نفّض ريشه، دار حولها، قرقر،  
قال لها ان الفضاء المكان الوحيد الذي يستطيع أن يراها فيه  
ملكة؛ ولما رفضت أن تطير، همس في أذنها انه لا يستطيع ان  
يبقى على الأرض ويجب أن يطير. مشى بأبهة الملوك، بثقتهم،  
بقوتهم، ثم انطلق. دار في الجو دورات كثيرة. دار ونظر إلى  
الأرض، وكانت حوالبه الأسراب الكثيرة وهي تطير مفتونة. إنَّها  
أحدى المرات التي يشعر انه امتلك كل شيء. ان تتطلع في عينيه  
لتكشف الآفاق البعيدة التي وصل إليها، الأشياء الرائعة التي  
رآها، لكنها لم تكن هناك. استراح قليلاً وهبط وبحث عنها.  
كانت في الزاوية، الزاوية نفسها التي جلس فيها أوّل مرة. كانت  
هناك، اقترب، نظر إليها بتساؤل، التفت إلى الناحية الثانية، دار  
حولها، استدارت. ودار حولها مرة أخرى، جلب لها بعض  
الحبوب لتأكل، نظرت إليه بحزن واستدارت مرة أخرى. وحين  
خيّمت الظلمة هبّت معها ريح باردة. اقترب منها ليدفئها، اقتربت

أبوا  
أه،  
أ  
منه  
ها  
ها  
سري  
بقة  
آتي  
هذه

الحالات النادرة، وإذا تعوّدت معظم كلاب الحراسة ان تقف على جوانب الغنم أو في مؤخرتها لتحرسها وتدفعها، فقد كان الصل يفضل البقاء في المقدمة، ليس في أي مكان من المقدمة، وإنما في مكان مرتفع، وعلى مسافة بعيدة نسبياً. وهذه الطريقة التي أخافت الشيخ في البداية وجعلته شديد الحذر من «ابن الملعون»، لأنه في بعض اللحظات يذهب إلى مسافة أبعد مما يرى الشيخ أو يطبق - هذه الطريقة جعلته يفكر أكثر من مرة بالتخلص منه، لأن الغنم تخاف الصوت، وتخاف من تلويحة اليد، وتخاف أيضاً من شراسة بعض الكلاب وهي تعضها من أرجلها أو جنوبها لتدفعها إلى الحركة. أما ان يكون الصل على هذه المسافة، وينظر إلى القطيع هذه النظرة المتكبرة فقد جعلت الشيخ يضربه ذات يوم بمقلعه وينتزع عينه، لكن الحياة تعلّم الكثير، إذ لم تمضِ شهور حتى أصبح الصل كل شيء، وعندها أصبح الشيخ ينام أو يغيب في أحلام بعيدة، كان في بعض الحالات ينسى أنه راع لقطيع من الغنم ما دام الصل موجوداً!

القصص التي تروى عن مكر الصل وقدرته ونشاطه لا تحصى، وأحاديث الرعاة يختلط فيها الحسد بالتقدير. أمّا عن المرات التي سافر بها الصل بالطائرة ليعود بقطعان جديدة، ومن أماكن بعيدة، فقد أصبحت مثاراً للتندر والسخرية. ما يكاد ينعقد مجلس حتى تنهال الأسئلة بطريقة ماهرة.

- «من ركب الطائرة أكثر: الصل أم الشيخ؟»: «هل يستطيع المختار ان يدفع ثمن بطاقة الطائرة أم يأخذونه مع الصل؟».

- «إذا كان الصل يركب الطائرات فلماذا تستغربون عندما ترونه مجنوناً ومتكبراً هكذا».



وتتقصف تحت ثقله، كنت أخاف ان يهوي العش من الاهتزاز  
القوي وتتساقط الفراخ.

الظلمة تقترب بنعومة خفية، الرجل يرتفع، الغربان  
بصرخاتها وطيرانها الخشن تدوم بطريقة أقرب إلى التحدي. أمّا  
عندما بدأت صرخات الفراخ الصغيرة في العش ترتفع فزعة  
مستغيثة، فقد شعرت ان شيئاً أقرب إلى الخطر لا بد ان يقع.

في تلك اللحظات المليئة بالتوتر والخوف والمعزولة عن  
لحظات الزمن العادية بدأ شيء عجيب:

صرخات متوجعة قاسية تملأ الدنيا، احد الغرابين دار حول  
رأس الرجل دورة مليئة بالعنفوان والبسالة، وخفق بجناحيه  
بصخب أقرب إلى الدوي، وارتفع حتى استقر في العش. اما  
الغراب الآخر فقد بدأ يدور حول الشجرة بين العش ورأس  
الرجل، وبدا بحركته وكأنه حجر مربوط بخيط ويدور في تلك  
المسافة التي تضيق كل مرة مع الامتداد البطيء والارتفاع.

كان الرجل مصراً، كان واثقاً وحذراً. والفراخ التي أصابها  
الفرع بدأت صرخاتها تتباعد وتأخذ نغماً مختلفاً، أمّا الغراب  
الذي كان يدور فقد أصابه الجنون، وكان جنونه يتصاعد ويحتد  
مع كل خطوة جديدة.

ان اية كلمات لا تستطيع أن تعبّر عن اللحظات الأخيرة،  
فعندما اقترب الرجل، ولم تبق إلا خطوة واحدة وامتدادة اليد،  
جنّت الدنيا وانقلب كل شيء. لم تعد الفراخ تعرف التوقف عن  
الصراخ الفرع، ولم يعد الغراب الكبير في العش قادراً على البقاء  
بذلك الوضع الساكن. أمّا الغراب الآخر فقد تخلّى عن الدوران

العصفور الآخر، وقف، انتظر، اقترب، مدَّ منقاره، حاول بمخالبه، والعصفور الذي تلقَّى الضربة يدور بتلك الطريقة التي تشبه ذبابة مذبوحة. كان يدور دوراناً مرعوباً يائساً. وبعد لحظات بدأت حركاته تخفت إلى أن تلاشت. قال الرجل الأول:

- هل رأيت ماذا يصنع العشق؟

قال الرجل الثاني وهو يضحك بصخب:

- كما قلت: ومن الحب ما قتل!

كان سالم يسمع، وبهدوء، نهض ليتأكد ان كان الطير ما يزال حياً أو مات. كانت الجثة الصغيرة ما تزال دافئة حين استقرت على راحة يده، لكن الحياة فارقتها، هزَّ العصفور جسمه، مرة ثانية، لكن الحياة كانت قد تخلَّت عن ذلك الجسد، وتذكَّر سالم الأيام السابقة، خاصة يوم الأحد من الأسبوع الفائت.

كان الضيف يسأل أولاده باهتمام:

- هل صليتم عليها في المسجد؟

وحين يؤكِّد له الأولاد ذلك يسأل من جديد:

- مَنْ سار في مقدمة الموكب؟ كيف كانت تبدو الوجوه،

كيف كان صوت المرتل؟ مَنْ هم المدفونون إلى جانبها؟ وهل جاء أحد لا أعرفه؟ وهل استغرقت العملية وقتاً طويلاً؟

كان الرجل يجلس في منتصف الصالون الكبير ليتقبل التعازي. كان بادي الحزن وبادي الحزم، لكن كان شديد التيقُّظ ايضاً، كان يسأل عن كل الذين جاءوا، وكان يسأل أكثر من ذلك عن الذين لم يأتوا.

جاء في كتاب الحيوان:

«وفي الجرذان جنس له عبث بالنقود والشفوف والدراهم وخشخشة الحلبي، وذلك انها تخرجها من جحرها في بعض الزمان فتلعب عليها وحواليها، ثم تنقلها واحداً واحداً، حتى تعيدها عن آخرها إلى موضعها، فزعم الشرقي ابن القطامي، ان رجلاً من أهل الشام اطلع على جرذ يخرج من جحر ديناراً فلماً رآه قد أخرج مالا صالحاً استخفه الحرص فهم أن يأخذها، ثم أدركه الحزم وفتح له الرزق المقسوم باباً من الفطنة. فقال: أنا أمسك ان أخذها ما دام يخرج، فإذا رأيته يدخل فعند أول دينار يغيبه ويعيده الى مكانه أثب عليه فاجترف المال. قال: ففعلت، وعدت إلى موضعي الذي كنت أراه منه، فأقبل يخرج ما شاء الله تعالى، ثم أخذ ديناراً فأدخله، فلما عاد ليأخذ ديناراً آخر فلم يجد الدينار، أقبل يشب في الهواء، ثم يضرب بنفسه الأرض حتى مات.

وهذا الحديث من أحاديث النساء وأشباه النساء.

**كانت** عيناه مليئتين بالقسوة، حتى وهو يضحك. اما اذا نظر الى أحد نظرة تأنيب أو سخرية فكان الخوف يمتزج برغبة الهرب، لأن نظرة مثل هذه لا بد أن تحمل الانتقام في أبسط الحالات أو أحسنها، وحين يكون مزاج البيك رائقاً، لا بد أن تتبعها كلمات أقرب إلى الشتيمة. كانوا يخافونه ويتحدثون كثيراً عن القوة الخارقة التي يتصف بها، والقسوة التي تميزه عن جميع الأغنياء في المنطقة وفي المناطق الأخرى!

كان الصغار يهربون حين يمر بسيارته السوداء، وكانوا يفعلون ذلك أيضاً حين يكون راكباً حصانه متجولاً في المزارع التي يملكها. أمّا الكبار فقد تعودوا ان يقدموا له كل فروض الطاعة بنوع من الاذعان يصل حدود الذل. كانوا يفعلون ذلك بالوقوف اذا مرّت سيارته، يفعلون ذلك ايضاً اذا مرّ راكباً حصانه، وبعض الأقوياء والمحظوظين كان يتجراً على سؤاله عن صحته وعن مزاجه. واذا لم يبدأ الحديث، لم يكن أحد يستطيع ان يفعل ذلك، كانوا يقولون «مزاج البيك معكر»، «البيك يفكر بقضايا كبيرة ولا يريد ان يفسد أحد عليه تفكيره» وكانوا يقولون أشياء أخرى عن مشاغله الكثيرة في العاصمة، عن الخصوم الذين سيسقطون نتيجة موقفهم منه، عن المهمات الكبيرة التي تنتظره!

وجوده في الضيعة يغيّر كل شيء فيها: الوجوه والتصرفات،

وحتى الطقس! ولفرط ما رويت القصص عنه أصبح أقرب إلى  
الأسطورة. كان يجيء إلى الضيعة بين فترة وأخرى، وكان يجيء  
معه عدد من الأصدقاء، ووراء السور العالي للقصر الكبير لم يكن  
أحد يعرف ما يجري، لكن الجميع يدرك أن شيئاً خطيراً يجري  
هناك.

يروى سكان الضيعة ان البيك يملك عدداً كبيراً من أسلحة الصيد ومعدّاته. ويروي هؤلاء انهم لم يروه يستعمل بندقية واحدة مرتين. أمّا عن مهارته في الصيد فقد أصبحت من الشهرة والمثل بحيث كانوا يقولون: «البيك لا يضرب إلا في اللحم»، وهذا يدل على أنّه لا يخطئ أبداً!

كانت أيام الصيد تختلف باختلاف المواسم، وكان الأصدقاء الذين يصطحبهم البيك في رحلاته يختلفون باختلاف هذه المواسم. ولا يتذكر أحد من القرية ان صياداً من الذين جاءوا رجع بصيد أكثر من البيك. أمّا كيف كان يتصرف بهذا الصيد، فما عدا احتفاظه ببعض الرموز التي كان يحاول ان يؤكّد من خلالها مهارته وقوته، لم يكن ينظر إلى الطرائد وانما يتركها للآخرين، خاصة هؤلاء الذين جاءوا من العاصمة. كان يحرص على ان يحتفظ بالأشياء الغريبة: رؤوس الوعول الكبيرة، جلود الحيوانات القوية والنادرة، وبعض الأحيان تلك الطيور التي لم يصد منها أحد غيره!

الخدم الذين يقيمون في القصر يؤكّدون ان رؤوس الوعول من الكثرة بحيث لا يستطيع أحد عدّها، وهؤلاء الخدم الذين يتكتمون كثيراً في الحديث عمّا يحويه القصر، كانوا يقولون بعض الكلمات التي تضيف غموضاً إلى الغموض الذي يشمل كل شيء

ولما خيَّم الصمت من جديد، قال بطريقة هادئة موزونة:  
- يجب ان يسمع عساف كل كلمة تقولونها، لأنه بهذه  
الطريقة وحدها يتأكد اذا كان أهل الطيبة قد أصبحوا بشراً  
ويستحقون الحياة، أم أنهم لا يزالون حمقى كما كانوا من قبل!  
وقبل أن يسألوه، ولكي تستقر الكلمات في عقولهم قال  
بحدّة:

- يجب ان نضع وراء ظهره مساند، ونجعله ينظر إلينا، لكي  
يعرف مَنْ يقول الحقيقة وَمَنْ يكذب.

قال أحد المسنين وقد ملّ هذا الالاحاح من الجنون  
المفاجيء الذي ركب المختار:

- للموتى حرمتهم، يا رجل، ويجب أن نرعى هذه الحرمة  
حتى النهاية، أمّا ان نمثل بهم، أن نمازحهم، أن نلعب معهم  
كالأطفال، فإنّ هذا يسيء للموتى ويخالف الدين.

وبطريقة تداخل فيها المكر والذكاء والقسوة، وافقوا على  
حل وسط: أن يعود المختار الى حيث كان، وبالمقابل ان يرفعوا  
الغطاء عن وجه عساف. وقال أحد الضيوف، وقد شعر ان معدته  
تكاد تخرج من حلقه، وامتلأ صوته بحشجة:

- سامحونا يا جماعة، لقد كنا نحن السبب في كل ما  
جرى، ولولا هذه الرحلة المشؤومة لما حصل الذي حصل.

قال أحد المسنين ينهي الخلاف ويخلق جواً جديداً:

- الأعمار، يا ولدي، بيد الله، فإذا جاء أجلهم لا  
يستقدمون ساعة ولا يستأخرون!  
قال رجل آخر:



- عساف كان يريد أن يموت بهذه الطريقة، كان يردّد أمام الجميع، أريد أن أموت في البرية، في الصيد، كلبى معى وبندقيتى على كتفى أو بيدي!

ورغم ان بعض المسنين وأذكىاء الطيبة ساقوا الحديث بعيداً، إلاّ أنّه كان يعود، دون رغبة أو شعور من أحد، إلى الصيد، وإلى الطيور والحيوانات، وفي كل مرة يُذكر شيء عن الكلاب أو الغزلان كان المختار يلتفت إلى عساف، ويقول بصوت جارج:

- أنتَ الذي كنت تقول ذلك. اسمع، إنَّهم الآن، بعد أن تركت الدنيا، يقولون الكلام نفسه.

ويتوقف قليلاً، يمتلئ وجهه بابتسامة ساخرة ويتابع:

- كانوا يقولون عساف مجنون، عساف صايع، عساف لا يحب العمل. والآن يردّدون الكلمات نفسها التي كنت تقولها! فإذا سمع أحداً ينهره أو يطلب منه الصمت، يهز رأسه دلالة الموافقة والاستسلام ويقول:

- الآن يمكن أن تقولوا كل شيء، تفضّلوا!

إنّها ليلة عجيبة من ليالى الطيبة. وإذا كان أهل الطيبة قد تعودوا على التسامح فإنّ فيهم قسوة تطفو فجأة في دمائهم وتجعلهم أميل إلى الغضب. ولو ان احداً فعل تلك الليلة ما فعله المختار لما انتهت الأمور بسلام، لكن الفاجعة التي حلّت بالمختار، بفقد الابن الوحيد الذي بقي له، في الحرب الأخيرة، ثم بذلك البحث المضني بين الطيبة والمدينة ليتأكّد من حياته أو موته، والضباط في المدينة لا يقولون له كلمة تريحه، وانما الجواب الذي ظلّوا يردّدونه دون تعب ودون تغيير: «مفقود» ثم

وفاة زوجته المفاجيء اثناء احدى رحلات بحثه، والتي كانت تستمر أياماً، وعودته إلى الطيبة ليجد البيت خالياً وليقول له الناس بطريقة غامضة أول الأمر، ثم جارحة: «لقد أخذ الله وديعته» - ان هذه الفاجعة التي نزلت بالمختار جعلته في كثير من الأحيان بين الصحو والجنون. وجعلت تصرفاته تتسم بذلك المقدار الكبير من الغرابة. لذلك لم يفاجأ أهل الطيبة من تصرفاته تلك الليلة، لم يقدروا أن تصل إلى هذا الحد من القسوة والتحدّي، لأن الكلمة التي ظلّ يردها دون انقطاع، طوال الفترة السابقة كلها: «لا أصدّق. لا يمكن ان يحدث كل هذا دفعة واحدة».

والطيبة التي تعرف كيف تقسو وكيف تتحمل القسوة، تعرف أيضاً كيف تسرف في الحنان ولا تتخلّى عن أبنائها. واذا وجد من همس بأن المختار، بوضعه الصحي الجديد، لم يعد قادراً على أن يقوم بواجبه، وعلى الجهة الشرقية في الضيعة، ان تبحث عن مختار آخر، فإنّ هذا الهمس قُوبل بالازدراء والرفض ولم يؤد إلى أية نتيجة، لأنّ الكلمة الوحيدة التي كانت تتردّد دون انقطاع: الطيبة لها وجه واحد ليس لها وجهان، كما انها لن تتخلّى عن أبنائها حين يسقطون، أو حين يضيعون. واذا كان الناس في الضيع والقرى الأخرى يفعلون ذلك فإنّ الطيبة لم تتعلمه ولا تريد أن تتعلمه!

تلك القصص اذا كانت قد أثرت في المختار بشكل ظاهر، فإنّها لم تترك أحداً إلاّ وحرّكت في أعماقه موجة عاتية من التساؤلات والحزن، وجعلت الأمور تبدو، في لحظات كثيرة، أقرب إلى الومض الممزق: ماذا تعني الحياة وماذا يعني الموت؟ ولماذا تنتهي حياة المخلوقات بهذه الطريقة العاتية؟ وماذا لو



أصبح الانسان أكثر صدقاً وبساطة وتخلّى عن كثير من الأشياء التي تحوّلته إلى مخلوق لا يعرف سوى جمع الأشياء ثم تدميرها؟ لماذا تصمت المدينة أيام المحل الذي يتأكل الأحشاء وتذكر أيام لا يفيد التذكّر؟

أسئلة مثل هذه وعشرات غيرها مرّت في أذهان البشر المحصورين في تلك الغرفة. صحيح انها غرفة واسعة، تدل على أنّ المختار كان يملك شيئاً ذات يوم، لكن الاهمال الذي بدا في الكثير من المظاهر، ثم الغبار الذي تعشق الغرفة جيداً، حتى أصبح جزءاً منها، والفوضى الظاهرة في كل شيء، مع قليل من القذارة الجديدة، ان هذه الأمور كلها تجعل النفس ضيقاً، وتبعث شعوراً قوياً بالانتهاء، فإذا أضيف اليها وجود عساف، بوجهه الجامد المتقلص، وعينيّه المطفأتين، وابتسامته الرخوة الساخرة، فحينئذ لا يمكن لأحد أن يشعر بالأمن، حتى أشجع الرجال وأكثرهم صلابه، ولذلك حين اقترح أحد المستنّين فتح النافذة القبلية، صرخ المختار بحدة:

- اتركوا كل شيء كما هو.

هل هي الذكرى او الرغبة بالتحدي؟ هل هو الاصرار على السير في الطريق إلى نهايته حتى لو كان الموت؟

يمكن ان تفسر الأمور على كل الوجوه، ويمكن ان يكون لكل وجه حقيقته الخاصة به، ويكون صحيحاً. فما دامت ارادة البشر الموجودين في تلك الغرفة قد سقطت في دوامة الحزن، ولم يعد أحد قادراً على ان يتحدّى المختار أو يرفض له طلباً، فإن أقصى ما يستطيع في مثل تلك الحالات، الاحتيال عليه ومعاملته كطفل.

ومع القصص والذكريات تنفجر الآن الأحزان والمشاعر.  
وظلّت كلمات المختار وتعليقاته، والتي بدت في لحظات كثيرة،  
أقرب إلى البلاهة، تطفئ على كل شيء وتعطيه الطابع الذي  
يريد، فحين يكون الغزال الضحية يصرخ بذعر:

- هذا ما قاله عساف. وعساف لم يصد غزالاً إلا مرة  
واحدة في حياته. ثم توقّف. ألم تسمعوا عساف كيف كان  
يتحدّث عن الغزلان؟ كان دائماً يردّد قولاً لا أنساه أبداً: الغزلان  
تبكي، تبكي دائماً وهي تموت، أياً كانت الطريقة التي تموت  
بها. ولذلك لم يذهب عساف إلى صيد الغزلان مثلما كان يفعل  
الشباب الأغرار وبعض القساء الذين لا قلوب لهم.

وإذا جاء ذكر الكلاب أو أية حيوانات أخرى، كان المختار  
يقلق، ويهز رأسه هزات طويلة مستمرة مثل بندول الساعة. فإذا  
وجد ما يقوله لا يتردّد لحظة واحدة.

هكذا كانت أطول ليلة في تاريخ الطيبة. وإذا كان الشباب،  
بدوافع غامضة متداخلة، بدوا أقل اعتراضاً وضيقاً بتصرفات  
المختار، فإنّ المسنين ما كادوا يدارون الأمر بشكل أو بآخر حتى  
انبثق الفجر، وعندها قال العم زكو الذي بنى معظم بيوت الطيبة:  
- أتعرفون...؟

قالها بصوت شديد النبرات، ليبدأ رحلة جديدة، وحين  
تطلعت إليه العيون، تابع باللهجة نفسها:

- اكرام الميت بدفنه، ويجب ان يُدفن عساف مع أول  
النهار.

وبحركة فيها الكثير من المهارة أشار العم زكو إلى مجموعة

من الشباب ان ينهضوا ويذهبوا معه لإعداد القبر. وحين قام، قال  
كأنه يصدر بكلمات:

- جهّزوه بسرعة، وحين ينتهي القبر أرسل إليكم لتأتوا به!

# *Endings*

'Abd al-Rahman Munif

*Translated by Roger Allen*



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## Translator's Introduction

The novel is a literary genre which throughout its history has taken as one of its primary topics the nature of modernity and the process of change. Bearing in mind the rapidity of its development in the post-industrial era, it should not surprise us that authors of this genre have focused their attention on the problems of the emerging middle class and, in particular, the life of the modern city. Perhaps one might suggest that novels have been and are written in the main by city dwellers about city dwellers for city dwellers, thus covering the author-text-reader triad favoured by much contemporary narratology. Novels set in the countryside are by comparison a rarer commodity, and particularly within the context of the Arabic novel. Novels set entirely in the desert are, I would suggest, almost unheard of; and therein lies the uniqueness of *Endings* by 'Abd al-Rahman Munif.

While the corpus of Arabic novels available in English translation is continually growing, it remains small by comparison with other world literature traditions. Furthermore the list has certain characteristics: the majority of novels are written by Egyptians, and they are set among the middle-class population in the capital cities of the Middle East. Both these features are, I hasten to add, a fair reflection of the tradition itself. By contrast, *Endings* is by a Saudi novelist; this may indeed be the first translation of a Saudi novel. 'Abd al-Rahman Munif was born in 1933. He has studied in Yugoslavia and France and holds a doctorate degree in petroleum economics. He currently lives in Boulogne on the Channel coast. For a time he lived in Iraq where he became a close colleague and friend of the great Palestinian *littérateur*, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, who

lives in Baghdad. Munif was editor of the petroleum journal, *Al-Naft wa al-Tanmiya* (Petroleum and Development). For some years now he has devoted himself exclusively to creative writing, and, as I write these words, he is in the process of finishing the third volume of his huge trilogy, *Mudun al-Milh* (Cities of Salt).

Munif's works in order of publication are: *Al-Ashjar wa-ghitiya Marzuq* (The Trees and Marzuq's Assassination, 1973), *Indama tarakna al-Jar* (When We Abandoned the Bridge, 1976), *Sharq al-Mutawassit* (East of the Mediterranean, 1977), *Qissat Hubb Majusiyya* (Gypsy Love Story, n.d.), *Al-Nihayat* (Endings, 1978), *Sibag al-Masafat al-Tawila* (Long Distance Race, 1979) and *Mudun al-Milh* (Cities of Salt), a trilogy of which two volumes have been published thus far: *Al-Tih* (The Wilderness, 1984) and *Al-Ukhdu* (The Trench, 1985). The third volume is to be called *Taqasim al-Layl wa al-Nahar* (Divisions of Night and Day). As if this enormous outburst of creative activity were not sufficient, Munif also embarked with his friend, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, on the fascinating project of writing a novel together; *'Alam bila Khara'it* (Mapless World, 1982) is the result of this cooperative effort.

Munif's themes in these works vary a great deal. Thus *Sharq al-Mutawassit* is an unnervingly graphic portrayal of the techniques used by the state somewhere 'east of the Mediterranean' (otherwise unspecified) to control the activities of its citizenry, whether in the prisons of the country itself or while studying in Europe. *Sibag al-Masafat al-Tawila* places its characters into the political situation in Iran at the time of the Prime Ministership of Mossadegh. *Mudun al-Milh* represents the author's return to a consideration of the political and social circumstances in his own homeland of Saudi Arabia. The work establishes a particular village and hero within the traditional desert society of Arabia and then uses them as a foil for the savage encroachment of oil interests on both the environment and its inhabitants. When completed, this trilogy will represent a fictional and, no doubt, continually critical assessment of the impact of the oil boom on traditional Saudi society. Here the professional training and creative instincts of Munif are combined in a most fertile way.

The one major aspect which sets *Endings* apart from most other novels is the role which place plays in the structuring and impact of the entire work. The environment impinges on almost every chapter, and no more so than in the striking opening to the novel:

Drought. Drought again!

When drought seasons come, things begin to change. Life and objects change. Humans change too, and no more so than in their moods! Deep down, melancholy feelings take root. They may seem fairly unobtrusive at first. But people will often get angry. When that happens, these feelings burst out into the open, assertive and unruly.

Droughts can, of course, occur anywhere in the world, but it is not long before the reader of *Endings* discovers that this drought is not merely some periodic statistic of meteorology, but an enduring condition faced by a community, the village of al-Tiba. Nowhere in the novel do we discover exactly where this village is on the map of the Arab world, and indeed a singular lack of both geographical specifics and chronology is one of the work's primary features. Al-Tiba thus becomes a symbol for any and all villages of its type, a paradigm for communities facing the wrath of nature unaided by modern technology. One of the clear implications of the events of this work is that, while the distant and alien city is glad to exploit the traditional hospitality of the village, it has yet to provide the struggling community with the means to battle the extreme forces of nature. Hence the import of the work's final pages. The descriptions of nature in this novel provide some of its most striking moments; Munif writes about the environs of the village, the hunting of animals, and above all, the fearsome sandstorm leading to the climax of the work, with a vividness and attention to detail which makes the location almost tangible.

The cruel vicissitudes of nature, the search for water and food, the imminence of danger and even death, these are all clearly depicted for the reader of *Endings*. As themes in works of Arabic literature they also have a history stretching back to

the initial chapters to a more particular level of both events and people.

When all these features are combined with the narrative approach adopted by the 'speaker', the reader gets the impression that he or she is participating in something resembling a piece of contemporary folklore. The narrator is continually providing different possibilities to explain the phenomena described and presenting a variety of points of view on an item of contention (and the narrator provides descriptions of many of them). On some occasions the narrator will suggest that one of the versions is more plausible than the others, but the very process of incorporating into each episode a number of differing aspects and perspectives draws the reader into the narrative in a creative way. Indeed it becomes an imitation of the very process which it is describing: 'The people in al-Tiba know how to turn a story in that incredible way which makes everything seem to be of primary importance. This talent is passed on from father to son.' The narrator is obviously intimately acquainted with al-Tiba and its people, but he uses the narrative mode of limited omniscience to convey to the reader the way in which the capricious whims of nature are reflected in the attitudes, arguments and actions of the members of this community. Within this process, none of the usual cues is provided for the reader. There are no chapter headings or numbers. As the wake over 'Assaf's body commences, we are informed within the narrative that a series of stories is to be told. However, the identity of each narrator is not provided, nor are beginnings and endings of the stories indicated in any particular way; in this translation I have provided a numerical sequencing for the stories myself. At the conclusion of the final story, the narrative continues without further ado. The effect of this narrative process is, I would suggest, very similar to that of participating in the creation and re-creation of a mythic tale, a process which has been described as 'expressing and therefore ... implicitly symbolizing certain deep-lying aspects of human and transhuman existence'. The narrator subtly invites the reader to listen as the traditions of the culture are tested to their limit and beyond.



the very beginnings of the tradition. The village of al-Tiba is right on the edge of the desert; it is, to use an anthropological term, 'liminal'. This same liminality is to be found as a contributing thematic element in the corpus of Arabic tribal poetry which was composed and performed in the period before the advent of Islam in the seventh century. The environment is the same, and so are the concerns of 'people'. One of the primary similes whereby the pre-Islamic poet expresses his particular vision is through descriptions of animals, and that very same feature is abundantly present in Munif's novel as well. This is found most notably in the series of stories which accompany 'Assaf's wake, but the descriptions of his dog and of the variety of birds and other creatures which share the harsh life of the community also contribute to the unusual atmosphere conveyed by the work. As 'the people of al-Tiba', that group which is invoked as an entity throughout *Endings*, discuss and argue about their past, present and future, and the forces of change, both natural and man-made, the reader is presented with a contemporary celebration of many of the traditional values which have survived the passage of time and the events of history, at least up till now.

This opening passage then sets the scene in a most effective and economical manner. But the reference to 'people' and 'humans' also establishes another feature of the narrative which is to pervade the novel. We have already observed the lack of references to *particular* place and time, something which lends an almost mythic aspect to the story. There is also the question of characters, or, in this case, a lack of them in the normally accepted sense. *Endings* is in fact singularly economical in its use of names of any kind. To be sure, we hear of Abu Zaku, the village carpenter, of the Mukhtar, and, above all, of 'Assaf. However, there is almost no concern with the portrayal of individual characters, whether through dialogue or description. Time and again throughout this work the narrative returns to the public voice of the storyteller as the reader is informed of yet another facet of 'the people of al-Tiba' and the usually forceful opinions of its older inhabitants. Indeed one of the most remarkable aspects of this novel is the length of time it takes to penetrate from the almost anthropological detail of

It is a pleasure to acknowledge that this translation has been undertaken in consultation with the author. I would like to extend to him my most profound thanks for his encouragement. I have made every effort to convey in the English translation the clarity and neatness of his style, ranging from the gnomic pronouncements about the community as a whole to the highly poetic descriptions of nature and animals, to the narrative styles of the collection of stories (including extracts from the works of the great ninth-century polymath, al-Jahiz), to the liveliest of arguments and discussions. I can only hope that, after this attempt to transfer these various facets of the original into English, other readers will share my admiration for this unique contribution to contemporary fiction.

Drought. Drought again!

When drought seasons come, things begin to change. Life and objects change. Humans change too, and no more so than in their moods! Deep down, melancholy feelings take root. They may seem fairly unobtrusive at first. But people will often get angry. When that happens, these feelings burst out into the open, assertive and unruly. They can appear in a number of guises. As clouds scurry past high in the sky, people look up with angry, defiant expressions. With the arrival of drought, no home is left unscathed. Everybody bears some kind of mental or physical scar.

During the course of their long lives the old people have witnessed many gruesome periods. As a result, they have long since become inured to years of fatigue and the pangs of hunger. Even so, the very thought of drought seasons can still fill them with forebodings. They are the only ones who face the prospect with such resolution. At first people persevere doggedly and manage to put aside small amounts of grain so as to provide some form of sustenance during times of drought. But these small stockpiles soon run out or simply dwindle away. It is the same with spring water and the stream. At this point a frantic search for daily bread gets underway; in the process anxieties and premonitions start rearing their ugly heads and turn into horrible spectres. The phenomenon can be seen in any number of different guises: expressions on children's faces; the glum looks displayed by the men and the curses they use; and the tears which women shed for no apparent reason.

Yes, drought is back again. Here it comes, pushing a whole

host of things ahead of it. No one can explain how these things coincide or happen to be there at all. Take peasants, for example. They would bring baskets of eggs to the edge of town; sometimes they would even venture into the centre where the markets are crowded with people. Then there were shepherds whose entire annual income would be based on the sale of a few lambs. They used to bring in their flocks at the beginning of spring carrying the tiny, newborn lambs on their chests to sell in town. And then there were the crafty vendors who would bring in grapes, figs and apples on their pack animals. They used to weigh things out on primitive scales with sets of weights made out of pieces of polished stone; at first they would always overcharge people for their wares. But when these people came into town during a drought season, they would all look strangely different. Their clothing would be torn and have an odd colouring. They used to look anxious and sad. The powerful voices they would normally use to advertise their wares seemed by now to have slithered back down their throats; in their place all you heard were garbled sounds. Sometimes the town shopkeepers would ply them with terse, abrupt questions. The vendors from outside the town would have to repeat what they had been saying. But it was not the vendors' faces that these town shopkeepers were watching; what they had their eyes on were their hands or rather the tiny purses which the vendors kept firmly tied to the hems of whatever clothing they were wearing on their heads or bodies. When these people came into town during drought, they did not have any eggs, fruit, olives or lambs to sell. Instead they would try to purchase as much flour and sugar as their scant resources would permit. That applies even to shepherds, who were always particularly impetuous. They would demand such inflated prices for their lambs that, if it proved necessary, they preferred to bring their animals back to town a second time. Even if they did not buy or sell anything, they never seemed the slightest bit worried. However during years of drought like this one, they too become tentative and ingratiating. They are afraid their old and weak animals will die of hunger and thirst at any moment and are very anxious to get rid of them as quickly as possible.

There were still other salesmen who used to come into town at different times of year, bringing whatever produce was in season at the time. Sometimes they would simply come to take a look around. When drought came, these people would not bring anything at all. They would look for all the world like a group of hedgehogs that had rolled themselves up into balls and buried everything underground.

If these were only the surface manifestations of the total situation, then no one would be particularly surprised. After all, the relationship between the town and its environs is a powerful and continuing one. When changes start occurring, no one can afford to make snap judgements. As it was, odd things did start happening. For example, merchants who had normally been willing to make small loans to peasants and accept repayment during the harvest season (with a generous amount of interest added on, of course) now began to adopt a new procedure. Initially at least this procedure seemed fraught with all kinds of stipulations and was accompanied by not a little reluctance on the merchants' part. Before long they stopped making loans altogether, maintaining, of course, that such regrettable decisions were occasioned by a variety of disputes and other factors. Those few money-lenders who were still willing to offer some kind of financial assistance refused point-blank to postpone repayment until the following season. They insisted on new terms: peasants were required to sign over large segments of the land they owned to the money-lenders and their sons. These money-lenders did make a token effort to show good will. In the process they made use of the entire repertoire of platitudes which creditors can always be relied on to produce on such occasions. Here is a small example: "This world of ours is a matter of life and death. Man cannot even guarantee that he will still be alive at the end of the very day he is living. So how can he possibly make any arrangements for his children's lives once he is dead and gone?" Nor was that all. They went on to say things like: "As God Almighty says in the Holy Quran: "When you contract a debt upon one another for a stated term, write it down, and let a writer write it down between you justly." Some peasants countered this insistence on the part of the money-lenders with an even more stubborn

attitude. Initially at least they refused to have their land registered in this fashion. But before long they found themselves compelled to part with gold and silver heirlooms which had been collected and passed on through generations and to offer them as collateral for flour, sugar and a few yards of linen. Later on, some of them gave in and agreed to register their lands and orchards in accordance with the creditors' demands. But, with every deal that was signed, the prices for land in the village dropped, and that made the merchants even more reluctant to offer any help. They now refused to make any agreements which were not on their own terms and insisted that all the required procedures had to be carried out.

There are other things which come with drought. People are struck down by strange diseases, and death soon follows. Old people used to pass away out of sheer grief. With young people, it was distended stomachs at first, followed by jaundice and then total collapse. People became inured to the idea of death. It no longer managed to scare them as it usually did at other times, although it certainly did bring a number of sorrows and long-standing hatreds to the surface. When drought was at hand, a desperate premonition of impending disaster seemed to hover over every house and almost to burrow its insidious way into the bloodstream of every living creature. Even animals usually kept in paddocks or at the far end of orchards had an especially edgy and desperate look about them.

In years like this death and hunger were much in evidence and so were countless flocks of birds scurrying their way across the sky like so many fluffy clouds high in the heavens. They could be seen at all hours of the day and even in the dead of night. Without making the slightest sound they used to fly past high in the sky, almost as though they were heading for some far away and unfamiliar destination, maybe even death, without knowing either where it was or when they would get there. People would gaze forlornly at the birds, fondly wishing that they would fly closer to the ground or else come down for a short rest; then it might be possible to grab several of them and thus avoid the imminent threat of hunger. But, as it was, the birds continued their exhausting journey to some unknown destination. Everyone stared up at them with a sigh, waiting

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for something to happen, but nothing ever did. Flocks of geese, cranes and dozens of other types of birds could be seen as they flew past on their relentless migration. From time to time sand grouse started to appear too. Peasants had long since come to realize that this latter species only leaves its desert habitat and flies in towards pastured land when hunger and thirst have finally reduced its stamina and the various desert oases and water cisterns scattered around the place no longer contain a single drop of water. Obeying a natural instinct for survival these birds too started to abandon their normal cautious ways. Peasants noticed them heading for any place where they stood a chance of finding some crumbs to eat or a few drops of water.

They witnessed the same tragedy repeated right before their very eyes. Peasants were used to waiting patiently and even to displaying a certain conservatism born of a pessimistic outlook. If anyone questioned them about the various seasons and farming, they replied that seasons did not merely imply rainfall but a lot of other things as well. If the questioner persisted, they would summarize the whole situation as follows: 'Whatever God provides for us and the birds leave behind, that's what the seasons mean.' Deep down they are actually afraid of everything; that is why they make such statements. When no rainfall comes in the month when it is supposed to, they start worrying. If it comes early, crops start growing and show about an inch or two above the ground. When that happens, they worry in case the dry period will be followed by heavy rains; then the ground will get saturated, unwanted grass will grow, and everything will be spoiled. Even when the rain comes in reasonable amounts, spaced out evenly and at the right time, they still fuss till the end of May when it suddenly gets much hotter and everything burns to a crisp. At that point their hopes are dashed, and promises have to be broken. Men may have been promising their wives new clothes; the younger men in the community have reached the age of puberty and are eager to get married, always assuming that the new season will bring good tidings with it. All such promises have to be postponed, and all because the 'heatwave' (that is what they call it) has arrived and put an end to their fondest hopes.

No one likes to recall drought seasons ... When it is

particularly severe and keeps recurring year after year, most people prefer death or killing; they may even move away rather than have to face this prolonged agony of waiting. Others are driven to a level of vindictiveness and cruelty which people find hard to credit; indeed the perpetrators of such cruelty can hardly believe their own behaviour when they recall it later on and in different circumstances. For, if a man cannot vent his spleen on clouds and Him who sends them, then victims of another type have to be found. Husbands who normally show a great deal of tolerance and never swear or take a sudden swipe at anyone seem quite ready to abandon their normal behaviour without the slightest sense of remorse. At the least provocation they hit out and scream bloody murder over the most insignificant things. People who usually manage to put up a merry and optimistic front will be abruptly transformed into bitter scrooges, something which shows in both their attitude and behaviour. Even the most devout people who normally consider everything brought by the heavens as a test for mankind soon fall prey to these symptoms. In fact, they start swearing and blaspheming much worse than anyone else, to such an extent that people who have known them for ages wonder to themselves how such seemingly devout people can keep such a staggering lexicon of curses and wicked thoughts stored up inside them.

This then was the way most people behaved during that long, cruel year. Needless to say, every village and town in this microcosm had its own particular features and way of life: special names, cemeteries, drunkards, lunatics, rivers and streams to provide drinking water, and wedding seasons after the harvest. The village of al-Tiba was no different. It too had its own particular life-style, its graveyard and its weddings. It had its fair share of lunatics too, but they were not always in evidence. They had a special, crazy presence of their own. Sometimes they would seem big and strong; at others they could be utterly stupid and weird. But, in spite of everything, people sometimes managed to forget all about them. Al-Tiba also had its share of weddings, joys and sorrows too. More often than not, the weddings came after the harvest. When there was no rain and the ground became parched, the sad times came.



Wedding ceremonies might involve just a few people and for a specific period of time, but when years of drought came around, the gloomy expressions were everywhere to be seen, and the feeling persisted for a long time.

As is the case with villages throughout the world, al-Tiba has things of which it is proud. In other contexts these things may not seem particularly significant or important. But, as far as al-Tiba is concerned, they form a cross-section of those special features which set it apart from other hamlets and villages. They represent the result of the action of time and nature in all its cruelty, something which is not the case elsewhere. For example the inhabitants of other villages may have loud voices. Peasants will often have shrill, high-pitched voices. They talk a mile a minute and spice their chatter with proverbs and aphorisms. That is the way peasants are all over the place; it stems from sheer habit and the distances which separate people from each other in the fields, or else from the fact that they have to shout at some animals which go astray or others whose peculiar temperament takes them off to distant, unknown places; or it may even be due to the distance between houses and the gardens and orchards around them (in which a large variety of vegetables are grown). All these factors have combined to produce in the inhabitants of al-Tiba a particular kind of temperament. Many other factors could be cited as well. As a result, people in al-Tiba have a particular way of talking. Someone hearing them speak for the first time without being aware of the way they are and how they relate to each other might imagine they were squabbling or that a dispute had turned so nasty that something terrible was about to happen.

If this was all that was involved, it would not be terribly significant, particularly as far as it concerns peasants and those who understand their temperament. However these characteristics are accompanied by a special narrative technique which

This is why shepherds become so indispensable during drought seasons and also because they know the places where animals are to be found. In general they are not very good at hunting, and no love is lost between them and real hunters. Shepherds are forever singing and playing those 'hellish' instruments (that is what the old people like to call them). They love showing off whenever possible, and never more so than when people are gathered together and some sort of performance is called for.

The village of al-Tiba marks the beginning of the desert proper. To the East are the orchards, the spring and then the market-place. The horizon marks the beginning of a chain of mountains. To the North and West broad plains stretch away into the distance interrupted once in a while by hills. These are sown with a wide variety of cereals and are also used to grow wheat, barley, vetch, clover and certain kinds of herbs. Close to the village itself vegetable greenery starts cropping up near the fruit trees. To the South the terrain becomes gradually more and more barren; the soil is flecked with outcrops of limestone chips. Bit by bit it changes. By the horizon it has turned into sand dunes, and then the desert itself starts. When the climate is good, al-Tiba is verdant and bursts into bloom on all sides. At the beginning of spring it is a riot of roses and other plants of all shapes and colours. Even the South side which seems so cruel and forbidding towards the end of summer manages to produce its own treasures from the bowels of the earth. People are at a loss to explain how all this can happen and how families in al-Tiba feel constrained at the beginning of spring to go out and pick all the incredible fruits which have till then remained buried beneath the ground. This entire festival season brings back memories of days of old when life was even more splendid and fruitful.

This particular village is marked by qualities and features which are not similarly bestowed on other villages around it. Even shepherds who have been given the responsibility of finding good pasturage will not venture close to al-Tiba's

death which seems to afflict life in the city; all things which they attributed to causes they had never encountered or heard of before.

Conversation in the evening would start quite spontaneously and without any pre-arrangement. It might be interspersed with a few innocent games. It would all happen on the spur of the moment with no prior planning. The process would include elaborate digressions. Things would always start with forests, trees, springs and so on. But then talk about periods of drought and the hardships the village had to face during those years would inevitably follow. Special feelings would be aroused by the sheer joy and pleasure which people felt during times of plenty when the ground was fertile, but the very mention of the hard times they lived through and survived would bring other sentiments rushing back, sentiments which overflowed with an assertive pride of a particular kind. Even children who had heard the stories over and over again would love to listen to them one more time; with every retelling they would sound fresh and packed full of heroic actions and lessons to be learned. 'We used to eat grass and plant roots,' the stories would go. 'We stooped to eating jerboas and even rats. Yes, they used to come into the village during drought years; in fact, they may have been the cause of such bad times. In those days that was the kind of thing we used to eat. Life was really tough, but men were men in those days: strong and hardy; they might even have eaten solid rocks! But the men today...!'

At this point some of the old people would smile. Others would reminisce. They would stare at each other and then glance at their children and lastly at their guests.

All this gives you some idea of what al-Tiba means to the people who are born there. When drought comes, everyone in the village feels a particular kind of sickness, and it makes no difference whether they are living there or far away. This sickness gradually becomes an obsession and then a nightmare. The villagers who now live far away need no prompting from anyone, if they can possibly afford it, to go back to the village.

had the sun risen on the third day than they stopped any more early seasonal planting and proceeded to plough as quickly as possible. In doing so, they, like everyone else, made use of every means at their disposal to guarantee themselves a good crop!

The old people were neither convinced nor delighted by this plentiful, almost frenzied rainfall at the end of March. They were of an entirely different ilk, one fashioned perhaps by nature itself and by those long days and the apprehensions which went along with them. Or perhaps there were other yet more obscure reasons connected with the very soil itself. Each one of them realized that every passing day brought him closer → and closer to the earth. As long as that was the case, each and every one of them felt impelled by a secret desire for a piece of earth which could receive his flesh and bones when he died. The very same feeling made him realize deep down inside that the aridity which was gradually infiltrating the soil and the slimy mud which the March rains had caused were both unsuitable for his eventual plans. As a result, each one of the old people was anxious not to die in a harsh year like this one. The mean tricks which nature could play made them feel desperate, anxious and even weary of the whole thing, but nevertheless each one of them wanted to die a decent and noble death, to pass away quietly and peacefully after fulfilling all the obligations of this life; and all this to be achieved without any fuss, but with all the respect due someone of his age. The very idea of dying the way young people or even animals did, suddenly and without any kind of warning, would drive them to the most profound feelings of despair.

Things turned out exactly as the old people had predicted. The abundant rains which fell at the end of March moistened the seeds deep down in the soil. They all started to grow and soon broke through the surface soil. Many seeds had been lost to the birds, and the ploughs had made deep furrows; as a result the plants sprouted at some distance from each other. Even so, they looked strong and sturdy. When the April sun bathed them in its warmth, they really came to life and grew even more. The farmers, filled with illusory optimism, kept repeating that what they really needed was a couple of rainfalls in April, one in the first half and another towards the end of the

'and the rainy season starts, machinery will start digging up the ground and lining the rocks up in piles. Hundreds of workmen and engineers will arrive. You'll see the whole thing with your very own eyes!'

People in al-Tiba were quite prepared to accept whatever was sent out to them and to distribute it with scrupulous fairness. They used to listen to this talk from the big city. They would hear all about the earth dam which was due to be built close to al-Tiba: it would be able to retain all the water which poured down during certain seasons and finished up in the bowels of the earth. No one could imagine how all that water could simply vanish or where it went. All that was left of these torrents were pebbles and deep trenches where large clumps of soil and vegetable-patches had been washed away. Big words and empty promises, they were the other things left behind!

In al-Tiba people listened to all this talk in a rueful silence. They could not make up their minds whether their children and the other men who locked themselves up inside big buildings were lying to them.

'We've heard this stuff so many times before,' they would tell themselves. 'Years have gone by, and nothing has changed.'

When times were good, they forgot all about the dam, the road and electricity. It would never occur to them that they might be given such modern conveniences. But when drought came, they would remember every detail: what the men who had come looked like and what it was they said. Something else jogged their memories too. Friends of their children had come to al-Tiba as visitors in previous years when the soil had been fertile and produce was good. They had gone hunting in areas around the village and had come back so overjoyed that at some points they had behaved more like children. They had seemed sincere enough. Some of these people were now important senior officials in the distant city, so much so that their names were mentioned in the same breath as those of prophets and saints. However they no longer had any memory of al-Tiba;

they had forgotten all about their friends who lived there. It was all over.

In drought seasons al-Tiba was left to lick its own wounds. But, when times were good, the village would send baskets of apricots into the city at the beginning of the season and towards the end would follow them up with grapes and dates. In between there would be yoghurt, cheese, eggs and young lamb as well. Nothing was expected from the city in return. Al-Tiba would send these things in to the city with a feeling of pleasure bordering on sheer joy. Fathers and mothers would send in baskets and bags of yoghurt on the small bus which used to leave for the city in the early morning. For them it was a solemn obligation. If they missed the departure of the employees' bus by just a minute or so, or else were unable to pick the dates at the appropriate moment, they were bitterly sorry!

So there was al-Tiba, unchanged and constant, forever loyal to everything in it and to every single person who lived there or passed by. The village managed to forge in its children an exceptional sense of loyalty, something which was unparalleled in any other villages whether close by or further away. During this cursed and dire year a large number of al-Tiba's sons came back to the village. No pleas or hints were required. As their feet touched the soil in al-Tiba and their eyes fell on the houses, they were filled with a profound sense of sorrow and chided themselves inwardly for waiting so long. The comparison between their life in the city and that of the people in al-Tiba gave them a guilty conscience. However, these initial feelings of sadness and regret soon gave way to a powerful desire to do something. Perhaps this time al-Tiba would be saved; then it might survive until the dam was built. Maybe something would happen in the big city which would make it possible for them to face the cruelties of nature without having to wait for false promises of the fickle rainfall which came year after year and then failed them for years.

As soon as people arrived from the city, they would take off their city clothes and put on the things they had worn years ago in the village. During the daytime they would pass by most of the houses in the village and enquire after the people who lived there. They would grieve for those who had died, ponder over

the whole host of suggestions which would be made to them, and make several private resolutions as to what they would do when they got back to the city. But that was not all. They distributed the things they had brought with them and started writing whole series of letters to relatives and friends in the distant city and even in the United States. At night they would spend a lot of time thinking and talking, but with every word they uttered there came a profound feeling of bitterness because they could not be sure about anything!

When needed al-Tiba could display tremendous patience and tolerance. Strangers could be forgiven just as much as its own citizens. But in drought seasons anger could be seen as well, the kind of anger which sometimes might seem like a trifling matter but which would eventually turn into an inconceivable and indeed intolerable kind of madness.

→ For example, a young man who was studying far away started to hold forth. 'Back there in the city,' he said, 'people don't behave the way you people do here. They convert words into power; organized, aggressive power. We've got to do the same, something really urgent, before death gobbles us all up.'

One of the older people curled his lips into a disapproving leer. 'And what do you suggest we do?' he asked, looking up at the sky and then down at the ground. 'You should realize,' he went on before the young man had the slightest chance of replying, 'no one can stand up to the government. We have to make use of our common sense and figure out what we can do.'

'When drought comes,' the young man went on nervily, 'you spend an entire year asleep. When it doesn't, you send letters and petitions. That's it! Al-Tiba will never survive that way!'

'Listen, my boy!' the young man's father retorted, 'Al-Tiba will survive. There have been many bad years like this one before. People have made it through and carried on with their lives. Al-Tiba's still here!'

'When you're living in conditions like these,' the young man said sarcastically, 'there's no real difference between living and dying! Just take a look at the soil, the trees and the livestock. Look at the expressions on people's faces. Everything dying. Another year like this one, and there'll be nothing left!'

This conversation could have gone even further. However, at

this point some guests who had arrived that afternoon came into the guesthouse. With that the whole atmosphere changed.

That afternoon towards the end of summer, four guests arrived. They were brought out by some of the village children who had moved to the city and were now friends of theirs. They arrived in two cars: one a jeep and the other a small, grey Volkswagen. People from al-Tiba, those who actually live there or those who have moved on, are noted for their sensitivity and gentleness. → They know how to lick their wounds in silence; it is amazing how they manage to keep their sorrow and troubles to themselves, so much so in fact that many people do not understand them and fail to grasp their real feelings. On their own they will discuss any number of problems and difficulties. But let guests arrive, and all such things are put to one side while they adopt a totally different mode of speaking. This is how the old people differ so markedly from the younger ones. The former are used to keeping their feelings to themselves and to waiting for the appropriate moment before expressing their feelings in public. The latter on the other hand seem to be afflicted by a kind of fever which makes them incapable of keeping their innermost thoughts and feelings to themselves. In seasons such as this one that is so even more than usual.

As a result some people wanted to discuss things for one last time, even though it was in front of guests. Many people in al-Tiba had waited so long for their children to come home from the city that their patience had run out. For one last time they were eager to discuss the prospects for the dam: when was it going to be built, and what were they supposed to do to get the whole thing started. But even they could not wait any longer than they had done already. For many years past they had been patient and endured their hardships in silence, but no more. From now on, they would be resorting to new methods of convincing officials back there in the city of quite how much power they actually had.

Yes indeed, the people in al-Tiba had been waiting for a long, long time. But on that particular afternoon, when they spotted



those two strange vehicles coming into the village, their hopes were completely dashed. Fathers and mothers embraced their returning children, and for just a moment the power of love was stronger than the feelings of reproach. Tears welled up in people's eyes, and a whole host of other emotions came flooding up. As a result, the angry thoughts and words which they had been harbouring for so long receded into the background. In their place came feelings of love and cordial words of welcome. This was, of course, the first time the guests had seen al-Tiba, and so as far as they were concerned, nothing seemed out of the ordinary. They were not able to detect that internal malady brought on by sheer desiccation. When they found themselves welcomed with such broad smiles, they felt warm inside and even managed to envy these rustic people the contentment which they so obviously possessed!

This was the way many matters were postponed until later. Other things were given priority. The items which the village children had brought back with them from the city were carefully distributed. Some of the older people took others aside and counselled them to behave prudently. They asked the younger people to display the customary respect towards guests by not stirring up troubles or grievances.

'These guests'll only be here for a day or so,' they all told themselves, 'and then they'll be leaving. Once they've gone, we'll be able to give these recalcitrant children of ours a piece of our minds. All they're good for is sending out necessities when drought sets in. Anyone would think al-Tiba had turned into a refuge for the poor and needy and was going to stay that way!'

There had been a good deal of talk about the water which would be available in abundance throughout the year, of fish which would be placed in the reservoir and of canals which would extend for great distances. But that was all over now. A few isolated phrases would do the rounds every few years, but even then it was only out of a sense of pity or sorrow for this village which day by day was gradually dying.

This was the way things went during the first few hours the guests were there; people reacted just as has been described. The village children who had come home sensed immediately that things had changed for the worse. Life in the village had

to bring his dog into their evening gatherings and meetings. This decision hurt 'Assaf a great deal, and he countered it with a more vehement and acerbic insistence of his own. Eventually a tacit agreement was struck. 'Assaf was allowed to attend the meetings without being forced to shake anyone's hand; the dog could stay by the door. 'Assaf accepted this arrangement reluctantly, but at all events his contacts with village meetings and get-togethers were so infrequent that people rarely set eyes on him. However, whenever a guest came to the village for hunting, 'Assaf was the very first person to be invited to attend. Now, if 'Assaf disliked meetings, he hated these guests just as much; for the most part he regarded them as insipid and naïve bores. But al-Tiba had taught him its own particular etiquette, and so he was compelled to go out with them and behave cordially. That involved a great deal of effort!

On that particular evening when they brought 'Assaf to the meeting, he could tell that things were not normal. He sat by the door and made his dog do the same. At that point he heard several people urging him to move into the middle. When he declined, one of the people from al-Tiba who had brought the guests out with him got up, made a warm gesture of greeting to 'Assaf, and tried to make him come forward. This went on for a while till one of the village elders suggested that 'Assaf move forward and the dog stay where it was.

Into every person's life there come moments of fulfilment. At the time they remain unappreciated. No one can tell how or when they come, or what forces are at work to make them burst out from the inside. Out they come, though, blowing with all the force of a gale and pouring down like an abrupt shower of rain. They overwhelm everything. And then, no sooner have they come than they are gone, like water seeping away rapidly into dry, sandy soil.

No one can possibly plan for such moments, even if he wished to do so. On this particular occasion 'Assaf had come against his will. He felt himself compelled to stare at some people whom he had never set eyes on before and probably never would again either once they had left al-Tiba. He was feeling pretty annoyed because one of the elders had asked him to leave his dog by the door. But now he found himself thrust into a world of passion,

the closest thing imaginable to sheer revelation. No sooner had people started asking him about hunting, how many birds he had caught that day and in general how the season was going, than he felt himself choking. He dearly wished he had never come. Even more, he wanted to get out of this awful meeting. But he knew the people of al-Tiba and was well aware of the gruff feelings of affection they all felt towards him; it was as though a bond hundreds of years old was tying him to everything around him, soil, people, trees and water, a bond which was made even stronger and more forceful whenever a really harsh year like this one came along.

At first he was determined not to say a word. The only replies they got to their questions were a few phrases. But then he began to feel an odd sensation inside him, a peculiar blend of congeniality and defiance. His heart was pounding faster than it normally did in such situations. It was at that moment that he made up his mind to do something he had never done before.

He remembers it very well, as does everybody else who was there at the time. For the first time in his life he plunged into the thick of a dispute. People were forever saying that his life had always been one long struggle, but he had never taken on such an issue as this before. The questions were still raining down on him, all of them about hunting.

→ 'Hisan!' he yelled defiantly, 'Hisan, come ... come here!' The dog sprang to its feet, slunk over like a snake and settled down at 'Assaf's feet.

The whole thing happened so suddenly. No one anticipated it. For a few moments everyone was too shocked and bewildered to do anything. The village elders who usually called the shots realized that, in calling his dog over to him, 'Assaf's tone of voice had sounded very unusual; it would obviously brook no opposition. They looked at each other helplessly and then at 'Assaf. For the first time ever in their long and eventful lives they saw in 'Assaf's expression a cruel, savage glint. All thought of objecting to the dog's presence vanished quite unconsciously. Instead they all shook their heads regretfully, a gesture which carried with it a certain amount of reproach as well.

'Assaf did not wait. Adjusting his position he stared long and

days partridges used to come right up to the door. Gazelles and rabbits were to be seen all across the plain. The ravines were so full of turtledoves that even 'Assaf could not make up his mind which one to go to first. That's the way things used to be. But the people of al-Tiba did not preserve this bounty. Instead they showed any bastard from thousands of miles around how to get here. Excuse me. I am not referring to the present company, of course! You are our honoured guests. I mean other hunters who come from all over the place, as though al-Tiba's the only hunting spot in existence. All these people want to do is kill animals. They used to kill absolutely everything in sight. They'd shoot female partridges before the male ones because the males used to panic and fly away, and that scared them a lot. When they had got their courage back, the female birds would take to the air and the hunters would shoot them down. They did precisely the same thing with gazelles, rabbits and other species. They came back to the village laden with game, but that was not enough for them. They had to tell their friends and their friends' friends all the way down to the proverbial tenth generation. They used to bring all sorts of unbelievable weaponry out with them, things which could blast rocks apart. So year by year al-Tiba was gradually but relentlessly despoiled. And now here you are, expecting 'Assaf to produce birds, animals and God knows what else out of thin air. Tell me, what's 'Assaf supposed to do? Is he supposed to be some kind of Christ? Does he lay and hatch the eggs, or what?"

Once again he stretched out his hand and rested it on the dog's back. Silence reigned over the entire assembly. They all looked astonished as he stared at them.

'Game was not invented for the rich and those who are motivated purely by greed. It was created for the poor, people who cannot earn their own daily bread. 'Assaf has spent his entire life in the desert and yet even in good seasons he has only hunted just enough to fill his dog's stomach and his own. When dry seasons come, it's fair enough to hunt so that people won't die on the streets. That's like using wheat bread instead of barley bread. But there's something which people in al-Tiba and in every other town and village I know simply don't realize: these days man has acquired a temperament of truly evil

defend themselves. So life goes on. But human beings ...'

He guffawed. There were no arguments as he chose a new spot. 'Maybe the birds here haven't been shot at yet,' he said as though to convince even himself. 'Perhaps there are some thorns they can use for shade! Heaven help us though!'

His tone of voice and general demeanour were the same when he reached the place which he thought was suitable for hunting. He stopped the car, let his dog out and then got out himself. This time he did not say a word or offer any advice.

'We'll meet back here in an hour or at the most two,' one of the men of al-Tiba yelled out in a loud voice so as to let everybody know. 'It's a long way back to al-Tiba, and we should get back early ...'

'Assaf gave a nod of agreement and made a circular gesture with his hands. Some of them thought this meant he would stay in the middle of the circle, while others took it to be a farewell wave.

The sun is beating down from the heavens like molten lead. The sand feels hotter than coals. Even the dog yelps as it lifts up its paws; it sounds almost like a call for help or a protest, as though it is being made to walk on sharp thorns or broken glass.

When the two vehicles took off, they trailed a huge cloud of dust behind them which completely enveloped 'Assaf and turned him into a part of the desert itself as it stretched away to infinity. The dog let out a howl of protest. For a while it ran after one of the cars, but then slowly made its way back to its master.

There exist places where nature can be seen in all its unbridled power: in seas and oceans, at the summits of mountains, in the depths of valleys, in the frozen ice-floes, in the darkness of jungles. In all these locales nature gives all sorts of warnings of changes to come. There is an internal charge present which cannot remain the same for long and will inevitably change at any moment. The desert, on the other hand, the mysterious, cruel, savage desert with all its surprises, transcends the normal

it was going or when it would die. One of the men from al-Tiba suggested that things were so risky that the two cars should stay close together. At that everyone felt a certain sense of relief. In fact, the driver of the Volkswagen was not satisfied merely staying close to the jeep, but insisted on driving in front of it, and just a few metres at that.

In the desert waiting like this for death to arrive is one thousand times worse than death itself. Here death does not come suddenly or in disguise. There is no question of it appearing quickly and finishing everything off. At first it just bares its teeth and sits there on the car windows. From time to time it may kick up a fuss and scream, buffet you in the face and blow a grain or two of sand into your mouth and eyes. When this bit of fun is over, it will retire for a while and start prowling round like a wolf, waiting for the next round to start. And it is not a long wait. Like smoke it soon rises up quickly and forcefully. The mouth goes dry, and eyes assume an expression of panic. Yet another cruel, nerve-wracking wait begins. The same searing agony is there and the same overwhelming power. There is no going back. Once again it starts pounding on the car windows, loudly and continuously. → With all this waiting and waiting, a man dies slowly; a thousand times over he dies. He loses all self-confidence; his will dissipates. He falls, picks himself up again, and then totters. His mouth ~~is~~ full of panic-stricken prayers, although he has no idea of where they have come from. He shouts, but there is no sound. He looks at the faces of his companions, only to see his own. He remembers, he resists, he collapses, he falls. Yet again he dies, and rises again from death. He looks out at the few metres of ground which are visible through the windows. He can feel the sand covering everything. He takes a mouthful of water and holds it in his mouth for as long as possible in the hope of getting more energy to put up some resistance and remain in control. He can no longer talk or swallow the water which in any case has turned into salt and saliva. He longs to shout out, to die once and for all. He wishes the earth would suddenly open up and swallow him. He longs for water and shade. And he waits ...!

In the desert even time assumes its own special meaning. It

place. People there never find it easy to reveal their true feelings, and, even if they do have something to say, they do it in their own unique way which few other people can recognize or understand!

No one dared question the Mukhtar. The men from the Desert Corps had helped people carry the body inside, but now they were ready to leave.

'We'll be off now,' their sergeant said. 'We'll get the report ready for submission tomorrow morning.' And with no more ado the truck sped off on its way!

The Mukhtar's eyes were red; he was obviously on edge. Occasionally he would make a meaningless gesture. He kept trying to put the whole terrible nightmare out of his mind; he could not bear the thought of recalling what had happened or of talking about it. In most normal circumstances he had a special knack of directing conversation and talking in a particular way which no one else in al-Tiba could emulate. It was often said that he could pour sugar on death itself and present the most complex and difficult issues in the simplest and most agreeable way. However this occasion left him at a total loss; he seemed both distracted and scared. His hands and face kept twitching nervily. But then the council of al-Tiba was called into session — something which had never happened in such circumstances before. A crushing silence hung over the whole assembly.

'There's 'Assaf!' the Mukhtar screamed at them unprompted and with no forewarning. 'There he is, right in front of you. Look at him!' Without looking round he shook his head in grief. 'Assaf, the great stallion,' he went on in a voice choked by tears, 'Assaf, as bountiful as a cloud-burst of rain; foster-father of the poor, who never got an hour's sleep at night, just so that al-Tiba should go on living and surviving; 'Assaf who loved everyone and killed himself so that people could carry on; 'Assaf, a giant among men. Now he's left you. You're on your own when it comes to fighting the government, the army, locusts and who knows what else. What on earth is going to happen now?'

His words sank in deep like burning-hot knives. People shook their heads. Tears fell silently to the ground. The Mukhtar noticed this. He was on the point of continuing in the same vein



infinite significance. 'You aren't dead. 'Assaf,' he went on as though talking to himself, 'you're still with us.'

'Listen, you people,' said a voice from the back. 'Life and death are in the hands of God. It's all over now!'

'Assaf will never die,' said a young man nervously. 'He's more alive now than all of us put together!'

'Don't blaspheme, young man!' said the elder. 'The angels are hovering above us at this very moment.'

Abu Zaku who built everything in the village, including graves, was the next to speak. He was anxious that everyone should forget their worst forebodings, and decided to try a common-sense approach. 'Listen, folks,' he said, 'morning's still a long way off. Tomorrow we have a grim duty to perform. You can either recite the Quran and talk, or else everyone can go home and come back tomorrow morning.'

'The door's wide open,' said the Mukhtar testily. 'Anyone who wants to leave is free to do so.' He paused for a moment to assess the impact of his comment and then continued. 'For my part, I do not intend to sleep for a single moment. I shall stay awake right alongside 'Assaf here till dawn breaks and we carry him to his grave!'

So began the incredible all-night session, something al-Tiba had never witnessed before. Almost everyone who was there said something. They talked of many things. The guests told stories too, but the people of al-Tiba did not understand them too well. Many, many things were said that night, and all the while 'Assaf lay there enveloped in a shroud with his face uncovered. The light danced on his features and on those of the others present, creating an ambience which was both eerie and awesome. There was a certain manic aspect to the whole thing; not for a single second did anyone there want to stop. The order in which the tales were told was governed by neither logic nor intention. It was just that everyone was gripped by a fervent desire to avoid silence and overcome it at all costs.

They talked about dogs, gazelles and donkeys, about floods in the valley, about the spring drying up, about 'Assaf and humanity in general. Someone was bold enough to recite some verses of poetry. A shepherd was even on the point of playing his flute, but one of the elders snatched it away from him and gave him a frown!



muffled sounds which he could just hear but not really understand. And then they would die away suddenly. He was still combing the sky for game; the look in his eyes was one of utter gloom.

He knew all the locations where you could find those sturdy mountain goats. They used to take cover behind the rocks by the lote tree. He would never fire a shot until they had had a chance to take a drink, raise their heads in the air and smell the breeze. He would choose the biggest and strongest animal. When he had had enough of the scene, he would fire his shot to kill instantly.

But, as far as he was concerned, everything was different now. He had no idea when to fire. Would he still be afforded those few transcendental moments, that blend of pleasure and danger? Here he was taking a risk without knowing what the upshot would be.

'Al-'Anzi's not the one hunting this time,' he told himself. 'It's the bedouin who's let himself be corrupted by foreigners. There he is, driving the landrover like a maniac; sometimes he lets it take off, at others it rolls all over the place, and then he lets it go crazy. Occasionally he'll even let the engine die, and then there's silence for just a few seconds.'

The afternoon drew to a close, and the sun started sinking towards the horizon. Moist breezes were in the air. Al-'Anzi filled his lungs, but the same depression still seemed to envelop him on all sides.

'Al-'Anzi won't miss,' he assured himself to give his self-confidence one last boost and stave off the agonies of doubt he was feeling. 'It'll be just like every other time.'

It was a little before sunset, a moment when everything seemed a unity – dust, the vast expanse, the glowing red disc of the sun, moist winds which had suddenly come up and were creating a particular atmosphere which pervaded the whole area – at this very moment al-'Anzi spotted the goat.

'There he is,' he yelled grimly.

The driver gazed listlessly around him to catch a glimpse of this fabled goat which al-'Anzi had talked about. He could not see a thing. He turned the landrover sharply to the right in the hope of getting a better view, but still saw absolutely nothing.

around and collects females like seeds, and that crafty aura of power which lets him lead flocks of pigeons as though toying with them or frolicking in the wind. Terms of admiration are to be heard as people look up at the bird cartwheeling in the sky above them.

These new statements of wonder played a sweet melody in his ears, and the expressions on people's faces provided an unspoken confirmation of his intuitions. He had more power now, and could do things which no one else could. The initial wager was followed by a second, and then by others. There was never any question of losing or reneguing. It would always get there; it might arrive late, but it always got there eventually. People who regarded the bird from this practical point of view and admired his prowess refused to picture him as just any bird. They wanted a real cock bird. However, he refused to be anything other than himself, pure and simple. People would feel particularly bad when they noticed him skulking in the corner with that tiny female pigeon.

'How can he stand that scrawny-looking female?' they would scoff. 'If he was a real bird, he'd be choosing one and more of the good-looking birds who are up to his standard. Then the offspring would be more powerful than father and mother together. He's as crazy as so many other birds.'

But she was the one he wanted, that quiet, sweet little bird with serenity in her gaze. Even though her body was large, she looked small and compliant. She would only ever give him anything after he had really worn himself out and was panting.

Inside those crazy veins of his something was going on.

The people who admired his way of walking and flying and who employed no end of hyperbole in depicting his abilities, refused to accept his life-style. In the afternoon young people would expect him to do wonderful things in addition to his strutting walk and clever way of flying. They used to talk about him very loudly so as to attract the girls' attention. They wanted him to behave like a real stud, the way some animals and birds do, so that they could laugh and talk even louder. That would be even more effective in attracting the girls. But the bird refused to cooperate. He strutted and flew just as they wanted, but continued to live the way he wanted. Meanwhile,



the older people admired the bird's power and cunning. They found nothing about his way of life peculiar. To them it was all very natural, as though they were watching themselves!

He managed to produce one group of chicks after another, and they all learned a great deal from him. Then came the day when the village changed its name to Dovecote because pigeons from other villages kept leaving them to come to this village. This even applied to the crafty wild blue which people always used to talk about with some bitterness. It was incredibly difficult to get hold of; it lived in deep wellshafts and inaccessible caves high up on the rocks where it would lay its eggs. But even these species came in droves, one after another, and all via these new generations of birds.

As the days went inexorably by, stones would be washed away from high up on the mountains, leaves would fall from the trees, and people would lose their sense of tranquillity. Time had the same effect on the birds. The bird would walk around in the hot sun and survey a large number of other birds mingling in a multi-coloured patchwork of species. He would feel himself gripped by a single desire: to go on flying for ever and remain suspended between earth and sky. He was unwilling to abandon his habits, his flying or his way of life.

One day (in early spring once again) he got the feeling that his powers were present in a superabundance he had never experienced before. He felt that he wanted to fly far away; and he wanted her to come with him. He preened his feathers, walked around her and cooed. He told her the sky was the only place he could envision her as queen. When she refused to fly, he whispered in her ear that he could not stay on the ground; he had to fly. He strutted around with all the pomp, self-confidence and power of a king and then took off.

He made several turns in the sky and looked towards the ground. All around him flocks were swarming around rapturously. It was one of those moments when he felt he had everything. When he returned, he landed heavily on the roof. He wanted her to be waiting for him there, to gaze into his eyes and discover the distant horizons he had reached and the amazing things he had seen. But she was not there. He rested for a while and then went to look for her. She was in the corner,

who kept track of him and watched his movements noticed that the dog had some unique traits which no other guard dogs had. He moved around very little and was very quiet. Such was his determination that, just by looking at dilatory sheep in a certain way or driving them on, he managed to instil fear and dread into them. But it was only on rare occasions that he had to behave like that. Most guard dogs are trained to stay either to one side or behind a flock of sheep so that they can keep an eye on them or keep them moving. Viper on the other hand preferred to be out in front and on some high spot relatively far away. At first, the Shaykh was worried by this technique. It made him very wary of this blasted hound he had acquired because the dog would sometimes go further away than the Shaykh could see or tolerate. More than once this whole behaviour made him think about getting rid of the dog. After all, sheep are usually scared of noise, hand gestures and vicious dogs who nip at their legs or flanks to make them keep moving. But here was Viper positioning himself a long way away from the flock with that supercilious look of his. It became so bad that the Shaykh shot at him with his catapult and knocked his eye out. But life has many lessons to teach. Not many months passed before Viper took over everything. The Shaykh slept or wandered off into his daydreams; as long as Viper was around, he would often forget that he was a shepherd with a flock of sheep to look after!

There are no end of stories about Viper's cunning, energy and capabilities. The stories shepherds told were a blend of envy and admiration. Some of these would talk about the trips Viper took in aeroplanes to bring back new flocks of sheep from far away; they would be the cue for sarcastic jokes. Hardly had a group gathered together before the questions would come pouring out.

'Which one's ridden in an aeroplane more,' someone would ask craftily, 'Viper or the Shaykh?'

'Can the Mukhtar afford the price of a plane ticket, or will they be taking him with Viper?'

'With Viper riding planes all the time, is it so surprising if he goes crazy and acts so proud?'

As the days rolled by, a life-style of almost unalloyed delight

that something incredible did start to happen. Vicious screaming sounds could now be heard. One of the crows was circling around the man's head, poised for attack and flapping its wings loudly. He then flew back and perched on the nest. Now the other bird began to fly to and fro from the nest to the man's head; the movement looked just like a stone tied to a piece of thread swinging back and forth. As the man climbed slowly but relentlessly up the tree, the circle grew smaller and smaller. The man was totally determined, and climbed cautiously but resolutely. By now the chicks were in total panic, and their cries took on a different tone. The crows themselves had gone completely berserk. The tension increased with every new stage in the unfolding drama.

Words cannot possibly describe the final moments. As the man got close to the nest — one step, a mere hand's stretch, away — the whole world went mad; everything became a blur. The chicks were now shrieking in sheer terror, and the large crow could no longer stay serenely in the nest. The other bird stopped gyrating and launched a new line of attack, divebombing the man directly from above, attacking him with its wings and entire body, and pecking and scratching him all over. The man divided his attention between climbing the tree and warding off these attacks. And then, almost like the onset of darkness, the whole thing came to an end. The crow pounced and managed to gouge the man's eye out; quite how no one will ever know. But the man's determination stayed with him. He grabbed hold of his short, stout stick and swung it. Two cries were heard, one from the man, the other from the crow as it fell under the force of the blow. Next day the female crow moved the nest somewhere else. On that very same day she could be seen in the corner of the garden using her claws to pick up walnut seeds among the thorns and carry them away, one at a time, to some other place.

### *THE EIGHTH STORY*

In March an oppressive hot spell arrived, bringing with it all the smells of the soil. Nature fanned out. Some early flowers

over to see whether the bird was still alive or dead. The tiny body was still warm as it lay there in his hand, but life had gone out of it. The bird shook its body once more, but life had already left. Salim remembered the old days and especially the Sunday of the week before.

→ 'Did you pray over her in the big mosque?' the guest asked his children anxiously. 'Who walked at the head of the procession?' he asked once he had assured himself of their answer to the first question. 'How did people look? How good was the chanter? Who are the people buried beside her? Did anyone I don't know come? Did the whole thing take a long time?'

The man was sitting in the middle of the room to receive people's condolences. He looked sad but resolute, and seemed completely alert as well. He enquired about all the people who came; he had even more questions about the people who did not come. From time to time he would repeat in a firm voice: 'When your turn comes...'

Salim remembered it all now. No sooner had he picked up the bird to throw it over the wall than he heard another loud crash. When he turned round, it was to see another bird fall in exactly the same spot. He looked anxiously. The scene was the same, and the very same images flashed before his eyes. But he was never able to decide whether it was the second bird which had decided to emulate the first or that two new birds had started playing the same game with the same result!

### THE NINTH STORY

In Al-Jahiz's *Book of Animals* we read:

→ There is a species of rat which loves playing around with coins, gauze, *dirhams* and trinkets that make a jingling sound. Sometimes it brings them out of its hole and starts playing with them and all around them. Then it puts them back one by one until they are all in place again. Al-Sharqi ibn al-Qatami tells the story of a man from Syria who was watching a rat take a *dinar* out of its hole. When he saw that the creature had taken some real money out, greed got the better of him. He was just about to grab the money when

he changed his mind; prudence brought him to his senses.

'I'll wait until it has stopped taking everything out,' he thought. 'As soon as it starts putting any money back in the hole, I'll pounce on it and grab the money.'

And that is precisely what the Syrian did. He went back to the place from which he had been observing the rat. It brought out all kinds of stuff and then started putting one piece of money back in. When the rat came back for another piece and discovered that it was not there, it started jumping up in the air and crashing to the ground until it died.

This is the kind of tale which women and people like that will tell you.

### *THE TENTH STORY*

Rex was a little dog as white as snow. He had hair like a tiny lamb's; it was soft and curly and hung down over his eyes. All you could see of them were two narrow slits which blended in with the rest of his face. His most distinguishing feature however was the thin snout which came to an abrupt point in a reddish-brown patch, a combination of hues which is rarely found in such an attractive combination!

Rex spent most of his time indoors; he was only rarely allowed outside and then only with someone. This exercise was part of the small village's daily routine. No sooner had he emerged from the house in the Major's company than he became the cynosure of all eyes and the major topic of conversation. They would talk about the way he behaved, how he raised his head to look at the faces of people staring at him, and how he raised his leg to relieve himself. But the thing which amazed everyone the most was the obedience which the Major could command from the dog. No sooner did he give that short sharp command than the dog would feel a moment of panic and stop whatever he happened to be doing. If the Major told him to come back or to stop barking, there would not be a moment's hesitation.

This relationship and other factors coloured the way in which the villagers thought of the Major. They regarded him with a

dog knew by instinct and never infringed in any way. Somehow Rex managed to get among them; to this day, no one knows how. He was alone, without the Major or his batman, and was thus unprotected and undistinguished in any way. A wretched bitch was lying there in the middle of a circle which all the dogs respected and maintained with an amazing regimen. What happened on that winter day after sunset was all simply confirmation of the rules of the game. The powerful dogs, the seasoned campaigners, were taking advantage of priority rights, and all the other dogs knew that none of them could interfere or break the code. However exactly the opposite happened. Rex appeared and caught everyone's attention. The rich people started behaving in their usual fashion. The dogs on the other hand did not notice him or pay the slightest attention. They could have made room for him inside the circle, but in fact something very different happened. Rex barged his way into the circle like an idiot. Everyone just sat there thunderstruck. The dogs looked at each other and then at him. In the flash of an eye (or actually before that could even happen) one of the dogs pounced on him and ripped most of his back wide open. In a trice Rex fell to the ground with a howl of agony, giving some pathetic whimpers for help. The other dogs meanwhile continued their fun under their own particular rules.

What ensued simply falls under the category of daily details. The Major ordered all the dogs to be killed; that much is true. For that purpose he drafted a number of soldiers in the regular army. But before long another Rex appeared. This time, the dog was from one of the larger dog species. People had different opinions as to what the dog's role was: some maintained he was a guard dog; others that he was supposed to follow in the other dog's footsteps; still others that this dog was strong, and could kill and lord it over all the other dogs. The Major's batman had some cryptic things to say which no one could explain.

'The Major's wife chose him,' he told them. 'It's her dog, not the Major's.'

The village dog community started to grow again and continued to bark both before and after the Major's departure. The new Rex was killed in obscure circumstances. No one knows who killed him or why!



which set him apart from all the other rich people in the district and others as well!

When he drove in his black car, children would run away; when he rode by on horseback to make a tour of inspection of the acreage he owned, they would do the same. The way older people had become accustomed to doing all kinds of obeisance to him was close to serfdom; it involved standing up whenever his car went by or he rode past on horseback. Some people who were more fortunate and powerful even went so far as to enquire after his health and mood. No one could strike up a conversation if the Bey did not initiate things. 'Oh, the Bey's feeling out of sorts,' they would say, or 'The Bey has lots of problems and doesn't want people to distract him.'

They had other things to say as well: about his many business interests in the capital, his enemies who would be ruined because of their attitude towards him, and the larger number of responsibilities waiting for him!

When he was on his estate, everything changed: his expression, his behaviour, even the weather. So many tales have been told about him that he has become a sort of legend in his own right ...

Once in a while he would bring a number of friends out to his estate. No one ever knew with any certainty what went on behind the high walls of the big mansion, but everyone was aware it was something momentous.

The people living on the estate say that the Bey owns a large collection of hunting weapons and equipment. They claim they have never seen him use the same gun twice. His skill as a hunter has become so famous and proverbial that they would note that the Bey only scores hits in the flesh; all of which proves that he never misses his target!

Hunting days would change along with the seasons, and so would the friends who accompanied him on these trips. No one in the village can ever remember a guest hunter returning with more game than the Bey himself. This is the way he would deal with the game: certain parts of the catch he would keep as a token of his skill and prowess, but the rest he would leave for others, especially people who came from the capital. He always insisted on keeping some rather peculiar items: heads of large

“Everyone’s lifespan is in the hands of God, my son,” one of the elders intoned to crush all argument and change the atmosphere. “When someone’s final hour comes, there is no way of either advancing or delaying it!”

“This was the way ‘Assaf wanted to die,’ another man said. ‘He kept saying in front of everyone that he wanted to die in the desert, on a hunt, with his dog by his side and his rifle either on his shoulder or in his hand!’

Some of the elders and more prudent people from al-Tiba tried to change the subject to some remote topic, but unconsciously and almost involuntarily the conversation kept reverting to the subject of hunting and birds and animals. Every time dogs and gazelles were mentioned, the Mukhtar would look over at ‘Assaf.

“That’s exactly what you used to say,” he would comment in a hurt tone. “Listen to them! Now you’ve left us, they’re saying exactly the same thing ...” He paused for a moment, and a sarcastic smile came over his face. “‘Assaf’s crazy, they used to say. ‘Assaf’s a loafer, he doesn’t like work. Now here they all are repeating exactly the same words that you used to use!”

Whenever anyone in the company lost his temper with the Mukhtar or told him to keep quiet, he would nod reluctantly. “Go ahead,” he would say. “You can say whatever you like now.”

It was one of the most incredible nights in the whole of al-Tiba’s history. The people of al-Tiba are normally tolerant, but there are occasions when bitter feelings will overwhelm their sensibilities and goad them into something close to anger. If anyone else had done what the Mukhtar did that night, things would not have come to a peaceable conclusion. But they all realized that the Mukhtar had been through a whole series of tragedies. He had lost his only remaining son during the last war. He had searched high and low between al-Tiba and the city to find out whether he was alive or dead. The officers in the city had had no words of comfort for him, merely repeating over and over again that he was ‘missing in action’. Then his wife had died suddenly during one of his search trips which had lasted for several days. He had come back to al-Tiba to find his house empty. When he told people that God had taken His

deposit, his attitude had at first seemed peculiar but later on it had become more stinging. This double disaster had affected the Mukhtar badly. He seemed to waver between sanity and madness, and at times his behaviour could seem very peculiar. As a result no one in al-Tiba was unduly surprised at the way he behaved that night, although no one had imagined that his mood could turn quite so bitter and defiant. Ever since his own personal tragedy, all he had managed to say over and over again was: 'I don't believe it. How can this have happened all at once?'

Al-Tiba knows how to treat people harshly and also how to deal with such behaviour from others. But it can also show extreme kindness and will never abandon any of its children. There was a slight suggestion that the Mukhtar's condition was so bad that he could not carry out his duties and that the Western segment of the area should be looking for a new Mukhtar. However the entire idea was greeted with both derision and outright rejection; it all came to nothing. Everyone was agreed: al-Tiba shows just one face, not two. It would never abandon any of its children even if they fell or lost their way. People in other villages and communities might behave that way, but al-Tiba certainly had never learned how and had no intention of doing so now!

The stories had had a particularly emotional effect on the Mukhtar himself, but no one remained unaffected. Everyone felt themselves overwhelmed by a surge of grief. And there was a whole host of questions to be answered. At several points everything had almost the same effect as an electric shock. What was the meaning of life and death? Why did creatures have to die in this devastating fashion? How would it be if man could live a more simple and honest life and rid himself of all his gadgets, things which had managed to turn him into a creature who only knows how to collect things and then destroy them? How is it that, during times of drought when people are starving, the city has nothing to say, but it will proceed to recall other times and seasons which are not even worth bothering about?

These and dozens of other similar questions kept buzzing through the minds of the people cloistered in that room. It was

This was the way the longest night in al-Tiba's history went by. For reasons which are both obscure and complex, the younger people were more tolerant of the Mukhtar's behaviour. One way or another the elders managed to keep their feelings on the matter to themselves. Finally dawn came. It was then that 'Amm Zaku who had built most of the houses in al-Tiba decided to change the topic and spoke up loudly.

'Do you all realize what has to be done?' he asked.  
⇒ Everyone looked round at him. 'You honour the dead by burying them,' he went on in the same tone. 'Assaf must be buried at first light.'

It was with a great deal of skill that 'Amm Zaku now gestured to a group of young men to get up and go with him to prepare the grave. He himself stood up.

'Get him ready quickly,' he ordered. 'When the grave's ready, I'll send word for you to bring him!'

The Mukhtar had fixed ideas on how 'Assaf was to be buried, and there was no arguing with him. The elders tried discussing the whole thing, but he shook his head and gave a gesture with his left hand which made it abundantly clear that he would not listen to any further discussion.

'That's what the officers and soldiers told me,' he replied when they kept arguing. 'I asked them about my son and the other soldiers killed during the fighting. They're buried in their own clothes because they are bound to be much holier than all the linen the city can produce.' He was almost jocular as he went on: 'And as you all know full well, al-Tiba doesn't have enough linen to clothe the living. In a year such as this one, how is it supposed to clothe the dead?' He became serious again. 'Assaf's death was not natural. He died for al-Tiba; he's a martyr. He wanted to be this way while he was alive, and he would certainly not have wanted to change his appearance at the very end!'

Things were getting more complicated than anyone could have imagined. They gave in to the Mukhtar's wishes, although with not a little remorse. Everyone came to the forceful realization that, whatever happened, the whole thing should be concluded as soon as possible. If it were allowed to linger on, all kinds of complications might emerge; and then no one, sane

محمد شكري



الهاقي

## زهرة دون راحة

قدام الحافلة، التي نزلت منها، اقترب مني طفل متسخ، حافي القدمين، في حوالى العاشرة من عمره.

- الفندق، أتريد فندقاً؟

- سوق الكبيبات، أين سوق الكبيبات؟

- اتبعني.

ينظر إلى وإلى حقيبتى البالية. أراد حملها. أعطيته خمسة سنتيمات اسبانية. تشاكّرنا وانصرف. السوق عامر ببائعي المواد الغذائية والثياب المستعملة والجديدة، في الدكاكين وعلى ساحه السوق. هناك الجالسون والمتجولون. الشمس تغرب. أصوات الإذاعات العربية تُسمع في الدكاكين. تمشيت في السوق بضع دقائق. سألت بائع ثياب بالية عن قهوة السي عبد الله. أشار إليها بحركة سريعة، ولا مبالاة، ومضى ينادي في المزاد العلني بأثمان الملابس التي يحمل بعضها على كتفه، وأخرى في يديه. يسار مدخل القهوة حاجز خشبي معروضة عليه مأكولات: سمك وفلفل مقلبان، بيض مسلوق وركام خبز أسود. الذباب ينطّ على الكل. قرب الوجاق،

طاولة كبيرة مستطيلة، حولها أشخاص يلعبون الورق، آخرون  
حول طاولات أصغر، معظمهم يدخن الكيف. البؤس بادٍ على  
سحناتهم وثيابهم. انتبه بعضهم إليّ. جلست في ركن. إلى جانبي  
طاولة صغيرة قدرة. طلبت من الوجداني شايًا أخضر بالنعنع.  
فكرت أنه السي عبد الله. كهل جالس قريبي يبيع الكيف. ذكرني  
بَعْفِيونَة في قهوة السي موح في طنجة. اشتريت منه لُقّة. عمّر لي  
«شَقْفًا»<sup>(١)</sup> من مطويه<sup>(٢)</sup>. كلما طلبت منه «السي»<sup>(٣)</sup> يمدّه لي عامراً  
بكيفه ثم أردّه له عامراً بكيفي. يدخنه أو يعطيه لأحد الجالسين  
قربه<sup>(٤)</sup>.

جاءني السي عبد الله بالشاي. سألته عن ميلودي صديق حسن  
الزيتاشي.

- لم يجيء طوال ثلاثة أيام.

في الليل غلبني الكيف، والجوع، والغربة. رشفت من كؤوس  
شاي بعضهم ورشفوا من كأسِي. أحسست بالآلفة بينهم. حدثتهم  
عن تطوان وطنجة ووهران، وحدثوني عن العرائش. قال أحدهم:  
- كيقولو طنجة اللي ما شافاني كتبكي عليه، واللي شافا  
كيبكي عليها.

- إنها عريقة تهزم كل من يعشقها.

- العهرُ الفاحش قُبْحُ أجهل ما فيها.

- لكنها جميلة وتاريخها عريق.

تكاسلت في الخروج لأفتش عمّا آكله. صورة الذباب، الذي

رأيتُه عندما دخلت واختفى الآن، تُغشي كلُّها فكرت في أن أطلب شيئاً من مأكولات القهوة. في الغالب لا أقرف من أيّ طعام. أتعبني الجلوس، والسجود التي فقدت حيويتها. النعاس يغلبني. أغمض عيني وأفتحهما بترّاح. شاحباً يبدو لي كلُّ ما أراه. ذهب أكثر من كان في القهوة. المقاعد والطاولات فقدت هي أيضاً وجودها. ألقيت نظرة على الحجرات الثلاث المقفلة. الحجرة قبالي دخل وخرج منها أشخاص بئسئون. الآخرين مقفلتان. بأن لي الحصار الذي هو كلُّ فراشٍ تلك التي فُتِحَ بابُها. فكرت في أن أسأل السي عبد الله عن ثمن النوم في إحدى هذه الحجرات الجماعية. كلاً. يجب أن أوفر. لا أعرف ما ينتظرن في هذه المدينة! ربت على كتفي صاحب القهوة وأنا غاف.

- سنغلق.

ثلاثة أشخاص يدخنون الكيف حول طاولة اللعب. رجوت السي عبد الله أن يترك حقيبتي عنده حتى الغد. طلب مني أن أكشف له عمّا فيها: صورتان شخصيتان كبيرتان مؤطّرتان، سروال وقميصان وزوج جوارب.

همت في طرقات المدينة. لا أثر للحراس من رجال الأمن، أو حراس متاجر الأحياء، والسيارات، كما في طنجة. منتصف الليل أو أكثر. تائهاً أمشي. لا شيء فيها يخيف. طقس معتدل وليلة قمرء. مُنتزه يطلّ على البحر. أضواء تلمع في البحر. فكرت في ليل طنجة المغربي إلى حدّ الموت وصيدها البحري: «رأس المنار»، «مالا باطا»، «مغاور هرقل»، «سيدي فنقوش»، «المريسة» و«الرمل



قال: «أنا هنا وحدي. القمر ينحجب ثم يبرز. قطفت زهرة  
بيضاء من روض المنزه. شَمَمْتُهَا. لم يستيقظ في نفسي أيُّ  
إحساس. زهور جميلة. شيء لا يفوح منه شيء. جمال سائب. ربما  
هذا ما يُبقِيها مزهرة هنا حتى تذبل أو تقطف غبثاً، ثم تُداس. لا  
شيء عندي أخشى ضياعه في هذه الليلة. إنني مثل هذه الزهرة التي  
أسحقها الآن بين أصابعي. سأنام هنا أو في أي مكان آخر. هواء  
البحر يخفف نعاسي.

عدت إلى الكبيبات. تَقَرَّقْتُ تحت سقيفة أحد أقواس  
الساحة. وضعت رأسي بين ذراعيّ المشبكتين فوق ركبتيّ. طيلة  
يقظتي لا عابر أسمع خطواته في الساحة. لا خاطرة أستطيع  
استعادتها. حتى أجمل الأنغام، التي أحبها، تخطر ثم تنفث. ذهني  
خاو كما لو أنه مغسول: كأنني لم أختزن أية ذكرى مُسَيِّفة لجميلها.  
صداع خفيف في رأسي وطنين. يخيل إليّ أني أسمع نبضات قلبي.  
ربما بسبب التخدير الكيفي، وفراغ معدتي.

استيقظت باكراً، امتلاء مثانتي يؤلني وشيئي متعصب بالامتلاء  
البولي. حركة الناس تدبّ في ساحة اسبانيا. اشتريت بسيطة من  
القُرُوس<sup>(\*)</sup>. في مرحاض المقهى الاسباني تصاعد بولي إلى فوق مثل  
نافورة. تَبَلَّل سروالي ويدي. تناولت قهوة بالحليب. المقهى يرتاده  
المسافرون. قهوة السي عبد الله لم تفتح بعد. ركبت حافلة الحَيّ  
الجديد بحثاً عن مدرسة المعتمد بن عباد. حيّ مليء بنبات الصُّبَّار،  
والغبار، والأزبال، والأراضي البور. مساكنه أكواخ من قصدير

(\*) القُرُوس: عجّين مقلّي يصنعه الاسبانيون.

الأيام . اذهبي إلى المصلحة المسؤولة في العمالة عن تسجيل أرقام  
الموتى الغرباء . اذهبي عندهم وقصي عليهم حادثة موت ابنك .  
هناك سيقولون لك رقم قبره إذا عرفوه .

«يا لهذا الزمان . لم يبق من ابني الحبيب عبد الواحد سوى رقم ،  
إذا عرفوه!» .

كانت امرأة بائسة . جاءت ورفعت وجهها المكشود إلى السماء ،  
وبكت ضارعة إلى الله أن يغفر لابنها اثمه . ندبته حتى أغمي عليها  
ثم أفاقت مهووسة بابنها ، وانصرفت عائدة إلى قريتها . تذكرت أن  
أمي هي أيضاً امرأة بائسة : تُصلي من أجلي ، وتضرع إلى الله أن  
يحفظني من كل مكروه .

### شرح الكلمات الدارجة:

- (١) الشقف: يشبه كشبان الخياط في حجمه وشكله تقريباً، مقوس ذو فوهتين، أو هو يشبه القشرة الملتصقة بأسفل ثمرة شجرة السديان، وهو عادة يصنع من الفخار، وفي حالة نادرة من الألومنيوم، وفي حالة أندر من الذهب الخالص.
- (٢) المطوي: هو محفظة صغيرة مستطيلة أو مربعة تصنع عادة من جلد الماعز أو غيره، تلف مرتين أو ثلاثاً، وينتهي طرفها الذي ترتبط به بخيط من الجلد بشدها. وهناك «النبولة» التقليدية وهي مثانة الكباش أو العجل، وكلتاها تستعمل لحفظ مسحوق الكيف.
- (٣) السبي: هو قضيب يدخل طرفه الأسفل في فوهة الشقف لتدخين الكيف، يصنع عادة من الخشب، لكن هناك بين الموسرين من يصنعه من الفضة. وقد عرفت حشاشاً، اغتنى ببيع الحشيش، صنعه من الذهب الخالص، وهو اليوم يقضي معظم وقته يحدق في الشمس من شروقها إلى غروبها، بعد أن أفلس في تجارته، وعاد إلى التدخين في السبي المصنوع من الخشب. إنه غليون الكيف.
- (٤) هذه عادة معروفة بين مدخني الكيف في المقاهي الشعبية، وهم أيضاً يتبادلون الرشقات من كؤوس بعضهم بعضاً برهاناً على إلتهم وتصادقهم.

الاسبانية. قد يكون المدير طلب منه أن يمتحنني شفويًا. طلب مني المدير أن أرجع غداً.

مشيت عائداً إلى المدينة. سلكت طريقاً غير الرئيسية المعبدة المُرْتَفَعة، التي جُثت منها. الطريق مغبرة. قدماي تغوصان في ترابها الرمل. على جانبيها سياجات من التين الشوكي، وأكواخ يخرج منها أطفال حفاة، أنصاف عراة، وسخين، وكلاب هزيلة، لقيطة ودميمة، ودجاج ينقب الخراء. في نهاية الطريق بشر عارية مُعْطَلة. دنوت منها. أطللت على هَوَيْتِها<sup>(\*)</sup> المظلمة. صمتُ عُمْقِها أغراني بالسقوط. صمتُ أيقظ في نفسي كلَّ يأسٍ: صمتي الأبدي. التقطتُ حجراً كبيراً جَهِدْتُ في حمله وألقيته في الهَوِيَّة. سمعت دويَّ سقوطه في القاع الجاف ثم صمتاً، وأنا مُطلٌّ على الظلام، ورائحة مقرفة، دافئة، مُحْتَزنة، تتصاعد من القاع. ابتعدت عن فوهة البئر الحَنْزَرة. ظل طنين السقوط في مسمعي لحظات. تخيلتني أسقط ذاك السقوط الأصم. لستُ حجراً. ربما سأظل أنزف في هوية البشر حتى أهدم. الأفطع ألا أموت. لست حجراً. استأنفت سيري. صوت السقوط يجذبني إليه بسحر قوي. وأنا أقاومُه حتى أنقذتني شجرة انبطحت في ظلالها الوارفة.

كان شاب قد ألقى بنفسه على صخور ميناء طنجة. جاءت أمه من بادية الفحص وذهبت إلى المقبرة. قَصَّت مأساة ابنها على الحارس.

«لا أعرف شيئاً عما تحكيه. لقد دفنا كثيراً من الأموات هذه

(\*) البئر البعيدة القعر، جمعها هوايا.

## مدامع العشاق الثلاثة

أبقى في القهوة حتى تغلق<sup>(\*)</sup>، بعد منتصف الليل أهيم في  
الشوارع منتظراً باب الله (المسجد الكبير)، أن يفتح عند صلاة  
الفجر. أنام، في أحد أركانه، على حصير تفوح منه رائحة الرطوبة  
البشرية. الحارس الخفاشي الدائم، أو أي نَعَاقٍ مَسْجِدِيّ عابر،  
يأتي فَيَزَعِرُنِي في مُبَاتِي ويطردني قائلاً:

- هذا مكان الصلاة والعبادة وليس للنوم.

أتوسل إليه أن يتركني. حين يعند، غَيّاً، ألعن فرج أمه،  
وشجرة أسلافه، جهراً، وأخرج حافياً وحذائي في يدي إلى  
الدروب من جديد.

ذات صباح باكراً كنت مُكَوَّراً في ركن. أحسست بجسم يتعثر في  
جسمي ثم يهوي فوقي. أفقت لألعن في غضب. إنه المختار الحداد

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(\*) في انتظار موعد الاغلاق، يتركني صاحب القهوة أتمد فوق المقعد فأغمر.  
رغم ضجيج لاعبي الورق، متوسداً دفاتري. في الصباح أجد لطخات دم  
ويقات مسحوة بين أوراقها.

الاعمى . سمعت عنه . تلميذ في المعهد الديني . معروف بحججه في التحصيل الدراسي . متفوق في اللغة العربية وأصولها . يحفظ القرآن والحديث النبوي ، والشعر العربي ، الملعون منه والمُعَمَّد . اعتذر لي جِدُّ آسِف . أجلسته إلى جانبي في رفق واطمئنان . النعاس ما يزال يغلبني ، لكن حضوره أقوى من دعوتي إلى النوم . حين عرف أني أدرس أخرج من تحت جلبابه الصوفي كتاب «مدامع العشاق الثلاثة» لزكي مبارك . عرض عليّ أن نفطر معاً على حسابه في مقهى سنترال ونقرأه . كان يوم أحد . خارج المسجد كاشفته قليلاً عن حياتي ، والظروف التي حفزني إلى الدراسة في العرائش . تآزرنا . يتأوه إثر كل كلمة أقولها أو يقولها . هو أيضاً بائس ، لكنه ليس متشرّداً مثلي يتيم . لم يتلاعن مع أبيه . لا بدّ أن الله مسرور بهذا اللقاء . له أخ يكبره يعول أسرته ، وآخر أصغر يدرس . رَدَّد عليّ مرات ، بعربية فصيحة :

- كل شيء يَهون . . .

يعرف مسالك الشوارع والأرصفة وأفاربزها . عند العبور إلى رصيف آخر يستوقفني على الإفريز . يلتفت يمينا ويسارا كأنما هو الذي سيقودني ثم يقول :

- هيا بنا الآن !

إنه يرى بسمعه . أتركه يمارس خبرته كما لو كان وحيداً . اشترينا «الشروس» وذهبنا إلى مقهى سنترال . بعد الإفطار أخذت أقرأ له كتاب مدامع العشاق الثلاثة . عندما أعجز عن نطق كلمة صعبة يساعدني على قراءتها طالباً مني إعادة قراءتها أكثر من مرة . قال لي :

## طائر السعادة

اشترت لي أمي سترة وقميصين وبنطالين لبدء الدراسة في مدرسة المعلمين. أخبرتها بإقامتي عند حبيبة فقالت:

- أنت تعرف ما يليق بك.

بدأ يسكنني شيطان الأدب فصرت أهتم بقراءة الكتب الأدبية أكثر من اهتمامي بدروس علم النفس التربوي، والتشريع المدرسي. النصوص التي أعيرها اهتمامي هي اللغة العربية. أستاذها مقتدر فيها. بعد الشرح قد يعرب لنا النص بكامله المكتوب على السبورة. إنه جَدّ مؤمن وجَدّ ماجن: الدنيا في يده اليسرى، والآخرة في يده اليمنى. يوم الجمعة، في أحد المساجد الصغيرة، يؤمُّ الناس ويخطب فيهم. يعرِّد، ليلاً، في الرينكون أو في سبته. صحبته مرات في سيارته القديمة. يضع فخاً تحت المقعد الخلفي. يتوهم أن فأراً يسكن سيارته. إنه فار ذكي لأنه لا يأكل الطعام كله. هكذا يقول.

ضبطني أستاذ التربية وعلم النفس أقرأ «البؤساء» فأخرجني صارخاً: «هذه قاعة الدرس وليست مكتبة». صرت أتردد على

مقهى كونتيننتال. مريح وأغلب رواده أنيقون تبدو على وجوههم آثار النعمة. تسعة وأربعون ألف فرنك، التي أنقاضها في منحة التدريب، كانت مبلغاً مهماً عام ستين. أعطي جزءاً منها لامي واحتفظ بالباقي. أوزع وقتي بين القراءة بالعربية والاسبانية والعريفة في الحانات. حانة ريبيريتو، المزينة جدرانها برؤوس الثيران، كانت أزهاها. أستمع بالأغاني التي أسمعها من الحاكي الألي في كونتيننتال. ثلاث أغاني لا أمل من تكرار سماعها: الصبحيات لنات كينغ كول، الساعة للوشوغاتيك، وبيسامي موشو لأنطونيو ماتشين.

سألت شاباً جالساً بجانبني عن شخص أنيق يحترمه رواد المقهى، وتتكون حوله ثلة أنيقة ومنعمة وجوهها مثله:

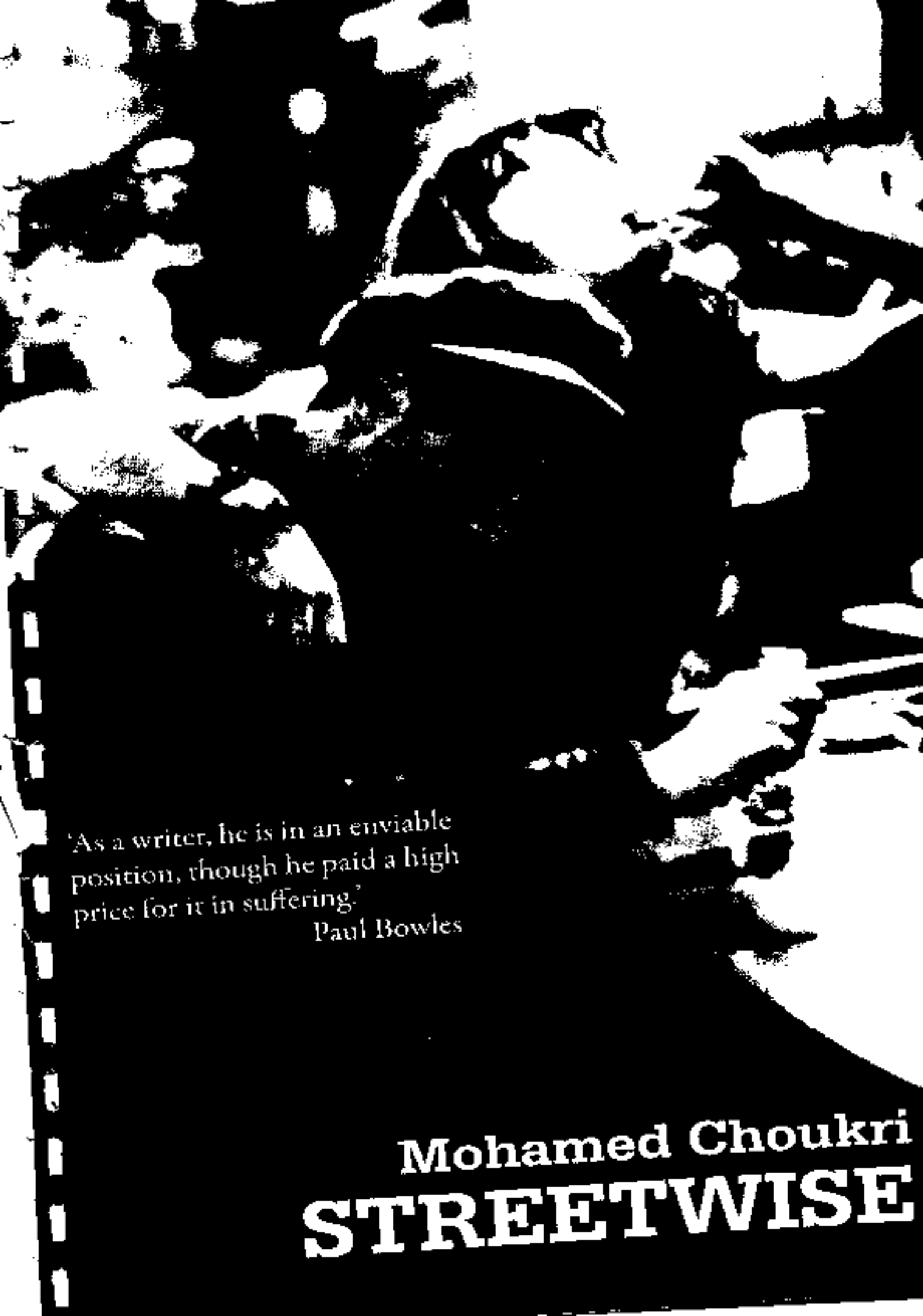
- من هو ذلك الشخص؟

- ألا تعرفه؟ إنه الأديب محمد الصباغ.

- ماذا يكتب؟

- الشعر المنشور.

اشترت كتبه: اللهات الجريح، شلال الأسد، شجرة النار وأنا والقمر (الأخيران مترجمان إلى الاسبانية) وكتب صغيرة الحجم. قرأتها في يومين. قلت لنفسي: إذا كان الناس يحترمون من يكتب مثل هذه الأشياء فأنا أستطيع أن أكتب مثلها أو أفضل منها. الكتابة إذن امتياز. كنت أعتقد أن الأديب لا يرى في الأماكن العمومية ولا يتحدث إلى الناس كما يفعل محمد الصباغ في هذا المقهى. إن الأديب إما هو خفي وإما هو ميت، كتبت شيئاً في ثلاث صفحات.



'As a writer, he is in an enviable position, though he paid a high price for it in suffering.'

Paul Bowles

Mohamed Choukri  
**STREETWISE**



Mohamed Choukri

# STREETWISE

*Translated by*

Ed Emery

TELEGRAM

London San Francisco Beirut

## Glossary

- carajol*    coffee with cognac
- djellaba*    a long, hooded garment worn by men and women
- kif*        a type of *hashish* found in North Africa
- majoun*    a paste made of *hashish*
- sabi*        the stem of the *kif* pipe, which may be of wood or metal
- shaqfa*    the clay bowl of the *kif* pipe
- taifor*     a very low, round table

café. He gestured vaguely across the market, and then ambled off shouting his wares to all and sundry.

To the left of the café door stood a wooden counter with *falafel*, fried fish, boiled eggs and a stack of black bread laid out on it, all swarming with flies. Indoors, next to the stove, was a long table with men sitting round it, playing cards. Others were sitting round smaller tables, and most of them were smoking *kif*. It was obvious from their faces and their clothes that they were poor.

A few of them registered my arrival. I sat at a small, dirty table over in one corner and ordered a mint tea from the man at the counter – I presumed he was Mr Abdullah. The *kif* was being sold by an elderly man sitting next to me, who reminded me of Afiouna in Mr Moh's café in Tangier. I bought some. He provided me with a *shaqfa* from his pouch. Whenever I asked him for a *sabi*, he passed me the *shaqfa*, filled with *kif*. I would then pass it back and he either drew on it or handed it on to one of the men sitting next to him.

When Mr Abdullah brought the tea, I asked if he knew the whereabouts of Miloudi, a friend of Hassan El-Zailachi.

'I haven't seen him for at least three days.'

As the evening wore on, homesickness and the combined effects of the *kif* and my hunger began to get the better of me. I chatted with the men in the café. We shared our teas, passing them around. I felt comfortable with them. I told them about life in Tetuan and Tangier and they told me what was going on in Larache. One of them said:

'It's like they say: people cry because they've never seen Tangier

and rested my head on them. There was no sign of anyone around, no sound of footsteps or anything like that. I don't remember having any thoughts at all. My mind was a blank, as if it had been washed out. Even when I thought about my favourite music, the tunes came into my head and then just disappeared. I had a slight headache, and a throbbing in my brain. It was as if I could hear the beating of my own heart. This was probably the effect of the hunger in my guts and the fact that I was stoned.

It was still early when I woke. My bladder was bursting and my urge to piss was giving me a hard-on. The Plaza de España was slowly beginning to fill with people. I bought a peseta's worth of doughnuts. In the toilet of the Café de España my piss shot up like a fountain, wetting my hand and my trousers. I ordered a milky coffee. The café was used by people waiting for buses. Mr Abdullah's café wasn't open yet.

I caught a bus to Hayy Jadid, which was where I would find the Mu'tamid ben 'Abbad School. The area was pretty desolate – all cactus and scrub and dust and garbage and wasteland. The housing there consisted mainly of tin shacks or brick-built huts, occupied by bedouin whose appearance was as grim as their tattered clothes. I watched their children shit and piss right next to the huts, as if it was the most normal thing in the world.

When I asked the school janitor if I could talk to the headmaster, he asked:

'Why?'

'I've got a letter for him.'

'Let me see.'

'It's a personal letter and I'm supposed to deliver it to him in person.'

He gave me a look that suggested I'd insulted him and then disappeared. Either he'd gone to consult the headmaster or he was pretending to. Eventually he came back and led me along to the headmaster's office. I handed over my letter of recommendation. The envelope had got crumpled in my pocket. The headmaster asked me to sit down as he began reading the letter. I could see that he was smiling. What was he smiling at? Had Hassan played some kind of practical joke on me? At length he laid the letter on top of a stack of files and asked:

'Where are you from?'

'The Rif.'

'And where do your parents live?'

'My mother lives in Tetuan, but I moved to Tangier, because I wanted to find a job.'

'And your father?'

'He's dead.'

My father had died in the summer of 1979, at the age of twenty-two.

'Where are you working in Tangier?'

The moment of truth was approaching.

'I do any work I can get.'

'What do you mean, any work you can get?'

'I work at anything I can lay my hands on.'

'Have you ever been to school before?'

He had the accent of someone from the mountains.

## 6

I stayed in the café till it closed at around midnight. Then I roamed the streets waiting for Bab Allah (the big mosque) to open for the dawn prayers. When the mosque opened, I went in, found a damp-smelling mat in one corner and curled up on it – no chance of sleeping, though. I kept being woken up by the people coming in to pray. In the end the mosque attendant came over to me and said:

‘This isn’t a flop-house. It’s a place of prayer and worship.’

I pleaded with him to leave me alone. When he persisted, I started shouting at him, cursing his mother and his whole family, and then went out into the alley again, my shoes in my hand. It was still early morning. I’d just found myself a corner next to a building where I could curl up and sleep when all of a sudden I felt someone stumble and fall on top of me. I cursed angrily. It turned out to be the blind *mukhtar*, Haddad.

I'd heard of him. He'd studied at the Religious Institute and he had a reputation as a brilliant student, particularly in the Arabic tradition and its origins. He'd memorized the Qur'an and the *hadith*, as well as a lot of Arabic poetry, both sacred and secular.

He started apologizing profusely. I sat him down next to me and told him not to worry about it. I was still very sleepy, but his presence overcame my desire to sleep. When he heard I was studying at the Institute, he pulled out a book from beneath his woollen *djellaba* – *The Tears of the Three Lovers* by Zaki Mubarak. He suggested that we went together to the Café Central, saying that he'd treat me to breakfast and we could read the book together. It was Sunday. As we sat there outside the mosque, I told him a little about my life and the circumstances that had led me to start college in Larache. We became friends there and then. At every word which either of us said, he would let out a long sigh. He was poor too, but he wasn't a homeless orphan like myself. He wasn't forever having slanging matches with his father. He had an elder brother, who supported the family, and a younger brother who was studying. I think God must have been pleased with our encounter. Several times the *mukhtar* declared to me, in good Arabic:

'Things are hard now, but they'll get easier as you go along ...'

He was amazingly clever at finding his way round the streets and pavements. When we needed to cross the road, he'd stop me at the kerb and glance left and right, as if it was him leading me, and not the other way round. Then he'd say:

'Alright, we can cross now ...'

She'd pissed herself. Had she pissed in her sleep or was she awake? Did she have a pissing madness as well as a dancing madness? In a brothel in Tangier once I'd slept with Pissing Laila, but she hadn't pissed like Habiba had pissed.

I backed off before I stirred up some other madness in her. I took my trousers off and lay face down on the couch. She was crying. Was she purging herself of my insult or was she trying some kind of come-on? Either way, I wasn't in the mood for playing games. Some women don't soften towards a man unless they cry, but I haven't the patience for games like that. What had made her piss? Had it been fear or a muscular spasm? Either way, I'd thought that Habiba was a human fruit, ripe and ready to be picked, or lying rotten on the ground. But I'd made a mistake. For me, at least, the fruit was not yet ripe.



# 15

**M**y mother bought me a jacket, two shirts and a pair of trousers for the start of term at teacher training college. When I told her what had happened with Habiba, she said:

‘I’m sure you know what’s best for you.’

The demon of literature had begun to take possession of me, and I was discovering I was more interested in literature than in educational psychology and educational planning. My greatest interest was the Arabic language. We had a good Arabic literature teacher. He’d write a text on the blackboard, and after he’d explained what it meant, he’d take it apart to show us its grammatical structure. He was a practising Muslim, but he had a good sense of humour too – in his left hand he held the world, and in his right the hereafter. On Fridays, in one of the small mosques, he’d lead the people in prayer and preach a sermon. In the evening he’d go out for a night on the town, in Rincón or Sebta. I went

## VITA

Hind Saad Al-Rashid was born in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. In 2002, Miss Al-Rashid was graduated from Girls College of Education in Riyadh (Now Ameerah Nourah bint Mohammad University). Her degree was a Bachelor of Art in English Literature. After her graduation, she worked as an English teacher in private schools then joined the English Department in the Girls College of Education in Riyadh as an English instructor for non-specialist departments. She has a published collection of Arabic short stories titled as '*Qosarat Mansiyyah*.' She started to be interested in translation and worked with some research institutions including: Dubai Consultancy Research and Media Center, UAE. She was awarded the Master of Arts degree in English/Arabic/English Translation and Interpreting in 2009.