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The English novel by Arab writers (1950-1970).

Maleh, L

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THE ENGLISH NOVEL

by

ARAB WRITERS

(1950 - 1970)

Thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the Department of English

King's College

the University of London

by

Layla Maleh

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INTRODUCTION

... Then the man with whom Romilayu had been speaking came up and spoke to me in English which astonished me... I don't know why I should have been so surprised... It's the great imperial language of today, taking its turn after Greek and Latin and so on. The Romans weren't surprised, I don't think, when some Parthian or Numidian started to speak to them in Latin; they probably took it for granted.

Saul Bellow
Henderson the Rain King

Any study of the development of literature written in English in the last few decades would reveal the extraordinary blossoming of a rich and varied body of creative writing from an unprecedented diversity of countries and nationalities. It is a fact that much of the interesting writing in English now comes from Africa, India, Australia or the West Indies. Even so, my announcement to friends and colleagues, both at home and abroad, that the Arabs too have written in English was almost always met with raised eye-brows. It seems there is little surprise shown in the West when an African or an Indian writes in English, but for an Arab the response is completely different. Many would maintain that 'Commonwealth' writers wrote in English out of necessity rather than choice, their 'colonised' countries being exposed to one 'English' culture for a considerable length of time; their own local heritage being confined mostly to the oral. Why should the Arabs who have a wealth of ancient cultural traditions, and a rich

written literature resort to English?

One of the main aims of this dissertation, besides introducing this literature, is to explain its raisons d'être and point to the different factors behind its emergence. Cultural 'colonialism' and close contact with the West, especially through its educational institutions, has produced in the Arab world a group, or rather a class of people, who feel more at ease with English than with Arabic, and who are more familiar with western history and culture than with their own. Creative writers who belong to this class also feel that their use of the English language for literary expression is again not entirely a matter of choice. They too happen to be the product of certain historical accidents that pulled them in the direction of one culture rather than another.

English, however, has not been with the Arabs for very long. In fact, when the first American college was established in the Middle East (The Syrian Protestant College, now known as the American University of Beirut), teaching was conducted entirely in Arabic,

the American tutors having to learn the indigenous language for this purpose. Foreign and missionary schools, which helped spread the language, commenced their activities in the mid fifties of the last century, but were not able to strike their roots into the area until its end. Yet, English, even at its point of blooming remained a second language, never completely replacing the native one. It was mainly a means for communicating with the West, and at no time a tongue that brought the Arabs together the way it did to India or the African countries. Moreover, its use was more or less confined to one social class, the privileged one, and to one religion, the Christian.

Although Arab creative writing in English goes as far back as 1911 (Ameen Rihani's The Book of Khalid[1], Duse Mohamed Ali's In the Land of the Pharoahs[2]) and although a good amount of fiction and poetry was produced in the early 'twenties by Arab emigrants to the United States (Gibran Kahlil Gibran, Mikhail Naimy, and others), it was not until the year 1951 that an Arab novel in English made its appearance, when Edward Atiyah, a Lebanese writer living then

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1. The Book of Khalid (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1911).
2. In the Land of the Pharoahs (London: 1911); 2nd edition(London: Frank Cass, 1968).

in England, published The Thin Line.[1] The next two decades witnessed the rise of several similar attempts by the same writer as well as a number of other young authors, who were also either living in England or had lived there. Such is the work of Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, a Palestinian, Hunters in a Narrow Street.[2] Waguih Ghali, an Egyptian, wrote Beer in the Snooker Club published in 1967 by Andre Deutsch and reprinted in 1968 by the Penguin young writers series. Rima Alamuddin, a young Lebanese author published her novel Spring to Summer locally in Beirut in 1963,[3] which was followed by a collection of short stories The Sun is Silent[4]. The only Moslem writer among this group of novelists, Isaak Diqs, a Palestinian who lives in Saudi Arabia, also produced a charming autobiographical novel A Bedouin Boyhood[5].

The works of these writers differed greatly from the writings of their predecessors (Rihani, Gibran, Nimy) in that they adopted totally different themes and techniques, and seemed to grow out of the European

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1. The Thin Line (London: Peter Davies, 1951).
2. Hunters in a Narrow Street (London: Heinemann, 1960).
3. Spring to Summer (Beirut: Khayat, 1963).
4. The Sun is Silent (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1964).
5. A Bedouin Boyhood (London: George Allen & Unwin , 1967; and the Pergamon Press, English Library, 1969).

tradition, unlike the first group which developed as an extension of the American literary scene of the time.

The writing of the Mahjarite school (Syrian emigrants to the American continent) contained much of the oriental spirituality which struck a happy match with American transcendetalism. It also abounded with much of the national awareness and confidence that was to disappear from the works of the bicultural, bilingual novelists of a few decades later. The latter tended to be much more inhibited by the West, and consequently saw themselves and their people through the eyes of Europeans, presenting mostly a folkloric picture of life in the Arab world. Their novels dealt with their own personal experience as individuals exposed to a foreign culture yet remaining emotionally attached to their native one. The characteristic problems which most of their heroes face is the attempt to come to terms with the double heritage which they bear, and to combat the ensuing feeling of estrangement which makes of them aliens even at home. In most cases, the protagonist is a young university graduate recently returned home from England where he studied, his personality formed

by western norms and values, and his habits and taste influenced by the foreign culture which claims him.

Despite the paucity of English literature by Arabs, this body of writing represents an interesting literary phenomenon worthy of the attention of anyone concerned with World Literature in English. It has strong links with Commonwealth writing and third world literature at large, as it shares with them the same interest in problems of bilingualism and biculturalism. Like other World Literature in English, it concerns itself with the psychological issue of alienation and obsession with the return of the exile theme, the pressing preoccupation with the search for identity, the quest for authentic self-presentation, which is expressed in an inclination towards autobiographical writing. Like Commonwealth writers, Arab authors in English take great interest in their social environment and seek to produce an honest image of it in the hope that they may correct some of the West's misconceptions about themselves and their societies. Many would agree also that in the case of literature in English by Arabs, the more distinguished value of the works lies perhaps in

their sociological documentation rather than their artistic merit. Accessibility to the readers of English all over the world has enticed a good number of writers in this language to use it as a means of direct self-expression. Maybe this is one reason why Arab authors have taken special interest not only in the sociological interpretation but in the political as well. Being granted the wide English speaking world for an audience, they seize the opportunity to communicate their ideas on serious political issues that afflict their countries, such as the question of Palestine and the corruption of governments. Accessibility to a wider audience and the pressure of politics on the mental and psychological attributes of Arab intellectuals at large have presented these authors with a theme to which they are somewhat unconsciously bound. Most of their works consequently register their version of the Arab 'Exodus', their aim being to achieve two main things: one, to mirror one of the most outstanding facets of Arab social and political realities; another, to defy the Zionist claims which have so strongly lodged themselves in the consciousness of the West, whether by means of the political forum or the literary pulpit. Quite successfully, a number of these novels such as Edward Atiyah's Lebanon Paradise,[1]

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1. Lebanon Paradise (London: Peter Davies, 1953).

Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's Hunters in a Narrow Street, Isaak Diqs's A Bedouin Boyhood, have communicated this 'thorny' political experience without falling to the hazards of apathy, banality or sheer propaganda.

Although the English novel by Arab writers may seem to be deeply rooted in the Arab sensibility, it can at no time be charged with parochialism. It certainly has made it its task to interpret the experiences and influences of transplanted Arabs; of Mid-Eastern societies in transition; of political fears and tensions. However, the larger meaning it extols has to do with the age-old conflict of traditionalism and change, historicity and modernity, verity and reality. These quests seem to be at the core of all literatures if not humanity's main concerns. This is not to suggest that any of these works has strong claims to greatness, although much of it is extremely meaningful and engaging. It will be, indeed, a disappointing experience to attempt to place Atiyah, Jabra, Ghali or any of the others on an equal literary par with the best of contemporary British or American novelists. In short, the English-Arab novel derives its significance, and in individual cases, its popularity, from the novelty of the world it delineates,

and the unfamiliar experience it yields. The success a work such as A Bedouin Boyhood enjoyed chiefly relied on the'magic spell' bedouin life has cast on a public fascinated by the quaint and the outlandish, and not on any 'unmatched' literary merits despite the reviewers' insistence on its 'Biblical' and'classical' qualities.

On the other hand, one can comfortably place the English novel by Arab writers in the same artistic category as the majority of works currently produced in the Commonwealth, not only on account of the thematic links it shares with them, and the similar ambition to contribute to world literature, but also because it, too, enjoys the same advantages of drawing on more than one culture, and consequently of offering a rich and interesting amalgam of visions and images. Artistically, like its Commonwealth counterpart, the English novel by Arabs displays similar technical traits or rather problems. Character drawing frequently subordinates plot; description abounds and seems to overshadow dialogue; inert details are not seldom introduced as they are retained for their 'anthropological' and documentary qualities and not for the purpose of plot development. Perhaps what brings the two still closer is the fact that

the Arabs as well as Commonwealth writers are newcomers to novel writing. Essentially they model their novels after European patterns, only infusing them, to various degrees, with their own indigenous particularities. This perhaps explains why writers in English in the Middle East presently tend to write poetry and short stories rather than novels, because these genres are the more natural outgrowth of the native tradition.

Where the Arabs differ from Commonwealth writers is in their more or less conservative use of language and in the lack of development of their own individual style. English, for them, has been a language of education, of their intellectual make-up alone: hence their attempt to write like the English or even to outbid them in the sophisticated and occasionally verbose use of the lingua. Unlike the Nigerians, for example, who use the language freely and even irreverently on occasion[1], Arab authors have not ventured to create any new coinages of expression, or to explore any new stylistic techniques. The language they employed has remained 'very English', to say the least, terse and conservative, except when a deliberate 'Arabism' is introduced. Nowhere

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1. "Writing in West Africa," Times Literary Supplement, Aug. 10, 1962.

in their novels can we detect the same linguistic energy that so charmingly characterizes most West African writing to cite but one case. One has to admit, however, that the historical accidents responsible for the emergence of Arab writing in English have been different from those which gave rise to Indian or African literatures. Arab English, if we may use such an appelation, derives its most vital character from the language of Britain and not from a locally emergent language.

Speaking of differences and similarities, one has to mention that literature written in English by Arabs elicits the same problems as Commonwealth literature with respect to questions pertaining to literary criticism. Is this literature to be judged by universal literary standards, or according to indigenous canons? Are we in need of critics mainly versed in the sociology of literature and specifically knowledgeable about Arab traditions, frame of mind and literary history? And finally where can this literature be placed? Is it English literature just because it is written in the English language; or is it Arabic literature by virtue of the nationality of its authors; or is it simply literature written in English?

Until very recently, creative writing that has emerged from outside the British Isles has been 'conveniently' labelled 'Commonwealth Literature', not so much for the political connotation of the term as for its ready practicality. The later adoption of the term 'World Literature Written in English' has been appropriately made in view of the emergence and growth of other writings in English, which do not' politically' qualify as 'Commonwealth'. Such a term comfortably offers a place for literature in English by Arabs and further presents an exciting opportunity to the interested critic and scholar to see the relationship among the various contributors to this wide body of writing.

Many, indeed, have long advocated the abolition of nationally-inclined literary classification. English has become a true world language, but literature written in it is not necessarily 'English literature'. Joseph Jones and Hartley Grattan, two of the first Americans to foster Commonwealth studies, have argued persuasively that this is one world, and that today we must consider not English literature but Literature Written in English.[1]

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1. Quoted by William H. New in World Literature Written in English newsletter entitled "The Commonwealth in Print", Nov.19, 1967.

With this broad concept, the novels under study stand out not as an isolated literary phenomenon but as a legitimate child to a family that hardly knows of its existence.

But is this child doomed to die in its infancy or is it to grow into manhood? The first is perhaps the more likely to happen. The novel written in English by Arabs appears to be a temporary happening, resulting from non-literary factors, geographic, educational, economic and cultural. Today, in the Arab world, the new generation of intellectuals and writers, though western in outlook, is primarily Arabic speaking. They have all read Faulkner, Forster, Sartre and Becket, but generally in Arabic. While they feel that they have learnt a great deal from these authors, they feel no compulsion to write in English or French, and they usually master neither.

Writing in a foreign language to reach a foreign audience seems to be gradually giving way to a translation movement that seeks to bring Arabic literature in general, and fiction in particular to foreign readers.[1] The last few years, therefore,

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1. Such as Heinemann's 'Arabic Writers' series, Aris and Philip's 'Approaches to Arabic Literature' series and many others.

therefore, have witnessed the translation of several Arabic novels, short stories and plays into English.[1]

Is the writing of novels in English by Arabs, then, a thing of the past? To a large extent, Yes. One can easily notice that the literature written by Arabs in foreign languages is neither a replacement for the native one nor a lasting alternative. It merely reflects a transitory literary 'event', which may be described as simply a deviation from the norm. There may be some future attempts on the part of Arabs to write novels in English, but the social and educational background of the new generation of Arab writers, as well as the general literary climate— development of new forms, publication facilities— suggest that very few Arab writers will in the future turn to English as a literary language. As it currently stands, the Arab voice in English is but a part of a world-wide venture into literature written in English, though a very hushed, almost unheard voice it still is.

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1. Such as:
- Naguib Mahmfouz, Midaq Alley, translated by Trevor Le Gassik (Beirut: Khayats, 1966).
- Tayeb Saleh, Season of Migration to the North, translated for the Heinemann African Writers Series by Denys Johnson-Davies(1970).
- Tayaeb Saleh, The Wedding of Zein, also translated from the Arabic by Denys Johnson-Davies for the Heinemann African Writers Series in 1969.
- The Heinemann's Arab Writers Series.
- Aris and Philip's Approaches to Arabic Literature Series and the translation of works such as Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's The Ship, and many others.

This dissertation sets out to examine the novels written by Arabs in the English language. Since no such study has been made before, and in the absence of any critical writings on the subject, it will primarily seek to survey the novels rather than offer a thorough assessment of their literary worth. It is more concerned with subject matter than with style and technique, mainly because the novels' socio-political and historical significance is generally greater than their literary merits.

Although references will be made to World Literature written in English, and to indigenous Arabic literature, this study does not attempt to assess the novels in relation to either. This does not, however, exclude the examination of the various influences to which the works have been exposed.

The dissertation is divided into four chapters. Chapter I, 'Babel and After : the Language Question' examines the history of bilingualism and biculturalism in the Arab world, and analyses the social, political and educational factors leading to the emergence of Arab writing in English.

Chapter II examines the early attempts by Syrian emigrants to the United States to write fiction in English. The narrative prose works of Gibran Kahlil Gibran and Mikhail Naimy are introduced briefly, while <u>The Book of Khalid</u> by Ameen Rihani is studied in depth as it represents the first serious attempt to write a 'novel' in English, although the work does not specifically meet the

requirements of the genre as known today. The works in this chapter are seen in context of the literary trends in the U.S.A. particularly in relation to the American transcendentalists and their European predecessors.

The English novel by Arabs in the post-Second World War period is examined and its central themes and preoccupations are studied in chapter III. Two main themes are singled out, alienation and the problems of acculturation, and literature as a political forum. The two themes bring literature written in English closer to the general context of that of the Third World as it,too, exposes the psychological repercussions resulting from cultural contact or even from cultural 'colonialism'.

The need for a new kind of criticism for the evaluation of 'foreign' literatures in English is discussed in chapter IV along with the various critical issues raised by the Third World literature in English. Related to the critical approach question is the critical reception of individual works— a subject discussed at length in the second half of the chapter.

Politics, as among Third World writers, also seems to force itself on both the mental and spiritual make-up of the Arab intellectual. Arab novelists in general can hardly ignore the tremendous impact politics has on everyday life in the Arab world. Arab writers in English are particularly conscious of the importance of introducing politics into their works. By so doing they seem to be responding not only to one of the

most pressing questions of their time, but also answering a more or less patriotic demand. Since they are capable of communicating with the Western world through the medium of English, it becomes their incumbent duty to convey to the West their people's views on matters that have for long been judged from the Western side only. The question of Palestine, emerges as one of those vital issues that merit the writers' attention and appeal to their sense of national obligation.

The conclusion seeks to determine the tradition to which the English novel by Arab writers belongs, and to look into the future in the light of current changes in the social, political and cultural factors discussed in the opening chapter.

Since this dissertation is concerned only with Arab novels in English, many important Arab writers in English, such as Etel Adnan and many others, have had to be excluded. Moreover, not all Arab novels in English are given detailed study. The relevance of the work to the major themes discussed, and its importance have detrmined the amount of study devoted to it. This alone would explain my dwelling at such length on works like Black Vanguard and Beer in the Snooker Club, and my brief analysis of Spring to Summer or Donkey from the Mountains.

CHAPTER I

BABEL AND AFTER

THE LANGUAGE QUESTION

THE BACKGROUND: CULTURAL ENCOUNTER

> Out in the streets, in the tramcars, in the shops, in the cafes, you heard four or five languages spoken simultaneously—exclamations, greetings, sentences, half-sentences in Arabic, English, French and Italian crowded in upon your ears in a veritable Tower-of-Babel jumble, and you heard the newspaper boys, shouting lustily; "Echo...Echo...Echo...Egyptian Gazette... Bourse Egyptienne, Bourse...Wadinnil... Ahram... Messagero Egyptiano...

Such is Edward Atiyah's account of the multilingual Arabs of Egypt. In his autobiography An Arab Tells his Story[1], which appeared some thirty years ago, Atiyah describes a society which being at the confluence of civilisations had acquired the languages, cultures, and habits of many foreign nations.

The situation has not changed much since Atiyah's book appeared. Anybody who walks in the streets of Beirut, and to a lesser extent the streets of other Arab capitals is aware of the multifarious colour of the city and of its 'cosmopolitan' character. The

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1. Edward Atiyah, An Arab Tells his Story (London: John Murray, 1946).

Lebanese have called their streets Bliss, Marseillese, or Graham; their restaurants, the Uncle Sam's and Wimpey; they go to the cinema at the 'Piccadilly', the 'Odeon' or the 'Clemenceau'; they have their 'five o'clock tea' at the 'Chez Paul' or the 'Diplomat'; they eat their 'hamburgers' and 'hot dogs' at the 'Strand' or the 'Cafe de Paris'; and for their 'pints' they go to their 'locals' at the 'Rose and Crown', 'Pickwick', or the 'Duke of Wellington'. The phenomenon is not confined only to names of streets, cafes or pubs, but extends even to proper names. The Arab Lebanese, who was subjugated to foreign rule and influence for a considerable period of time became very conscious of even his name and found himself altering Jirius to George, Tanios to Antoine, and Yusef to Joseph. The new name seemed to immediately lift him to a new social rank, and place him on the same par as his foreign 'superiors'.

The problem is not as simple as it may seem. It involves a history of foreign intervention in the area, and a long record of political and ideological influence.

It has been the practice with most students of Arab

history to consider, roughly speaking, the beginning of the nineteenth century as the starting point of the modern Arab renaissance. This, it is believed, is the period at which the Arab world became more and more exposed to military, cultural, economic and political influences of the West. It is true that western interests in the area can be traced to much earlier dates[1], yet those appeared under the guise of religious and missionary zeal. More specifically, historians agree that it is the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798 that marks the first direct extensive military and cultural contact between the Arabs and the West, preparing the way for a series of attacks at the Arab world[2], the results of which are still affecting the formation and development of the Arab character. Napoleon's expedition, in the words of Professor Bernard Lewis, did not only open a new phase in the history of western impact and bring the problem of impact and response, in an acute form, to the Arab lands; it also inaugurated a century and a half of direct Anglo-French involvement in the affairs of these lands.[3] And most important of all is the fact that it opened the eyes

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1. The crusades are regarded as the first western military invasion of the Arab world. Ostensibly economic motives were mingled with religious ones.

2. "The Arab World is that stretch of land that extends from the Arabian Gulf in the East to the Atlantic in the West." Anwar Arrifa'i, Al Watanul Arabi (The Arab World),(Damascus: Dar al Fikr, 1960), P.5.

3. Bernard Lewis, The Middle East and the West (London: 1964), P.34.

of the Arabs to an industrialised and more technically advanced West that they began to seriously think of emulating the invader and benefiting from his learning and experience.[1] Aptly anticipating the far effects of his expedition, Napoleon addressed his soldiers on the eve of the invasion by saying: "You are going to undertake a conquest, the effects of which upon commerce and civilisation will be incalculable."[2]

H.A.R.Gibb, in his book Arabic Literature: An Introduction, also maintains that Napoleon's "meteoric invasion... tore aside the veil of apathy which had cut /the Arabs/ off from the new life of Europe and gave the death blow to medievalism."[3] Such medievalism

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1. Napoleon's expedition was certainly more than a military invasion; it was also a cultural incursion from the West into the heart of the Arab world, comprising as it did many scholars and scientists, among them was Champillion who deciphered ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic writing, and engineers who studied the project of joining the Mediterranean and Red Sea by piercing the Suez Isthmus. On the political level, the Arabs came to know, through the French expedition, and for the first time, the concept of a 'Republic'. See, Ibrahim abu-Lughod, Arab Rediscovery of Europe (Princeton University Press, 1963).

2. Copies of the original letters from the Army of General Buonaparte in Egypt, intercepted by the Fleet under the command of Admiral Lord Nelson (English translation), London 1798, Vol.I, P.237.

3. H.A.R.Gibb, Arabic Literature: An Introduction (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), P.159.

was brought upon the Arab East by the Ottomans throughout the 16th to the 19th centuries, during which time the Arab world suffered from "stagnation and decay."[1] Napoleon's vessels were loaded with scientific equipment that was put to use as soon as the French troops landed on Egyptian soil. The printing press was introduced into Egypt for the first time which made communication possible[2] and allowed more French infiltration into and integration with at least the upper strata of Egyptian life. Napoleon mixed with the inhabitants of Egypt and worked towards the establishment of strong Franco-Egyptian relations. Some of his men married Egyptian women and adopted Islam as a religion. He himself proclaimed interest in the Islamic faith and expressed his deep respect.

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1. H.A.R.Gibb, Arabic Literature: An Introduction, Ibid.

2. Buonaparte's press was used for communiques in Arabic thus establishing direct and immediate communication between the ruler and the inhabitants. See, Salaheddine Boustani, The Press During the Expedition in Egypt, 1798-1801 (Cairo: Al Arab bookshop, 1954).

In his book An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt (London: Cass, 1968), James Heyworth-Dunne maintains that printing presses with Arabic founts had been installed in Lebanon long before the 19th century, but their output was restricted in the main to a few religious tracts and psalters. And apart from a treatise on smallpox, this press issued nothing of interest for the local population.

for the unitarian concept of God.[1,2]

Slowly at first, but with increasing momentum, the ideas of the western world gained a lodgement amongst the Arabs, and stimulated successive rulers in Egypt to seek new inspirations in the culture of the West. Mohamad Ali[3], and later on his son, Ibrahim, saw the future of Egypt in terms of greater contacts with the Occident. Impressed by the skill and efficiency of the French, he employed a number of Frenchmen to help him create the structure of a modern state

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1. See, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Arab Rediscovery of Europe, Op.Cit.,PP.14-15. Also see, J.C.Herold's Buonaparte in Egypt (London: Hamish Hamilton,1962).

2. Needless to say that the real intentions behind Napoleon's conquest, so carefully screened from the Egyptians, were clearly stated in a proclamation to his own soldiers, in which they were made to understand that their conquest "will give the English a most sensible blow, which will be followed up with their destruction" and that the destruction of the Beys "who favour the English commerce exclusively is imperative for the welfare of the French. Copies of the Original Letters, Op.Cit.,P.237. Napoleon's direct aim in Egypt, therefore, was not primarily to deliver French enlightenment to the Arabs but to utilise the Arabs for the building of French glory.

3.Mohamad Ali was an Albanian officer in the army sent by the Ottoman Sultan to resist the French occupation of Egypt which for many centuries had been ruled locally by the Mamluk military caste under the remote suzerainty of the Sultan. Mohamad Ali was able to defeat the Napoleonic troops in Acre and to establish his ascendency in the army. In 1801, when the French finally evacuated Egypt, he emerged as its virtual ruler, owing only a nominal allegiance to the Sultan. For the next forty years, he and his son Ibrahim Pasha dominated the Middle Eastern scene.

in Egypt.[1] He also sent missions of Egyptian students to France to learn European techniques.[2] Many of Mohamad Ali's schemes seemed, however, to end in failure. His ardent wooing of the West only resulted in indirectly inviting them to occupy the Arab lands. The occupation of Egypt by Britain, undertaken in 1882 for a limited purpose and a limited time, became permanent, and was extended to the Sudan. Most of North Africa was invaded by the French and the Italians. Iraq and Syria— including Lebanón, Jordan and Palestine— came under foreign rule in the period following the first World War. As B. Lewis describes it, the Ottoman Empire

> which for four centuries had held the Arab lands, was defeated and destroyed, and a series of new, unfamiliar political structures was assembled from the debris.[3]

By the end of W.W.II, contact between the West and the Arab world— the eastern Mediterranean in particular

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1. For some brief accounts of this, see The Cambridge Modern History, (New York:1907), Vol.X,545,572; G.Young, Egypt (New York: 1927), PP.23-62; M.Sabry, L'Empire Egyptien sous Mohamed Ali et la question d'Orient (Paris:1930), PP.579-592; H.Dodwell, The Founder of Modern Egypt; A Study of Mohammad Ali (Cambridge:1931), PP.192-241.

2. The first Egyptian student mission was sent to Italy in 1809, and by 1818 there were 23 Egyptian students in Europe. In 1826, the Pasha of Egypt sent the first large Egyptian mission of 44 students to Paris.
B. Lewis, Op.Cit., P.36.

3. Ibid., P.35.

was already a hundred years old. Missionaries[1] had already opened their schools and consuls had established their privileges and extensive influential contacts. In villages in Mount Lebanon, Arabic-speaking children were already singing Christmas carols in French or English, and outward-looking citizens in the major cities were rapidly learning foreign languages to do business with the more developed West. At the same time, anxious for the future of their children, they sent them to schools that taught a foreign language that would secure for them both social preferment and commercial success.

In the wake of the nineteenth century, Shakespeare was being performed in Arabic at local theatres in Egypt[2]; Molier's The Miser, in Beirut and Cairo[3]

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1. The function that the missionaries played was dual: One, religious, to convert Moslems and Eastern Christians to Western Christianity; the second, political and economic and was disguised beneath the first.
The idea of missionaries goes back to the Reformation in Europe. Catholicism found itself surrounded with oceans of Protestantism in Europe, which made it seek new adventures outside the continent in order to reduce pressure on European Catholicism, and to move to new lands where it could exercise more freedom, and where it could gain its power back and spread it again in Europe. Muta'b Munaf, Al Waqi'ul Fikri wal Mujtama'ul Arabi al Jadid (The Intellectual Present and Modern Arab Society), (Baghdad: Al Ma'amel, 1966), P.33.

2. The Egyptian Khalil Mutran, for example, translated Othello and The Merchant of Venice into Arabic verse. See Yusef M. Najm, Al Masrahiyatu

and his Tartuffe was translated into Arabic scene and language and was called Sheikh Matluff.[1] Rifa'ah al Tahtawi, an Egyptian scholar was lured by the rich Literary 'treasures' of the West and founded his School of Languages (Madrasatul Alsun) to which he attached a translation office in 1841 for the purpose of rendering European works into Arabic. He provided Egypt with a number of capable translators and with the translations of foreign books necessary in the newly established schools and training colleges. Though these translations were not all concerned with literary matter, they were important for the development of Arabic literature in that they created a new language and style. In other words, there had already been a flow of European thought into the lives and minds of the Arab population.

The influence of European thought on the Arab mind was immense and the rising educated class was unconsciously emulating Western writers and thinkers in every respect. Authors imitated Western works with which they had come in contact. Ahmad Shawqi, the Egyptian poet laureate, inspired by Shakespeare wrote a number of

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Fil Adabil Arabi Al Hadeeth (Drama in Modern Arabic Literature), (Beirut: Dar Beirut, 1956)

3. Ibid., Yacoub Sannou' translated Moliere's The Miser and produced it in 1839. Maroun al Naqqash wrote Al Bakhil (The Miser) depending heavily on Moliere's play.

1. Ibid., P.273. The play was translated by Mahmoud Usman Jalal in 1850.

poetic dramas including one on the subject of Antony and Cleopatra; Jurji Zaydan, under the influence of Sir Walter Scott, produced a number of novels on themes taken from Arab history; Maroun al Naqqash, a Lebanese playwright, came back to Beirut from a short visit to Rome and presented in 1848 on a stage he erected at his house before a group of celebrities in the city his own Arabic but distant version of Moliere's l'Avare. Adaptation from French literature in particular became a common practice and many went further to claim the works entirely for themselves. Such are Najib Haddad's Gharam wa Intiqam (Love and Revenge) pilfered right out of Le Cid by Corneille; a play Hamdan was 'adapted' from Hernani by Victor Hugo; while Ghusn al Ban had more than strong echoes of the story of Raphael by Lamartine.[1]

Although European culture breathed a new life in the literary output of Arab writers and shook away the dull monotony that bereaved it in the past three or four centuries, the result was not without its shortcomings. Instead of representing in their works

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1. For this information and more details see: Elias Abu Shabaka's Rawabitul Fikr bein al Arab wal Faranja (Intellectual ties between the Arabs and the West), (Beirut: Dar al Makshouf, 1945),, PP.88-89, 94-95.
Also see the highly informative study by Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Arab Rediscovery of Europe, Op.Cit.

their own society with its own peculiarities, intricacies and problems, the characters they created, though Arab in name; moved, talked, thought, reacted, even loved not as every day Arabs do but as those described in western literature. The espousal of cultures produced its first bastard child.

The century and a half of Anglo-French preeminence in the Middle East indeed brought immense and irreversible changes, on every level of social existence. These changes came through a number of channels, namely: trade, government and education. Situated between East and West, the Arab world, especially the eastern Mediterranean part, has always had wide commercial dealings with the West. In the sixteenth century, English merchants in Aleppo working for the Levant company learnt Arabic; in the twentieth century, however, Arab businessmen and merchants, anxious to make use of western techniques for amassing wealth, found it convenient to learn a foreign language to deal and mix with fellow businessmen of other lands. As most government departments came under foreign adminstration during the French and British mandate in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Palestine; and under British rule in Egypt, the Sudan and Aden, government officials had to learn the language of the

administering powers in order to communicate with foreign senior officials, and at the same time to secure promotion to more advanced posts. Here one should not overlook the fact that the very laws the various government departments were to carry out, were foreign-inspired. The civil and penal codes of Syria, Egypt and Lebanon are even today based on French models.

The third and most important channel of foreign influence has been education. Foreign education, however, had to come, unfortunately, through the work of missionaries with their various sectarian loyalties and inclinations. As mentioned earlier, missionary work in the Arab world can be traced back to the sixteenth century[1] when the missionaries were fluent in Arabic with which they preached and spread Western Christian thought. Although the missionaries can be seen as the first perceived harbingers of change in Arab education, very few would indeed disagree that the "chief and ultimate object of their work"as one outstanding member of the Protestant mission to Syria admits "is the conversion of the Mohammedans to the Christian faith,"[2] and the hope

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1. Muta'ab Munaf, Op.Cit., P.33.
2. H. Jessup, Fifty Years in Syria (London: 1910),Vol.I, P.85.

to spread the 'word of God' among the so-called "forty millions of perishing sinners" in the "infidel" Moslem East.[1]

Obviously, and to the disadvantage of the Arabs, the West, through its missionaries, was not all that zealous to dispatch to the East the secrets and means of Western development. Such concepts as secularism, science and scientific methods, nationalism, freedom and other vital ideas expressive of the spirit of Western civilisations were not truly what the Westerners came to offer to the Arabs. Such ideas only reached them through the back door so to speak. Instead, the first half of the nineteenth century witnessed an amazing and unprecedented rivalry amongst the various missionaries who came to the Middle East, each competing to win the favour and cooperation of Moslem, Christian and Jewish natives to the particular teachings they were disposed to. The French Jesuits whose activities reached their peak in the 1830s hoped to convert followers of Eastern churches to Catholicism. Between 1844 and 1943, forty six Catholic missions were established in Egypt alone.[2]

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1. H.Jessup, Op.Cit., P.68.
2. Salama Jiryus, Tareekh al Ta'leem al Ajnabi fi Misr fil Qarnein al Tase' Ashar wal Ishreen (History of foreign education in Egypt in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries), (Cairo: The Supreme Council for the support of fine art, literature and social studies, 1963), P.43.

Conversely, the Scottish mission came to Egypt in 1856 and the Protestant Bible Society in 1840 with the aim of spreading Protestantism amongst Egyptian Copts and converting the Jews of Alexandria to the Christian faith.[1] Meanwhile the Americans had already dispatched their own missionaries to the area as early as 1823 to keep some kind of 'religious' 'balance', especially as the Eastern churches had adopted a hostile attitude towards Catholic missions. The Americans were supported by a printing press, which had been brought to Malta in 1822.[2] In 1830, an Arabic fount was added to the plant but no Arabic books came from the press until after its transfer to Beirut.[3] But this enflamed Jesuit rivalry. They did not only increase the number of their schools but went further to set up their own printing press in 1848 now known as the Imprimerie Catholique. In 1875, the Université Saint Joseph was the Jesuits' answer to the Syrian Protestant College (The American University of Beirut) established in 1866. And the Russians, of course, were not to be left out. In 1883, the Imperial Russian Palestine Society was formed by a man called Vasili Khitrovo. By 1900, the

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1. J. Heyworth Dunne, An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt (London: Cass, 1938), P.278.
2. A.L.Tibawi, American Interests in Syria, 1800-1901. A Study of Educational, Literary and Religious Work (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1966, P.52
3. Ibid.

Society had as many as 43 schools in Syria and Lebanon, a number which multiplied to 82 schools in 1913 comprising about 12.000 students of both sexes. The Russian Society was equally active in Palestine as it had some twenty five schools there including two teacher training colleges in Nazareth, and Beit Jala, near Jerusalem.[1]

Of all these, the French seemed to have the upper hand in foreign education. By 1914, they alone, we are told, "must have had in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, some 500 schools, representing 20 different congregations, with an attendance of about 50.000 boys and girls."[2]

The religious momentum of foreign education in the Middle East slowed down and even changed its course in the direction of more 'secular' teaching. The British occupation of Egypt in 1882 resulted in the rise of a number of schools that were originally set up for children of the British community in Egypt, and that were, in most cases, directly linked to boards of known colleges and universities such as

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1. Mikhail Naimy,'Letters', The Complete Works (Beirut: Dar al 'Ilm lil Malayeen, 1974), P.458.
2. Philip Hitti, Lebanon in History: from the Earliest Times to the Present, 3rd edition (London: Macmillan, 1967), P.447.

Oxford, Cambridge and London. Although the schools were at start restricted to children of foreign expatriates, children of notable and wealthy Egyptian families were encouraged to join.[1] Gradually, English education began to seriously compete with the prevalent French although at no stage could it completely replace it. True, the British occupation helped to a large extent in weakening the French Catholic church, but it certainly failed to produce the same effect on culture. This is perhaps due to the many restrictions the British imposed on conditions of enrollment in the various schools. Those admitted had to come from economically and politically powerful families, or had to enjoy some special connections with British officials[2]. Tuition fees were noticeably high, so that only the very rich could afford sending their sons to English schools especially as grants were never allowed to Egyptian nationals.[3] In this respect, American schools showed more flexibility and tolerance. As their educational institutions were still religiously oriented, they scarcely confined their schools to one class or one social sector. In contradistinction, their schools were

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1. Such were Victoria College, the English College for Girls, the British School in Alexandria; and the English school in Cairo.
2. Such as the English School in Heliopolis. See, Salama Jiryus, Op.Cit., P.124.
3. Ibid.

to allure the entire population by setting up branches in the cities as well as the countryside and by demanding fees which were frequently minimal. Moreover, no social discrimination was observed.[1]

British schools moved away from the patronage of the church only to fall under the guardianship of the state.[2] The board of the English School in Heliopolis, for example, was directly linked to the British embassy in Cairo and had to include amongst its members four representatives of the embassy,

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1. Salama Jiryus, Op.Cit., P.125.
2. Victoria College, for example, which started in 1909 as a secondary school, stressed that teaching religion was optional and only done upon recommendations and instructions from the students' parents or guardians. The annual prospectus which the college issued that year laid special emphasis not on theological matter but on more 'mundane' objects such as games of cricket, football and hockey. In his inauguration speech in 1909, Lord Cromer went further to urge 'all influential people' in Egypt to do their best to prevent religious 'zeal' from impeding progress in education. The college, he further stressed, was to be a microcosm of Egyptian society comprising as it did students from various races and faiths /sic./

The total number of students in 1909 was 196, of which 90 were not only the Egyptian but the Turks as well, the Syrians, the Armenians, the Maltese and the Greeks, the English and the French, the Italians, the Spanish, the Dutch, the Swiss and the Belgians. Lord Cromer, in his speech, hoped that such an amalgam of students would minimize national differences and would convince the educated Egyptians as well as European officials in Egypt that these were the true exponents of Western civilisation.

See, A Short Account of Victoria College, Alexandria (White Head Morris, 1920), P.5. Cited in Arabic by Salama Jiryus, Op.Cit., P.167.

two members from the army, one from the nearest British military headquarters, the other from the nearest airforce base.[1] Needless to say, such 'official' members of the board were there to see that the schools were run to their interest and along lines that did not conflict with British policies in the area. Or as sarcastically, but perhaps honestly, put by the Egyptian novelist Waguih Ghali in his Beer in the Snooker Club, these institutions

> were run for rich Arabs and Egyptians who, it was hoped, would later rule in their parents' place. The school was there to see that they ruled in Britain's favour.

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1. The board of the school comprised the following members:
   1. A representative of the British ambassador.
   2. A representative of the Anglican Archbishop in Egypt.
   3. A representative of the British Council in Egypt.
   4. A representative of the general British Consul in Egypt.
   5. A representative of the nearest British military headquarters.
   6. A representative of the nearest Air Force headquarters.
   7. A representative of the British Charity Society in Egypt.
   8. Two representatives nominated by the British ambassador in Egypt.
   9. Two representatives nominated by the Anglican Archbishop in Egypt.
   10. Three members nominated by the benefactors of the school.
   11. Three members nominated by the executive committee of the board.

   which means that the embassy has four members on the board and the army has two members.
   Articles of Constitution and Standing Regulations of the English School, Cairo, P.2. Cited in Salama Jiryus, Op.Cit., PP.128-129.

The expansion and increase in the number of foreign schools[1] then came out of religious and later political considerations and was enhanced by class and status significance. For these very reasons, interest in foreign education remained chiefly in the domain of the rich and non-Moslem population. The Christian Arabs who were tied to the West by strong religious affiliations preferred to send their children to schools where Christian teaching was available. For since Islam was the religion of the majority in the Arab countries, not much attention was paid in public schools to the teaching of Christianity as a religion. Thus

> The Roman Catholics and Maronites went to schools of the different monastic orders, Jesuits and Frères, and imbibed French culture saturated with Roman Catholicism; while the Protestants flocked to the English, American and German schools where they assimilated Anglo-Saxon lore. The Moslems and Greek Orthodox were divided between the two, though on the whole preferring English and American to French schools, as being less fanatical.[1]

And so the attachment of students to myriads of religiously and politically disposed schools, but chiefly not Arab-inclined, spawned individuals who were better acquainted with European history and culture than with their own, and who were better versed in a foreign language than in their mother tongue.[2]

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1. Edward Atiyah, An Arab Tells his Story, Op.Cit., P.3.
2. To go back to the example of the English School in Cairo, it suffices to mention that

And what is perhaps more acute is this sense of superiority many of them felt as they looked down upon the less privileged who went to government run schools; or the similar haughty stance they took against the Arabic language itself. Very few of them indeed were conscious of problems that troubled their country as they grew away from its language, culture and heritage and lost that intimate link with it.

But this does not mean that the entire population of the Arab world received its education in foreign schools and spoke a foreign language. One has to stress time and again that such schools catered only for a religious and social minority, though a rich and influential one it often was. The Christians as mentioned earlier

> came to derive from this largely one-sided association with the nations of the West a sense of importance that ministered to their vanity and mitigated the humiliations of their inferior position.[1]

And the Moslems found in acquiring a foreign language and education, beside the social status, a means of remaining in control of key government and commercial posts especially as the knowledge of a foreign language became a pre-requisite for such careers.

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it was naturally English and European and not Arab history that merited the attention of those in charge of curricula planning.

1. E. Atiyah, An Arab Tells his Story, P.2.

The middle class Moslem population, nevertheless, thought differently of the second language question. The average Moslem Arab was always reluctant to accept a language different from his own, let alone to adopt one. He always respected and admired the eloquence of Arabic especially since it was the language of his Holy Book Al Quran, and the tongue by which God spoke to his prophet Mohammad through his messanger Gabriel. This is perhaps the reason why Arabic has shut itself from foreign influences that have threatened it in the last four centuries as a result of successive foreign rule. In fact, the Arabic language itself became for the Arabs a basic premise of their nationalism:

> Arabic is the register of their creativeness, a symbol of their unity, and an expression of their mental and artistic attitudes.[1]

When, therefore, Arab governments sensed the threatening influence of foreign education on the unifying element of the Arabic language, speech and literature, they paid greater attention to the teaching of Arabic. In Syria, for example, during and particularly after the French mandate, public schools although still following the French educational system, geared their curricula towards the enhancement of national feeling through emphasizing native Arab speech and lore.[2] The

1. Hazem Zaki Nuseibeh, The Ideas of Arab Nationalism (New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), P.69.

2. Passing Arabic language and literature examinations throughout the twelve years of schooling in Syria is a pre-requisite to passing

practice has been closely adopted in Algeria and other African Arab countries where French for years was the only official language. Foreign languages, however, are still taught as obligatory subjects in Arab schools but the tuition is often conducted by non-native speakers who themselves do not in most cases possess any perfect mastery or command of the language.

In the period following independence, Arab students who wished to pursue their higher education or specialize in fields not available in their home countries were sent by their governments to foreign colleges and universities abroad. In fact, the number of students receiving their education in foreign countries has been steadily increasing[1] and with them

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all other subjects, regardless of the nature of the school attended (technical, scientific, etc.).

1. The number of Syrian students receiving their education outside Syria mounted to 15,205 in the year 1960; 731 of which were sent by their government, and the rest went on their own. This number increased to 19,029 in 1968.

The following table points out the number of students studying outside the country and the countries they received their education in, in the year 1967-1968.

Name of Country	Number of students Receiving Scholarships	Students on Their Own
Arab countries	65	6159
Western Europe	163	6023
West Germany	47	
U.K.	29	
Italy	5	
Belgium	13	
Denmark	1	

the influence of Western thought has thus further extended. Consciously or unconsciously, the Arab student, in the process of pursuing his studies amongst foreign people, acquires a good deal of their mental and moral outlook. He goes back to his country not only using their language in his daily conversation,[1] but also expressing new concepts and views.[2]

The outcome of this dependence by some Arabs upon

Name of Country	Number of Students Receiving Scholarships	Students on their own
Switzerland	4	
Sweden	1	
France	17	
Austria	46	
Socialist Countries	211	1597
D.D.R.	72	
Bulgaria	10	
Poland	67	
Czechoslovakia	24	
Rumania	15	
Hungary	8	
Yugoslavia	15	
U.S.S.R	254	-
U.S.A. & Canada	34	652
Miscellaneous	80	43

Department of Statistics, Ministry of Education, Statistical Bulletin, Damascus, 1968.

1. A questionnaire has been given to American University of Beirut students whose native language is Arabic, to see how great is the effect of learning English on their daily conversation has been. The number of students asked was 64. The experiment has been performed by Miss Ilham Samara, a graduate student in the psychology department. The questions and their related answers are:

1. What language did you speak at home before you were old enough to go to school?
   45 students spoke Arabic entirely.
   14 students spoke mostly Arabic with some English or French.
   5 students spoke half Arabic and half English (French).

foreign education, is a group of bilinguals[1] and biculturals who are faced with identity problems.

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2. When I first started to go to school, my friends and I spoke:
   44 spoke Arabic entirely
   18 Spoke Arabic mostly, with some English(French)
   2 Spoke half Arabic and half English (French)

3. Today at home my family and I speak:
   40 Entirely Arabic
   22 Mostly Arabic with some English (French)
   2 Half Arabic, half English (French)

4. On campus my friends and I speak:
   4 Arabic entirely
   28 Arabic mostly with some English (French)
   24 Half Arabic, half English
   7 Mostly English
   1 Entirely English

5. Away from home and outside the university I speak:
   12 Arabic entirely
   38 Mostly Arabic, some English
   9 Half Arabic, half English
   3 Mostly English
   2 English entirely

2. The relation between language, culture, and cognition has been an attractive field of study for linguists, psychologists and anthropologists. For further information see:
E.Sapir, Culture, Language and Personality (Berkely, 1961); B.L.Whorf, Language, Thought and Reality (Cambridge, Mass., 1956); S. Ervin, "Language and TAT Content in Bilinguals," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1964, 68, PP.500-507.

The question that these sources raise is whether there may be a change in the bilingual's system of beliefs and values as he shifts from one language to the other. Does he adopt the stereotypes associated with the language and its corresponding culture and when he uses that particular language, does he learn only the structure of that language system or does learning of a language carry with it learning of the culture in general and values and norms in particular?

Some propose that the learner of a second language is in a way making a step towards being acculturated into a second linguistic/cultural community. If the two cultures are somewhat incompatible, the learner may actually experience feelings of comfort and anomie as he loosens ties with his in group and becomes more and more acculturated into the second linguistic community.

1. 'Bilingual subjects' refers for most investigators to an 'equilingual' person who performs well in all aspects of both languages.

For as Dr. Hazem Zaki Nuseibeh maintains in his book The Ideas of Arab Nationalism "a language is something more than a passive instrument. It is a way of life and thought".[1] When Arab students obtain their higher education at an English, American, French or German institutions, they integrate partially into a new way of life. As the proportion of these students to the total population is necessarily small, they become a sort of enclave, whose outlook on major problems is not shared by a majority of people. And to make the confusion worse they are not in agreement among themselves concerning these questions. An American-educated Arab is likely to have different views on such matters as political theory, systems of government, forms of economic organization, and social and moral values from those held by a French-educated Arab, even though both belong to the same Western tradition. Thus "a dual disharmony exists: (1) between the Western-educated elite and the masses; (2) within the ranks of the elite itself."[2]

The intellectual crisis of the younger Arab generation as Hisham Sharabi, an Arab intellectual, views it may be summarized in terms of three main features: (1) psychological uprootedness; (2) loss of moral and religious certainties; and (3) changes of values.

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1. Hazem Zaki Nuseibeh, Op.Cit., P.69.
2. Hisham Sharabi, "Political and Intellectual Attitudes of the Young Arab Generation," Middle East and Muslim Africa, edited by Tibor Kerekes (New York: Praeger, 1961), P.50.

"Uprootedness", Sharabi thinks, is found "in all large cities and towns /in the Arab world/ from Beirut to Tangiers"; for them "cultural and psychological uprootedness is a normal state of being."[1]

The problem is that the entire Arab literate generation which "has come to manhood in the mid twentieth century finds itself disinherited in a world providing no values or certainties that are relevant and contingent."[2] The one force, Islam, which provided its fathers with conventional means of comfort and security appears to have ceased to carry any real meaning for the young generation. Cut off from his heritage, the Arab intellectual has to import his ideologies. The consequent multiplicity of values does not contribute to any inner sense of direction. From this vertiginous tension, there appears to be no easy escape.

The Arab novelists writing in a foreign language came to represent the live fruition of a century and a half of Western involvement with Arab affairs and the concomitant social and psychological effects resulting from the interplay of civilizations and cultures. Both in their life styles and literary careers, the writers were to display the uprootedness, the identity problems, the change of values and ideological discrepencies which their societies were undergoing. However, the reason why Western influence

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1. Hisham Sharabi, Ibid.
2. Ibid.

was to leave a deeper mark on their characters than on the rest of the Arab population is strongly related to social and even religious factors already detailed and discussed. The majority of the writers under study (with the exception of the Palestinian Isaak Diqs) are Christian by faith, bourgeois by upbringing (Rima Alamuddin is a Druze, of a Swiss mother). Their readiness, therefore, to react favourably to Western influence was not hindered by any preconceived hostility, as in the case of Moslem fanatics for instance, nor by any conscious feeling of potential threats to their traditional social and cultural values. By virtue of their upper-class backgrounds (Atiyah was son to a notable doctor working in the Sudan; Ghali came from an aristocratic Egyptian family; Alamuddin was daughter of a Lebanese tycoon, etc.) they all were able to frequent foreign schools at home and pursue education their abroad (Atiyah read history in Oxford, Jabra and Alamuddin read English literature at Cambridge, Ghali was a student of medicine at the University of London...). Their involvement, therefore, with Western culture was, more or less, a <u>fait accompli</u>, manifested not only in their concrete knowledge of the West or intimate relationship to it, but, even more important, in their eager interest in and emulation of Western European characters.

However, this does not explain away the urge to write creatively in the foreign language, which is

very different from using it as a means of communication with the West, or for educational purposes. True, amongst Arab intellectuals educated in the West, intellectual argument, serious thecretical discussion, most cases where logical and ideological terminology are essential, the conversation tends to be carried on in English. Even at one level, English words enter into the native speech. But the desire to reveal one's inner self by way of creative writing in a foreign language is an entirely different question.

Should one then reach the conclusion that the writers in question reflect an intense case of Westernization, or a curious phenomenon engendered by close cultural contact? Or should one view the literature produced as merely an expression of the Arab bourgeoisie in a certain phase of social change? The answer may be found in the further investigation of the language-choice question.

The Language Choice:

In a certain sense Francophone and Anglophone Arab writers do not have much choice in their adoption of a foreign language as a vehicle for literary expression. Foreign educated,they feel 'no longer at ease' with their indigenous language and are much more at home with the language of their education. Friends and colleagues of the Lebanese author in English, Edward Atiyah, for example, tell of the discomfort he often

felt whenever he had to deliver his weekly talk in Arabic to the B.B.C.'s Arabic service. He was never confident enough of his grammar and had to ask friends more knowlegeable of the secrets of the language to correct his drafts for him before being on the air.[1] Whereas on the other hand, Atiyah's mastery of the 'foreign' English language was indeed enviable. Critics in Britain who reviewed his works had to admit that he wrote "better English than 90 per cent of English novelists."[2]

The fact that most of these writers too lived or are still living in the West, married or befriended Western women[3], and assimilated Western culture and lore, habits and manners, must have an enormous impact on their language choice. English is the language they used for their daily purposes and they simply continued to use it in their creative writing.

In many cases then the choice of which language to write in is not particularly conscious. The writer expresses himself in the language that comes to him first. When asked how he came to write The Book of Mirdad (1948) in English, the Lebanese writer Mikhail

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1. Information obtained from Atiyah's colleague at the B.B.C. Arabic Service in London.
2. Review of The Thin Line, The Spectator 9th Nov., 1951, P.614.
3. Atiyah, for example, married a Scottish woman and lived the major part of his life until his death in England.

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Naimy said:

> The only thing I was decided on was that the book should be written in English. If you ask me why, I would be at a loss with an answer. So had it simply come to me.[1]

Indeed, what perhaps matters in the long run is not the language in which a writer says things but the way he says them. As the Indian writer in English Balachandra Rajan points out:

> /for a writer/ to whom the act and way of saying is the birth and definition of a thing said,... the choice of a language is largely illusory. There are no alternatives, and the right way is the only way that is possible. One chooses the language which one must, and whichever language one chooses, one has to fight with it to remake it.[2]

Certainly, few authors would consider the pros and cons of the different languages at their disposal before putting pen to paper. In 1953, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, the Palestinian novelist and critic, found that English was the only language he could write his novel in (Hunters in a Narrow Street) as the Arabic novel then had not yet reached the desired level of maturity.[3] Besides, to him, writing in English was both a challenge and a pleasure. Ever since he read English literature at Cambridge, Jabra tells, "expressing myself in this language was a sweet challenge I met confidently and blithefully."[4]

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1. Mikhail Naimy, Sabun: Hikayat Umr (Seventy: A Lifestory), (Beirut: Nawfal, 1959), III, 214.
2. B. Rajan, "Writing in English", Illustrated Weekly, 26th May, 1963.
3. Personal correspondence with the author, letter dated in Baghdad, 5th April, 1970.
4. Ibid.

But although he seemed at first determined to use this language permanently for creative writing[1], later on, Jabra turned almost entirely to Arabic[2] after he finally settled in the Arab world. "I found it absurd to write novels in English anymore now that I lived on Arab land," he confesses. Jabra even transalted his collection of short stories Passage in the Silent Night originally written in English into Arabic and prefered to publish it locally. The language choice then has in this case been determined by a temporary need and as a result of an intellectual and linguistic climate in which the author lived.

Whereas Jabra began his writing career in English and turned then to Arabic, it was exactly the reversed case for writers like Ameen Rihani and Gibran Kahlil Gibran. The latter spent their intellectually 'formative' years in the United States away from their homeland, and though they persisted in communicating and expressing an Arab sensibility, their literary linguistic tool was becoming increasingly English. But these, living in exile, must have discovered the practicality of

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1. Between 1942 and 1954 Jabra published many of his English poems in literary magazines in Britain and Palestine, such as in Poetry (Dec.194. Forum (published in Jerusalem) in 1944,1945; as well as in literary student magazines published at Cambridge and London universities. In this period, Jabra also wrote a novelette in English, Echo and the Pool but never had it published as he considered it one of his 'finger exercises'.

2. In Baghdad, while occupying the chair of English literature at the Baghdad University, Jabra wrote in English a number of political

using a world language with its wider audience. Both writers certainly gained a greater popularity and a much wider circulation of their works than any other Arab writer writing in a foreign language. Gibran's The Prophet is only one case in point.

The choice of language in several Third World and Commonwealth countries must have been partly determined by similar realizations. The appeal of having the English or French speaking worlds for an audience enticed many African writers to support literature in English or French instead of the indigenous tongues. Senghor, for one, defended the choice of French as a literary language for Africans on the grounds of its world-wide usage. He said

"... nous nous exprimons en français, parce que le français est une langue à vocation universelle..."[1]

It ought to be obvious that the Arab writer's purpose in writing in English and reaching a wider audience

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articles and talks as well as poems which were published and broadcast locally. In more recent years, he contributed a good number of studies in English to scholarly magazines and journals abroad such as "Art, Dream and Action" in the London Gazelle Review (1976); "The Exile as Writer," in Journal of Palestine Studies; "The Comitted and the Rebels" Middle East Forum (March 1967); "Literary and artistic tendencies in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine," in Peter Mansfield's book Survey of the Middle East; "Arabic Language and Culture," in Michael Adam's Handbook of the Middle East; "Modern Arabic Literature and the West," Journal of Arabic Literature (1971), Vol.II, 76-91; "Transitions in Arabic Poetry Today," Middle East Forum, Vol.XLIII, No.1, 1967.

1. "Comme les lamantins vont boire à la source," in his Liberté I, P.225.

has been greatly stimulated by this desire to communicate and interpret the reality and humanity of his often misjudged people. Through the medium of English, he is able to address the 'colonizer' in his own language and speak of the problems, political and social, which Western influence in the Middle East has bred. There is little surprise that a good number of Arab writers in English have chosen to bring up the Palestine question in their poetry and fiction, and opportuned themselves of not only presenting their side of the story, but also of baldly and candidly exposing the West's foul play in their lands. Notwithstanding the perennial arguments for and gainst the use of literary forms as political forums, many Arab works in English have, in various degrees, succeeded in projecting Arab political views without turning their literature into propaganda. Of these attempts Etel Adnan's poetry deserves to be mentioned particularly her poem 'Jebu' published recently in K.Boullata's edition of Women in the Fertile Crescent[1]. Equally worthy of notice are Edward Atiyah's Lebanon Paradise[2], Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's Hunters in a Narrow Street[3], Isaak Diqs's A Bedouin Boyhood[4], and El Sir Hassan Fadl's Their Finest Days[5].

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1. K.Boullata, ed., Women of the Fertile Crescent (Washington D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1978).
2. E. Atiyah, Lebanon Paradise (London: Peter Davies, 1953).
3. J.I.Jabra, Hunters in a Narrow Street (Heinemann, 1960).
4. Isaak Diqs, A Bedouin Boyhood (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967).
5. S.H.Fadl, Their Finest Days (Rex Collings,1969)

Strongly related to the language choice and the political theme is the question of censorship. Writing in a foreign language has granted some of the Arab authors a sense of security from censorship at home. Publishing abroad meant to many of them, especially to those who come from countries where the freedom of expression is restricted, that their ideas will not be distorted in anyway or will not be prevented from coming out into the light. Beer in the Snooker Club[1] by the Egyptian writer Waguih Ghali would have perhaps stood no chance of publication at home on account of the perhaps 'more than desired' openness with which the political system was ridiculed. Censorship is not by rule political. The morally and religiously conservative tendencies in the Arab East have, for years, applied the censor's scissors to many types of 'daring' writings. In a foreign language, however, an author steps not only out of taboo themes or expressions but also feels less inhibited, because the language he uses is not that of his childhood and upbringing and so does not carry with it the same strong intrinsic moral connotations or linguistic prohibitions. Many people, indeed, feel that they can swear in a foreign language and not feel embarassed about it. Arab writers in English

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1. W.Ghali, Beer in the Snooker Club (London: Andre Deutsch, 1964).

for this matter, have not opted for English with the purpose of using swear words. But to the majority of them, the alien speech has minimized their inhibitions towards the description, for example, of sexual intimacies between their characters. Edward Atiyah's unpublished novel 'After Every Tempest', inspired perhaps by D.H.Lawrence, evidences the author's attempt to disencumber himself from morally prohibited themes in his native country. The love scene in the midst of the sea is almost culled out of Lady Chatterley's Lover. Few indeed can imagine the same scene retained in an Arabic novel let alone being written in that language. However, anyone who takes a look at the novel's manuscript can immediately sense the unease with which that scene was produced. It was the only chapter written and rewritten several times with obvious laborious corrections and amendments. The foreign language obviously granted freedom. But the author's psyche remained perturbed about handling it. It is interesting to know, however, that British publishers turned down the novel on account of the "indecencies" the work abounded with!

Only few Arab writers chose a foreign language for purely aesthetic reasons. These were mostly French speaking Lebanese. Farajallah Haik, for one, felt that there were certain intrinsic values in the French language and aesthetic advantages in using it. To him, French

is like a piece of clay which can take all shapes and forms that one cannot resist its "beautiful allurement", its resilience, its clarity, and its "seductive case":

> Je considère la langue française comme une belle argile qui se prête a toutes les formes... On ne peut résister à sa belle allure, à sa souplesse, à sa clareté, je dirai même à sa desinvolture qui est pleine de séduction.[1]

One recalls at this stage similar views expressed by Francophone African writers. Leopold Sedar Senghor included the French's aesthetic values among other reasons for using it for literary expression. French, he says is "une langue de gentillesse et d'honnêteté" (a language of graciousness and civility)[2], and the advantage inherent in it is "essentiellement, la richesse du vocabulaire et le fait que le français est une langue d'une audience internationale," (is essentially the richness of the vocabulary and the fact that this language caters for an international audience).[3]

Similarly, zealous defenders of the English language all over the world have reiterated one after the other the merits abundant in its warp and woof. It is not only a"very adaptable language" but also "so transparent it can take on the tint of any country."[4]

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1. Farajallah Haik, quoted by Maurice Sacre in Anthologie des auteurs Libanais de langue francaise (Commission Libanaise de l'unesco, Beyrouth, Novembre-Decembre 1948), P.5.

2.Cited by C.R.Larson in The Emergence of African Fiction (Indiana University Press,1971),P.168.

3.L.S.Senghor,"Le Francais, langue de culture," Esprit, XXX (1962), 842.

4. R.K.Narayan, "English in India," Commonwealth Literature, ed. by J.Press (London:Heinemann,1965) P.123.

Justifying his use of a foreign tongue, and perhaps attempting to have a clear conscience about it, Farajallah Haik proclaimed that anyhow Arab authors are already writing in a language that is alien to their people. "Cette langue"/Classical Arabic/, he maintains "est aussi loin de l'arabe dialectal que le latin de français."

The most commonly repeated assertion is that the foreign language has a sense of 'fatality' about it that writers will either express themselves in it or not write literature altogether. After all, didn't Joseph Conrad, one of the successful pioneers in this field, express a similar outlook when he said "if I had not written in English, I would not have written at all."[1] And yet he knew enough French to write in it while he had not learnt English until he was sixteen.

Whatever 'seductive' attractions a foreign language may have, or whatever reasons make its use a compulsive need, one cannot but hope that the literatures written in it will only facilitate the encounter of people despite their cultural differences, and that each can perceive through the knowledge of

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1. Cited by C.D.Narasimhaiah in "Indian Writing in English: An Introduction," Journal of Commonwealth Literature (July, 1968), P.15.

the other, how close they are, and how much they resemble one another. Indeed, let such literatures be, as J.P.Clark once wrote, "a positive step back from Babel's house of many tongues."[1]

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1. J.P.Clark, in a foreward to A Reed in the Tide (London: Longmans, 1965), P.viii.

CHAPTER TWO

THE EARLY ATTEMPTS

Gibran Kahlil Gibran

Mikhail Naimy

Ameen Rihani

The first Arabs to use English for creative purposes were Syrian[1] emigrants to the United States who, for political, economic and religious reasons, had left their country towards the end of the nineteenth century to seek a new life in the American continent. Their literary output was mostly written in Arabic and directed first to the growing communities of Syrians in North and South America; and second, to the Arabs of the East. Poetry existed in abundance and was mostly coloured by feelings of nostalgia for the homeland, combined with political and social protests for reform. Gradually, writers who had close contact with the cultural and intellectual life of the West, and whose acquisition of the foreign language was being sharpened by their extensive reading, started to produce literary works written in the language of the host country— English. A good number of them oscillated

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1. Up to the end of the first world war the term 'Syrian' refered to citizens of Greater Syria which comprised Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan. The division was a result of a French-English pact known as the Sykes-Picot agreement.

between the two languages and were drawn to the one without abandoning the other. Others translated their own works either from English to Arabic or vice versa, as for example, Mikhail Naimy. Readers in the Arab world thus had access to almost the entirety of these writers' works as they reached them in Arabic, and were little aware that a poem or a story first saw the light in a foreign language.[1] The stylistic novelties which readers trace, have always been attributed to the western elements with which the neo-Arabic literature was mixed. For, as will be seen later in this chapter, it was due to the literary endeavours of the Syrio-Americans that a new style developed in the Arab world, a style that rebelled against and departed from traditional scholasticism with its periphrases, and its rhymed and elaborate prose. Written in exile, away from the stifling atmosphere of the intellectually and politically ailing Ottoman empire, this literature was the first healthy sign of a potential literary revival. In fact, it has been the practice of scholars of modern Arabic literature to consider the Arabic literary output of 'Al Mahjar'[2] as the starting point of an Arab literary

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1. Such as Naimy's Book of Mirdad, Rihani's Outside the Harem and many others.
   Until recently, Arab critics disagreed on the original language in which Gibran wrote his works. In 1971, Fawzi al Atawi in his book Gibran Kahlil Gibran, Abqariyun min Lubnan (a genius from Lebanon),(Beirut: Al Sharika al Lubnaniya lil Kitab), still believed that The Prophet was the first work written by Gibran in English (see PP.5, and 7). As will be seen later, The Madman 1918 and The Forerunner 1920, both in English, were well known in the United States.

2. 'Al Mahjar' is the Arabic term used for the land to which one emigrates.

renaissance. Yet, in spite of the voluminous criticism on the literature of Mahjar, few indeed are the attempts to include English works by Arab writers in any serious study. These have been not dealt with collectively as an entity different from its Arabic counterpart. To cite an example here, one is reminded that Arab critics of Rihani have devoted volumes to his Arabic works, and only a few pages to the much more interesting English oeuvres. But Rihani, except in very few cases, wrote either in English, for English readers; or in Arabic with an Arab audience in mind. Consequently, Arab readers and critics recognized him as the eminent author of Rihaniat, Antumul Shu'ara' Mulouk al Arab, but knew very little of the author of The Book of Khalid, The Path of Vision, or A Chant of Mystics.

Gibran Kahlil Gibran remains an exception. The reception of his works by both Western and Eastern readers was much greater than the attention given to his Arab contemporaries. "The gift of the East to the West"[1], the Arabs called him, while Westerners saw in him "a new Psalmist and writer of fables, who gives to us of the Western world a note too seldom found in the writers of our own poets."[2]

Gibran's Prophet attracted little notice when it appeared

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1. Husayn Rushdi Sariy-al-Din, "Minhat al Sharq il al Gharb" (The gift of the East to the West), quoted in Khalil Hawi, Kahlil Gibran. His Background, Character and Works (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1963).

2. Howard William Cook, The Sun, quoted in Jean and Kahlil Gibran, Kahlil Gibran: His Life and World (New York: Graphic Society, 1974).

in 1923, but his popularity has grown at such an increasing rate that in the early seventies, the four millionth copy was sold and the twentieth translation into a foreign language made.[1] Still, Gibran's critics have in most cases regarded his works as one continuous endeavour, one long poem with a beginning and an end, without paying much attention to the language shift when he suddenly decided in 1918 to write chiefly in English. Gibranism[2], the distinctive stylistic characteristics of the author, seemed to display to the Gibran reader and critic no major changes as the author changed languages. In English or in Arabic, it was the same romantic, mystical, imaginative and symbolic style which had traces of Nietzsche, Blake and Whitman, and which wedded the linguistic flow of the East to the suggestive precision of the West. Perhaps it is the availability of the entirety of his works in the two languages , English and Arabic, that allowed critics to see the <u>oeuvres</u> as a growth of one mind regardless of the

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1. Jean and Kahlil Gibran, <u>Ibid</u>.
2. Of 'Gibranism', Mr. Claude Bragdon wrote: "The character and depth of his influence upon the entire Arabic world may be infered from the fact that it gave rise to a new word, Gibranism. Just what this word means, English readers will have no difficulty in divining: mystical vision, metrical beauty, a simple and fresh approach to the 'problem' of life... extraordinary dramatic power, deep erudition, lightning like intuition, lyrical life, metrical mastery, and Beauty which permeates the entire pattern in everything he touches."
   quoted by Barbara Young in <u>Beloved Poet</u> (New York: Alfred A.Knopf, 1972), P.37.

change in the linguistic tool.[1]

It is true that the three major authors in English, Gibran Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931), Ameen Rihani (1876-1941), and Michael Naimy (1889-), have been singled out in a number of scholarly studies by Western and Eastern critics alike, yet, no real distinction was drawn between the English and the Arabic works in any attempt to point out thematic, stylistic or even psychological differences. Such an endeavour certainly lies beyond the claims of the present study though it realizes its interesting potential. But this then prompts a definition of the scope of this chapter. To render the material on Arab emigrant writers in English relevant to the general theme of the thesis, this chapter will focus solely on literary genres which come close to the definition of a novel, or which use narrative techniques conducive to the later development of the more technically mature form of the Arab novel in English.

In the strictest sense of the word, none of the Syrio-American writers wrote novels, but they did concern themselves with narratives of various kinds, in which we may

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1. Only Rose Ghorayeb in Gibran fi Atharihi al Kitabiya (Gibran through his works), (Beirut: Dar al Makshouf, 1969) points out some stylistic distinctions between the Arabic and the English works. See PP.221, 231. Barbara Young, in a foreward to The Prose Poems (Heineman: 1974) simply states that "there is a Gibran English as there is a Gibran Arabic, and both are definitely and subtly different from any other English or Arabic." P.vii.

discern an uncertain groping towards fictional form. As a matter of fact, in terms of Northorp Frye's now famous classification of fiction into novel, confession, anatomy and romance[1], the works of Gibran, Naimy and Rihani have more to do with the last three kinds than the novel itself. And the reason for this is not far to seek. In Arabic, even more than in English, the novel is a new form, while Arabic literature in the form of confession, anatomy or romance is fairly common. What could be more understandable, then, than that these writers should choose a literary form familiar to them for the expression of their themes, especially as their subject matter had less to do with the realistic particularity of an imagined world than the more nebulous world of philosophical abstraction.

Indeed, only one work, Ameen Rihani's Book of Khalid, the first of the three to be published, has any real pretensions towards being a novel. Nevertheless, it is instructive to observe how Gibran and Naimy handled their narrative themes, because a proper appreciation of what their aims and achievements were will help us to understand the limitations of more recent Arab novels in English, which also lapse into a certain fuzziness, pretentious

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1. Northrop Frye, The Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton University Press, 1957), P.23.

moralising, and philosophical speculation, which tend to retard rather than fill out the narrative. That the fictional efforts of these early Syrio-American writers were only partially successful must account for the fact that they provided little inspiration for other Arab writers in English to follow. It is also interesting to observe that these writers constitute a self-contained unit; their grafting together of oriental mysticism and American transcendentalism was in the final analysis a movement away from the novel, as defined by Frye, and later novelists found it more fruitful to copy the more concrete, fact-laden narratives of the European realistic tradition.

Before embarking on a close examination of the fictional works of each of Gibran, Naimy and Rihani, a historical account of the circumstances that made the rise of these writers possible is imperative. Such an account, however, must needs be brief and more literary than historical.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Literary historians agree that the civil war of 1860 in Mount Lebanon, and the entanglement of ensuing economic, political, and religious events were the prime motives for the wave of emigration by Syrian Arabs to Africa and the American continent. Although the war was often interpreted in terms of its religious implications—

Druzes versus Christians— modern historians are inclined to regard it as one of the early attempted revolutions in the Middle East, carried out by the poor against feudalism and class distinction.[1] Whatever the true motivations were, an inevitable outburst against the increasingly despotic rule of the Ottomans, who had held the country since 1516 and subjected Syria and the other Arab 'provinces' to "a period of universal stagnation and decay."[2] Contrary to the true teachings of Islam which insist on the equal treatment of people regardless of their faith, sect or creed, the Ottomans, who regarded themselves the supreme pontiffs of the Moslem church, and who laboured to invest themselves with the attributes of theocracy to inspire their subjects with veneration, exercised bitter discrimination against the Christians and blind orthodoxy in regard to the Moslems.

To this was added the fact that the Ottomans

> were primarily a military aristocracy, and consequently uninterested in culture, so that under their rule... the Arabs had become a secondary race, ruled by foreigners from outside their land.. /and/ the Ottoman masters, so utterly foreign to the Arabs, could no longer be used as patrons by Arab poets and literatures... Indeed, the question at stake under Turkish rule was, not only whether the Arab belles lettres could possibly survive, but also whether it was possible for the Arabic language itself to remain intact.[3]

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1. Nadra Sarraj, Shu'ara' al Rabita al Qalamiya (The Pen Bond Poets), (Cairo: Dar al Ma'aref,1957), P.42.
2. H.A.Gibb, Arabic Literature (Oxford: Clarenden Press, 1963), P.103.
3. Nadeem Naimy, Mikhail Naimy: An Introduction (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1967), P.11.

The despotic rule on the political level, and the orthodox imposition on the intellectual and cultural, led to the intellectual isolation of the Arab from the developing world around him. In the words of Professor B.A.Nicholson

> Nowhere in the history of this period can we discern either of the two elements which are productive of literary greatness: the quickening influence of a higher culture or the inspiration of a free and vigorous national life.[1]

In this atmosphere of political and social unrest, it was easy for religious differences, fed by the zeal of the various sectarian foreign missionaries and nourished by western colonial ambitions, to trigger the fire of the civil war. Religious animosity culminated in the terrible massacre of 1860 in an area reported to have lived up to the 1840s in a state of religious co-existence, toleration and amity.[2] The upheaval resulted in foreign intervention which eventually led to the autonomy of Mount Lebanon, or what was later to be called 'Al Mutassarifiya'.[3] This comprised the mountain proper, excluding the coastal towns and the valley of Biqa'. Thus isolated in the arid mountains and cut off from the sea, the Christian Arabs

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1.Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, A Literary History of the Arabs (Cambridge University Press, 1930), P.443.

2.Philip Hitti, Lebanon in History: from the Earliest Times to the Present (London: MacMillan, 1957), PP.433-434.

3.In 1860, England and France decided to intervene in Syria on behalf of the Porte. The autonomy of the mountain was drafted in 1861 and amended in 1864. It was protected by the seven European countries, England, France, Russia, Prussia, Austria and Italy.

of Mount Lebanon had little to cultivate and less to live on. The result was that thousands of desperate men left their homeland seeking new fortunes to support themselves and their families. Many left for Egypt, Europe, North Africa, Australia, but the majority headed for America which was then luring Arabs and Europeans alike. By the beginning of the twentieth century, some 400,000 Syrians had settled away from home.[1]

The wave of emigration, then, was the outcome of a combination of factors which led the Syrians to seek a life better than that offered under the Ottoman rule. To this can be added a number of other motivations such as the attraction of life in the West as described by the many pilgrims who visited Syria and the Holy Land,[2] for America was often pictured as the land of freedom, gold and fortune.[3] What also helped in delineating an attractive and alluring image of the new world were the several reports printed in the local press glorifying the land of milk and honey.

Moreover, the fascination of the New World appealed to

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1. Philip Hitti, Lebanon in History, Loc.Cit., PP.473-7.
2. Ibid., and Nadra Sarraj Shu'ara' al Rabita al Kalamia, Loc.Cit., P.50.
3. N. Sarraj, Ibid.

the growing middle class which was increasingly dissatisfied with the limited opportunities offered to them at home. They even felt that they were not allowed to put to practice a knowledge they acquired from the schools and colleges which were flourishing in the country. Economic and political power was still in the hands of the social 'elite', and foreign interests which permeated the Arab world were rubbing shoulders with the nascent bourgeoisie, competing for business opportunities. The awkward 'individualism' could not, however, easily give in; rather they sought new founts of benefit even if that meant emigration.[1]

Abbas and Najm in Al Shi'r al Arabi fil Mahjar (Arab Poetry in 'Mahjar'), maintain that the emigration movement was strongly linked to the rising petite bourgeoisie in Syria. They even consider that the translation into Arabic of works such as Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (by Butrus al Bustani) reflects the middle class mentality.

In her book on Arab emigrant writers in the United States of America, Nadra Sarraj suggests that the principles and ideas of the French revolution which were promoted in the

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1. Abbas and Najm give details of how European industry competed with the infant Arab one. Silk industry, tobacco and textile had to give way to the better quality European counterpart (see PP.14-17). The European trade route also shifted to the Far East, which caused a recession in the economy of the Middle East.
Ihsan Abbas and M.Yousef Najm, Al Shi'r al Arabi fil Mahjar (Beirut: Dar Sader, 1957)

Middle East first by Napoleon and his troops, and then by the French expedition which landed in Lebanon after the 1860 civil war, must also have illuminated the minds of the Syrians and perhaps, indirectly, enticed them to look for the West where freedom was revered and the individual respected.[1]

Whether the growing communities of Arab settlers saw their dreams come true in the large cities of New York and Boston, or not, they certainly displayed commendable traits in their receptive and keen personalities. Introduced to an entirely new mode of life which possessed ideas, goals and values different from their own, they were capable of preserving their Arab heritage without shutting themselves off from the challenging vital world around them. In fact, this very world was an eye-opener, in whose light they started to look afresh at their own selves and their past. Among these emigrants was a group of sensitive writers, able and ambitious, who registered the experience of the Arab emigrant with much boldness and vivacity, in an art that was non-conformist to say the least. As already mentioned, Arab emigrant writers have, to a large extent, concurred in emancipating Arabic literature from the sterility of

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1. N.Sarraj, Op.Cit., P.34.

language and style which dominated the belles lettres during four centuries of impotent Ottoman rule, when writers were preoccupied with form rather than content and were engaged in the purposeless pursuit of euphuism and linguistic disputes.

The opportunity to break away from the stagnant, intricate rhetorical artistry and the traditional scholasticism of medieval Arabic literature was to present itself among the emigrants who had contact with a new culture, and could draw fresh inspiration from their readings of the European Romantics or American transcendentalists, who sang freely of life and glorified nature and the emancipated self. Thematically, there was nothing more becoming for the thwarted souls of the emigrants than the cry of the romantic bards to strip the self of its artificial garb and indulge in the boundless freedom of nature, truth and humanity. Technically, the 'prose poem' as they came to call it, or 'free verse' as it is better known in the West, was also a more than welcome literary form which could carry the weight of their experience without limiting it within the conventional verse forms and rhythms. Both in terms of subject matter and form, contact with the Romantic West was a liberating force. In other words, the intellectual, onerously long suppression under which the emigrants had long suffered, helped create a new breed of writers who had the eagerness, the longing,

the ambition and the thirst to create new literary trends which could replace the old ones, and who were able to graft on to their works shoots from other cultures to give their own blossoms more life and vitality. The experiments did not confine themselves to forms and themes but also to language. A number of these writers tried their hands at writing in English; some excelled, some did not. Of the first, three were able to attain world fame, namely: Gibran Kahlil Gibran(1883-1931), Mikhail Naimy (1889-), and Ameen Rihani (1876-1941).[1]

While each of these writers had his own independent literary style, they seem to have developed common literary traits which had almost identical sources of inspiration. The three authors knew one another very well, exchanged literary advice[2] and played one another's critics.[3] Both Gibran and Naimy were founding members of Al Rabita (The Pen Bond), a literary society which sponsored the creative works of the Arab writers in the United States. They all came from lower middle class Christian families in the Lebanon, and shared the same experience of emigration and its psychological aftermath. They had, more or less,

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1. Others who wrote in English were Jameel Mansour, Habib Ibrahim Katibah, Yusef Ghorayeb and J. Masou'd.

2. In his biography of Gibran Kahlil Gibran, Mikhail Naimy describes how Gibran used to show him his English and Arabic works before sending them to the publishers. Rihani and Gibran also used to exchange literary advice, and it was Gibran who drew all the illustrations for Rihani's Book of Khalid.

3. See Naimy's review of both Gibran and Rihani in his critical work Al Ghirbal (Beirut: Nawfal,1975).

similar educational backgrounds[1] and were exposed to the same western influences which were to shape their works and intellectual make-up. And above all, despite their westernisation, they retained their Arab outlook and Lebanese heritage. Rather, their experience of acculturation, contrary to the later post war novelists, with whom this thesis is chiefly concerned, did not result in a problematic dichotomy of East and West. On the contrary, they were able to note the possibility of a synthesis that subsumes worthy elements from both worlds, that infuses some eastern spiritualism into western materialism, with the belief that humanity is best served by bestriding the two cultures and recognizing the virtues of each.[2]

Most of the English writings of the three young emigrants were in 'prose poetry' which was blended with philosophical dissertations as in Gibran's The Prophet, or Jesus, Son of Man; or with mystical extravaganzas as in Rihani's The Chant of Mystics and Naimy's The Book of Mirdad. The novel, the genre of imaginative literature which gives artistic form to the relationship of man and society was

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1. Naimy was the most educated of the three. He was educated by Russian missionaries in Palestine, then in Russia. In the States he obtained a degree in Law from Washington University.
2. Suheil Bushrui, ed. Gibran of Lebanon

only to be seen in glimpses. One reason for this may perhaps be found in the fact that the writers were more concerned with the unchanging moral verities in a timeless setting (Orphalese and its people in The Prophet can stand for all ages and people), whereas novelists see the time factor as an essential element not only in giving shape and substance to the novel but in creating the realia of the character. As Walter Allen states in his book The English Novel, "from its very nature the novel demands a greater or less degree of realism, of fidelity to the facts of the world as men commonly see them."[1] The emigrants cared little for this realism. Coherence and probability of story did not mean much to them, and their characters were not life like in a life like world. This is perhaps why The Book of Khalid by Ameen Rihani succeeds as a philosophical romance and fails as a novel. For to concentrate on the characters as thinkers and preachers of ultimate truth is to lose sight of them as living human beings.

There is, however, a reason besides the dominance of the absolute and humanitarian preaching which explains why the early emigrants did not write novels: It is the absence of this genre from their own literary history.

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1. Walter Allen, The English Novel (Penguin, 1973ed.), P.23.

As early as the twenties, the time when Rihani, Gibran and Naimy were at the peak of their literary careers, the Arabic novel was still in its embryonic phase. In fact it had to wait for at least two or three more decades before it could reach a reasonable degree of maturity. Also, the Arabs in America were not in the habit of buying books, let alone novels. Beside that the periodical press, which flourished in the Arab communities, did not encourage the promotion of the novel form. Instead, the article or the essay was the more popular. Added to this is that emigrant writers found it easier to express themselves in poetry, the traditional Arab instrument of expression, especially as the Romantics presented them with ready models to follow and emulate.

Therefore, even when the Syrio-American writer wanted to write a narrative, it was the parable form that attracted him most as it permitted the blending of the story with the poetic as well as with moral and spiritual speculation. However, one may see in Gibran's parables, Naimy's allegories and Rihani's romances, precursors of the Arab novel, in the same way as one may regard Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress as a possible forerunner of the English novel.[1]

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1. Walter Allen, The English Novel, P.33.

GIBRAN KAHLIL GIBRAN (1883-1931):

The Madman, His Parables and Poems[1] (1918) is Gibran Kahlil Gibran's first publication in English. It comprises thirty four parables and poems, and is illustrated by three of the author's drawings. The book is significant not so much in being the first work written by Gibran in English as in forming a major turning point in his literary development. The Madman not only ushered Gibran into the established literary circles of Boston and New York, but also heralded him as a writer of social vision with the same prophetic qualities as those of no one less than William Blake.[2] In The Madman one finds the nucleus of such later works as The Forerunner, The Prophet, and Jesus, Son of Man, where the main message is 'universal' love and salvation through love.

Recent studies have related this work to Nietzsche's Zarathustra[3], to Blake's 'Songs of Innocence', to Biblical tales and to the general context of the American transcendental movement[4]. In fact, The Madman seems like a blend of

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1. The Madman (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1918)
2. On the flyer of The Madman, the publishers referred to an incident when the great French artist Rodin described Gibran as "the William Blake of the twentieth century." Later critics maintained that the incident is likely to be untrue as Gibran himself frequently invented commendations by important people.
3. Joseph P. Ghougassian, Kahlil Gibran: Wings of Thought (N.Y.: Philosophical Library, 1973), PP.41-42.
4. Suheil Hanna, An Arab Expatriate in America:

all these, and perhaps the names of Tagore, LaFontaine, and even Sigmund Freud could be added to them. What is surprising is the fact that this strange blend of sources has been, to a large degree, successful.

In the first parable of the book, the madman tells how he became insane. It happened thus:

> One day, long before many Gods were born, I woke from a deep sleep and found all my masks were stolen,— the seven masks I have fashioned and worn in seven lives,— I ran maskless through the crowded streets shouting, "Thieves, thieves, the cursed thieves."
>
> Men and women laughed at me and some ran to their houses in fear of me.
>
> And when I reached the market place, a youth standing on a house-top cried, "He is a madman." I looked up to behold him; the sun kissed my own naked face for the first time. For the first time the sun kissed my own naked face and my soul was inflamed with love for the sun, and I wanted my masks no more. And as if in a trance I cried, "Blessed, blessed are the thieves who stole my masks."
>
> Thus I became a madman.

The invitation to see the unmasked face of reality is unmistakeable here, although the writer resorts in his allegory to the archetypal image of the wise fool called insane the minute he grasps truth. It is not difficult to see that the madman throughout the parable is a sinister, disillusioned person, who finds that the shams and hypocrisies

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Kahlil Gibran in his American Setting (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1973).

of society can be detrimental to the development of his self-identity. But with the masks stolen, he gains a freedom of a higher kind. No longer does he have to "prepare a face to meet the faces" that he meets, rather, he walks naked and purged as any seeker of ultimate truth is bound to do.

Following the trend of Zarathustra, the madman introduces himself with a shout[1], though not announcing the death of God but denouncing the evil social ways that civilization introduced. In his eyes, the primordial law of existence is the belief in the innate natural goodness of all beings. His fervid expressions in his poems and parables but unfold a scornful attitude towards hypocrisies that fetter but also protect the evilly disposed. Gibran's ultimate message in the entirety of his works is man's salvation through universal love, love that leaves no room in the heart of the human being for wickedness, injustice or selfishness. Yet, in The Madman, although the message does not flicker, the pages, nevertheless, are draped with a kind of sarcasm and bitterness that makes the mention of love a blasphemy. The expression of this irony reaches its zenith in "The Perfect World", the last parable in The Madman. This world, ironically

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1. Joseph Ghougassian, Op.Cit., P.42.

called perfect, enfolds a human chaos and a nebula of confusion. It is inhabited by "peoples of complete laws and pure order, whose thoughts are assorted, whose dreams are arranged, and whose visions are enrolled and registered."[1] It is plain that Gibran is criticizing a highly mechanised world where everything is measured and calculated to the extent that people are turned into dead mechanical objects, void of human feelings. Yet, in the name of discipline and order, they lie and steal and hurt and blaspheme. Their blemeless code of conduct is to "rob a neighbour with a smile, to bestow gifts with a graceful wave of the hand, to praise prudently, to blame cautiously , to destroy a soul with a word, to burn a body with a breath, and then to wash the hands when the day's work is done."[2] Disillusionment in this world finally extends to the Deity Himself when the madman calls him "God of lost souls, thou who art lost amongst the gods."

Two years later, Gibran's wrath was slightly subdued. The Forerunner[3](1920) reflects the work of a gentler mind, "ironic but not madly so, compassionate but not overly so, a curious mind free from rancour and bitterness."[4] At times, The Forerunner comes close to The Madman's

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1. The Madman, P.61.
2. Ibid., P.62.
3. The Forerunner: His Parables and Poems (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1920).
4. Suheil Hanna, An Arab Expatriate in America, P.113.

pitch of anguish, but in the end, now scathing, now soothing, he breaks away hoping for perfection and salvation in love. In fact, The Forerunner can be seen as a link between Gibran's earlier works of angst and anger, and the later more mature ones as manifested in his chef d'oeuvre The Prophet.[1]

The narrator of the work is not a madman but a mysterious, mystical 'seer' who seeks unity with himself and then with the Divine Being. Man, here, is a nobler creation than in The Madman. In him there are seeds of the divine, and he must strive to fulfill the absolute within him. In Gibran's words, man is his own forerunner, and the towers he has built are but the foundations of his giant-self. It is in this context that the Emersonian influence can best be seen, although first glimpses of the pantheist doctrine and the 'Over-Soul' could be traced in the earlier parables of The Madman, especially the one entitled "God".[2] Both Gibran's language and his choice of images are typical of the Emersonian tradition, as when he describes his meeting with God:

> ... after a thousand years I climbed the sacred mountain and again spoke unto God saying, "My God, my aim and my fulfilment;

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1. In Christianity, the forerunner refers to St. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ. Here, Gibran's book anticipates the birth of The Prophet.
2. The Forerunner, P. 3.

> I am thy yesterday and thou art my tomorrow. I am thy root in the earth and thou art my flower in the sky, and together we grow before the face of the sun."
>
> Then God leaned over me, and in my ears whispered words of sweetness, and even as the sea that enfoldeth a brook that runneth down to her, he enfolded me.
>
> And when I descended to the valleys and the plains God was there also.[1]

With Emerson and Carlyle, Gibran also shares the concept of the poet as a 'seer' and hero; and perhaps motivated by their example, he dreams of himself as a public preacher and lecturer

> My friends and my neighbours and you who daily pass my gate, I would speak to you in your sleep, and in the valley of your dreams I would walk naked and unrestrained; far heedless are your waking hours and deaf are your sound-burdened ears.
> ...
> Like moths that seek destruction in the flame you gather daily in my garden; and with faces uplifted and eyes enchanted you watch me tear the fabric of your days. And in whispers you say the one to the other, 'He sees [illegible] with the light of God. He speaks like the prophets of old. He unveils our souls and unlocks our hearts, and like the eagle that knows the way of foxes he knows our ways.[2]

The reader is invited to involve himself with the preaching, his involvement being all the while guided by the storyteller turned overlooker and teacher.

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1. The Madman, P.4.
2. The Forerunner, PP, 57, 63.

As the writer seems not to be very comfortable with the narrative form, the speaker in the poems and parables is shown to be constantly shifting from narrative to meditation. Often, he loses the sequence of events and delves into boundless speculations. Moreover, he uses the narrative as a device to get on to something else. But even when he carries on with the story-telling, his scenes become 'visions' not confined by time and place but by the eternal disputes between the real and the unreal. The speaker consequently is immediately lifted from his position as narrator to the higher position of seer. And the controlling voice, is only that of Gibran himself 'telling' in a kind of self-revelation.

Despite the fact that author and narrator are one and the same, Gibran is capable of keeping a reasonable distance between himself and his fictitious world. In both The Madman and The Forerunner, the narrator first introduces himself in a brief essay as an involved creator and experiencer, but soon detaches himself from all action and simply tells the story. There are several instances, however, when he is tempted to shift the telling from the third person to direct speech, where he fuses identities with the characters. Perhaps unconsciously, he moves from the distant to the involved

narrator again, and the last voice we hear is his voice incorporating all truths.

The telling itself is an amalgam of a descriptive narration and a dramatic enactment, all in a style that has obvious affinities with the Bible. In the words of the German orientalist, Brockelmann, Gibran's work does in a sense reflect the shadows of the "Psalms of David, of the Song of Solomon, of the Book of Job, of the lamentations of Jeremiah, of the Vision of Isaiah, as well as the exhortations of the Galilean."[1] Gibran explained his attraction to a Biblical style; he told his friend and benefactor Mary Haskell that "the Bible is Syriac literature in English words. It is the child of a sort of marriage. There's nothing in any other tongue to correspond to the English Bible. And the Chaldo-Syriac is the most beautiful language that man has made— though it is no longer used."[2]

The reception of Gibran's early English works was quite remarkable. Gibran was introduced to the Americans as

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1. "Djabran Khalil Djabran et les Origines de la Prose poétique moderne," cited by Jean Lecerf in Orient, Vol.III, 1957, P.11.

2. "The Mary Haskell Diary" (University of North Carolina Library, unpublished manuscript), n.47, July 30th, 1917, quoted in Jean Gibran and Kahlil Gibran, Kahlil Gibran: His Life and World, op.cit. P. 313.

a mysterious hero and a ready-made genius, the Middle Eastern counterpart of Tagore.[1] Reviewing The Madman for the New York Call, the commentator wrote: "This book introduces to English readers the work of the greatest poet of Arabia... In the opinion of many critics, he is a far greater poet than Tagore."[2] The reviewer of The Evening Post found the comparison with Tagore inadequate for "where Tagore furnishes his readers pleasant and palatable sweetmeats... Gibran offers them strong and often acrid doses of disillusion and truth, a tonic enjoyed by but few. A poem like "The Sleep Walker" might have been taken directly out of Jung's revealing "Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido."[3]

The kind of people who were responding to his first books in English were diverse. Many supporters of the new Imagism admired the construction of the poetry.[4] "Kahlil Gibran is writing poems and parables that have an individual music, a naive charm and distinction and a structural symmetry based on symbol, contrast and parallelism," wrote Marguerite Wilkinson in an anthology of contemporary poetry. "/It/ is almost entirely a

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1.Jean and Kahlil Gibran, Kahlil Gibran,P.326.
2.Ibid.
3.Ibid.
4.Ibid., P.330.

poetry of symbolism. His poems are parables, not designs in rhyme, rhythm or imagery, although his rhythms are clear and pleasing. In The Madman, we have the best parables that can be found in contemporary poetry. And each may be interpreted according to the whimsy of the reader."[1]

The interest The Madman elicited was perhaps partly due to this extended range of possible interpretation. Gibran was read in churches, praised by social reformers,[2] and discussed in educational institutions.[3] In fact, his poems and parables were read and discussed by the Poetry Society of America even before their publication. An influential supporter of his, James Oppenheim, included him on the advisory board of his literary magazine The Seven Arts along with Robert Frost, Louis Untermyer, Robert Edmond Jones, Edna Kenton and David Mannes. Thus, Gibran had the opportunity to publish some of his parables along with works by Lowell and Frost, Eugene O'Neill, D.H.Lawrence, Sherwood Anderson, Theodore Dreiser, John Dos Passos and H.L.Mencken.[4]

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1. Marguerite Wilkinson, New Voices (New York: Macmillan, 1929, rev.ed., PP.27,95) cited by Jean and Kahlil Gibran in Kahlil Gibran, PP.330-331.
2. Ibid.
3. He was invited to the Carnegie Institute of Pittsburgh to read his poetry. See Ibid, P.310.
4. In 1915 "The Greater Sea" appeared in the December issue; "The Astronomer" and "On Giving and Taking" in January 1917.

Gibran's identification with this group of writers perhaps lay behind the success of his early English works, although in no way could he truly measure up to the greatness of any of them.

Gibran's reputation in the East was also soaring. The success of his English writings was blown out of all dimensions. It was made to look, even by scholars and academics, like a national victory or rather a spiritual conquest of the West by the East.[1] The West was said to be wanting in spirituality, and Gibran was its deliverer. Of this Professor Khalil Hawi has written:

> Although the Lebanese and the Arabs were suffering the humiliation of dominance by the Western powers, the West for all its material power, or perhaps because of it was in need of a spiritual message which it could not create for itself, and for which it turned gratefully to a Lebanese and an Arab.[2]

Such statements and many more were typical of the phraseology used in creating the hero image of Gibran. The following is another example:

> Did you know compatriots of Gibran, sons of his nation and his language, that many

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1. Farid Antun, Al Khalid al Rahil. Gibran Hayyan (Beirut: Sader, 1957).
2. Khalil Hawi, Kahlil Gibran. His Background, Character and Works (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1963), P.72.

> of the Americans... who held fast to the matter (material) of life and sought after the dollar... had at last bowed their heads to the genius of Lebanon and gone down on their knees before the greatness of Gibran's spirit and beliefs.[1,2]

The more critical American magazines played down the exaggerated praise bestowed on Gibran. The Dial observed, "It is not strange that Rodin should have hoped much of this Arabian poet. For in those parables and poems /The Madman/ which Gibran has given us in English, he curiously seems to express what Rodin did with marble and clay. The English language never seems a fit medium for work of this nature. It is too angular, too resisting to hold the meanings which oriental literature crowds as thickly and dazzingly /sic/ as jewels on an encrusted sword-hilt."[3] The Nation expressed similar views:

> Disciples of the modern cult of things Eastern will possibly welcome the specimen of the work of the Arab sage, Kahlil Gibran... We think, however, that most westerners will find the work repellent in its exotic perversity, and will lay it aside with an uncomprehending shake of the head, for East is East and West

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1. Husayn Rushdi Sariy-al-Din, Minhat al Sharq ila al Gharb, PP.493-495, cited by Hawi in Ibid.

2. Also see, Habib Masu'd Gibran Hayan wa Mayitan (Gibran Dead and Alive), (Beirut: Dar Rihani, 1966), P.20. Masou'd maintains that "Gibran favoured English for a noble desire in himself: to divert, by his teachings, a great civilization from its materialism to his Eastern spiritualism. Or as Arnold Bennett said, to extricate from the virgin American civilization, a spiritualism... not much different from that Jesus Christ unsheathed from the materialistic Roman civilization."

3. Jean and Kahlil Gibran, Op.Cit.

> is still West, and Tagore has not really succeeded in bridging the chasm between them, nor do we think Gibran will do so.[1]

The Madman was, in fact, rejected by two publishers (Macmillan and William Marrow), before Alfred A. Knopf, a young, little known publisher then, accepted it. Later on, Knopf was to publish all of Gibran's works including The Prophet. The editing and the final preparation of the works before their publication was always done by Gibran's friend and benefactor Mary Haskell. In the journal she kept on Gibran, as well as in her diary and letters (all housed in the library of the University of North Carolina) Mary gives details of Gibran's English and the changes and suggestions she used to make:

> K.'s English is remarkable— has a final quality that I for instance would not get if I were translating from his original— simply a structure occasionally wrong... It will not be long before he will be such a master of English that he need look nothing over with anybody... And his English prose is poetry prose— "the voice of a voice" is in it... he does not mind the English seeming as if a foreigner did it.[2]

Many poems and parables, Mary admits, did not require any correction at all "and the English of it [was] superb",[3] although Gibran felt that "this writing in English is very hard for me... I've been finding out that English is a very wonderful language if I can learn how

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1. Jean and Kahlil Gibran, Ibid.
2. Mary Haskell 44, 2nd September; 31st August, 1914, quoted in Ibid.
3. Ibid., P.284.

to use it."[1] In writing The Madman and The Forerunner he seemed to be more dependent on Mary Haskell's corrections; "I am sure that I could not have written a word in English if it were not for you," he tells Mary, "but I must learn a great deal before I can give form to my thoughts in this wonderful language... Large thoughts must be expressed in a large way before they are felt by others. My English is still very limited but I can learn."[2]

Gibran himself questioned the reason why any poet should write poetry in a foreign language. When he read Lights of Dawn by Aristides Phoutrides, he told Mary that he thought the writer 'word-ridden'; only to admit a little later that "after all, foreigners can't write English poetry... Yet I keep on trying."[3]

While trying, Gibran was constantly worried: "Is my English, modern English, Mary, or is it the English of the past? For English is still to me a foreign language. I still think in Arabic only. And I know English only from Shakespeare and the Bible and you."[4] The English Gibran was finally able to produce, in the words of Mary Haskell, was not of any period, but "a sort of universal

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1.Jean and Kahlil Gibran, Ibid.
2.A letter from Gibran to Mary Haskell dated 2nd August, 1915, quoted in Ibid., P.300.
3.Ibid., P.313.
4.Mary Haskell's journal 65, 2nd January, 1923, quoted in Ibid., P. 363.

English in the simplest structure, pure line that he uses, in choosing the Bible style."[1]

Perhaps what encouraged Gibran to carry on writing in English in spite of the seeming hardships was the attention he received following the publication of The Madman and his parables. The flurry of interest which the work educed was a new strength for Gibran. The Forerunner consequently "needed hardly a word changed" Mary tells, "Gibran's English is the finest I know for it is creative and marvellously simple. And now he rarely misspells a word— though he still uses the dictionary as aid— and rarely misses an idiom."[2] When Mary read, a year later, from the manuscript of The Prophet "when love beckons to you, follow him, Though his ways are hard and steep", she was transfixed. "There was nothing more beautiful."[3]

It is of some consequence that Gibran's early writings were composed under the supervision of someone whose chief interests were not solely literary. Not infrequently, critics of Gibran have refered to the "care, the insight, the psychological feel for cajoling excellence that

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1. Jean and Kahlil Gibran, Ibid, P.313 (Mary Haskell's Journal 47, 30th July, 1917).
2. Ibid., P.337.
3. Ibid., P.316.

/Mary Haskell/ brought to bear on the work of the Arab artist poet," that she helped him "chisel a metaphor or craft an image or a parable or a poem." To detect the truth of such statements, a parable is picked up at random and a comparison between Gibran's original, and the corrected text is given. On May 10th, 1916 Gibran sent Mary Haskell the following parable for correction and advice:

> In my father's garden there are two cages. In one there is a lion brought from the desert of Ninevah; in the other cage is a songless sparrow. Every-day at dawn the sparrow calls to the lion. "Good morrow to thee brother-prisoner."

On May 14th, she sent him back her version:

> In my father's garden there are two cages. In one is a lion, which my father's slaves brought from the desert of Ninevah; in the other is a songless sparrow. Every-day at dawn the sparrow calls to the lion, "Good morrow to thee, brother prisoner."[1]

Naturally, it was Haskell's version that was sent to the publishers to appear in The Madman under the title "The Two cages." Obviously, the only correction which the poet's friend introduced was not by any means a linguistic, nor rhythmic, nor poetic correction, it was merely the insertion of the phrase "which my father's slaves brought." Although this may not necessarily be the pattern of the 'careful','diligent' aid Haskell

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1. Beloved Poet, edited by Virginia Hilu (The love letters of Kahlil Gibran), (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), PP.270-271.

offered Gibran, one cannot help wondering how much of the Arab writer's thoughts were altered, or fitted into images 'chiselled' to match the West's pre-conceptions of the East.[1]

No matter what changes were made into the original manuscripts by a Mary Haskell or a Barbara Young, the final product pleased the Western reader tremendously. American youths of the sixties went back to The Prophet and took him as the Gospel of the twentieth century.[2] "That face", an American reviewer angrily said (refering to the portrait that adorns the dust jacket of The Prophet), "has stared at me from Army foot-lockers, from desks when I crammed at New York University, lectured at Columbia, taught at C.U.N.Y. It followed

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1. Equally interesting (and still not attempted so far by any of Gibran's critics) is the study of his work in translation. The only critic who objected to faulty translations of certain words was Ghazi Fouad Barraks in Gibran Kahlil Gibran: Dirasa Tahliliya li Adabihi wa Rasmihi wa Shakhsiyatihi (an analytical and structural study of Gibran's literature, art and character), (Beirut: Dar al Nisr al Muhalleq, 1973). Attempting a psychological criticism of Gibran's works, Barraks discovered that the mother motif with which Gibran was mainly preoccupied, was less evident in the Arabic texts as the translators rendered the 'feminine' images into 'masculine' images, linguistically more correct in the Arabic. Thus the sentence from The Wanderer "when we reach the heart of our mother the sea" (P.89) reads in Arabic "when we reach the heart of our father the sea." The author provides further examples of

me when I strolled the yards and quads at Emory, Chicago, Harvard, Miami, Bennington, Washington and... at Cambridge, Heidelberg and the Sorbonne."[1]

MIKHAIL NAIMY, 1889 -

As the novel in the West had its roots in the moral fable, the allegory and the romance, the early Arab novel in English seems to have followed a similar track. Gibran's parables were rhapsodies of a high order, but in taking up the moral precept as an ultimate message, they occasionally failed to catch the rhythm of real life. They, to use Arnold Kettle's phrasings, frequently became an "illustration of a view of life,"[2] though an over-simplified and limited one. Moral fables fail, Kettle tells us, "unless the writer imbues his original moral concept with the stuff of life."[3] To

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of corrupting terms of significant symbolic implications. Also see, Selim Hanna, Op.Cit.

2. Prof. St. Ehno Nauman has recently included Gibran in his scholarly history of American philosophy as a contemporary influential figure.
Dictionary of American Philosophy (Philosphical Library, 1973).

1. Stefan Kanfer, "But is it not strange that Even Elephants Will Yield and that The Prophet is Still Popular?" The New York Times Magazine, 25th June, 1972, PP.24-30.

2. An Introduction to the English Novel (Hutchinsons University Library, 1951), Vol.I, P. 25.

3. Ibid.

do Gibran justice, one must remember that more often than not, he introduced into his works slices of real life. One example selected at random is the meeting of Mary Magdalene with Jesus in Jesus, The Son of Man.[1] In fact, Jesus has rarely been portrayed so realistically, and scarcely has the real man in him been presented in such a plausible image. The fact remains however that first and foremost, Gibran, whether writing a parable, a poem or an essay was more concerned with the moral significance of life than with the observation of its exterior structure, and hence his symbol-ridden characters.

Conversely, Mikhail Naimy seems to hold the balance between the two. On the one hand, he, like others of his generation, had a cosmic concept of his role as an author, and felt that he had a universal message to convey. On the other, his Russian education[2], supplemented by American schooling[3] shaped his literary talents

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1. Jesus, The Son of Man (Alfred A. Knopf, 1928).

2. Naimy received his early education at the Russian school in Lebanon, then at the Russian Teachers' Training Institute of Nazareth in Palestine. The Russian Royal Palestine Society was in charge of this institute as mentioned in an earlier chapter. Between 1906 and 1910 Naimy was a student at the Poltava Seminary in Russia on a grant from the 'Imperial Russian Palestine Society'.

3. Naimy graduated with a degree in law from Seattle State University, the state of Washington.

and helped him be more at ease with western literary forms, especially the novel and the short story. Mohamad Najm, a literary historian of the Arabic novel includes Naimy amongst the first innovators of the genre;[1] and Issa Anna'ouri in his work Adab al Mahjar[2] (literature of the emigrants) maintains that Naimy succeeded where both Gibran and Rihani failed. For while their writings were mostly incantatory, Naimy was capable of creating more technically advanced works of prose fiction by observing reality and then reflecting it in a simple and translucent style.[3] Of this, he gives two examples, Al Aqer[4] (the barren one), and Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul.[5]

In spite of their claims to realistic particularity, a good number of Naimy's works verge on the allegorical,

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1. Mohamd Najm, Al Qissa fil Adab al Arabi al Hadeeth (Beirut: Al Maktaba al Ahliya, 2nd edition, 1961), P.289.
2. Issa Anna'ouri, Adab Al Mahjar (Cairo, 1959).
3. M. Najm, Op.Cit.
4. 'Al Aqer', Kan Makan (Beirut, 1937), PP. 52-83.
5. Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul, or The Pitted Face (New York, Philosophical Library, 1952). Arabic edition Muthakkarat al Aqrash (Beirut: Sader, 1949).

especially as the author usually starts writing with a bare idea or an abstract concept in mind and weaves a story around it[1], or simply dresses the various values he holds in human garments. In most cases, his principal aim of writing a story is to postulate a religious or a philosophical notion.

Altogether, Naimy wrote some eighty stories[2], of which only four were written in English or rendered into that language. These include The Book of Mirdad, A Lighthouse and a Haven[3], Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul, or The Pitted Face, Till We Meet[4], and Gibran Kahlil Gibran[5] (a biography of Gibran written in narrative form). What is surprising is not the paucity of the English works as compared to the Arabic but the fact that few as they are, they were all written long after Naimy had returned from the United States and settled in Lebanon. Whereas Gibran felt that he had to write in English because everyone around him was

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1. Mohamad Najm, Op.Cit., P.43.
2. The majority of these stories have been collected in Kan Makan (Beirut: Nawfal, 1974), Akabir (1956), Abu Battah (1959) and Hawamish (1965).
3. The Book of Mirdad, A Lighthouse and a Haven (1st edition, Beirut: Sader, 1948; 2nd ed. Bombay, 1954; 3rd ed. London: Vincent Stuart, 1962; 4th ed. New York: Penguin Books, 1971 and London, 1974. Arabic edition: Beirut: Sader, 1959).
4. Till We Meet(and Twelve Other Stories) Bangalore: 1957. Arabic edition, Beirut, 1946 1952, 1958, 1964, 1970, 1971.
5. Gibran Kahlil Gibran (Beirut: Sader, 1951).

writing in that language, Naimy chose to write when everyone around him was using Arabic. The explanation he gives in his autobiography Sabŭn[1] is that upon his return to his homeland, he realized how English was more widely diffused than Arabic, and that it had stronger links with the live languages of the world. "Until the publication of The Book of Mirdad" Naimy writes, "I depended on Arabic alone to express my thoughts and feelings. For Arabic is the language of my fathers and forefathers, and it is one of the richest and most noble of languages... Yet those who can read it are but a few millions. Besides, I do not think as an Arab only, nor do I address myself solely to the Arabs. My thoughts are universal and I write for all people, of all races and ages. I simply had to break the chain Arabic has bound me with, or rather with which I fettered myself... And since I speak English well, why don't I convey into it some of the creations of my pen?"[2]

Although this is Naimy's own justification for writing

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1. Sabun; Hikayat Umr (Seventy; a life-story), (Beirut: Nawfal, 1977).
2. Ibid., Vol.III, The translation is mine.

in English, a more plausible explanation is perhaps the fact that upon his return to Lebanon, Naimy became aware of the universal fame his friend and compatriot, Gibran had attained. Encouraged by his example, and not entirely envious of his success, Naimy set out to demonstrate that he too could write creatively in English, and like Gibran, prophetically as well. He urged his readers, however, not to think that in seeking another language he was seeking an acknowledgment his people denied him. He, moreover, reminded them that of praise from critics, readers and friends, he could publish volumes.[1]

That Naimy set out to outbid Gibran is quite evident in The Book of Mirdad, A Lighthouse and a Haven. In conceiving the character of Mirdad, Naimy undoubtedly, was greatly inspired by the Prophet and his teachings to the people of Orphalese. Like Gibran's hero, Mirdad is a kind of Messiah reincarnate. He instructs an assembly of monks who, in their turn, like the disciples of Christ, go out into the world to spread the word of the Gospel.

The Book of Mirdad is fashioned in the tradition of

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1. Ibid.

Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress (which was available in its Arabic translation as early as the first half of the nineteenth century[1]). Like Christian, the narrator of Mirdad encounters all kinds of hardships before he reaches a more sublime state of Being. Climbing the "unconquerable" steep Flint Slope on his way to the monastery, 'The Ark' on 'Altar Peak', where he is to look for the Book-the Gospel, the narrator is forced to give away his provisions, his staff, his clothes, and his shelter. When he is thus rid of his earthly provisions and his bodily weaknesses, he becomes worthy of the revelation.

The two hundred and nine pages of the work are divided into two parts: "The Story of the Book" and "The Book". The first gives a brief history of the monastery and the legend connected with it. It describes how Noah, upon his death bed, ordered his son Sam to build a monastery on top of the Milky Mountains to be called 'The Ark'. The monastery is to house nine monks whose task is to keep "the fire of faith burning", lest people should lose sight of the meaning

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1. See, Ihsan Abbas and Mohamad Yousef Najm, Al Shi'r Al Arabi fil Mahjar (Arabic Poetry in North America), (Beirut: Dar Sader and Dar Beirut, 1957), P.24. The Pilgrim's Progress was published by the Evangelical missionaries who thought the work would inspire people with devotion.

of the flood and "the lusts and wickednesses that brought it on." The Ark Monastery was to live on the charities and donations of the faithful; but with the passage of time it began to amass wordly wealth by accepting gifts which exceeded its immediate needs. This was encouraged by the senior monk Shamadam (sham Adam), whose wordly desires could not be easily quenched. But upon the death of one of the monks, a humble-looking man in ragged clothes asked permission to join the monastery to replace the deceased. After much reluctance, and to the great dissatisfaction of Shamadam, he was accepted. Mirdad, the newcomer, stayed with the monks for seven years working as a lowly servant and not interlocuting with a soul. After the seven years, he broke the seal of his silence and revealed himself as the returning prophet.

The second part of <u>The Book of Mirdad</u> is wholly devoted to Mirdad's teachings as recorded by the youngest of the monks Naronda. It falls into thirty seven chapters or sermons which have strong echoes of Biblical style, and of Zarathustra's preaching to his people. This part of the book is more concerned with the problem of reconciling man with divinity, his striving through doubt to God, and his inner

searching for mystical unity, than with external observation and interpretation of real life.

The impact of theosophical doctrine on Naimy's ideas regarding the human aspiration to partake from the universal Being, is most clearly betrayed in the character of Mirdad. Naimy was introduced to theosophy by a Scottish fellow student during his college days at Seattle, Washington. Theosophy had a special attraction for him because "on top of appealing to his type of spiritual make-up, it claims for itself a deep rooting in most of the well-known spiritual teachings in the world, past and present. With a little reinterpretation and insight... such western trends of thought as Platonism, Pythagoreanism, and Stoicism, are as easily incorporated in it as Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism and Christianity together with the old religions and mysteries of Egypt and Mesopotamia, not to mention its possible claim to such fairly recent figures such as Gurdjieff, Tolstoy, Emerson, Thoreau, Blake, Wordsworth and many other similarly minded writers in both East and West."[1] The reason why Naimy favours The Book

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1. N. Naimy, Mikhail Naimy: An Introduction (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1967), P.110.

<u>of Mirdad</u> of all his works is that in it he was able to allow his thoughts reach their full momentum, and to subsume the motifs which reverberated throughout his life and works.

It remains to be said, however, that in <u>Mirdad</u>, Naimy was only treading on the beaten track of thought. He reiterates a host of myths and stories ranging from pre-Biblical times until now. Since the epic of Gilgamish, we have known that to seek a higher knowledge, one has to foresake the world, to "die to live or live to die" as Shamadam put it. However, the use of the flood legend to establish the moral <u>bona fides</u> of the story is in itself an innovation among Arab writers who, until recently, refrained from making any use of their local mythologies whether Mesopotamian, Assyrian, Phoenician, Quranic or Biblical, as frameworks for their literary <u>oeuvres</u>.

<u>The Book of Mirdad</u> is an allegory only in the part which presents the narrator's struggle towards knowledge of God, and his journey to the summit. The characters he meets on his ascent are also allegorical. The naked woman "beauteous of face

and form," and the ugly old woman who divests him of his clothes, represent the temptations of lust and sexual desire, whereas the young couple who rob him of his staff and use his cave-shelter for their nuptial chamber may stand for the disloyalty of worldly men and the importance of self dependence. The appelations in the book also carry some allegorical significance. 'Mirdad' as Naimy tells in Sabūn is the name of an angel mentioned in some ancient Arabic book[1]. It also denotes in Arabic the return or resurrection.

The rest of the monks have names derivative from either Biblical, Phoenician or Hebraic origins. Micayon, for example, is composed out of 'Mi-ca' which in Hebrew denotes 'likeness, or, he who is like', and 'ayon', who is a Phoenician God. Similarly, the name of Himbal also refers to the worshipping of the Phoenician God 'Ba'l', whereas Micaster means he 'who is like a star'. 'Zamora' was chosen, Naimy tells us for its musicality, as was the name of 'Naronda'. 'Bennoon' according to the author, means 'son of the throne', derivative from the Arabic 'Ben' (son) and the 'N' consonant which connotes in its calligraphy

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1. Mikhail Naimy, Sabun, Op.Cit.,P.216.

the concept of infinity; the unfinished circle ( ) with the single dot in its middle. 'Bethar', on the other hand, whose prince is enlightened and converted, is the Arabic for 'brothel' (beit aar), denoting the lower state from which the prince was lifted.[1] 'Altar Peak' is symbolic of life into death, while the narrator-traveller remains nameless, partly because the author wishes to fuse identities with him (in his autobiography he refers to himself as the climber of the slope), and partly in order to refer to any human aspirant seeking Godhood. The rest of the book has little in common with allegorical literature, and bears closer affinities with scriptural writing and prophetic sayings.

The general structure of the book is relatively loose and its movements are shaped more or less by the swaying alternation of Mirdad's moods. Yet, to avoid the single-voiced preaching, of which he once accused Gibran, Naimy creates a number of secondary episodes with the purpose of entertaining the reader on the one hand, and also inserting some dynamic movements

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1.Naimy explains the meanings of his symbols in a letter to Marianna Da'boul Fakhoury, editor of Al Marahel magazine published in Sao Paolo. The letter is dated 13 Dec., 1960. Mikhail Naimy: Al Majmou'ah al Kamila, Rassail (The Collected Letters) (Beirut: Dar al 'Ilm lil Malayeen, 1974),P.317.

in the semi horizontal telling. Thus, he invents the story of the death of Himbal's father to discourse on death, or Micayon's dream to tell of the human longing for the 'kingdom of God', or the ailing cow, to talk of old age. In these episodes, Naimy's talents as an engaging story-teller are most evident. They even show why, as a writer, he excelled in the short story and was less successful with the novel form. Undoubtedly, he can control the telling, manipulate the action, but not for long, as he is soon tempted to yield to his psycho-philosophical fancies, and ascend the preacher's forum again.

In its attempt to address the mind and the heart, reason and emotion, Naimy's tone throughout the work is cool and reserved, unlike Gibran's impassioned mannerism. Yet, whereas Gibran's naivete of expression is so incongruously great that it can actually be captivating, Naimy's taciturnity is occasionally annoying. But one is not to forget that his main objective, as he frequently proclaimed[1], was to instruct, not to entertain; to educate, not to amuse, which explains much of his polemical undertones.

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1. See Naimy's collected letters, The Complete Works(Arabic text), Op.Cit, Vol.VIII, 580-581.

Arab critics have done Naimy great injustice in their insistance on labelling this work a novel and assessing it accordingly. He frequently declared that The Book of Mirdad "is not a novel. It is, as the title indicates, a lighthouse and a haven. As for the story in it, it merely serves as the string to the necklace. Yet, it has enough imagination and creativity to make it an appropriate background for the theme of the book."[1]

The Book of Mirdad was first published in Beirut in 1948. Efforts to publish it in Britain were of little avail, as the English publishers advised him to seek a market elsewhere. "The book will not sell well", he was told "in a country where everyone holds close to his own creed. Besides, it does not accord with the Christian teachings by which people of this country abide. You can hope to publish it here only when a new church with sympathetic views is set up."[2]

Some fourteen years later, an English edition did come out published by Vincent Stuart[3], followed by

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1. Ibid., P.317, from a letter to M.D. Fakhoury dated Dec.,1960.
2. Sabūn, Op.Cit., P.217.
3. London: Vincent Stuart, 1962.

two Penguin editions in both London and New York.[1] The first English edition of the book sold some 600 copies[2], a reasonable number for a work of its nature. Soon, translations into foreign languages were made, and the author tells us that the book is now available in French, German, Dutch, Portuguese, as well as the Indian Gujarati.[3] No new church has emerged in any of these countries, except perhaps for the increasing interest in the mystical religions of the East which Mirdad very well embodies. In fact, the best reviews of the book came from Indian magazines and the like. Kenneth Walker in the Aryan Path[4] recommends it to "all who enjoy good writing and who are interested in the riddle of their existence." Mirdad's message, the reviewer continues, "is the message that comes from the depths of all the great religions, and his instructions for moving about unfettered by the small 'self' of everyday life are instructions similar to those given for the discovery of the Atman or Greater Self of the Hindus."

Indeed, the beauty of the writing lies not in the form

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1. Penguin, 1971; reprint, 1974; Indian edition, Bombay: N.M.Tripathi, 1954.
2. Naimy's Collected Letters, The Complete Works, Op.Cit., P.513.
3. Sabūn, Op.Cit., P.218.
4. The Aryan Path, March, 1963, P.132.

of the book so much as in its content and style. Here, Naimy is obviously an analyser of emotions rather than a creator of characters. He delineates the throbs of hearts rather than their physical movements on earth, all in a prose saturated with poetry and permeated with lofty images. The value of this work should be assessed in this light only.

In Naimy's Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul, or The Pitted Face[1], and Till We Meet,[2] the requirements of fiction are met with more successfully. The author not only seems to be more in control of his plot, the development of his action, but he also creates characters who have more affinities with life, and who are able to grow out of their particular situations and gain a symbolic and universal stature. In achieving this, Naimy, however, does not depart from his major philosophical preoccupation postulated in Mirdad. Both Memoirs and Till We Meet reiterate his belief in the spiritual expansion of consciousness far beyond the 'self' to the 'Greater Self', in subjugating the lower nature of man and preparing him for the spiritual ascent towards God.

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1. Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul (New York Philosophical Library, 1952).
2. Till We Meet (Bangalore: The Indian Institute of World Literature, 1957).

Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul is the story of Shakib, a Syrian emigrant of a wealthy family long settled in Argentina. He falls in love with the young and beautiful Najla, and is betrothed to her, much to the delight of their families. But on their wedding day, Shakib slays his bride in a small hotel room and runs away leaving behind him only a slip of paper on which he has written: "I slew my love with my hand, for it was more than my body could feed and less than my soul hungered for."[1] He loses his memory as a consequence, and remembers nothing of what he has done. He leaves for New York where he picks up a job as a waiter in a Syrian restaurant in lower Manhattan and works there conscientiously yet silently. He never exchanges confidence with a soul to the amazement of the proprietor and the customers. Shakib's mystery is unwrapped when he suddenly disappears and all attempts to find him fail. Upon searching the quarters where the "pitted face", for that was the name he was known by, lived, the narrator of the story and the owner of the restaurant fall upon a diary Shakib had kept in which he closely registered his psychological traumas while searching for his

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1. Memoirs, P.143.

real identity. The last pages of the diary describe how S.N.Harib, the bride's brother, finally traced Shakib and frequented the restaurant to shake him from his darkness. His attempts only succeed when he leaves him a copy of a Spanish paper with a detailed report of his murder. The self recognition was immediate, and Shakib as suggested, left the restaurant to put an end to his life. The narrator then seeks permission from the proprietor to allow him to keep the diary and publish it in book form.

This bare outline of the story may at first glance suggest that Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul is another allegorical work not differing much from Mirdad's in its concentration on the struggle between the higher and the lower existence, whether in theme or form. It may even imply a contradiction with what was earlier said about the realistic portrayal of characters. The story of pitted face is undoubtedly allegorical and highly symbolic, yet the character of the protagonist is saturated with human yearnings and imbued with the agonies of men torn between their animalistic and spiritual instincts.

In spite of the copious scope of this theme, Naimy

in presenting realistic particularities by providing every now and then the suggestive detail of scene and incident: the restaurant where 'pitted face' worked is portrayed with much authenticity: the odour of the boiling coffee, the small talk of the customers, and the flashing scenes in the mind of Shakib which fail to assemble and yield a coherent meaning.

In making Shakib lose his memory and sever any verbal communication with others, Naimy was able to cut him off from the outside world and allow him to live internally in a kind of meditative trance. It was his intention to lead him from the narrow and cramped consciousness of daily life to the exploration of the much greater realm where the mystics roam. In so doing, he was putting into practice what Mirdad preached to the monks of the Ark, that "speech is at best an honest lie. While silence is at worst a kind of naked verity,"[1] and that "except you cross that void and that expanse in silent contemplation, you shall not know how real is your being, how unreal the nonbeing. Nor shall

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1. The Book of Mirdad, P. 75.

you know how fast your reality is bound up with Reality. It is that silence I would have you roam, that you may shed your old, tight skin and move about unfettered, unrestrained."[1]

The keynote to this inner delving can perhaps best be found in Naimy's Arabic poetry, especially in his collection Eyelid Whispering, written about the same time. The opening poem "Close Your Eyes to 'See" (Aghmid Jufunaka Tubsir) re-echoes the meaning of the absolute and visionary screened from the eyes of men by the ordinary; and the richer vision and perception which accompanies the inward turning into the self. This is strongly connected with Naimy's trust in the individual or rather the 'I' which he considers "the source and centre of all things."[2] "Your I", he says, "is but your consciousness of being, silent and incorporeal, made vocal and corporeal. It is the inaudible, and the invisible; that seeing, you may see the unseeable; and hearing, you may hear the unhearable."[3]

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1. The Book of Mirdad, P.76.
2. Ibid., P.40.
3. Ibid.

In order to establish the fidelity of events against their backgrounds, Naimy resorts to the 'eternal' manuscript device, which was much admired and used by the Arab literati of al Mahjar at the beginning of this century. To be the publisher of Shakib's diary endows the narrator with the distance he requires between himself as eye-witness and his readers. Similarly, in The Book of Mirdad, "The story of the Book" serves an identical purpose. In unravelling the mystery of the book and publishing it, the narrator acquires a higher degree of detachment which gives the work a prophetic authenticity as long as the narrator remains the transmitter of truth and its mouthpiece only.

Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul was first written in Arabic and published in Beirut in 1949. Naimy decided to translate it into English as he believed that "the Arabs have taken much from the West, it is time now to return the debt, and to overcome our feelings of inferiority to it."[1] An American edition came out in New york, 1952[2], which apparently encouraged

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1. Al Adab, NO.5, 1957, P.20.
2. Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952). Arabic edition; Muthakkarat al Arqash (Beirut: Sader, 1949).

Naimy to render more of his writings into this universal language. Liqa', a novelette written in Arabic and published in Beirut in 1946 soon appeared with the English title Till We Meet[1], finding an Indian publisher in Bangalore in 1957.

Till We Meet is by common consent[2] one of Naimy's most compelling works. In it, all the constituents of his thought and artistry are apparent, yet without allowing the onerously long dwelling on pure philosophy to impair the delicacy of the literary expression. Although the novelette reiterates the earlier ideas expressed in Mirdad and Pitted Face concerning the agonizing battle of man between his devotion to the higher spiritual truths, and his limited human existence, it seems to grow out of a more convincing setting and to involve a larger number of personae, thus allowing more room for variation of views.

While both Mirdad and Pitted Face are drawn against a more or less abstract background, the peak of

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1. Besides 'Till We Meet', the opening story, this work includes some of Naimy's translated short stories.
2. See Yousef Najm, Op.Cit.

the mountain in the first, and the inner labyrinths of the human soul in the second, the events of Till We Meet take place in a small village in the Lebanon, and the reader is more able to imagine the physical setting of the story. There is also more variety of scene and a freer handling of the time sequence than in the early works. This, however, does not mean a complete departure from the allegorical and the metaphysical to which Naimy had grown accustomed, for Till We Meet is very allegorical, although it reveals a deft blending of the natural with the supernatural, the commonplace with the extraordinary. Men exist on two planes: they are flesh and blood on one, and ephemeral, symbolic beings, on another.

In order not to abandon his now familiar pattern of story telling, Naimy introduces his narrator-eyewitness as a friend of Mr. Al Karram, the father of Baha, who tells him of the tragic ending of his daughter's wedding. During the ceremony, Leonardo, a violinist and employee in the Karram's house, is asked to play his music in celebration of the occasion. But as the strings of his violin twitter and shiver with a mysterious tune, Baha loses consciousness and lapses into a trance from which

she never awakes. Leonardo runs away and hides in the caves nearby the mountains, where the narrator later on finds him, learns of his story, and decides to help him.

The story which Leonardo tells recalls not only Naimy's belief in the sublimation of sexual desires, but also in the doctrine of reincarnation. Leonardo reveals how, several lives ago, when he was a shepherd in the valley of the "virgins", and Baha a young pretty girl, they fell in love. But when he played his tunes to her on his reed, impure thoughts passed through his mind, and as a result, they had to be brought back to earth in another life to redeem their love from the desire of the flesh. When,after several ages, he was asked to play his tunes for her again, on her wedding day, it seemed that his initiation into the spiritual was not complete. A second chance, nevertheless, presented itself when the police spotted him in the grottoes and arrested him. But the narrator, who had sympathized with Leonardo's enigma, persuades Baha's father to allow Leonardo into her room with the hope that he will heal her. After much reluctance, Leonardo is admitted. He takes his violin with him and starts

playing, smoothly at first, then feverishly. The tune is purified of all animalistic passions. Baha stirs, is brought to life again, but only to drop down next to Leonardo who, in his turn, falls motionless. Above their heads, two souls meet in an eternal embrace.

Any reader of Naimy's autobiography will no doubt be struck by the great similarity between his heroes and his own life style. Like Leonardo, Pitted Facé, and Mirdad, the author experienced a struggle to subjugate the human to the divine, to withdraw from the ordinary world in order to be able to grasp the extraordinary. Naimy, to a large extent, succeeded in achieving both. Like his heroes, he condemned the bonds of physical love. His love affairs in Russia and the United States[1] made him more certain that "no love is love that subjugates the lover. No love is love that feeds on flesh and blood. No love is love that draws a woman to a man only to breed more women and more men and thus perpetuate their bondage to the flesh."[2] Naimy preferred celibacy to matrimony, thus putting into

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1. See, Sabūn, Op.Cit. PP.310-316.
2. The Book of Mirdad, Op.Cit., P.117.

practice what Mirdad preached:

> The overcomer do I preach,— The Phoenix-Man who is too free to be a male, too sublimated to be a female.
> ...
> Let men and women who are yet not far from the stallion and the mare, and from the buck and the doe, seek each the other in the dark seclusions of the flesh. Let them alloy the licentiousness of the bed chamber with the licence of wedlock.[1]

Similarly, Leonardo is purged by reaching freedom from the flesh and from all the impediments it places in his way to perfect unity. "My aim was to become one with her beyond the bounds of time and space."[2] Pitted Face slays his bride to protect his sanctity and chastity, to harness his 'animalistic' passion and even use it as a means to overcome the weakness in human nature. And Naimy chose to leave the United States and retreat to a small village in the mountains of Lebanon, where he could be in closer contact with nature and the Eternal Truth. Indeed, he refrained from practicing law (he who has a degree in law from the University of Seattle, Washington) and preferred to live contentedly as a recluse to defend the greater Trial of man.

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1. The Book of Mirdad, P.117.
2. Till We Meet, P.68.

Naimy's beliefs in the enslavement of the flesh have their roots in Christianity as in the Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism. Buddha, realizing the fettering bondage of physical love, left his wife and children and sought perfect unity in the Nirvana. Christ, on the other hand, emphasized that "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing,"[1] and warned that " to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."[2]

This strong connection between the personal and the fictitious in Naimy's writing explains the narrator's ready identification with the works' personae. The central characters in the three works under study have so far been, Mirdad and the narrator, Pitted Face and the narrator, Leonardo and the narrator who, in this last, does not function as a detached commentator, but emerges as an engaging character through whom the psychological dimensions of Leonardo are reflected. The rest of the characters in Till We Meet are drawn with much clarity. They all gain

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1. The Gospel according to St. John, 6/63.
2. The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans, 8/6,7.

human dimensions with the exception of Baha who remains in the shadow of the events. The novelette, moreover, has a kind of energy lacking in the earlier works, which stems from a greater richness of events and scenes. These take place in a variety of locations, the hotel, the valley, the grottoes in the mountains, the prison and Al Karram's house. The narration begins towards the middle of the episodes, before it goes back to pick up the events in the past and to carry them into the future. All this shows Naimy more at ease with the creation of his fictitious world and more aware of the requirements of successful fiction.

AMEEN RIHANI, 1876-1941

In 1911, Dodd, Mead & Company of New York, published The Book of Khalid, the first work of fiction written by an Arab in English, seven years before Gibran's The Madman, and thirty seven years before Naimy's Book of Mirdad. This, however, was not Rihani's first experiment with English writing, for in 1903, he rendered into English the philosophical verses of the

Arab poet of the tenth century, Abu Ala'a al Maarri.[1] In 1905, he was able to publish his own English verse under the title Myrtle and Myrrh.[2]

Of the first Arab literati writing in English, Rihani is the most prolific and versatile. Altogether, he wrote some twenty five works in English[3], and about twenty works in Arabic.[4] Of his English works, however, only eleven have been published, the rest being currently prepared for publication under the supervision of his brother Mr. Albert Rihani in response to the increasing interest of Arab scholars in the early English output of the Mahjerite group. Nevertheless, not all Rihani's works are of a literary nature, as he frequently dealt with the political and historical, and wrote dissertations on the philosophical, which earned him, not without justice, the title of the philosopher of Freikeh (his home town).

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1. The Quatrains of Abul Ala'a al Maarri (New York: Doubleday Page & Co.,1903).
2. Myrtle and Myrrh (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1905).
3. Such as: The Luzumiyat of Abul Ala'a (New York: James T. White & Co., 1918).
The Descent of Bolshevism (Boston: The Stratford Co., 1920).
The Path of Vision (Boston: The Stratford Co., 1921).
A Chant of Mystics (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1928).
Ibn Saoud of Arabia (Boston: Houghton Miffin & Co., 1928).

The Book of Khalid is a difficult work to classify. Though largely based on Rihani's autobiography, it is not only a narrative, but a philosophical dissertation and a work of moral indoctrination, mystical imagination, satirical and political understatement. Illustrated by Gibran Kahlil Gibran and foreshadowing The Prophet, The Book of Khalid is divided into three books: (1) In the Exchange; (2) In the Temple; (3) In Kul Makan (everywhere).

In his preface to the work, the author tells us that while visiting the Khedival Library in Cairo and admiring the "papyri of the scribe of Amen-Ra and the beautifully illuminated copies of the Koran," he was attracted by a modern Arabic manuscript, which bore on its cover drawings that were as "curious, if not as mystical as ancient Egyptian symbols," and the

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Around the Coasts of Arabia (London: Constable & Co.,1930; and Houghton Miffin Co., 1931).

Arabian Peak and Desert (London: Constable & CO. 1930).

4. Such as : Faysal al Awal (King Faysal the First), (Beirut: Sader, 1934).

Qalb al Iraq (The Heart of Iraq) , (Beirut: Sader, 1935).

Qalb Lubnan (The Heart of Lebanon), (Beirut: Rihani, 1947).

Mulouk al Arab (The Kings of the Arabs), (Beirut: al Matba'a al Ilmiyah, 1929).

Hutaf al Awdiyah (The Calling of the Valleys), (Beirut: Rihani, 1955).

Wujouh Shargiyah wa Gharbiyah (Eastern and Western Faces),(Beirut: Rihani, 1957).

dedication: "To my Brother Man, my Mother nature, and my Maker God." After examining the manuscript, he discovers that it reveals the life of a certain young man named Khalid, who says that his work is "neither a Memoir nor an Autobiography, neither a Journal nor a confession... It is as it were, a book of the chart and history of one little kingdom of the soul,— the soul of a philosopher, poet and criminal."[1] Khalid further professes his work to be a kind of a guidebook, although he admits that the world has had enough of reformers and redeemers, Masters and Knights. But the time will come, he adds, "when everyone will be his own guide and interpreter. The time will come when it will not be necessary to write books for others, or to legislate for others, or to make religions for others, the time will come when everyone will write his own Book... and that.. will be his code and creed... the palace and cathedral of his Soul in all the Worlds."[2]

Enchanted by all this, the author seeks permission from the custodian of the library to edit the book and publish it. But first, he must gather further information about this Khalid. After some investigation

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1. The Book of Khalid, P. 17.
2. Ibid., P.19.

and inquiries in the hasheesh dens where the "paled-faded intellectualities of Cairo flock," he is introduced to Shakib, Khalid's best friend, who happened to have just finished writing the 'Histoire Intime' of his friend who disappeared suddenly some ten days ago. Shakib is willing to give his Histoire to the writer with the hope that it fills some of the gaps in Khalid's memoirs. The editor rejoices, especially as he was not entirely pleased with the style of Khalid who seems not to have mastered "the most subtle of arts, the art of writing about one's self" and who "does not follow the masters in their entertaining trivialities and stupidities," like Gibbon who interrupts his autobiography to tell how he often enjoyed a game of cards in the evening, or Rousseau who confesses to having "kissed the linen of Madame de Waren's bed when he was alone in her room," or Spencer who "devotes whole pages... to tell the all-important narration of his constant indisposition."

Thus, furnished with two manuscripts instead of one, the editor sets out to tell the story of Khalid, drawing his material from both sources, occasionally adding his own interpretation, commentary or criticism.

As the story progresses, we learn that Khalid is a young Syrian born in the city of Baalbek of 'brave daring Phoenician ancestors' and Arab heritage. He, and his friend Shakib, emigrate to the United States of America in search of "the gold-swept shores of distant lands.. and the bounteous fields of the West."[1] But the New World which has long lured them was from the start as disenchanting as the odour of disinfectants and the scrutinizing and humiliating looks of the officers at the bureau of Emigration where they were first "dumped".

The book further describes the five year experience of the young emigrants in New York. It tells us that they lived in a cellar "as deep and dark and damp as could be found," and worked as cart pushers and peddlars to earn their living. But, through describing the daily practices of Khalid in his new setting, we are introduced to his intimate self. We learn of his thirst for learning and knowledge, we find that in the two years following his arrival he not only sharpened his knowledge of Arabic by studying the grammarian masters, but also read in

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1. The Book of Khalid, P.25.

English the works of Rousseau and Carlyle, Dickens and Balzac, Tennyson and Blake, Emerson and Thoreau and many others, who are later revealed as responsible for his intellectual quality. The voyage to the New World becomes a voyage into life with Khalid the sojourner ascending its metaphysical celestial spheres.

This part tells us more about the spiritual side of Khalid and anticipates things to come. Soon, he abandons peddling as he discovers the horrors and abominations of the materialistic society which forces him to be deceitful, a hypocrite and a liar. And in true Thoreauean manner he flees to mother nature to preserve the integrity of his soul and the freedom of his mind.

He wavers between belief and atheism, between order and anarchy; and most important, he begins to question his own identity and the purpose of his being. His mental nebulosity finally resolves itself into something concrete: It is America or rather the materialistic society that is killing its spiritual children, and he must return to his homeland. His dilemma and torment lie in his being torn between his love and

hatred for the country he adopted . On one hand he sees in it prosperity and progress, on the other a bad omen for a "miserable happiness."

> O America, equally hated and beloved by Khalid, O Mother of prosperity and spiritual misery, the time will come when you shall see that your gold is but unreal, your gilt-edge bonds but death decrees, and your god of wealth a carcase enthroned upon a dung-hill. But you can see this now; for you are yet in the false dawn, struggling disorderly, worshipping your mammoth carcase on a dung-hill — and devouring your spiritual children.[1]

The contrasts between the West and the East, between ambition and contentment, activity and sweet idleness are established. And Khalid seeks his world Temple, which is built "on the Borderline of the Orient and Occident... on the mountainheights overlooking both," where "no false Gods are worshipped."

In the Lebanon, however, Khalid did not find that wholesome peace of the soul. For the sacredness of the soul there was being violated by those who proclaimed themselves as being its custodians— mainly the clergy. Khalid's return to the homeland only marked the beginning of a long strife between himself

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1. The Book of Khalid, PP. 148-149, (in the Beirut, 1973 edition); P. 128 (the New York,1911 edition).

and the religious institutions which had unwisely turned into money-hoarding mongers. He was soon abused for his 'heretic' opinions and staunch criticism of the church, and was consequently excommunicated. Moreover, the church banned him from marrying his cousin Najma, of whose love we have heard him tell since his early days in America. Khalid is later imprisoned in Damascus and Najla is married off to a government official "with a third-class Medjidi decoration and the title of Bey," thanks to the plotting of the Padres of Baalbek who, "in addition to their crafts," have become "matrimonial brokers of honourable repute." The disease of materialism is spreading far and wide, and money is becoming the essence of things: "the ethos of the Syrians..., like that of the Americans is essentially money-seeking."[1]

What follows is a spiritual and metaphysical adventure which Khalid undergoes while loafing around the valleys of Syria and Lebanon. Among the pine trees, where he builds his shrine, he is healed both physically and spiritually:

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1. The Book of Khalid, P.131.

> Here in this grand Mosque of Nature, I read my Koran. I, Khalid, a Bedouin in the desert of life, a vagabond on the highway of thought, I come to this glorious Mosque, the only place of worship open to me, to heal my broken soul in the perfumed atmosphere of its celestial vistas. The niches are not in this direction nor in that. But whereso one turns there are niches in which the living spirit of God is ever present. Here, then, I prostrate me and read a few chapters of My Holy Book. After which I resign myself to my eternal Mother and the soft western breezes lull me asleep.[1]

In his retreat, Khalid recollects his experience in tranquility. He sets his observations of the West, and his impressions of the East side by side, to conclude later that "the dawn of a new life, of a better, purer, healthier, higher spiritual kingdom" could only emerge when you graft "the strenuosity of Europe and America upon the ease of the Orient, the materialism of the West upon the spirituality of the East."[2] And in a Whitman-like tone he chants an eastern-western litany:

> Of the Orient and Occident, the male and female of the spirit, the two great streams in which the body and soul of man are refreshed, invigorated, purified— of both I sing, in both I glory, to both I consecrate my life, for both I shall work and suffer and die. The most highly

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1. The Book of Khalid, P.211.
2. Ibid., P. 267.

> developed being is neither European nor Oriental; but rather he who partakes of the finer qualities of both the European genius and the Asiatic Prophet.[1]

After discoursing, in a more or less disorderly manner, on spirituality, transcendentalism and the bottomless recesses of human will, Khalid touches his philosophic raptures with a colourful description of his tramping tour in the Lebanon. Here, Rihani betrays early signs of his great talent in writing travel books which cohere later on in the excellent accounts of his sojourn in the Arabian Peninsula.[2]

The last part of the book describes Khalid's return to the life of the city and his involvement in the political events which were taking place after the dethronement of Sultan Abdul Hamid and the call for a new constitution. The writer does not say much here about the sudden change of interest which Khalid displays. The shift from metaphysical reflections to political activity is not clearly accounted for. All we know is that he is now in the political pulpit preaching that there can be no Revolution without a Reformation: "A political revolution must

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1. The Book of Khalid, P. 312.
2. Such as Around the Coasts of Arabia, Op.Cit. Arabian Peak and Desert, Op. Cit.

always be preceded by a spiritual one, that it might have some enduring effect. Otherwise, things will revert to their previous state of rottenness as sure as God lives."[1]

Khalid's name is now well known in every town and hamlet all over Syria. He is the man with strange new ideas who claims to belong to both East and West, Christianity and Islam, and who wants people to follow his example. He even becomes a phenomenon called 'Khalidism'[2] as the editor tells us, a phenomenon much hailed by some and assailed by others. He is hailed as "the expected one— the true leader, the real emancipator,— who has in him the soul of the East and the mind of the West, the builder of a great Asiatic Empire." On the other hand, those who assailed him described him as "an instrument in the hands of some American speculators who would build sky-scrapers on the ruins of our mosques."[3]

The climax takes place when Khalid is invited to give a speech at the great Omayad Mosque of Damascus, along with two other speakers, a Syrian and a Turk.

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1. The Book of Khalid, P.312.
2. Ibid., P.322.
3. Ibid.

Notwithstanding the several warnings of sage Sheikhs of the city to refrain from speaking candidly to a fanatical, zealous mob, and despite government attempts to censure his talk and dictate another, Khalid takes his place in the pulpit of the mosque and spells out his criticism of corrupt politicians who use the innocent passionate masses for their own ends, and calls upon his listeners to divert their minds from the "religiosity and cant of today" to the "religion pure of the heart," to free Islam from the customs, traditions and superstitions which have impaired its wisdom and purity. At this speech, zealotry rises and shakes a protesting hand, and the angered mob cries for Khalid's blood. It is thanks to Shakib, the editor informs us, that he is smuggled safely out of the mosque except for a minor slash in the forehead, and a slight stiletto-thrust in the back.

Alternating between Khalid's manuscript and Shakib's Histoire, the editor further tells us that the traumatic experience in the mosque did not leave Khalid a weaker man, for he could see triumph in surrender, a sunrise in the sunset. "I am but a scruboak," he says, "which you might cut down, but

but not uproot. Lopp off my branches; apply the axe to my trunk; make of my timber charcoal for the censors of your temples of worship; but the roots of me are deep, deep in the soil beyond the reach of mortal hands."[1] And although the first encounter with the masses was disappointing, he still dreams "of the awakening of the East; of the mighty Orient rising to glorify the Idea, to build the temples to the Universal Spirit— to Art, and Love, and Truth and Faith."[2]

The remainder of the book describes Khalid's decision to leave Syria for the freer Egypt, especially now that there is a warrant on his head. He goes to Baalbek to bid his mother farewell. There, he discovers that Najma, his cousin, is left alone. Her father has died, and her husband after the dethrone-ment of Abdul Hamid has fled the country, leaving her with her small child, Najib. She suffers from early symptoms of tuberculosis, a disease Khalid had suffered from in his early days in Lebanon. Khalid decides to take her and the child with him to Egypt, where they live in a tent on the border of

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1. The Book of Khalid, P.347.
2. Ibid., P.348.

of the Libyan desert. There, in the severe delight of the desert, Khalid lives happily "far from the noise and strife of politics, far from the bewildering tangle of thought, far from the vain hopes and dreams and ambitions of life."[1]

This carefree, happy life is threatened by two calamities, the illness and death of the little boy, followed by the death of his mother Najma. Struck by these misfortunes, Khalid disappears suddenly, leaving behind him no detectable trace. His friend Shakib who had emigrated with him to Egypt and become poet laureate to one of the Pashas of Cairo, provides the last notes on the disappearance of his friend:

> He might have entered a higher spiritual circle or a lower; of a truth, he is not now on the outskirts of the desert: deeper to this side or to that he must have passed. And passing he continues to dream of "appearance in the disappearance; of truth in the surrender; of sunrises in the sunset.

From what has been said so far, it is quite obvious that a 'brief' summary of The Book of Khalid is almost impossible. Although a thin story line solders the work together, what is revealed at the

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1. The Book of Khalid, P.357.

end is not a sustained plot that ebbs and flows resolving itself in a single conclusion, but a state of mind that embraces a human, intellectual, and spiritual experience. The reader, consequently, is not tied to the development of events or episodes, so much as to the different shades and moods which this experience evinces.

It is not difficult to trace the parentage of Rihaṇi's thoughts and ideas. A close analysis of his work reveals a marked similarity with those of the American transcendentalists, chiefly Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman. Rihani seems to share their spiritual yearnings, their broad mystical vision, and their blend of religions, Occidental and Oriental. The frequent quotations and references in his work to On Self Reliance, Walden, and Song of Myself are not accidental. In all likelihood, The Book of Khalid was written with all of them in his mind.

Early in the book, Rihani indirectly furnishes his readers with a list of his sources while enumerating the philosophical and literary works which Khalid/Rihani was exploring in the United States. Of these he mentions, beside the New England group of transcendentalists, a number of Muslim Sufist thinkers such

as Ibn Al Farid and Jaluluddin Al Rumi, and Al Gazali; as well as the names of Rousseau, Wordsworth and Carlyle. The latter will prove to be his primary source of inspiration as will be shown later on in this discussion.

It is not surprising that Rihani should want to make use of both the Oriental Sufists and the English and American Romantics at the same time. For after all, didn't American transcendentalism turn to Eastern religions for inspiration, and didn't they have their deep rooting in the spiritual teachings of the Far and the Middle East? There is little wonder then that Rihani should feel no estrangement as he shifted from Islamic mysticism to its English and American counterparts.

In a mystical experience, the nature and reality of God and the relationship between the worshipped and the worshipper are vital features. To Rihani, God is not the Christian God, nor the Moslem God, nor the Buhai's. He does not control nature; His Divinity is within nature:

> I carry no notebook with me when I go down the valley or out into the fields. I am content if I bring back a few

> impressions of some reassuring instances of faith, a few pictures,and an armful of wild flowers and perfumed shrubs.[1]

Fundamentally, for the Sufists, the relationship between God and Man is that of love, to flow into one another, to be the Brahman "all in all", to become the One and the Absolute, to merge into the Over-Soul. "Everything in life must resolve itself into love", says Khalid, for love "is the divine Solvent. Love is the splendour of God."[2] "Do you love me' 'means do you see the same truth that I see'". In this belief, Rihani seems to conform with what Whitman said in his Song of Myself:

> And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,
> And that all the men ever born are also my brothers and the women my sisters and lovers,
> And that a Kelson of the creation is love.

Like Whitman, Rihani believed that in order to be in union with the Omnipresent he must have confidence in Man, in whom he sees the forceful glow of life, the source of everything. "My faith in Man," he says "is as strong as my faith in God,"[3] and

> No matter how good thou art, O my Brother, or how bad thou art, I still would believe in

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1. The Book of Khalid, P.208.
2. Ibid., P.317.
3. Ibid., P.135.

> thee,[1] and have faith in thee, and love thee.

And what Rihani certainly shared with Whitman was that identification of man with all other creatures, high or low:

> To me the discovery of a woodman in the valley were as pleasing as the dicovery of a woodchuck or a wood-swallow or a woodbine. For in the soul of the woodman is a song, I muse, as sweet as the rhythmic strains of the goldfinch, if it could be evoked.[2]

In quest of a spiritual union with nature, Rihani also found in Thoreau a guide and a teacher. Alluding to him frequently, quoting him, refering to his Walden experience, he follows his example and seeks knowledge and faith in the open book of mother earth:

> But let us swing from the road. Come, the hedges of Nature are not as impassable as the hedges of man. Through these scrub oaks and wild pears, between this tangle of thickets, over the clematis and blackberry bush,— and here we are under the pines, the lofty and majestic pines. How different are these natural hedges, growing in wild disorder, from the ugly cactus with which the neighbours choose to shut in their homes, and even their souls.[3]

Like Thoreau, Rihani believed that to purify the soul is to meet with nature and to mingle with its soil:

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1. The Book of Khalid (Beirut edition), P.23.
2. Ibid., P.209.
3. Ibid., P.207.

> O my brothers, build your temples and have your vineyards, even though it be in the rocky wilderness.[1]

A clear and marked parallel between Rihani and Thoreau is in their intense belief in God's presence in all places, and at all times; in the profound realization that man's soul partakes in a platonic manner, of a higher soul, and specifically in submitting to the Soul that enfolds all souls and beings:

> Let the I deny the stars, and they will nevertheless roll in silence above it. Let the not-I crush this I, this "thinking reed," and the higher universal I, rising above the stars and flooding the sidereal heavens with light, will warm, remold, and regenerate the world.[2]

There also remains the influence of Whitman and Thoreau's contemporary, Ralph Waldo Emerson. Indeed, one can meticulously list the extensive parallels between the two writers, but for the purpose of brevity, it suffices to mention that both shared beside their mystical outlook to life, their intensive approach to knowledge, their view of nature, particularly the way it is infused with the Divine. Were it not for its Arab and Moslem references, the following could have been culled from Emerson:

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1. The Book of Khalid, P.234.
2. Ibid., P.248 (Beirut edition), P.227 (New York edition).

> Indeed, the floor of the Tent seems too narrow at times for its crowded guests; but beneath the surface there is room for every root, and over it, the sky is broad enough for all.
>
> The bewildering vistas through the different coloured pillars, taking in a strip of sea here, a mountain peak there, have an air of enchantment from which no human formula can release a pilgrim-soul. They remind me— no; they can not remind me of anything more imposing. But when I was visiting the great Mosque of Cairo I was reminded of them. Yes, the pine forests are the great mosques of Nature.[1]

And stylistically, Rihani seems to share Emerson's oracular and sententious prose, and like him, to assert his 'philosophies' with visions and intuitions rather than with polemic arguments. Emerson's influence[2] was to stay with Rihani for more years to come. Ten years after Khalid, The Path of Vision still bore the imprints of the mystical poet of Concord. A typical passage is:

> A thought in the crucible of life melts into the thoughts of the world, the footsteps of a pioneer become ultimately the highway of a nation: the heroism of an individual becomes the trodden path of a race.[3]

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1. The Book of Khalid, PP.210-211.
2. In Mulouk al Arab (Kings of the Arabs), Rihani acknowledges his indebtedness to Emerson in more than one way. It was through Emerson, and specifically through his book English Traits that he came to know and admire the English people and thinkers. Thanks to this book, he confesses, he was able to remain 'un-Americanized',

Thematic and proverbial parallels with the English Romantics are also not scanty. Rihani basically shares with them the concept of man born essentially good, but with the passage of time, his purity and perfection being impaired by society. Undoubtedly, it is Wordsworth's vision of man and child whom Rihani echoes

> There is a deeper understanding between man and child than between man and man. For who but a child dare act so freely among these polyglots of ceremony in this little world of frills and feathers.[1]

and in:

> ... of all lovers of nature, the children are the least amateurish. And everyday here I see a proof of this. Behold them wading to their knees in that lusty grass, hunting the classic lotus with which to deck their olive branches for the high mass and ceremony of Palm Sunday.[2]

Also reminiscent of the European Romantics are Rihani's stormy outbursts against the materialistic civilization of the West. Such anger, as Professor Irving Babbitt says in his Rousseau and Romanticism[3], is the result of violent emotional disillusion. Professor K.Hawi also maintains that the idea that

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unlike his fellow Arab compatriots. Emerson was also the first to introduce him to Thomas Carlyle, through whose Hero and Hero Worship, surprisingly enough, he came to know "the great Arab Master, Prophet Mohammed." (P.7.)

4. The Path of Vision, Op.Cit., P.20.
1. The Book of Khalid, P.337 (N.Y.edition).
2. Ibid., PP.206-207.
3. Irving Babbitt, Rousseau and Romanticism (New York, 1919), PP.239, 264, 266.

civilized men are living corpses is found in many of the late Romantics, such as James Thomson in The City of Dreadful Night; Baudelaire in his poems about Paris; and Nerval in the poetry and prose which depicts his hallucinations. Blake also intimates the concept of London as hell.[1]

Although Rihani's indebtedness to Western thinkers is more conspicuous, a number of the narratives and fantasies in The Book of Khalid are rooted in the traditions and cultures in the East. In fact, the East and West not only meet in his mind and ideas but in his style as well, which has the Oriental spirit, the Sufist tones, the Moslem and specifically the Quranic phraseology, all curiously wedded to the style of Carlyle or Emerson— the thunder and crack of words, the smack and roll of them on the tongue of the first, and the imaginative and emotive meaning of words of the second.

An example of his indebtedness to Middle Eastern literature is the story of Khalid's visit to the girl he loves, Najma. It goes as follows:

In the dusk one day, Khalid visits Najma

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1. Khalil Hawi, Gibran Kahlil Gibran, Op.Cit., PP.212-213.

> and finds her oiling and lighting the lamp. As she beholds him under the door-lintel, the lamp falls from her hands, the kerosene blazes on the floor, and the straw mat takes fire. They do not heed this— they do not see it— they are on the wings of an ecstatic embrace. And the father, chancing to arrive in the nick of time, with a curse and a cuff, saves them and his house from fire.[1]

The story which Rihani attributes to Khalid and Najma is one of the most famous love stories in Arabic literature. 'Majnun Leïla', the equivalent of the western Romeo and Juliet, is to be found in pre-Islamic poetry as well as in the verses of the twentieth century Egyptian poet laureate, Ahmad Shawqi. It has permeated folkloric tales and established itself in oral literature and popular art. Undoubtedly, Rihani himself, who must have grown to like and admire the tale, desired to introduce it to the Western reader by slipping it gently into the tale of Khalid and his beloved.

For the purpose of introducing local colour into his writing, the writer adorned his work with translated verses from the Arabic, from the Quran, from popular proverbs, from daily slang, as well as from the works of Arab thinkers such as Al Gazzali and Al Farid.

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1. The Book of Khalid, PP.176-177.

In The Book of Khalid, it becomes rather obvious, Rihani utilizes many motifs from the culture in which he was born and in which he grew up.

Rihani's great indebtedness was truly to Carlyle, although he made use of a host of other writers. In form, The Book of Khalid is founded on the curious model of Sartor Resartus, and is written in the same heightened, satirical and highly ornamented style. For Rihani, to be attracted by the rhetoric of someone like Carlyle is not surprising for a number of reasons which will be discussed later on. What is surprising is the fact that as early as 1902, Rihani himself had written a staunch criticism of the Carlylean style itself. In an article in Arabic entitled "Carlyle and the French Revolution," he described the Victorian author as

> neurotic, suffering from black bile and indigestion, as well as another disease worse than the two, the disclosure of which is not presently of great importance. These vile symptoms emerge in his writing in the form of the most hideous satire.[1]

Although he further asserted that satire proper is a successful device if aptly used to expose the fatuous and the absurd, he discriminated between the 'intelligent'

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1. Carlyle fi al Thoura al Faransiyah, first published in Mujaz Tariekh al Thoura al Faransiyah (Summary of the history of the French Revolution) (New York: al Houda, 1902). It also appeared in

wit of Voltaire and the crude irony of Carlyle[1].

A close, even cursory, analysis of The Book of Khalid displays a marked similarity between Sartor Resartus and Rihani's work, and depicts what seems to be a conscious emulation of the Carlylean style. The impact is certainly of manner not matter, of form not of content, of rhetorical devices and narrative techniques. There is little doubt indeed that Rihani had the form of Sartor in mind long before he started writing, and perhaps shaped his own work with the model pretty close at hand.

Let us first see what in the Carlylean style might lure an Arab writer and whether its traits have any special esteem in the original native tongue of Arabic. One must be aware, however, that the discussion will have to include some sweeping generalizations as it will be the work of the critic not hindered by the limited scope of a dissertation to explore the similarities and differences between the two styles. The following, therefore, does not aim to make a full study of the Carlylean and the Rihani style, but to represent the fundamental traits of both.

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the posthumous publication of Wujouh Sharqiyah Gharbiyah (Eastern and Western faces),(Beirut: Dar Rihani, 1957). The transaltion is mine.

1. Ibid.

One is certainly tempted to consider that the 'architecture' of the Carlylean language would naturally appeal to the Arabs' almost innate admiration for the oratorical and the highly rhetorical. Carlyle's style overall distinctly possesses these very qualities[1]. It exhibits a vast range of peculiarities which presently have their counterparts in classical Arabic. To mention but a few: 'alliteration', 'parallelism', 'antithesis', 'apposition', 'onomotopea', abstract diction and lengthy sentences.

Carlyle, for example, was exceedingly fond of alliterative doublets, "lucid and lucent", "long and lank", "tailors and tailored"[2], etc., a device which Arab poets and writers greatly esteemed. He was also specifically concerned with cadence and the rhythmic flow of language, consequently with paralleled phrases and appositive nouns which once carefully predominated in classical Arabic rhetoric. The beat of the following passage from Book I of Sartor Resartus might have tickled the ear of Rihani:

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1. For a discussion of Carlyle's style see, G.B.Tennyson Sartor Called Resartus: The Genesis, Structure, and Style of Thomas Carlyle's First Major Work, (Princeton University Press, 1965). Also see, Grace J.Calder, The Writing of Past and Present (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1949).

> Man's whole life and environment have been laid open and elucidated; scarcely a fragment or fibre of his Soul, Body, and Possessions, but has been probed, dissected, distilled, desiccated, and scientifically decomposed: Our Spiritual Faculties, of which it appears there are not a few, have their Stewarts, Cousins, Royer Collards: every cellular, vascular, muscular Tissue glories in its Lawrences, Majendies, Bichats.[1]

Influenced by the classical Arabic models and by the Victorian masters, Carlyle in particular, Rihani rhapsodised in alliterative doublets and parallel sentences. "Lean and lathy," "loud-lunged," "soft and subtle", "linsey-wolsey freedom", " a world of frills and frocks and feathers", are but a few examples. Any specimen of his writing picked at random would reveal the constant concern for the strategy of parallel patterns disclosing "cadences, not without melodious heartiness"[2]:

> But is it not important, is it not the fashion at least, that one writing his own history should first expand on the humble origin of his ancestors and the distant obscure source of his genius? And having done this, should he not then tell us how he behaved in his child-hood; whether or not he made anklets of his mother's dough for his little sister; whether he did not kindle the fire with his father's Koran; whether he did not walk under the rainbow and

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1. Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1938), P. 2.
2. Ibid., P.35.

> try to reach the end of it on the hill-top; and whether he did not write verse when he was but five years of age.[1]

Examples of parallelism abound in The Book of Khalid, and like Sartor Resartus, his "pages are a tissue of elaborate parallel constructions."[2] Yet, it seems that these parallels are not so much constructed for expanding a meaning, or adding further particulars which aim at a fuller understanding; rather, they are used for the intrinsic movement and flow of the sentence and chiefly for their rhythmic effect. Occasionally, parallelism is used to effect a dramatic enactment of a scene as in: "Najma's father bows low, rubs his hands well, offers a large cushion, brings a leaning pillow, and blubbers out many unnecessary apologies."[3] Or it is used to expand a mood or describe a state of mind: "Disappointed, perplexed, diseased,— defeated, excommunicated, crossed in love,— but with an eternal glance of sunshine in his breast to open and light up new paths.. Khalid makes away from Baalbek."[4]

From Carlyle, Rihani did not only learn the art of rhythmic and parallel cadences, although they became

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1. The Book of Khalid, P.26.
2. Grace J. Calder, The Writing of Past and Present, Op.Cit., P.169.
3. The Book of Khalid, P.199.
4. Ibid., P.202.

hallmarks of his style, he also emulates his use of exclamations and exclamatory questions. It appears that both writers favoured this device as it served the oratorical purposes which they much esteemed. The following is only one of many examles:

> And is not Khalid, like his spiritual Mother, floundering, too, in the false dawn of life? His love of Nature, which was spontaneous and free, is it not likely to become formal and scientific? His love of Country, which begins timidly, fervently in the woods and streams, is it not likely to end in Nephelococcygia? His determination to work,which was rudely shaken at a push-cart, is it not become again a determination to loaf? And now, that he has a little money laid up, has he not the right to seek the cheapest and most suitable place for loafing? And where, if not in the Lebanon hills, "in which it seemed always afternoon," can he rejoin the Lotus-Eaters of the East?[1]

Another peculiarity of the Carlylean style which Rihani faithfully adopted is the use of capital letters for emphasis. Most of the afore-cited quotations give ample evidence of this. Yet, another example may further illustrate it:

> From his transcendental heights, the Superman shall ray forth in every direction the divine light, which shall mellow and purify the spirit of Nations and strengthen and sweeten the spirit of men. In this New World, I tell you, he shall be born, but he shall not be American in the Democratic sense.

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1. The Book of Khalid, P.149.

> He shall be nor of the Old World nor of the New; he shall be, my Brothers, of both. In him shall be reincarnated the Asiatic spirit of organization, of Poesy and Prophecy, and the European spirit of Art, and the American spirit of Invention. The Nation that leads the world to-day in material progress shall lead it too, in the future, in the higher things of mind and soul. And when you reach that height, O beloved America, you will be far from the majority-rule, and the devil and Hell. You will then conquer those 'enormous mud Megatheriums' of which Carlyle makes loud mention.[1]

And as Carlyle was frequently taxed for his 'lexicographic' diction, Rihani can easily stand the same charge. George Meredith once described the style of Carlyle as "a wind-in- the orchard style, that tumbled down here and there an appreciable fruit with uncouth bluster... learned dictionary words giving a hand to street slang, and accents falling on them haphazard, like slant rays from driving clouds..."[2] If this be true of Carlyle, it certainly is also true of Rihani. For although Rihani spoke of revolution and break up in style, and reproached his contemporary Arab writers for their undue concern with the dilapidated diction and pretentious forms, he himself hunted for the outlandish and the unusual turns of expression. Added to this is his equally frequent use of slang, and of 'uncushioned' Arabic terms which could make the

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1. The Book of Khalid, P.135.
2. Cited by G.J.Calder in The Writing of Past and Present, P.187, from Beachamp's Career "Works of George Meredith", XIII,24-25.

reading of Khalid by an English reader quite a tedious task. More than once, Rihani was exprobated for this ostentatious display of learned dicta .. His friend and contemporary, Mikhail Naimy was one of the first, who found Rihani's lexicography a tantalizing experience. In an article in Al Ghirbal he accused him of pretension and of'outbidding the English in their own language.'[1] Rihani's justification, however, was that "diction has shades, colours and rhythms which are as important as the meaning they denote. And in selecting my wording I usually look for that shade and that colour which best befits my meaning. I believe that every thought has its own terminology, whether in English or in Arabic, which no other dicta can aptly render."[2]

As for his use of Arabic terms in his writing, Rihani tells us that it was intended"to convey accurately to the English reader the life, thought and behaviour of the Middle Eastern peoples; the blending of Eastern and Western backgrounds being to establish a common background for both East and West."[3] Rihani, indeed, scarcely found it necessary to verify each

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1. Mikhail Naimy, The Complete Works, Op.Cit., P.463.
2. Rihani's letter to Naimy, dated 1921, Rasai'l Ameen Rihani, 1896-1940 (The Collected Letters) (Beirut: Dar Rihani,n.d.), P.186. The translation is mine.
3. The Book of Khalid, P.13.

bit of eastern terminology or imagery as it occured to him which undoubtedly presented his readers with a number of difficulties. This seeming difficulty enticed the author's brother, Mr. Albert Rihani, when reediting the book in 1973 to change "the extremely high English words for easier ones and to render the Arabic words into English."[1] Thus, such Arabic words which appeared in the New York edition of 1911, as 'mouzzen', 'al-Fatiha', 'al-Khatima', 'sakka', were rendered into the less enchanting 'prayer-summoner', 'preface', 'end', and 'water carrier' respectively. Yet, although the editor admits that 'water carrier', for example, is not the equivalent of 'sakka', a sufi term used to express spiritual thirst, he persists with the 'unfortunate' translation with the hope to make the work "easier to understand by English readers."[2] Concurrently, he simplifies words such as 'fuliginous' into the more familiar 'dark'; 'kine' into 'cows'; 'troglodyte' into 'cave-dweller'; and 'apothecary' into 'duggist'. Although this gives us an idea of the kind of wording Rihani used, one still wonders whether footnoting wouldn't have better served the purpose of explication, without violating the

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1. The Book of Khalid (Beirut,1973), P.14.
2. Ibid., P.15.

sacredness of an original text. The editor, however, retained some of Rihani's 'learned' words so as not to deprive him of what he must have one day considered the pride of his career, and the summit of his linguistic acquisition. Words such as 'nephelococcygia', 'political carpophagist', 'necrophagous' and 'Mandragora' (used by Carlyle), have not been replaced by simpler ones. One cannot but question here what made the editor change 'apothecary' into 'druggist', and not 'nephelococcygia', for example, into the better known 'Utopia', if he were to carry on with his task seriously.

Another feature common in both Carlyle's Sartor Resartus and Rihani's Book of Khalid is the extensive use of the second person singular familiar, thou. Both use it when sermonizing or reflecting on a spiritual or moral theme. The clearest justification for this is the Biblical association, as the word 'thou' trails some of the awsome authority of the Gospel. For like Carlyle's, Rihani's work was intended to be a sermon which addresses first and foremost, man's spiritual interest. An occasionally Biblical style was found to be most apt for the two oeuvres, although tinged, from time to time, as

Meredith suggested, with the slang of the day.

It is perhaps appropriate here, while investigating the stylistic similarities of the two works, to comment briefly on the nature of humour in Rihani, to see if here too he was influenced by the Carlylean model. Carlyle's humour was certainly not to be found in the inflated moralizing, or the lugubrious posturings of Professor Teufelsdröck, but rather in his outrages on conventional thought and practice which provoked amusement as well as reflection.[1] Similarly, Rihani's 'sermons' were often drab and cheerless, but he succeeded in drawing out laughter in his ironic portraiture of the traditional politicians or clergymen of his country, or the cynical delineation of the democratic candidates in the local American elections. One example is when early in the book Khalid's friend, Mr. Hoolihan, informed him that Mr.O'Donohue of the Wigwam party offered him the post of political canvasser of the Syrian district, the details of which Shakib provided in his Histoire Intime:

> Khalid did become a Tammany citizen, that is to say, a Tammany dray-horse; that he was much esteemed by the Honourable Henchmen, and once in the Wigwam he was particularly noticed by his Shamrag Majesty Boss O'Graft; that he was Tammany's Agent to the Editors of the Syrian newspapers of New York, whom he

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1. G.Tennyson, Sartor Called Resartus, Op.Cit.

> enrolled in the service of the Noble Cause for a consideration which no eloquence could reduce to a minimum; that he also took to the stump and dispensed to his fellow citizens, with rhetorical gestures at least, the cut-and-dried logic which the committee of Buncombe on such occasions furnishes its squad of talented spouters; and that— the most important this— he was subject in the end to the public disgrace of waiting in the lobby with tuft-hunters and political stock-jobbers, until it pleased the committee of Buncombe and the Honourable Treasurer thereof to give him— a card of dismissal.1

The concocted names of 'O'Donohue', 'Boss O'Graft', and the 'Honourable Henchmen' are but obvious reminiscences of the Carlylean notorious concoctions of 'Teufeldröckh', 'Hofrath Heuschrecke', 'Weissnichtwo', and 'Entepfuhl'. And indeed, Rihani's sense of the ludicrous, as depicted in the above passage, has clear echoes of the Carlylean wry irony.

In his reprobations of the clerical institutions in the Lebanon, Rihani uses the same quaint turn of expressions as those of Carlyle, not without his satirical undertones. Likening the Padres of Baalbeck to matrimonial brokers, he writes:

> And in their meddling and making, their baiting and mating, they are as serviceable as the Column Personal of an American newspaper. Whoso is matrimonially disposed shall whisper his mind at the confessional or drop his advertisement in the pocket of the Columns of their Bride-Dealer, and he shall prosper. She as well as he shall prosper.[2]

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1. The Book of Khalid, PP.125-126.
2. Ibid., P.197.

Like Carlyle's, Rihani's humour derives from juxtaposing the trivial with the haughty, the low and the lofty, the learned and the vulgar. Another example of this is his treatment of the Christian confession cult:

> The woman having done and gone, the wicket is open, and the serving-monk ushers us through the dark and stivy corridor to the rear, where a few boxes marked "Made in America"— petroleum boxes these— are offered us as seats. Before the door of the last cell are a few postherds in which sweet basil plants are withering from thirst. Presently, the door squeaks, and one, not drooping like the plants, comes out to greet us.[1]

His comic irony emerges occasionally as in a scene from an animated picture. The quickness of manner, the histrionic movement, the brief, expressive yet clownish gestures, as in the scene where Najma is to decide whether she should marry the third-class Medjidi official or not. Her father takes her by the hand to show her a noose he has prepared for her, and tells her briefly to choose between it and his Excellency:

> Poor Najma has not the courage to die, and so soon. Her cousin Khalid is in prison, is ex-communicated— what can she do? Run away? The church will follow her— punish her. There's something satanic in Khalid— the Church said so— the Church knows. Najma rolls these things in her mind, looks at her father beseechingly. Her father points to the noose. Najma falls to weeping. The noose serves well its purpose.[2]

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1. The Book of Khalid, P.225.
2. Ibid., P.200.

The importance of these citations is to be found not so much in the particular details as in the general effect. To read The Book of Khalid 'spatially' not line after line, or paragraph following another, is to probe the shadows of a world in which Carlyle could have once lived; to touch the earnest philosphy disguised in sardonic garbs, and feel the spirituality of a message clad in the suggestive realism of a narrative.

The stylistic similarities have been pointed out first, because it is our belief that Rihani was primarily attracted to Carlyle on account of the stylistic traits which he as an Arab most appreciated: the excessive concern with eloquent wording, the elaborate oratory, resonance of sentence, and balance of structure which Carlyle clearly exemplified.

But apart from the stylistic similarities, there exist a number of common features which certainly bring The Book of Khalid and Sartor Resartus much closer to one another. In making out the framework of their narratives, both Rihani and Carlyle purport to possess manuscripts which profess to be a guide-book, "a voice publishing tidings of.. philosophy.. a spirit addressing spirits,"[1] or "a book of the

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1. Sartor Resartus, P.15.

chart and history of one little kingdom of the soul."[1] Both manuscripts are written in language foreign to the English reader— Teufelsdröckh's in German, and Khalid's in Arabic. The writers decide to 'translate', 'edit', and publish the books with the hope of introducing it to the English public. But they express dissatisfaction with the manuscript's style and the deficiency of biographical information which they yielded. Carlyle thinks of Teufelsdröckh as an "uncultivated writer"[2], and the book at large does not entirely content him. The work on clothes by Herr Teufelsdröckh, he says, is "a mixture of insight, inspiration, with dulness, double-vision and even utter blindness." And "it may now be declared that Professor Teufelsdröckh's acquirements, patience of research, philosophic and even poetic vigor, are here made indisputably manifest; and unhappily no less his prolixity and tortuosity and manifold ineptitude." Carlyle further concludes that "there is much rubbish in this book."[3]

Likewise, Khalid's editor refers to that "vexing manuscript,"[4] and chides its author for stylistic rambling and discrepancy, as Khalid "for ten whole

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1. The Book of Khalid, P.17.
2. Sartor Resartus, P.34.
3. Ibid., PP.31-32.
4. The Book of Khalid, PP.248-249.

pages, beating continually, now in the dark of Metaphysics, now in the dusk of science; losing himself in the tangled bushes of English Materialism, and German Mysticism, and Arabic Sufism; calling to Berkely, to Haekel; meeting with Spencer here, with Al-Gazzaly there; and endeavouring to extricate himself in the end with some such efforts as "the Natural being Negativity, the Spiritual must be the opposite of that, and both united in God from the Absolute." The editor adds that "whoever relishes such stuff, and can digest it, need not apply to Khalid; for, in this case, he is but a poor third-hand caterer. Better go to the Manufacturers direct; they are within reach of everyone in this Age of Machinery and Popular Editions."[1]

To make up for the inadequacies of the manuscripts, and in order to obtain biographical data on both Khalid and Teufelsdröckh, Rihani and Carlyle both seek additional information from the protagonists' friends. Shakib, Khalid's "most intimate friend and disciple"[2]; and Herr Hofrath Heuschrecke, the "Professor's chief friend and associate in Weissnichtwo,"[3] offer to provide the editors with the lacking information

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1. The Book of Khalid, PP.248-249.
2. Ibid., P.28.
3. Sartor Resartus, P.38.

on the lives of their masters. Moreover, they supply them with letters and similar materials which they hope would aid them in their editing of the books.

But this is not all. The central characters in The Book of Khalid and Sartor Resartus have striking similarities, both physical and mental. Teufelsdröckh has a "little figure" and "thick locks" of hair, "long and lank, overlapping the gravest face we ever in this world saw." His eyes are deep, "and looking out so still and dreamy."[1] He sits whole days "in loose ill-brushed thread-bare habiliments.. to think and smoke tobacco."[2] Khalid is also "little" with "bushy hair"[3] which he wears long.[4] He looks like a Dervish[5], or a monk as he wraps himself in a loose black garment of coarse wool.[6] And his general outlook is that of a "phantom-like dreamer."[7] Both are "speculative radicals"[8], "feverish and clamorous,"[9]"always invoking the distant luminary of transcendentalism for light";[10] displaying an obvious "tendency to Mysticism"[11], and both are men "devoted to the higher philosophies."

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1. Sartor Resartus, P.18.
2. Ibid.
3. The Book of Khalid, P.174.
4. Ibid., P.108.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., P.270.
7. Ibid., P.128.
8. Sartor Resartus, P.67.

These are not the only parallels which suggest Rihani's reliance on Sartor Resartus for the creation and development of his protagonist. The whole development and growth of Khalid as a character or a diminutive prophet runs along parallel lines with Teufelsdröckh. Like the German Professor, Khalid grows by a succession of insights and intuitions, or what Carlyle described as "Intuition quickened by experience." He passes through a number of intense experiences from which he emerges with new insights and visions. And what matters here is not the episode that Khalid narrates, but the pure thought with which he emerges. Indeed, what we witness in The Book of Khalid is not so much the progress of a fictional character as much as the progress of the philosophical argument. And in Sartor Resartus, "though our attention is focused on Teufelsdröckh as an individual momentarily, he is never made our exclusive interest."[1] On the whole, interest in both characters is minimal compared to the more engaging concepts they postulate.

One can already see that it is not merely for a few

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9. The Book of Khalid, P.264.
10. Ibid., P.265.
11. Sartor Resartus, P.70.

1. G.H.Brookes, The Rhetorical Form of Carlyle's Sartor Resartus (University of California Press, 1972), P.97.

episodes, chance phrases, or general thoughts that Rihani is indebted to Carlyle. There are instances in his book where the influence is more than a likely echo of the Victorian writer. In his chapter on "Flounces and Ruffles", for example, the Carlylean impact reaches its zenith as he philosophises on clothes in the manner of Herr Teufelsdröckh, and even specializes in "ruffled garments". The following is one example:

> What can you do without your flounces? How can you live without your ruffles? How can you, without them, think, speak, or work? How can you eat, drink, walk, sleep, pray, worship, moralize, sentimentalize, or love, without them? Are you not ruffled and flounced when you last see the darkness? The cradle and the tomb, are they not the first and last ruffles of Man? And between them what a panoramic display of flounces. What clean and attractive visible Edges of unclean invisible common skirts! Look at your huge elaborate monuments, your fancy sepulchers, what are they but ruffles of your triumphs and defeats? The marble flounces, these, of your cemetries, your Pantheons and Westmin ster Abbeys. And what are your belfries and spires and chimes, your altars and reredoses and such like, but the sanctified flounces of your churches.1

Much of what Carlyle was concerned with was "to strip away coverings, taking man down to the bare essentials, which prove to be not merely the naked,

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1. The Book of Khalid, PP.182-183.

unclothed human body but the incorporeal invisible human soul."[1] Rihani seems to be working on the same essentials: Man's "spirit, in the course of time was born; it grew and developed zenithward and nadirward, as the cycles rolled on. And in spiritual pride, and pride of power and wealth as well, it took to ruffling and flouncing to such an extent that at certain epochs it disappeared, dwindled into nothingness, and only the additions remained."[2]

One cannot fail to be struck by the similarity between the motif of clothes symbolizing several social institutions in Sartor Resartus and the flood of symbolic images relating garments to political and religious offices in The Book of Khalid. The world in Rihani's work is a "Dress Ball of the human race."[3] "The Pope of Christendom, in his three hats and heavy trailing gowns, blessing the air of heaven; the priest in his alb and chasuble, dispensing of the blessings of the Pope; the judge, in his wig and bombazine, endeavouring to reconcile divine justice with the law's mundane majesty..."[4]

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1. G.H.Brookes, Op.Cit.
2. The Book of Khalid, P.183.
3. The Book of Khalid, P.185.
4. Ibid.

to the rest of this bewildering variety of the pageant.

In tracing such obvious parallels, one is likely to fall into two hazards. First, an already assumed affinity between two writers can frequently blind the researcher to the possibility of other sources. Secondly, one is likely to strain after 'seeming similarities' to prove the given hypothesis. In this case, the question that persists is whether in clothing Rihani in the Carlylean mantle, we are not neglecting the influence of someone like Jonathan Swift, for example. When Rihani speaks of 'additions' which the spirit acquires with the passage of time, couldn't he be alluding to Swift's Tale of a Tub? And a phrase such as "Man, to my way of thinking, is a flounce-wearing spirit" could show a Carlylean urge to see the spirit in its nudity, but could also recall the Swiftian phrase "what is Man himself but a Micro-Coat, or rather a compleat suit of cloaths with all its trimmings."

Still, there are more of Rihani's borrowings from Carlyle to be mentioned. Apart from Khalid's development along lines similar in pattern to those of Teufelsdröckh, the closing scene also bears a striking similitude. Khalid, at the end of the book

disappears suddenly, and the final 'conjecture' of his new 'spiritual' abode is given by his scribe Shakib. Similarly, Teufelsdöckh diappears abruptly and Heuschrecke, the faithful friend, speculates that "Es geht an," Teufelsdröckh has departed Weissnichtwo to witness the new birth of society.

To eke out his dependence on the model of Sartor Resartus, Rihani adopted several of Carlyle's narrative devices, chief of which is speaking through a fictional editor. At its face value, the editor device or 'guise' is employed to maintain an artistic distance between writer and reader; a "hoax" as Carlisle Moore says when reviewing the Carlylean editor, " of a kind developed by all great satirists, which influenced its readers for their betterment whether they were deceived or not."[1] Such a possibility was, in fact, suggested when, early in the book, Rihani, with tongue in cheek, said that the "K.L. Manuscript which we kept under our pillow... was beginning to worry us. After all might it not be a literary deception, we thought.."[2]

Yet, it seems that there is more to it than the

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1. Carlisle Moore, "Thomas Carlyle and Fiction, 1822-1834," Nineteenth Century Studies edited by Herbert Davis,et.al.(Cornell Univ. Press, 1940), P.149.
2. The Book of Khalid, P.26.

mere deception of reader and artistic estrangement. In both Sartor Resartus and The Book of Khalid, the editor assumes a wide range of roles and performs the activities of editor-narrator, translator, critic, reviewer and biographer simultaneously.[1] And, indeed, since the narrative enfolds through a multiplicity of voices, Khalid's, Shakib's, and the editor's, the last takes the mediating role manipulating all voices into a coherent order.

Before any discussion of the role of the editor is attempted, the question that creeps up is whether Rihani, in creating this character, was aware of its tremendous potentials, or was simply emulating the Carlylean model with whatever intrinsic advantages it unconsciously yielded. Recent studies of Sartor Resartus have emphasized Carlyle's deliberate use of the fictional editor as a successful means of voice manipulation.[2] G.H.Brookes, in his interesting work on the rhetorical form of Sartor Resartus, maintains that the fictional editor has offered Carlyle some considerable rhetorical privileges. Through him, the writer can reinforce Teufelsdröckh's philosophy by direct advocacy; or by occasionally criticizing or ridiculing this philosophy, he can ease his reader into a careful evaluation. Further,

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1. In my discussion of the role of the editor in Khalid, I have followed the arguments presented by G.Tennyson and G.H.Brookes in

he can express astonishment at Teufelsdröckh's views in order to accomodate certain of his readers' fears. In short, he can perform a wide variety of rhetorical operations which help advance the philosophy.[1]

Certainly, Brooke's comments on Carlyle fit Rihani closely, and may be read as comments on his own fictional editor. After all, it is highly possible that Rihani was first and foremost attracted to the figure of the editor for all the rhetorical services it seemed to offer. To give him the benefit of the doubt, a closer observation of his editor must be attempted.

In making up the manuscript and editing story, Rihani seems to achieve two main purposes. Firstly, the fact that Khalid's memoirs is preserved at the Khedivial Library amongst the papyri of Amen-Ra and ancient Egyptian manuscripts, lends it a special importance and immediately links it with history. Consequently, the story it unfolds, which is Rihani's own (as his brother affirms), seems to come from a remote authority which could readily persuade the

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Sartor Called Resrtus, and The Rhetorical Form of Carlyle's 'Sartor Resartus' respectively.

2. G. Tennyson, and G.H.Brookes, Op.Cit.

1. G.H.Brookes, Op.Cit.

reader of its truth. Secondly, by pretending to be writing The Book of Khalid by drawing on both the K.L.manuscript and the scribe's Histoire Intime, the writer can attain a flexibility of tone and point of view which allows him to take a number of stances from the material he postulates, pointing out its pros and cons and gulling the reader into acceptance.

That the editor takes a variety of roles is quite evident throughout the book. At the beginning, he seems to be seeking the confidence of his reader by pretending to be the fair judge of the material he is editing. By criticizing Khalid's manuscript, which he often does, he sets himself apart from the protagonist and allies with the reader instead. He merely arranges the material to what he thinks is the reader's best interest. When Shakib, for example, is carried away in his descriptions, the editor stops him, thus exercising the privilege of his editorial office.[1] Also, he selects from Khalid's book what he thinks most revealing of his character: "Of a number of subjects in the book..., we choose, My Native Terraces, or Spring in Syria, symbolizing the natural succession of Khalid's winter of destiny."[2] Not infrequently, he gives 'the head and tail' of a story leaving the rest to the imagination of the reader. By so doing he prepares the

1. The Book of Khalid, P.58.
2. Ibid., P.203.

reader for more involvement in the work and assigns to him the task of a seeker.

By the same token, when the editor's comments turn, a little later in the work, from the linguistic and stylistic criticism of the K.L.manuscript, to the nature of the intellectual and spiritual experience of the protagonist, the reader is also invited to practice the same vein of criticism which in fact is no more than a self analysis process.

Other than being the mere reporter and commentator, the editor assumes the capacity of guide and interpreter. His involvement in the philosophy he is editing, gradually increases and he is tempted into judging and evaluating the concepts at hand. Occasionally, he gives a brief 'prologue' or 'epilogue' to an episode, explaining its symbolic meaning or stressing its importance in connection with what follows. Introducing the chapter on "The Kaaba of Solitude" he tells that "in it are signal manifestations of the triumph of the soul over the diseases, adversities and sorrows of mortal life. Indeed, here is an example of faith and power which we reckon sublime."[1] Similarly, the editor follows the chapter

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1. The Book of Khalid, P.203.

on "Flounces and Ruffles" with the following:

> "Humanity is so feeble in mind," says Renan, "that the purest thing has need of the co-operation of some impure agent." And this, we think, is the main point of Khalid's rhapsody on flounces and ruffles.[1]

Although the editor is never allowed to develop as a character in the narrative, we gradually learn more about his beliefs and convictions through his approvals and disapprovals of what Khalid does or thinks. In fact, while playing the cicerone in Khalid's land, the editor acquires a more authoritative stance and displays better erudition and wisdom than Khalid. And although, early in the book speculative thoughts came only from Khalid, the editor, towards the end, takes the liberty of introducing his own views on philosophical and moral concepts. No longer can he be seen only as a bridge through which the reader has access to Khalid and his thoughts, but as a guide, himself thoughtful and reflective. He galvanises moral or metaphysical reflection, provokes the reader to different reactions and stimulates him both intellectually and spiritually.

The fact that The Book of Khalid is basically a didactic

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1. The Book of Khalid, P.188.

work lends emphasis to the function of the editor as a guide and decipherer. Khalid or Rihani had an insight into a number of things: man at large, man and society in the Orient and Occident, and matters of spirit and mind, and he wished to introduce his reader to this spiritual and intellectual revelation. In the preface to his book, he purports the work to be not "merely as a certificate of birth or death," to raise it up not "as an epitaph, a trade-sign, or any other emblem of vainglory or unworthy riches; but truly as an entrance through which a race and those above and those below that race, are invited to pass to that higher Temple of mind and spirit."[1]

And as the fictional editor in Sartor Resartus is considered by some critics to be one of the strengths of this persuasive work[2], and to reveal a deliberate and intelligent use of the potentials of the device in order to stimulate and persuade the reader; Rihani, by the same token, seems to contrive to exploit the same rhetorical advantages for the purpose of engaging his reader in constructive speculation. By creating an intrinsic dialogue between editor and

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1. The Book of Khalid, P.18.
2. See, G.H.Brookes, Op.Cit.(The Editor and the Controlling Voice), PP.48-79 (especially P.50).

protagonist, and wavering between belief in Khalid's righteousness and skepticism of his doings, the author preserves his work from the dryness of philosophy and the tediousness of speculative advocacy.

If the editor in The Book of Khalid succeeds in encouraging intellectual or spiritual striving in his reader, it is mainly the fruit of a Carlylean lesson. In "State of German Literature," when explaining how a writer with an "invisible and immaterial object" must win a reader, Carlyle said that "the reader must faithfully and toilsomely cooperate with him, if any fruit is to come out of their mutual endeavour."[1]

As Sartor Resartus presented its critics with the problem of designating a literary form to it[2], The Book of Khalid seems to elicit similar difficulties as it has a way of fitting into more than one category. Although literary nomenclature has its own hazards, the temptation persists to 'pigeonhole' a work somewhere amongst the familiar types and genres. In the case of The Book of Khalid, the classifier must be chary to assign it to the novel form, or to 'romance'. There are certain 'credentials' for the

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1. G.Tennyson, Sartor Called Resartus, Op.Cit.
2. See, G.H.Brookes, The Rhetorical Form of Carlyle's Sartor Resartus, Op.Cit.,PP.1-15.

first, and clear ties to the second. Western critics described it as an "esoteric romance of East and West,"[1] or a philosophical story, but not fiction. While the only Arab critic who refered briefly to The Book of Khalid, Jamil Jabir, described it as a novel.[2] Rihani himself answering the Sun interviewer, admitted that The Book was not meant to be a work of fiction. To the question "what is the nature of the work" then, he said: "I can scarcely say," and he looked worried at the idea of having to nail down an artistic creation to a literary form. "It is a sort of romance in philosophy." "It is not fiction," he went on to say, "though written in the narrative form." And fiction, he is asked, "do you intend writing that?" "Who knows?" he replied. "The Khalid at the end of my book meets a Lady who belongs to a cult of thinkers in the East; she has her views, and he has his views. I have written no novel yet. But who knows what situation may develop."[3]

Rihani's answer certainly suggests one of the significant factors which hinder the recognition of

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1. From a clipping of newspapers and magazines in the possession of the author's brother, Mr. Albert Rihani.
2. Jamil Jabir, Ameen Rihani, Al Rajul, Al Adeeb (Rihani, the man, the writer), (Beirut: 1947), P.52.
3. Sun, July 11, 1911.

The Book of Khalid as a novel,— that of the dynamic interplay of characters. The narrative could have developed into a novel had it been projected through the conflicting personalities of its personae. But what we presently have is the projection and reflection of one mind all through. True, the story was narrated through different voices mentioned earlier, yet, no stylistic differentiations can be depicted between one character and another, or one narrator and another. And except for Khalid, none of the characters attains any realistic dimensions. Even his relationship with the other personae of the narrative remains entirely static. This includes, to a certain extent, Shakib, his scribe; and more evidently Najma, the woman he loves. A number of characters are also dropped half way through the narrative, appearing and reappearing only when needed. The best example of this is, once again, Najma who is entirely neglected towards the end of the narrative after being forced back to the scene for no obvious reason, except perhaps to permit Khalid to reflect on birth and death when she and her son die. Evidently, Rihani is primarily concerned with the intellectual implications of Khalid's experience and not strictly with his fictional growth.

Likewise, the book lacks a consistency of narration. Although a chronological and logical sequence of events is clearly promoted throughout the book, the action is interspersed by subordinate themes which deflect our attention from the main plot. More often than not, the events seem to be contrived not for any organic development of the narrative but for transmitting pure ideas regardless of intrinsic structural unity of the work as a whole.

Altogether, incident and character are used not for the dynamic creation of a sustained fictional world. Instead, they are exploited to get on to something else— a vehicle for ideas so to speak, or an apparent narrative that obviously does not gain our primary concern or embody the author's primary intention.

This, however, should not make us overlook the many distinguishable narrative elements which the book possesses, all indicative of good fiction. Conventional definitions of the 'novel' form generally tend to lay a special emphasis on the realistic and faithful reproduction of life. Seen in this light, The Book of Khalid could have strong claims to the genre. For despite its multifarious sections, subdivisions and copiousness of theme, Rihani's narrative

is played against a background readily recognizable by the reader, especially as the author strains to relay every suggestive detail of his protagonist's experience in a convincing vein. The details pertain to both external and internal worlds and cover a wild range of objects from observation of habits of dress and food to the delineation of a psychological mood.

In fact, seen in relation to the works of Gibran and Naimy, The Book of Khalid, though similarly preoccupied with philosophical and moral quests, reflects a much greater degree of truthfulness to life, and a more realistic presentation of man in relation to society at a certain stage of its development. Characters, events and narratives, when individually analysed seem to enjoy a certain vitality, reality and energy. It is only when Rihani solders them together with a string of abstract philosophy that they shrink into a dwarfish world. What is meant here is that the author fails to develop his fictional world organically and seems to be incapable of creating a dynamically sustained plot. This is mainly due to the fact that frequently he loses control over the necessary balance between the fictive and the expository, giving the upper hand to the last. Otherwise, the author displays

an admirable sense of observation, and an unmistakable ability to draw a scene engagingly. This has enabled him to present in Khalid a most enchanting and convinving description of the two disparate worlds, as he manages to find the things of the East and of the West both strange and familiar— strange enough to call out the full powers of his observation, familiar enough not to be confusing. This has compelled western reviewers to admit that "the West has never hitherto witnessed itself in the flashing mirror of such a mind."[1]

Indeed, albeit its metaphysical pursuits, it would be hard to find a work written by an Arab in the first decade of this century which is richer in concrete everyday things, in 'earthly' delightful wit and humour, and in poignant irony. Perhaps what gives it its abstract 'feel' is the strange juxtaposition of the daily and the mundane, to the most cerebral and lofty of ideas.

Is the work then a romance as Rihani suggests? Clearly in the light of conventional definitions of romance, The Book of Khalid meets the requirements

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1. Bookman, N.Y.City, Dec.1911.

of the genre only in that it permits the absorbing of diverse and even contrasting themes; that it has the ability to grow through continuation and elaborations on earlier themes unsufficiently developed; that it is basically didactic, that it uses subject matter as a means of conveying a new philosophy, and that it performs "the double function of entertainment through titillation and the conveying in palatable form of a particular kind of philosophy of life."[1] The thin line love story which runs throughout Khalid can also be seen as one of romance features, especially as it, too, is of the "idyllic or idealized type," marked by strange or unexpected incidents and developments. And above all, like most romances, the subplot and subordinate themes diverge, subdivide, join, separate and meet again, so that the work is a kind of interlocking whole, devoid of unity in the modern sense but forming as impregnable a structure as any revolving around a single centre.[2]

Rihani did not give up the idea of writing novels in the modern sense of the word. In 1915, he wrote Outside the Harem, a document on social protest. It

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1. Arnold Kettle, The English Novel, Op.Cit. P.29.
2. "Romance," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th ed., P.1023.

remained a manuscript, never finding an American publisher. Albert Rihani explains that the lack of interest of publishers in this novel was the result of its theme. No one in the West seemed at that time to be interested in the question of the Arab woman or her rebellion against tradition and her desire for emancipation. His only recourse was to have it translated into Arabic. Kharijal Hareem translated by Abdul Massieh Haddad was published in Beirut in 1917.[1]

The attempts made by Rihani to write a novel in English were not to be resumed until the year 1951 when Edward Atiyah's The Thin Line made its appearance. There is then a lapse of over forty years in the life of the English novel by Arabs. Between these two novels, a considerable amount of Arab writing in English took place, but it dealt mainly with non-literary subjects such as politics and economics.

The actual rise of the English novel by Arab writers did not begin till the end of the Second World War. The preceding period witnessed a series of Arab national movements and revolutions such as the Arab revolt against Turkey in 1916, and the Syrian Revolution against the French in 1925. The Arab

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1. Rihani must have tried again and again to write a novel in English in the contemporary sense of the word. An unfinished 'novel' "Dr. Della Valle, or, No, Dr. Beppino" with an American-Italian cast, all set in Rome, Italy , has recently be deposited at the library of the American University of Beirut. Although the manuscript, in its 312 pages (n.d.) still betrays some of the early signs of digression, long windedness, poor characterization, etc. typical of the writer's early works, it constitutes, nevertheless, a remrkable step towards a better understanding of the requirements of the genre.

A collection of short stories The Green Flag (58pages, typescript,n.d.) has also been deposited at the same library.

heritage and language were stressed at this point of national awakening, so that Rihani himself, who lived in both the United States and Lebanon, was criticized for writing in English.[1]

Yet the two World Wars opened the eyes of both East and West to the importance of each other, not only on commercial, political or strategic bases, but also on intellectual grounds. The western reader became more ready to learn what the eastern thinker wished to say, and vice versa. The 1948 Palestinian war urged some writers, such as Jabra, to address the Western reader and explain to him the Arab attitude towards the problem. Hunters in a Narrow Street was his document. Other Arab writers started writing novels in English to reach a wider audience and address an international public; or merely to present the problem of detachment and alienation which Arab intellectuals were undergoing as a result of their bilingualism, biculturalism and multiplicity of values. The following chapter will focus on this phenomenon of the alienated.

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1. Albert Rihani, personal interview in Beirut on May 14, 1970.

CHAPTER THREE

THE 'FIFTIES AND AFTER

COMMON THEMES

The earliest attempts at Arab novel-writing contributed very little if anything at all to the development of the novel of the 'fifties and 'sixties written by people such as Atiyah, Ghali, Alamuddin and Diqs. As a matter of fact, in terms of both subject matter and form, the post-Second World War writers depart markedly from the concerns and sensibilities of the early writers, and seem to fit more conveniently in the European realistic tradition of art than in the Arab. The reason for this is to be found in the historical, political and social changes responsible for the emergence of each group, more specifically in their diverse raisons d'etre.

It has been mentioned earlier that the literary adventures of Gibran, Naimy or Rihani were incited by an unheeded spurt towards a wider, freer world, and were an expression of a boundless ambition to take part in the making of human thought. Although they used certain forms of narratives for their works, these early writers concerned themselves more intimately with the thought, the message they conveyed

than the literary form per se. And most important of all is the fact that, though strangers to the language and to the land (the U.S.A.), they felt no inhibitions whatsoever as they freely handled the alien linguistic tool or the novel literary form. And indeed, though they were far from being artists living in the ivory towers of private concern, their outlook of themselves was not wanting a touch of superiority. In his Prophet, Gibran with the sagacity of Old Testament Kings, and the wisdom of the Bible, poured his counsels and sermons on western and eastern readers alike. Similarly, Naimy meant his Book of Mirdad to be a universal reference work for matters of conduct, a guidebook so to speak, or a Gospel; while Rihani not only preached spirituality and simplicity to the West but also went around the 'Coasts of Arabia' meeting its kings and princes, advising them on how to run their own kingdoms.

The writers that followed possessed little of this openness, of the confident seeking of an equal place in the universe. They were more concerned with regional themes, specifically with questions of national and cultural identities. This, however, may not be a peculiarity of the Arab authors in English alone. European romanticism with all its universal and humanitarian concerns had soon to be channelled into the more particular concerns of the individual in an urbanised society: his adaptation problems, his psychological ailments;

in short, the dialectic of innocence and experience in a pre-industrial and a highly mechanised world. Yet, difference of approach, of concerns, of self assessment, that existed between the two groups of Arab writers can be interpreted, besides the world-wide increasing concern for the individual, through the emergence of a new important factor in their lives: colonisation. When Rihani and Gibran were writing, the West was looked upon by the Arab emigrants as the embodiment of human ideals of liberty, fraternity and justice.[1] But when Atiyah or Ghali wished to express themselves creatively, even the English language which they used was not entirely their choice; it just happened to be the language they knew best by virtue of the missionary schools to which they were 'seduced' at one stage of their growth. They did not, like their forerunners,

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1. Critical of the many maladies of the East, these writers had a naive yet blind faith in what America and the industrialised countries of Europe could do for the Arabs. Although this feeling did not persist for very long and was soon checked by their growing disillusionment in the whole legacy of Western justice and equality, this is how they thought of the role of America during the First World War. In a letter written (in Arabic) to his friend Shukri Bakhash, dated Seville 18th April,1917, Ameen Rihani wrote the following:
' Little is my doubt that the deprived small nations of the world will wake up to see a new and liberated life waiting for them once this war is over. Why not, so long as America is willing to raise her voice in the peace conference for their well being and independence...America has joined the war, and thousands of Syrians have now attained the American nationality. Thousands...have lived under this glorious American flag and drunk from its well of democracy... It was America who opened its arms for them, who gave them shelter and refuge from the despotism of the Turks, and who bestowed on them rights they long yearned for. Our gratitude is only great. Can we not today give evidence of our patriotism and gratefulness?...Every drop of blood shed under its flag will yield the sweetests fruits in the future.'
From Rihani's Collected Letters (Arabic text), edited by Albert Rihani (Beirut:Dar Rihani,n.d.),PP.168-9,170.

sail to the West in search of higher values; the West had already embarked on their land as a superior, more knowlegeable power, 'civilising' but simultaneously inhibiting as well. In other words, the second generation of writers felt, due to the clash of civilisations— one superior, the other inferior— of which Frantz Fanon extensively speaks, more inhibited about tackling universal themes, and contented themselves with the ethnographic or documentary novel, which was partly an imitation of the coloniser's own novel with 'native' themes, and partly a plea to inform, define, explain or simply seek acceptance.

This is not to suggest, however, that writers of the second generation questioned the issue of imperialism violently as did their Francophone compatriots in Algeria or Morocco. Their protest was less harsh and more subdued as they blamed mainly the West for awakening in them feelings of inferiority dormant before, and consequently rendering them misfits in their own homes, incapable of adjusting to values they were taught to reject, if not despise. The novels written in English during this period came to present not an outcry against imperialism but an exemplification of one of its fruits: a troubled psyche, a cultural inhibition accompanied by an urge to defend the self and look as 'civilised' as they make them.

One fact must, however, be registered at this point, that

although the English novel by Arab writers was born out of individual needs and undoubtedly sincere desires to record the conduct of a society at a turning point of history, it does not seem, in most cases,to emerge out of the same strong national or political grips of conscience which are manifested in the native literature of the period written in Arabic or French. More likely, it presents the 'fate' of an intellectual class, and reflects a group of people bourgeois by upbringing, liberal by creed, prudent but hesitant, nationally sincere but not politically committed; in short, people caught at the paradoxical crossings of civilisations.

The post-war era, then, meant the emergence of new concerns and passions. In form, as well, the stage at which the Arab novelists in English found themselves, included as one of its major distinctive characteristics a strong demand for realism— for accuracy in the literary depiction of the Arab world. The realistic novel which they attempted to produce did not only mark an imitation of that produced in Europe, but also disclosed an urge to further a 'realistic' Arab image in the world as a way of refuting the European myth of 'backward Arabia'. The Arab reality as presented by these writers is first used to combat an erroneous and often arrogant view of the superiority of European culture; second, to publicize and then attempt to solve the various social, psychological and political problems facing the

Arab world.

Essentially linked to the realistic demands of the post war novel in English by Arab writers is its apparent dependence on autobiography. Both Atiyah's Black Vanguard and Lebanon Paradise expose some identity of problems with those that he either experienced or was personally a witness to. Ghali's Beer in the Snooker Club is almost pure autobiography, and Diqs's A Bedouin Boyhood fits obviously in the same category as the writer himself admits. Jabra's Hunters in a Narrow Street and Alamuddin's Spring to Summer are no exceptions to this, although the first takes the trouble of informing his reader in a preface to his book that any likeness between the narrator and the author is accidental, and the work is not to be considered biographical. Still, it is clear that in main outline, if not in detail, the novel is clearly rooted in personal experience. This common tendency has further contributed to the development of the realistic form in which the writers moulded their works. The authors' 'investigation' of themselves in relation to their own societies had essentially to depend on a realistic technique: the linear unfolding of the narrative through biography and social chronicle combined.

A 'realistic' ethnographic or 'documentary' literature, one often hears it said, is basically designed for foreign consumption, and folkloric descriptions of the local are often seen as aiming to satisfy the curiosity of the foreign reader. Though this may be largely true, such

'ethnological' reproductions, we must admit, are not always retained for 'entertaining' purposes. Certain authors describe their societies and lives as they search for an identity and so the literature written acquires, on the contrary, a sense of revelation and contestation. The most representative of this trend, as will be seen further on, is perhaps Edward Atiyah especially in his novels with Middle-Eastern themes.

A close analysis of themes common to these authors can further elucidate the nature of their concerns and reveal the broad sensibilities which preoccupy them. The themes can be reduced basically to two main groupings: alienation and problems of acculturation, and politics.

ALIENATION AND PROBLEMS OF ACCULTURATION:

> "I left this place by running all the way to California. An exile which lasted for years. I came back on a stretcher and felt here a stranger, exiled from my former exile. I am always away from something and somewhere. My senses left me one by one to have a life of their own. If you meet me in the street, don't be sure it's me. My center is not in the solar system."
>
> Etel Adnan
> "In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country"
> Mundus Artium, X,1,1977, P.23

Critics agree that 'alienation' has become almost a cliché, or something of a cant word in many kinds of intellectual discourse, including literary criticism[1], perhaps because it can so conveniently include a variety of conditions such as loneliness, estrangement, disaffection, indifference and disillusion, and because of " the years of continuing crisis which have forced on our awareness the problem of human estrangement."[2]

The older meaning of the word was insanity, aliené in French and alienado in Spanish meaning a psychotic, a "thoroughly and absolutely alienated person."[3] The first considered aspect of alienation was the Christian lament about 'being 'alienated from God' or 'having fallen from Grace'. The Divine Order, it was said, was violated and Man alienated himself from the 'ways of God'. His whole life had then to be a continuous struggle to reconcile himself with the Deity. In the nineteenth century, Hegel and Marx used the word for a condition of self-estrangement somewhat less severe, where a man's actions seemed something

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1. W.J.Harvey, Character and the Novel (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965),P.42.
2. Fritz Pappenheim, The Alienation of Modern Man (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1959), P.14.
3. Erich Fromm, The Sane Society (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1955), P.124.

separate or alien from his own being, beyond his control. Erich Fromm, in his book The Sane Society builds on this definition when he says that alienation is a mode of experience in which a person "does not experience himself as the center of the world...is out of touch with himself as he is out of touch with any other person."[1] Here the focus is on what might be called self-alienation. More recently, the term has been given still broader meanings, as for example by Fritz Pappenheim in The Alienation of Modern Man, where he presents no precise definition of alienation, but associates it with isolation, with homelessness, with a gulf between subject and object, with depersonalisation, and with forces in technology and politics and the social structure which treat people as things rather than as human beings. This reiterates the Marxist view which proposes that alienation is a product of complex industrial and capitalist societies. The concept of alienation is here characterized by universal 'saleability' (i.e. the transformation of everything into commodity), by the conversion of human beings, even their very sentiments into 'reified' objects.[2]

In this chapter, the term 'alienation' will be used in a broad sense, since the subject is singled out primarily in order to study a complex of feelings and experiences which Arab writers in English share, and to show how these

1. Erich Fromm, The Sane Society, P.124.
2. István Mészáros, Marx's Theory of Alienation (London: Merlin Press, 1975).

experiences are reflected in their writing.

For the Arab novelist writing in English, the problem of alienation is basically cultural. It springs from his experience of acculturation[1], from the fact that there is a clash between his traditional culture and that of the West. The conflict which he feels deals the battle between allegiance to the past which demands a conservative attitude, and the desire for change which is half feared, half welcome. He is alienated because he exists as a cultural hybrid, because his grasp of the new culture which he acquired through foreign education has remained self-conscious. Emotionally, he is still tied to the terre natale, whereas, though he has adopted the West 'mentally' and in many cases physically as well (geographically), his relation to it remains rationalistically taciturn if not cool and reserved. What he desires, even yearns for, is wholeness, an integrated oneness with self and society.

Arab novelists in English have handled this problem of

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1. 'Acculturation' is a term currently used by critics of Commonwealth and Third World literature to indicate the process of absorbing new cultural traits and values.

acculturation in a profound and sustained way.[1] As mentioned earlier, autobiography has often been used to

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1. The East-West motif also characterizes, though to a lesser extent, Arabic fiction of about the same period. Novelists who had some contact with the West have also frequently portrayed their protagonists as torn between an outdated but warm and tenacious Orient, and an Occident desired but cool, distant and mostly inhospitable.

The Lamp of Umm Hashim, a novella by the Egyptian writer Yehia Haqqi, written in 1941, plays the East-West meeting in full. It traces the spiritual deveopment of an Egyptian young man as he returns home after a long stay in England where he studied medicine; and portrays the intolerable internal and external stresses to which he is exposed once he decides to put his new learning into practice and lead his own individual life.

Many of the novels written by Egyptian authors in the 'forties and early 'fifties convey to us the detachment between the disparate cultures in both social and individual terms. Tawfiq al Hakim's novel A Sparrow from the East may be described as a definitive illustration of this clash. The novel is set in Paris where a young Egyptian student— obviously the writer himself, is studying French literature and falls in love with a French woman who leaves him at the end to go back to an old lover. The story is obviously designed to show the contrast between the infinite devotion of the man from the East and the calculated utilitarianism of the woman from the West. Unlike Hakim, Haqqi in The Lamp of Umm Hashim does not set out to prove the superiority of Eastern or Western values, he simply resorts to the 'myth' of the 'return of the native' and traces the problems of readjustment which his protagonist faces after a long sojourn abroad.

The increasing interest of Arab novelists in the problems of alienation does not merely go back to the intense feeling of acculturation which Atiyah, Ghali and the rest have experienced. Rather, this theme of deracination developed considerably with the increasing popularity of French existentialists amongst Arab intellectuals. When Sartre and Camus were translated into Arabic and read all through the 'fifties, they took Arab intellectual life by storm. Sartre's ideas became pivotal to the new generation of writers who sought involvement in political and social issues of their times. Whether novelists, essayists or poets, their preoccupation with the radical change and the concepts concomitant to it. Existentialism has often made use of a protagonist who is 'alienated' from 'existence', like Roquentin in Sartre's Nausea and Meursault in Camus' The Outsider. Superficially, these characters appear anti-social because they can see no point in social observation, and their 'alienation' is no more than a repulsion from and by society leading to an objective attitude towards that society. This watered-down idea of existentialism has appealed to many Arab authors as they saw the existential protagonist as merely a super-rebel and so attempted to adopt him to explain the situation of their protagonists.

delineate the psychological schism resulting from the disconcerting espousal of cultural dualism. Writers have tried to analyse themselves, rid themselves of their conflicting obsessions, question their own beings and register the results. Themselves deracinated, they recount how they became strangers in their own societies and how nostalgic they often felt for the the tranquility of self-knowledge. Characteristically, the problems always emerged with that urge for 'otherness' typical of almost the entirety of the third world.

THE QUEST FOR OTHERNESS:

"Dieu, dis-je tout haut,
delivrez moi de mon passè."[1]

For all objective observers, the true alienation of the acculturated Arab intellectual is that of the loss of the self in the absolutes of other people's culture, language and the saga of Western civilisation. Arab intellectuals blithely plunge into a foreign culture and try to make it their own. They leave their hometowns and sail to their voluntary exiles seeking a country not their own, to mimic the manners and gestures of its people, borrow their looks, skins and faces; marry their daughters and pretend to be one of them. This world of the 'others' is a 'fairy tale' world. They read about it in books, learn of its attraction by hearsay, and cherish it as a secret dream . In Ghali's Beer in the Snooker Club, Ram prepares to leave for such a world of fantasy:

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1. The Moroccan writer Driss Chraibi in his novel Les Boucs, P.102.

> The world of ice and snow in winter and red, slanting roof-tops was beginning to call us. The world of intellectuals and underground metros and cobbled streets and a green countryside which we had never seen, beckoned to us. The world where students had rooms, and typists for girl-friends, and sang songs and drank beer in large mugs, shouted to us. A whole imaginary world. A mixture of all the cities in Europe; where pubs were confused with zinc bars and where Piccadilly led to the Champs Elysees; where miners were communists and policemen fascists; where was something called the 'bourgeoisie' and someone called the 'landlady'; where there were Grand Hotels and Fiat factories and bull fighting; where Americans were conspicuous and anarchists wore beards and where there was something called the 'left'; where the Swedes had the highest standard of living and where poets lived in garrets and there were indoor swimming pools.[1]

While Ghali was attracted to the West in a more or less vague and ambiguous way, it was England above all other countries that beckoned to Atiyah. For fifteen years, ever since he "gazed enthralled at the epic pictures of Our Island Story", he had " made that island/his/ homeland." An Arab Tells His Story,[2] Atiyah's autobiography, vividly adumbrates this quest for 'otherness' which preoccupied him during the greater part of his life:

> I have made English my language, in which I can speak and write as well as most educated Englishmen. And finally this process of affiliation is to be crowned by my marriage to an English girl, that is to say I am going to be the next best to a natural son of England, a son-in-law. Surely that is the nearest any gentile can get to being a Jew. Now I can meet any Englishman on a footing of equality. I need no longer feel ashamed of myself, inferior. Everything that an Englishman can boast of having, apart from the blood in his veins, I have acquired.[3]

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1. Beer in the Snooker Club (Penguin,1968),P.44.
2. An Arab Tells His Story (London: John Murray,1946).
3. Ibid.,P. 124.

To aspire to be someone else, to wish to identify with the group which is opposed by the native masses is certainly one of the most paradoxical effects of the play of the larger, more powerful society upon the smaller and the weaker. Indeed, the quest for 'otherness' signifies the highest point of alienation, and the way of becoming 'another' is only an avenue for self-division (even if the change is considered by some as transformation towards the better.)

And most curious of all is how this ecstatic embracing of western culture is characteristically accompanied by a simultaneous urge to despise all that is 'native'. In his early worship of the English, Atiyah 'pulled down' his own people. To him, the East was "supremely unorganized and undisciplined,"[1] where " for more than five hundred years there had been no living literature or history; no recorded human experience of any universal significance; no delving by man into the heart of man, no enquiry by man into his destiny."[2] Siding with the others, Atiyah at one stage denied the Arabs even the achievements of their great civilisation. The Arabs, he says, were mere carriers of Greek thought to Europe but " they never really assimilated the spirit of the

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1. An Arab Tells His Story, P.97.
2. Ibid., PP.97-98.

Hellenic culture. They took from it only its externals, the mathematical and physical sciences, its formal logic and abstract intellectualism, but their minds were inaccessible to its spiritual message, and inaccessible they have remained, in the main, till the present time."[1]

Notwithstanding the debatable nature of such statements, they signify, if anything, the westernised author's desire to dissociate himself from his own past and history. Absorbed with the insatiable thirst and unappeased ardour of the neophyte, his contempt is predominant, and it replaces all previous feelings of acceptance or approval. Even issues less important than history or past national achievements, such as habit and custom, personal taste and aesthetic values come crashing down under the scrutinizing and critical gaze of the sceptical author. Indigenous architecture, interior decoration and simple domestic articles in Atiyah's autobiography turn into targets for his criticism as they often reveal an 'uncivilized taste', "ugly and incongruous."[2]

The rejection of the homeland is whole and complete, soil, inhabitants and all. Instead, there is a yearning for Northern latitudes, different skies and gentler suns:

> I had tired of the transparent sky and harsh sun of the East. There was no mystery, no

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1. An Arab Tells His Story, PP. 185-186.
2. Ibid., P.104.

> promise of surprise in them. Everything on that Eastern earth glared with the same white intensity; every nook stood naked probed to its depth; every outline stabbed you in the eye. The sky was open to infinity, giving God himself no privacy.[1]

Obviously, the desire for 'otherness'[2] seems to have as its corollary a sense of non-belonging ever enhanced by an imaginary concept of the East as an uncongenial and menacing part of the world from which a conscious dissociation must be quick and complete. The East was a "shame", says Atiyah, that "burned fiercely" in the hearts of expatriates. I had run away from that shame seven years before... I had striven with all my might to free myself from the disagreable affiliation resulting from the accidents of blood and geography."[3]

It was Atiyah's bold criticism of the East manifested in his autobiography and his subsequent book The Arabs[4] that earned him torrents of angry attack from fellow Arab compatriots. If what he said was true, many of them felt, then why publicize it to the world and in the international language of English? Atiyah was frequently urged not to 'wash the dirty linen in public', though he was never accepted by the Arabs, even after he had declared himself an Arab nationalist and revealed his fundamental change of loyalties. Today, Atiyah's name is

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1. An Arab Tells His Story, P.105.
2. In his book l'Ideologie Arabe Contemporaine (Paris: Maspero, 1967), Abdallah Laroui tells that "for three quarters of a century, the Arabs have posed one single question: who are the others and who am I? To think, is to assume what the others think." P.15.
3. An Arab Tells His Story, Op.Cit.
4. The Arabs (Penguin, 1958).

still associated with that young Arab, friend of the British and promoter of alien thought and foreign habit. The fact that he met his death while taking part in a hot debate on the Palestinian question did not serve to change this image very much. Hardly any Arab newspaper or magazine made mention of the incident, although as this study will try to reveal further on, it was mainly the single, unaided voice of Atiyah that for many years pleaded for the Arab cause in Britain and eventually died for it.

The quest for 'otherness' seems to be an inevitable phase through which acculturated Arabs pass before grasping their true identities. During this phase, the 'west' or 'Europe' becomes the point of reference, always and ever present, controlling and goading reactions, impelling them with a daemonic restlessness reminiscent of its romantic heroes, The Flying Dutchman, The Wandering Jew, or The Ancient Mariner. But does the journey to the West leave them any wiser, sadder, or both?

THE BETRAYAL OF THE 'OTHERS':

" J'avais refusé l'Orient
et l'Occident me refusait"[1]

Having severed his moorings from his people, the acculturated writer turns towards the adopted society for

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1. The Tunisian writer Albert Memmi in his novel La Statue de Sel (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), P.273.

secure anchorage. To his great dismay and disappointment, he discovers that the quasi-magical identification with the 'superior' race is a temporary reverie that soon lapses, leaving behind it a great void. In it, he remains a transient, clandestine, never true citizen. And indeed, his dream of seeking a place where he and his ideal image of himself can be at home is shattered and destroyed as he discovers too soon that any success he achieves is transitory, and any attainment of meaning in life a fleeting experience. Atiyah's sense of his own identity is shaken, if not threatened with total collapse when he discovers the impenetrable fence which separates the British from the natives in the Sudan. To his mortification, he finds out that the "side of the fence on which they /the British/ dwelt had a lofty and forbidding character. The people on it did not merely dwell apart. They dwelt apart in the manner of a superior species."[1] Even academics at college " enjoyed the prestige of rulers. Not the dignity of schoolmasters but the aura of sovereignty surrounded their every step. They excercised a kind of military authority, and the discipline they enforced savoured strongly of the barracks."[2]

Ideality and actuality meet in a head-on-collision, and the acculturated sojourner begins to taste the

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1. An Arab Tells His Story, P.137.
2. Ibid., P.138.

bitterness of rejection, little hitherto anticipated. His longing to identify with the West is given a severe check when even his skin is scrutinized to find whether he is fit for the assimilation or not.[1] In a Soyinkan

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1. This seems to be a popular theme for all third world writers, and is particularly manifested in the poems of the Moroccan author in English Mohammad Abu-Talib, where he tells about his rejection by both the white and the black. The following are two examples of the awkward stance of an Arab refused by the one and the other:

"Wrong Colour"

"262-7272
What can I do for you?
"It's about your ad lady
I'd like to hear details if I may."
"Well, it's a nice efficiency,
Newly decorated
Elevator service,
Clean neighbourhood,
Hundred-eighty fifty,
Plus utilities."

"May I come please?"

"You certainly may.
You don't sound from here,
Are you Puerto-Rican?"

"No, ma'm, North African."

"Then it's not for you
I'm afraid.
Our building's all white."

"You mean my colour, right?"

"Sorry, foreigner,
No time for jokes!"
Click! Click!

" Make it Black, Please!"

"Excuse me, please!
Is the apartment still available?"

"Yas-suh, it sho'es."

vein, Ghali recounts his encounter with an English landlady:

> 'Are you coloured?' she asked. I looked at my hands to see whether I was coloured. Although I had read so much about this in Egypt, I had never encountered it in actual life. I had never wondered whether I was coloured or not (later I went to a library and learnt that I was white).
> 'I don't know,' I said.[1]

This encounter of East and West can be perturbing on more than one level. First, there is the shock of discovery that there really exists a different life-style, one they have always dreamt of but to which they are denied admission. Second, the more fortunate group who are more readily accepted in the alien society, begin to realize that the values they 'illegitimately' try to inherit, remain alien to them, that they do not and cannot interiorize them by any voluntary effort and certainly

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" I'd like to hear about it."
" Y! sho ken.
Hits a one-room and a livin';
Y! haz yo! on keetchin,
Bot de bafroom ez shared.
De rent ez fufty-eighd a mont!
De likker sto!
Right nea! do.
'Scuse me, suh,
Whar'z yo from?"

" From Morocco, ma'm.'

" Yu see, suh?
We haz a kostom heah,
We only takes koller folks,
Does yu onderstand?"

" I sure does do!"

" Well, suh,goodbye!"

From Whispers of Anger (Regency Press,1971).

1. Beer in the Snooker Club,P.95.

not by intuition. And third, those who decide to make the trip back home (geographically or metaphorically) are tantalized by their sudden awareness that they, no longer, can affiliate with their original societies. They dicover that the voyage to the West has undermined the bedrock of values and convictions acquired over a lifetime; that their minds and souls, nourished by the new beliefs disconcertingly fail to conform with the old ones, although a mysterious urge may thrive in them for that ambiguously relaxing and comforting equanimity they had always previously provided. They try to recapture their identity, their roots, the ancestral heritage, the musical rhythms of their earlier lives, their faith, in brief, their entire Arab permanence. But the return to the early self involves a process of depersonalization much greater than the one they undertook on their route westward. To rehabilitate, they have to repudiate once again, to detach themselves from the West to which they have grown accustomed, and begin to adopt once more the conscience of their people in preparation for the final return to the soil, the motherland, in order to remake their beings, even, as a French writer[1] once said, " to make love to the right race."

The abiding alienation which all three groups bitterly feel, though the accent differs slightly in each case,

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1.Drieu la Rochelle.

stems from the drama of the conscience, or rather, the prick of conscience resulting from that painful search for identity and the urge to belong; the discovery of a confounding change in themselves, and the awareness of a profound abyss between their old and new personalities. Their flaw is similar to that of alienated Western heroes, particularly to Julian Sorel in Le Rouge et le Noir, and to the later Meursault in Camus' L'Étranger: Sorel had boldly penetrated a social class which was not his, and Meursault was accused of not loving his mother and not believing in God. The acculturated Arab writer is alienated because he, too, has boldly penetrated a culture and a civilisation not his own.

The majority of Arab writers in English reacted to their alienation with an urge to tell the whole story— the story of the East, and the story of the West and what happened when the two actually met. Their novels, therefore, abound with what Uma Parameswaran[1] calls "conducted tours", with the tendency to compartmentalize, label and explain— a shortcoming which even Henry James, Parameswaran adds, could not avoid. More often than not, the works divide equally between East and West, and are moreover, crowded with a cast also comprising an almost equal number of Arab and British characters.

1. Uma Parameswaran, "What Price Expatriation?" Commonwealth Writer Overseas: Themes of Exile and Expatriation, edited by Alastair Niven (Brussels:Didier, 1976), P.47.

This perhaps indicates the middle position in which the writers find themselves, and their desire to appeal to both worlds on their own terms.

The point of contact between the two disparate worlds is frequently effected through a 'Forsterian' situation, where the West is an alien power imposed on the natives forcefully, ruthlessly and not altogether justifiably, changing their manners of conduct, belief and thought; or through the 'return of the native' situation, where the protagonist is estranged from his own people by virtue of his westernisation and loss of roots. The first, obviously, allows the author to ponder and comment at his leisure on the interaction between cultures by studying their various aspects; while the home-coming motif permits the rise of the 'problematic' hero of whom Lucien Goldman speaks (i.e. in search of authentic values in a degraded world), and allows a psychological study of the protagonist, thus focusing more on the problems of the individual than on the problems of society. In both situations, however, writers direct their criticism against the East as well as the West, showing how each contributed to their alienation from themselves and from their societies.

This does not suggest, however, that the literary Arab works in English necessarily observe the clear-cut division just cited. In fact many of them resorted to the study of the individual in the context of his environment and demonstrated the interrelation between

sociology and psychology, between environment and character. We may even safely add that the ethnographic or the folkloric novel, the realistic novel and the novel of alienation are here but simultaneous literary happenings.

Although Arab alienation has been for the most part cultural, a number of writers have attempted to trace the repercussions of that initial contact between the Arab East and the West, namely through the introduction of missionary work. The theme of religious alienation, however, did not merit the greater attention of the acculturated writers partly because the majority were Christians themselves (not converts), and partly because they were not attracted by the religious implications of the encounter so much as by how far the situation exposed the Eastern and the Western character. In a short story entitled "The Missionary"[1], the Palestinian-Lebanese author Afif Bulos tells of the 'rape' of the East by the West. Miss March, a frustrated old maid decides to join the missionaries in a small village in the Lebanon driven by a seemingly boundless zeal to convert Moslem natives to Christianity. Ironically, the village where the missionaries have been stationed for over forty years, had always been Christian (the only

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1. Afif Bulos, Hajjeh Hilaneh and Other Stories (Beirut: Librarie du Liban, 1975),PP.45-63.

success they were able to achieve was in attracting a number of families to the Anglican church instead of remaining in their own church). When Miss March succeeds at last in converting two young orphans from a neighbouring Moslem village to the Christian faith (alluring them with prospects of education, a shelter and a secure job) she finds herself gradually attracted to the youthful Jamil. Shortly before his baptism, she seduces him, much to his shock and resentment. The sixteen year old boy, lost and confused, avoids any further contact with Miss March,but as she discovers her pregnancy, she proposes marriage forhim in return of a shop and a small capital. The marriage proposal is flatly rejected in a scene where she calls him a "savage" Calls her
and "dirty native", and he/"a bad woman". The story ends with Miss March forced to leave the mission and to go back to England, still carrying in her womb the spawn of a young Easterner, naive perhaps, but dignified. The story is obviously meant to lash out at the representatives of civilisation who, after all, turn out to be not so civilised at the core. The missionary experience as the author sees it, is merely a mask for exploitation, a veneer of idealism pasted over the faces of civilised men. The story further endorses the alienation of native converts (religious and otherwise). Jamil, despite his disenchantment and disillusionment, does not leave the

missionaries. "What else could he do?", the English Doctor on the compound admits, "We have taught him a smattering of English, which is of no use in this area whatsoever, and made him get used to living in reasonable comfort."[1]

An interesting parallel can be drawn between Bulos's 'The Missionary' and a three-act play by Edward Atiyah. In No Return to Paradise[2], Atiyah, similarly, adumbrates the young East's confrontation with the West and the disconcerting discovery of falsehood of the so-called representatives of civilisation. Atiyah, in his play, does not only deride the stupidities of the British ruling class in the imaginary land of Segunda (the Sudan), but also exposes their inconsistency of thought and contradictions of conduct. And above all, he dispels the superiority myth built around the western character: the myth about their 'honesty', 'integrity', and 'altruistic motives'. Teresa, a Segundese native who served in the household of the British Commissioner, and who was newly converted to Christianity, discovers that the commissioner's wife (who played a chief role in her

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1. The Missionary, P.62.
2. This unpublished play is in the possession of Miss Elise Henden, the writer's secretary and friend. The author apparently did not try to have it published, but it is very possible that it was acted on the stage of Gordon College, Khartoum as a clipping from a friend's letter indicates.

conversion), was committing the 'sin of the flesh' with one of her husband's colleagues. The incredibility of the act makes her distrust all Christians who "teach us this is good and that is bad, and say we must do good and not bad, and then they do bad themselves. They do things they teach us not to do; they sin against God and Christ and what they have taught us."[1] Similarly, her fiance, Stanislas, discovers that all the time he was being used to voice a rejection of a plan to unite the country's North with the South for the British government's own interest and not for any unforeseen good or interest of the Segundese people themselves. And the bitterest cynicism is when Ton Awail, a cook in the same household, and the most pious of all converts, renounces Christianity and dies a martyr to his tribal God— the crocodile, when the latter was about to be shot by the high commissioner:

> Tong: No Master. You no shoot crocodile, please.
> Oliver: Why the devil not?
> Tong: Because crocodile, he my ancestor.
> Carmichael: Your what?
> Tong: Friend of my tribe. He protects me; I must protect him.
> Vera: He's the totem of his tribe.
> Father Arnold: But, Tong, my son, you are a Christian, you do not still believe these things!
> Tong: Please, Father Arnold, I Christian, but crocodile my ancestor.[2]

The falling back on old Gods and ancestors is a deliberate

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1. No Return to Paradise, P.36.
2. Ibid.,P.42.

flouting of colonial policies, provoked by an instinctive indignation at abuses of humanity. The 'civilising' powers, Atiyah seems to be saying, have only spawned amongst the natives feelings of doubt and mistrust about political, social and moral truths. Their failure to live up to their ideas and expectations not only isolated them, but caused the 'natives' to retreat to the 'certainties' of olden times. Alienation, the helpless fall between the old and the new, seems to be but one logical result of all this.

Bulos' and Atiyah's works, though widely different in terms of literary merit , are particularly good examples of incipient alienation at the early stage of contact between two cultures. The accent here falls on the initial dichotomy between idealism and pragmatism. The more acute cases of alienation were to appear in the poetry, short stories or plays of Arab writers in English, but specifically in their novels— the chief concern of this thesis. In the section that follows, an attempt will be made to trace the theme of alienation in the works of Arab novelists in English, and to examine the nature and effect of the psychic loss which the protagonists of these works undergo. Through this 'thematic' grouping, a critical assessment of each novel will be attempted in order to suggest the literary framework within which the authors worked.

A TALE OF TWO WORLDS: EDWARD ATIYAH'S 'BLACK VANGUARD':

> "It's a wrtecched business, this virtual quarrel of ours with our own country, this everlasting impatience that so many of us feel to get out of it. Can there be no struggle then, and is one's only safety in flight?"
>
> Henry James
> Roderick Hudson

Even a slight acquaintance with Atiyah's novels, plays or poems reveals him to be very much concerned with the theme of cultural conflict. As an expatriate himself,he knew what it was like to be alienated. His work, for all its diversity of theme, reflects in many ways the prevailing ambition of the man with dual heritage who strives to appeal to more than one world.

When he started to write in the 1940s, the East-West encounter was his chief concern: differences, likeness, the pros and cons of each, etc. His play No Return to Paradise just cited, marks the beginning of a gargantuan search for certainties, the more realistic details of which were to be found in his autobiography An Arab Tells his Story published in 1946 as well as in his two novels Black Vanguard (1952) and Lebanon Paradise (1953). The later works The Crime of Julian Masters (1959), The Eagle Flies from England (1960), and the unpublished After Every Tempest written in 1964, have little to do, if anything at all, with the cultural conflict. In fact, there is even

very little of the Arab in them and more of the English scene, character and theme. In After Every Tempest, there is even a bold criticism of the English society itself, its parochial conservatism, sexual inhibition, hypocrisy often clad in the garments of good manners. Rebuking the customs of the English indicates at least two important factors: Atiyah has obviously assimilated in the 'alien' society, rather this English society does not inhibit him any longer. He, an equal, an almost native son can see through it, lash at it, and openly criticize it. Though there could also be other likely reasons for this shift of interest. Atiyah's 'Arab' novels were not received, perhaps for their somewhat 'distant' themes, with the same enthusiasm as his 'English' novels. He, in search of a constant audience, especially since he was now living on earnings from his writing, had to accomodate theme to the predominant public taste. This is, of course, if we neglect the wish to belong to a wider circle of writers instead of being confined to the role of interpreter and mediator between cultures, a role he played, in public and private life, for too long.

In order of publication, Black Vanguard[1] is the second of Atiyah's novels. It appeared only one year after his

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1. Black Vanguard (London: Peter Davies, 1952).

warmly-received work The Thin Line[1] (1951) which was basically preoccupied with the psychology of murder in a middle class rural setting. Unlike its predecessor, the main theme of Black Vanguard is the impact of Western education and the Western ethos upon a young Afro-Arab mind (obviously a Sudanese though Atiyah never specifies it), at once intelligent and greatly enthusiastic, highly susceptible to the "new" doctrines which it encounters but also deeply attached emotionally and, so to speak, by blood, to its origins. Its chief predicament, however, lies in its inability to reconcile its visions and ambitions to a traditionally harsh, absolute and dogmatic society.

When the story begins, Mahmoud a student of philosophy at Oxford hears with horror, and just before his finals, that his father, Sheikh Ahmed, has betrothed him in his absence to a fourteen-year old cousin whom he is bringing to England immediately. Paralysed by dismay, he cannot conceive of the childish ignorant cousin as a match for his cultured mind. An English friend puts his dilemma very clearly: "But damn it, he can't give you the most advanced western education and not expect you to feel differently about these things."[2]

But once Badriyah arrives, Mahmoud is sexually attracted to her, and decides to try to 'civilize' her. Her poignant

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1. The Thin Line (London: Peter Davies, 1951).
2. Black Vanguard, P.22.

innocence, touching naivité and physical attractiveness charm him and make him more determined to make of her a woman who is able to leave the fetters of tradition behind.

The London 'climate' did indeed seem to transform the young future bride. There, she enjoyed her picnics with Mahmoud on their bicycles, and the early refreshing swim in the isolated pool where they could be alone, away from the spying eyes of one million traditions and restraints. In London, Badriya and Mahmoud even make love without a crowd waiting behind their door to hear the screams, the evidence of lost virginity. No longer was she a "woman of the harem, with greased hair, but a lovely girl of the fields dipped in water and sunshine, and growing out of the grass"[1]. The joy of their love "stolen from a traditional marriage, smuggled...behind the back of old customs," filled them with its sweet magic and serene contentment.

Upon his return to his home town, Mahmoud hopes, through education and the good offices of Jean Bannerman, a plain matter-of-fact Englishwoman in the teaching profession, to rescue Badriya from the stifling atmosphere of the women's quarters. But he is too optimistic. The air of the 'harem' is natural to Badriya , she breathes in it quite freely and happily. The spontaneity, the gay, apparent freedom

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1. Black Vanguard, P.104.

that had come from the child while in London, all flit away through the influence of custom. Mahmoud tries to fill the intellectual gap in his marriage by attaching himself to Miss Bannerman. His attraction to her grows as his hopes of Badriya fade. Jean Bannerman, however, escapes to England when she discovers herself drawn to him. Mahmoud finally divorces Badriya after she disobeys him and circumcizes their daughter, thus causing the child's death. His story comes to a subdued close on a note of tempered tragedy. He does not only fail to make his wife a cultured woman, his other dreams of improving his country and emancipating his people from superstition and ignorance are also shattered. He attempts to introduce a philosophy course in a Sudanese college, but he is charged with atheism and even with conspiracy with the British Government. He also fails in his program for a socialist village for the workers of his feudal father's farm. He leaves for England with the hope of proposing marriage to Miss Bannerman and to resume his life in the West. But another disappointment awaits him there. Jean will not marry him and will give no satisfactory reasons. It seems that the East and the West cannot meet yet, and that the problems each faces are not easy to solve. A subplot concerns another Sudanese intellectual, Amin, who happens to become the first 'native' to marry an English woman, Betty. In this, Atiyah seems to have drawn on the story

of his own marriage[1], and on his attempts to overcome the prejudices of East and West.

This, in outline, is the plot, a simple clear-cut and balanced one, although perhaps a little too symmetrically set-out — Amin and Betty calculatedly balancing Mahmoud, Badriya and Jean. But this does not impair the narrative. Rather, the reader soon accepts it as a convenient if obvious device which lays out the principal motifs of the story to make this mise en scène of East and West intelligible and orderly to permit a close observation of both the Arabs and the British. The resulting excellent portraiture seems to salvage the perhaps too distinctly defined technique.

The major predicaments which face the characters of Black Vanguard are brought out by a succession of contrasts between the Sudan and England. Mahmoud's sole aim is to live an emancipated domestic life and to change the established, the yet unshaken sheme of things in his country. In private life, his main concern is to retain the sense of individuality which he has grown to cherish while at Oxford, in the face of communal demands of Sudanese life. This, in broad terms, may actually be seen as the leit-motif which unifies the strands of the novel: individual aspirations against social reality.

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1. An Arab Tells his Story , Chapter XXXIII.

Black Vanguard, perhaps Atiyah's most ambitious novel, is at once a sensitive and perceptive treatment of the problem of alienation, a candid critique of the social and moral ailments of East and West, a document of sociological value, and a pioneering effort, by a Third World writer, to comment on the race problem and on the relationship between ruler and ruled.

Atiyah's engaging analysis of alienation is principally based on first hand experience. Himself an Oxford graduate, and having lived for a considerable period of his life in the Sudan, he came in close contact with fellow compatriots who were, like himself, the intellectual product of two cultures, men poised at the apex of transition. Friends and relatives of the author believe the story of Mahmoud to owe much to the life-story of a certain Mu'awiya Abdul Nur, a fellow undergraduate student at Oxford, and a grandson of the Mehdi of Sudan. The predicaments which faced Abdul Nur upon his return to the Sudan must have furnished the author with much of the book's material. Identity of problems has also enabled him to draw upon his own personal experience of acculturation without deviating from the main theme of the work. This, and the author's characteristic insight into human nature, accounts for the knowlegeable handling of material, the ease with which Atiyah tackles background and character, and the skilful blending of fact and fiction.

Although the novel is an outright denunciation of inflexibility, parochial traditionalism and social injustice, it is not the expression of an angry mind. There is no hatred in it, but the prevailing bitterness leads us to intense emotional attitudes towards the unjust forces which threaten to erode the individuality and integrity of the protagonist, causing his failure and retreat. Instead of wrath, the author very delicately and fairly traces Mahmoud's endeavours to adjust himself to the new circumstances. And indeed very gently, the suffering of alienation is made felt. The list of injustices is quite long: society tyrannical; Islam outdated and misused, the family in complete acceptance of habit and custom and permit no dissidence; the wife remote and completely resigned to the order of things; even the West, the only refuge of the protagonist seems incapable of offering shelter or protection.

What seems to accentuate Mahmoud's awareness of his dilemma is his wish to retain a sense of individuality, something he learnt to cherish while at Oxford, in the face of communal demands, coupled at the same time with an unabatable desire for union with family, community and self. Unlike Amin, he has a sense of commitment and belonging, as the Sudan, people and land, had always appealed so powerfully to him. Amin, an artist, gay, cheerful, though less sensitive than Mahmoud can readily give up his country to

marry Betty Corfield. His dedication to wife and vocation supplant other emotional attachments. "My people have five other sons," he tells Mahmoud, "but I have only one life and I want to live it the way I choose. It's different for you because you have a sense of mission. You want to go back and work for your people. When you're like that you can put up with anything."[1]

Because of this sense of commitment and readiness to 'put up with anything' in order to be a credit to his people, Mahmoud makes one concession after another. He allows himself to plunge into 'native' practice and agrees to go through a traumatic experience of a traditional wedding ceremony. In spite of his strong dislike of the matrimonial customs of his society, he realizes that his wife has to have her hair greased with oil, her feet and hands hennaed, and he is not allowed to take her away on their wedding night but pressured into 'going in to her' with a crowd feasting outside, waiting for the"screams of the modest virgin being deflowered against her will."[2] He wonders why he shouldn't,after all, practice the customs of the society to which he belongs:

> Mahmoud began to feel that he had been unreasonable. A deep sense of loyalty to his country, even in its backwardness, and

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1. Black Vanguard, P.28.
2. Ibid., P.144.

> a horror of being snobbish towards its customs merely because they were not Western, stirred in him, reinforcing the pleadings of his parents... Perhaps his first reaction had been superficial. The one thing he did not wish to be was the African or Oriental who succumbed uncritically to the veneer of Western culture. Despite Oxford, or because of it, he did not want his life to be a copy of the externals of Western life.[1]

This passage, unquestionably, symptomises, according to Frantz Fanon's theories, the intellectual's realization of the danger he is running in drifting away from his people, and his attempt to conform. To combat estrangement and to express loyalty to the people he, in Fanon's words,"accepts everything, decides to take all for granted and confirms everything even though he may lose body and soul."[2]

The feeling of anger and total detachment from community is gradually accomodated into the 'gentler' sense of 'pity'. Mahmoud pities the "stupidity" of his family and the "unawareness of what they had done." But unconsciously, he in pitying, is slipping into the nostalgic embrace of a world perhaps outdated, but certainly warm and tenacious. All at once, he does not blame and forgive but he can see, as if for the first time in his life, that the society which can be detrimental to his freedom and individuality

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1. Black Vanguard, P.145.
2. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, P.175.

is not without its merits:

> And he was warmed by the gathering of people they had just had, by seeing the familiar shapes and faces sitting round their garden in that easy, friendly intercourse, by the sight of the piled-up red slippers and canes. It was all so warmly, so unstiffly human— a close, simple old-world community, rustic in flavour though in a town, not yet broken up, not yet frozen by industry and excessive urbanisation.[1]

From house to house, a warm flush of good-fellowship and love flows and touches Mahmoud in the heart. He feels he belongs to this big family in spite of its being tribe-like and primitive: "Here one could not be lonely, not as one would in the West." Mahmoud is "happy to be re-absorbed into all that, as though without knowing it, he had been missing something all the years of his absence."

Indisputably, a movement, not greatly unlike that of Francophone West Africa, involving the free man reverting to his origins, is detected here. Could it be another case of 'negritude', an <u>habitude</u>, <u>arabitude</u>?

The protagonist, however, with his vast legacy of individuality acquired from the West and his ambitious plans to introduce substantial changes in the fabric of his society is allowed to retain no illusions. 'Arabitude' in the sense just implied, does not seem to hold forth

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1. <u>Black Vanguard</u>, P. 140.

the promise of the utopia of tranquillity and content for too long, as it is grounded not in the convictions of reason but in emotional outbursts. And the fact that Atiyah registers such an inclination and describes at length the favourable ways of traditional life in the Sudan demonstrates his wish to impress on his reader the complexity of Mahmoud's dilemma. Because his protagonist is firmly in the clutches of familial community there seems to be no easy solution for his predicament.

Although he may be conscious of the unique values of Sudanese society, Mahmoud is not blind to its limitations. One incident after another compels him to recognize his "impotence as one individual trying to live an emancipated domestic life against the established, the yet unshaken scheme of things in his country."[1] Mahmoud's asset has pointedly been stressed to be that of intellectual integrity. As early as paragraph one of the first chapter, he has been portrayed as an insatiable learner with an inquisitive and a favourably open mind:

> Yes, but don't you think, Sir, that philosophic integrity is impossible, absolutely impossible, in anyone who comes to philosophy as a believer in some religion or other? Look at Descartes, for instance. He starts with the most commendable rectitude, but what happens to his indubitably true proposition when he gets on to God?[2]

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1. Black Vanguard, P.177.
2. Ibid., P.7.

It is this integrity that has to suffer most when it collides with the "worship of false gods, old and new" in a country "where the alleged sanctity of religion, even of superstition, still bars the way to honest thinking."[1] The incident of the philosophy lectures particularly records this clash. Mahmoud's success in attracting a handful of third and fourth-year university students to the study of philosophy ends tragically. Parents force their sons to boycott the lectures and local papers launch the most vehement of attacks against the "atheism" that is preached and promoted by the 'Oxford graduate' Mahmoud.

> ... the teaching of atheistic philosophy at the college by Mahmoud Suleiman represented the first step in an organised attempt by the Government to weaken the hold of Islam on the country. The Government was now sending selected students to British universities, from which they come back stripped of their religious beliefs to spread atheism among the new educated generation. The Government was doing that because it had realised that religious feeling was the greatest force behind nationalism.[2]

Ironically, the incident proves to be not the expression of any genuine alarm of the guardians of faith against any sign of unorthodoxy, but a veiled attack against a rival national political party. The real target of the campaign is not Mahmoud but his father. By defaming the son, Sheikh Ahmad's chances of winning the National

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1. Black Vanguard, P.179
2. Ibid.,P.259.

Assembly elections will be jeopardised. Mahmoud loses his job as he refuses to write a public statement confirming his belief in God. Enmeshed in a web of intricate ironies, trapped by corrupt practices condoned by others and by the tactless handling of problems in his country, Mahmoud is not even allowed to be martyr to the right cause. His downfall does not register a stand in defence of 'moral rectitude' nor of 'philosophic integrity'; he has been the ugly fruit of cheap blackmail.

Disappointments accumulate. Far from being the fount of security and coherence, Sudanese society no longer conforms to Mahmoud's formerly idealized image. Moreover, he gradually discovers the enormous rift between the intellectual make up and the mental framework of the community that surrounds him, as well as the impossibility of achieving any workable relationship with the old order. His failure to teach philosophy or effect any substantial change in the college curricula is soon followed by another thwarting experience equally doomed to be 'assassinated'. His ambitious scheme to build new huts for the farmers instead of their unhygenic dwellings, a school for their children, a dispensary, and to start adult education classes, is ruthlessly shattered. Although

The new huts have made "a clean tidy suburb in the village, well-aired, well-lit, attractive to look at with their domed roofs and windows patterned like lace to keep the glare out," the peasants refuse to inhabit them. "Our women believe there's jinn in the huts" the farmers tell him. They will either go back to their palm huts or leave the town altogether. Mahmoud's alienation grows as his subsequent reactions reflect. With pretended calmness he exudes an exaggerated indifference: "he turned and walked away... Nothing really mattered...". Some distance behind "the old hovels still clustered, crooked, the stinking darkness in them sealing the low doorways." His enthusiasm has drained out of him, his dreams demolished. All he wants is to exorcize this world of the occult and superstition out of his mental system, the spiritual as well.

Black Vanguard is made up of similar vignettes all unremittingly exposing the foibles of a community bereft by febrile emotionalism, unmitigated obduracy and short-sightedness. The incidents are generally geared to impress on the reader's consciousness the way society can constrain the alienation of the individual without offering him any compensatory way out.

To resist the threat of alienation two factors seem specially important. A person may have a strong sense

of belonging to some social group— family, caste, community; or he may be a rebel, a revolutionary. Mahmoud in renouncing the community, is left in the ironic position of seeking a panacea for his inner ailments but remaining irremediably deracinated. The family, a greatly important source of moral assuagement is seen as a debilitating force in his fight, crippling ambitions and impeding self-fulfillment, instead of offering the needed solace and support . More than once the clash of values in Black Vanguard is brought out to be symbolic not of the East-West conflict alone but of the generation gap as well (although the Occident is still considered the cause of this: instrument of liberation and object of admiration). Indeed the paradox of fathers and sons, the established order of the first and the filial, abundant enthusiasm for change of the second, is a topic that has attracted the majority of Arab writers, Atiyah in particular. The fathers, representing the past are first 'throned and crowned', regarded as omniscient divinity. But as the narrative progresses, all the sons want to do is to depose this majestic presence and unseat the fathers. For Atiyah, the father is a paradoxical figure, he imparts compassion but also inspires terror, he represents the equanimity of the past but personifies the sterility of the present and

ambiguity of the future. In Donkey from the Mountain, the father's mere presence makes everybody shudder, and the sole ambition of wife, daughter and sons is to diminish this figure to gain freedom; while in Lebanon Paradise the fathers stand for corruption and docility, an order which their children also try to eface. In fact, the psychologist interpreter may find certain account in Atiyah's own autobiography not without significance. The scene where he learns of his father's death is full of such implications:

> A disturbing mixture of feelings surged in me when I learned of my father's death. Grief and relief were so intemingled that I am not sure now which came foremost.
> ....
> I was to my shame, conscious of a feeling of relief. My father's death totally eclipsed the issue which till a moment before filled me with the most intense apprehension.[1]

The issue the father's death eclipsed is Atiyah's prospective marriage to an English woman. In all likelihood, the father was not going to bless this affiliation with the 'others', but with his death the young man is endowed with greater mobility and freedom of choice. The image of the father thus becomes equivalent to that of the past, of heritage, of received ideas, of taboos and of established norms, the eclipse of which betokens a new era.

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1. An Arab Tells his Story, Loc.Cit.,PP.126-127.

The father in Black Vanguard, however, defies any comparison with the acrimonious figure of Faris Deeb of Donkey from the Mountain. Rather, he is an amiable person with his mixture of dignity and ingeniousness, his deep affection for his incomprehensible son, his coruscating wit, and, significantly, his secret belief that the efficiency of British administration overseas rests upon the integrity of its young officials in solitary posts.

Yet, what has been said about Atiyah's mixed feelings of grief and relief can help us understand Mahmoud's ambivalent relationship to his father. The drama of the protagonist is not a Freudian rejection of the father. Mahmoud explicitly expresses his great love and admiration for Sheikh Ahmad, and indeed the Sheikh is portrayed with much warmth and tenderness. Moreover, it can surely be argued that Sheikh Ahmad is 'progressive' enough for his age and generation. He sends his son to Oxford to get the 'best of English education', he himself travels to Britain and discourses with Mahmoud's tutor on Nietzsche and Spinoza; he displays enough understanding of Mahmoud's initial rejection of the marriage plan, although he slyly plays the underdog to gain his sympathy and win his approval; and above all, he is held amongst his people with great esteem as a fair-minded

moderate. In personal life as well, he shows sensibility and reasonable insight. Furthermore, he has one wife in a country where polygamy is permissible and he shows his wife the affection that many Sudanese women are normally denied. But again his actions and reactions are so various and contradictory that in their inconsistency they fail to evince any plausible example for the son to follow. Although he stresses to his son the importance of independence, Sheikh Ahmad never ceases to assert his claim on him. Soon after Mahmoud's return to the Sudan the father cashes in on the debt his son owes him. To him, the 'debt' entitles him to interfere in his private life and to pressure him to revert to the old communal standards. The following passage is a case in point:

> Well, then, I don't understand, and you are being very unreasonable, very. You want to put me in an impossible position for no reason at all; I who want nothing but your happiness, who've thought of nothing but that since you were born. If I've broken my back sitting in the saddle six hours a day for the last twenty years, going round the cotton fields, it was to amass a fortune for you, to make you independent for life, and to be able to give you the best English education so that the highest position in our country should be within your reach... And what am I asking of you now...?[1]

Readers familiar with Commonwealth writing in English, the

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1. Black Vanguard, P.36.

African in particular, will be struck by the similarity that exists between this situation and the problems facing young African protagonists in their struggle towards modernity. No Longer at Ease, for example, by the Nigerian Chinua Achebe, written nine years after Black Vanguard, elaborates on this conflict of generations, and heightenes the pressure of a community that works piously to sponsor the making of an educated man only later to 'unmake' him and cause his downfall. There is in fact a further similarity between the two situations. Sheikh Ahmad, like the Umuofian community of No Longer at Ease, despite his moral simplicity, or because of it, is prone to blind admiration of the ways of the West, capable of emulating the facade of its civilization but not the core. He typifies the nascent Arab bourgeoisie of the 'thirties and 'forties and betrays his affluent class's interest in the ostensible externals of modernity. His concept of education affirms this bourgeois mentality. He detests the fact that his son, after years of English education ends up in a teaching career instead of opting for a civil-service job as much as he abhors his son's socialist interests:

> A few days ago our papers reported your having made a speech at the socialist club in the university. This did not please me, my son. Socialism and communism are alien to our religion and traditions. I am also worried

> about what the Government will think. Please do not go to that club again, and if you are a member, let me hear that you have resigned. I will then get the papers to mention it.[1]

Similarly, when Mahmoud protests against marrying an uneducated girl, the father assuages his fears by promising to see that she will have 'private' lessons may be 'French and music', and will get a piano "like the one Sir William Carter has."

For all this, the father figure in Black Vanguard with his ambivalence of values, is set the task of embodying a certain kind of equivocalness that contributes to the protagonist's alienation and shows him pulling like a tidal current from all it represents towards a solution of one kind or another.

Indeed, Black Vanguard repeatedly portrays Mahmoud's alienation within the family, which by traditional Arab standards is the quintessential institution responsible for a person's firmness of character. Consequently, when Atiyah untethers his protagonist from all familial ties he only prepares him for total deracination. To alienation from the father is added alienation from the wife. Incompatibility between spouses is not a new phenomenon in the Arab world. More often than not,

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[1] Black Vanguard, P.10

the wife is incapable of offering the intellectual and even spiritual companionship which a man usually requires in the normal sequence of daily life, let alone at times of crisis such as the ones Mahmoud undergoes. In his fight against social nepotism, he finds Badriya a broken reed, never an ally. Ironically, she becomes a constant reminder of the dark forces that threaten his identity, and she is the one who deals the last blow to his dreams. Her ignorance kills their only daughter, the seed that could germinate a breed of emancipated women. In fact, all the fears, disappointments and frustrations in Mahmoud's life become attached to one person , Badriya: cause of the first and last tastes of defeat. Mahmoud's alienation from his wife is at first purely intellectual:

> He and Betty and Amin were launched on a wide swift tide of talk, leaving his wife as though standing on a shore from which she could not embark. Every now and then they became conscious of her isolation, and came back to say a few things to her— simple things on simple subjects, but the tendency to return to their own level, to race ahead in their Oxford talk, was irresistible.[1]

But intellectual alienation turns into physical resentment as well. Whereas Mahmoud's initial attraction to Badriya is mainly sexual, later references to her are associated with nauseating smells: 'the reek of

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1. Black Vanguard, P.178.

the aphrodisiac ointment,' stifling the hot room, 'her skin and hair glistening with their grease', and the 'fluid of life gone out of her.' Through the evocation of similar images, Mahmoud's rejection and resentment is made powerfully felt.

How much this betrays Atiyah's own views of Arab women is to be found in his autobiography and public statements. In his mind the backwardness of society intermingles with the sequestration and enslavement of women; and not infrequently Atiyah blamed the women's servile submission, their total resignation, on years of corrupt usage and misunderstanding of Islam. The mystery surrounding Muslim women who were enveloped in black and lived in mysterious houses with high latticed windows was repulsive to him, and presented a formidable barrier. This explains why a note of alienation from Islam is not difficult to detect in Atiyah's autobiography and works. Yet, although he often thought (especially in the earlier years of his life when he was an orthodox Christian) that Muslims were uncouth, and alien, his estrangement from Islam was essentially not religious but social.

Both Black Vanguard and the subsequent Lebanon Paradise deliberately expose the author's unlimited criticism of the grim aspects of the Eastern woman's conditions.

It has been said earlier that to combat alienation, one has either to belong to a social group or to be a rebel. Mahmoud is destined to remain deracinated because to the end of the novel he continues to pull away from the overwhelming power of the group and to retreat into the solitary shell of the self. The impulse to rebel instead of retreat is also lacking. Mahmoud is trapped by his own kind of idealism: he attempts to do away with compromise and equally with continued struggle, prefering to live by the absolutes of his own convictions. Indeed, part of his predicament is that he is a rudderless victim subject to corroding external forces, an ambitious man threatened by the detritus of a primitive past. Yet his failure is also the result of his personal weaknesses: his lack of flexibility and adaptability to situations, the tactlessness of approach and impracticality, his tendency towards theorization, and his unfailing swing between two cultures without committing the self once and for all to either or to some compromise.

However fervid his reactions may be, and however scornful he is of the traditions and customs that fetter his society, it is plain that the idea he has of change is relatively immature and somewhat too idealistic. He is anxious to see immediate substantial changes in his country without possessing the qualification to bring

them about. Mahmoud's basic error is to suppose that he could convert an immensely rooted legacy of being by an abrupt transplantation of mentalities, sensibilities and practices. Furthermore, the connection with the past and the necessary continuity with it and from it hardly occurs to him. Even his tackling of problems is reminiscent of the Westerners' 'white man's burden', ever remaining at the periphery but never hitting the core. His plans at social reform, for example, and his strike at feudalism and capitalist exploitation of farmers, are confined to the building of a few new habitations for them (ironically, he visits the farmers in his eight-cylinder Buick or in the Ford or Hillman his father brought back from England). His socialist inclinations do not entice him to be concerned with the problem of private and public ownership of the means of production, nor with state intervention to limit ownership or redistribution of wealth. One wonders whether his socialism is not merely a romantic sympathy for the poor.

The sophistication of Mahmoud's methods— whether or not they are valid in the West— prompted by his creed of liberalism acquired by virtue of his Oxford education, possesses little practicality when applied in a 'newly awakening' or 'developing' country. He presumes that the teaching of philosophy resolves most of the social

impediments of his country:

> You teach it /philosophy/ in order to arouse a passion for truth and precise logical thinking, to arm people against the facile and the fraudulent. If we want to progress we must learn to think unconditionally and this is what philosophy teaches you.[1]

Assuming that social change can be effected through the introduction of volumes of 'Plato and Hume, of Bertrand Russell and Whitehead' reflects once again Mahmoud's romantic and idealistic conception of reform, as well as his overenthusiasm for theory and lack of practical thinking, which could foresee the irrelevance of philosophic indoctrination for an emerging country.

To stress the shortcomings of Mahmoud's character, Atiyah uses Betty and Amin to counterbalance his lofty idealism and voice their version of a solution. Amin and Betty succeed where Mahmoud seems to fail although their problems are never suggested to be of a less serious nature than his . There is, for sure, the same confrontation with the tyranny of the group, and there is also the heavier burden for Betty of battling on two different fronts, the resentment of the English community and the suspicion of the Sudanese. Surprisingly enough, she and her husband seem to accomodate themselves to the Sudanese environment in a much easier and more convincing way than Mahmoud does. Amin, in fact, "could go back after all

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1. Black Vanguard, P.179.

those years away and not be appalled at the position" of his people.

If Mahmoud's predicament lies in his inability to achieve an uninterrupted link between past and future, East and West, Amin's greater attribute is that he makes significant uses of the two. The East and West symbolically, and significantly too, meet in his art, the one complementing the other. He puts into practice what Mahmoud theorizes, and designs new types of village houses African in conception, using local materials, cheap enough to be within everybody's means, but attractively and practically designed. Though at heart, and in practice too, he is much more of the westernised person than Mahmoud, he does not turn away from the past nor finds it a 'burning shame'.Rather, he is critical of the wholesale acceptance of the West as the following passage adequately illustrates:

> Our problem...is that our old art, such as it was,is dying out, and we have no taste yet in any other medium. We never had any architecture or painting or sculpture, but we had our crafts and made some beautiful things— the earthenware coffee-pot, for instance. Now we're not making coffee-pots any more, because we get cheap porcelain ones from Japan, with tawdry gilt circles on their sickly white, and the people don't see that they are hideous. It's a new medium and they have no habit and good taste in it.[1]

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1. Black Vanguard, P.221.

This is indeed one of the very few times in the novel when a hint at a solution is made. Nevertheless, these references, few as they are, suggest that Black Vanguard is not set the task of advocating the supremacy of one culture over another, nor of giving the values of either East or West any total virtue. Through compromise Amin finds his chance for change, or rather for growth— a rebuilding of Africa by using African motifs and Western knowledge, and most certainly by establishing a continuity or laison with the past. This, in all likelihood, is the message Atiyah is hammering home.

Mahmoud's inflexibility is further established through the comparison with Betty who is shown to possess a mind with a more practical bent. The presence of challenge in her new setting has imbued her with the desire to introduce changes in Sudanese life in the most subtle and delicate way. To enunciate this, Betty reacts to the Sudanese way of life with sympathy and much understanding. Neither Amin's mother's clumsy manner of dressing nor the disorderly arrangements of flowers shock her. She notices such things with "a warming compassion", and she accepts the differences between herself and Amin's people as accidental and cultural. Unlike Mahmoud, she takes practical steps towards the emancipation of Amin's mother and sister by insisting that they should dine together at the same table contrary to the social

customs of the Sudan. She personally supervises Amin's younger sister's education and slowly and successfully she drags her out of the harem. She further carries out a survey to find out whether the segregation of women in Moslem countries is really a question of religion or only a social matter. And once she realises that it is only a social custom, she sets out to liberate the young girls of the family. Betty succeeds in her mission because she is deeply convinced that Amin's people are intrinsically equal to hers, that their values of life are equally viable if not even superior to those of the British.

Yet, as a character, Betty is not fully developed. Her presence in the novel is merely functional. She is important in so far as she casts some light on other characters and situations, and indeed the role she plays in contrasting Mahmoud is not minimal. Betty is there, one soon notices, to bring about the values of the East as seen through the eyes of a westerner. If Mahmoud strips the Sudan of its merits, Betty is there to restore the balance. The limitations of a backward society on individual freedom, as Mahmoud sees it, does not imply any spiritual or mental superiority, as Betty affirms it.

Atiyah's study of Mahmoud's personal adjustments to the bitter facts of his background works to evoke, among

other things, the psychological repercussions associated with the rise of an intellectual class of 'elite' in a 'developing' country. Mahmoud, an authentic representative for this class, displays the full play of a man who cannot belong, and the paradoxical but ironic interchange of superiority and inferiority complexes in the context of the changing of environments. Throughout the novel, Mahmoud is shown on the verge of rebellion, one minute repudiating, the next conforming; one minute hating, the next loving; now despondent, now exhilarated; now determined to challenge the external pressures that threaten him, now unable to mobilize his energies for anything but the desire to escape. Although by and large, this indecision is caused by the world of flux and confusion in which he finds himself, the author's thesis does not seem to advocate that society's will is the sole factor responsible for the change of the course of a person's life. True, Mahmoud fails because of the tantalizing confrontation with a stubborn culture resistant to change, but he fails also because of an intrinsic instability of character that surfaces at times of crises, preventing him from rehabilitating his own values.

Mahmoud's aloofness is a result of an intense case of identifying with the 'others' already investigated at

the beginning of this chapter. He asserts the fears of his mother and kinsmen that the foreign education and the years of living with the 'others' will make him an 'Inglizi', a man with alien habits and thoughts, although one cannot but wonder whether three years spent at Oxford can change a man's whole mental and spiritual set of values the way it effected Mahmoud's 'metamorphosis'. If anything, it undoubtedly explains Mahmoud's innate desire and perfect readiness to be 'adopted' by the West.

Characteristically, when Mahmoud goes back to the Sudan, he promptly condemns everything that does not measure up to the Western standards he has acquired. He expects people to understand fully his enigma while he, who is educated and must therefore be more perceptive and understanding, fails to realize that customs continue as long as there is no substitute for them. His mother, seeing her son's insistance on a 'modern' wedding puts her own dilemma and perplexity very clearly when she says: "But, my son, we don't know any other kind of wedding. These are the customs of our country. How would you have your wedding then? We must have a feast."[1]

Mahmoud's lack of understanding of his people emerges in his dismay at his wife for not behaving like an English woman. He insists that she accompany him to the 'English gatherings' where he 'races' in his Oxford talk and leaves her behind feeling her own estrangement.

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1. Black Vanguard, P.144.

Or he rebukes her for withdrawing to the 'harem' or for greasing her hair. But the problem is not "only the scent," Badriya perceptively tells him. "It's everything... I am not an English girl; I can't be one, and you try to make me one. Why did you marry me if you wanted an English girl for a wife? Why didn't you marry an English girl like Amin?"[1]

The reason why Mahmoud married Badriya and not an English girl is indeed questionable. On the surface of it, it looks as if he was truly sexually attracted to her as the first chapters suggest, and that this attraction, strong enough to cause him to almost fail his final exams, blinded him to the intellectual disparity between himself and Badriya. On a deeper level, the marriage, when seen in context of the events, heralds another example of Mahmoud's dependence on the 'others' to be given a certificate of existence. When Sheikh Ahmad brings Badriya to London on an 'educational' trip, his son frets and rages over his parents' violation of his personal life and their desecration of marriage values. His first response to Badriya is total negligence, feeling "a strange, soothing sympathy" in her English companion, Miss Bannerman. What changes the tension between them and miraculously transforms their relationship from the

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1. Black Vanguard, P.215.

ice-cold to the fervent is the West's acceptance of Badriya and its enchantment by her beauty. The incident of the English lady (an ex-beauty queen perhaps) who stops Sheikh Ahmad on the street to compliment him on the beauty of Badriya is particularly significant. Equally suggestive is Mr.Raikes's obvious attraction to Badriya's looks, which make him extend an invitation to the company of Sheikh Ahmad to spend a week-end at his mansion in Kent where he can teach Badriya horse-back riding. This seeming approval by the 'classy' representatives of the 'others' tickle Mahmoud's pride and flares up his passions for her. Badriya symbolizing him and his race, the warmth of the Sudan, his native soil is flattered, liked, accepted. As if all along, he has been waiting for the 'endorsement' of the 'others', he succumbs to the marriage, rather accepts it, and even finds more satisfaction in the protectiveness he has suddenly felt for his 'child-bride' than in the sympathy of intellectual equality with English women.

Interestingly enough, the security of acceptance bestowed on him by the 'others' and the subsequent assurance of self-value provokes Mahmoud to rebel against traditions for the first and last time in the entire novel. His rebellion expresses itself in sexual terms. He has sexual intercourse with Badriya before going back

to the Sudan to be married according to custom and tradition. It is not surprising that the first act of rebellion takes place under the shadow of eros. Abdulkabir Khatibi, a Moroccan critic and sociologist finds sexual rebellion a primal challenging move against social order. It denotes virility, growth into manhood and the desacration of the authoritative will of the fathers:

> Ce n'est pas étonnant que cette libération se fasse sur le plan de l'Eros. La virilité démesurée est un moyen de combat contre le père et le bordel la première éducation d'un homme libre.
>
> C'est ainsi qu'armé de sa sexualité, le Fils désacralise son père.[1]

Yet, the sexual unity with Badriya gains an added importance when seen to reveal Mahmoud's inability to court the West and his impotence in trying to establish a relaxed laison with it. His relation with the Occident seems to be mostly stiff and cerebral, and fails to develop any physical bond with it. This sexual inhibition indicative of the protagonist's depreciation of his self esteem, expresses itself in Mahmoud's inability to court English girls or indeed any white girls, "because of a secret shy fear that he might be rebuffed on account of his colour." His inhibitions have also been caused by another fear, that he may be mistaken for an African who took pride in sleeping with white girls because the girl

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1. Abdulkabir Khatibi, Le Roman Maghrébin (Paris: François Maspero, 1968), P.80.

"belonged to a superior race, because her kinsmen were still bossing you in your country," and worse than this because it felt "as if a servant had suddenly discovered that he could have his master's daughter."

In this context, Badriya becomes a shelter and refuge from a world friendly and understanding but eternally overpowering and inhibiting. She symbolizes the metaphorical return to the sensual soil of his native land, the slumber of origins, and the warmth of the ancestral caverns. With her, Mahmoud will not fear rejection. He has made love 'to the right race'.

Atiyah traces the interchangeability of rejection and acceptance with a wholeness of perception so that the reader genuinely grasps the critical posture of the educated elite. He shows how the feeling of inferiority which the protagonist experiences while in the West is suddenly transformed into preponderance and superiority once he is back home. Mahmoud's physical unity with Badriya and his embracing of origins is spurious. It proves to be no more than a threat of rejection by the 'others'. But when the threat subsides upon his home return, he hastens to impersonify the figure of the European; the identification with the others is back in full process, and his actions exude once again an air of snobbery. More often than not, his siding with the

English against his own people and his overplay of 'fair-mindedness' is disconcerting. "You're become half-English now," a Sudanese friend tells him "no wonder you're quick to defend them."

This, then, is the root cause of Mahmoud's alienation, the fact that he remains half-English, half-Arab; that having joined the ranks of the educated elite he has lost contact and communication with his people; that he fails to create a synthesis between his autochtonous culture and the 'borrowed' one, or to reconcile his ambitious quest for 'otherness' with the actuality of the self. Whether or not he succeeds, after the novel ends, by exiling himself geographically, to exorcise his internal exile is indeed debatable. Atiyah gives no clues. Mahmoud may be destined to remain the schizophrenic intellectual hybrid for the rest of his life. In fact, judging by his intellectual and psychological make-up, one can already foresee that he will continue to strive, but in striving he will surely err.

Although the theme of the dispossessed individual in conflict with a cruel and contingent universe was already a trite subject in modern fiction; and althoug Black Vanguard fits, from this viewpoint, the traditional 'species' of the English novel 'with a social purpose',

thematically it is indeed in the vanguard of 'third world novel' in English[1]. The problem of cultural alienation, the trauma of social change, and particularly the delicate issue of racial interaction, are all tackled with great fairmindedness and from a cosmopolitan standpoint of value. Black Vanguard is certainly more than a rehash of the outworn East-West theme, or a mere document of two disparate worlds. Its virtue is that it lays bare the mounting problems to be faced, from a human angle, in a 'developing' country. In this sense, Black Vanguard aspires to achieve what E.M.Forster has so remarkably done in his masterwork A Passage to India.

Any study of the East-West conflict has inevitably to recall A Passage to India and the Forsterian spectacle of threatened and mummifying identities. This study is no exception, not only because Forster's work has become the prototype in this field but also because Black Vanguard and A Passage to India share more than a coincidental theme. In fact, there is every suggestion that Forster's novel provided Atiyah with the framework of his artistic creation.

Although Black Vanguard is more concerned with the

1.The term is currently used by such critics as Charles Larson in his work The Novel in the Third World (Washington,D.C.: Inscape publishers,1976). He includes writers from Africa, the Caribbeans, India, the South Pacific, as well as Afro-Americans and native American writers.

'return of the native theme', its delineation of the meeting of two civilizations on one land and the equilibristic juxtaposition of the English and the Arabs is reminscent of Forster's Indians and Anglo-Indians. One cannot fail to notice the similarity that exists in the 'lay out' of the two worlds, the ruling English with their insistence on rationality and fairmindedness, and the Arab Sudanese who are enmeshed in the intricate play of politics and conflicts concomitant with the emergence of nationalistic feelings in pre-independence Sudan. Like Forster, Atiyah creates a world densely populated, heavily analysed, with the deep desire to be faithful to its reality. Consequently, his cast of characters includes a collage of human representatives cast in different roles and functions.

On the English side, Sir William Carter, the chief Secretary, tall and baldheaded, loved by the natives "because he was brilliant, witty and enormously human," strongly recalls Forster's Mr. Fielding. Carter is unconventional and holds balance between the English and the Sudanese without a hint of prejudice. He is neither idealist nor imperialist and has no fear of the opinions of the English public. But although his understanding of the country and its people, his puckish humour and his unobtrusive kindness have won him

the admiration and affection of the natives, the other British officials remain sceptical of his outwardness, themselves incapable of upholding such liberal ideas as his. His policies are undoubtedly progressive and his view liberal. He sincerely wishes to see the Sudan run by the Sudanese, despite the opposition he meets from the colonial-minded British officers beating "their well-known line— 'premature'... It isn't time yet'... 'you can't begin to run before you can walk.' But he knew

> It was more than time if the country was not to go sour on them, time to have an Assembly with genuine powers and native ministers responsible to it, time to put natives into many of the higher administrative posts, time to show the people that Britain was sincere. For years the guiding principle of his policy had been to do things in time, not to wait and haggle and offer phantoms until there was nothing but a blind, emotional hatred all round to treat with.[1]

In contrast with Sir William, there are the Beresford-Jonses, Peggy Miller and Lady Jupiter and the rest of the British officials who again powerfully echo the Lesleys and Callenders, the Turtons and Heaslops of Passage. How well we seem to know them all, as if they had an existence all by themselves even before either Passage or Black Vanguard had been created: their cocktail parties, their 'white' club where they look in

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1. Black Vanguard, P.108.

every evening and shun social intercourse with the natives like the plague, and where they jointly agree that Sir William's sympathy with the 'natives' is just one of those idiosyncracies easily pardonable in an old friend. The English community in Atiyah's Sudan stands for much that E.M.Forster himself disliked in the Anglo-Indians: Insensitiveness, officialdom, superficiality, repressiveness and rudeness. These are qualities that make themselves felt at times of crisis: the alleged assault against a young English woman in the case of Passage, and in Black, the proposed marriage between Amin Shendi and Betty Corfield.

On the other side, there are the Arab Sudanese whom we see mostly through the eyes of Mahmoud and Betty. There are the scenes at the club where the Sudanese notables gather, including the 16 stone district judge, jovial in disposition and thunderous in voice. Here, too, Atiyah's portraiture of the Sudanese recalls Forster's vision of the Indians (or is it merely that they all share the muddled destiny of people of the third world?), and the goodwill and spirituality of the Arabs are contrasted with the suspicion and antipathy of the English. Like Dr.Aziz of Passage, the Sudanese are pictured in their enthusiasm to please, impress and flatter before they are flatly rebuffed or rejected.

When Betty Corfield, for example, arrives in the Sudan, the whole community prepares to receive her. Changes are introduced into the household of Amin's family with the purpose of meeting the tastes and requirements of English ladies. Even articles such as vases and stockings, novelties in the Sudanese community, become of great significance as they indicate the 'natives' desire for approval and acceptance.

Whereas the marriage of Betty and Amin evoke among the Sudanese curiosity, anxiety and not a slight sense of pride, the English, with the exception of Sir William, betray their insensitiveness and xenophobia. Lady Jupiter finds this "extremely unpleasant" and unprecedented case an odious thing, and the sight of the couple "so repugnant" that she "instinctively" turns away. While Maria, equally nauseated by the notion of the mixed marriage remarks:

> I don't care what a black man is like, nor where he's been eduacated... I find the sight of his skin next to a white woman's intolerable. There's the indecency of something unnatural about it, and a white woman who places herself in that position seems to me depraved.[1]

Atiyah moves between the two worlds; of the empire-building, colonially minded English, and that of the Arab Sudanese with great freedom and flexibility. Like

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1. Black Vanguard, P.205.

Forster, he skillfully plays the one against the other, displaying the same gift of analysis, of spiritual discernment of the concealed and half concealed sides of human nature. His accurate blending of observation and insight, the subtle portraiture, the acute study of human mind, are all of the same finished kind as that of Passage.

And like Forster too, Atiyah seldom lacks the power to go beneath the surface of the trivial occurances of everyday life. In fact, if he has learnt anything from Forster it is the ability to draw characters as they move against a background which is as vital as they are, a background echoing with the traditional as well as the modern, with the highbrow and the lowbrow, with the sophisticated as well as the seemingly naive. The charm of both writers certainly lies in the precision of their very observations, social, historical, and political which always has the power of suggesting the full presence of a whole being.

Specific examples can be pointed out. The opening of Black Vanguard, for example, bears more than strong echoes of the opening of Forster's Longest Journey. A glance at the two beginnings will perhaps suffice to evidence their similarity. In Black Vanguard chapter one opens on a discourse between Mahmoud and his Oxford tutor on philosophic integrity:

> 'Yes, but don't you think, sir, that philosophic integrity is impossible, absolutely impossible, in anyone who comes to philosophy as a believer in some religion or other? Look at Descartes, for instance. He starts with the most commendable rectitude, but what happens to his indubitably true proposition when he gets on to God?'[1]

Similarly, The Longest Journey opens on a scene in Cambridge where the discoursers are discussing philosophy, particularly the existence of objects:

> 'The cow is there,' said Ansell, lighting a match and holding it out over the carpet. No one spoke. He waited till the end of the match fell off. Then he said again, 'She is there, the cow. There, now.'
>
> 'You have not proved it,' said a voice.
> 'I have proved it to myself'.
> 'I have proved to myself that she isn't' said the voice. 'The cow is not there.'
> Ansell frowned and lit another match.
> 'She's there for me,' he declared. 'I don't care whether she's there for you or not. Whether I'm in Cambridge or Iceland or dead, the cow will be there.'

Atiyah's debt to Forster cannot be discerned in the chance occurence of a similar incident or character only, but is to be felt in the whole fibre of his writing. More specifically, the Forsterian influence can be sensed but not seen or meticulously pinpointed. Its presence irradiates the world of Black Vanguard, and seems to govern it with the same vision of human relationships that manipulate the characters and events of Passage. It is to be found, for example, not so much in the details as in the general effect

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1. Black Vanguard, P.7.

when handling a theme such as that of "separateness, of fences and barriers" which run throughout the two novels "the separation of race from race, sex from sex, culture from culture, even of man from himself."[1]

By and large, the similarity between Black Vanguard and A Passage to India is basically thematic. It pertains chiefly to the handling of the East-West conflict and to the character drawing and general structure of the work. Stylistically, however, Black lacks the poetic murmuration of E.M.Forster, and the suggestive symbolism which is perhaps one of Passage's main virtues. Where the two works again meet is in their comprehensive embrace of reality and the inclusion of what Forster calls in Aspects of the Novel, "the immense richness of material which life provides." This is perhaps why no study of Black Vanguard, and one would presume of Passage to India as well, can be exhaustive and comprehensive, and why the critic would find himself a little humiliated by its embarras de richesse.

What further establishes Atiyah as a disciple of Forster is not only the realistic rendering of the external worlds of his heroes, but also the exploitation of the natural and physical elements for the representation

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1. Lionel Trilling, E.M.Forster (Norfolk, Conn.: 1943), P.130.

of the major conflicts in his novel. Atiyah's evocation of the natural background is significant, particularly in suggesting the malevolent power it exerts over man which leads to difficulties and separation. In Forster's India, the earth and the sky conspire against the unity of men who are dwarfed by the greater will of the cosmos. Fates are decided by mysterious forces which are all part of Forster's philosophy of life. And the land, the soil of India becomes the symbol, rather the negation of individuality or romance. In Chandrapore "the very wood seems made of mud, the inhabitants of mud moving," while even the countryside is "too vast to admit of excellence. In vain did each item in it call out, 'come, come ! ".

Such a description as that of aridity, physical and spiritual, may perhaps be compared with the description of the Sudan as Mahmoud sees it:

> There was no colour in these streets except the occasional green or blue window squinting off-squarely in the mud walls. The colour of mud, of bare earth and gravel, prevailed desolately in street after street, and there was little shape either. It seemed rather as though the houses were lumps and deformities which had grown out of the ground, arid and colourless like it. If England was grass, grass, grass, this was dust, dust, dust.[1]

The internal dryness that surges inside Mahmoud extends to the outside world. The aridity within blends

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1. Black Vanguard, P.142.

with the aridity without, and the general effect is that of barrenness and futility. Yet, although the degree by which Atiyah develops his nature metaphors never grows in stature or suggestiveness to the extent of Forster's, his summoning of natural elements recalls the tones of Forster:

> Outside the sun was rising in a sky of charred orange, still murky from the settling dust. Shorn of its sword-like flames, it climbed like a large pale disc, clear-rimmed without its corona. But you could feel the veiled, fierce threat of its virility beginning to pierce through. The mass movement of the wind had gone, but occasionally a lingering tongue licked the verandah, and a few wreaths of dust spiralled up from the warming tiles. A grey powdery dullness lay on the greenery of the garden, dimming even the glazed leaves of the great mahogany tree and the crumpled scarlet blooms of the canna. It was a dirty, gritty world about to be clutched in a scorching hand.[1]

This passage recalls, no doubt, the harshness and fierceness of the Indian sun as often described by E.M.Forster; the harshness that reveals no beauty but that conspires along with the rest of the natural elements to debilitate man's will and his power for resistance. The Indian sun in Passage during the hot season also "returns to his kingdom with power but without beauty— that was the sinister feature. If only there had been beauty."

The atmosphere evoked in such descriptions is functional, not a mere embellishment to the work. Throughout the

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1. Black Vanguard, P.107.

novel, we see the Sudan in the context of these scenes of dust and physical dullness. So when the protagonist's dreams come shattering down one after the other, the whole thing seems to be a natural outcome of this background of futility and desolation. The natural setting becomes no longer something apart from man but a symbol of the dichotomy that exists between him and the world in which he lives.

If Atiyah has adopted a number of stylistic devices from Forster, he certainly has not acquired his brevity and economical style. Atiyah, in fact, can easily be carried away with his long-winded descriptions, particularly of local customs, habits and traditions. His awareness of his foreign reader apparently prompts him to lavish details of indigenous culture, details that are retained not as crucial elements in the central theme, but as part of the realistic background the author wishes to evoke. However, Atiyah's description of Oxford, for example, is indeed no less interesting than his careful delineation of the Sudan. He recreates so vividly the language, the sophisticated conversation, the feel of the place and the life that vibrates in it, all in a style that no sociologist nor literary critic can abuse.

This accurate eye and ear for the shades and tones of his setting does not desert him except when he is

confronted with the problem of rendering into English the dialogues of the less educated Sudanese. In his zeal for the elevated diction and elaborate English in which he took tremendous pride, Atiyah slips into the error of having some of his illiterate heroes articulate their thoughts and feelings in the most sophisticated language. On other occasions, his English characters unconvincingly exchange conversations with the native Sudanese without a hint of a language barrier between them and without the aid of an interpreter.

Nonetheless, apart from these shortcomings, Black Vanguard remains one of the most authentic portraits of the life and dilemmas of the Western educated Arab youth in the inter-war period.

WAGUIH GHALI'S BEER IN THE SNOOKER CLUB:

> "I've slammed all the doors of my past because I'm heading towards Europe and Western civilization, and where is that civilization then, show it to me, show me one drop of it, I'm ready to believe, I'll believe anything. Show yourselves, you civilizers in whom your books have caused me to believe. You colonized my country, and you say and I believe you that you went there to bring enlightenment a better standard of living, progress, missionaries the lot of you, or almost. Here I am— I've come to see you in your homes. Come forth. Come out of your houses and yourselves so that I can see you. And welcome me, Oh welcome me."
>
> Driss Chraibi
> Heirs to the Past

To turn from Edward Atiyah's Black Vanguard to Beer in the Snooker Club by the Egyptian author Waguih Ghali, is to stride out of a late Victorian world and leap forward right into the angry young man cult of the fifties. Although thematically, Beer is very much in line with Black Vanguard in so far as it portrays the East-West conflict and the psychological repercussions on the ethos of an educated young Arab, the sensibility of Ghali's world is essentially different from that of Atiyah's. If Black Vanguard recalls the aura of an E.M.Forster, Ghali's work must then recall an Osborne, a Kingsley Amis or a Salinger. Unlike Forster and his disciple Atiyah, Ghali does not concern himself with finding solutions or providing answers, rather he contents himself with the ironic observation of and the cynical commentary on the contingent world in which he lives.

Atiyah was basically a man of compromise, in search of the happy medium where the best of the East and the best of the West could meet. His writings, his life-style in England (in public and private life he played, until his death, the role of interpreter and mediator between the Arabs and the English; personal tastes and habits were also a successful blend of the two cultures) evinced every sign that he had reached a modus vivendi with the alien world around him. Ghali was different. He was incapable of compromising and

consequently his exile was much more painful and could only lead to one end, suicide. Of all Arab novelists who write in English, Ghali's alienation was perhaps the most acute. It seems rather impossible to tell how much of his deracination and his tragic fate was the result of his background or the circumstances forced on him. As a person he was a depressive in the clinical sense, but some unhappy situations made his fate more certain. He came to England to study medicine (not that he took this career very seriously) but after several years he was deprived of his Egyptian nationality and his passport was withdrawn from him (he was to the left of Nasser's revolution, though no one who knew him could tell exactly why he lost his nationality). The British would not renew his visa and he had to leave for Germany which he thought would be more hospitable to political refugees. But in Germany he was imprisoned until the British publisher Andre Deutsch[1] was able to intercede with the British authorities and bring him back to England where he lived until he died by suicide at the age of thirty eight. The whole affair was too traumatic for Ghali, for someone who had an unstable psyche to start with. Ghali, one supposes, might have killed himself wherever he was and whatever had been done to him, but this unhappy incident accelerated a perhaps inevitable end.

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1. In fact it was Ms. Diana Athill who sponsored Ghali and undertook to pay the expenses of 'shipping him' outside the country if the Home Office so desired. This information and all other biographical information on Ghali has been kindly given to me by Ms. Athill herself.

The uncomfortable background of being an Egyptian who was brought up and educated in the European tradition (English nanny, English schools in Cairo, English reading, etc.) also contributed to his feeling of rootlessness. He did not truly belong to his own country or to anywhere else.

He wrote Beer in the Snooker Club on a diet of tea and bread, in a German cellar, unheated (until he discovered, like Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man, a way of tapping the electricity supply of the house next door and rigged up a perilous little electric fire of his own invention). Only the timely turning up of an English girl-friend prevented him from starving to death that winter, but he always thought of it as one of the happiest periods of his life, because of the writing. Being really 'down' in hard fact prevented his neurotic 'downs'— life was so bad he did not have to make it so, and then he could work and be happy. If that was really so, then his exile gave him something, as well as helping to take away his life.

After Beer was published, Ghali kept on writing though he could never finish another book. He was essentially an autobiographical writer (Beer is almost pure auto-biography) and his life as an exile was too painful

to write about. In all likelihood, he kept reaching a point where he saw that his central character was heading for suicide, and that made continuing the story too frightening.

Beer, however, has none of this morbid outlook on life. Or at least, even when it detects the morbidity of existence, it possesses the power to laugh at it and jeer at its absurdity. Ghali in this work can indeed see the debasement and degradation of his world and still accept it as a kind of joke. But then, Egyptians, to him, have always accepted life as a joke. Jokes to them "are as much culture as calypso is to West Indians." The result is a work greatly satirical, highly spirited, witty, and incisive.

When Beer in the Snooker Club appeared in 1964 it was warmly received by critics in both Britain and the United States.[1] The Times Literary Supplement refered to it as "a triumph of genuinely comic social satire,"[2] a work that falls in line with the novels of Evelyn Waugh and the Post-war fashionable 'comic' social satires. Meanwhile, the New Statesman reviewer described it as "a small masterpiece of a novel" and commended the "wit, intelligence, and passion, an

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1. In London the novel was first published by Andre Deutsch in 1964; a reprint was made by Penguin's New Writers Serics in 1968. The American edition also came out in 1964 published by A. Knopf.

2. "Doubter on the Nile," TLS,(20 Feb., 1964), P.141.

unusual richness in any novel" with which the intellectual, political and social Egyptian experience has been communicated.[1] Similarly, the American New Yorker found Beer "an entirely successful comedy of manners," that "like most successful comedies.. is at bottom extremely serious and uses comedy as an approach to the unbearable."[2] More recently, S.A.Gakwandi gave a brief analysis of Beer in his critical study The Novel and Contemporary Experience in Africa[3]. "Nowhere in the African novel," Gakwandi affirms "is the position of a small westernized intellectual group in a traditional society treated with a deeper understanding than in the Egyptian novel Beer in the Snooker Club by Waguih Ghali. This is a satirical portrait of Egyptian society done with great love and compassion."[4] The author further establishes a similarity of situation between Beer's protagonist and several of the characters in Soyinka's The Interpreters. The comparison, one promptly feels, places the two works on the same par of literary excellence— an excellence long established for Africa's perhaps greatest writer.

The reviewers' praise was indeed well deserved especially as the novel was dominated by a freshness and objectiveness

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1. Martin Levin, New Statesman (21 Feb., 1964), 67: 301.
2. "Book Reviews", New Yorker (12 Sep., 1964),P.203.
3. Shatto Arthur Gakwandi, The Novel and Contemporary Experience in Africa (Heinemann,1977), P.72.

different from that of other novelists of the Commonwealth or the more general 'Third World'. Beer does not stake on the autochtonous description of the indigenous world in which it is set nor on entertaining its foreign reader with the exotic and outlandish. The dilemmas in which the characters find themselves are viewed with great compassion but decidedly from a larger and more universal standpoint.

The elements we are likely to find most powerful in Beer in the Snooker Club are its fine oscillation between the comic and the tragic and the swift gliding across the paper-thin ice that divides it from real tragedy. Perhaps the central impetus in the work is Ghali's inherent sense of the absurd and his concomitant need to accept it and learn to live with it rather than combat it. In this sense Beer in the Snooker Club is a Bildungsroman with a difference. The experience of growth through which the protagonist goes culminates at the end in a self-imposed limitation. He gives up his "problematic search," to use Lucien Goldmann's terminology; yet the "virile maturity" that he achieves does not entice him to reject the world of convention and the predominant scale of values. Instead, it ironically imbues him with the defeatist's desire to accept the very contingent and absurd, to call off the fight and to succumb to this inauthentic and degraded world.

If the quest for 'otherness' has been the root cause of Mahmoud's alienation and defeat in Black Vanguard, in Beer in the Snooker Club it is the 'otherness', unsought but almost bestowed like a birth certificate, that lies behind the hero's capitulation and failure. Ram, the central character and narrator of Ghali's novel is alienated from the majority of the people of Egypt by three distinct factors: his faith, his class and his education. He is a Copt by religion living in a Moslem world, a bourgeois by birth and upbringing, and an Englishman by education. His family belongs to the class of French-speaking aristocrats of pre-revolution Egypt. They live in fancy mansions in Al Zamalek, where the upper classes are clustered, served by "eight servants, permanent staff," and their children are taken care of by "foreign governesses... although nowadays the governesses are pretty girls in their twenties who come for a year or so and have an expensive time" there. At twenty-one, though penniless himself, Ram is usually smartly dressed up with hand in pocket and a "bit of cuff showing, a suspicion of waist coat under /his/ coat, and a strip of handkerchief in/his/ breast pocket."

The novel begins with a portrait of an immediately recognizable 'angry young man'; an Egyptian Jimmy Porter, so to speak, or a Lucky Jim, two figures that

are mentioned in the first four pages of the novel. Ram is the sponger who lives on other people's wealths, the poor amongst the world's riches, the uncommitted amid a swirl of national movements. Yet the one major difference that sets him apart from other conventional angry young men is his consciousness and perceptive understanding of what goes around him. Although he turns his guns against most aspects of present-day Egyptian life, he is well aware of the influences which have created them. And indeed, one discovers,Ram's cool indifference and nonchalance is only feigned and conceals behind it the bitterness and deracination of the uncommitted who yearn for commit ment, which is the theme of the book.

The story, a more or less plotless one, which unfolds in four main parts, is narrated through the first person point of view. Ghali who uses Ram as his mouthpiece can thus guide his reader or rather thrust him directly into the thoughts and feelings of his hero. He further achieves a satisfactory distance from his experience displaying all along a considerable awareness of and compassion for his personal and public dilemmas. With Ghali, the novel is also set in both England and Egypt and is equally populated by an English and Arab cast. Part one is set shortly after Ram's return from England, while part two takes us in a flash-back to his experience in Britain. The

two following parts describe Ram's attempts at adjustment to Egyptian life after the Suez war, and his final capitulation to the 'comforts' of an upper class marriage.

If the character of Ram is less conventional than the ones other Arab novelists in English draw, its impetus still depends on the East-West conflict at base, and on the same quest for 'otherness'. Throughout the novel, we see Ram wavering between submission to the West's Circean clutches, and the exigencies of reverting to one's roots. To him, the West, or Europe, becomes at once the fulfillment of a dream, the actualization of one's life learning and education, an invitation to 'life', and above all a world that denies nothing. Yet, like other Arab protagonists, Ram is credited with hopes, purposes and values only to watch them collapse and evanesce later on.

The passionate striving after Europe— already a fait-accompli in the lives of the acculturated— is first evoked by the indoctrination Ram and his friends receive in British 'public' schools in Egypt. School masters imbue their pupils with the formula that Europe and happiness equate and coalesce. They create a fascination in the young students for England and what is European and English. The West soon becomes visual in their imagination as they grow to know it

better than their own country. Ram's life, which hardly extends beyond the circle of Al Zamalek and the snooker club is already attached to some kind of romantic image of Europe. He longs to go there

> to live... to have affairs with Countesses and fall in love with a barmaid and to be a gigolo and to be a political leader and to win at Monte Carlo and to be down-and-out in London and to be an artist and to be elegant and also in rags.[1]

The actual structure of the above statement is quite suggestive. The lack of punctuation, the repetitive phrases, all convey the excitement, the yearning, the panting longing to embrace the whole of Europe in its ambiguity and mystery. It gives a down-to-earth and casual reflection of an emotion tempered by a vague aspiration, and puts before us a candid image of the West as envisaged by the young and inexperienced, an image that incorporates a strange mixture of great and small visions.

Europe, however, grows to represent not merely the romantic image or the joie de vivre which the young and carefree long for. The sojourners soon attach to it a realization of another kind; the awareness that it can offer them the potentialities of 'living' which their native countries deny them. It counteracts the thwarting and indeed the unsatisfactory elements in the social and also the political set up of their homelands. Contact with the Western order of life

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1. Beer in the Snooker Club (Penguin,1968),P.44.

then becomes an eye-opener, an instigator or a liberator.

Ram's usage of the word 'life' and 'living' is worth considering at this stage. It is perhaps one of the most recurrent in his phraseology and seems to denote the gush of vague desires and ambitions that surge in the hearts of those still in search of a purpose. In almost all occurances, 'life' and 'living' are undoubtedly connected with the land of the 'others':

> We left, Font and I, for London. For dreamed-of Europe, for 'civilization', for 'freedom of speech', for 'culture', for 'life'.[1]

Ram discovers that Europe has awakened in him new potentials:

> Well... somehow, when I came here /England/ or perhaps just before I came here, I consciously realized that I, also could "live".[2]

London becomes a reality, an actualization of a reading experience, a fulfillment of an ambition. For Ram, it is fascinating enough to be in a pub with the intellectuals he has read about:

> I was enjoying myself. Not particularly because of what we were talking about, but because I was there in a pub with the 'intellectuals' I had read about in books, and because the girls were attractive, and because John was such a likeable person. It was natural to want to fit this environment to the books I had read, and to tell myself: here you are, Ram...'life'.3

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1. Beer in the Snooker Club, P.49.
2. Ibid., P.94.
3. Ibid., P.57.

Even the mere renting of a room in Battersea, London, and the feeling of independence and personal privacy fill him again with...'life':

> I took a room in Battersea with a mechanic's family: a small room with a hospital bed, a sink, a table and chair and nothing else. But I had an independent entrance and it was cheap and, anyhow, it had 'colour', and strangely enough, I began to 'live'. Of course no one who 'lives' in the sense I mean knows he is living; it is only when he ceases to 'live' that he realizes it.[1]

The word 'live' here, evokes among many other things the plainness and puniness of Ram's ambitions, the apathy of small dreams rendered impossible in one's own country and the importance attached to them when realized in the world of the 'others'. Trivial things, like one's private room, and the less trivial like one's private life, become of tremendous significance when denied. No wonder the actualization of them equals nothing larger than 'life'.

Flight to the land of the others, then, is undertaken as an affirmative act against the fear of submission to a langourous and self-denying world. Ram and his friends find themselves seeking another place to live in not just because it is so idyllic but because it may help them assert their individuality, the integrity of the self; and because it may be more conducive to the rigours of self-fulfillment.

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1. Beer in the Snooker Club, PP.96-97.

The Shattering of idols:

With the fading fascination of the first encounter with the West comes the bitterness of disillusionment. Dreams now fulfilled, the awakening is not a very pleasant experience. The rejection of the 'others', and the disillusionment in the 'others' make their presence felt very strongly. Ram and Font approach England with a sort of reverence, since for them it is the country where the ideals of tolerance, social equity and freedom have been realized. But when they enter it, it is to become "Dirty Arabs and wogs," on whom the Home Office casts a jaundiced eye, and to inhabit a society that has produced one of the most class-conscious set ups in the world. The months in which Ram and Font are getting the tang of English realities are the ones immediately preceding the Suez invasion, and this along with the extent of this disillusionment in the British ideals of fair play and equality, deals the blow to their idolization:

> This stupid thing of expecting 'fair play' from the English, alongside their far from 'fair play' behaviour, was a strange phenomenon in us. Perhaps in our subsequent outcries against the English, there was the belief that if they knew what they were doing wasn't fair play, they would stop it. In spite of all the books we had read demonstrating the slyness and cruelty of England's foreign policy, it took the Suez war to make us believe it. Of course the Africans and the Asians had their Suezes a long time before us... over and over again.[1]

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1. Beer in the Snooker Club, PP.46-47.

The faith in British integrity, the belief that their presence in Egypt was maintained purely for educational and civilizing purposes in the hope of raising the 'subject' people to a new level of dignity and responsibility— a message Ram has previously swallowed whole— suddenly loses its impetus and credibility. Instead, a new realization dawns on him: The educational institutions where he has been indoctrinated were

> run for rich Arabs and Egyptians who, it was hoped, would later rule in their parents' place. The school was there to see that they ruled in Britain's favour.[1]

For this very reason, Ram, while in England, writes to a friend in Egypt telling him

> not to send his son to an English school. If his son was one of those who swallowed what they were told, he would one day be disgusted.2

Disillusionment in the West augments considerably when Ram discovers that the "culture" he has "lapped up like a puppy" has merely helped alienate him from his people and rendered him a misfit in his society. He finds that this culture has, besides widening his intellectual horizons, contributed to his bearing ideas that conflict with the prevailing indigenous concepts whether in matters moral, social, or political. He detects that the judgments he has been passing on

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1. Beer in the Snooker Club, PP.47-48.
2. Ibid., P.46.

general aspects of his country have been strongly motivated by whether they meet the European standards he has acquired or not; that, in fact he has,more or less, been cut from his people by his consuming ambition to emulate the 'others', and that his impregnation with alien ideas has been so powerful that he finds it difficult to liberate himself from their grip. Ram questions the sudden metamorphosis which the West has engendered in him, and how it has touched even his moral and ethical codes:

> What is happening to me? I am Egyptian and have lived in Egypt all my life and suddenly I am here, and at the end of three weeks I have slid into this strange life where I meet a girl and think it natural to go to bed with her at the end of the day, under the same roof as her brother and mother and Paddy, and find it natural they find it natural she sleeps with me if she wants to. Such things don't happen in Egypt, so how can I come here and live in an entirely different manner and yet feel I have been living like this all my life? What will happen to me when I go back to Egypt?[1]

Ram is one of the very few who can realize the absurdity of this situation. He watches with dismay, though not without cynicism, how Font, for example, can get himself all worked up while discussing English politics and yet remain estranged from the Egyptian body politic. Even when he and his friends indulge in the discussion of local political vicissitudes, it is merely to pass lofty ideas based on European

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1. Beer in the Snooker Club,P.89.

concepts "unaware that it is the Middle East they are discussing and not the United Kingdom":

> The ludicrous position of an Egyptian sitting in Cairo and being furious because of Gaitskell's stand on the manufacture of nuclear weapons in England does not strike Font. Admittedly he bagan by being furious about Egyptian internal politics as well, but that too was ludicrous, like a Lucky Jim would have been in England during Dickens's time.[1]

Ram's 'angst' and anger stem from his discontent in the alien culture that powerfully claims him. He not only finds himself afflicted by its luring, though conflicting, attractions, but senses the strong challenges his personality as an Egyptian or Arab has been exposed to:

> The mental sophistication of Europe has killed something good and natural in us, killed it for good... for ever. To me, now, it is apparent that we have, both Font and myself, lost the best thing we ever had: the gift of our birth, as it were something indescribable but solid and hidden and, and most of all, natural. We have lost it for ever. And those who know what it is, cannot possess it... Gradually, I have lost my natural self. I have become a character in a book or in some other feat of the imagination; my own actor in my own theatre; my own spectator in my own improvised play. Both audience and participant in one— a fictitious character.[2]

At times the estrangement becomes so painful that Ram blesses ignorance that could have left him a contented fool than a knowlegeable misfit. This idea, in one form or another, re-echoes like a leit-motif throughout the entire work, particularly as the West is no longer seen as a deliverer from 'backwardness' but as the cause of psychological

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1. Beer in the Snooker Club, P.15.
2. Ibid.,PP.48-49.

muddle and intellectual confusion:

> All this is London. All this is London I told myself. All this comes of hearing Father Huddleston speak, of knowing who Rosa Luxemburg was, of seeing Gorki's trilogy in Hampstead. It comes of Donald Soper at Speaker's Corner, of reading Koestler and Alan Paton and Doris Lessing and Orwell and Wells and La Question and even Kenneth Tynan. Of knowing how Franco came to power and who has befriended him since, of Churchill's hundred million to squash Lenin and then later the telegram; of knowing how Palestine was given to the Jews and why... of the bombing of Damascus and Robert Graves's Good-Bye. Oh, blissful ignorance. Wasn't it nice to go to the Catholic church with my mother before I ever heard of Salazar or of the blessed troops to Ethiopia?[1]

Because of Western education, Ghali seems to be saying, many intellectual Arabs have been deracinated from their own culture and transplanted into another. Like Ram, they are bound to question, at one stage or another, whether the Occident has not merely been an accident that disfigured their entire lives. Not that the West has denied them its assets of knowledge but because this knowledge proves less applicable in the Arab East than it is in the West.

Why Western knowledge is inapplicable in the East is not entirely contributed to the classical clash of values or duality of heritage. Ghali has reasons to believe that local governments and the prevailing social and political systems play a major role in distancing the educated elite from taking an active part in the development of their country. To him, alienation from the West is inevitably followed by

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1. Beer in the Snooker Club, P.28.

an estrangement from the homeland. This estrangement is nowhere suggested to be a social estrangement as in Black Vanguard, for example. On the contrary, in Beer we sense how Ram's love for his country and people has grown greater after his sojourn in England. It is the political system that alienates him most as he realizes that the so-called revolution has only bred hypocrisy and corruption, chaos instead of reform, insecurity instead of order. The majority of the Egyptian people according to Ghali/Ram have been alienated from the political machination in their country. And all the revolution could achieve was the replacement of one ruling class by another— the aristocracy by the military.

In the Egyptian revolution there is no place for the educated. Font, who can get 'severely' political, and who is supported by 'degrees' and a 'vast' knowledge cannot be employed by the government as the government itself seems to fear the educated and seeks to protect itself from them. He ends up by selling cucumbers on a barrow, or when he is luckier he finds a job at the snooker club where he wipes the tables with the last issue— and perhaps the only copy in Egypt— of the Herald Tribune or the New Statesman, another farce in the lives of the educated.

Quite effectively, the author depicts how the

intellectual, social and political disillusionments and frustration of the rising intelligentsia breed non-chalance and defeat. After much talk of commitment, of joining underground movements or enrolling in the Communist party, Ram's 'leftishness' is reduced to a search for concocted draught Bass, and a game of cards. Time after time, the image of Ram as the Egyptian angry young man who attacks the establishment but drifts towards anarchy; the angry and frustrated idealist who discovers that there is no crusade worth fighting for, is powerfully felt. Towards the end of the novel, Ram becomes in himself a proponent of the very same life style which he criticizes. He achieves 'neutrality' of the kind John Wain's protagonist in Hurry on Down is contented with, where Charles Lumley reflects:

> Neutrality, he had found it at last. The running fight between himself and society had ended in a draw.

For Ghali, the situation he is probing is a subject for apathy as well as a matter for excellent comedy and farce, and so his world of family soirees, and drunken parties, of phony people who play croquet on 'simulated' English lawns and emulate the Queen's accent; of the mannerism of the 'Frenchified' Egyptians or the ostentatious Americanized Time magazine-readers, this world is vividly depicted alongside the impoverished Egyptian fellah as well as the majority of masses who are resigned to the will of Allah.

Indeed, the notable thing is the fact that all this is presented without bitterness or rancour. There is no self-pity, or self-justification, but a toughness reminiscent of the style of the angry young man generation. Such toughness is achieved through the quaint, the painful, the paradoxical pressures within and between individuals that prevent them from self fulfillment, but swiftly we are called back by Ghali's vivacious and humorous scenes from the temptation to over-dramatise. That one can discern the looming seriousness and unflinching honesty in spite of the author's frivolity, light-heartedness and leavening humour is a mark of Ghali's success. And the mark of this successful novel lies precisely in its author's ability to balance against its tragic framework a degree of self-mockery which defuses explosive emotions and aids reflection at the reader's own leisure.

RIMA ALAMUDDIN'S SPRING TO SUMMER

Although Arab novelists in English have been essentially preoccupied with the theme of alienation which emanate from the conflict of cultures, they have not been totally oblivious to other aspects of alienation such as those proceeding from the conflicts of generations or from social changes. Both Rima Alamuddin's Spring

to Summer[1], and Edward Atiyah's Donkey from the Mountains touch on familial alienation engendered by the eternal conflict of fathers and sons. They trace a socially changing environment and observe the interplay of young and old minds in two models of middle class Lebanese society; one in Beirut, the capital, the other in a mountain village. Neither novel has any claims to literary greatness. Yet both remain, more than anything else, successful documentary works of sociological value.

Spring to Summer is Rima Alamuddin's first novel, written in 1960 when the author was only nineteen; and it is to the credit of the writer than otherwise, that the novel presents to the reader a vivid and energetic image of that age lived by a young, ambitious and emancipated Arab girl.

Although the novel, unlike most works written in English by Arabs, is not autobiographical, it carries many of Alamuddin's personal impressions this time of her life at the American University of Beirut. Many of her descriptions of the campus, of the general atmosphere of the university are almost photographic, though,somehow, never static as the young author's apparent closeness to and intimacy with the place adds warmth and a kind of 'rapport' to the setting. Equally exciting is the unspoilt, virgin vision of Lebanon which deos not wallow in undue glorification

1. Spring to Summer (Beirut: Khayat, 1963).

of the country or lapse into bitter condemnation of its shortcomings. It quietly reflects the ambivalent feelings of a rebelling young girl towards a homeland from which she is neither culturally estranged nor politically distanced. Her rebellion is largely individualistic and places itself in the context of the classical moral clash of generations.

Spring to Summer is one of very few novels of alienation written in English by Arab writers that end on a happy note for the protagonist. Mahmoud of Black Vanguard leaves for England, his future uncertain, his fate still to be shaped; Ram of Beer in the Snooker Club capitulates, after much talk of rebellion, change and reform, to the seeming comforts of a rich marriage, but Samar Khaldy, the heroine of Spring to Summer remains undefeated until the end although the reader is dismayed at her final decision to live "happily ever after" in an oil rich Arab state where she raises a family and expectedly repeats another epoch of sheltered, placid though comfortable family life.

Spring to Summer, however, has features in common with the rest of the novels discussed, namely the sexual expression of the protagonists' rebellion against their societies. Because Samar cannot any-longer accept her conventional, uneventful life, she

suddenly decides to break away from her family and live openly with a lover, Akram Said, a brilliant, arrogant fellow student with an overpowering personality who has fought his way up from an obscure and violent origin far below her bourgeois society. Once again, social revolution takes place under the shadow of eros, and the sexual expression of it marks the first strike against the fathers, the past and traditions.

Samar's revolt, however, is rather vague, it has no complex intellectual awareness, no 'revolutionary' consciousness, but seems to spring out of a sudden, even un-meditated determination to pull away from the community. Even the cause of the revolt itself is not adequately investigated or judged. What comes out, however, is a wild feeling, something the heroine herself has little control over, a more or less demonic desire which enters her heart and seizes her soul and makes her act the way she does. Many, indeed, would have preferred to see a more tangible and mature expression of the women's revolt in the Arab world through the reading of Spring to Summer. These would, most certainly, be disappointed as the novelist fails to establish any link between Samar's rebellion and the condition of Arab women in her society. The absence or lack of clarity of Samar's position from the women's revolt in her country is not compensated by any presence of a clear female point of view in the work. The story is narrated by a

detached 'sexless' observer. Even the most crucial views concerning social change or reform are not expressed by the female protagonist but either by Monsieur Giraudoux, a French teacher who has been in the Middle East for years, or by Akram Said, who is not typical of the average Arab man or even Arab rebel. Samar, on the other hand, remains passive and quiet for most of the time. She makes one major step by moving out of her parents' house to her lover's, then drifts afterwards allowing fate and circumstances alone to shape her life and future. Not infrequently, this passivity and quietness appear to be more calamitous than Akram's ambition and ferocity.

All this soldered together seems to eclipse the author's real intentions. Is Alamuddin simply narrating the episodes conducive to her heroine's growth from "the childhood of March to the full womanhood of August— from Spring to Summer" as a prefatory note to the novel suggests, or is she striving towards a more meaningful implication of the young girl's life?

There is undoubtedly a residual note of ambition felt all through, of wanting to do or say more than she actually does or says when the book is finished. This is why a number of subordinate themes or issues is raised without being fully tackled to the satisfaction of writer or reader. Such are the John Osborne-

Charlotte Bronte exploration of marriages within socially different classes; the male chauvinism of Arab men as represented by Farid, Samar's brother; the corruption of government institutions; and the superficiality of Lebanese bourgeois life seen through the characters of Salwa and Samar's parents.

Despite toying with various subordinate themes, Alamuddin's final thesis is that the individual can only assert his values by opting out of the social system which denies him self-fulfillment. That the way to this may be uncertain, the goal elusive, but individual withdrawal can be seen as the only, though solitary, way for personal salvation.

EDWARD ATIYAH'S DONKEY FROM THE MOUNTAIN:

Donkey from the Mountains[1] or as the more apposite American title, The Cruel Fire,[2] suggests is a 'cruel' study of alienation within the family where husband is estranged from wife, father from sons and daughters, and lovers from their beloved. Faris Deeb, a tyrranical paterfamilias, and a prosperous but mean grain dealer in the Lebanese village of Barkita, is both feared and hated by his family. He overpowers members of his household by dictating their moves and even whims

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1. Donkey from the Mountains (London: Robert Hale, 1961).
2. Doubleday, 1961.

and by keeping them financially dependent on his miserly support. Their means of escape and, moreover, revenge, is once again emotional and sexual. The wife denies her husband his marital rights and takes herself a lover; the daughter, defying her father's threats, secretly slips into the arms of her young man; and the sons meet their girls behind their father's back and dream of emigrating to another land.

But the tables are suddenly turned on the old man by his own family. Faris Deeb is gulled by an Egyptian cabaret dancer in Tripoli who "dangles a carrot before his lust" but who contemptuously repels him. Coming home, outrageously feeling his humiliation and his ineptitude to contrive any extra-marital relationship, he assaults and inadvertently kills an American actress whom he finds bathing in his orchard pool. Although the police fails to point an accusing finger at him, it is the wife and the children who begin to piece together the clues that indict the father, half-horrified but half-rejoicing that now at last they have power over him. But the wife has a card upon her sleeve; in return for secrecy she asks Faris Deeb to transfer all his money and property to the family and then leave the country. The situation summons pity for this 'lonely man' who discreetly attempts to extricate himself from the toils of his family's suspicions, but who, when finally faced with their discovery and consequent demands finds himself unable to meet his wife's terms and decides instead to burn all his money and drown himself in the orchard

pool.

In Donkey from the Mountains, Atiyah succeeds in blending irony with tragedy, spite with sympathy. Although Faris Deeb is ironically portrayed as the Shylock of Lebanon, his final image is not altogether that of an unpitiable person. His fear and loneliness, his painful isolation from his family, as well as his downfall and death are all tragic, but there is a streak of irony that deflates the tragedy and renders it 'redundant'. The cause he lives for and dies for is trivial. The whole purpose of his life, money-hoarding, is petty.

The novel's main interest, however, lies not in the suspense, or the furtive elements of the crime but in the effective study of the characters. What is perhaps most remarkable about the character drawing and presentation is their lack of pretensiousness. They are brought out to life convincingly and with utmost simplicity— no undue exaggeration, no over-laboured probing for sophisticated implications, no embellishment of any sort. The interchangeability of the human feelings of fear, resentment, apathy and pity that surge in them are presented in the simple, perhaps 'old fashioned' straightforwardness needing no Jung or Freud to add their fingerprints It is this simplicity, which does not imply any lack of understanding or knowledge, that makes the reading

of the work a more refreshing and absorbing experience despite its arctic theme.

We have traced the theme of alienation in four novels written in English by Arab writers. Two have been studied in depth as they have been found to reveal one of the most important aspects of alienation— the cultural estrangement— which has haunted not only Arab novelists in English but perhaps the majority of Third World writers. The two other novels, Spring to Summer and Donkey from the Mountains have been hastily referred to as they point to a more or less classic type of estrangement, that caused by the clash between the old and the new.

The protagonists of these novels have found different ways out of their alienation. Mahmoud of Black Vanguard opts for the West determined to obliterate from his memory everything that ever happened to him between his return home and his final retreat to what he hopes will now serve as home in the West. Ram of Beer in the Snooker Club resigns himself to placid stagnation giving up the cause and the fight. Samar of Spring to Summer settles for the comforts of bourgeois living with little awareness of the compromise made. While Faris Deeb of Donkey from the Mountains chooses to slip quietly through the back door by drowning himself in his own orchard pool.

Interestingly enough, the fates of the protagonists to some extent parallel those of their creators: Edward Atiyah does exactly what Mahmoud finally chooses to do; settle in England turning it into permanent home but not altogether giving up the cause of the first home. Waguih Ghali takes things a bit further than his protagonist by withdrawing from life altogether. Rima Alamuddin is destroyed by the East that Samar accepts, she is shot dead by a desperate lover, a happening that points to the futility and almost absurdity of Samar's final choice, and that anticipates her inevitable disillusionment.

THE POLITICAL FORUM

The truth of the common charge that third world literature is never apolitical is perhaps best illustrated in the works of Arab writers in English. As life in the Arab world grows more political, and as politics impinges more and more on all aspects of life, the contemporary Arab writer who is invariably politically conscious feels himself compelled to relate his personal experience to the political milieu that forces itself upon him. Very few, indeed, of the novelists under study have taken the political theme as their main concern. Yet, hardly any of their works avoids political issues which are often seen as an inseparable part of the settings of such novels. More often than not, the much-spoken-of theme of alienation is strongly related to, and frequently motivated by political disillusionment.

Black Vanguard and Beer in the Snooker Club give ample evidence of this where the alienation of the protagonist originates from his inability to translate into hard fact the political and social visions he

nurtured while in the West.

To seek out the political material in the Arab novel in English has also to do with the theme-language correlation. Using the international language of English, the writer identifies a new importance attached to his printed word. Through it, he is endowed with the privilege of addressing the outside world in its own tongue and is enabled to communicate the Arab political experience whole and from the Arab point of view.

Writers, recognizing the possibility of introducing the political theme in literary forms, thus gaining immediacy as well as intimacy, have sought through their creative writing to win world sympathy for their national demands as well as to correct the many misjudgments of the Arabs often passed in the West by the educated and the uneducated alike.

That politics can successfully be introduced, in various degrees, into creative writing is not new. The Irish as well as the Black writers in general have come to the same realization. Sophisticated Anglo-Irish writers of the early twentieth century won much world sympathy for the Irish Independence Movement by projecting the forlorn image of Ireland

as the immemorial Deirdre, and that of Irish rebellion as the undying Cuchulain. Similarly, the African writer who writes in French or English asks to be understood and to "let his authentic experience prevail over the grosser European stereotype of himself as a member of a 'primitive' community."[1]

The language factor further lures the Arab writer to dabble in politics as it eclipses the fear of government censorship of his works as a result of some direct or implied unfavourable mention of a particular regime or one of its leaders. Writing from exile, in a foreign language, and publishing abroad, the Arab novelist feels freer to practise self-criticism or even to indict an existing Arab government. Atiyah, Jabra, Ghali and many others openly disclosed the weaknesses of Arab policies as they saw them— a relatively unusual practice in many Arab countries to date.

A work such as Ghali's Beer in the Snooker Club would have perhaps never found a publisher had it been written in Arabic for its daring political views and staunch criticism of the Egyptian revolution.

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1. Judith Illsley Gleason, This Africa (Evanston: North Western University Press, 1965),PP.42, 69.

The fact that Ghali's nationality and passport were withdrawn from him at the time of writing the novel as well as that the work was published abroad and not in any Arab publishing house encouraged the author to launch straight-forward criticism instead of resorting to allegory which fellow Arab writers may find incumbent for the expression of any similar emotions.

In fact, it is precisely this candidness that won the Arab writers a warm reception in the West. Critics in general were not mindful of the political theme, for on the contrary they found it informative and enlightening, coming from intellectuals who do not seek to dress up reality before presenting it to its readers. Lebanon Paradise, with its theme of the Arab-Israeli conflict, earned Atiyah a good name not only as a good novelist but as a fair-minded Arab intellectual who can handle a subject that for years has defied the efforts of statesmen, experts and thinkers, in a most convincing and agreable manner. The same assured mastery over the handling of delicate political issues was one of the reasons that made Diqs's A Bedouin Boyhood a "masterpiece" or "classic" in the eyes of many reviewers.

The candidness, nevertheless, was not infrequently exaggerated. Intoxicated by the West's blessing for fairness, a number of writers, though a slight one, were ready to outbid the West and express feelings which to date are considered by the many as sacriligeous. Ghali, for example, in a bravado of political openness and enthusiasm declared his sympathy (no one knows how genuine it was) towards Zionist organizations, and was with the help and blessing of these organizations, the first Arab to visit Israel in 1967.[1] It may not be altogether a surprising coincidence to know that the next Arab visitor allowed in Tel Aviv by Israeli authorities was the Moroccan novelist who writes in French, Driss Chraibi.

As long as the Arab novelist in English expressed reasonable sentiments over his political theme, he had no problems with western publishers or critics. Yet, any discernment of over heated emotions or presentation of a too Arab point of view invariably meant difficulties with publishers. Jabra Ibrahim Jabra tells how his novel Hunters in a Narrow Street stood no chance of being reprinted after it was sold out six months following its publication. An American publisher bought publication rights from him

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1. From Israel Ghali sent an article which was published in the Times (1st September, 1967), P.9.

only to send him a note sometime later, that he could not publish the novel on account of its political nature which might "get him into trouble."[1] Paul List, a German publisher who had the novel translated into German also obtained from Jabra publication rights, but failed to publish it for fear of being "accused of anti-semitism."

However, when a writer introduces politics into his work, he is not necessarily answering any patriotic or propagandist demands. Politics, in one way or another, has become an inescapable force that pressurises the psyche of the modern individual. The web of political conflicts and controversies has so powerfully enmeshed public and private lives alike that no sensitive creative writer can completely work away from its shadow or ignore its dominating effect. Terry Eagleton in his book Marxists on Literature[2] points out how politics has become the expression of our age; and how writers such as Aragon and Sartre have often illustrated this in their novels. For example, in Aragon's Passengers of Destiny the central character "prides himself on deliberately ignoring political events of his day,"

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1. Jabra I. Jabra, personal correspondence, a letter dated at Baghdad, April 5, 1970.
2. Terry Eagleton, Marxists on Literature (Methuen & Co., 1976), P.447.

but in the end and as a result of an accident, he finds himself partly paralysed. He loses the use of speech "except for one word which is now the only one he can utter: 'politique'. And so it is with the help of this one word that he makes all his wants known to the woman who looks after him: hunger, thirst, sleep, etc. Although Eagleton admits that the allegory is particularly forceful, he concludes that " in the twentieth century, destiny is decided through politics."

Eagleton further finds the same 'lesson' in Sartre's novel Reprieve. The time of the novel is W.W.II., the place is Munich. "The fate of each character is influenced by Hitler's decisions and by Chamberlain's and Deladier's capitulation before his demands." The truly pathetic figure that emerges is that of Gros Louis, " an illiterate peasant who does no harm to anyone and yet finds himself, very much against his will, transported from place to place and finally locked up in jail, all because of 'politics' of which the poor fellow is quite ignorant." Eagleton maintains that the inescapable moral of the novel is that "even when we ignore politics, politics will not ignore us."

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1. T. Eagleton, Ibid.

A number of Arab writers have in recent years harped on this theme. In his play Al Daraweesh Yabhathoun anil Haqiqa[1] (The Dervishes in Search of Truth), the Syrian Mustafa Hallaj looks into the making of political conscience and the almost forceful creation of a rebel. A mistaken identity incident drags an innocent, politically ignorant man into jail and ends up by his total transformation into a committed 'revolutionary' individual. Al Qala'a al Khamisa (the Fifth Citadel) by the Iraqi Fadel al Azzawi[2] also elaborates on the pressure of the external world on the contemporary Arab individual and his ensuing metamorphosis from indifference to political activity.

Of course this does not mean that all Arab literature, written in Arabic or in a foreign language, has necessarily to deal with the Palestine problem, for instance, or more generally with the ideological and political conflicts in the Arab world. It means rather that such conflicts inevitably have their tangible or even intangible effect on the mental outfit of the author and on the content of his writing in a much similar way that the Spanish civil war had on

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1. Mustafa Hallaj, Al Daraweesh Yabhathoun anil Haqiqa (Damscus:Arab writers Union, 1972).
2. Fadel Al Azzawi, Al Qala'a al Khamisa (Damascus: Arab writers Union, 1973).

Hemingway and, in the fine arts, Picasso; or the Vietnam war on numerous contemporary American writers. More precisely, it is this concern, which wars and political dilemmas elicit, with universal issues such as man's inhumanity to man or the development of the politically mature mind, that leaves its imprint on works of art.

The degree of the Arab writers' in English engagement with the political problems of the age they live in has not varied much. As suggested earlier on, many of them treated the political aspect of their society as a de facto side of the Arab image. They have examined not only the Arabs' major political problem, Palestine, but also local internal issues such as the corruption of governments or the hypocrisy of politicians as in Ghali's Beer in the Snooker Club and Jabra's Hunters in a Narrow Street. Others were out to present Palestine as land, people and political dilemma, mainly motivated by the fact that Europeans and Western people in general are usually more familiar with the Israeli point of view with regard to the Arab-Israeli confrontation. Zionist fictional literature or fictional literature sympathetic to the Zionist view has had wide circulation among the readers of western languages and has had its effect in the shaping of their attitudes and opinions. One of the best known examples of a pro-Zionist work of

fiction is the novel Exodus, by Leon Uris, which has as a setting the W.W.II period in Palestine which led to the establishment of the state of Israel. The Arab point of view, on the other hand, has been poorly presented to the Western world and has had little circulation in it. In the world of fictional literature there has been no Arab equivalent of the pro-Zionist Exodus, that is to say, there has been no 'successful' novel presenting the Arab view of the Arab-Israeli crisis which has gained currency among Western readers. And although Arabic prose literature on this subject does exist, very little of it has been published in a western language. Seen in the light of this 'need', most Arab novels in English seem to succeed in drawing a picture of this time the Arab Exodus. They, however, vary in the degree of success they achieve in fusing political material into their literary works.

EDWARD ATIYAH'S LEBANON PARADISE:

If we have any reason to consider the political novel as a popular genre amongst third world writers, we have reason to see in Edward Atiyah's Lebanon Paradise an excellent example of its successful artistry. Perhaps the disarming honesty and accuracy that stamps the whole book accounts for much of the praise with which the novel was received despite its thorny political theme of the 1948 Arab-Israeli confrontation. But

Atiyah is one of very few Arab writers in the West who can handle the bitterest of political controversies without feeling or arousing personal enmity. His public speeches, political essays and debates always unveiled an impressive personality combining as it did passion and honesty in a remarkable way. His basic convictions as a socialist and Arab nationalist were unshaken, and "he was incapable of saying less than what he believed to be the whole truth."[1]

This 'unflinching' honesty earned him the love and respect of both his friends and opponents to the extent that no one less than the Jewish Observer and Middle East Review reporter admitted that

> In fact, I wondered sometimes whether he was held in greater affection by his Israeli and Zionist opponents than by his Arab friends.[2]

If Atiyah succeeded in at least neutralizing his opponents, it was in part because he called attention to problems that were overlooked by Arab patriots and propagandists who recoiled from admitting personal weaknesses or failures. In contradistinction, Atiyah felt that no facet of his society was immune from criticism and consequently viewed the Arab social and political set-up with a severely critical eye.

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1. Albert Hourani, Obituary of Edward Atiyah, The Times, 26 October, 1964.
2. The Jewish Observer and Middle East Review, 30 October, 1964, P.9.

Lebanon Paradise, on the other hand, does not only expose maladies that bereave the Arab world but seems to offer solutions that are both valid and feasible. To a large extent, the validity of Atiyah's propositions is due to their being rooted in reality and to the author's authentic connection with the problems he delves in. Atiyah was quite familiar with the Palestine question as it was his task, in his capacity as Secretary General of the Arab Office in London[1], to explain and defend the Arab point of view about Palestine. This vocation remained a deep and permanent concern of his and he never wavered in his belief that the Arabs of Palestine had been treated unjustly. The present novel draws largely on this vast experience of the problems of the Middle East and particularly on his experience of the refugee camps as he collaborated with the notable Palestinian figure Musa Alami to help Arab refugees, and together worked to establish what later came to be known as the Arab Development Society. The more mundane aspects of the novel, particularly the description of the Frenchified Lebanese clique at the 'Lebanon Paradise' also have connections with reality as a personal dedication from the author to his daughter reads: "To Selma who saw and enjoyed the Paradise last year."[2]

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1. For the period 1945-1949.
2. A copy of his novel presented to his daughter, found amongst Atiyah's books in Miss Henden's library.

Lebanon Paradise characteristically begins with a meeting between East and West, personified in the characters of Jennie Haydon and Violette Batruni. The first is an English journalist who is sent by her paper to the Middle East to report on the fighting in Palestine and on the conditions of the refugee camps in neighbouring Arab countries. The latter is a rich Lebanese girl of a 'petty' bourgeois family who resides in Egypt but comes to the Lebanon for her summer holiday and stays at the 'Lebanon Paradise' hotel in a mountain resort. The comparison between the two characters and the worlds they represent is immediately established with a hint of the prospective changes that will result from their contact. Violette is warm, friendly, young, ambitious, aspirant for a freedom and independence that equals the English girl's own, yet, she is less firm in character and seems to be groping for certainties. The female English character, on the other hand, appears to possess the same traits characteristic of almost all of Atiyah's novels. Miss Bannermann, Betty Corfield of Black Vanguard and Jennie Haydon of Lebanon Paradise are all "sturdy young" women "with large candid" brows, "a fresh out-door look" about them, "hair tumbled back slightly wind-swept." Their faces are "strong and handsome" while their normally blue

eyes always have "a large direct look, bright and confident." Atiyah's female English characters are women of vocation who contrast sharply with the idle Arab females he sets out to satirize. Miss Bannerman, for example, is one of the pioneer teachers in the Sudan and Betty Corfield is an ardent Marxist who breaks all traditions and lives up to her principles. She is the first to marry a coloured man and she successfully puts to practice, in her new limited Sudanese society, the learning and ideology of a life time. This contrast between the English and the Arab females is made quite clear in the beginning of the second chapter when Jennie and Violette meet:

> "My name is Jennie Haydon," she said. "I'm a journalist." "And mine, Violette Batruni.... I'm nothing in particular."[1]

The introduction of English characters in Atiyah's novels, Lebanon Paradise in particular (especially as Atiyah drops Jennie's character completely half way through the work) is done with the aim of 'grafting' new values and aspirations on the Arab character (for this seems always to be Atiyah's notion of the ideal Arab character: a successful blend of East and West).

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1. Lebanon Paradise (London: Peter Davies, 1953), P.12.

More specifically, the English character is basically seen to be a functional one designed to trigger dormant potentials in Arab heroines:

> Together they walked into the hotel, the English girl who had seen the Indian jungles and the fighting in Palestine, and her Lebanese guide who was wondering whether to see in her a message of fate.[1]

Yet, as seen in Black Vanguard, the English character is important not only in so far as it 'infects' the Arab protagonists but also in bringing about the values of the East as seen through the eyes of a westerner. If the Arabs are allowed to practise self-criticism or express any undue admiration of the West, the English are there to restore the balance. The longing of Easterners and Westerners alike for a different life style is described with deep understanding of human nature. Violette longs for a more meaningful and intensive life, for life in England as she imagines it in the several books she has devoured, but Jennie "can't stick it", for "it's so tame and conventional and suburban":

> No, give me India and Egypt... the sun and the shouting; I love it all. Life is much warmer here: more blood and less inhibition.[2]

From this point on, one of the major concerns of the novel is the recording of Violette Batruni's decided revolt against the pre-ordained, the placid pattern

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1. Lebanon Paradise, P.14.
2. Ibid., P.67.

of her life. She first turns against the marriage being arranged for her to a young man très comme il faut, which is the hall-mark of a Batruni son-in-law, not because André is not charming in his own eligible way but because he is not so much her choice as her parents' for her. "The bare realization that her life was being shaped behind her back" pricks her into a sense " of protest, even before she passes on the question whether the shape itself was really to her liking." She saw the same pattern of married life that her four sisters followed about to repeat itself in a sure monotony that would horrify her:

> She had no doubt at all that if she married André her existence would follow the same groove. André would become even more prosperous than he was already. They would have three or four servants, a large inflated American car, and a villa with a pergola in the garden. They would have three or four children, and her father and mother and sisters would gush endlessly over them— Ah, les amours, quels petits choux. They would buy a ciné-camera (all her sisters had one), and take endless films of the children to be shown at family reunions. And they would give tremendous parties... And they would play cards— she, la petite partie; André, la grosse, pinacle, cooncan, poker... Soon after thirty, like her father and mother, like Rose already, like all people with a certain income in Cairo and Beirut, they would develop some fashionable ailment that necessitated taking an annual cure at Vichy or Aix-les-Bains.[1]

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1. Lebanon Paradise, P.11.

Longing to do something worth while with her life, and encouraged by her English friend's example, Violette shyly offers to work in a camp for Palestinian refugees in spite of her parents' opposition. In the camp, she meets Musa (Moses) Canaan (the symbolic combination in the name is obvious), a new kind of a young man, a Palestinian who is not 'eligible' but a sensitive cultured person who shoulders great responsibilities.

By transplanting his heroine from the world of 'Lebanon Paradise' with its clientele of wealthy pleasure-seekers, into the world of the nearby camp with its want and suffering, Atiyah manages to create once again the kind of situation that he can handle best; the two world arrangement so characteristic of Black Vanguard. This Jamesian-Forsterian device helps Atiyah set up his two poles of values, contrast them, and ironically point to their various ramifications. The two worlds are never water-tight, however, they admit movement between them and afford opportunities for meeting through link characters like Jennie and Violette.

It is Atiyah's perceptive understanding and keen observation of his society that enables him to describe so successfully aspects of the two juxtaposing human situations. Equally remarkable is his ability

to maintain a sensitive balance between seriousness and humour, between the grimness of the camp and the gaiety of the hotel. The aura of the 'Lebanon Paradise' is evoked through the humorous but excellent rendering of conversation, and delicate nuances of the dialogue. The abundant and frequent transfer from English to French is done deliberately to ridicule the artificiality and pretentiousness of the Lebanese French-oriented bourgeoisie. A whole picture of one side of Lebanese life is conveyed through such small talk of the Batrunis, the Harfouches and Khouris on the balcony of their hotel, the focal point of their lives being centred on their 'bridge' parties, the rivalry d'ami between Mme. Batruni and Mme. Harfouche, small motives and manœuvers that are all described with wonderful skill and incisive irony.

Atiyah does not only mock the Lebanese bourgeoisie for their idleness and triviality but seems to accuse them of unconcern towards the Palestine tragedy. Blazing arguments flare up in the hotel's lounge, denouncing the British and American perfidy, or laying a manly stress upon the rottenness on their own side, but all in quite a comfortable vein. Their hearts do not really bleed. Theirs is a generous expression of pity for "les pauvres" "les Palestiniens", that is easily forgotten and dismissed at the mention

of "a few bottles of Araki... the most sumptuous in the Lebanon." Palestine for them is an opportunity to express noble feelings towards humanity. "Heart-rending sights," declares Mme. Harfouche, "I haven't seen them myself but those who have say it's enough to wring the hardest heart." But the whole war business is a real nuisance, especially if one has to travel from place to place. The whole thing has been

> "Très désagréable,"... Everything was so unpleasant this time because of the war in Palestine: customs, passports— such fuss. They pried into your visa with a microscope. They looked at the shape of your nose. They searched your baggage with a comb... Une corvée."

In deploring the attitudes of the Arab upper classes, for all their insouciance and uncommitment, Atiyah is attempting to define the position of each sector of society to circumscribe its share of the responsibility for what happened in Palestine. The holiday-makers at the 'Lebanon Paradise' belonged to a "detribalised generation," were nationally unattached, unconcerned about conditions in the Arab countries except in so far as their own position, wealth and security were affected.

> They were essentially cosmopolitans living on the fringe of Europe, more particularly France. Neither the Lebanon nor Egypt inspired them with any feelings of patriotism.

Atiyah takes a fearless stand on the collective forces that caused the loss of Palestine, not only on the

"selfish, cynical rich who symbolize the rottenness" responsible for the tragedy, but on the entire masses who "by and large...were not willing to die" for Palestine the way the Jews were. Time and again he brings forward to his readers appropriate facts that indict his own people at the risk of making himself unpopular amongst his peers[1]: the overriding feeling of irresponsibility that prevails among the rich and the pauper alike; the false pretensiousness, the undue arrogance, the shallowness and lawlessness of governments, the corruption of leaders and above all the "medievalism" that pervades mentality and conduct:

> How can you expect a people to fight efficiently, to be well organized, even to have enough patriotism... if ninety per cent of them are still living in the Middle Ages?[2]

Atiyah's points are made more pungently by alternating his scenes between the Lebanon Paradise Hotel and the refugee camp. There are several objectives for this contrast; one, to emphasize the incongruity of the two worlds in order to show the absurdity of the situation; another, to suggest that only shock, suffering and perhaps death can allow rebirth to be,

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1. As mentioned earlier on in this thesis, Atiyah was never considered patriotic enough by his fellow Arabs on account of this candid self-criticism and indictment of the Arabs. This is why he was never truly credited for his ceasless efforts to publicize and support the Palestine question.

2. Lebanon Paradise, P.127.

and perhaps most significantly, to tell the story from the inside of what happened in Palestine and caused the Arab dispersal.

What seems at first to be a political and moral disquisition immediately gives way to a powerfully delineated picture of degraded humanity. Atiyah's account of the camp is more than just a general restatement of the conditions which the war had produced. It is an attempt to present a human drama that exposes debasement, suffering and hatred by turns. Pride and honesty come to nothing in the face of hunger and cold; a family conceals the death of one of its members to keep his ration of flour going, while the only form of theft in the camp is blanket snatching. Since blankets are allotted to children and old people, the others who "too feel a bit cold sometimes in the night," find it "a temptation to see the corner of a blanket sticking out of a tent."[1]

A good part of the description of the camp refers largely to the social inequality that exists in the Arab world. Even amongst refugees there seem to be classes. The wealthy have their 'connections' who help them to settle down anywhere they wish and continue living prosperously, but it is the poor who go to the

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1. Lebanon Paradise, P.79.

camps and live in squalor and dirt. Or as one taxi driver puts it:

> It's like everything else: even in exile, the rich get off more lightly; they manage to smuggle out some of their money; they have friends and relatives everywhere. Truly, there is primo and terzo even for refugees.... Only death equalises between the rich man and the pauper... Death and, they say, communism...[1]

Atiyah, however, in bringing out into the open the forces that debilitated the Arab stand against the Israeli 'invasion' does not spare the West from its share of the blame. The West has been all along partial towards Israel, especially Britain on whom the Arabs naively relied but then "when the Jews were strong enough, the British just walked out." The common opinion which all Arabs share is that

> Nothing happens in this part of the world if the English don't want it, and nothing that they want doesn't happen. If the Palestine Arabs become refugees here and there it is because the English wanted it, and now if they want it the refugees will go back.[2]

One of Atiyah's lines of argument, and as if to condone their conduct, is that the British were the victims of Jewish propaganda. Several of the characters in Lebanon Paradise proclaim their beliefs

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1. Lebanon Paradise, P.92.
2. Ibid., P.27.

that "England is controlled by Jews," that there are "six Jews in the British cabinet" and that their members in the Parliament are also legion. Because of this the Jewish

> propaganda has been so successful; they've made England and America believe that it is a just and a good thing that they should have Palestine.

But such argument does not hold for very long. Musa Canaan's voice soon dispels any inclination to forgive the West. The West has lost its conscience; in fact, any mention of this conscience makes him "want to vomit or blaspheme." In his tendentious exposé of the injustice accorded the Palestinians, he betrays a "flaming, savage hate," which he and fellow Arabs felt for the West's forcible plantation of a foreign national state within their midst. "A deeper hate, because born of a more burning sense of outrage." This time it was not "a struggle against British or French imperialism... a temporary domination." The Palestinian Arab, Musa in particular, knew "with a sure instinct" that "he was fighting against his eventual extermination or eviction from his native land."

Hope for the future in the Arab world, Atiyah seems to suggest, is through self-reliance and internal reform. His 'Forsterian' liberalism has spawned a

vision of the Arab countries following a reformist, socialist programme "something like English socialism; a programme that will abolish poverty and ignorance and disease... among the Arab masses in ten or fifteen years." Atiyah symbolises the efforts needed by the Arabs to meet the demands of the modern world through the characters of Violette and Musa. Theirs are the attitudes which the author thinks are inevitable to arise amongst the young who perceive the triviality and futility of the past generation. When Violette leaves her comfortable hotel and decides to make that jump from the lap of luxury and into the pit of the camp's suffering, she metaphorically draws the line between the past "which cost us Palestine" and the present which beckons to a new dawn. Or as Musa frequently says

> We had been living on an illusion called the Arab awakening which, after filling us with pride and hope and self-confidence since we were schoolboys, was suddenly exposed as a false dawn... Well, never mind. If it was a false dawn, the real awakening will yet come. This catastrophe ought to awaken us. Despair is a terrible experience, but it is something real. It takes you down to the depths, and from the depths a new life, equally real may come.... Perhaps if you have known despair, you will never again be taken by the facile and the spurious.[1]

The Palestine dispersal has created the new Arab and Atiyah explores the change on several levels, the political, the social as well as the moral. His subplot, which at times grips the readers' attention

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1. Lebanon Paradise, P.158.

more forcefully than the main plot, finds new potentials and meanings in the dispersal. Mrs.Barradi, an attractive Moslem lady whose husband is declared missing in Palestine, takes the opportunity to discard the veil and relinquish the restrictions of her conservative society. Longing for a romantic fulfillment of her unsatisfied passions, she gets involved in a love affair with Emile, Violette's brother-in-law. Revolt, once again, expresses itself in sexual terms as Fareeda and Emile immerse themselves in sexual relations, each rebelling against years of inhibitions, conventionalism, and traditionally contracted marriages. The affair is doomed to end when towards the end of the novel, Fareeda's husband is found alive in the refugee camp, though pitifully paralyzed, and Mrs. Barradi takes him home to nurse him. But he too has been purged by the experience; he does not mind that his wife is now unveiled, for he himself has discovered how

> the veil and the habara belong to the past... the dead past we had to bury in Palestine, the past which cost us Palestine... when you have seen the things I saw in Jaffa and on the way here, you know why we lost our country... It was like somebody with a bow and arrow trying to fight a man with a machine-gun.[1]

The trauma of the war experience has indeed its purgatory effect. Suffering becomes the only criterion

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1. Lebanon Paradise, P.243.

of living that differentiates "between reality and its shadow." The Arab Palestinians at the camp represent "those immediate criteria of reality" not the people of the 'Lebanon Paradise'. Those "had not suffered; they did not...belong to this mass of stripped humanity." Atiyah allows death and shock to be a rebirth to being. Even André, the Lebanese dandy, grows out of his upper-class superficiality after the accident which paralyzes him in a shooting affray following an absurd fight with another rich young Lebanese over parking place.

The novel ends on a more optimistic note. Fareeda and Violette, in true Forsterian female-heroine fashion, find a new sense of mission in life after having made the journey from innocence to maturity, from fantasy to reality. The first attends to the wounds of 'injured Palestine'. The second nurses a sick but life-giving Lebanon. While Musa Canaan leaves to attend a meeting where a new party is being formed.

If Lebanon Paradise is a successful work, despite its seemingly hazardous political theme, the claim must be based on the fact that it is not a propaganda novel. Needless to say, the main danger any writer must guard himself against is that of bias, one-sidedness and dogmatism. Atiyah seems to have,

quite successfully and also convincingly, guarded himself against such a risk by objectively interpreting factual reality into fictional creativity; and by making use of the political activity around him as material for his writing without impairing that refined quality which makes literature. In this, he has proved to be a good example of the 'committed' writer who does not forget his literary task in the face of his awesome theme. Sartre has warned against such risk when he said that

> Dans la littérature engagé, l'engagement ne doit en aucun cas faire oublier la littérature.[1]

In reviewing Lebanon Paradise for the New Statesman and Nation, Walter Allen too pointed out to this fact that the novel

> is a very intelligent and attractive work, with an undercurrent of partisanship for the Arabs in their struggle with the Jews that never becomes propaganda because of Mr. Atiyah's implicit criticsm of his own people.[2]

The class distinction, the religious differences, and the political clashes of Lebanon Paradise are all welded together to suggest the density of the novel's background but not to eclipse the author's concern with character development or analysis. Rather,

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1. Situations II, P.30.
2. New Statesman and Nation, 24 Oct.,1953.

the details of the setting, meticulous as they are, contribute to the authenticity of the situation and to the plausibility of the plot. True, the end of the novel reveals a more or less unconvincing turn of plot that lets "the whole down" in Walter Allen's opinion, especially as Atiyah "has to call in gratuitous violence to resolve his plot"[1], but this is all part of the Forsterian school of which the author is a faithful disciple. The stories that Forster tells "are so melodramatic. Violent events, sensational confrontations, incredible turns of plot, abound in his work."[2] Atiyah has only been a fast and faithful learner.

Atiyah's Forsterian techniques have already been established in the lengthy discussion of Black Vanguard. Here, too, one has been able to discern certain similarities that exist between character and situation in Lebanon Paradise and Forster's works in general, particularly the 'two-world' motif, the female heroines, the liberal outlook as well as the reckless turns of plot. However, what brings Lebanon Paradise still closer to the Forsterian cult is its being " a day of judgment."[3] Like A Room with a View or A Passage to India or in fact any other novel by Forster,

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1. Walter Allen, Ibid.
2. W.W.Robson, Modern English Literature (Oxford University Press, 1970), P.95.
3. Ibid.

characters are basically divided into "the saved and the damned," where "sheep are separated from goats."

Furthermore, Atiyah, in true Forsterian tradition, "makes no pretence of impersonal aloofness from his characters"[1] as his voice reverberates throughout the whole novel. He makes his stand from many issues quite tangible as for instance in his analysis of the Moslem woman mentality. His inherent suspicion of Islamic tradition and society, though frequently dispelled under the pressure of reasoning, vents itself now and then in 'uncondoning','accusing' observations. In the character of Fareeda Barradi he expresses many of his views regarding Islam. He finds that the fanaticism of Fareeda's background has only bred in her sensuality and an obsessed desire for seduction. Elsewhere in the novel, he refrains from judging morally any of his characters, especially the Christians. Atiyah seems to have been so influenced by the stories he heard in his youth about Moslem restrictions and inhibitions[2], that he concluded they were all authentic. His picture of a Moslem family, as of Islam in general, does not allow for genuine admiration.

The skilful rendering of atmosphere, whether this

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1. W.W.Robson, Ibid.
2. See, An Arab Tells his Story, Op.Cit.

is seen as still another Forsterian impact or now a hallmark of Atiyah's works, is certainly one of the greatest merits of the novel. The scenes are drawn with freshness of outlook and an authenticity so true to the spirit of the Arab world that compelled reviewers and commentators to mention that

> This is not only an excellently written and cunningly constructed novel. It is a picture of real life— down to the amazingly Frenchified language— in the Lebanon, from which the reader will gather a more accurate impression of what the Arab world really thinks of the British— and of themselves— than from any other modern novel I have yet seen.[1]

Many readers perhaps find Lebanon Paradise a very engaging novel not only for the 'political' picture it yields but for the skilful delineation of its setting. Atiyah relies quite heavily on anthropological background for the establishment of his picture of the Arab East. Awareness of his 'foreign' reader has enticed him time and again to devote whole sections of the novel to the description of habits and customs. Yet, unlike in Black Vanguard, Atiyah can here successfully manouver his 'anthropological' details to have functional purposes such as the promotion of plot, the revealing of inner aspects of the characters' personalities, or the anticipation of and preparation for forthcoming events.

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1. Sir Ronald Storrs, a commentary on the dust cover.

What impresses one in Edward Atiyah's Lebanon Paradise is his admirable ability to situate political concerns in their right social context that the one is inseparable from the other enlarging the reader's perception of it in its individuality as well as in its entanglement and relationship to it. Indeed, the importance of this work derives not simply from its theme, but also from the writer's skill at transforming his basic polemical conceptions into a viable reality, a reality which presents these ideas but does not eclipse man's humanity.

JABRA I. JABRA'S HUNTERS IN A NARROW STREET:

Much more directly political, and hence artistically less sucessful is the work of the Palestinian writer Jabra Ibrahim Jabra Hunters in a Narrow Street. The novel deals with the same theme of the 1948 war in Palestine and the ensuing problems facing the emerging Arab youth in their search for a political and social identity. Something of the same flavour of self-criticism and appeal for reform inhabits the world of Hunters in a Narrow Street; and Baghdad, the setting of the novel is described more or less apocalyptically with a vision of what is yet to come.

The novel opens with the protagonist Jameel Farran, a Christian Palestinian searching for a modestly-

priced hotel where he can spend the night. He has just arrived in Baghdad from embattled Jerusalem where homes have been blown up and destroyed and hundreds of people made dislodged and dispossessed. His fiancee Leila Shahine was amongst those killed in the ferocious attacks on Arab homes, the last glimpse he had of her was the sight of her hand torn off the wrist with the engagement ring buckled round the third finger.

Having lost his love and his home and in need of money to keep his now refugee family, Jameel, who has a degree in English from Cambridge (just like the author) goes to Damascus where Palestinian teachers are being registered for employment in the neighbouring countries and manages to secure a teaching post in a college in Baghdad. But in Baghdad, Palestine as both theme and primordial concern of author, is dropped to give way to new preoccupations: to the conflict of race and tradition, historicity and modernity; as well as to the political tension that bedevilled Iraq under Nuri Said.

Jameel grasps the reality of such conflicts when he falls in love with Sulafa, a girl he tutors privately as her father, Imad Nafawi, ironically a prominent Arabic scholar and former cabinet minister, does not allow her to pursue her studies at college where she

is likely to mix with men and 'roughnecks'. Although the love affair itself is not quite convincing especially to a western reader who may find it difficult to see love emerge so suddenly and over brief telephone calls and conversations, it helps to unfurl before us the battle of fathers and sons and it functions as the focal point that tethers together the various issues the novel raises: Sulafa's aunt Mrs. Selma Rubeidi, an attractive woman educated in the U.S.A., seduces Jameel relentlessly. She epitmizes the frustration and thirst of the educated who find no self-fulfillment in their countries and thus turn to the phony but spurious glamour of cocktail parties and social gatherings. Her cousin, Adnan Talib, renounces his wealthy family and leads an independent life away from the superficiality and narrow-mindedness of his class. A revolutionary and a bohemian, he shouts his poems in the cafés of Rashid street, and plots wild vague millennia. Even Towfiq Khalaf, who in his turn brings forward the dichotomy between desert and urban life, is made to propose marriage to Sulafa in order to further involve him in the existing discrepancies and conflicts. Also her being a Moslem in love with a Christian, touches lightly on religious differences in the Arab world and offers a kind of solution in their forthcoming marriage. And when in the end of the novel Adnan Talib murders

Sulafa's father, he does so not only to liberate her from his grip but to liberate the whole country from his likes. "There are at least a dozen others I'd like to give similar treatment," he finally admits.

As a political and social testimony of a certain phase of Arab life, Hunters in a Narrow Street is quite informative and instructive. What it generally extols is a sense of faith in the future despite the desolate present. What it demonstrates are the existing foibles of a mentality and code of conduct that impede the Arab progress and development. Although the shift from one concern to another— from the Palestine war to social and political turmoil in Iraq— seems lacking in clarity of purpose and unity of theme, the reader soon realizes that the detailed picture the author draws of Iraq aims to analyse and expose viable circumstances that caused the Palestine 'tragedy'. Palestine is lost because the political and social consciousness has not yet matured enough among Arab youth.

Because the author intends his work to be essentially a testimony of the 1948 events in the Middle East, his awareness of the importance of his material as well as his consciousness of his foreign reader (whom he wishes to enlighten) intensify occasionally

that one can at times detect some lack of ease or unrelaxed posture in his writing. Jabra's 'good intentions' trap him in the hazard of striving for effect or of soliciting his material which occasionally mars his work. The metaphore of Leila's torn hand, or of Palestine torn off the Arab body, is unduly overdramatized. Its recurrent appearance throughout the novel, whether in love scenes or during political arguments, seems to indicate an apologetic note, a reminder that the author, or Jameel the protagonist, has not forgotten Palestine nor his personal and national tragedy. Almost after every deviation from the political theme, or after indulgence in romantic or sexual relations the hand immediately flashes in the mind's eyes of Jameel Farran.

Not without reason, one is tempted to feel that politics, in one way or another, has forced itself on both the author's conscience and artistic craft the way it has done so on numerous other writers from Saloane to Malraux. Jabra, perhaps felt an awesome responsibility, himself being a Palestinian and well versed in the English language, to document to the world the story of the Arab loss of Palestine. One, indeed, can hardly expect a sensitive writer to go through such a trauma of an experience without being influenced by it or without wishing to record

it in creative form. "I wanted to write a novel about the Arab world in its years of crisis, 1948-1949", Jabra says. "And I wanted this novel to be as documentary as the art of fiction permits."[1] Hunters in a Narrow Street, however, has remained todate Jabra's most politically inclined novel. A recent novel published in Arabic under the title Al Bahth an Walid Masoud (the search for Walid Masoud) picks up the Palestine theme again, particularly the story of guerrilla fighters, but once more, the author drifts almost unconsciously towards social observation of which he is undoubtedly a master. Politics for Jabra, then, is perhaps the 'prick of conscience' that now and then stimulates him to touch on issues that every Arab deems vital. Talk of commitment, particularly in the Arab world, and perhaps the third world in general, not infrequently intimidates authors and indirectly forces them into the path of political writing. But again one can argue that the political crisis is the most acute expression of the general crisis not only of the Arab being but of the world's at large.

In Hunters Jabra seems to maintain that the moral and ideological conflicts that bereave both Iraq and Palestine all have a political background; that there

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1. Personal Correspondence, Op.Cit.

are hardly any aspects of this life which are not tangled with the political battle in one way or another. Selma's corruption, Sulafa's thirst for emancipation, Adnan's yearning for change and reform are all connected with the system or the order that is about to collapse.

Because Jabra is no politician by nature but a sensitive writer dragged into politics by the pressure of time, his novel does not seem to propose any specific political vision, like Atiyah, for example no matter how broad and Utopian his is. Where Atiyah has found his own program, Jabra has merely outlined the need for such a reform. But the question remains whether one normally expects political programs or detailed plans for change from creative writers, or whether it suffices to reflect reality with an all disarming honesty.

If Jabra does not possess a ready formula, at least his insights into the negative aspects of his political and social machination are penetrating and sound. Fierecely discontented with the actualities of his time, he translates his repulsion into uncondoning, searing observation and incisive analysis of characters and actions. He is keenly aware of the corruption amongst the feudalist upper classes in Iraq but he

is equally enraged by the abjectness and sloth of the masses. The Nafawis, Rubeidis and many others in the novel represent the greed, corruption and ignorance typical of their class. But the rest of the population are helplessly resigned to an arid and purposeless life. How can a social and political revolution then see the light when the two halves of society, the rich and the poor, live in the midst of a vacuum and feel contented; when there is precious little to do during the day and no one worries about it, when the successive days bring with them "renewed aridity" and"repetitive purpose-lessness." Jabra's protagonist feels repelled by the lethargy and mediocrity of people in Baghdad:

> when life came back.. after the terrible Siesta hours, men and women did not know exactly what to do with it... The men piled in coffee shops (in which to cope with the large numbers, benches were mostly used instead of chairs) and the women— Oh, I'd seen them in multitudes overflow their slums and sit in black abas on the earth and the dung by the Tigris. The Sulafas perhaps gathered in one another's gardens and listened to the radio, even played records of South American tangos and paso dobles. The Selmas entertained or played cards. Tens of thousands filled the cinemas. The professional clubs filled with gamblers. The two halves of humanity, went their separate ways, equally arid; equally purposeless.[1]

Towards the Rubeidis and Nafawis, Jabra is spiteful and indignant. Towards those who look passively at the waste of their lives, he shows little sympathy

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1. Hunters in a Narrow Street (London: Heinemann, 1960), P.179.

at all. In his opinion, the apathy of the situation has posed several impedient restraints in the way of the young who were trying to make their first concerted bid for ascendancy. Adnan Talib, an idealist, personifies everything that is thwarting about the Iraqi 'medieval world'. Brian Flint (the only Englishman in the novel) reflecting on Adnan's character says, "He's passionate. He is tormented by some Utopian vision. An honest frustrated idealist, that's what he is."[1] And to this, Jameel Farran, the protagonist hastens to add that "whatever frustration there is in him and whatever idealism... they are typical of fifty million Arabs."[2]

Caught between the corruption of the one and the inertia of the other, the young are paralyzed by frustration. Adnan's revolt is Bohemian, idealist and vague. But even the rest of the Iraqi youth who stir for action, who demonstrate and riot in the streets of Baghdad holding banners that carry the words "Long live freedom" and "Down with feudalism" and who are forced into violence of killing, are soon muted and their voices of protest forcibly made faint and low.

The tone of general and personal frustration is strong

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1. Hunters in a Narrow Street, P. 146.
2. Ibid.

and the note of embitterment is unmistakable as the author finds in Baghdad society an expression of desperation and corruption. He attempts to shift his criticism from the ameliorative social, to the incentive political, trying frequently to correlate the two. But he is inclined to harp on the bases that enfeeble both institutions and he seems to fall on a common denominator, that of hypocrisy. Hussein, another Bohemian poet argues that the problem of the Arabs is hypocrisy too:

> Hypocrisy in politics, hypocrisy in friendship, hypocrisy in virtue, hypocrisy in religion, hypocrisy high and low and everywhere.[1]

Because of hypocrisy, even Palestine becomes the scapegoat for governments and states. A country is being lost, a people forcefully evicted and dispossessed, and all that Arab leaders do is make hot-headed speeches full of talk about sacrifice and patriotism:

> Our papers find in Palestine a rich source of material to fill up their columns. It is repetitious, uninformed, hot-headed, high worded and the people are sick of it. But how else can we prove to them we're patriotic?[2]

Mere talk goes on and the high-sounding and 'patriotic' speeches call for change and block steps in its direction. But even change has become an outworn cliché:

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1. Hunters in a Narrow Street, P.49.
2. Ibid., P.29.

> everybody wants change, a revolution; not only the leftists and progressives, but the rightists and the reactionaries too.[1]

But

> what do we do, some talk, some organize piddling cells, some fill acres of paper with sh--y articles. That's all we can do.[2]

At the college where Jameel teaches, things are not much better. Teachers who have been in the system for sometime have apparently been absorbed in the follies of this system, and have yielded to the general easy-going sway of a routine:

> There were meetings to be sure, perhaps too many of them, and discussions of college departments and curricula which achieved very little, since each professor, jealous about his academic standing, was prone to overestimate the particular university system that produced him. The names of Beirut and Iowa and Oxford and Kansas and Sheffield and London and Cairo were bandied about with zest and determination.[3]

Hunters in a Narrow Street is indeed no self-glorifying, self-justifying document in defence of the Arabs. On the contrary, the Arabs, as already noticed, come in for a great deal of criticsm. Kinds of corruption, apathy and hypocrisy are candidly described in a manner that is not altogether new to creative writers from developing countries. The

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1. Hunters in a Narrow Street, P.112.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., P.32.

theme of rottenness within and without has had a particular appeal to a good number of authors. Idris Chraibi's Heirs to the Past, Achebe's A Man of the People and Soyinka's The Interpreters, to cite only a few examples, have all indulged themselves in the scrutiny of internal powers that, in their turning against their own people, often outbid the 'foreign' greed of colonialism. John Ekwere's poem 'rejoinder' aptly presents this problem when he says

> No more the foreign hawks
> On alien chikens prey--
> But we on us.[1]

Jameel strongly senses that the Arabs, despite their own shortcomings, have been dealt a blow by their own leaders and governments. The war in Palestine has given such strong evidence of this when the Arabs "were not allowed to fight,"[2] to defend their country; when they were given toy guns that did not fire[3], and even when as refugees "nobody wanted" them[4]. Very few Palestinian or Arab writers have indeed come so close to indicting their people for what happened during the war. Atiyah, of course, was equally outspoken in his Lebanon Paradise especially in his description of the fears of workers, taxi-drivers and the like, of Palestinian competetion for jobs.

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1. Reflections: Nigerian Prose and Verse, edited by Frances Ademola (Lagos, 1962), P.68.
2. Hunters in a Narrow Street, P.14.
3. Ibid., P.9.
4. Ibid., P.14.

One cannot but again maintain that the English language in which these writers express themselves has undoubtedly helped disperse their political inhibitions and fear of censorship or reprimand. No longer are there taboo themes for the Arab writers or pressing needs to depict the 'official' image of their countries.

It remains to be said, however, that no matter how fervid his accusations may be, and how scornful he is of the miserable hypocrisies and follies that ensnare the Arab body politic, it is plain that the most vehement inculpation Jabra has at heart is that against the West. Actually, in chronological order, the story unfolds to tell first and foremost of the treachery and perfidy of the big powers in creating a political 'tragedy' in Palestine. Such accusations regarding the "superior powers who organized the fight and relegated" the Palestinians "to a useless back-ground" are betrayed in such statements as that made by Jameel that the West "will not let Jerusalem fall into ruins under the hoofs of Zionist terrorists"[1]

or in father Isa's naive retort:

> I can't understand the West... It is supposed to be Christian. Look what it is doing to Christians and to the land of Christ... How can they do this to the Holy City?[2]

Jameel explains the perturbing insouciance on the

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1. Hunters in a Narrow Street, P.18.
2. Ibid., P.16.

side of the Christian West, their indifference to what happens in the Holy Land by maintaining that to the average westerner, Palestine is something abstract and remote, vaguely Biblical and somewhat romantic. To them it is not as it is to the Arabs a picture of home and even mundane reality. Christ Himself is not the same nor is Christianity:

> ... I think of Christ as a man walking our streets with a haggard face and beautiful hands. I think of him standing barefooted on our cobbles and calling all men to His love and His peace. I think of Him here, in these very streets and hills and houses and hovels. For me Christ is a part of this place. But how do you suppose they think of Him in the West? Do you suppose our Christianity is like theirs? When thay sing of Jerusalem do you think they mean our own arched streets and cobbled alleys and terraced hills? Never. Christ for the West has become an idea— an abstract idea with a setting, but the setting has lost all geographical significance. For them the Holy Land is a fairy land. They have invented a fanciful Jerusalem of their own and made it the city of their dreams. But for us the geography is real and inescapable. When they sing of Jerusalem in their hymns they do not mean our city. Theirs is a paradise, ours is hell, Gehenna, the city of no peace. Nor is their Jerusalem the city of Christ anymore. It is the city of David. What does it matter to them if our houses are destroyed... They've stolen our Christ and kicked us in the teeth.[1]

Jabra's bitterness undoubtedly dictates his opinions in passing judgment on the West's manner of handling the Palestine problem. Wrath, abomination, horror and mockery drape his picture of the representatives of the 'civilised' West by turns. One of the passages

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1. Hunters in a Narrow Street, P.17.

that highly reveal the author's state of mind and offer direct criticim of western attitudes is his description of such organizations as the United Nations. Here the judgment is not of right and wrong but of pathetic helplessness of a stripped and degraded humanity:

> We've been recently counted and pigeon-holed by United Nations. They're giving us ration cards, on the strength of which we get so much flour and powdered milk and a few ounces of margarine per head. The flour makes black bread, and the powdered milk is not much appreciated by the refugees, especially when they have to take it every morning dissolved back into liquid. Most of them turn it into leben and sell it dirt cheap to the unlucky ones who have not been given ration cards because they do not technically qualify as refugees. Misery is being classified, and Oh, they're so clever at it, U.N.O's officials. [1]

In fact, Hunters in a Narrow Street is one of very few novels written in English by Arabs that do not piously worship the West. More unusual is its cynical sketching of European and American characters and direct mockery of such institutions as missionaries and 'zealous' foreign clergymen. Those are caricatured as men

> well-heeled and glib, who talk about the love of Jesus Christ to Christians and Moslems alike, and hope to convert the refugees by telling them Christ is the son of Allah, which makes even the starved laugh...They preach through interpreters to those who need no preaching, and embark on theological controversies with the Orthodox. ... People say they're Zionists in disguise, spying on our conditions and indirectly plugging the old line of the gathering of the Jews in the Promised

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1. Hunters in a Narrow Street, P.120.

> Land. At least two of them were given a sound beating the other day near the vegetable market.

Even the character of Brian Flint, the Englishman who works at the British embassy in Baghdad and who befriends the bohemian clique of Adnan, Hussein, and Abdul Kader, is in his turn portrayed ironically. There is no halo of impeccable rectitude around him which characterises many of the English characters in the novels under study. Although his pronouncements and judgments of Iraqi life are frequently apt and profound, he is quite often presented as merely the simple-minded tourist ready to fall in love with "everything he /sees/ even the dirt in Rashid street." His is an image of the Westerner flabbergasted by the discovery of ancient history within the walls of the ancient city of Baghdad; but still foolishly enchanted by the sight of Kurdish citizens dressed up in their national costumes "complete with a mighty roll of a turban with tassels and voluminous blue trousers that rustled as they moved." And as if to further emasculate his character, references are made to the possiblity of his being a homosexual. Other English characters who appear in the novel in glimpses as in Salma's cocktail parties are also sketched not without the same great admiration accorded them in other novels.

Why Hunters in a Narrow Street may not be considered the most successful political work amongst the Arab novels in English is due perhaps to its tendency towards occasional sentimentalism and appeal for pity or over-dramatization. In his undoubtedly genuine desire to speak to the public at large not only to his literary confreres, and in his eagerness to squeeze his political experience into the narrow confines of his art, Jabra has overemphasized, in only some parts of his novel, the polemic-political side of his story. Probably what could have redeemed it from such pitfalls is the application of stronger restraints on personal emotions or refraining from arousing sympathy or pity in the reader. In his interesting book African Literature: A Critical View, David Cook warns of such danger and stresses the author's need for

> absolute refusal to overdramatize suffering or the human condition; which means, as a a corollary, that while an opportunity may be provided for readers to acquire sympathetic knowledge of what is going on, there must be not a hint of an appeal for pity. Self-pity inflicts perhaps the most damaging spiritual wounds that human beings can force upon themselves; a whisper of it will alienate us more quickly than any other quality, since it excludes all spontaneous reaction by others.[1]

But in statements such as the following, although by no means are they typical of all Jabra's writing, one

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1. David Cook, African Literature: A Critical View (Longman, 1977), P.222.

might detect a little more than the 'whisper'

Cook warns against:

> That night I dreamed that I saw Leila dressed in a black aba, like the girls of Baghdad. I was struggling with her all night desperately. I tried to remove her aba, but it would not come off. Again and again I tried, but the black robe clung to her body unyieldingly, and she laughed, laughed as she had always laughed before that Jewish T.N.T. mine put an end to her laughter and mine.[1]

Perhaps because of this occasional sentimentality, critics have been divided over the worth and importance of the novel. When it first appeared in 1960, some reviewers hailed it as a highly informative and useful account of a political problem that had for years been presented from one point of view; others simply condemned it as sheer propaganda. "A novel like this," wrote the Times, "shows us much better than a dozen articles what Arab nationalism means."[2] An Arab reviewing the novel in the United States described it as a highly valuable and long-awaited work. Abdul Wahed Lu'lu'a, in a letter to a Lebanese journal, noted the great impact the novel had on his American friends, and the sympathy it won amongst them for the Palestinian cause.[3]

And whereas Ronald Bryden in his review of the novel for the Spectator found it "moving"[4], Jon Kimche,

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1. Hunters in a Narrow Street, P. 31.
2. The Times, 14 April, 1960, P.13b.
3. Al Adieb (April, 1962).
4. The Spectator (15 April, 1960), P.550.

a Zionist journalist, argued in the Jewish Observer that Hunters in a Narrow Street was worthless and even accused its writer of being a Nasserite propagandist. Kimche, however, used the occasion to launch a similar attack against Edward Atiyah, whom he accused, along with Walid Khalidi (a notable Palestinian historian) of having prostituted himself for propaganda purposes.[1]

The greatest merits of Hunters in a Narrow Street as a literary work rest, however, not on its polemical or political implications, but as many readers would undoubtedly agree, on its charming and authentic reproduction of Arab life in the late 'forties and early 'fifties of this century. The novel holds us mostly by its intensely evoked background and by the sense of the fullness and complexities of the life and time it sets out to delineate. By finally mastering the effective art of registration, Jabra has achieved an intimacy of a high kind which provides not only an illusion of reality but also a sense of social and historical accuracy. In fact, he has in Hunters been able to capture the spirit of the age and to record in most admirable details the full experience of a generation with its private and public wants. There is a good deal of concern in it with class relationships, with changes in social

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1. Jabra I. Jabra, Personal correspondence, Op.Cit.

structure and with religious shifts in mentality. On all these issues, Hunters seems to be very knowledgeable and succinct. In its attempt to embrace the complex reality of the experience, it hardly leaves out any issue vital to Iraqi society. Yet, in doing so, it does not stop at the mere descriptive but probes into the possible implication of each event with the intention of rendering besides the social accuracy, a sense of psychological and mental verisimilitude. The obvious concern with sexuality throughout the work, for example, is partly done with the wish to document a de facto aspect of the Iraqi set-up, and partly to suggest the means of escape individuals indulge themselves in to vent the intellectual and social frustration that traps them. The brothel metaphor is a case in point. Samiha, the prostitute, prefers to live inside the brothel because she feels safer there. Corruption without is much greater where the danger of losing her humanity intensifies. At least, inside, she prostitutes her body only; outside, prostitution is a phenomenon that involves culture, integrity and individuality. No wonder the "whore-house" is placed in the centre of Baghdad where "some of the most respectable schools are."

Jabra's evocation of the place as a physical setting is equally admirable. Obviously, he knows his Baghdad very well: Rashid street with its tumult

of human movement and motor traffic that often sounded "like a great river with rapids and weirs," and the Tigris "which /cuts/ the city neatly in two" and holds "in its expansive unhurried flow the memory of civilisations thousands of years old." Hunters is probably one of very few novels that deftly and charmingly depict so authentically the minutiae of the city of Baghdad. His description of the public bath, for example, is an enchanting picture culled out of a Piranesi work, or a Gothic painting. Equally interesting is his vivid rendering of religious festivities such as the lament on the memory of the assassination of al Husein, the martyr saint of the Shi'ate Moslem sect.

Maybe because of his perceptive understanding of the land and its people, the novelist is also able to foresee the future and anticipate the political and social changes that actually took place later on in Iraq. The last scene in his novel which closes on a rejuvenated city where "the crows and the kites in squawking formations flew over the palm groves of a slowly refurbished land" offers an apocalyptic vision into the future. From this city which has witnessed conflicts of all kinds— conflicts between the old and the new, the town and the gown, the city

and desert, the East and the West, from this multiplicity of contrasts and paradoxes, Jabra's hero emerges more hopeful for serious changes in things.

What is lacking in this overall composite picture, in its striving for effect and comprehensiveness, is perhaps a full realization of characters, a realization of the same measure that background and situation have reached. Characters, as W.H.Harvey maintains are "in a sense..end products; they are what the novel exists for; it exists to reveal them."[1] In Hunters, however, the case is different. Characters, including the protagonist, exist to reveal a social set-up which remains the chief concern of the author. Major and background characters are "allowed a moment of intensity and depth", to use Harvey's words, but their 'function' remains that of establishing the density of socio-political reality.

WAGUIH GHALI'S BEER IN THE SNOOKER CLUB

Waguih Ghali's Beer in the Snooker Club touches on socio-political problems without ever making them its main preoccupation. It does not, in fact, like the rest of the novels discussed, tell of the development of political consciousness, if anything, it

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1. W.J.Harvey, Character and the Novel (London: Chatto Windus,1965),P.56.

rather speaks of the failure of such an endeavour. True, the novel abounds with scathing denunciations of the corruption of the governing classes; it ironically and cynically exposes the 'falsehood' of the Egyptian revolution of 1952; it rages against foreign intervention during the Suez war, and it ridicules cultural 'colonialism', it mocks the unsuccessful evocation of national feelings amongst Egyptian youth, and it attempts to relate its characters to the Palestine problem, yet all this falls in the background of the novel simply to reveal the various facets of the Egyptian world. Neither is there any sense of partisanship for the Arabs as in Lebanon Paradise or an 'apocalyptic' vision for their future as in Hunters in a Narrow Street. When related to what has earlier been said in the section on alienation, one feels that the strongest expression the novel elicits is that of 'anger'— anger that lashes at all institutions political and otherwise and that ends in the total defeat of the protagonist. In Beer in the Snooker Club the accent falls on the individual himself. This time, the novel exists to register his downfall. The socio-political background is there to elucidate the causality of the defeat.

Ram's flaw is his inability to subscribe to any definite ideology or develop a sense of commitment in

the most critically political and politically-conscious period in the history of modern Egypt. He grumbles a lot, finds faults in everything around him, but acts very little to effect any change in the nature of the things that enrage him. Even the few times when he decides to act and join some party or underground movement, he contemptuously pulls out of it and dismisses politics as having no acceptable solution to his problems. His dismay lies in general not in politics per se so much as in the corrupt manouvering of politicians. He often sees and describes himself as a scrupulous and honest man and this fact seems to him in a terribly incongruous relation to belonging to any prevailing political party or organization. He withdraws out of the political game as an expression of his indictment of it, and genuine inability to identify with it.

Ram's problem is perhaps more determined by disillusionment, disgust, and 'fatigue' than by any hint of baffled idealism. This disillusionment has lived with him in earlier as well as later years. He sensed it in pre-revolution Egypt and was still embittered by it after the revolutionary regime well established itself. To him governments and parties have only changed labels, the rotten core has remained the same. He tells how in King Farouk's days, when

he was still at school, he and the youngsters of his age voted:

> I don't remember which party I voted for, but we were given whisky and salted pea-nuts, after which we were taken in Cadillacs to vote with our thumbs. (Apart from Kamal, none of us was of voting age.)[1]

Politicians to Ram seem to have a singularly perenial success at promoting hypocrisy regardless of their skins or colours. In his college days, the parties also had not changed much:

> The university reopened and again I had to choose a political party to belong to. Roughly. there were the following: the Wafd, the Ikhwan (Moslem Brotherhood), the Communists, and the anti Wafd.
>
> The Wafd paid well provided you were a good orator and organizer of strikes. They gave you a car and, I was told, free drinks at the Arizona or the Auberge— I forget which. The Ikhwan was a fearsome thing to belong to. You could be ordered to shoot anyone at anytime in cold blood; they paid you with promises both earthly and otherwise, and you had to be active even when the university was closed (as a Copt, I would not have been able to join that one anyhow). The Communists were the respectable though secretive ones; the hard-working, the intelligent, the quiet. No rewards, only risk of imprisonment and misery to the family. The anti-Wafd was the most popular, and was joined by socialists, anarchists, university-closing fans, semi-idealists, progressives, and most of the middle class.
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> I didn't join any party, but contented myself with being devoted to 'evacuation' and was always the first home whenever a strike was suggested as a blow to British imperialism.[2]

Even from that early stage in his political awareness,

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1. Beer in the Snooker Club (Penguin,1968),P.58.
2. Ibid., P.59.

Ram decides to contract out of what he considers the signposts of a gradual moral decay in his country. The cynicism that accompanies his withdrawal digs deep but makes the final capitulation less painful. Although he snipes at the existing structure of the body politic , his tone gradually betrays a note of helplessness and surrender, a what-can-you-do exclamation drawn all over. When he assesses the 1952 revolution, he does not defy its status quo but ironically and bitterly jeers at the prospects of change it promises and anticipates its vulnerability.

The revolution itself had dealt perhaps the strongest blow to Ram's political outlooks. This was not so at the beginning when he believed that

> the only important thing which happened to us was the Egyptian revolution. We took to it wholeheartedly and naturally, without any fanaticism or object in view.1

Not much later, however, he saw it as merely substituting one upper class for another, the military for the aristocracy. It meant that the posh clubs that were condemned in the early days of the revolution "as a symbol of exploitation" and were "taken over by a committee or something like that" only acquired "a few additional military members," members who too "have acquired this floating, breeze-like ethereal quality." It further meant that

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1. Beer in the Snooker Club, P.41.

"political prisons and concentration camps" multiplied and housed the 'reactionaries' as well as the 'progressive leftists'. But the only strange difference about these prisons is that the "rich landowners and reactionaries" were "well treated, allowed special privileges and given lenient sentences", while the leftists and pacifists were "tortured and terribly ill-treated." The revolution also meant that the rich still had their strings to pull, and that their means of transgressing the law were still valid. Ram's aunt in this way is able to sell her sequestrated land and pretend to the government she is giving it to the poor.

What makes Ram's enigma worse is the fact that he is not from the start an apolitical animal, but an individual who genuinely cares for not only his country but mankind at large; an individual whose disillusionment and sense of frustration has 'assassinated' his causes and destroyed his desires for action. He loves his country, though in his own way; he bears a scar from fighting in the Suez war; he is deeply hurt by social injustice and often screams at its unfairness and he outrages against political 'illiteracy'. In fact, his political vision extends beyond the confines of his homeland, and far to the left of its 'socialism'. He reproaches

his Americanized cousin , Mounir, because:

> He didn't know there was any racial discrimination in America. He had never heard of Sacco and Vanzetti, he did not know what 'un-American activities' was. No, he did not believe there were poor Puerto Ricans or poor anyone in America. Who was Paul Robeson? Red Indians without full citizenship? What was I talking about? I must be mad. All he knew was that he had spent three years in America, had picked up their pet phrases and had been given a degree. He was all set to be given high office, and what sickened me was the knowledge that he would get it. It made me sick because apart from Font and myself, all the other students dying at Suez were from poor families and Mounir and Co. were going to lord it over the survivors.[1]

At moments of self-analysis, Ram blames his failure on this very knowledge he reprimanded his cousin for not possessing. In a way he sees himself larger than his surrounding and this makes the adjustment to its canons painful. Actually, much of Ram's problems of failing to belong, have, as earlier on suggested, their cultural roots. Cultural alienation inevitably leads to political alienation if this is not already considered an inseparable part of it. The dilemma has several facets to it. First, the emergence of more than one loyalty, as a result of being the cultural hybrid he is, has not helped much to define a national purpose or consciousness for Ram, neither has it indeed helped him to identify

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1. Beer in the Snooker Club, P.39.

with a specific class or group. Secondly, the exposition to a wider world has, so, blurred Ram's visions instead of enlarg ing them that he himself is incapable of drawing lines between chauvinism and nationalism, or nationalism and internationalism. He poses vital questions such as the one concerning the legitimacy of wars even when these involve defending the homeland, and he sees it all in terms of vicious circles:

> It is funny how people— millions of people — go about watching the telly and singing and humming in spite of the fact that they lost brother or father or lover in a war; and what is stronger still, they contemplate with equanimity seeing their other brothers or lovers off to yet another war. They don't see the tragedy of it all. Now and then one of the millions reads a book, or starts thinking, or something shakes him, and then he sees tragedy all over the place. Wherever he looks, he finds tragedy. He finds it tragic that other people don't see this tragedy around them and then he becomes like Font or Edna, or joins some party or other, or marches behind banners until his own life, seen detachedly, becomes a little tragic. I hate tragedy.[1]

Because of his 'universal' political outlook, even Palestine for Ram is an ambivalent cause. Never does he view it from the purely Arab angle or take any definite stand on it. His vision of Israel (he never calls it Palestine) is seen from two sides, the Egyptian and the non-Egyptian, the national and

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1. Beer in the Snooker Club, P.128.

the humanitarian, the local and the international. The"bloody officers in Israel ... massacred Arab women and children," but

> Imagine a third of our income being pumped into an army to fight a miserable two million Jews who were massacred something terrible in the last war.[1]

He declares that "we Egyptians don't care one way or another about Israel", but elsewhere he vents his outrage at the 1956 war and the hideous malice of all Israelis: "You know very well that all Israelis would like to see us dominated by Europe or America."

Acculturation has created of Ram a man who speaks for no ideology, or even for a homeland. For even Communism which he seems to advocate throughout his story proves equally disillusioning. He quits that too:

> If.. someone has read an enormous amount of literature, and has a thorough knowledge of contemporary history, from the beginning of this century to the present day, and he has an imagination, and he is intelligent, and he is just, and he is kind, and he cares about other people of all races, and he has enough time to think, and he is honest and sincere, there are two things can happen to him; he can join the Communist Party and then leave it, wallowing in its shortcomings, or he can become mad. Or.. if he is unconsciously insincere, he may join one of the many left-wing societies in Europe, and enjoy himself.[2]

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1. Beer in the Snooker Club, P.172.
2. Ibid., P.160.

To stress Ram's elusive character, particularly his national detachment, Waguih Ghali introduces into his novel a number of Jewish characters who present clear contrasts to Ram: Edna with whom Ram is in love but who would not marry him as an incredible turn of plot at the end of the novel reveals her to be married to an Egyptian Jew who is presently in Israel; and Levy,a quiet and timid friend of Font and Ram who teaches Arabic and refuses to leave for Israel or contemplate doing so as he believes that in it one loses one's personality and individuality becoming an obscure number in a calculated machine directed by others and brainwashed by the state. Edna is the most interesting of the two and captures both the reader's attention and admiration. She is all that Ram isn't although she tries hard to win his allegiance to her vision of life.

Edna Salva is a pretty Egyptian Jewess, the daughter of one of the richest families in Egypt. She is bright and intelligent, well educated, and sensitive. She sponsors Ram both financially and morally; takes him to England and introduces him to Europe as well as to Egypt of which he seems to know very little. Unlike Ram, and despite a vast western education that 'belittles' his, Edna the Jewess is the one who is rooted in Egyptian soil and Ram, the Egyptian Copt, is deterred from it. Somehow, her acculturation

experience has not left its imprints on her strongly Egyptian character. If anything, it has made her more attached to her land; her causes have also remained intact. It is Ram in fact who suggests to her the possibility of leaving for Israel where she can "live and be happy", but she is the one to refuse and insist on her Egyptianness despite a scar she bears on her face as a result of a whip an Egyptian officer used when searching her house. A real socialist, Edna prefers to be with Egyptian fellaheen and never travels first class. At the age of eighteen she fell in love with Adel, a poor peasant from a nearby village, but her parents knew about it, sent her to England to study, and with the help of their Egyptian friends "bribed the necessary people and brought an action against Adel for 'inciting' her. Later on when she returned to Egypt she learnt that Adel had died in the war with Israel.

In fact, it is Edna who tries to restore the broken links between Ram and Egypt. She draws his attention to the realities around him and opens his eyes on the real Egypt that he has never grasped. She explains to him that the Sporting Club and the "race meetings and the villa-owners and the European dressed and travelled people" he meets are not Egyptians. Cairo and Alexandria were cosmopolitan "not so much because

they contained foreigners, but because the Egyptian born in them is himself a stranger to his land."

But if Ram now appears "a stranger to his land" it is not so much because of his hybrid cultural make-up which alienates him from his people but because of the corruption that he finds around him that he feels completely crippled and impotent. The only way open to him now, as a means of alleviating some of the pain, is to surrender to the perhaps illusory comfort of a rich marriage. This final capitulation turns him into some sort of a victim; his marriage to Didi becomes a form of escape into a world of "bears and squirrels" in which one tries not to care. However, he is not a defeated hero falling in the defence of a cause because the cause for Ram has never been clear and has never managed to find a clear role for himself in the political turmoil. His final withdrawal may, of course, be viewed as some form of political statement but this should not blind one to the fact that Beer in the Snooker Club is not, and was obviously not meant to be, a novel with politics as a major preoccupation. Politics here is an agent skilfully employed to study the life of a number of individuals against the background of a changing world that is never changing fast enough for them or rising up to their expectations.

ISAAK DIQS'S A BEDOUIN BOYHOOD

A Bedouin Boyhood succeeds as a political work of real literary worth because of rather than despite its polemical implications. It does so not on account of what it proposes to say but for what it so successfully refrains from saying. The potency comes from this great ability to "look back without anger", and to tell the whole story of the Arab dispersal from Palestine yet not in so many words. Diqs does not resort to symbols with political overtones. Such a method would perhaps have marred the naive, child-like simplicity and freshness of his narrative. Nor does he set up any analogues with mythology or place his plot and characters in a remote time or space in order to achieve the necessary distance with his reader. He delivers his message gently by only offering a testimony and an honest recording of the minutiæ of life in southern Palestine then showing it shattered by the multiple thrusts of the twentieth century chiefly by the transformation of Palestine into another political entity.

It must be a strenuous task for any writer to convey to a foreign reader something of the essence of his

political experience without being sentimental or banal. For a Palestinian writer the task is perhaps twice as hard. Europeans and western people in general are usually more familiar with the Israeli point of view of the conflict. So how can such a writer gingerly present the Arab view of the crisis without making his reader flinch away under the pressure of emotional demand? Diqs in A Bedouin Boyhood provides for us a mode which allows statement to grow out of incident and which involves the reader indirectly in the delineated experience without forcing on him any appeal or demand for pity.

The anecdotal style of informally related memoirs which the author uses in order to trace his growth from boyhood to manhood, against a background of tribal society, is appropriate on various levels. It helps him build up for us the experience inside a generally circumscribed life-pattern not just that of an individual but of a whole society. By the retelling of actual incidents, the author is also able to suggest and never to state the uprootedness of his people from their land for it to be occupied by an 'alien' people. Furthermore, the author does not have to strive for effect as the experience he displays is often strong enough as it is and needs no dramatization or window dressing. And indeed, the

the story telling technique has helped the author to avoid any hint of pretentiousness or self-importance, for all the solemnity, and at the same time, the over-familiarity of his subject.

The ease and candidness of Diqs's style yielded its fruits immediately. Reviewers called upon their readers and upon the people who sympathize with the Jewish feeling about Palestine to read Mr. Diqs and

> appreciate that the Arabs have honest feelings too. Not that this book is in the least political. On the contrary, it is simply about life— stories of boyhood escapades, love and marriage, friendship and death, animals, flowers and the weather, all told in a strong yet sensitive English that creates a truly vibrant and moving picture.[1]

It is not then in the spare instances of political suggestions that we find the main significance of this work, but in the kind of human conduct that it extols. Diqs does not dwell too ponderously on the griefs of dispossession. His restraint is perhaps all the more effective as only occasionally does he refer to the Arab dispersal with bitterness and never with hatred. The strongest he has to say is perhaps the dedication of his book "To all of my people driven from their land", or the episode which begins: "It was two summers before we were driven savagely from our country for it to be occupied by a foreign people."

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1. David Holden, "Permanency in the Sands," Sunday Times (25 June, 1967).

Perhaps most poignant, because unpretentious, is the account of the day when the boy coming back from his boarding school gets off the bus, starts out on the long walk to where he believes his tents are and becomes aware of a strange silence all around. Not a soul is about. Much of the wheat is uncut. And what is cut has not been gathered. Suddenly, in a stubble field, he sees the blanched marks on the ground where tents have been recently pitched out, for some reason, moved. Only a sad white bitch with puppies remains to suggest what has happened. His tribe's land has fallen to Israel.

Diqs restrains himself from even mentioning the name of the people who caused the dispersal. Israel is rarely mentioned, and Palestine is never refered to as a geographical or a political entity. To the boy, the narrator, there is only 'home'; the valley of Wadi-Al-Hisi,"the place which they had never left before." The child's conception of what had happened is merely that "The good faithful earth on both its banks /Wadi-Al-Hisi/ had become no more the place of peace and fertility. The earth which collected the people and kept them together was stolen."[1]

Although Diqs tells of how his tribe was driven up into the mountains where its animals die of cold,

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1. A Bedouin Boyhood (Pergamon Press,1969), P.99.

and where the impoverished tribesmen eventually decide to try their luck eastwards, what comes through is the heartache of the exile for his own place rather than the abomination of enmity. Only the rhythm of his writing changes its beat and the tempo of it grows heavier, sadder, more melancholic just like the sound of the mihbash in the tribal tent:

> The sound of the old mihbash pounding the coffee beans could still be heard early in the morning, in the evening, and sometimes at different times— it might be noon or late at night, according to the time that a guest did come. But I could feel the change of the mihbash sound. Oda was still the man who crushed the coffee, but his happy musical beats were not the same. He had been able to make us dance to his mihbash rhythm, but now he did the job as a matter of course, and, as I think now, it expressed the sad emotion deeply suppressed in his soul.1

The favourable reactions that A Bedouin Boyhood elicited were not prompted by the work's discreet handling of the political theme only, but by the novelty of the experience it communicated. The freshness of perception and the disarming honesty with which tribal life has been conveyed through the eyes of a young boy has captivated readers in the West especially those amongst them who have been brought up on the sophisticated but 'savage' town life of the Arabian Nights. The scenes Diqs describes are of the utmost simplicity. Yet, by an accurate

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1. A Bedouin Boyhood, P.99.

sense of observation, an almost poetic vision, he is capable of creating a rare series of strikingly vivid vignettes of the boy's life even out of "days when nothing in particular happened."

Diqs relies most heavily on the meticulous details of tribal daily life for the establishment of his composite picture of bedouin character. The picture is one of home, family and neighbourliness, into which the author is able to weave his reminiscences of tribal customs and code of living. He begins with his childhood among the bedouins and their sheep on the slopes of Wadi-Al-Hisi. "They did not know about the outside world except on Thursdays when men and women used to go to the neighbouring village to buy some necessities, riding on horses or camels." His tribe has ceased to be nomads "because both the climate and the soil were good" in Wadi-Al-Hisi and they were not in need of going from one place to another. They were indeed sufficiently prosperous to support a school and to send their sons out to receive further education. Diqs recalls a little of his school days, of herding the sheep on the hill-top, helping with the threshing of corn, of the Ramadan fair and the tribal law giving, of the death of his sister and the day he got lost in Gaza.

In such accounts of tribal daily happenings, a strong sense of community is evoked and the feeling of the tented village's unity and cohesiveness recurs throughout the book almost like a leitmotif. The community, and not the protagonist, eventually become the principal character in the work, though a tendency towards idealization is easily noticed. All members of the community that Diqs describes are proud and honest people, women are beautiful, men virile, even thieves are honest and return the goods they have stolen as in the story of Bin Rizk. But in A Bedouin Boyhood even the idealization of the tribal life seems acceptable as it reveals in most instances not any conscious or deliberate comparison with urban life with the purpose of showing its superiority, rather it indicates the boy's zest for such a mode of existence and the exuberance that has not been quenched by his later 'more civilized' town experience. Isaak Diqs is himself proud to recall the deeds of his fathers; their innate justice and honesty, their hospitality, and their courage and chivalry. Such virtues are presented with a commendable concreteness and intimacy. The lucidity and immediacy of the description emanates from the author's authentic connection with bedouin life and his deep respect and admiration for its ways and codes. Yet one cannot but notice that the overall picture of bedouin life,

no matter how quaint or unfamiliar to the foreign reader, has not betrayed any sense of parochialness or regionality. More often than not the episodes the author narrates are interspersed with realistic human touches which reinforce their place in the more universal and larger human experience.

The episode of the tribe's departure eastward after the war and the father's decision to stay behind on his own for the first time in his life to secure a decent education for his sons shows Diqs's skill at evoking simple human feelings with power and understanding:

> ...in the faint undulating light I saw my father sitting, his face towards the West, and in his lap there was a rababa which I had not seen before. I had not heard my father play on any musical instrument. He had always been serious: and so he was that night, even though he was playing. He stopped playing, stirred the remains of the fire and began to heat his rababa. He was deeply pensive as he turned the instrument this way and that. Then he tightened the string, tested the instrument and began to sing.
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> It was a sad song, reflected on his face, which appeared strange to me in the dancing light of the lamp. I could not grasp all that he sang, but I felt that it was deeply sad and that it was about the self-torture of a man who refused to go with his people and followed another way.[1]

The aspect of the book that makes the greatest impact on the reader is the simplicity of emotion and style

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1. A Bedouin Boyhood, P.105.

and the directness of writing. Such complete simplicity may be due to the fact that Diqs does not consider his command of English as great. "This book is true", he tells in the introductory note to his book; "I have written it in English, which is neither my native language nor perfectly known to me." Yet the effort of wringing out the essence of his youth in a foreign tongue has only made his descriptions all the more effective for the absence of rhetoric. Diqs's limpid and lucid prose, his bare and unaffected style have indeed given his writing a singualrly attractive ingenuity. And all this seems to be in perfect harmony with the uncomplicated thoughts of the narrator and the age he was at the time of telling the story. Even the artlessness of the anecdotes he records increases their effectiveness and evokes for the reader the charm of a life as experienced and seen by a young bedouin boy. There is no doubt that the author's consciousness of his linguistic tool has bred a kind of serenity and composure in his writing and a fascinating freshness in his expressions. He certainly appears to have a virgin appreciation of the shape and taste of words, and a pious application of a language which has not been yet staled by familiarity. Indeed, the work stands out, shining, when compared with many others written in English as a foreign language whose authors

adopt a stilted verbose prose in the impression that it is the genuine sophisticated literary style.

Isaak Diqs's writing not in the "heightened prose.. of a Doughty or a Lawrence but a bedouin writing of bedouins with the touch of a Shropshire lad"[1] demonstrates how the novel can be used as a political forum without lapsing into overt political statement or engaging in political propaganda. The Arab Exodus, a controversial enough issue, is handled with delicacy, captivating brevity, and indeed with effective succinctness.

The same is largely true of the three other Arab 'political' novelists in English. Atiyah has been able to produce a successful political work by essentially avoiding melodrama and achieving an admirable sense of objectivity. Jabra has captured the reader's attention by producing convincing scenes from the life of the Arabs during their political dilemma, and by remaining essentially truthful to social and historical circumstances. Ghali has found it possible to play down his obsession with politics by retaining a kind of balance through humour and through penetrating though frequently incisive social observation.

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1. "A Bedouin Looks Back," The Economist (6th May, 1967).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CRITICAL RECEPTION

THE CRITICAL APPROACH

Most notable in the study of 'foreign' literature written in English in the last decade or so is the increasing awareness of the need for a new kind of criticism which would take into account the special nature of this literary phenomenon. This criticism, many believe, should not depend solely on the traditional tenets of European criticism but should be more flexible so as to take into account the many problems which are likely to interest the critic involving both language and culture. Edgar Wright, a critic of African literature, has observed that the relation between literature and criticism is that of vitality and energy. It is never static, he says, and what functions as criticism for one literature may not necessarily function for another.[1] "Any new

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1. Edgar Wright, "Problems of Criticism", Reading in Commonwealth Literature, edited by William Walsh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), P.157.

literature or literary movement of value," Wright adds, "is not only subject to existing critical approaches but may itself act as a powerful agent in modifying those approaches."[1] A responsible criticism, it is often claimed, should not content itself with one single orientation but should possess certain pre-requisites to enable it look afresh at newly emerging works and styles.

The tendency has most commonly been to acknowledge the individuality of the work of art and to judge it in terms of European theories, methodologies and literary standards. This view has been promoted by two main reasons. First, the literary forms and techniques which have been adopted belong to the European tradition. Secondly, the language in which it is written is English. The point at issue here is whether the wave of writing in English by 'foreign' authors has produced a literature noticeably different from its English generator; and consequently, whether it should be judged as a literary growth of English literature and assessed according to its canons, or be estimated in its own right. On the surface, it is difficult to see Arab novelists, for example, working outside the context of the European

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1. Edgar Wright, The Critical Evaluation of African Literature (Heinemann, 1973), P.ix.

literary tradition, in general, or of the English tradition in particular. The novel,which is the European literary genre par excellence, has been 'imported' along with its structure and models, its methods of treating time and space, as well as its power to encompass a whole range of visions, perceptions and attitudes. Yet, when it comes to cultural and autochthonous references, the relationship tends to be much more complex.

For the study of Arab literature in English, the critic necessarily has to reconsider some of the extra-textual methods of literary analysis which have been — not unreasonably— given secondary place by critics such as I.A.Richards and W.K.Wimsatt. The existence of certain connections between the cultural, social, political and economic factors and the novels prompts the critic to seek some form of knowledge of the Arab writer's cultural background and not merely to content himself with the study of the text alone. This socio-cultural approach, however, does not and cannot replace literary criticism.[1] Indeed, the very notion that it should do so is abhorrent to the critic who looks at a literary genre in the light of socio-cultural or historical knowledge. It may be

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1. Eldred Durosimi Jones "Focus on Criticism", African Literature Today, NO.7 (Heinemann 1975). Jones maintains that the central document is the work itself. It must be judged by what it contains and what can legitimately be implied from it. A work of art cannot be rescued from its own deficiencies by appeals to its background.P.v.

argued that since the Arab novelists sought primarily to present the warp and woof of their societies with authenticity and truthfulness, regarding their writing as a testimony to certain cross sections of Arab life, this form of criticism is valid. Yet, as S.O.Iyasere suggests in an article on the use of socio-cultural and anthropological material in criticism, "what knowledge of the writer's cultural background or discussions of traditional practices are brought in must always serve the end of illuminating what the work itself presents. Here, the distinction between criticism and precriticism must be borne in mind. The information about cultural backgrounds is simply information, descriptive not evaluative."[1]

This approach, nevertheless, carries advantages as well as dangers, privileges as well as responsibilities. Although the concept of literature as 'testimony', which springs from a rudimentary knowledge of sociology, displays a number of errors of judgement not entirely unknown to reader and critic alike, it has nevertheless proved that a literary work does 'testify' directly or indirectly to its age. In fact, critics as varied as

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1. Solomon Ogbede Iyasere, "African Critics on African Literature; A Study of Misplaced Hostility," Africans Writers Today, Vol.7, (Heinemann, 1975), P.25.

Ian Watt (The Rise of the Novel), the Hungarian George Lukács, and the Rumanian Lucien Goldmann (Towards a Sociology of the Novel) have stressed the important correlation between the structure of thought in a work of art and the economic and social factors which shape the artist's mind. For Goldmann, "literary works are not in the first place to be seen as the creation of individuals but of what he calls the 'trans-individual mental structures of a social group— by which he means the structure of ideas, values and aspirations."[1] Whatever the justifications for this approach may be, there always exists the danger of passing off socio-cultural interpretation as literary criticism. What is perhaps needed is a critic who can examine Arab fiction in English from both the aesthetic and the cultural point of view.

Indeed, modern literary criticism avails itself of sophisticated means and methods which are capable of assessing the literary value of a work. More than ever, writing has turned into an ambiguous art which requires much deciphering and elucidation, and the critic may be compelled to resort to a variety of critical perspectives to be able to grasp its complexities and ambiguities.

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1. Terry Eagleton, Marxists on Literature (methuen & Co. Ltd., 1976), P.32.

PROBLEMS OF CRITICISM

"Critical standards derive from aesthetics. Aesthetics are culture dependent. Therefore critical standards must derive from culture."[1]

With this 'apparently' simple syllogism, the African critic Joseph Okpaku[2] sums up one of the most serious problems of comparative criticism today, although he, too hastily and perhaps unjustifiably, dismisses the existence or the hope for the existence of some universal standards by which a work of art can transcend its locality and be judged in its universality.[3]

Although Okapaku's statement was meant to be a "declaration of hostilities" against European critics who engage in scrutinizing a non European work of art, judging it by some process of pigeonholing and categorizing, only to find in it an Eliotian reference here or a Dickensian imprint there, it nevertheless poses a very important question for the European critic at large: how is he

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1. Joseph Okapku, "Tradition, Culture and Criticism", Presence Africaine, NO.70, 1969, P.139; and Journal of the New African Literature and the Arts, NO.5/6, 1969, editorial comment.
2. Okpaku is editor and publisher of the Journal of the New African Literature and the Arts, Stanford.
3. A.N.Jeffares in his introduction to National Identity edited by K.L.Goodwin (Heinemann,1970) maintains that "a piece of writing must be judged by an international audience rather than a local

expected to grasp, before he evaluates, an experience which is entirely alien to him? How is he to pass judgement on the author's handling of emotions when these very emotions are unbelievable to him? In what way will he react to a 'cultural' joke or respond to the indigenous sense of humour? One recalls here similar questions once asked when people engaged in teaching English literature to foreign students in tropical countries,

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> one, or rather as well as a local one... because any vital work is good when it is judged by standards throughout the world, by the best possible standards."

Speaking at a conference on 'African Literature and the University Curriculum' held in Dakar in March 1963, Mrs. Dorothy Blair of South Africa took the position that

> "Obviously I can apply only the canons of aesthetics to which I am accustomed by reason of my philological studies, or indeed of my European cultural roots. May that not be held against me. Personally, I can't see any harm in this provided that one accepts... a certain universality of aesthetics, based on truth or rather on certain truths that are applicable to any culture."

See, Gerald Moore, ed., African Literature and the Universities (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1965), P.76.

But hasn't the term 'universal' been monopolized for centuries by the West? Mrs. Blair does not seem to want to answer that.

for example, when they tried to explain why April in Eliot's Waste Land was the cruellest of months.[1] The case is one of tables turned where the European critic finds himself unable to understand how a man can be betrothed in his absence as in Black Vanguard, for instance, or how love can develop between two adults merely over telephone conversations, through the exchange of passionate letters and 'silent' looks as in Hunters in a Narrow Street. Obviously, comparative studies are slipping gradually not into the world of sources and influences but into that realm of ethics and aesthetics, sociology and anthropology too.

For this very reason, perhaps, British reviewers of Arab novels in English have come out with conflicting remarks especially on matters of imagery and humour. While the reviewer of the Daily Telegraph found in Black Vanguard by Edward Atiyah a work "flatly written in a heavy, slow style, without much humour,"[2] the reviewer of the Daily Dispatch praised this "excellent" novel for its "swiftness" and for its "tact and humour."[3]

Cultural distinctiveness, apparently, accounts for much

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1. John M. Munro, "Teaching English as a Foreign Literature," Educational Forum, XXXIII, NO.3, March 1969, 321-328.
2. John Betjeman in his 'review of new fiction', Daily Telegraph, 3rd May, 1952.
3. "Arab at Oxford," Daily Dispatch (Manchester), 16th May, 1952.

of the 'misplaced' praise or condemnation with which the Arab novel has been received.

Indeed, there are peculiarities of Arab life and experience and speech that remain 'foreign' even when clothed in English fashions. The writer cannot and should not at any cost be taxed for displaying un-English tendencies though he is writing in the most correct English. The critic here must make allowances, as I.E.Iyenger would put it; and differences in attitudes towards the basic common instincts of life such as love, pride, hatred, honour or death, must be presented, unaltered, in their authenticity. For in their diversity we detect their familiarity, the familiarity of human life. To put it more pointedly, the critic of Arab fiction in English is called upon to approach his subject with open mindedness. His tools should not be doctrinaire, and his views not insular. It is well known that any critic assesses a work of art in relation to other familiar works of past or present. He deliberately or unconsciously recalls to mind a vast amount of reading, and immediately attempts a comparison. Yet in the case of Arab fiction in English, the lack of a framework or a background to fall upon compels him, not entirely out of choice, to refer back to what he knows best, to the works of a Hardy or a Conrad, to a Joyce or to a Faulkner. The significant issue here

is the fact that the Arab novel in English does not make any claims to greatness, and in this light alone the critic must see it. A literary assessment in relation to masterworks of the 'Great Tradition' may prove frustrating, futile, if not entirely erroneous. Moreover, the Arab novel in English must be viewed as a 'literary phenomenon', as something 'functional' answering a need which exactly defines it, something transitional perhaps, a thing with a beginning and an obviously approaching end. The critic may wish to study this phenomenon, analyse it, dig into its roots and the causes of its emergence, evaluate it on its own merits, or in comparison with other emerging works in English, contemplate its contribution to 'world literature', but he may find very little benefit from trying to see it as an outgrowth of the English tradition.

The handling of language is another problem the European critic is faced with. The problems arise in the main from linguistic and stylistic inadequacies or from a mishandling of the novel which is for Arabs a newly acquired literary form. Following this train of thought, one is inclined to think that the local critic is perhaps the best interpretor of this fiction. His familiarity with the authors' background, as well as the knowledge of their literary climate would enable him to give a

fair estimate of the novelists' literary value. Further, the Arab critic, at least in theory, does not have any problems of 'cultural distinctiveness' to overpass, an additional qualification in his favour. Yet, curiously enough Arab critics have, by and large, paid very little attention to writers using foreign languages as means of literary expression, if they have not ignored them[1]

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1. Only three studies by Arab critics on the works of Edward Atiyah have so far been traced. The first, an unpublished thesis submitted in 1971 to the University of Edinburgh for the degree of Diploma in English by a Libyan student Mr. I.K. Azzabi. Azzabi deals with Atiyah's early works: the autobiography An Arab Tells his Story; The Thin Line and Black Vanguard . The work is a good introduction to the novelist though not a comprehensive one. Perhaps the shortcomings of the thesis are: first, its dwelling too long on the narrative analysis; second, in his attempt to trace literary influences in the works of Atiyah, Azzabi comes out with many forced influences. The academic discernment of sources is rather overdone, especially when the writer compares the dialogue between the protagonist and his inner self in The Thin Line with Tennyson's Endimion, or when he sets the comparison with Wordsworth.

The second study is an article published in Literature East and West by Mr. Basem Ra'ad. The author confines his study to what he calls "the Middle Eastern novels" without any reference to the rest of Atiyah's works. The study, short as it is, attempts to give a more coherent and a fuller evaluation of the literary worth of the works, and pays equal attention to both form and content.

The last is a relatively short article in Al Kulliyah (The American University of Beirut's alumni magazine) by Rosemary Sayigh. The article mainly reviews Atiyah's novel Lebanon Paradise and the reviewer considers it as a long-awaited-for event. Her immediate reaction to the novel was "to want much more of the same kind of thing." The reviewer here is interested not only in the

completely. Only creative writers from the Maghreb countries[1] who write in French have merited sympathetic attention from their Arab compatriots.[2] Their works have been translated into Arabic and have been read widely. In fact, ministries of culture and education have made it their task to supervise and subsidize the translation of these works.[3] The explanation of this response is simple. Governments have seen in the French writing phenomenon a patriotic responsibility. Afterall, this has been the outcome of a long history of colonisation; and to encourage this infant literature was in line with pan Arabism.

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literary value of the work but also in its political and sociological potentiality. "I have often heard Arabs complain that they are not properly understood in the West, aren't they neglecting a very simple and very effective way of explaining themselves? Sayigh poses the question "why don't Arabs write more novels?... novels that tell us so much more about people than travel books or sociological studies.." The response here does not basically differ from that fostered by the European critic (as a matter of fact, the name of the reviewer could indicate an American or a European married to an Arab). The interest in the novel is once again a socio-cultural rather than a literary one.

1. The 'Maghreb' includes Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. The appelation refers to the 'western' part of Arab North Africa in contrast to 'Al Mashreq', the 'eatern' part of it.

2. Lebanese writers in French have also merited some critical attention though on a rather limited regional level. Very few of them are known throughout the Arab world. The French, however, have encouraged this infant literature, allowing its plays to be performed in their capital, Paris, and facilitating publication matters. Most prominent of these writers are the novelist Farajallah Haik and the dramatist George Shehade. Worthy of mention here is a Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1972 by Samir Ghali "Deux Ecrivains Libanais d'expression Française: F. Haik and G. Shehadé."

The translation and the wide 'marketing' the French-Arab novels received made it possible for the Arab reader and critic to have access to the thought of fellow Arab North Africans. They welcomed the new literature as they found in it a refreshing experience, an interesting fusion of East and West, and a welcome departure from the novel of social criticism which was produced in Syria and Egypt at the time.[1] The Algerians had just emerged from their war of independence and their writers were writing a 'litterature de combat', committed, forceful and sincere.[2] The Moroccans, in their turn, exposed to

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1. In his introduction to North African Writing (Heinemann,1970), Len Ortzen points out that literature written by Arabs in French has surpassed its Arabic counterpart in neighbouring countries. He justifiably refers to the fact that "Arab writers are inward looking and prefer to concentrate on the microscopic, chiefly through the medium of the short story or descriptive sketch." The Arabs, he adds, cannot claim the same international importance as that of the North African writers. "It is they /the North Africans/, conscious of their wider audience, who are the more militant and have the greater range. They are also conscious of belonging at once to their own people and French civilisation and obviously feel the tension in their blood and bones."

2. Examples are legion. Of these one can mention Malek Haddad, author of La dernière impression, Je t'ouffrirai une gazelle, L'élève et la leçon; and Katib Yacine, author of Nedjma, Le polyglone etoilé; and Mahmoud Dib, author of Un été Africain , Qui se souvient la mer, Cours sur la rive sauvage, La dance du Roi, Dieu en Barbarie... The names of Assia Djebar and Mouloud Mammeri should not be excluded, the first is authoress of La Soif, Les impatients, Les enfants du nouveau monde; the letter is author of La colline oubliée, Le sommeil du Juste and L'Opium et le bâton.

colonisation and experiences of acculturation were reviewing their past in the light of their newly acquired values and were set out on the long search for identity.[1] Similarly, the Tunisians were involved in the quest for self recognition.[2]

English speaking writers, on the other hand, were not seen as a whole, as a literary group or movement; there was and there still is no awareness of them as such. And as most of them published abroad[3], there was only some scanty news of one or two of their works, mentioned in passing. The American University of Beirut is the only institution in the whole of the Middle East which houses some of their novels in its library. In fact, one is inclined to believe that the Arab reader or critic found in French speaking writers fellow patriots who were at the disadvantage of not knowing any language other than the French for obvious reasons; whereas;

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1. Such as Ahmad Sefrioui author of Le chapelet d'ambre, La bôite à merveilles; and Driss Chraibi, author of Passé simple in which he conveys a harsh reaction against Moslem formalism, Les Boucs in which he revolts violently against both East and West, L'ane which reveals the inner bewilderment of the newly awakened people of North Africa, Succession ouverte, a reconciliation with the past though links with it are still severed, also Un ami viendra vous voir, and La civilization, ma mère.

2. Such as Albert Memmi, author of La statue de Sel, Portrait du colonisé, précédé du portrait du colonisateur, Portrait d'un Juif and L'homme dominé.

3. With the exception of Alamuddin's Spring to Summer published by Khayats in Beirut, Lebanon.

their English speaking counterparts were seen as members of a bourgeois class who had access to a foreign education which they could easily afford, but who eventually 'defetced' during the process. Arab governments and governmental institutions could not sponsor or patronize any organized translation or publication of the works in their countries especially as most of these novelists opposed openly the existing regimes,[1] (as they did not have any censorship problems abroad), or criticized the public institutions with much candidness.

THE CRITICAL RECEPTION IN THE WEST

When early in 1951, Edward Atiyah's The Thin Line, the first Arab novel written in English, made its appearance, it gained an extensive press coverage and won its author immediate recognition in Britain and abroad. Shortly after its publication in London by Peter Davies, American publishers were negotiating copyrights. The Thin Line was soon published in the U.S. by Harper and Brothers, and in a paperback by the Avon publishing companies. Translations into several world languages

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1. Such as Waguih Ghali's Beer in the Snooker Club which openly criticized Nasser's revolution. Edward Atiyah, too, was often taxed for his western loyalties and sympathies.

followed and the novel became available in Norwegian, Spanish[1], German[2], Swedish[3], Italian[4], French[5] and Japanese[6]. Two years later, The Thin Line was dramatised by H.M.Harwood and was brought to the Whitehall Theatre by the "New Edward Terry Players" group for their initial production in March 1953.[7] The success of both novel and dramatised version encouraged the Associated British Pictures Corporation to buy the copy-rights, but work on the film was delayed and a French production appeared instead under the title Juste avant la nuit directed by Claude Chabrol. The film is presently playing in Britain and France and was listed by the American Time magazine as one of "the year's best" in 1975.[8]

1.La Linea Sutil, translated by Elena Torres Galarce (Buenos Aires: Emecé editores, S.A., 1955)

2.It was serialised in a German magazine.

3.Den Tynne Streken, translated by Eivind Hauge (J.W.Eides Forlag, Bergen, 1952).

4.La Lama dell' Agnoscia, translated by Giacomo Gentilomo (Milano: Editrice la Tribuna, Piacenza, 1964).
Gialissimo, cheap paperback with porno cover.

5.L'etau, translated by Raoul Holz (Paris: Gallimard, 1963).

6.Translated into Japanese by Jun Fumimura, published by Hayakawa Shobo & Co. Ltd., n.d.

7.The leading lady of the play and the group's artistic director was Miss Iris Terry, granddaughter of Edward Terry and the last of a famous theatrical family.

8.29th Dec., 1975. The film was listed among other films such as Barry Lyndon, Jaws and The Magic Flute.

This was an encouraging start, indeed, especially for a first novel and 'first novelist', a start that many a British or European writer would undoubtedly hope for. But when The Thin Line came out, Atiyah had already established himself as a public figure. He was frequently read and heard in newspapers and on radio programmes, and was often invited to Oxbridge debates and to press conferences to discuss current political issues. His autobiography An Arab Tells his Story published by John Murray in 1946 had been received with much attention and enthusiasm.[1] The Thin Line nevertheless, established Atiyah immediately as a 'promising' novelist. The reviewer of the New York Herald Tribune expressed the opinion that the novel "certainly encourages attention for anything else Mr. Atiyah may have to say."[2] True, Atiyah's following novels were not received with the same sustained praise as his first, but this can be seen as a result of the author's shifting of theme. Atiyah was being gradually drawn, in both life and fiction, to the Arab life of the Middle East. Unlike The Thin Line, his Black Vanguard, 1953; Lebanon Paradise, 1954; and Donkey from the Mountain, 1961, were essentially products of

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1. see for example T.R.Fyvel's review in the Tribune, 12.7.1946; Mrs. E.Dugdale in the Zionist Review, 7th, June 1946.
2. 18th May, 1952.

the Arab world and mind even though the medium of expression was still the English language. Politics was also entering his writings, and his public stand on certain issues caused some critics, who held opposing views to be prejudiced in their assessments of his literary output.[1] Yet, it is worth mentioning here that it was Atiyah's political and not his literary works which received the most attention and the warmest reviews.[2] The reception of the English novel by Arab writers in the West has, for the most part, been sympathetic. Atiyah was not the only Arab novelist praised for his literary undertakings, although he was the most prolific and versatile. In 1967 Isaak Diqs's A Bedouin Boyhood, published by George Allen & Unwin Ltd., was described as a "little classic" written in a "biblical" language[3], a work "of real literary worth"[4] that surpasses in its simplicity and in its "manner of writing... the heightened prose... of a Doughty or a Lawrence."[5] Three years earlier Waguih Ghali's Beer in the Snooker Club was also favourably received, though not on account of its linguistic and stylistic merits, like Bedouin, but for its audacity and vivacity. Beer

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1. See Mrs. Edgar Dugdale's article in The Zionist Review, Op.Cit.(despite the author's great admiration of the work).
2. Such as reviews of The Arabs, and Atiyah's documents on Palestine.
3. Scarbourough Evening News, 14th April,1967.
4. Times Literary Supplement, 5th Oct., 1967.
5. Economist, 6th May, 1967.

enjoyed a critical more than a commercial success[1], and the Times Literary Supplement described it as "a triumph of genuinely comic social satire... spirited, congenial and incisive,"[2] while Ronald Bryden of the New Statesman called it "a small masterpiece of a novel."[3]

Both Diqs and Ghali found their ways to American publishers and to reprints in Britain. Praeger published an edition of A Bedouin Boyhood in the United States, and Pergamon Press reprinted the book as part of an educational series about children in other countries.[4] A reprint of Beer in the Snooker Club was brought out by Penguin New Writers Series in 1968, and an American edition was published by Alfred A. Knopf.[5]

Works by Jabra Ibrahim Jabra and Rima Alamuddin also met with sympathetic attention, though not equalling that given to their fellow Arab writers. Critics reviewing their works were still enchanted by the fact that the Arabs were writing novels, and in English. One could easily detect a patronizing if not a condescendingly encouraging tone in the reviews which usually started with a criticism of "awkward handling" or "faulty

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1. Letter from Ms. Diana Athill, director of Andre Deutsch, dated London, 17th August, 1976.
2. Times Literary Supplement, 20 Feb.1964, P.141.
3. New Statesman, 21 Feb, 1964, 67:301.
4. Letter from Mr. John Halsall, director of publishing, dated Exeter, 1st July, 1976.
5. Letter from publisher, Op. Cit..

structure" but ended with a note on the writer's "energy which promises better things to come."[1]

With such warm critical reception, one wonders if a large part of this criticism has not been merely a form of paternalistic or charitable support. This is probably due to the feeling of surprise English critics usually have when they discover a creative writer in English from outside their Isles. Unlike the French who "expect him to appear wherever their language is spoken,"[2] the English express bewilderment when he emerges. In fact, the majority of Arab novelists have been commended for their mastering of the language and for their deft handling of it, more than for any other artistic merit.

Critics have responded favourably to novels written in English by Arabs largely because they considered the language factor an achievement in itself. They may say very little about the literary value of the work or the authors' writing abilities as novelists, but they lavish praise on the novelists' command of language.

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1. Times Literary Supplement's review of Spring to Summer, 26th April, 1963, P.292.
2. Len Ortzen, North African Writing (Heinemann, 1970), P.1.

Very rarely are the authors seen as writers *per se*, but as Arab writers first and foremost. A number of reviewers have persistently pointed out biographical elements especially those related to language acquisition or to integration into British society,[1] in an attempt to comment on factors which shape the author's style.

More often than not, one gets the impression that had it not been for the language or for the nationality of the author, the works would not have won half the applause. Reviewing *A Bedouin Boyhood* for the Australian *Adelaide Advertiser*, Mary Armitage maintains that "for a former Bedouin shepherd /the author himself/ to write a book in English is an achievement in itself, like the classic dog walking on its hind legs."[2] Although the imagery differs with the reviewers of *Bible Lands*, the shock of surprise persists: "This book is a remarkable achievement. Its author, a Bedu from Southern Palestine who was educated entirely in that country, is writing in the language of a country he has presumably never seen."[3] Incredibility at the deed seems to add an exotic charm to the work without

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1. Reviews of Atiyah's works in particular persistently referred to his educational background as well as his marriage to a Scottish wife, etc.
2. Mary Armitage, "Growing up in the Desert," *Adelaide Advertiser*, 16th Sep., 1967.
3. Undated clipping from the publishers' own collection of reviews.

helping much towards a fair evaluation of it. Other reviewers such as the Times Literary Supplement's, tended to vary their critical criteria, still emphasizing the 'language achievement'. After applying the usual string of adjectives: "a sensitive study," "the story is well told with sympathy and spiritual insight," the reviewer of The Thin Line stresses the point that "it is a first novel and the author's mother tongue is Arabic, which makes it all the more deserving of praise."[1] It is in statements such as this that one detects the critics' delight in the 'amazing' miracles of language acquisition. Along with this goes a further bewilderment at the authors' insight into the psychology of the Europeans. Reviewing the same first novel for the New York Times, Anthony Boucher found The Thin Line "an extraordinary effective first novel by a Syrian whose command of the English language is as amazing as his insight into English psychology."[2] For Nigel Nicholson of the Daily Dispatch, the fact that The Thin Line is the first novel by an Arab to be published in this country "is no particular commendation in itself,"what is more remarkable is "that such an author could write a book so sharply and accurately western."[3]

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1. Times Literary Supplement, 12th Oct.,1951.
2. New York Times, 18th May, 1952.
3. Daily Dispatch, 31st August, 1951.

Some of the commendations of the novels, on the other hand, came from reviewers who found the works informative and instructive. In many cases the critics spoke of a novel favourably when they learnt something new or authentic about life in the Middle East. Interest in the political or social issues was greater than the traditional concern with plot, characterization, etc. In other words, the works were generally taken to be something of a social document revealing various new standards. For the first time, the Arabs were speaking for themselves and in the language of the West. Earlier English and European readers formulated their opinions of the Arabs through the often prejudiced accounts of travellers,[1] and later through the works and studies of orientalists.[2]

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1. See, Sari Nassir The Arabs and the English (Longmans, 1976). Nassir surveys the image of the Arab as seen by the West through the centuries. He begins with the Biblical references to the Arabs and follows it with accounts of the crusaders, then the travellers to the Middle East. He maintains that the West originally saw the East as a place of piracy and slavery. He quotes Henry Mundrell, a 17th century traveller who refered to the Arabs as those who "lurked in caves in the mountains." Reference is also made in the book to Fynes Moryson who portrayed the Arabs as robbers and sinister people.(P.31) The introduction of the translated version of The Arabian Nights into the West, Nassir adds, "the fantasy world of the Arabian tales, with its genies, magic, flying horses, and super-natural birds, reinforced accounts of earlier travellers." Nassir gives examples of Mandeville's "desert monster" in Egypt, who was half goat, half man; and Lithgow's birds that flew over the

It is true that many of the English writers who wrote about the Middle East came very close to reality but they mostly remained at arm's length from it. Burchardt, even perhaps Burton, Doughty, Lawrence, Bell, Flecker and others all trekked to the Middle East to see it romantically. It was the Holy Land that attracted them most with its

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Red Sea and died from its fumes, and the disintegrating apples in the Jordan Valley which crumbled when bitten.

Pitt's travel narratives, which attained popularity at the time the Nights appeared, enhanced the image of the mysterious East with the city of Cairo having slave markets, veiled women, whores, dervishes, eunuchs and people who were "much given to passion." All this complemented the Nights' exotic and picturesque scenes of harems, princes, slaves and romance.

In the 18th century the image of the Arabs in England began to acquire new themes of exotic and erotic qualities. These new qualities became part of the general attitude of travellers towards the Arabs in particular and the Middle East in general. Alexandre Pope, in a letter to Lady Montague, called the Middle East "the free region of adultery."(PP.39-40).

2. In his book La Crise des intellectuels Arabes (Paris: Maspero, 1974), Abdullah Laroui maintains that the disadvantages of orientalists' works are legion: "they frequently lead to an ideological criticism which can best be described as dull. Great intellectual efforts are wasted and gradually become of no value." For Laroui, western 'orientalism' is not western science applied to a particular subject, rather,one notices a narrowness of scope and method. This can be attributed to a number of reasons: the system of studies, the choice of postulates, the pursued objectives, etc...(pp.59-60).

The Orientalists' vision is marked for the most cases by a nostalgia to the past coupled with a great neglect of Third World Crises as well as an unforgivable disregard of the formidable national tide. (see the highly informative and authoritative study by Edward Said Orientalism (New York: Pantheon Books,1978); also see Anouar Abdelmalek "L'Orientalism en crise," Diogene, No.44, Oct-Dec.,1963).

Biblical stories and myths. When they wrote back home, their writings were stamped by this romantic vision. The Arab character had to remain in the background to be brought to the surface only when he could complement this romantic vision.[1] In the beginning of the twentieth century, the political and social state changed considerably, and the archetypal, stock romantic image of the East began to fade. The two world wars did not sweep the face of Europe alone but impinged on the Middle East as well and left its lasting marks on it. New political entities, called 'states' were formed, and political division became the hallmark of the era. No romantic image could any longer befit the rising turmoil of the Arab world, and 'pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina' had to come to a halt. Although the 'pilgrimages' were gradually being replaced by 'expeditions' and scholarly research, no European could speak for the emerging Arabs with adequacy. They, the Arabs, had to speak for

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1. It was Lawrence of Arabia who was mainly, though by no means solely responsible for building up the modern Arab 'legend'. We had Lawrence's Seven Pillars of Wisdom in which the Arab townsmen and fellaheen, Arab landowners and bankers, the lawyers and clerks and intellectuals of cities like Cairo, were all identified with the desert warrior in one single romantic picture of the whole Middle East as a permanent Maquis. Meanwhile, the real problems of the Middle East Arabs, the problems of semi-colonial populations, for the most part struggling to assert themselves against the disintegrating impact of the West, were little known or studied. That intellectual Arabs should begin to speak for themselves is therefore timely.

themselves and to correct the many misconceptions which the Europeans held about them. One cannot deny, though, that the Middle East of Lawrence Durrell for example, was a much more charming and enchanting place than that of Atiyah; but Durrell's Quartet was lacking any sense of intimate involvement, and restricted itself almost exclusively to the European predicament. Similarly, works such as Newby's Picnic at Sakkara[1], remain works written by outsiders applying foreign psychology, aesthetics and ethics to the Arabs. In spite of the fact that most novelists people their works with Arab characters, the total effect is not one of authenticity. Newby 'sniffs' at Egypt more than he sees it. He identifies people and places by their smell, 'garlic' or 'pistachios', to always feel afterwards an urge to "soak in a bath scented with his favourite pine bath salts, /though/ even pine salts...would not rid him of the most clinging odour of all: the patronizing contempt of the crowd."[2]

It is no surprise,then, that critics hailed Arab fiction in English as mouthpieces of the Arabs, and as a welcome departure from the many novels which treated the Middle East as a background for sordid European

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1. Picnic at Sakkara (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955). Also see D.J.Enright's novel Academic Year (London: Secker &Warburg, 1955).
2. Newby, Ibid., P.27.

amours and intrigues. In his introductory comment on the dust jacket of Lebanon Paradise, Sir Ronald Storrs wrote:

> This is not only an exceptionally written and cunningly constructed novel. It is a picture of real life— down to the amazing Frenchified language— in the Lebanon; from which the reader will gather a more accurate impression of what the Arab world really thinks of the British— and of themselves— than from any other novel I have yet seen.

One sees here why the European critics have concerned themselves more with the content of these novels than with their forms. To the reviewer of the Liverpool Daily Post, Lebanon Paradise "is of interest in the first place because it is the story from the inside of what happened to the Arabs who left Palestine after 1948. In this book, however, the plot matters less than the background, as it is for the political and geographical situation that most people will read and remember and perhaps disagree with it."[1]

Clearly, the political issues which these novels unfolded became of particular interest to the reader, the critic, as well as the political debator. Elizabeth Munroe, author of several books and pamphlets on the

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1. Liverpool Daily Post, 6th, October, 1953.

Middle East, realizes that "few foreigners learn Arabic or think of the people that speak it as anything more than excitable, grubby, or picturesque. Here then is a revelation for them: An Arab who, writing in English and in an engaging prose style, can show them that life of East and West as seen through the eyes of that important and growing element in the Middle East today, the young and educated middle class."[1]

Obviously, the novel here is accepted by its critics as a political forum which reveals the opinions of its authors without impeding their art. The conviction which most critics shared, including those antagonistic to Arab politics, was that the novels were "agreeably informative,"[2] "giving the reader a real insight into the life of the Arabs and heightening one's understanding of the present conflict between the Arabs and Israel."[3] Even such a traditional foe to the Arabs as the Jewish Observer and Middle East Review found a work by Atiyah about Palestinian refugees from Haifa /Lebanon Paradise/ containing "more truth and insight than all the writing of Khalidi and

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1. From clipping in the possession of Ms. Elise Henden, former secretary and close friend to Edward Atiyah.
2. The Illustrated London News, 5th Dec.,1953.
3. East London Advertiser, 21st July, 1967. A review of A Bedouin Boyhood.

Childers combined."[1]

How far an author is justified in employing the form of a novel for grinding his social and political axes is frequently debated. Yet, in the case of Arab novelists in English, what saves the authors from being taxed on account of their political extravagance is the absence from their writing of political propaganda. In fact the authors' objectivity has been unanimously praised by the critics. Thus, the Guardian opened its review of Diqs's A Bedouin Boyhood by stating that

> English readers who are accustomed when they seek to understand the Arab approach to life, to being bludgeoned with propaganda or bemused by cloudy insincerities will find here a quietly convincing account of a way of life which is fast disappearing.[2]

Similarly, reviewing Lebanon Paradise for the New Statesman and Nation, Walter Allen described the novel as "a very intelligent and attractive work, with an undercurrent of partisanship for the Arabs in their struggle with the Jews that never becomes propaganda because of Mr. Atiyah's implicit criticism of his own people!"[3] Following the same line of thought, the Jewish Chronicle complimented the book

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1. Obituary note, 30th Oct., 1964, P.9.
2. Michael Adams, Guardian, 9th June, 1967.
3. Walter Allen, New Statesman and Nation, 24th October, 1953.

for "its honest and straightforward disclosure of the working of the Arab mind."[1]

Altogether, it is obvious that readers found it refreshing to read novels with political themes which managed to give "the Arab point of view without being purely a vehicle of political propaganda."[2] Indeed, it is for this objectivity that a politically moving book such as A Bedouin Boyhood was accepted by the West, merely because Diqs tells of the dispersion of his people "without bitterness or rancour, but with a slightly melancholy sense of injustice."[3]

The novels were also praised for their accuracy, simplicity and directness of style. About Atiyah's novel Donkey from the Mountains, the reviewer in the Times Literary Supplement said that the "main interest" of the novel "lies rather in the picture of Lebanese life than in its detective quality." He also commended the 'convincing' style through which "the country world of vineyards and orchards, coffee and hubble-bubble, with its village atmosphere" could be accurately seen.[4]

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1. Jewish Chronicle, 2nd April, 1954.
2. The Belfast News Letter, 21st July, 1967.
3. Muster, 26th July, 1967.
4. Times Literary Supplement, 17th March, 1961, P.173.

About this accuracy of style and directness of manner, Jeannet Favret wrote in L'homme justificatif reviewing A Bedouin Boyhood that what struck her mostly was the truthfulness of the book and the precision of detail:

> "This book is true," dit il dans une note luminaire. Ce livre est vrai, en effet, d'une vérité au second degré; plus plausible souvent que celle des ethnographes prophessionnels.[1]

Simplicity is another quality ascribed to the writings of Arab novelists in English. The simplicity implied here is mainly that of style. Being conscious of the pitfalls of literary expression in a foreign language, novelists like Alamuddin, Ghali and Diqs approached language gingerly. The result is a kind of simplicity of expression; and the limitations of language which they placed upon themselves aided calmness of reflection. Two authors are excluded here: Atiyah and Jabra, who in their attempts to handle the language deftly, produced a prose style that could at times verge not on the simple but indeed the consciously artistic. About this simplicity, the Scarborough Evening News reviewing Bedouin said:

> Very occasionally, about once in every

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1. L'homme justificatif, IX, 1.

> decade, a new book is published that is completely different from anything that has gone before. A Bedouin Boyhood is just such a book, for not only is its plot original, but it also breaks fresh ground with the locality in which it is set, the way its characters are brought sharply into focus and the simple, almost poetical style used in order to bring all these to life.
> ... But the aspect of this book that makes the greatest impact on the reader is the almost biblical simplicity and directness of writing.[1]

What has been said earlier about the critic's use of stock knowledge of literary works for comparative purposes is quite evident here. In more than one case, the critics attempted to see a novel in the light of another. Analogies were drawn between characters of the Arab novels and those of European fiction, and individual scenes were brought out whenever they might indicate some latent borrowing or influence. Needless to say not all of these analogies were apt. Neal Ascherson, reviewing Alamuddin's Spring to Summer for the New Statesman[2], sets out on a seemingly false analogy. Although his initial comparison of the work with Turgenev's is acceptable /he sees Samar, the protagonist of the novel, as a Turgenev hero who proclaims that he is giving

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1. The Scarborough Evening News, 14th April, 1967.
2. The New Statesman, 22nd March, 1963, P.430.

his estate away to the serfs/, the remainder of the comparison reveals a basic misunderstanding of the author's intentions. Ascherson writes:

> There are other aspects of this tentative intelligent novel which recall Turgenev: The lingering over the warmth and spontaneity of unreformed, well-off life in a poor country, and the suggestion that those who make the brave gesture of departing from their class consorting with fierce radicals will be destroyed by fate in the end.

Nowhere in the novel is there the slightest suggestion of 'destruction by fate' for those 'consorting' with 'fierce radicals'. Rather, the radicals of the novel disappointingly turn into conformist petit bourgeois who, though they defy the social conventions of their Lebanese society and wave the banner of rebellion, end up 'living happily ever after' in an oil rich Arab country. True, there is a lot of intellectual talk about rebellion and change, there is a lot of action as well, but it all remains on the very personal even romantic level with a rather defeatist end. In the last few pages of the novel, Samar sends a letter to her cousin Salwa in which she tells her of her 'happiness'. She and Said were to follow exactly the same pattern of life they originally rebelled against— the mediocre, petty upper middle class way of life. The destruction of which

the New Statesman reviewer speaks, is in fact not of those who 'consort' with radicals, but of radicals who 'consort' with conformists.

Turgenev and other Russian writers seem to provide a suitable framework for critics to work on in their analysis and comparison. While Spring to Summer recalled Turgenev heroes, Beer in the Snooker Club, according to Ronald Bryden, also in a New Statesman review, evokes "the flavour of turn-of-the century Russian comedy.. as Turgenev and Chekov's aristocrats in their time."[1]

The assumption that a critic judges literary works against others familiar to him still holds. A single novel such as A Bedouin Boyhood has been compared at once to an African novel, Camara Laye's L'enfant noir by the Tanzania Standard[2], to Lawry Lee's Cider and Rosie by the Asia and Africa Review[3], to the 'eternal' story of Christ in Palestine by the Royal Central Asian Society Journal[4], to English travellers such as Burton, Palgrave and Doughty by the Glasgow Herald[5], and even

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1. New Statesman, 21st February, 1964.
2. Tanzania Standard, 24th July, 1967.
3. Asia and Africa Review, 20th July, 1967.
4. Royal Central Asian Society Journal, 28th Feb., 1968, PP.84-85.
5. Glasgow Herald, 27th May, 1967.

to the English translations of the many West Irish memoirs, naturally by the Irish Times.[1] Meanwhile, The Times Literary Supplement reviewing Beer in the Snooker Club found in Ghali's writing echoes of Waugh's comic social satire, and in his protagonist, Ram qualities reminiscent of both 'Lucky Jim' and 'Holden Caulfield'.[2]

One might generalize by saying that the lack of a common or agreed standard of evaluation has compelled the critics to resort, in the main, to comparative criticism. Otherwise, their judgements have remained of a sweeping nature, informative but not entirely perceptive. C.P.Snow, for one, found Atiyah's The Thin Line an "original," "convincing" novel with a "deep insight", and the story an "exciting and intense"[3] one. Undoubtedly, the half dozen adjectives applied to the novel here can in their generality equally apply to almost any other work by any other writer of any other period.

Another reason for the absence of the purely literary estimate of the works, is the fact that the books were

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1. Kevin Casey, The Irish Times, 20th July, 1967.
2. Times Literary Supplement, 20th Feb., 1964, P.141.
3. Sunday Times, 18th Nov., 1951.

at times reviewed not by professional literary critics but by the politicians and the sociologists interested in the affairs of the Arab world. A Bedouin Boyhood , for example, was reviewed for the Guardian by the paper's political correspondent Michael Adams, who is known for his sympathetic views of the Arab Middle East. Naturally, the review had more to say about the "grim lesson which the Arabs have to learn from history,"[1] than about the novel's artistry. Similarly, the Sunday Times' review of the same work was written by its political commentator, David Holden[2], who inevitably saw in the novel a political message, despite his insistence on the apolitical nature of the story. Holden wrote:

> I wish that some of the people who quite reasonably sympathize with the Jewish feeling about Palestine might read Mr. Diqs and appreciate that the Arabs have honest feelings too. Not that this book is in the least political. On the contrary, it is simply about life— stories of boyhood and escapades, love and marriage, friendship and death, animals, flowers, and the weather, all told in a strong yet sensitive picture of a people whose traditional ways are being shattered by the multiple thrusts of the twentieth century. The publishers suggest this book may become a classic. I fancy they are right.

It is clear here that the critic is trying to say

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1. Michael Adams, Guardian, 9th June, 1967.
2. David Holden, "Permanency in the Sands," The Sunday Times, 25th June, 1967.

something of literary worth about the novel but is gradually drawn to political suggestions.

All too often, the literary trained critic has been replaced by the 'Arabist' and the specialized orientalist. Specialized anthropological magazines have also taken interest in the Arab novels for the sociological information they frequently reveal. Both Man[1] and the Eastern Anthropologist[2] came out with relatively lengthy reviews of Diqs's A Bedouin Boyhood. The first saw the novel as a welcome contribution to the emerging recording of 'tribal literature', which unlike the rather ancient tribal art is basically a 'modern phenomenon'. The second maintained that the"charm of /the/ contents will delight the general reader while as a source book of information about Bedouins it may well serve the purpose of professional anthropologists."

Occasionally, the reviewing of the books was erratic, if not ludicrous. The recent emerging interest of the West in the Arab world as a new source of business power has surprisingly geared some of the criticism in

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1. Man, Vol II, Part 3.
2. The Eastern Anthropologist (Lucknow), Vol.XX, NO.3, New Delhi. Review by Sachion Roy.

this direction. Reading works by Arab writers suddenly became a 'must', especially for those thinking of starting business in the Arab world. At times, the whole content of a novel was twisted to make it appeal more readily to the business-minded reader. Thus, the reviewer of Safari Digest, for example, came out with the following:

> The development of Saudi Arabia from desert kingdom to oil rich modern state is one of the miracles of the past fifteen years. A unique book written in English by a young Jordanian Arab, chronicles that progress against the background of his own bedouin boyhood. An interesting insight into the Arab world for those wishing to expand their trade with Arabia.1

Needless to say, A Bedouin Boyhood is not about Saudi Arabia nor about its development into an oil rich country. The narrator simply ends up his story by settling there as a civil servant while the whole bulk of the book tells of his life in Palestine and his childhood amongst other Bedouin tribes. And indeed no part of the novel can in any way help those interested in "expanding trade with Arabia", except perhaps if, like any successful work of literature, it could provide them with some insight into life and truth, and into themselves.

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1. An undated clipping in the possession of the publishers.

One recalls here that similar criticism came out when Atiyah published his autobiographical work An Arab Tells his Story. A good number of critics found it indispensable reading not only "for an understanding of the Middle East and its problems," but also for "every Englishman planning a career in this part of the world."

Whatever the nature of the reviews, the critics did not always approach the novelists without prejudice. The fear that the English reader will take the Arab authors to be true representatives of their people has enticed the Zionist Review, through an article written by Mrs. Edgar Dugdale, to search for a new definition of the word 'Arab'. Mrs Dugdale wrote:

> I do not know how the learned in such matters define an "Arab", and I would not dream of challenging Mr. Atiyah's right to describe himself, especially as he makes clear how widely his Lebanese Christian background, and all his inherited traditions differ from those of any Moslem Arab. The gap is wide, not only as regards levels of culture, for these might in time be bridged, but because of the vast differences between the Christian and the Islamic ethic, in such matters as toleration and family life. There is therefore, I think, some little danger that the English-man who forms his opinions about the new Arab states, their claims and their aims, from the written word only, may be misled into supposing that such men as Edward

> Atiyah, Albert Hourani, or the late George Antonius.. are typical of the Arabs whose constituted spokesmen, they are for the Western world.[1]

Mrs. Dugdale is certainly greatly misinformed about the making of the Arab, whether Moslem, Christian or Jew. The irony of it all is that, in spite of her ill-supported argument, she still challenges an Arab writer such as Atiyah for 'claiming' to be an Arab. Meanwhile, she warns her readers against believing that Arabs can be as 'civilized' and 'educated' as the authors they have read. The above cited quotation undoubtedly speaks much for itself, and does not need further elucidation.

In the final analysis, with the exception of very minor incidents, the reception of the Arab novels in the West has been favourable. Nevertheless, the works were judged individually, hardly in relation to one another, and never as a literary genre. Each novel was valued according to its own merits without relating to previous works by the same author, or to novels by other Arab writers in English or even to the general context of third world writing in English.[2] Consequently,

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1. Zionist Review, 7th June, 1946, P.5.
2. Exceptions to this are Paul Edward's inclusion of extracts from Black Vanguard and Beer in the Snooker Club in his Through African Eyes (Cambridge University Press, 1966), and Modern African Narratives (London: Nelson, 1966); and Shatto Arthur Gakwandi's examination of

no specialized interest was aroused similar to the increasing concern with writers from Africa, India or the West Indies. Commonwealth studies, on the other hand, are beginning to eliminate the political and geographical limitation imposed on the appelation, and consider works in English from outside the Commonwealth.[1] It may still be too early, though, to predict whether the study of Arab fiction in English will ever find its permanency within the realm of World Literature in English.

THE PUBLISHERS:

The insomnia of a writer does not end with his having the work completed, it usually starts with the initial search for a publisher. A first novelist, in particular, experiences real difficulties in getting his work published as it always takes any writer several books to build up a reputation (with very few exceptions). This, naturally, does not only apply to Arab writers seeking publishers in the West; many English writers would have similar difficulties if not identical ones. To a certain extent, the Arab

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Beer in the Snooker Club in the context of the contemporary African novel, that of Soyinka in particular.(The Novel and Contemporary Experience in Africa, Heinemann: 1977)PP.72-73.

1. An evidence to this is the emergence of periodicals and magazines such as World Literature Written in English (the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada), and many others.

novelists under review were fortunate in having had very few publishing problems. Most of them were, in fact, approached by the publishers rather than having to hunt for one. Yet, in a number of cases, there was a middle man who recommended the work. Waguih Ghali, for instance, was approached by Andre Deutsch as a German publisher informed the company about him.[1] In its turn, Andre Deutsch told an American publisher about Beer in the Snooker Club[2], and an edition of the novel was brought out in the U.S. Later on, the paperback rights were sold to Penguin upon their request, as mentioned earlier.

Similarly, the introduction of Isaak Diqs to his first publishers, George Allen and Unwin Ltd. was effected by Mr. Robert Seeds, Diqs's English teacher who was impressed by the work he did for him. Later, the Pergamon Press took an interest in the book as they wished to introduce it to their school editions of works on children of the world.

Edward Atiyah was the only writer who had his own agents who handled publishing matters for him. Still,

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1. Ghali was living in Germany then, and a publisher had agreed to publish a German translation of Beer. This never materialized though, as Ghali was imprisoned in Germany and was forced to leave the country.
2. Alfred A. Knopf.

he never kept to one publisher. All his works, novels and political writings, were published by some five different publishers. This may not, though be a peculiarity of Atiyah so much as that of the London publishers themselves. Nevertheless, Atiyah left at leats three unpublished works, two plays[1], and one novel[2], and one is inclined to wonder whether these works were rejected by the publishers' readers(especially as two of them were written in the early fifties when Atiyah was most read).[3] After Every Tempest, his last and unpublished novel was finished just a couple of months before Atiyah's sudden death. The attempts of Miss Elise Henden, the author's former secretary and close friend, to have the work published posthumously failed for two main reasons: first, on account of certain formalities connected with publishing works by deceased writers; and second, on account of the fact that the novel was discarded by more than one publisher for its alleged 'eroticism'.[4]

All the novels were published in London with the exception of Alamuddin's Spring to Summer which was

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1. The Seventh Child, and No Return to Paradise.
2. After Every Tempest.
3. No Return to Paradise was read by the Times literary editor who suggested that it be performed on the stage of the university of Omdurman, Sudan. Atiyah's correspondence.
4. Information obtained from Miss Henden.

published by Khayats in Beirut and distributed in the U.K. and abroad by Constable& Co. On the whole, most of the publishers had little contact with the Arab world and accepted the novels for their own merits and not for any specialized interest they took. In addition, the authors did not have an established market for their genre, naturally due to the meagreness of their output as well as to its irregularity. Unlike the Africans for instance, they were unable to establish an interest in the novels set in their native region. The Africans did create a clique readership even for new and unknown writers. Interest in African literature seems to be increasing[1], and there is great doubt whether its Arab counterpart will ever claim similar attention.

Still, the Arab novels sold fairly well in comparison to other works in English by non native speakers. Sales figures for Beer in the Snooker Club, for example, were 3000 for its first print[2] (a normal figure for a first novel) in the U.K.; and about the same in the United States. The paperback figures

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1. Judging by the number of journals which are presently mushrooming in both Africa, the United States as well as Europe. Examples are legion— Africa Report (issued in the U.S.); the Heinemann's African Writers series; the Penguin African Series; The Oxford Library of African Literature, and many others. Andre Duetsch has also established a branch in Nigeria— The African universities press.

2. Although at first it sold very slowly and the publishers had to sell about 500 copies off cheap for or five years later. Letter from publishers dated 17th Aug., 1976.

nevertheless, were much better and amounted to 20,000 copies[1]. To strike a comparison here, one is reminded that Chinua Achebe's novel Things Fall Apart sold 20,000 copies in Nigeria in 1963, with only 800 copies in U.K. and 2,500 in the rest of the world.[2] In nearly all cases, first print figures oscillated between 3000 and 5000, a normal figure for European publishing houses.[3] George Allen and Unwin, for example, published about 3000 copies of A Bedouin Boyhood, half of which were sold in the U.K. and half abroad. The reprint of the book by the Pergamon Press figured 5000 copies. And as it was part of a series about children in other countries, the publishers say that "it sold at least as well as any others in the series" though they admit that the whole series was not very successful.[4]

Although the sale figures are not remarkably high, they compare very well with other 'foreign' writers in English. The Indian authors R.K.Narayan and Kamala Markandaya, for example "can look forward to 5,000 " copies for a first edition[5] (although Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve sold later for as many as 25,000

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1. Letter from publishers, Ibid.
2. J.P.O'Finn, "Towards a Sociology of the Nigerian Novel," African Literature Today, ed. by Eldred Durosimi Jones (N.Y.: Africana Publishing Company, 1975), NO 7, P.37.
3. Letter from Andre Deutsch, Op.Cit.
4. Letter from A.Wheaton and Company, dated Exeter, 1st July, 1976.
5. R. Wilkinson, "The Indian Novel in English", (unpublished thesis, University of Durham,1969),P.57.

copies in the U.K. only).[1] Meanwhile Dr.Bhabani Bhattacharya had 3000 copies sold of his novel So Many Hungers on its first printing. The normal figures for an Indian novel in English are 2,000 in the West, and 1,000 in India.[2] As for the Arab novelists, they can only hope for a western market as sales in the Arab world are very limited, with Lebanon remaining the sole market in the Arab Middle East.

Of course the majority of the novels had to rely upon the individual merits of the book. This is most clearly seen with Edward Atiyah, whose first novel The Thin Line (with the psychology of crime theme) sold very well[3], whereas the following novels (with the East-West theme) did not sell nearly as well.[4] The subject matter seems to be the main factor in determining the popularity of the work much more than any other artistic factor or previous knowledge of the author. Both The Thin Line and The Crime of Julian of Julian Masters which were mistakenly taken to be purely 'crime stories', and which were consequently reviewed and recommended by magazines which interest themselves in such matters, seem to have sold best,

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1. R.Wilkinson, Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Letter from publishers, Peter Davies Ltd., dated in London, 20th July, 1976.
4. Ibid. Also the price of the individual novel was reasonable ranging between 10and 12 shillings which made it accessible to all readers.

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whereas Atiyah's later and more serious works were unfortunately relatively neglected.

Some of the novels written in English by Arab writers found their way into public libraries yet without any regular representation[1], as is the case of novelists such as Naipaul (West Indies), Narayan (India), or Achebe (Nigeria). Public library readers would probably, when deciding to read an Arab novel, want a much more exotic quality than these works could offer, an Arabian Nights revisited, perhaps, or even some fascinating travelogue. To their probable disappointment, they would find that these novels were fashioned in European styles and were concerned with the problems of the individual in the second half of the twentieth century.

This naturally poses the question of the 'audience'. Who does the writer ultimately write for, and does the knowledge or awareness of an audience affect in any way the relationship between an author and his reader?

The issue of the audience arises out of the fact that by using an international language such as English, the Arab author is inviting all speakers of that language

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1. Such as Edward Atiyah's The Thin Line, Isaak Diqs's A Bedouin Boyhood (available in five branches of the London Library), Alamuddin's short stories The Sun is Silent. Atiyah's The Thin Line seems to still attract the attention of public library readers. The copy I borrowed was ckecked out at least three times in the first half of 1976.

to share the experience of his work. This primarily excludes his own people, with the exception of the bilingual minority which uses English not only as an auxiliary language but also for the private enjoyment of a literary work. The rest of the people are generally not in the habit of reading novels, particularly in a foreign language. Novels written in English must necessarily, because of the language, be directed at a foreign audience, a fact which could influence the writer's work in more than one way. On the one hand, it could lead to the author's prostituting himself to please and entertain his reader by aiming to capture his interest through the deliberate introduction of elements of exoticism or intrigue. Or, it may inhibit his handling of the language and lead to an artificial super-sophisticated style void of any shades of sincerity.

All this adds to the problems of the critic who, by taking heed of them, tries to reach a fair, unbiased interpretation of the works. The issues cited in this chapter join to make the task of criticism of fiction written in English by Arabs not only a new experience but also an interesting and intricate one.

CONCLUSION

There is something both exciting and inhibiting about stumbling upon a new subject or material. One is thrilled by the 'ingenuity' of the discovery but is soon intimidated by its 'overwhelming' copiousness. Such feelings are even further intensified when the subject is to be chiselled and hammered into an academic dissertation. The author of the present study has enjoyed the exultation of unearthing a yet unknown feature of World Literature Written in English, but at the same time has realized the frustration of trying to achieve comprehensiveness without falling into tediousness. True, a new subject endows the writer with great freedom of movement as he steps on fresh ground, yet, the unfamiliarity of the subject compels him to spend a considerable amount of time on details he may normally discard when discussing some aspect of an established cult. The delight at tracing the parentage of Ameen Rihani's thoughts and style, for example, and the joy at discovering step by step the so far

undetected resemblance between The Book of Khalid and Carlyle's Sartor Resartus had to be 'tempered' by historical and literary introductions and restrained by details of the story and its events.

Socio-historical interpretation has therefore frequently preceded literary analysis. And when this takes place, the works have to be studied not as separate or individual attempts but as literary phenomena with their own rise and possibly imminent fall. The growth of the English novel by Arab writers from the experimental forms of the fable, the allegory and the romance written by Gibran, Naimy and Rihani respectively, to the more technically mature works of the 1950's and 1960's has been examined in order to point out their thematic as well as their technical interrelatedness. Several traits and characteristics have been found to be common to most of them: an obsession with certain themes, such as the cultural conflict, the dialogue between East and West, the alienation of the Arab intellectual, the pressure of the political world on the consciousness of the individual,and many others.

Common technical qualities of the works have also been observed, and literary influences have received

particular attention. It has been shown that while the precursors of the English novel by Arab writers drew inspiration from the works of American transcendentalists and their European counterparts, the later novelists of the post W.W.II era were more influenced by the European realistic tradition of art. E.M.Forster, for one, has been seen to impart a considerable effect on both the style and thought of someone like Edward Atiyah.

Of greater interest to the student of World Literature Written in English than this relationship that solders the works of Arab novelists in English to Western traditions, are the great affinities this body of literature has with Anglophone writings produced in the Third World. The points of similarity vary from the Arab novels being the product of a hybrid culture, to their evidencing one more example of the interplay between the colonizer and the colonized with all the cultural, intellectual and psychological results concomitant to it. Furthermore, it has been observed that, like Third World writers in English, the Arabs, too, have sought to interpret their experiences and sensibilities to a world largely governed by the Western experience, and entirely oblivious to non-Western cultures. All this, taken together, is important. It reveals that Arab writing

in English is not an isolated accident, but a significant part of this wider literary movement which seeks to express Third World views in the universal language of English.

This study had had to confine itself to the limits set in the introduction. It cannot, and does not, claim to have altogether exhausted the subject; it does claim, however, to have 'unearthed' an interesting area, to have surveyed it, traced its development, and placed it in context. In so doing, it has prepared the ground for further study, which, it is hoped, will be undertaken by others. These studies will have to examine the stylistic and linguistic qualities and idiosyncracies, if any, which are particularly characteristic of Arab novels in English. They will moreover have to look into the influence of the indigenous culture on Arab writing in English, and also examine all Arab writing in English in all its thematic and formal variety.

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