

**T.C.**

**İSTANBUL YENİ YÜZYIL ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ**

**İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANA BİLİM DALI**



**Magical Realism as a Postcolonial Narrative Mode of  
Resistance in Three of Ibrahim al-Koni's Novels**

**Submitted by**

**Abdelkarim A. Ashour Ben Tahir**

**for**

**The Degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy in English Literature**

**İSTANBUL, October 2019**

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SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ

İngilizce Dil ve Edebiyat Ana Bilim Dalı

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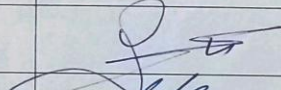
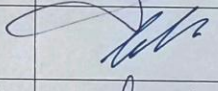
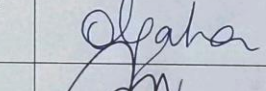
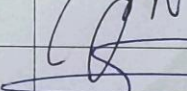

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## Table of Contents

. Abstract	
Dedication	
Acknowledgement	
<b>Introduction</b>	
<b>Chapter One:</b>	
1. Theoretical framework	
1.1. Postcolonialism	17
1.2. Western narrative discourse	26
1.3. Magical Realism	49
<b>Chapter Two</b>	
2. <b>Arabic Novel Through the Ages</b>	
2.1. Its Origins and beginnings	71
2.2. Transition from Arabic Traditional Novel to the Modern Novel	104
2.3. The Novel in North Africa and Libya	127
<b>Chapter Three:</b>	
3. <i>The Bleeding of the Stone</i> : Peaceful Resistance	140
<b>Chapter Four:</b>	
4. <i>The Seven Veils of Seth</i> : A Paradise and Hell	176
<b>Chapter Five:</b>	
5. <i>Gold Dust</i> : Man-Animal Brotherhood	196
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>217</b>

## **Abstract**

Most post-colonial African writers and writers from Asia and Latin America whose countries had experiences with colonialism, use magical realism as a mode of writing in their works of fiction. In this mode of writing, writers have the advantage of using both realism and magic to express the postcolonial experience that enables them to challenge and undermine the conventions of the domineering Western narrative discourse. It is regarded as a powerful and effective decolonising narrative discourse through which writers can express their hidden, silenced, and suppressed anti-colonial attitudes.

This thesis focuses on the Libyan Tuareg writer Ibrahim al-Koni's real reasons and intentions behind his choice of magical realism as the mode of writing in his novels. The dissertation stresses the importance of this technique for al-Koni who sees it as the most suitable, powerful and effective means to achieve Tuareg's inspirations of having a state of their own. Through this mode, he tries to challenge and subvert the domineering Eurocentric narrative discourse which gives a false picture of the non-European and non-western societies. It allows him to express different approaches to reality other than the Western outlook to it.

Al-Koni, in his oeuvre always, directly or indirectly, asserts that the Tuareg are historically the aboriginal inhabitants of the North African Sahara and affirms that they have been living there for more than ten thousand years. He, therefore, portrays the desert, the historical paintings on the rocks and in the walls of the caves in Tassili mountains, trying to prove that the Tuareg are an

ancient nation that has its own heritage, history, civilisation, which influenced the ancient neighbouring Egyptian civilisation. He tries to send a message saying that although they are the aboriginal inhabitants of the land, they are unfairly, and unjustly marginalised, denigrated and treated as inferior tribes both by most of the Libyan Arabs and the international community as well.

*The Bleeding of the Stone, The Seven Veils of Seth and Gold Dust*, clearly demonstrate the Tuareg's struggle for survival in order to peacefully gain international recognition of their presence and to preserve their culture, and beliefs. In an interview, al-Koni says that his people are victims of the international community and that they should have the right of forming a state of their own like what happened to suppressed minorities in Kosovo, Bosnia, and South Sudan. In Libya, where the Tuareg live, but Arabic is the only recognised language and Islam is the sole religion of the country. For al-Koni, this is a kind of suppression and denial of the Tuareg's language, myths, cultural heritage and identity which he feels that it is his duty to unmask and to resist and subvert the Western mainstream discourse in his fiction.

I intend to study the narrative and thematic strategies of the above mentioned three novels which I believe are excellent examples of postcolonial works of peaceful resistance.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my dear wife Hamida, and my lovely, and youngest daughter Kholood who both stood by me during all the stages of writing this dissertation, and during the period of my illness when I decided to quit writing and go home; they insisted that I should continue my task and get the degree I came for. They never complained of being away from their country and their dear ones.



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Similarly, I am grateful to my son Haitham and my brother Khattab who both came from Libya in order to be beside me during the surgical operation to extract a malignant tumour from my colon. They shared my room in the hospital, sleeping on a couch and never left the room a minute for ten long and hard days. I cannot forget my friends and colleagues Busheha BUSHEHA, Al-Mukhtar Salem, and Salah Abdulhafiz for their encouragement and help.

## Introduction

Despite the fact that Ibrahim al-Koni, the Libyan Tuareg prolific writer and novelist is well-known in the Arab world for publishing more than eighty books and has received many local and international awards and that his books have been translated into thirty-five foreign languages, only recently his novels started to draw the attention of non-Arab literary critics. In his article, “*Ibrahim al-Koni’s Atlas of the Sahara*”, Elliott Colla, scholar, writer and translator of a number of al-Koni’s novels, observes that he has experienced difficulty in finding life-like works of fiction in the records about the desert written by insiders like al-Koni who really has lived in the desert, and has first-hand experience in it. Something that makes his works have a special flavour that is almost impossible to find in any other work written about the desert and its people.<sup>1</sup>

The same idea concerning the rarity of al-Koni’s translated works is expressed by Hartmut Fähndrich, a German scholar and translator, specialising in the translation of Arabic literature into German. Fähndrich points out that only recently he knew of Ibrahim al-Koni as an African novelist, adding that he knew him by accident while he was investigating writers from Africa. Fähndrich refers this to the bad circulation of the publishing press. He observes that most of al-Koni’s translated novels are published and distributed by the

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<sup>1</sup> Elliott Colla. “*Ibrahim al-Koni’s Atlas of The Sahara.*” *Bridges Across the Sahara: Social, Economic and Cultural Impact of The Trans- Sahara Trade During the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Ed. Ali Abdullatif Ahmida : (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009)187-96

American University of Cairo Press, which means that they are not available in many Western countries.<sup>2</sup>

The critic and African literature specialist, Fiona F. Moolla, aligns with Colla in terms of the scarcity of books written about the North African Sahara Desert in English by indigenous authors who live in the desert and have first-hand experience with it such as al-Koni. Moolla asserts that al-Koni's work has become available to a large number of English language readers, and his ideas and philosophy of the Sahara desert and its people have become widely known only after the translation of his major works into foreign languages.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Moolla confirms the originality and uniqueness of al-Koni's works of fiction. He argues that al-Koni's work in many details differs from the works of most Latin American and African magical realist novelists. Al-Koni focuses on the desert, desert people, their beliefs, and mythologies. Moreover, he concentrates on their struggle for survival and many political issues, while with the other writers, these issues constitute only a part of their interests.<sup>4</sup>

Up to now, there are only a few studies that deal with the works of al-Koni, and as far as I know, these studies highlight a number of different issues

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.imaginaryplanet.net/weblogs/idiotprogrammer/2009/12/interview-with-ibrahim-al-koni-desert-is-a-soul-not-a-body/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283189189\\_Desert\\_ethics\\_myths\\_of\\_nature\\_and\\_novel\\_form\\_in\\_the\\_narratives\\_of\\_Ibrahim\\_Al-Koni](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283189189_Desert_ethics_myths_of_nature_and_novel_form_in_the_narratives_of_Ibrahim_Al-Koni) [accessed Nov 22, 2017].

<sup>4</sup> \_

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283189189\\_Desert\\_ethics\\_myths\\_of\\_nature\\_and\\_novel\\_form\\_in\\_the\\_narratives\\_of\\_Ibrahim\\_Al-Koni](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283189189_Desert_ethics_myths_of_nature_and_novel_form_in_the_narratives_of_Ibrahim_Al-Koni) [accessed Nov 22 2017].

other than the ones discussed in this thesis. This study tries to shed more light on al-Koni and his works and I believe it will be a modest contribution to the Arabic Library. This will help acquaint the non-Arab readers to the problems of this part of the world and get a true picture of the desert and the victimised people which al-Koni's is portraying.

This thesis discusses the interests and the daily problems of the Tuareg's historical, political, economic, social, and cultural aspects of the Tuareg as presented in al-Koni's fiction. Al-Koni was born and brought up on the traditions of this minority group people, popularly known as "the veiled men" or "the blue men there. It must be highlighted that the population of the Tuareg are about two million nomadic people who live in the great North African Sahara Desert, and in Libya, Algeria, Niger, Mali, and Chad. The Tuareg are Sunni Muslims and speak Tamasheg language. Moreover, they constitute an essential part of the Berber community which consists of Tebu, Amazegh, and Tuareg. Berbers in general, are demanding better representation, and some of them are asking for self-autonomy.

Al-Koni has been regarded as a magical realist, Sufi storyteller, and novelist whose work is full of mythological elements, spiritual quest, and existential questions. Through his work the reader becomes well- acquainted with the Tuareg way of life, and their fight for survival. The reader gets his information about this minority group from an insider who has first- hand experience with Italian domination over Libya. He and his people have witnessed and suffered from resentment, injustice and oppression, and of being treated as inferior others.

Al-Koni feels that it is his duty to portray the desert as it really is, not as portrayed and represented in Western and Eurocentric discourse and through the writings of the Western explorers which lack objectivity because these books depend on their personal impressions and observations. The Eurocentric discourse deals with the North African desert and its people according to their own conceptions of reality which is based on the idea of the superiority of the West and the inferiority of the Orient. The world is in dire need for unbiased writers from within like al-Koni, Achebe, and Soyinka who are committed to their peoples and believe in the equality of all races, and thus give true and authentic pictures of the spaces they live in.

In this study, I have limited myself to the literary production of one African writer in order to avoid the risk of being unable to cover properly the political, economic, cultural and social aspects and problems that face the Tuareg people in the Great North African Sahara Desert. The focus on one author will enable me to deal with all the aspects mentioned above which directly affect the daily life of this minority group, and thus avoid the risk generalising or simplifying.

Al-Koni deals with the desert as a colonised territory which has been torn into pieces by the colonising Western countries and has been divided between five recognised states. He believes that the inhabitants of the desert are also torn into small groups or tribes and their identity was affected, their movements and transportations were limited and greatly affected as well. In fact, they feel that they are victimised, oppressed, and al-Koni wants their voice to be heard all over the world.

I would like to draw the attention of the reader that I am obliged to give a brief summary of the three novels under discussion, namely *The Bleeding of the Stone*, *The Seven Veils of Seth*, and *Gold Dust* to help the reader understand the analysis better. In addition to the literary analysis, they have been investigated from political perspectives as well due to their political nature. The issues discussed in this thesis are associated with the interests of the Arab and non-Arab readers. It must be noticed that one of al-Koni's objectives is to confront and subvert the Eurocentric discourse which serves the political, economic and cultural hegemony and schemes of Western countries.

Postcolonial writers know that the colonisers are the main cause in hindering any kind of progress and development in the occupied countries because they force the occupied to adopt their culture, language and try to convince them with their inferiority and the superiority of the West. It is crystal clear that al-Koni's oeuvre is a kind of rebellion and resistance against the coloniser's domineering ideology. His literary production indirectly calls for the freedom of the Berber in general and the Tuareg in particular. He, therefore, concentrates on writing about the historical treasures such as the ancient paintings and engravings carved on the walls of the caves and on the rocks of the Tassili mountains in order to prove that they are the first people who have inhabited this desert. Moreover, he always creates scenes and incidents to talk about the Tuareg's cultural heritage, beliefs customs, legends and mythologies in order to show that they are a nation which has its own ancient laws and traditions and that they deserve to be seen and treated like other nations.

The three novels that I am going to analyse in details in chapter three, chapter four, and chapter five of this study indirectly deal with the social and political status of the Tuareg in addition to their national identity which al-Koni tries to resurrect and invigorate. His novels not only deal with the Tuareg's struggle for independence but also describe their hard and real situation and their way of life in the Sahara desert and thus his readers obtain a true and authentic picture of the Sahara and its people- a picture which is quite different from the false one drawn by Western adventurers in their travelogues and canon. In the Western discourse, the Africans and Orientals are portrayed as savage, uncivilised, immoral and evil people who have no history, culture, laws or traditions, while the Westerners are represented as virtuous, good and civilised. This was one of the main reasons behind al-Koni's adoption of magical realism as his mode of writing in order to write back and challenge all these false ideas. Through this mode of writing he can write about his people's past history, legends, culture, and thus resist and encounter the false ideas about his people in a veiled manner and thus proves that they are not as represented in the Western canon. It is true that the main interest of al-Koni and most African writers are the social and political aspects, and consequently we see that most of their literary production takes a political nature and in most part tries to convey a true and authentic social vision of the desert and its dwellers. In fact, al-Koni tries to change the conditions in which he and his people live in, and find a bigger and better place more than what the colonizer has allocated for them. Al-Koni has a sense of mission toward his people, he, therefore, has chosen to live in exile and write about the concerns of his people

rather than write about his personal concerns. He has chosen to be the conscious of his people and denies his personal interests. In fact, al-Koni wants to record in writing Tuareg history, customs, laws, traditions, and values.

He writes about the Tuareg issues in order to convey their voice to the world and to regain their identity. Al-Koni uses the magical realist mode to destabilize and subvert the Western canon. Magical realism as will be mentioned later is a mode of writing ensued as a reaction to certain conditions that affect the marginalized and denigrated Tuareg's lives in terms of their the political, social and historical experience during the postcolonial period. Al-Koni writing about the desert and its people from the oriental outlook, in other words from the perspective of an insider as a kind of subverting and resisting the Eurocentric canon. It is a sort of reconsidering the representation of the Tuareg people whom he feels that they are belittled, underrepresented and treated as inferior others. It must be admitted that al-Koni is considered the conscious of his people, he is his people's eyes and ears. He is concerned with their cultural heritage, social and political situation.

This dissertation titled "*Magical Realism as a Postcolonial Narrative Mode of Resistance in al-Koni's Fiction*" is concerned with 'magical realism' and how al-Koni applies this technique as a post-colonial narrative mode of resistance in *The Bleeding of the Stone*, *The Seven Veils of Seth* and *Gold Dust*

When we read his novels carefully, al-Koni could be classified as a rebel whose main aim is resisting the colonials and restoring the threatened Tuareg's cultural heritage, their lost self-confidence and identity. He adopts the post-



colonial and magical realism mode in order to be able to portray the victimized Tuareg, their past traditions, legends customs, laws, and mythologies, which he believes as the best way of combating colonialism and acquainting the world with the Tuareg's cause. Anders Cullhed & Lena Rydholm quote the novelist and literary critic Brenda Cooper who points out that, "African writers very often ... incorporate spirits, ancestors and talking animals, in stories, both adapted folktales, and newly invented yarns, in order to express their passions, their aesthetics, and their politics."<sup>5</sup> Tuareg's cultural heritage, customs, beliefs, and past history are always present and included in abundance in al-Koni's narrative mainly for political reasons. He tries to show that they are different almost in everything from the other races inhabiting the northern part of Libya.

Drawing on the same issue, Ouyang Wen-chin in his article titled, "*Magical Realism and Beyond: Ideology of Fantasy*" maintains that the novels, and other literary works such as essays, and articles that are viewed as postcolonial come from postcolonial countries that have been fettered and governed by imperial European countries.<sup>6</sup>

The purpose of the study is to find out the real reasons behind his choice of this mode of writing. Is it out of a sense of duty toward his people whom he has a wide knowledge and information of their socio-political and cultural reality that he wants to record everything in their life in writing lest one day will be forgotten and wiped out by modernity? or Is he using this mode as a way of

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<sup>5</sup> - Anders Cullhed & Lena Rydholm, *True Lies Worldwide: Functionality in Global Contexts* ( Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2014), 275.

<sup>6</sup> - Ouyang, Wen-chin, "Magical Realism and Beyond: Ideology of Fantasy" in *A Companion to Magical Realism*. eds. Stephen Hart and Wen-Chin Ouyang( Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2005), 13–20.

telling the world that the Tuareg is a nation that has the right to form their own independent state like that of Kosovo, Bosnia and South Sudan, because he believes that Tuareg have a different cultural heritage, and are socially, economically, politically suppressed, persecuted and victimised though they are, as he always hints, the aboriginal inhabitants of the country?

Answering the above-mentioned questions will assist the reader to understand al-Koni's aesthetics, politics, and writing techniques better.

This thesis is carried out on the basis of post colonialism and magical realism theories which al-Koni uses as vehicles to achieve his goal of reclaiming Tuareg's past cultural heritage, identity and may one day form their own state. In other words, this study sheds light on the books of the Martinican psychiatrist, political philosopher, and writer Frantz Fanon *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), the Indian literary and cultural critic, theorist of postcolonial culture scholar Homi K. Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* (1980), and *Orientalism* (1978) the book of Edward Said the founder of the academic field of postcolonial studies. Moreover, the study places emphasis on some of the works of other prominent figures in the field of post colonialism like Bill Ashcroft, Griffith Gareth and Helen Tiffin's book *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) , the difference between 'magic realism' and 'magical realism' which some think they are interchangeable. In addition to dealing with the relationship between postcolonialism and magical realism, the thesis shows how al-Koni makes use of these two theories in his novels.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters in addition to the introduction and the conclusion. Chapter One discusses the definition of post colonialism

and how critics and scholars differ in the way this term is written, moreover, it discusses the historical background of realism and the origin and beginning of magical realism. Moreover, the thesis discusses the difference between magic realism and magical realism. In addition to dealing with the relationship between postcolonialism and magical realism, the thesis shows how al-Koni makes use of these two theories in his novels.

Chapter Two discusses the Arabic novel, its beginning, development and whether it is, as some critics believe, is a new literary genre, imported from the West in the second half of the nineteenth century and that the Arab novelists had to imitate the Western authors in this new genre or it is the creation of the Arabs. It also discusses the development of the Arabic novel, particularly in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Libya until it reached the stage of maturity, and obtained global acknowledgement and recognition. Moreover, it discusses the main reasons of its development. The second part of the same chapter deals with the North African and Libyan novel, its beginning, and development, and its themes.

Chapter Three discusses Ibrahim al-Koni's novel *The Bleeding of the Stone* in terms of the postcolonial and magical realism theories in which the author challenges the Western mainstream discourse and calls for peaceful resistance.

Chapter four discusses *The Seven Veils of Seth* where al-Koni paradoxically describes the desert as paradise and hell and hints that the foreign companies are the main cause of all the predicaments and ecological problems that took place in the desert.

Chapter five discusses the ancient rites and customs of the desert inhabitants and Man-animal strong relationship and brotherhood in his novel *Gold Dust*.

It must be noted that the central ideas on which all al-Koni's novels revolve around the desert, its animals, and regaining the rights and identity of the Tuareg people. Al-Koni's message is that the Tuareg should be seen and treated as a nation that has an ancient history and civilisation, and should not be regarded as a tribe or groups of tribes.

But, before studying the said novels in detail, I intend to analyse the concepts of 'post-colonialism' and 'magical realism'.

# Chapter One

## I. Theatrical Framework

### 1.1. Post colonialism:

*Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,  
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;*

(Rudyard Kipling)

After the notorious Sykes-Picot secret colonial agreement on May 1916, the two victorious imperial powers, Great Britain and France, took advantage of the outcome of the First World War, and maliciously divided the Ottoman dominions in the Arab World among themselves. This secret bargain was given the name of two diplomats who represented their countries in the negotiations and signing the said agreement, Sir Mark Sykes, from Britain and François G. Picot from France. These two countries saw that they should bear 'the White man's burden' as Kipling says in one of his famous poems. The French took charge of the Maghrib, Lebanon and Syria. Palestine and Jordan were put under the British mandate, while Egypt and Iraq were given incomplete independence. Libya was already under the Italian occupation in 1911. This led to the creation of strong military and literary movements of resistance against the occupiers among the natives of these countries.<sup>7</sup> A lot of thinkers and intellectuals in these occupied countries took part in the movements of liberation, leading, instigating their people and contributing to fighting the occupiers. To mention just a few of these intellectuals we cite al-Rusaffi, a

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<sup>7</sup> - Muhsin Jasim Al-Musawi, *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel: Debating Ambivalence* (Leiden. Boston: Brill, 2003), 45.

notable Iraqi poet who fled to Turkey, and al-Thaalibi, from Tunisia, fled to Iraq and continued writing postcolonial literature from their countries of exile. Their contributions were not restricted to the period of colonisation, but extended to the post-independence era.

From the time after the Arabic Renaissance and awakening, multi-faceted encounters took place, particularly in literary narratives between East and West due to the bad treatment and racial discrimination against the indigenous people by the colonising West who treated the natives as (inferior others). This resulted in the appearance of post-colonial literature in which a number of current issues of identity, hybridity, ambivalence, gender, and race, to mention just a few, were introduced in the literary field. Ashcroft *et al*, in their book *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, maintain that “post-colonial literatures are a result of...interaction between imperial culture and the complex of indigenous cultural practices.”<sup>8</sup>

It is worth highlighting that long before the appearance of the Post-colonial books of Fanon, Said, Bhabha, and others, there were a lot of movements of resistance all over the colonized countries that fought the colonisers and consequently resulted in gaining independence and self-governance. The colonial rule in the Asian and African countries ended at different times of the twentieth century due to the liberation movements. India got its independence from England in 1947. By 1980, England had lost almost all its colonies. “The

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<sup>8</sup> - Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* ( New York: Routledge, 1995), 1.

concept of one nation ruling the other has become almost unthinkable in the present day.”<sup>9</sup>

Jasim Al-Musawi, the author of *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel: Debating Ambivalence* observes that it is only the honest and brave intellectuals dominate the narrative space with its representational concerns and discuss taboo subjects during colonial periods and after gaining independence.

In the works of the postcolonial novelists, we often find the authors use the heroes, indirectly, and in a hidden style, talk about the real experiences of the people in their society in the form of fiction rather than writing and criticising in plain words. The author tries to expose the dire political, social and economic situations of his people through his characters in order to be safe. It is not wise to write what is really in their minds in despotic regimes.<sup>10</sup> For instance, the Libyan novelist Ibrahim al-Koni writes about the desert, and the real sufferings of Tuareg, and uses the real and the magic weaved and fused together. Through this mode, he does not involve himself and criticise in plain prose, but uses his fiction to say whatever he wants to say through the heroes of his novels. He puts on his shoulders the burden of acquainting the world to the real situation of the Tuareg people who live in the western part of the Libyan Sahara desert. He talks about their religious traditions, rites, custom, practices and how they fight back the destructive intrusions of the desert invaders. He uses ‘magical realism’ as a kind of resistance against the foreigner who intruded the desert and upset Tuareg’s life and their cultural heritage and even threatened their existence.

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<sup>9</sup> - M. S Nagarajan, *English Literary Criticism, and Theory* (New Delhi: Blackswan: 2011), 185.

<sup>10</sup> - Al-Musawi, 54.

In his narrative, he focuses on the history of Tuareg and tries to mirror the rottenness and destruction that have taken place as a consequence of the desert exposure to Western civilisation and to man's greed and brutality.

Ibrahim al-Koni has emerged as one of the leading Arabic language authors since the 1990s. His novels, short story collections, essays, aphorisms, and Arabic proverbial writings are coloured by the life of the nomadic tribes and inhabitants of the desert of southern Libya, as stated by Elliott Colla:

Taking the Tuareg aspect of al-Koni's writing seriously allows us to recognize a radically redrawn map of the world—one in which the Sahara is a full, rather than empty space; one in which the Tuareg lie not at the edges, but the centre of history.<sup>11</sup>

Al-Koni may well be considered as one of the pioneer writers of fiction in Libya, not only for his use of magical realism, myths, his recourse to history, but also for his emphasis on Tuareg's freedom, their dignity, and equality. In his novels, he insists to give his characters Tuareg names, in additions of using Tuareg words, and phrases every now and then in all of his novels to make the reader live in Tuareg's world and atmosphere. The non-Tuareg characters are described as intruders and given evil names such as 'Cain' which symbolises the Qura'nic and Biblical 'Cain' who killed his brother Abel.

Likewise, Imen Y. Cozzo maintains that many postcolonial literary critics and men of letters such as Susan McHugh, Elliott Colla, and Meinrad Calleja all acknowledge, and categorise al-Koni as a magical realist writer. Moreover, she

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<sup>11</sup> - Elliot Colla, *Ahramonline*, Wednesday 22nd December, 2010.  
<http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/2340.aspx>. Last retrieved August 2013.



points out that he is one of the first novelists to use this genre in the Arab world.<sup>12</sup>

In his oeuvre, particularly in the three novels which I have chosen to scrutinize, namely *The Bleeding of the Stone*, *The Seven Veils of Seth*, and *Gold Dust*, it is observed that there is an emphasis on animal-human relationships, and the coexistence between these two different species. Furthermore, al-Koni uses metamorphoses where man transforms into an animal as in *The Bleeding of the Stone*; therefore, some critics as Fiona F. Moolla, Elliott Colla and, Susan McHugh, among others, see that his novels should be considered examples of Arab magical realism where he blends the magical with the real in a unique way.

‘Post-colonialism / postcolonialism’ is a confusing and complex term that is not easy to define; it appears that there is no consensus concerning its definition. Literary critics and thinkers differ as to how to spell the term. Some spell it with a hyphen ( post-colonialism) while others spell it without a hyphen ‘postcolonialism’. John McLoed, Professor of Postcolonial and Diaspora Literatures at Leeds University, argues that the hyphenated (post-colonialism) seems to refer to a particular historical period. It refers to the period that follows the evacuation of the coloniser, namely, the period after attaining political freedom and becoming a self-ruled country. In other words, the hyphenated form is limited to the period beginning with national independence. Thus, the hyphenated term gives the impression that the age of colonialism does not exist anymore due to the departure of the coloniser from the colonised

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<sup>12</sup>- Imen Aya Cozzo, *Two Questers in the Twentieth –Centuries North Africa: Paul Bowel and Ibrahim al-Koni* (Newcastle: UK.: Cambridge Scholar Publishing 2016), 202.

country. On the other hand, the unhyphenated 'Postcolonialism' form traces the era throughout the colonisation and after gaining political independence. Moreover, it also refers to the methods and ways of literary representations of the colonised Orient in the Occident Literatures, particularly in the classics.<sup>13</sup>

Jasim Mausawi, in his book *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel: Debating Ambivalence*, agrees with MacLeod in his argument that "the historical post-colonial, in its hyphenated inscription, does not necessarily contradict the postcolonial, but the latter assumes a greater potential beyond the historical, which it also decentres."<sup>14</sup>

In other words, it must be noted that the term postcolonialism is not confined to the period after the colonisation, but also refers to the prolongation of the period of colonial intervention in the internal affairs of the colonised countries by means of military power and the knowledge they impose on the colonised.

Postcolonialism is the literature of resistance that deals with the writings written in the ex-colonies of European imperial countries such as Spain, Italy, France, and England. Moreover, it includes other countries that are still under the colonial rule of any of the said countries. Additionally, postcolonialism theory deals with the literature written by writers from the colonised countries and is interested in discussing issues that concern the colonised people and making these issues as its subject matter.

One of the main interests of postcolonialism theory is to subvert, change European and Western views toward the excluded minorities, and thus

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<sup>13</sup> - John McLeod, *Beginning postcolonialism*. Second edition (Manchester: MUP, 2007), 5.

<sup>14</sup> - Al-Musawi, 68.

generating or making space for the socially, and politically oppressed, the disregarded, and creating a different discourse other than the Eurocentric one.

Ato Quayson, in his introduction to *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature*, aligns with Spivak, Edward Said, Fanon and other prominent postcolonial theorists concerning the nature of postcolonial studies and asserts that these studies focus, among other things, on how the occupied natives are represented in the Western literature. Moreover, it deals with the heritage and cultural differences between the coloniser and colonised societies. Additionally, Postcolonialism studies explore the circumstances and situations of the marginalised, and excluded minorities who are of different races anywhere in the West.

Literary critics and scholars as Edward Said, Franz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, Ashcroft, and others, believe that colonialist countries did not confine themselves to military force in ruling and dominating the occupied territories. They maintain that even after the occupied countries attained their independence, colonialism and imperialism continued in different aspects, hidden shapes and forms. They assert that the imperial impact exists and still strong up to now, particularly in the representations of the Orient in the literature of the European countries.

In other words, though some of the countries that gained political independence and became free from the colonisers' direct rule, colonisers are still in power controlling the ex-colonised, socially, psychologically, economically and in many other aspects of life. Dr. Datta G. Sawant in his article "*Perspectives on Post-colonial Theory: Said, Spivak and Bhabha*"

observes that postcolonialism is the persistence and continuity of domination so that the colonised countries look as if they are free and have political freedom, but in reality, they are not economically, culturally and psychologically free at all.<sup>15</sup>

The notable Post colonialism theorists, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin align with Bhabha, Said, Spivak concerning the scope of the term 'Postcolonialism', and in their view, the concept deals with the traditions, values, principles, and other cultural aspects that have been influenced by the conquests of European countries to the African, Asian, and Latin American countries. The European colonisers have imposed their culture, languages, beliefs, and values upon the colonised from the first moment of the colonisation up to date. For this reason, the literatures of the colonised countries, like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, South Pacific Island countries, and the African countries, to mention only a few, are classified as postcolonial literatures that emerged from first-hand experience of colonisation.<sup>16</sup>

In short, the majority of postcolonial thinkers largely agree that the impacts of colonialism are not restricted to colonising a foreign country and ruling its people, but more importantly, it involves trials to change the colonized ways of life, language, ways of thinking, traditions, religion and force the coloniser's

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<sup>15</sup> Dr. Datta G. Sawant " *Perspectives on Post-colonial Theory*": Said, Spivak, and Bhabha Article- October 2011.

<sup>16</sup> - Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin: *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literature*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition( London &New York: Routledge,2002),2.

culture, attitudes, and use the occupier's language in addition, they want them to admit their inferiority and acknowledging the coloniser's superiority.

In his article, "*Representation of Post Independent Africa: A Man of the People*" Dr. Pallavi Bhardwaj, a teaching staff member in one of the notable Indian universities, points out that Postcolonial theory discusses a wide variety of problems such as ethnicity, gender, race, in addition to encountering, and undermining dreadful and tragic effects of Western culture and literature. Moreover, postcolonial theory deals with the problems of building a postcolonial national identity.<sup>17</sup>

It must be highlighted that Postcolonial Literature deals with colonial experience, not as the coloniser sees and feels it, but as the colonised and marginalised looks at it, as the case of the writings of the prominent Nigerian writer and novelist Chinua Achebe, the Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong, the Nigerian Nobel Prize winner in literature Wole Soyinka, and the notable Libyan writer and novelist Ibrahim al-Koni, to mention just a few. Their works concentrate on the problems that face the natives, in addition to the conflicts and tensions created by the West in their simple African societies. These authors attempt to build confidence in the hearts and minds of their peoples and prove to themselves and to the rest of the world that they have their own culture, they have their own laws, their own philosophy, and their own traditions. More importantly, they assert that their societies have their own culture long before the colonisation. In their novels, short stories and essays they urge their people to have confidence and attempt to restore this lost

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<sup>17</sup>- Pallavi Bhardwaj, "*Representation of Post Independent Africa: A Man of the People*" The International Journal Of Humanities & Social Studies (ISSN 2321 - 9203) www.theijhss.com 123 Vol. 2 Issue 12 December 2014.

dignity. Their aim is to convince their people that they could govern themselves by themselves and solve their own problems by using their own laws and traditions as they used to do before colonisation. According to them regaining their dignity, identity and self-respect are things of utmost importance.

## **1.2. Western narrative discourse**

The majority of literary scholars agree that Postcolonial literature is a new field of study which became very popular in the twentieth century due to the appearance and impact of some literary works which consequently became indispensable texts of Post-colonial studies, such as Edward Said's *Orientalism* which was published in 1978, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) by the notable Martinican psychiatrist, philosopher, and revolutionary Franz Fanon, *Nation and Narration* (1980) by Homi Bhabha, and *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literature* (1989) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), an article by the distinguished Indian scholar of post-colonialism Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.<sup>18</sup>

Edward Said acknowledges the truth of the well-known phrase 'Knowledge is power', which is attributed to the great English philosopher, scientist and writer Francis Bacon (1561-1626), but Said argues that 'knowledge is never innocent'. Said explains that the West used their knowledge of the 'Orient' and Orientals as a means to further tighten their grip on the Eastern countries for their own interests. Said says that the French occupation of Egypt did not last for more than three years, but because Napoleon sent scholars and scientists

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<sup>18</sup>- M. S. Nagarajan, *English Literary Criticism, and Theory* (New Delhi: Blackswan, 2011), 185.

along with the military power, their effect in Egypt still exists up to the present times<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, Said names some prominent European writers, politicians, thinkers, and poets who wrote poems, plays, novels and articles about the East and the Orient, portraying the Orient as inferior to justify Europe's subjugation and rule of the East. Said writes

the choice of "Oriental" was canonical; it had been employed by Chaucer and, Mandeville, Shakespeare, Dryden, and Byron. One could speak in Europe of an Oriental personality, an Oriental atmosphere, an Oriental tale, Oriental despotism, or Oriental mode of production, and be understood. It designated Asia or the East, geographically, morally, culturally.<sup>20</sup>

Edward Said goes even further than that and gives additional examples of how the West represents the East in their literature. To illustrate this, he quotes a speech by Arthur J. Balfour, Prime Minister of Great Britain, delivered in the House of Commons in 1910 legitimising and defending the British occupation of Egypt. Answering a question about his description of the Egyptians as inferior Orientals, Balfour asserts the British and European superiority, and confirms the inferiority of other races:

Western nations as soon as they emerge into history show the beginnings of those capacities of self-government[...]having merits of their own...You may look through the true history of the Orientals, in what is called, broadly speaking, the East, and you never find traces of self-government [...] We are in Egypt not merely for the sake of Egyptians, though we are there for their sake; we are there also for the sake of Europe at large.<sup>21</sup>

Prime Minister Balfour, portrays the Egyptians, and Easterners in general as inferior, backward people who exist out of history, unable to govern themselves by themselves. He, therefore, gives his country the reason and the right to treat

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<sup>19</sup> - Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Classics. 2003), XV.

<sup>20</sup> - Said, *Orientalism* 31-32.

<sup>21</sup> - Said, *Orientalism*, 31-33.

them accordingly and finds the excuse to rule Egypt. He claims that it is for the best interest of both parties ( the colonised and the coloniser). According to Arthur Balfour, the Egyptians never were able to act or think for themselves, but need the help of a superior race to do these jobs for them. Edward Said illustrates the relationship between knowledge and power, which he confirms that “knowledge is never innocent”. Moreover, Said argues that the ‘Orient’ in Western literature is represented as inferior, primitive, and morally degenerate, and this produces a wide gap between the West and the East.

M.H. Abrams & Geoffrey Galt Harpham in their *Handbook of Literary Terms*, maintain that Edward Said in *Orientalism* adopts Michel Foucault's historicist theory of discourse in which Foucault maintains that the discourse of a certain period creates notions and ideas, disputes and establishments which are in themselves products and broadcasters of power, and these exhibit the real power of ‘knowledge’, at a certain period of time.

Abrams aligns with Said concerning the power of Eurocentric discourse and knowledge used by the West. He argues that the imperialist countries used ‘knowledge’ to establish their authority over the Oriental countries not only through the use of military power, but also through circulating Eurocentric discourse which instil, and implant in the Oriental minds the idea that whatever comes from the West is superior to anything that comes from the inferior East.<sup>22</sup>

However, Western countries, because they have the power and knowledge, created a discourse about the *Orient* and established binaries to differentiate between the coloniser West and the colonised East. The established binary

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<sup>22</sup>- M.H. Abrams & Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *Handbook of Literary Terms* (New Delhi: Cengage Learning Ltd. 2009), 237.



shows that one side as positive (superior) ‘ the West’, and the other as negative or (inferior)’ the East’. This discourse was created long ago which influenced the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. Its purpose is to ensure the supremacy and dominance of the colonizer over the colonized.

Ambesange Praveen V maintains that according to Said, in the European literature, particularly, the classics, the East is always represented as inferior to the superior West-the East is presented as mysterious, and immoral. Said maintains that colonialist discourse is the tool with which colonialism is recognised and established. Moreover, this discourse is an ideology which mirrors colonial power.<sup>23</sup>

Postcolonial literary critics and scholars believe that Western novelists, thinkers, and even philosophers have negative opinions and attitudes towards Africa and Asia; consequently, they depict the *Orient* “as an irrational, psychologically weak, feminized, non-European *Other*, which is negatively contrasted with the rational, psychologically strong, and masculine West.”<sup>24</sup> Westerners have created binary oppositions to attain their superiority over other races and implant the idea of inferiority in the minds of the Easterners. In other words, Western discourse, particularly in the classics discloses the hidden schemes, power, knowledge, and ideology which serve to preserve and solidify Western superiority. Defoe’s *Robeson Crusoe*, Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow’s *Tamburlaine* and Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* are good examples of Western canonical works that serve this purpose. Postcolonial writing is held to

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<sup>23</sup> - Ambesange Praveen V., *Postcolonialism: Edward Said & Gayatri Spivak* . Research Journal of Recent Sciences.Vol. 5(8), 47-50, August (2016).

<sup>24</sup> -Said, 65–67.

reject the European canon. Readers have started realizing and treating works from Europe's ex-colonies as the opposition of the European acknowledged and undisputed mode of writing. They have started to consider postcolonial writing as a way to recover their traditions which were destroyed by the coloniser West. So one of the aims of postcolonial literature is to re-read, re-write the Western classics such as Defoe's *Robeson Crusoe*, Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, to name only a few.

Claude Alvares in his article "*Resisting the West's Intellectual Discourse*" agrees with Said and other postcolonial theorists that the West utilises knowledge to dominate the East, but adds that in addition to knowledge, and discourse, the West uses military power as well to establish their rule over the East. Alvares confirms that it is a fallacy to believe that the West established its political rule over the East, mainly through Knowledge and Eurocentric discourse. The West dominated the East both through knowledge and without any worry of using military power as well.<sup>25</sup>

The use of force, in addition to knowledge, could be seen clearly when the ambitious Military French leader, Napoleon Bonaparte, wanted to enlarge and widen his empire in the East started his campaign there by sending scientists, scholars, and missionaries to Egypt and Syria in 1798. He provided them with financial support in order to study the East and the oriental people to pave the way for his military occupation. When Napoleon set his feet on the Egyptian soil, the first thing that he did was to kill a lot of people, then delivered a speech to the Egyptians saying: "Indeed the sensible man knows that our acts are His

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<sup>25</sup> - Claude Alvares, "*Resisting the West's Intellectual Discourse*." In *Dominance of the West over the Rest*. ed., (Penang, Malaysia: Just World Trust, 1995), 1–21.

(God's) will and divine decree, and he who doubts this is stupid and devoid of perception."<sup>26</sup>

It is as what Said contends, that 'knowledge is never innocent'. Napoleon used military force, terrorized the Egyptians first, then used knowledge in order to subjugate the people of Egypt and Syria.

Al-Koni alludes to the use of power and knowledge by the invaders in *The bleeding of the Stone*, *The Seven Veils of Seth* and *Gold Dust* through his characters the Arab Cain, the American John Parker, the Italian Bordello and the strangers Dudu and Isan. ( this will be discussed in chapter three and chapter four of this dissertation.

Despite the fact that postcolonial theorists as Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak have a different point of views in their theories of postcolonialism, but each tries to expose, examine and unearth the Western construction and representation of the Orient. Their main objective is to explain, take action and reduce or eliminate the negative effects of colonialism on the colonised people, their cultural heritage, and identity. They were not simply concerned with restoring the past culture and identity of the ex-colonised, but attempted to prove that the ex-colonised and coloniser can live together in harmony and mutual respect.

Gayatri Spivak, one of the most influential writers in the field of postcolonialism often uses the military term 'Subaltern' in order to highlight the disgraceful representation of the Orient in the European literary discourse. A *subaltern* is someone with an inferior military rank, or low in the social, or political hierarchy. The term can also mean someone who has been marginalized or inhumanly suppressed. The Italian Marxist thinker, Antonio

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<sup>26</sup> Al-Musawi, *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel: Debating Ambivalence*, 48.

Gramsci was the first to use this term meaning those “groups in society who are subject to the domination of the ruling classes such as labourers, farmers and other groups denied access to ‘hegemonic’ power.”<sup>27</sup>

In her article, “*Can the Subaltern Speak?*” Spivak argues that the West created the subaltern in their discourse, and imposed social and political systems which deny a space for indigenous people to speak for themselves. The ultimate result is that the subaltern cannot speak. In her article Spivak attacks the Eurocentric attitudes of the West toward the East. Like Said, she points out that knowledge is not innocent. Knowledge is always monopolised by Western economic interests, politics, and power. Knowledge, according to Spivak, is not different from any other product manufactured or created by the (superior) West, and then marketed to the East and Asia.<sup>28</sup> Western scholars have always falsely claimed that their knowledge about the East, its culture and its people is based on scientific study, therefore, it is true, objective, and unbiased. They, misleadingly claim that their goals are mainly humanitarian, charitable and that all they want is to fight ignorance, poverty, disease, and tyranny in the countries they occupy.

Nagarajan, the author of *English Literary Criticism and Theory* observes that England, France, Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands colonized and dominated many African, Asian, and Latin American countries and looked at

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<sup>27</sup> - Elem Eyryce Tepeciklioğlu, *The Development of Postcolonial Theory* . Paper Presented at the 4th ECPR Graduate Student Conference Jacobs University, Bremen: 4 - 6 July 2012, 7

<sup>28</sup>- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “ *Can the Subaltern Speak?*” in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffin(London, New York: Routledge Tylor Group,1995,24-28.

the natives of these countries as inferior subjects who should be treated as subalterns. Great Britain, France, and Spain colonized over three-quarters of the globe by the mid of the twentieth century. Great Britain held power and influence over a large number of countries, therefore, was called ‘the Empire where the sun never sets’. Widespread interest in Postcolonialism Literature and criticism began after the end of the Second World War when most of the colonised countries gained their independence. Nagarajan adds that one of the tasks of postcolonialism literature is exploring and questioning the repercussions of occupation and the intense impacts of foreign domination.<sup>29</sup>

Postcolonial theorists like Fanon, Said, Césaire, Bhabha, Spivak, and many others believe that Western knowledge was used for political and economic interests to legalise and validate their colonisation.

John McLeod asserts this in his book *Beginning of Post colonialism*. He argues that theories of postcolonial narrative have a great and powerful influence in the growth and expansion of postcolonialism literature. These theories study, investigate, and uncover the ways of the Western representations, narrative styles and how they are employed to further help them establish their imperial schemes, tighten their grip over their colonies, and solidify their dominance.<sup>30</sup>

This kind of representation of the *Orient* in European texts led to creating a split between Europe and the ‘*Others*’, central to the creation of a dominant

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<sup>29</sup> -Nagarajan, *English Literary Criticism, and Theory*,185.

<sup>30</sup> - McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*,17.

European culture as well as the maintenance of European domination and control of the lands of the *Others*.

A lot of intellectuals in the field of postcolonialism are greatly influenced by the notable books of postcolonial theorist, West Indian Martinique Frantz Omar Fanon (b1925). Fanon's books *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) won him a global reputation as a prominent intellectual in international decolonisation. As mentioned earlier, these two books have a great impact on a lot of writers and activists in the field of postcolonialism. After graduating from the University of Lyon in the field of Medicine and psychiatry, Fanon was appointed in Blida-Joinville Hospital in Algiers which was a French colony and considered as an inseparable part of France at that time. While practicing his job as a psychiatrist treating French and Algerian soldiers in Algiers, Fanon began to notice dreadful psychological effects of violence on the colonised. Additionally, he noticed that the French authorities practiced racist policies against Algerian soldiers. Consequently, he quit his job and joined the Algerian Liberation Movement and became the official spokesperson of the movement<sup>31</sup>

In *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon points out that:

In the colonies, the foreigner coming from another country imposed his rule by means of guns and machines. In defiance of his successful transplantation, in spite of his appropriation, the settler still remains a foreigner. It is neither the act of owning factories nor estates nor a bank balance, which distinguishes the governing class. The governing is first and foremost those

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<sup>31</sup> - Charles Peterson, *Frantz Fanon, West Indian psychoanalyst, and philosopher*.  
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Frantz-Fanon> .Last Updated: Sep 21, 2018.

who come from elsewhere, those who are unlike the original inhabitants, 'the others'.<sup>32</sup>

Fanon observes that there is a great distinction between the colonised and the coloniser who came through their knowledge and use of military power. The colonised are treated as inferior human beings in their own land, and denied to have the same human rights given to the colonisers; they are treated as '*the Others*'. Fanon asserts that domination is the main objective of the coloniser. He points out that in order that the colonisers achieve their goals they always use military force, and resort to violence to achieve their goals of subjugating the colonised. They believe that only through violence they can reshape the world of the colonised native. He, therefore sees that it is necessary for the natives to fight back and use violence to attain their independence and freedom.

Moreover, Fanon sees that the native postcolonial governments and their leaders are to blame for their failure in achieving the dreams of their people and for their inability to overcome the problems created by the colonisers. They failed to establish national unity, economic dependence, among the newly liberated masses and failed to get rid of the rampant corruption, ethnic division, and racism.<sup>33</sup>

In other words, the colonized *Others* are required by the colonisers to be exemplary colonial subjects who should willingly accept and be content with

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<sup>32</sup> - Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Trans. C. Farrington( Harmondsworth: Penguin,1961), 30-31.

<sup>33</sup> - Charles Peterson, *Frantz Fanon, West Indian psychoanalyst, and philosopher*. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Frantz-Fanon>. Last Updated: Sep 21, 2018 .

European domination and superiority. The colonised are expected to acknowledge that they are irrational, uncivilised, insensible, illogical, ignorant, and do not have the ability, as Balfour says, to govern themselves by themselves. Moreover, they should abandon their native culture, their indigenous identity, their language and replace them with the coloniser's culture, language, and identity.

Nagarajan, the author of *English Literary Criticism and Theory* contends that the colonialist ideology has created colonised *Others* who act as what the coloniser wants and desires. The coloniser wants the colonised to willingly accept the superiority of the coloniser, admit and accept their own inferiority.<sup>34</sup>

This agrees with Frantz Fanon who believes that imitating the white and accepting the colonial culture, at the same time do not see and treat the natives as equals create grave physiological and sociological consequences, which means creating natives with unstable or double identities. As mentioned earlier, Frantz Fanon suggests that the colonised should resort to violence to gain their rights and their country back. Fanon wants a total cleansing of the coloniser- he is even against the use of the coloniser's language. Violence, according to Fanon, is the right, and appropriate means of gaining independence, and cleansing and purifying the colonized Africans from the psychological effects of colonisers. That is one of the reasons which directed Fanon to support and join the most powerful groups of 'FLN' (National Liberation Front) in Algiers. Narangan says that the phenomenon of "imitating the West is called 'mimicry'. According to Fanon, through mimicry, the colonised subjects

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<sup>34</sup> - Nagarajan, *English Literary Criticism, and Theory*, 187.



develop a ‘double’ consciousness’, that is, perceiving the world through the eyes and outlook of the coloniser as well as through their own vision provided by their native culture. This creates unbalanced, disturbed or double identity.<sup>35</sup>

Another prominent postcolonial thinker, and critic is Homi K. Bhabha, born in India in 1949. He got his Ph.D. Degree from Oxford University, and taught in a number of highly ranked universities, Harvard University was one of them. Bhabha agrees with Fanon in certain points and differs with him in others. He aligns with Fanon about the psychological effects of colonialism. Unlike Fanon, Bhabha is against the use of force and violence to gain independence. Bhabha wrote several postcolonial major works such as *Nation and Narration*, *the Location of Culture*, and several others. His works influenced a lot of critics and scholars of the field of postcolonialism. In his books, Bhabha focuses on the anxieties and the disturbed personality of the colonised. For Bhabha, colonisation affects the personality of the colonised psychologically. The colonised becomes uncertain to which culture he belongs. She or he is divided between two clashing cultures. Bhabha calls this the state of ‘*unhomeliness*’. Charles E. Bressler, in his book, *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* argues that this “concept referred to as *double consciousness* by some political theorists. This feeling of perception of abandonment by both cultures causes the colonial subject (the colonised) to become a psychological refugee.”<sup>36</sup> Bhabha points out that it is not possible for the colonised countries to restore their previous identity as it was before colonization.

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<sup>35</sup> - Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 30-31.

<sup>36</sup> - Charles E. Bressler, *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. 5t Edition( Boston, USA: Longman.2011),205.

According to Bhabha, when the coloniser's culture mixes with the colonised culture, a third space culture - a mixture of the two cultures is formed. The new ensued third culture changes the coloniser's and the colonised culture as well, which Bhabha calls *hybridity*.

As mentioned earlier, Postcolonial Literature concerns itself with the colonised national culture and identity from the day of colonisation to the period after the departure of colonisers. It is worth noting that postcolonial Literature discusses and deals with a wide variety of topics such as cultural heritage, religion, mythologies, racial discrimination to mention just a few. In short, the area of Postcolonial Literature is very wide. It is not limited to particular issues or confined to the period of colonisation alone.

Although scholars and critics have no general consensus about the history, scope, and boundaries of postcolonialism, they agree that it is not limited to military occupation and antagonism, it also deals with the outcome-the period after national independence. Moreover, it focuses on the representation of the so-called 'inferior' East in the Literature of the 'superior' West. Moreover, it deals with the culture and cultural literature of the colonised and ex-colonised countries.

Jonathan Hart, in his article "*Traces, Resistance, and Contradictions: Canadian and International Perspectives on Postcolonial Theories*" agrees with Ashcroft et al, regarding that Postcolonialism is a "highly complex study of the cultural, political, and historical differences among the European imperial powers from their former colonies."<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the prominent

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<sup>37</sup> - Jonathan Hart, "*Traces, Resistances, and Contradictions: Canadian and International Perspectives On Postcolonial Theories.*" *Arachne* 1.1 (1994): (71-72)

Chinese postcolonial scholar Wang Ning, argues that postcolonialism is a strong, valid cultural approach that discusses the ideological reactions which challenge colonialist Western culture and the colonial discourse. additionally, it helps to amend and change Western people's traditional false impressions and attitudes about the East and to spread postcolonial studies in the West.<sup>38</sup>

Ashcroft et al, argue that before the term 'Postcolonial' became popular, there were other derogatory and belittling terms meant to give negative impressions about postcolonialism such as 'Commonwealth Literature' and 'Third World Literature'.

Ashcroft et al explain that the literary expression 'Commonwealth Literature' occurred in the 1960s, and its meaning or scope is confined to certain geographical and political areas. It is also confined to a particular historical period that it cannot trespass. The term refers to a group of literatures that is written in countries that were or are under the British control, and are members of the British Commonwealth. On the other hand, Third World Literature is uncomplimentary term used to be taught as an academic course in some Universities.<sup>39</sup>

McLeod sums up the history of Commonwealth Literature, elucidating that it is narrowed to countries which were under the British colonization. He differs from Ashcroft et al on the date of its beginning; while the first says that it began

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<sup>38</sup> - Wang Ning, "*Postcolonial Theory and the 'Decolonisation' of Chinese Culture*  
<https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/ariel/article/.../28207>

<sup>39</sup> - Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin, *The Empire writes back. Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*. 2<sup>nd</sup>.Edition ( London, Routledge, 1989), 22.

in the 1960s, the latter says that it began in the 1950s. McLeod maintains that the term did not exclude exploring and studying the literary production of the European societies who are settled in the colonies in addition to writers of the ex-colonised countries.<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, ‘Commonwealth Literature’ is sometimes used as an equivalent to ‘post-colonial literature’, while post-colonialist literature does not exclude writings scribed in other languages. Commonwealth Literature is “that body of writing created ... in the English language, by persons who are not themselves white Britons, or Irish, or citizens of the United States of America.”<sup>41</sup> Bertens observes that during the 1980s, Commonwealth Literature became part of the developing and huge literary subject area, known now as postcolonial studies.<sup>42</sup>

It is worth highlighting that, most if not all, postcolonial writers are engaged in a continuous literary fight trying to correct and wipe away the negative colonial impacts and the misconceptions, stereotyping of the Europeans about the East and the Orient which are found in abundance in European classics, travelogues, and many other writings. What the postcolonial writers do is a kind of ‘writing back’ or re-writing the East from an insider and a marginalised point of view. The West misrepresented the East, making this distortion of facts knowingly and according to a strategy planned a long time ago. In his article titled *Postcolonialism: Edward Said & Gayatri Spivak*, Dr. Ambesange Praveen V. argues that the great interest of the West in the East was not born today, but

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<sup>40</sup> - McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, 10.

<sup>41</sup> - [www.ipsnews.net/1997/.../literature-what-is-commonwealth-literature](http://www.ipsnews.net/1997/.../literature-what-is-commonwealth-literature).

<sup>42</sup> - Bertens, Hans, *Literary Theory: The Basics* ( London Routledge, 2007), 200.

dates back to the Middle Ages. He argues that this interest is obvious in the tales and stories told and written by Western travellers who described their adventures in that vast area. To illustrate he cites the adventures of Marco Polo (1254- 1324), the well-known Italian writer and discoverer as evidence. Polo recorded his travels and adventures, mixed with his personal impressions about the East in a book titled *The Travels of Marco Polo*. Thinkers believe that the introduction of the East to the West began with the publication of this famous book of travels, which was translated into many European languages. Consequently, many travellers followed suit and started to write about their own adventures in the East. Additionally, the Portuguese explorer, Vasco-da-Gama, from Portugal, made a voyage to India in 1497-1499 and wrote a lot of interesting accounts about his personal impressions and observations of India and the East.<sup>43</sup>

The interest of the Europeans in the East, Africa in particular, was mainly for imperial and economic reasons believing that they are the better race and have every right to dominate the East. In his *Confession of Faith* (1877), Cecil John Rhodes, a member of Parliament, Prime Minister of Cape Colony in South Africa, writes:

Africa is still lying ready for us, it is our duty to take it. It is our duty to seize every opportunity of acquiring more territory and we should keep this one idea steadily before our eyes that more territory simply means more of the Anglo-Saxon race, more of the best, the most human, most honourable race the world possesses.<sup>44</sup>

The motive of the Europeans, as Cecil publicly declares, was to solve the problem of overpopulation in Britain, for the population of Britain at that time

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<sup>43</sup> - Ambesange Praveen V., “ *Postcolonialism: Edward Said & Gayatri Spivak*,”

<sup>44</sup> - Cecil Rhodes, *Confession of Faith, 1877, appendix to John Flint, Cecil Rhodes* (Boston, MA: Little Brown, and Co.,1974), 248-49,250.

was 40,000000, in addition to that, Britain needed new markets for the surplus of their products and their mines.

Robert Young confirms this idea, asserting that colonisation and occupying foreign lands was not for civilising the colonised, nor for religious and humanitarian reasons as the West always claims, but mainly for economic reasons as mentioned earlier by Cecil.

The Martinican poet and writer Aimé Césaire(1913-2008) in his *Discourse on Colonialism* agrees with Robert Young and makes it crystal clear that the motives of the colonisers are to exploit the natural resources of the colonised countries, improve the colonisers' economies and gather huge fortunes found in the occupied countries. He explains that the real nature of colonisation is not preaching the Gospel and converting the colonised subjects into Christianity, as the colonisers claim, nor it is for humanitarian reasons, and building institutions that aim to build civilised and prosperous societies, nor to overcome or reduce the rate of literacy in the colonised countries. Césaire, without any signs of fear or hesitation, says that the main aim of colonisation is to improve the economic situation of the colonisers and to exploit the natural resources of those countries.<sup>45</sup>

John McLeod in his book *Beginning Post Colonialism* aligns with Césaire and Young in their views of the reasons of the West's interest in the East when he admits that "Colonialism was a lucrative commercial operation, bringing wealth

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<sup>45</sup> - Aimé Césaire, "*Discourse on Colonialism*". Translated by Joan Pinkham. (New York and London: 1972 Monthly Review Press),2.

and riches to Western nations through the economic exploitation of others. It was pursued for economic profit, reward, and riches.”<sup>46</sup>

Rhodes and Belfour were not the only ones who believed that colonialism, as long as it is by the Anglo-Saxons and Europeans, is good both for the colonizers and the colonised. Kenneth N. Addison, the author of *We Hold These Truths to be Self-Evident: An Interdisciplinary Analysis of the Roots of Racism and Slavery in America*, quotes Jules Harmand ( 1845-1921), a French politician, colonial administrator, and strong adherent of imperialism, colonialism, and publisher of *Domination et Colonisation*, in 1910 had the same belief. Harmand advocated the indirect rule of the colonised and was against their assimilation in the French society. He asserts that they should not have the same rights the French have. He was also a staunch opponent of educating the indigenous, colonised Eastern subjects believing that Western education is above the *Orients*’ simple, inferior minds. According to him, their minds are far less intelligent compared to the Europeans and they are unable to absorb and understand Western education. Harmand says:

It is necessary, then, to accept as a principle and point of departure the fact that there is a hierarchy of races and civilizations, and that we belong to the superior race and civilization, still recognizing that, while superiority confers rights, it imposes strict obligations in return. The basic legitimation of conquest over native peoples is the conviction of superiority, not merely our mechanical, economic, and military superiority, but our moral superiority. Our dignity rests on that quality, and it underlines our right to direct the rest of humanity. Material power is nothing but a means to that end.<sup>47</sup>

The above quotation explains clearly that the colonisers see it as their divine right to claim and unfairly use the land of the colonised and make use of its

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<sup>46</sup> - McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, 7.

<sup>47</sup> - Kenneth N. Addison, *We Hold These Truths to be Self-Evident: An Interdisciplinary Analysis of the Roots of Racism and Slavery in America*. Lanham, Boulder( New York, Toronto, Plymouth-UK: University Press of America Inc.,2009), 6.

natural resources because they are the superior race. Moreover, they overtly subdue the indigenous inhabitants to slavery and indentured labour and see this as their right because they have the knowledge and material power.

The natives are expected to willingly abandon their own culture, religion, traditions, laws, adopt, and learn the coloniser's language, imitate the coloniser's way of thinking and education. Furthermore, the natives should not expect to be treated as equals to the colonisers. This is what Frantz Fanon warns against in his book, *Black Skin, White Masks*.

Drawing on the same issue Leela Gandhi, in her book *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* quotes the English poet, and politician Thomas Babington Macaulay's ill-reputed notes and remarks which he wrote in 1835. In these notes, he underrates and belittles the Indian and Arab cultures and educational systems. Macaulay writes: "a single shelf of a good European Library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia."<sup>48</sup>

Macaulay's Eurocentrism is crystal clear in his preference of European education and culture to any other, especially the Indians and Arabs. According to Macaulay, European culture and literature is the standard to judge good literature anywhere. Any other culture or education, according to Macaulay should be ignored, disregarded, and replaced by European culture and education.

Moreover, Macaulay's desire was to deprive the colonised of their own identities and replace it with the British identity but in Indian blood and colour.

Ashcroft et al quote Macaulay who arrogantly says: "we must at present do our

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<sup>48</sup> - Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Sydney Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1998), 144.



best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.”<sup>49</sup> This is what Fanon warns against and talks about in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*.

It is of vital importance to note that there is an involuntary and innate clash between the native, indigenous pre-colonial cultures, and the culture imposed on the natives by the imperial forces. Many of the post-colonial texts deal with the negative impact of colonisation, particularly the loss of the indigenous identity.

Cozzo maintains that the cultures of the colonised subjects are greatly affected by the occupier countries. The cultures of the occupied are always excluded, set aside, belittled, and replaced by the imperialists’ culture. Therefore, postcolonialist writers, zealously, attempt, and strive to write back, and prove in their literary productions that the natives have their own rich cultures which they highly respect, are proud of and thus seek to retrieve their lost identity.<sup>50</sup>

In short, postcolonialism literature aims to erase and eradicate the negative consequences produced by colonialism on the culture of the colonised. It attempts to give voice to the subaltern, to the suppressed who are silenced by the powerful and prevailing Western ideologies. Postcolonial literature attempts to relieve the subalterns from being suppressed by trying to alter the colonial attitude of superiority toward them. One of the main objectives of postcolonial

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<sup>49</sup>- Ashcroft et al., *The Empire writes back. Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*. 2<sup>nd</sup>. Edition, 375.

<sup>50</sup>-Cozzo, *Two Questers in the Twentieth –Centuries North Africa: Paul Bowel and Ibrahim l-Konai*, 23.

literature is to alleviate or undermine the European way of thinking toward the colonised, and the subalterns, so that they can speak and create their own discourse.

Postcolonialism discusses the literature written by the novelists and thinkers of the ex-colonised countries. During the period of colonisation, the colonised are suppressed, and the colonisers impose their culture, their values and ways of thinking. The same suppression continues even after the decolonisation period.

Post colonialism deals with the writings that were influenced and polluted by the colonial practices, and the literature that developed as a consequence of the colonial power, from the period of colonisation to the present day. Its function is to discover the coloniser's political, economic, and social ideologies at work and attempt to undermine them.

Colonialist discourse represents the language by which the colonisers express their superiority over the natives. The natives are always represented as inferior, uncivilized, lacking morals, therefore, the Anglo-Europeans claim that it is their duty to educate and civilize them. The whole native culture must be set aside. The colonisers are the centre, 'the self,( us), and the colonised are the margins, 'the others' (them).

Before discussing magical realism, I see it is of utmost importance to briefly discuss 'realism' and attempt to explain its relationship with magical realism.

Realism is a literary movement that emerged in France in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but its historical background goes to more than two thousand years back. In

fact, realism is the art of portraying the things in life as they are, and the concept is attributed to Aristotle, the Greek philosopher's idea of mimesis.

It is acknowledged that Aristotle was the first to introduce realism in literature in his *Poetics* which has become the basis of Western literary criticism. According to him, all humans have an innate tendency to imitate since birth. Mimesis, for Aristotle, is a natural characteristic of all humans. According to Aristotle, man is unique and differs from other creatures; he imitates more than any other. Man learns by imitation since childhood. In other words, we are born with the instinct of imitation. Aristotle sees mimesis as an essential means of learning about nature and reality<sup>51</sup>; he believes that it could be defined as the reflecting of nature. In Greek thought, the concept of mimesis is very important because they believe that art is a search for imitating the beauty of reality, and this concept of imitation is very important in the search for true art that mirrors reality accurately. For Aristotle, mimesis does not involve imitation only but also seeks perfection. Aristotle saw literary creation, whether it was epic or tragedy, as a kind of mimesis or imitation of things in our daily life. Good art, according to Aristotle must be convincing to the audience and describes life accurately.

Likewise, realism relies upon the idea of credibility in art. J.A.Cuddon, the author of *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* explains realism as the depiction of life as it really is with faithfulness without changing facts or exaggerating them such as describing things as beautiful whereas in reality, they are ugly and horrible. Moreover, realism is not

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<sup>51</sup>- Michelle Puetz , <http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/mimesis.htm> Winter 2002.

interested in dealing with illogical, and improbable things that cannot be scientifically explained.<sup>52</sup>

Realism was regarded as a key development in the French novels and paintings between 1850 and 1880. As a term, realism occurred for the first time in 1826 and was used to accurately describe the models with which nature provides the artist. However, most of the supporters of realism in France were against teaching the values and doctrines of Classicism and Romanticism in the universities and, instead, they demand a modern and effective work of art. Their aim was to give a true and realistic portrayal of the life of the lower and middle-class people, their customs, traditions, mores appearances, and their problems.

In other words, realism developed mainly as a literary feature of the novels in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In their works, novelists tried to give a true picture of life and the societies they live in attempting to gain the interest and sympathy of their audience. Corinne H. Dale quotes David Grant who emphasises the role of creation in addition to the imagination, and says that “The effect of realism is achieved not by imitation, but by creation; a creation which, working with the raw materials of life, absolves these by the intercession of the imagination from mere factuality and translates them to a higher order.”<sup>53</sup> We notice here the importance of imagination or creation in addition to imitation to give a realistic picture of real life.

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<sup>52</sup> - J. A. Cuddon, *Literary Terms, and Literary Theory*, (London: Penguin Books, 1999, 729).

<sup>53</sup> - Corinne H. Dale. *Chinese Aesthetics and Literature* ( New York: State University of New York Press, 2004, 159).

Since realism depends in a great part upon creation and imagination in representing life and reality, it is worth noting that it had its influence in the growth and development of magical realism as a narrative discourse.

### **1.3. Magical Realism**

Over the past eight decades of the previous century, magical realism has achieved universal acceptance and popularity as a narrative mode of writing. The Libyan novelist Ibrahim al-Koni is considered by many as an outstanding novelist who could ingeniously include ‘magical realism’ in his novels. This what distinguishes him from most Arab novelists. He, therefore, has achieved worldwide fame and success. Al-Koni is considered a pioneer in using the ‘magical realism’ mode of writing in the Arab world literature.

‘Magic realism’ and ‘magical realism’ are two different terms which a lot of people erroneously think that they are interchangeable or have the same meaning. Magic realism is a style used by fine arts painters trying to present the ambiguous elements of daily life and make their paintings represent reality clearly. It is used to depict a new kind of art trend in 1925, which considered as having different characteristics from the expressionism art trend which was popular at that time. On the other hand, magical realism is a literary narrative technique used by a lot of novelists who were influenced by the German art critic Franz Roh's ideas and developed a form of writing which assimilates fantastical elements like legends, folk tales, fables, and myths into everyday life.

Nowadays, magical realism has become a very popular narrative mode recognised and used everywhere and attained global fame. Maggie Bowers, in

her book *Magic(al) Realism*, asserts that most contemporary literary critics and thinkers give the credit of coining the term to the German art critic Franz Roh who wanted to describe the work of post-Expressionist artists in the mid-1920s, to differentiate and distinguish it from the expressionist art. Bowers argues that most of the literary critics like the prominent Amaryll Chanady, Seymour Menton, Lois Parkinson Zamora, and Wendy Faris assert that the term ‘magic realism’ was first introduced by Franz Roh, the German art critic in his book which was published in 1925 under the title *Magic Realism: Problems of the Most Recent European Painting*. Roh created the term ‘magic realism’ to differentiate the new kind of painting from the old expressionist art. The new kind of painting pays more attention to very tiny, and non-material details such as feelings and the like, in the painting which makes it quite different from the old style.<sup>54</sup>

Bower observes that Roh introduced the term “magic realism” as a response against the abstract style adopted by the advocates of Expressionism movement. Expressionists try to find a way to embody and convey the personal inner experience in the painting through the distortion of natural images. A lot of artists began to try and test this new form called Magic realism.

Dr. P. Indira aligns with Bowers about the origin of ‘magical realism’ asserting that it is an international style began in Europe first and then moved to Latin America by the two Latin American writers Arturo Uslar Pietri and Alejo Carpentier. In his book, *Salman Rushdie and Magic Realism* P. Indira maintains that the Argentinian novelist, writer and literary critic Enrique

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<sup>54</sup> - Maggie Ann Bowers, *Magic Realism*(New York: Routledge, 2004),8.

Anderson Imbert (1910-2000), points out that ‘magic/al realism’ as a term “first appeared in the criticism of the plastic arts and only afterward it was extended to literature.”<sup>55</sup> In 1927 the Italian novelist, poet, and playwright, Massimo Bontempelli (1878-1960) was the first to use the term in Literature to distinguish modernist novels from other kinds of fiction. It is worth highlighting that this kind of fiction was neglected and it was almost about to be forgotten in Europe until it was resurrected by the Latin American novelists in the 1940’s.

Lois Parkinson Zamora, one of the leaders in the comparative study of literature of the Americas, and Wendy B. Faris, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at The University of Texas, expertly elucidate that “Magic” in magical realism narration, does not mean using witchcraft, sorcery or supernatural power over something or someone to change its physical form from one species to another or one state to another. Zamora and Faris explain that magic here means violating the limits and restrictions of a purely realistic setting and becoming a part of a new setting. It deals with the real realm, and real characters and focuses on personal and interpersonal conflicts. They assert that in Magical Realism, “the supernatural is an ordinary matter, an everyday occurrence--admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism.”<sup>56</sup>

In his article, “*Magical realism as Postcolonial Discourse*”, the notable Canadian literary critic, Stephen Slemon summarizes the term ‘magical

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<sup>55</sup> - Enrique Anderson Imbert, “*Magical Realism in Spanish-American Fiction*”  
<https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/IFR/article/view/1309>

<sup>56</sup> - Zamora and Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments: Magic Realism and the Mystification of Narrative*. (Nashville, USA: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004) ,3.

realism' as problematic and contradictory because it blends the real with the magical of the fantastic in a splendid way. According to him, the term is confusing and problematic, because it consists of two contradictory incompatible narrative discourses 'magic' and 'reality'. Then we notice that these two narrative discourses are weaved perfectly and harmoniously together. Neither of them dominates or obliterates the other. Therefore, 'magical realism' obtains worldwide fame and international appreciation so that it has expanded to include a lot of other geographical locations in Africa, Asia, and other Western countries such as Canada.<sup>57</sup>

Wendy B. Faris, in her book titled, *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Mystification of Narrative*, succinctly explains that magical realism amalgamates realism and the improbable, which is difficult to believe that it would be possible that the farfetched appears to develop naturally within the real and the ordinary which makes it difficult to differentiate between them.<sup>58</sup>

Additionally, she points out that blending two narrative genres together as well as including various cultural traditions, signifies that it mirrors the hybrid nature of this narrative technique, in addition to being multicultural in nature.

Defining magical realism, Toner Can explains that magical realism is "a mode of narration that naturalises or normalises the supernatural, that is to say, a mode in which the real and the fantastic, natural and supernatural, are

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<sup>57</sup> - Stephen Slemon, "Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse." In L. P. Zamora and W. B. Faris (Eds.), *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* (Durham & London: Duke UP), 407-426.

<sup>58</sup> - Wendy B. Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments: Magic Realism and the Mystification of Narrative*. Nashville, USA: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004,1.



coherently represented in a state of rigorous equivalences- neither has a greater claim to truth or preferentiality.”<sup>59</sup>

The majority of critics and literary thinkers, according to Zamora and Faris, identify magical realism as a narrative mode that does not acknowledge boundaries whether existential, geographical, political, social or racial. Only in magical realism you find two completely different worlds weaved seamlessly together in a work of fiction.<sup>60</sup> In this narrative mode of writing, metamorphosis, dissolution, and transformation are commonly seen as natural and probable- but not impossible.

Zamora and Wendy see that magical realism as a subversive mode where binaries such as “ mind and body, spirit and matter, life and death, real and imaginary, self and other, male and female are boundaries to be erased, transgressed, blurred, brought together, or otherwise fundamentally refashioned in magical realist texts.”<sup>61</sup>

The world of magical realism is not a clear and distinct world; in actual fact, there are grey areas which make it difficult to choose or understand. In magical realism, the narratives mingle so that differences between reality and fantasy cannot be distinguished easily from each other. Flora Ghezzi and Glan Maria Annovi quote Erikson summing up magical realism as “corrosion within

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<sup>59</sup> - Toner Can, *Magical Realism in Postcolonial British Fiction: History, Nation and Narration*, Stuttgart, Germany: Ibidem- Verlag, 2015, 9.

<sup>60</sup> - Lois Parkinson Zamora & Wendy B. Faris, ed. *Magical Realism : Theory, History, Community* Durham & London: Duke University Press.1995,6.

<sup>61</sup> . Lois Parkinson Zamora & Wendy B. Faris, ed. *Magical Realism : Theory, History, Community*, 6.

the engine of the system.”<sup>62</sup> Ghezzeo and Annovi see that the magical realism narrative mode has learned and completely grasped the master narrative technique, and now is trying to subvert its long- established conventions and rules.

Magical realism has been incorporated and used by a large number of post-modern writers, particularly Latin Americans. They mix reality with extraordinary and supernatural elements, to show the world that they have a rich, vivid and complex culture.

Although a lot of people think that magical realism is a regional narrative style restricted solely to the Latin American writers who are thought to have spread it as a literary form, Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, both have a different opinion. They strongly reject the claim that magical realism is mainly a Latin American narrative mode, as some claim it is. They assert that it is an international style which has got world-wide popularity during the second half of the past century, and is considered as the key element of postmodernist fiction.

Wendy and Zamora confirm the importance and global acceptance of magical realism. To prove their point, they give the most compelling evidence saying that this mode of writing is used by a number of the Nobel Prize winners for literature such as the Colombian novelist and short story writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez(1927-2014), The Mexican Octavio Paz (b.1914), The American Toni Morrison(b.1931), the author of *The Beloved Trilogy*, the Japanese novelist and short story writer Yasunari Kawabata ( 1924-1972), the author of *Japan the*

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<sup>62</sup> - Flora Ghezzeo and Glan Maria Annovi, ed.. *Anna Maria Ortese: Celestial Geographies* ( Toronto Buffalo London: Toronto University Press,2015),10.

*Beautiful and Myself*, the Japanese writer Kenzaburo Oe ( b.1935), the author of *The Silent Cry*. Wendy and Zamora confirm that these are not the only ones who use magical realism as their technique of writing. It must be noted that there are many well-known authors who acknowledge magical realism as significant mode of writing in world literature like the Chilean novelist Isabel Allende (1942) the author of *The House of the Spirits*, The American novelist Donald Bartheleme( 1931-1989), author of *Second Marriage*, Salman Rushdie (1947) author of *Midnight's Children*.<sup>63</sup>

Zamora and Wendy point out that the above- mentioned writers and critics come from different parts of the world, discussed and critiqued various writings scribed in different countries, describing different cultures. Additionally, these writers never denigrated or belittled other people's way of thinking, cultures or traditions. All cultures, all traditions, whether Eastern, African, Latin American or European are highly valued and respected. Their writings and critiques never propagated or showed preference of any particular race, ideology or geographical area over another.

It is worth mentioning that John D. Erickson agrees with Zamora and Faris that magical realism is a universal narrative mode not restricted to Latin American writers or any geographical area or race. For instance, it was used in Africa and Asia by the Arabs in *The One Thousand and One Nights* centuries ago.

Furthermore, Erickson argues that the writers of the Francophone African countries are liberated of the writing and speaking conventions and rules

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<sup>63</sup> - Lois Parkinson Zamora & Wendy B. Faris,.,ed. *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*( Durham & London: Duke University Press.1995),4

because magical realism is strongly connected to their nomadic thought and way of life, therefore, they express themselves freely without paying attention to any boundaries or restrictions.<sup>64</sup>

In short, magical realism was not born today, its history dates back to the publication of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, to al- Maari's *Apostle of Forgiveness*, to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the historical romances of Sir Walter Scott, to *Decameron* and *Don Quixote*, to *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift and to Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* which we find the real is wonderfully blended with the magical. Without any doubt, these works prove that magical realism is not a recent phenomenon but has been used centuries ago.

Suzanne Baker, as well, agrees with Erickson, Zamora, and Faris concerning the universality of magical realism. She gives names of some Canadian writers who contributed to this universal mode of writing such as Robert Kroetsch and Jack Hodgins who have had their contributions to this style of writing through authoring a number of critical essays and theories about this technique, proving that this mode of writing is not limited to particular race or geographical area, as some of Latin American writers claim.<sup>65</sup>

It is worth highlighting that Erickson is not in line with those thinkers and critics who claim that magical realism is a marginal or outsider discourse because it challenges the conventional European discourse. To support his argument, he quotes the French critic and theorist Jean Francois Lyotard who

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<sup>64</sup> - John D. Erickson, "Magical Realism and Nomadic Writing in The Maghreb", in *A companion To Magical Realism*, Chin Ouyang, Stephen M. Hart, eds. (New York: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), 247.

<sup>65</sup> - Suzanne Baker, "Binarisms and duality: magic realism and postcolonialism"  
<http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/readingroom/litserv/SPAN/36/Baker.html>

states that "There is no such thing as a margin. What speaks of margins is the Empire that reflects its boundaries, its borders, its marches ( regions to be conquered.)”<sup>66</sup> The universally acknowledged fact, is that magical realism has forced itself on the reading public as a universal narrative discourse beside other discourses. Erikson continues to say that magical realism as a mode of resistance created a kind of balance of narrative by denying the master narrative of its unmatched position and its substantial advantage. Magical realism proved and imposed itself as an essential discourse among others.<sup>67</sup>

The fact that must be stressed is that magical realism has world-wide popularity, and used extensively in Africa, Asia, and Europe as well. Bowers elucidates this notion very clearly saying some critics erroneously think that magical realism originated, and is located in certain geographical sites. Although it is more commonly used in certain locations, the fact that cannot be denied that it is a universal writing style, and a way of thinking that cannot be restricted in one particular country or geographical area.<sup>68</sup>

Although some well-known Latin American writers such as Garcia Marquez and Carpentier erroneously claim that magical realism is a purely Latin American style, it must be admitted that it is a mode which has a world-wide fame used by many European, Asian and African authors, as mentioned earlier. It has been used by writers such as the German Jewish novelist Franz Kafka, the English novelist Angela Carter, the Indian Salman Rushdie, the

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<sup>66</sup> - Erikson, “*Magical Realism and Nomadic Writing in The Maghreb*”, in *A companion To Magical Realism*, Chin Ouyang , Stephen M. Hart, eds. ( New York: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), 248.

<sup>67</sup> - Erikson, 248.

<sup>68</sup> - Bowers, *Magic Realism*, 31.

Nigerian post-modernist poet, and novelist Ben Okri, the Libyan novelist Ibrahim al-Koni and many others.

According to Bowers, magical realism was brought to Latin America through the post-expressionist and surrealist movements in Europe by two diplomats and novelists, the Cuban Alejo Carpentier, and Arturo Uslar-Pieri from Venezuela. These two Latin American writers and diplomats, says Bowers, were very much interested and involved in the European literature, and became greatly affected by it during their period of working there as diplomats in the 1930's. And since the novelist Carpentier was involved and absorbed in the European literature, he, therefore, is considered as the initiator of magical realism in Latin America.<sup>69</sup>

A great deal of the influences of magical realism can be found in Western literature, mainly of the modernist period at the start of the twentieth century. Magic realist painting joins with modernism in an attempt to find a new method of expressing a “deeper understanding of reality witnessed by the artist and writer through experimentation with painting and narrative techniques.”<sup>70</sup> For Bowers, magical realism, violated former modes of narratives in order to give a precise and smooth picture that was a mixture of the influences of photography and Renaissance art. Additionally, magical realist narrative has become linked with the modernist techniques in disturbing or abandoning linear narrative time to create a kind of doubting the notion of history.

The novel, in the middle of the twentieth century, was called ‘the new’ novel’ and was regarded as the result of the modernist movement which

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<sup>69</sup> - Bowers, 13.

<sup>70</sup> - Bowers, 7-8.

emerged after World War I because novelists of that period rebelled against the old writing conventions. They detached themselves from the old shackles and created new writing techniques.

The majority of magical realist novels may be considered as postcolonial. That is because a large number of these novels are placed in a postcolonial background and written from a postcolonial viewpoint that rebels against the European master narrative conventions. The wide use and popularity of magical realism writing corresponded with the development and growth of the postcolonial novel at the end of the twentieth century, which led some of the most notable postcolonial critics to state that magical realism is nearly always associated with postcolonialism.

Faris explains the reasons for the popularity of magical realism, and how it became known all over the world as a postcolonial mode of resistance, especially in the Third World countries. She refers this to the nature of this mode, which according to her, has afforded a literary basis, and foundation for important and serious cultural work, and through this mode a lot of excellent literary works dealing with silenced voices, excluded cultural traditions have developed and floated on the surface. Moreover, magical realism changes, and amends the overriding style of realism through subverting, and undermining its main conventions of representation, thus it has been considered as a mode of resistance of Eurocentric narrative discourse.<sup>71</sup>

Bowers points out that the term magical realism refers to a specific narrative mode that offers “a way to discuss alternative approaches to reality to that of

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<sup>71</sup>- Wendy B..Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments: Magic Realism and the Mystification of Narrative*,1.

Western philosophy, expressed in many postcolonial and non-Western works of contemporary fiction.”<sup>72</sup> It is used by notable and distinguished writers from different continents, countries, and different races. The magical realism writers see it as a decolonizing narrative mode of resistance. As mentioned earlier, magical realism is an amalgamation of both realism and magic used to challenge the conventions of the Western authoritative colonialist discourse. Consequently, most of the above-mentioned authors use it to portray the postcolonial experience of the marginalised people and the destructive effect of colonialism on the social, economic, political and cultural heritage of the natives during and after the colonisation period.

When it comes to the popularity of magical realism as a narrative mode of resistance, it must be highlighted that Zamora and Faris consider it as one of the most widespread narrative styles of fiction nowadays. For Zamora and Faris, it is “a return on capitalism’s hegemonic investment in its colonies, ‘magical realism’ is especially alive and well in postcolonial contexts and is now achieving a compensatory extension of its market worldwide.”<sup>73</sup>

The Canadian critic Slemon, aligns with Zamora and Faris in confirming that magical realism thrives in the Third World countries which experienced colonialism, therefore it is used as a mode of resistance by the marginalised

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<sup>72</sup> - Bowers, *Magic Realism* ,1.

<sup>73</sup> - Faris, Wendy B. “*Scheherazade’s children: Magical Realism and Postmodern Fiction.*” , 2.



against the mainstream narrative imposed by the imperial domineering powers.<sup>74</sup>

According to Slemon, the use of magical realism means challenging and opposing the dominant European narrative modes of writing. It is a refusal to assimilate in the imposed Western literary practice and culture.

Providing postcolonialist writers with the proper means to criticise and attack dictatorial regimes through subverting and rejecting the conventions upon which such despotic regimes rely, is one of the reasons which made magical realism attain global popularity.

The Nigerian Francis Abiola Irele, winner of Nigerian National Order of Merit Award for Humanities, and author of *The Cambridge Companion to the African Novel* quotes Brenda Cooper who elucidates magical realism as a mode that is incompatible with fanaticism, extremism, racism, ethnicity and the idea of the purity of races. Equally important, it is sacrilegious, and blasphemous. For these reasons, we find the magical realist novels are full of various mores and traditions, contradicting approaches, different or conflicting political views that represent different kinds of people.<sup>75</sup>

Brenda Cooper shows the importance of magical realism as a postcolonial narrative mode of resistance that can deal with and discuss a wide variety of issues instead of focusing on a limited number of topics.

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<sup>74</sup> -Slemon. "*Magical realism As Post-colonial Discourse*", 407-426.

<sup>75</sup> - Francis Abiola Irele, *The Cambridge Companion to the African Novel* ( Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 257.

Erickson points out that magical realism, in addition to being a technique of writing that differs greatly from the typical and conventional Western literature and way of thinking, it is used as a means of resisting the overriding Western discourse.<sup>76</sup>

Like most literary thinkers and critics, Enrique Anderson Imbert observes that magical realism is a narrative mode of resistance that rejects and opposes the European domineering master narrative. In his article “*Magical Realism in Spanish-American Fiction*” he agrees with Erickson who contends that. Magical realism, almost always, takes the shape of resistance against the Eurocentric discourse which falsely claims to have the ultimate truth, and arrogantly discards any other mode of narrative.<sup>77</sup>

‘Magical realism’ is characterized by two contradictory viewpoints, one based on an improperly-named rational view of reality and the other on the acceptance of the supernatural as a matter-of-fact reality. In fact, the real world and the magical world coexist, so that we see a perfect amalgamation of the two worlds. Neither of the two genres subrogates the other.

Furthermore, in his book, *Palamedes' Shadow: Explorations in Play, Game and Narrative Theory*, Robert Rawdon Wilson elucidates that in the magical realism mode of writing there are two completely different worlds each has its

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<sup>76</sup> - John D. Erickson, *Magical Realism and Nomadic Writing in the Maghreb*, in *A Companion to Magical Realism*, 247.

<sup>77</sup> - Enrique Anderson Imbert, 247.

own laws that differ from the other but are entangled, weaved together, in a communicate, entangle in an entirely normal fashion.<sup>78</sup>

The German artist and critic Franz Roh differentiates between 'realism' and 'magical realism' saying that 'realism' pays more attention to logic, practicality, the familiar in real life as we live it, history, the probable, while 'magical realism' concentrates more on legends, myths, the mysterious, and the defamiliarization, magic, metafiction, and metamorphosis.<sup>79</sup>

Some critics confuse between 'magical realism' and 'fantasy', and wrongly think they are interchangeable and have the same meaning. The fact of the matter that they are two different genres, each has its own characteristics. In reality, it is not easy to tell the difference between them. The Bulgarian literary critic Tzvetan Todorov shows the difference between them. He defines the fantastic as a hesitation between belief and disbelief of the supernatural in a piece of narrative. It is a very delicate literary form; it can very easily fluctuate between belief and disbelief. For Bowers, it is not the aim of the writer of the fantastic to create an atmosphere of disbelief but to create a theme of ambiguity and hesitation. In the fantastic, the reader realises that the novel he or she is reading is neither possible nor probable. In spite of his or her hesitation to

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<sup>78</sup> - Robert Rawdon Wilson, *Palamedes' Shadow: Explorations in Play, Game and Narrative Theory* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990),205.

<sup>79</sup> - Tihana Mudrovcic, "Magical Realism in Contemporary American Ethnic Writing" <https://repozitorij.ffos.hr/islandora/object/ffos%3A1702/.../review>

accept the events, incidents, and characterization, the reader can enjoy it for the sake of pleasure or entertainment.<sup>80</sup>

Caroline Lee Schwenz in her article titled “*magical Realism*” states that magical realism is not the same as pure fantasy, simply due to the real setting of the magical realist novels. In a magical realist novel, all the events occur in a common and real- world not a created or imaginary one as it is in a fantasy. According to Schwenz, the magical realist novelist gives a true and reliable description of his or her characters, the society and the places they live in.<sup>81</sup>

However, magical realism novelists are sure that this mode enables them to preserve and have the seriousness of the themes they are discussing. Contrarily, fantasy novels are written solely for pleasure and entertainment. Another aspect that characterises and distinguishes magical realism from fantasy that it is a serious and not an escapist narrative mode; it mirrors the people and the society the author is depicting. This type or style of writing explores truth; it is neither speculative nor hypothetical. It looks for the truth which makes it different from science fiction and pure fantasy.

It is noticed that in ‘magical realism’, the authors use legends, myths, customs so that their novels give a true picture to the world they are portraying. Magical realism mirrors the society and the people who live in it as is the case in al-Koni’s *The Bleeding of the Stone*, *The Seven Veils of Seth*, and *Gold Dust* which will be discussed in detail in chapters three and four. The magical elements or incidents presented in these novels are not the result of pure imagination, but it is the manifestation of the reality of those people who

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<sup>80</sup> - Bowers, 25.

<sup>81</sup> - Caroline Lee Schwenz, <https://scholarblogs.emry.edu/postcolonialstudies/2014/06/21/magical-realism/>

believe or experience and have faith in magical elements or events and regard them as real and part of their identity, cultural heritage, and their daily life.

In magical realism, time is circular, it sometimes moves back and at other times it reverses. Characters change into animals to save themselves from an enemy or escape a dangerous situation, dead ancestors are visited in their graves to be consulted during calamities to find a solution to a problem as in al-Koni's *The Bleeding of the Stone* and in *New Waw: Desert Oasis*.

One of the features of magical realism, as Chris Baldick, puts it in, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* that it surpasses, transcends the limits and restrictions of realism and benefits from characteristics of myths, legends, folktales and fables and at the same time preserving the significant social customs and traditions.<sup>82</sup>

Fantasy, legends, fables, myths and folk tales, dreams, hallucinations, magic, and cultural heritage are presented naturally by magical realism novelists as if they are real-world products, and part of the world we live in. These find fertile soils in postcolonial Africa, Latin America, and India. The Canadian literary critic, Slemon attributes this to magical realism because of its “uniqueness or difference from mainstream culture — what in another context Alejo Carpentier has called *lo real maravilloso* or ‘marvellous American reality’ and this gives the concept the stamp of cultural authority if not theoretical soundness.”<sup>83</sup>

For Slemon, it would not be right or appropriate to classify ‘magical realism’ to a specific literary theory. The term ‘magic realism’ is problematic and contradictory. In his article “*Magical Realism As Postcolonial Discourse*”

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<sup>82</sup> - Chris Baldick, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 146.

<sup>83</sup> - Slemon, “*Magical Realism as Postcolonial Discourse* 407-426.

Slemons argues that 'magical realism' never effectively distinguished or segregated itself from the modernist and post-modernist theories or neighbouring genres such as the uncanny, metafiction, fabulation, the baroque, the pastiche, the marvellous. Slemon argues that some critics have decided in none of the magical realism applications to literature has the concept of magic and consequently, he is not shocked or surprised to find out that a number of literary men and critics have preferred on the whole to disregard this literary expression.<sup>84</sup>

In order to subvert the conventions of the European narrative and explore the relationship between literature and reality, magical realist authors use metafiction. Magical realists sometimes interrupt their narrative and make comments within the novel about the characters, the text itself, and sometimes they explain how the ending of the novel is going to be. Incidents and descriptions of places or characters or traditions are repeated, believing that this helps the reader to better understand the novel.

Intertextuality or ( borrowing parts from other texts, and inserting them in one's work ) is another feature that is used excessively in the magical realism narratives. The chapters of some of al-Koni's novels are headed with a saying, maxim, or an excerpt from other texts. Intertextuality means that there are interrelationships between one text and another– viz there is no pure originality. It insinuates that one text is quoting from another.

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<sup>84</sup> - Slemon, 407-426.

Metamorphosis: (change from a human shape into another creature, animal or insect or any other form). This is prevalent and takes place in many magical realism novels, for instance, Gregor, the protagonist of Franz Kafka's *Metamorphoses*, wakes up early in the morning to discover that he has transformed into a bug, and in al-Koni's novel, *The bleeding of the Stone*, Asouf changes into a *Waddan* ( a rare animal in the Libyan desert) in order to escape from the Italians. (This will be discussed in detail in chapter three.)

Ghosts, Jinn from the Spirit World, demons, amulets that protect against evil, prophecies that have to be deciphered, metaphors are all common elements in magical realist novels, particularly in al-Koni's fiction. The fact that the cultural past and beliefs exist in abundance in magical realist novels and these often include encounters with the dead, seeking their advice to solve certain problems or conflicts.<sup>85</sup> Resorting to the laws, legends, and myths of the ancestors in order to restore the lost identity, and uphold their cultural heritage during the time of occupation give magical realism a political dimension, and considered as a kind of resistance on the part of the postcolonial authors.

An important attribute of the magical realism narrative style is that it weaves realism and magic together even though the magic and the real are two contradictory worlds. In fact, 'magical realism' succeeds in fusing these two irreconcilable terms together in a seamless manner. Amaryll Beatrice Chanady, the author of *Magical Realism And The Fantastic*, contends that it is a mixture of a probable and an improbable world vision.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> - Wendy B. Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Demystification of Narrative*, 137.

<sup>86</sup> - Chanady, Amaryll Beatrice, *Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved versus*

Magical realism, very ingeniously turns and changes the real with the aid of magical happenings in a clever mixture that the improbable looks to the reader as if it is quite ordinary and probable.<sup>87</sup>

Magical realism like postcolonialism challenges and rejects binaries such as coloniser, colonised, civilised and primitive, West and East, life and death, good and bad, male and female, animal and human, upon which the Western civilisation is built. There is a consensus among critics and thinkers that the reader shares the narrator his or her acceptance of both the real and the magical while reading the novel. Contrarily, in the fantastic mode of writing, the reader knows that the story is a piece of an imaginary work meant to be read for pleasure and enjoyment.

Drawing on the same idea, Professor Seymour Menton, the notable scholar of Latin American Literature, argues that magical realism deals with the improbable, not the impossible. It discusses matters of our daily manners of living which sometimes include irrational, and illogical elements.<sup>88</sup>

A number of literary critics assert that magical realism is a writing style that provides an outlook to the world that does not abide by the natural laws nor to Western reality. Schwenz points out that it is “an expression of the New World reality which at once combines the rational elements of the European super-civilization and the irrational elements of a primitive America.”<sup>89</sup>

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*Unresolved Antimony* ( New York: Garland, 1985),21.

<sup>87</sup> - [shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/jspui/bitstream/.../7/07\\_chapter%202.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/jspui/bitstream/.../7/07_chapter%202.pdf)

<sup>88</sup> - Menton, Seymour, “Jorge Luis Borges, Magical Realist.” *Hispanic Review* 50.4 (1982): 411–26. *JSTOR*. Web. 01 Nov. 2012 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/472332?seq=2>>.412

<sup>89</sup> - Caroline Lee Schwenz <https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/postcolonialstudies/2014/06/21/magical-realism/>



Magical realism has been defined as “writing that works both within and against the aesthetics of realism”<sup>90</sup> whereas postcolonial literature concerns itself with combating and resisting colonialism, its physical and psychological effects. Both genres seem to have a relationship with each other and their motives agree in many aspects. Magical realism challenges, and rebels against the colonial boundaries and binaries, and the idea of looking to the world from the European point of view. Amaryll Chanady points out that Looking and understanding the world from different, and various viewpoints,“ allows us to see dimensions of reality of which we are not normally aware.”<sup>91</sup> Slemon explains that magical realism bears in it an idea of opposing, and resisting the Western colonising countries and its totalitarian policies, and its use in literature denotes resistance and rejection to the European narrative mode.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, ‘magical realism’ plays a key part in the writings of the marginalised and the suppressed groups. It helps postcolonial writers to convey their voices, their feelings, and attitudes to their people and to the whole world. Unlike, some of the postcolonial authors who use the European mode of writing, using realism in order to portray the deplorable conditions of their people under colonialism, magic realists mingle and weave reality and fantasy as a kind of challenging and subverting the dominant narrative style. Most

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<sup>90</sup> - Baker, “*Binarisms and duality: magic realism and postcolonialism.*” in *Postcolonial Fictions* no. 36 October [Michèle Drouart](#) (editor), 1993 periodical issue pg. 82-87.

<sup>94</sup>- Amaryll B. Chanady, *Magical Realism and The Fantastic: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1985), 27.

<sup>92</sup>- Slemon,407-426.

magic realists use the oral tradition in their texts in order to preserve them and transmit their customs, laws, and cultural heritage by word of mouth from one generation to the next as what al-Koni does.



## **Chapter Two**

### **2. Arabic Novel Through the Ages**

#### **2.1. Arabic Novel: Its Origins and Beginnings:**

This chapter aims to trace the genesis of the Arabic novel, its history, beginning, its growth, and development in some of the Arab countries, particularly Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Libya. But from the outset, it must be made clear that in addition to the above, this chapter discusses the contributions of a number of Arab writers, intellectuals, and focuses on an amalgamation of factors which led to the development and evolution of Arabic Literature in general and the novel in particular.

Since the Arabic novel is so broad a topic to be wholly covered in one chapter, the study is limited to a number of the most prominent contributors and the factors which led to its development, therefore, some illustrious contributors are not covered. This does not mean that they are less important, but as mentioned above, is due to the limited scope of the chapter allotted to this wide-ranging topic.

It is worth noting that the Arabic Literary Renaissance first took place in Egypt in the turn of the nineteenth century after the French occupation of Egypt and Syria from 1798 to 1801, and the emergence of Mohammad Ali Pasha, the Albanian general, who was sent to Egypt by the Ottoman Sultan Selim III (1761-1808) after the evacuation of the French from Egypt in 1801. Mohammad Ali Pasha got rid of all his rivals and announced himself as ruler of

Egypt where he started wide-ranging reforms, mostly educational. Mohammad Ali Pasha was zealous to Westernize the country, so in the 1820s he sent the first educational mission of Egyptian students to Italy and France in order to learn and bring Western technology and sciences to Egypt. The contact of the Egyptians with French and Italian scholars was in many ways fruitful and resulted in the birth of modern literature. A lot of critics consider it as the beginning of the Arabic Literary Renaissance, known as “*nahda*”. In order to modernize Egypt and create a strong country, Mohammad Ali founded a number of schools teaching various fields on the French style where French texts were prescribed and taught. Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, an Egyptian writer, teacher, translator, and Renaissance intellectual headed the educational mission to France. After his return to Egypt, and with the help of his students, he started to translate books from French to Arabic on different fields of knowledge, particularly literary ones. The founding of the Bulaq Press, the first Arabic press in the Arab World in 1835 is one of Mohammad Ali Pasha's great achievements in Egypt. In addition to publishing governmental issues, the Bulaq Press also published rare old Arabic books such as *al-Muqaddema (The Introduction)* by Ibn Khaldoun, *Risalat al-Ghufran, (The Epistle of Forgiveness)* by Abu ala al-Maarri which talks about an imaginary tour to the next world. Moreover, the Bulag Press published scientific and some literary Persian and Turkish books as well. During Mohammad Ali Pasha's rule which was known of stability and religious tolerance, Egypt turned out to be the heart of the new Arabic Literary Revival. The new environment of freedom in Egypt attracted several Syrian and Lebanese intellectuals and translators, mostly

Christians, who came to live in Egypt as immigrants due to the civil war which irrupted in 1850 in their countries of origin. The Lebanese and Syrian intellectuals had been in contact with Europe since the sixteenth century through trade transactions and through the Christian churches brought their books and belongings to Egypt and started various literary activities , in addition to founding journals and periodicals. Later the impact of the literary Renaissance spread to other Arab countries, particularly Syria, Lebanon and Iraq during the colonial scramble of the Arab world. The Arab world was divided into small countries dominated by France and England in accordance with Sykes–Pico agreement in 1916 right after the First World War. The immigration of Syrian and Lebanese intellectuals and writers to Egypt, the translation of European literary works, the appearance of the Printing Press, as well as the founding of the periodicals, journals and the modernization of education particularly during the rule of Mohammad Ali and then Khedive Ismail, all combined together to bring a substantial and positive effects on the development of the modern Arabic Literature in general and the novel in particular.

There is no doubt that ‘novel’ is a slippery term that is difficult to define. It is not static, but a genre that develops over time. No single or short definition can encompass what it is at all times and in all places. S.M. Schreiber gives a brilliant definition to the novel in her book *Introduction to Literary Criticism*. She defines the novel as “a fictitious prose narrative of some length, about possible people doing possible things in the real world, whose theme is human

nature and human relationships and human values.”<sup>93</sup> Schreiber argues that the primary interest of the novel is a reality to an individual’s experience which is unique and new, particular and not universal. Thus the plot of the novel should be composed of human experience, and this experience should take place in a particular space and a particular time and should be conveyed to the reader through a particular mode of expression. The literary historian and critic, Ian Watt ( 1917-1999), author of *The Rise of the Novel* agrees with S.M. Schreiber that the novel is a new literary form and a presentation of human experience and that realism is one of its main characteristics. Watt adds that Defoe, Richardson and Fielding are the real founders of this new genre, and through their efforts, the novel form was established in England before anywhere else. Furthermore, Watt says that both Richardson, and Fielding saw themselves as the real founders of this new genre and that they both viewed their works as a departure from the old-fashioned *romances*. However, it must be acknowledged that Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding created a new form of literature in the eighteenth-century which later came to be called the ‘novel’. Yet, Watt observes that the eighteenth-century writers failed to set the characteristics of this new genre they had founded and failed to give it a name. Watt points out that not only Samuel Richardson or Henry Fielding, the creators of this new genre which we now call ‘novel’, but also their generations of writers failed to give it a name nor specify the features, characteristics, nor venerated its

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<sup>1</sup> S.M. Schreiber, *Introduction to Literary Criticism* (London: Pergamum Press, 1965), 36.

continuously changing nature. Watt asserts that only in the last decades of the eighteenth century that the term 'novel' first appeared.<sup>94</sup>

It is to be noted that both Richardson and Fielding claimed that they were writing accounts of true stories, which means that what they wrote was not fiction. Fielding first used the novel form to write a parody of Richardson's *Pamela*. As mentioned above, the term "novel" was fully established at the end of the eighteenth century. It was very suitable for this new genre because it meant 'new', for nothing like this form had been created up to that time, it mirrored the unique and new human experience. In other words, Watt believes that the novel is a full and true report of human experience and is, therefore under obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the characters concerned, the facts and particulars of the times and places of their actions, which are presented through a more largely referential use of language that is common in other literary form.<sup>95</sup> Watt goes even further to say that scholars have viewed 'realism' as the determining feature that distinguishes the work of the early eighteenth-century novelists from previous narratives. Although a number of scholars and critics acknowledge that Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, which was written in 1719, as the first of this genre, but other critics like McKeon, the author of *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach* says that the novel was "still held in such disrepute that Daniel Defoe, its presumed begetter, took great pains to ensure that his masterpiece would not be assimilated to this much-despised byproduct

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<sup>94</sup> Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Fielding and Richardson*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1959, 9.

<sup>95</sup> -Ian Watt, 32.

of literature.”<sup>96</sup> According to Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* is not a created story that came from the imagination of the author but is a true story. For him, the novel is not about real life, a sentimental false story, lacking in taste and character, invented to spoil and deprave people’s hearts and perceptions.<sup>97</sup>

Defoe was not the only one who expressed his dislike of the term ‘novel’, and he was not the only writer who refused to call his work a novel. Dorothy Hale says that Hawthorn, the well-known American writer also refused to call his fiction a novel. She says that Nathaniel Hawthorn the American novelist, and short story writer (1804-1864) the author of *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* gratified to censure the novel saying that it is a new production written by a crowd of dammed women writers. Hawthorn repelled against this artistic infection and rejects to name his literary production a novel, instead, he chooses to classify his production as Romance.<sup>98</sup>

Georg Lukas, one of the most prominent authorities of this genre and the author of *The Theory of the Novel*, views the novel from another perspective. Unlike Watt who asserts that one of the novel’s features is an extended fictitious narrative written in prose—and this is what distinguishes it from other genres, Lukacs has another say, he argues that:

The novel is the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem, yet which still thinks in terms of totality. It would be superficial – a matter of a mere artistic technicality to look for the only and decisive

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<sup>96</sup> Michael McKeon, *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*. Ed. Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, 57.

<sup>97</sup> - McKeon, 57.

<sup>98</sup> Dorothy J. Hale, *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900-2000*, Oxford, UK: Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 2005, 566.



genre-defining criterion in the question of whether a work is written in verse or prose.<sup>99</sup>

Contrary to Watt and Schreiber who both view that the primary interest of the novel is to be true to individual's experience which is unique and new, particular and not universal, Lukacs, on the other hand, sees that the hero in the novel is as in the epics of Homer, and in the plays of Shakespeare is never an individual and the theme does not represent the destiny of a person but the destiny of the whole community.

According to Lukacs '*totality*' means all conditions and aspects that affect the lives of all humans which they experience throughout their lives and struggle to overcome. '*Totality*', then, is the economic, social, political and historical conditions which define the reality of human existence. Literature must, therefore, be based on this totality. In addition to awakening and exciting imagination, Lukacs asserts that any literary work should also expose and criticise the ideological ills and shortcomings of the contemporary capitalist society.

Conversely, Dorothy Hale looks at the novel from a feminist perspective and does not agree with Lukacs's Marxist social approach of the novel. She asserts that the novel is a genre that builds the social construction of the nineteenth-century female identity. She maintains that since the time of Virginia Woolf onward, the prominent part and focus of the novel is its excessive concern with the identity of women trying to reinvigorate it and make it tangible. To prove her point, Hale gives a number of novels whose

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<sup>99</sup> - Georg Lukacs, *The Theory of the Novel* ( London: The Merlin Press,1988),56.

protagonists are women such as *Pamela, Clarissa, Jane Eyre, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Charlotte Temple, Jane Talbot, Ruth Hall, Maggie, The Girl of the Streets, What Maisie Knew, Sister Carrie, My Antonia, Lolita*. She maintains that these are not the names of ordinary women, but are women whose personalities and beauty inflamed three hundred years of novel writing.<sup>100</sup>

Unlike Lukacs who believes in the totality of the novel, Hale asserts that a novel is a literary form that should be an independent unit, that could be secluded from historical, political and historical settings or situations.<sup>101</sup> Yet, Peter W. Grahams, the author of *Jane Austin and Charles Darwin* says that the 'novel' refers to something new asserting that the term 'novel', "at first referred to 'novelties' or 'news and tidings,' then more broadly to tales or short stories such as those of Boccaccio."<sup>102</sup>

The Russian literary critic, and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, author of *The Dialectic Imagination*, on the other hand, believes that the existing literary theories on the novel are inadequate to explain the philosophy and uniqueness of this new genre. Bakhtin sees that the difficulty of giving or producing a theory of the novel comes from the fact that it is a genre of a new and changing world which is uncompleted yet. The world is in constant change. It is the constant change and development of the world which does not allow us to form a fixed definition.

Toner Can, the author of *Magical Realism in Postcolonial British Fiction: History, Nation and Narration*, quotes Bakhtin who sees the novel as "a genre

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<sup>100</sup> - Dorothy J. Hale, 566.

<sup>101</sup> Dorothy J. Hale, 18.

<sup>102</sup> Peter W. Grahams, *Jane Austin and Charles Darwin* (London & NY: Routledge, Tylor & Francis Group, 2008 ),8.

in the making, or in living contact with unfinished still-evolving contemporary reality. Unlike the novel, other genres, such as the epic and the tragedy, have already become obsolete.<sup>103</sup>

Moreover, Bakhtin believes that there is a shared relationship between the meaning and the context, involving the writer, the work, and the reader altogether. He sees that they affect and influence each other, and the whole are influenced by the existing political and social forces.

It must be acknowledged that the novel is not restricted to a particular or single style, technique or mode of writing. The novel may be epistolary, picaresque, gothic, historical, autobiographical, detective, dramatic, among others. Salma Jayyusi the author of *Modern Arab Fiction: An Anthology*, points out to some of the main features of the novel and its difference from the folk *romance* genre. She observes that the novel has the flexibility to use a variety of narrative prose. It also allows the use of long descriptive passages, and different modes and techniques in the narrative. The author has the freedom to change his narrative from discourse to dialogue, from the objective to the subjective and vice versa. In short, the novel is a flexible literary genre which develops and changes over time, its main theme is Man and the above-mentioned features give the novel its particular characteristics and make it different from any other genre.

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<sup>103</sup> - Toner Can, *Magical Realism in Postcolonial British Fiction: History, Nation and Narration*( Stuttgart, Germany: Ibidem-Verlag), 2015, 2.

Another key point about the novel that it is, unlike the folk romance which is told by word of mouth by different narrators and different periods of history from generation to generation something, which makes it liable to change. Due to its reliance on the written word, the novel is not subject to change, unless the novelist himself decides to change something in it, otherwise, it remains permanently the same.<sup>104</sup>

M.H. Abrams, the well-known American literary critic and author of *Glossary of Literary Terms*, like Jayyusi, explains that the novel is not limited to a particular style or kind or mode of writing but can be applied to different kinds of writing that only share the characteristic of being a lengthy product of the imagination written in prose. The novel is differentiated from other genres written prose such as the novelette and the short story because the last two are lesser in length. The novel's lengthy narrative allows the novelist to create more characters, more complicated plot or plots than in other shorter genres. Furthermore, the novelist can elaborate on character development, and in the description of the landscape. These features are not available in shorter narratives of the novelette and the short story.<sup>105</sup>

Additionally, Abrams differentiates between the long prose narrative of the novel and the long narrative in verse as in the works of Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton which the novel outshined at the turn of the eighteenth century. Moreover, Abrams observes that in most European languages the term for

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<sup>104</sup> . Salam K. Jayyusi, *Modern Arab Fiction : An Anthology* ( New York: Columbia University Press,2005),2.

<sup>105</sup> - M.H. Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms*. Seventh Edition( Boston, Massachusetts: Harcourt College Publishers, 1999, 190.

‘novel’ is *roman* which is derived from the medieval term, the *romance*. Furthermore, the English name for the form is derived from the Italian ‘*novella*’ which means "a little new thing", which was a short tale written in prose. Such kinds of short stories were in vogue in Italy in the fourteenth century. Some of these stories dealt with serious topics and others were scandalous like Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* which was written sometime between 1349 and 1353 is one of these tales.

Similarly, the eighteenth-century English novelist Clara Reeves (1729-1807) the author of the Gothic novel *The Old English Baron* (1777) clearly differentiates between the *novel* and *roman* as well and classifies them as two different genres. She maintains that the word “*novel*” in most European languages signifies something new.

Reeves says that in the first place, the novel was utilised to differentiate it from other genres such as Romance, because a lot of people confuse between the two, and some believe that the two terms are interchangeable. All things considered, the Romance is a story about an imaginary or legendary person who always overcomes all the obstacles and difficulties that face him, whereas the novel deals with real-life situations, characters, and settings. Additionally, we observe that the Romance is written in an exaggerated hyperbolic language that makes things or people look or seem more than what they really are.<sup>106</sup>

According to Reeves, the main objectives of the *romance* was to draw or excite the attention and, to direct this attention to some useful, or at least innocent end. Jeremy Hawthorn points out that *Romance* is one of the most fundamental

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<sup>106</sup> - Tony Tanner, *Jane Austen*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986), 57.

traditions which contributed to the emergence of the novel – asserting that the term ‘roman’ is the equivalent of a novel in many modern European languages.<sup>107</sup>

The American writer Michael John McKeon (b.1947), author of *The Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach* brilliantly sums up the dominance of the novel over all other literary genres. He argues that though a newcomer and was not very popular at the beginning, the novel gained wide currency, and has become more popular than all other genres. This overwhelming success could be attributed to its trespassing neighbouring genres. Now it has superseded them all and has become independent, and more prevalent.<sup>108</sup>

Although most scholars and critics have differed in their definitions of the novel, most, if not all agree that the novel has no literary boundaries or restrictions and can use any prose mode of expression, any form, or method its author chooses. The novel can present any human experience to the reader in any way the author selects, whether it is an ethical, historical, philosophical, religious, or even scientific experience. The setting in the novel can be anywhere, it might be the city, the village, the woods, the desert, the sea, or the air; in short, the novel’s setting is anywhere humans are to be found. Moreover, its themes are unlimited, the novel does not acknowledge any taboos.

The fact that is worth highlighting that there is no consensus among Arab and non-Arab literary scholars and critics as to how and when the modern Arabic novel first began. Some are of the opinion that the Arabic novel began a long time ago. This group asserts that the Arabic literary heritage, as Wail S.

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<sup>107</sup>- Jeremy Hawthorn, *Studying the Novel* ( London: Bloomsbury, 2016),13.

<sup>108</sup>- Michael McKeon, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*. Ed.( Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000),58.

Hassan, professor of comparative literature at the University of Illinois, at Urbana, Champaign observes in his book, *The Oxford Handbook of Arab Novelistic Traditions*, that the Arabic literary heritage

is rich in narrative genres that date back to the pre-Islamic era, and has a wide variety of forms, lengths, styles, and modes: *khobar* ( anecdote- report), *khurafa* (legend), *ustura* (myth), *ayyam al-Arab* (history of pre-Islamic tribal warfare), *riwaya* (report), *hikaya* ( tales that can be long or short, philosophical, comical, or allegorical.)<sup>109</sup>

Other critics have a completely different opinion and confirm that the novel is a Western invention that started in the mid-eighteenth century and that the Arabs are very poor in literary forms that mirror their culture. Matti Moosa, the author of *Origin of Modern Arabic Fiction* is a strong advocate of this opinion. He observes that the Middle East Arabs never had an acknowledged tradition nor literary systems that mirror the spirit and the philosophy of their culture. Moosa points out that the evolution and growth of modern Arabic literature were behindhand, and matured only at the mid of the twentieth century. Consequently, the concept or the notion of Arabic novel existed in the nineteenth century is vague and doubtful.<sup>110</sup>

Another group of leading critics holds the stick in the middle and does not advocate any of the previous opinions. This group argues that the emergence of the Arabic novel can neither be wholly attributed to the Arabs nor to the West alone, but its rise was due to an amalgamation of factors. Nuri Gana, in his book *The Edinburgh Companion to the Arabic Novel in English*, says “the Arabic novel owes its beginnings, in good part, to East-West intellectual and

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<sup>109</sup> -Wail S. Hassan, *The Oxford Handbook of Arab Novelistic Traditions*. Ed. (New York: Oxford University Press,2017),1.

<sup>110</sup> - Matti Moosa, *Origin of Modern Arabic Fiction*( Boulder& London: Lynne Reiner Publishers,1997), IX.

cross-cultural encounters, transmissions and exchanges through, among other factors, travel, colonial contact, adaptation, and translation.”<sup>111</sup> Contrarily, Hamdi Sakkut, author of *The Arabic Novel: Bibliography and Critical Study*, gives a detailed historical account of the Arabic novel stating that a number of critics and literary men and women are of the opinion that the Arabs have a rich literary heritage and that the Arabic novel started a long time ago. Sakkut argues that “Some claim that the Arabs have written novelistic narrative literature since very early times.<sup>112</sup> Those who advocate this opinion give as evidence the epic folk romances such as *Antra ibn Shaddad*, the pre-Islamic black poet and legendary warrior in the Arabian Peninsula, and a folk Arab romance of *Sayf inb thi Yazan*, one of Yemen’s kings who lived in the sixteenth- century, the epic of *al-Zir Salem* (D.531), *al-Zahir Baybers* who led the Egyptian army against the Mongols in the battle of Ayn Jalut (the Pool of Goliath) near Jerusalem in 1260, the chivalric romance tales of *Abu Zaid al-Hilali*, the eleventh -century hero of the migrating tribe of Bani Hilal.

Salma Jayyusi states that the Arab tribes in the Arabian Peninsula used to raid on each other for subsistence due to the scarcity of water and places to graze their animals. Consequently, bitter wars ensued between them. A lot of legends were created, rejoicing their victories and talking about the heroism of the warriors. Nowadays those wars are referred to as ( Days of the Arabs.)<sup>113</sup>

In addition to the above, some critics and scholars consider *The Thousand and One Nights*, an anonymous series of tales, as an essential part of the Arabs’

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<sup>111</sup>- Nuri Gana, *The Edinburgh Companion to the Arabic Novel In English: The Politics of Anglo Arab and American Literature and Culture*. Edinburgh: (Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 7.

<sup>112</sup>- Hamdi Sakkut,13.

<sup>113</sup>- Jayyusi,6.



literary inventory. They even go further to say that *The Thousand and One Nights*, had a great impact on Western literature in general since the eighteenth-century in addition to its influence on Latin American magical realism in the twentieth century.<sup>114</sup> Roger Allen in his book, *An Introduction to Arabic Literature* briefly sums up some of the features of *The Thousand and One Nights*. He observes that *The Arabian Nights* is an assortment of wonderful folk tales collected in Arabic in the fourteenth century. It contains funny tales, tragic tales, adventure tales, historical tales, tragic romances, love stories, it also contains animal fables. Additionally, *The Arabian Nights* include some magnificent tales about the Abbasside Caliph Haroon al-Rasheed, and his well-known minister Jafar al-Barmaki.<sup>115</sup>

Nevertheless, some Arab literary critics underestimated the literary importance of *The One Thousand and One Nights* and looked unfavourably for some time to its form, language, and style. Salma Jayyusi explains that Arab literary critics used to view *The one Thousand and One Nights* as inferior to other contemporary works of fiction. They criticised it for its use of dialect, which according to them, is full of grammatical mistakes, excess of imagination, additionally, it is far from real-life situations. Later, the Arabs changed their views and started to look at it favourably, only after it was translated into French by Antonio Galland in 1704.

However, some Arab critics and writers rejected the old kinds of fictional narratives, especially those that deal with tales about jinn, magic, fiends and the like. They believed reality should be the main interest of fictional narratives.

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<sup>114</sup> - Hassan, 3.

<sup>115</sup> - Allen, *An Introduction To Arabic Literature*, 173.

They asserted that modern fiction should not concern itself with myths and supernatural phenomena like the tales in *The One Thousand and One Nights*.

Jayyusi argues that the Arabs produced a number of different types of genres of fiction, some of which principally, of pre-Islamic times, they have shared in fashion and mode with other ancient cultures; still, others were produced after Islam, were mainly of Arab creation but are neglected and overlooked. Jayyusi argues that the Arabs had their old literary heritage. She cites the collected narratives of Wahb ibn al-Munabbih which are preserved in *Kitab al-tijan fi muluk Himyar (The Book of Crowns on the Kings of Himyar)* as evidence of the old Arabic literary heritage. To illustrate the importance of this book, which according to Jayyusi, has been overlooked either due to ignorance or in purpose. She argues that this book has within it a lot of legends and folktales where the genies, demons, and ghostlike creatures, living weird and eerie things occur in abundance. She explains that it is

testimony to the tarnished status in modern times of classical Arabic fiction that this major early book of narratives, which is a foundational part of the formative stages of fictional creations in Arabic, has been largely overlooked and, as far as I know, has not been assigned as part of a comprehensive educational curriculum.<sup>116</sup>

Additionally, the literary critic, Matti Moosa, in the *Origin of Modern Arabic Fiction* asserts that the Arabs before the Islamic era had the habit of storytelling tales describing their tribal life. In these tales, they used to portray many sides of their social life and behavior like “generosity, self-praise, courage, group feeling, erotic love, and revenge. Most of these survived into the

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<sup>116</sup> - Jayyusi,4-5.

pre-Islamic era, being retold, particularly to Arab soldiers during their early period of Islamic conquests, to arouse their fighting spirit”.<sup>117</sup> Moosa goes on saying that the exact date of collecting and arranging these tales is not known for certain. *Al-jamharah* ( a collection of tales) by Umar Ibn Shabba al-Numayri of al- Basrah (780-875) was likely to be the first anthology about the Arabs’ raids and wars against the neighboring tribes and countries before the rise and emergence of Islam. Moosa does not go in line with Jayyusi who sees that these tales are an essential part of the Arab literary and fictional heritage.

On the contrary, Moosa sees no connection between these tales and the modern Arabic novel. He confirms that these tales have nothing to do with the Arabic novels and the short story that exist today. They are poles apart from each other in the range of subjects covered, in their connection with milieu, and in their form.<sup>118</sup>

Furthermore, Moosa points out to the dissimilarities between the tales collected in *The Thousand and One Nights* and modern Arabic fiction. He believes that the tales in *The Thousand and One Nights* mostly about delightful and amazing adventures in which the ingenuity or the good luck of the hero defines and determines the result of this adventure.

The events of *The Arabian Nights* have the tendency of being told in fables and legends which have nothing to do with the real-life we live. Moreover, the

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<sup>117</sup> - Moosa, 1.

<sup>118</sup> - Moosa, 1.

settings are mostly unreal and imaginary, and the characters are stereotypes and not characters of different features and characteristics<sup>119</sup>

Contrarily, the Egyptian writer Mahmud Tymur (1894-1974) had a completely different opinion regarding *The One Thousand and One Nights*. He says that it motivates the imagination of its readers and that many well-known European intellectuals and writers such as Voltaire(1694-1778), the, French writer, historian and philosopher of the Enlightenment age read *The One Thousand and One Nights* many times before trying their hands at narrative fiction.<sup>120</sup>

The group who believes that the Arabs have a rich fictional heritage that needs to be rediscovered, revived and developed cite more literary examples of this rich heritage in addition to those mentioned earlier which were written centuries ago. They present the sophisticated *Epistle of Forgiveness* as an excellent example written approximately one thousand years ago during the Abbasid period by the renowned Abbasid blind poet Abu- Alaa al- Maarri (973–1057). Jayyusi maintains that *the Epistle of Forgiveness* is a narrative about an imaginary tour to the other world on which Abu- Alaa al-Maarri sends one of his resurrected dead friends, a (writer), who visits both Paradise and Hell and asks several important literary characters ( poets, linguists, and narrators) about their deeds during their lifetime and the consequences of their doings.<sup>121</sup>

During his tour in Paradise, Abu- Alaa' al- Ma'arri's dead friend (Ibn Al-

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<sup>119</sup> - Moosa, 1.

<sup>120</sup> - Muhsin Jasim Al-Mosawi, *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel Debating Ambivalence*. Vol. XXIII Ed. (Boston: Brill Leiden, 2003), 83.

<sup>121</sup> - Jayyusi, 8.

Qareh) was surprised to find out that several pre-Islamic poets have been forgiven. Visiting Hell, the Sheikh encounters Imru al-Qays, Bashar ibn Burd, and several other renowned Arab poets, including the famous vagabond, Tabbata Sharran<sup>122</sup> and many others. Dr. Sana M. Jarrar in her article, “*Two Journeys To the Afterlife: The Epistle of Forgiveness and The Divine Comedy*”, argues that “Al-Maarrī fills his hell with a huge number of men and women, Muslims and Christians, ignorant, honest, mean, rich and poor, but they are mostly writers, poets or scientists because the main objective of his journey is to make a type of literary and linguistic criticism.”<sup>123</sup>

It is worth noting that some great European literary men and poets were inspired and influenced by the Islamic and the Arabs’ literary heritage. Dr. Jarrar observes that there are a lot of similarities between al-Maarrī’s *The Epistle of Forgiveness* (d.1057), and Dante’s magnum opus, *The Divine Comedy* ( 1320 AD.), most critics strongly believe that Dante in his *Devine Comedy* is remarkably inspired by *The Epistle of Forgiveness* which was written more than three centuries earlier.

Additionally, she observes that there are many different viewpoints concerning the Oriental and Islamic origins of *The Divine Comedy* and its relationship with al-Maarrī’s *The Epistle of Forgiveness*. She claims that some believe that the *Devine Comedy* was not of Dante’s creation but he plagiarized the subject from al-Maarrī, the real creator. Others argue that Dante was

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<sup>122</sup> - Allen, *An Introduction To Arabic Literature*, 162.

<sup>123</sup> - Sana M. Jarrar “*Two Journeys To the Afterlife: The Epistle of Forgiveness and The Divine Comedy*”, *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*. Vol.5, No.2, PP 47-56, February 2017.

inspired by al-Marri's *The Epistle of Forgiveness* and only quoted the idea of the imaginary journey to the other world. All in all, the majority of critics and scholars confirm without any doubt that *The Divine Comedy* was influenced to a great extent by Islamic heritage in many aspects. Needless to say that *The Epistle of Forgiveness* is an important literary work which, according to Jayyusi, "succeeded in transforming the epistle genre into a new literary form with distinct fictional characteristics."<sup>124</sup> Moreover, Wail Hassan goes further to say that the *maqama* genre is the source of the Spanish Picaresque *Don Quixote* (1605) by Miguel de Cervantes, to prove that the Arabs had a rich literary heritage which influenced some of the Western writers<sup>125</sup>, an opinion, I believe shared by many Arab contemporary critics and scholars.

The well-known critic and theoretician Edward Said (1935-2003) has a quite different point of view from Jayyusi and a number of other literary scholars regarding the beginning and origin of the Arabic novel. Said argues that Arabic literature before the twentieth century has a rich variety of narrative forms – *qissa*( story), *sira*( biography), *hadith*( narrative or news, story), *khurafa* (pleasant fictitious story), *ustura* (legend), *khobar* (a piece of information), *nadira*( funny talk), *maqama*( picaresque tales written in an episodic style of fiction) – but none of these is similar to the narrative or form of the European novel.<sup>126</sup> Similarly, the prominent Saudi novelist Abdul Rahman Munif (1933-2004) and a number of other younger Arab writers, critics, and literary scholars are of the same opinion as Edward Said. According to them, the Arab novelists

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<sup>124</sup> - Jayyusi..8.

<sup>125</sup> - Hassan, 3.

<sup>126</sup> -Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982), 17.

borrowed and imitated this new European genre in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Munif claims that the modern Arabic novel is neither indebted in any way to the Arab tradition nor connected with the folklore of *The Thousand and One Nights* nor with the tales of chivalry such as *Sayf ibn thi Yazin* or *Antra ibn Shaddad*. Adding insult to injury, Munif says that “The Arabic novel has no heritage. Thus any contemporary Arab novelist has to look for a means of expression for himself, with hardly any guidance to aid him. It is thus inevitable that he will make some mistakes and display shortcomings.”<sup>127</sup>

In other words, Munif strongly disagrees with those who assert that the modern Arabic novel had its deep roots in pre-Islamic and medieval Arab narrative tales. Along with many others, he believes that the novel is a new creation emerged in the nineteenth century which the Arabs imported from the West and imitated.

*Maqama* is a literary genre thoroughly created by the Arabs. Moosa defines the *maqama* as picaresque tales written in an episodic style of fiction dealing with the adventures of scoundrels, ruses and dishonest but cute and lovable heroes. It was first coined and used by Badi al-Zaman al-Hamadhani, (968–1008) (Badi al-Zaman means wonder of the world). His real name was Abu al-Fadl Ahmad ibn al-Husayan, a man of letters, poet and famous as the initiator of *maqama* genre which later was imitated and used by many others.<sup>128</sup> Matti Moosa places great importance on the *maqama* of Arabic prose as a narrative mode in the development of Arabic fiction. Since there are no literary roots or

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<sup>127</sup> - Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*, 17.

<sup>128</sup> - Julie Scott Meisami, Paul Starkey, Ed. *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* ( London & New York: Routledge,1998), 123.

heritage for Arab novelists to follow and build upon, therefore, the role played by the *maqama* in the development and growth of the Arabic novel cannot be overlooked or denigrated.<sup>129</sup>

The main objective of *maqama* was, generally to instruct as well as to amuse. Moosa adds that *maqama* was a first-person narrative about the adventures of a lowborn adventurer who has uncontrolled tendency to travel from place to place without a fixed aim. The tales are permeated with wit and funny events. In addition to being entertaining, and amusing, they mirror the urban way of life, and severely criticise the ills of the society.<sup>130</sup>

Nuri Gana, the author of *The Edinburgh Companion to the Arabic Novel In English* states that early Arabic literary narratives such as the eighth-century *Kalila and Dimna*, a widely circulated collection of animal fables of Indian origin written in Sanskrit possibly as early as the third century, which Ibn al-Muqaffa translated from Persian into Arabic in the eighth century. The *maqama* or chivalric tales of Badi al-Zaman al-Hamadhani and Muhammad al-Qasim al-Hariri in the tenth and eleventh centuries, respectively, the twelfth-century philosophical tale *Hay ibn Yagzan* by the philosopher Ibn Tufayl; and, particularly *The One Thousand and One Nights* not only influenced the development of modern Arabic novel but also “ had variably informed the rise of the novel in Europe from Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* (1605-1615) and Daniel Defoe’s *Robison Crusoe* (1719) to Lawrence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1759-

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<sup>129</sup> - Moosa, XI.

<sup>130</sup> - Moosa, XI.



67) and beyond.<sup>131</sup> Nuri Gana goes on to say that one reviewer in a recent article titled (*The History of the Novel*) remarks that

This text [*The Arabian Nights*], which had been borrowed enthusiastically in Europe and later on made representative of the romance that Western realism left behind, became evidence (having travelled eastward again in modern and postmodern time) refuting the premise that the Middle East fiction could not possibly be anything but a borrowed form.<sup>132</sup>

Both Nuri Gana, and Jayyusi agree that artistic creativity is not restricted to a certain race, ethnic group, geographical area or a certain culture. There is no superiority of one race over another. The human mind works the same, and creativity and ingenuity could be found anywhere and in any race, including the Arabs. To prove her point, Jayyusi cites several examples of the Arab mind creativity:

first, the picaresque tale in the West exemplified by Cervantes (hailed as the father of the Western novel) in *Don Quixote*, which also employed, as we find in the Arab *maqama*, [...] the excursion to hell and heaven as we see in Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, highly reminiscent of the earlier Arab version [...] of the most famous work, the eleventh-century *Epistle of Forgiveness* by al-Maarri, as we see in *Robinson Crusoe*, a novel reminiscent of the philosophical tale *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, by the much earlier Andalusí philosopher Ibn Tufail (1100–1185).<sup>133</sup>

What Gana and Jayyusi want to assert is that the novel is an international creativity, its rise should not be wholly attributed to the West or to the East. The human creative mind is the same anywhere.

Throughout the past centuries, as mentioned earlier, scholars and literary critics differed widely regarding the beginning and origin of the Arabic novel. The truth of the matter is that the Arabs started to write the novel proper only late in the nineteenth century in Egypt and Greater Syria which included Lebanon at that time. Jayyusi argues that the would-be enthusiastic Arab

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<sup>131</sup> - Gana, 7.

<sup>132</sup> - Gana, 8.

<sup>133</sup> - Gana, 9.

writers did not embrace and imitate the techniques of the Western novel only because they were very much impressed and influenced by the developed Western novel, but because the Arab writers were ready to accept and adopt it wholeheartedly, and it was the right time for the novel to appear in the Arab world.<sup>134</sup>

The Arabs needed, were willing, and prepared for it. A number of different issues accumulated together in the nineteenth century in the Arab world, especially in Egypt led to bring about major changes in the narrative of the Arabic fiction which in the past lacked imagination and vitality. As mentioned earlier, the most important factors for the rise of the novel in the Arab world were the entrance of modern education, brought into Egypt by Mohammad Ali Pasha who ruled Egypt from 1804 to 1849 after the French evacuation which made Egypt the heart of the modern Arabic literary reawakening. The policy of religious tolerance adopted by Mohammad Ali induced a number of Syrian and Lebanese men of letters, mostly Christians to migrate to Egypt, the building of new schools and sending educational missions to Europe, particularly to Italy and France in the early decades of the nineteenth century. For Moosa, these were the most notable and distinguished avenues that Egypt could learn the Western philosophy, culture, and way of thinking. All these factors, among others, helped the growth and development of the Arabic novel.

The first of the educational missions to Europe was in 1826, where a number of young Egyptians were sent to Paris headed by Rifa al-Tahtawi (1801-1873), an Egyptian religious scholar, as their adviser. Al-Tahtawi was an active

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<sup>134</sup> -Moosa, 5.

translator and administrator of remarkable energy and the most prominent intellectual figure in Egypt of his era. Al-Tahtawi lived in France for about five years during which he mastered the French language, studied the French culture, their political system, and customs carefully, then wrote down his observations, impressions, and experiences about their way of life. He studied their clothes, infrastructure, water sewage system, food, educational system, the status of women in the French society and wrote these down in his well-known book *Takhlis al-abriz fi talkhis Paris*, (*Extraction of Gold in Summarizing Life in Paris*). In other words, the progress of the French in the arts and sciences, in particular, impressed al-Tahtawi considerably. Moreover, he was impressed by the scientific and academic institutions such as the huge libraries, laboratories, and schools as well. *Takhlis al-abriz fi talkhis Paris* (*Extraction of Gold in Summarizing Life in Paris*) is the first of a number of works written by Arab writers and intellectuals recording their impressions about their visits to Europe. Roger Allen states that the impressions of the Arab intellectuals and writers about Paris and Europe were a subject for a chain of novels which have been published by the most prominent novelists such as by Suhail Idris, Yahya Haqi, Taha Husayn, Tayib Salih, Tawfik al-Hakim and others in the mid of the twentieth century. Additionally, during his stay in France, al-Tahtawi got acquainted with a number of prominent French Orientalists such as Caussin de Percival, Pierre Amedee Jaubert, and Sylverstre de Sacy. Al-Tahtawi learned a lot from these scholars who encouraged him to read books of the world ancient

civilizations as well as the books of the European thinkers like Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Racine.<sup>135</sup>

The age of Khedive 'Ismail (1863-1879) was a golden age for cultural prosperity and productivity in Egypt due to his open mind. He permitted translating Western literary books in addition to the scientific ones. During Muhammad Ali's rule translation was mainly restricted to military purposes, scientific works and textbooks in order to build modern, strong Egypt. When Khedive 'Ismail ascended the throne of Egypt in 1863, he was determined to westernize his country to the maximum extent possible. As a consequence, a lot of positive changes took place in Egypt, especially in the sector of education. Under his instructions, many new native schools were built on the European style. This had a positive impact on the entire educational system which witnessed drastic changes, and in turn, contributed to the development of Arabic literature.

During Khedive's reign, translators paid more attention to translating European literary works and were relieved of their previous main task which was restricted to translating scientific, military and educational works as was the case during the reign of Mohammad Ali. Translators started to translate literary works joined by cultured Syrian and Lebanese Christian emigrants. Allen Roger points out that Khedive Ismail's policy of Westernization Egypt helped in making it a safe refuge for a lot of Syrian Christian immigrants who chose Egypt as a place of residence after the period of fighting between the various sects of the Syrian society in the 1850s. These intellectuals and literary

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<sup>135</sup> -Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*, 5.

men brought with them their literary knowledge and know-how, in addition to their early experience of drama. They also established many journals, newspapers, and magazines of cultural and scientific nature.<sup>136</sup>

Needless to say that one of al-Tahtawi's major achievements in the development of modern Arabic fiction in Egypt and beyond was through his role as a pioneering translator of European works. In 1835 Muhammad Ali established a School of Languages in Cairo, and al-Tahtawi was appointed as its administrator. In addition to the school of languages, Mohammad Ali established an official gazette, *al-Waqae al-Misriyyah (Egyptian Events)*, and al-Tahtawi was appointed as its editor in 1941 in addition to his previous job. This was of major importance to the field of education in general and to the development of fiction in particular.

Al-Tahtawi and his students started to translate hundreds of significant books of European thought such as, "Voltaire, Montesquieu, Fenelon, to mention but a few. To these were added, slowly but inevitably, a number of other literary works. Among the first were the *Fables of La Fontaine*, and the novels of Alexander Dumas."<sup>137</sup>

One of Rifa'a al-Tahtawi's major contributions was the translation of François Fenelon's novel *Le Adventures of Telemaque* under a title of his own creation set in rhyming prose in order to keep with the predominant decorum of the time, *Mawaqi' al-'aflak fi waqa'I' Tilimak (The Orbits of the Celestial*

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<sup>136</sup> - Allen., *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*, 24.

<sup>137</sup> - Allen. *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*, 24.

*Spheres Relating to the Exploits of Telemaque*)1867.<sup>138</sup> Some critics believe that al-Tahtawi's translation of *Le Aventures de Telemaque* was not mainly for literary purposes, but an expression of disapproval for sending him to Sudan in 1841 during the reign of Abbas I like a kind of punishment and exile for his revolutionary ideas in his book *Takhlis al-abriz fi talkhis Paris* under the pretext that he was needed there. Al-Tahtawi felt that he was maltreated and was sure that the main purpose for sending him to Sudan was to humiliate and silence him. Al-Tahtawi could not show his dissatisfaction in plain prose, therefore, he had to turn to fiction in order to articulate his displeasure and annoyance. He found in *Telemaque*, which was full of liberal views on education and politics, allegory to vent his anger for the injustice done to him.<sup>139</sup> Moreover, a-Tahtawi may be credited for introducing "the Greek Mythological figures into modern Arabic literature through his translation of Fenelon's *Le Aventures de Telemaque*. Based on the Myth of Ulysses, its plot involves treachery on the part of the unjust king and the exile of the hero."<sup>140</sup> The myth of Ulysses has some similarity to the story of sending al-Tahtawi to Sudan. Le Cossack in his book *Major Themes in Modern Arabic Thought* says that in addition to al-Tahtawi's interest in procuring and borrowing European cultural ideas, he also encouraged the printing of some of the Arabic classics such as the well-known *Ibn Khaldoon's Muqaddema (The Introduction)* and *The Thousand and One Nights* in the Bulag government Press. These works were printed in Arabic for the first time. During the late nineteenth and early

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<sup>138</sup> - Sakkut, 15.

<sup>139</sup> - Moosa,6 .

<sup>140</sup> - Trevor J. Le Gossack, *Major Themes in Modern Arabic Thought: An Anthology* (Ann Arbour: The University of Michigan Press, 1979), 9.

twentieth centuries, many Western romances, novels, and plays were translated into Arabic. This introduced Arab writers to the techniques of the various modern genres which contributed to a great extent in developing and modernizing the Arabic literature.

However, in spite of the apparent advantages of the translations from Western literature to Arabic, a number of writers and critics were unenthusiastic to this modernization and strongly objected it believing it was a kind of foreign cultural occupation. Contrarily, some other writers and critics have a completely different opinion. They welcomed the translation of *Le Aventures de Telemaque* and other Western novels admitting their literary characteristics and that it is worthy of praise and commendation. In his translation, al-Tahtawi could make Western Literature read by conservative Muslims through his use of rhymed prose and by ornamenting his writing with popular Islamic proverbs and at the same time sticking to and preserving the general outlines of the original text. "He apparently meant to dress his work in an Egyptian garb with Egyptionized figures."<sup>141</sup> Al-Tahtawi's translation of *Le Aventures de Telemaque* was a successful attempt in abandoning the traditional and stagnant literary models. He, therefore, as I believe was a pioneer in paving the way and opening the gate for others to follow suit and try their hands in modernizing imaginative literature in Egypt and the rest of the Arab world.

The impact of al-Tahtawi on the development and modernizing of Arabic fiction and drama was so evident in the translation works of his pupil

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<sup>141</sup> - Moosa,6.

Mohammad Othman Jalal (1829-1898) who translated a number of Western works into Arabic. Jalal was interested in French literature, particularly drama. The works he translated were mostly comedies such as *Paul et Virginie*, by Bernardino de Saint Pierre in rhyming prose, under the title, *al-'Amani wa al-minna fi hadith Qabul wa Wardajinna (Aspirations and Gracious Gifts concerning the Story of Qabul and Virginia)* 1872. Molière's *Le Tartuffe*, *Les Femmes Servants*, *Le' Ecole des Maris*, and *Les Ecole de Femmes*. Jalal used colloquial Egyptian in a number of his translations.<sup>142</sup> To enhance the appeal to French literature, Jalal not only used colloquial Arabic but also went further and replaced the French names with Egyptian names in addition to Egyptionizing whole scenes, and sometimes he was bold enough to change the themes of the French plays to make them suitable for the Arabic reader. Matti Moosa says that Jalal changed *Tartuffe* to *Sheikh Matluf*, *Madame Parnell* to *al-Sit Umm- Nil*, and *Orgon* became *Ghalbun*, *Paul* became *Qabul*, and so on.<sup>143</sup> For some, this is considered as a kind of creativity on the part of Jalal.

The Egyptian critic, writer and novelist Yahya Haqqi (1905-1992), courageously admits that the Arabic novel owes its beginnings to the West. He argues that the Arabs first came to know the modern story through translations. Haqqi goes on to say that there is no harm in admitting that modern novel came to us from the West.<sup>144</sup> Haqqi was a well-rounded person whose contributions to the Arabic literature were not restricted to writing novels. He worked in the field of journalism, literary criticism, government, and international diplomacy. His writings encompass a wide range of themes- the city and the countryside,

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<sup>142</sup> - Sakkut,15.

<sup>143</sup> - Moosa,12.

<sup>144</sup> - Moosa, P.92.



the poor and the rich, development and education. His love for his country instigated him to make his main objective as a writer the service of his country as best as he could.<sup>145</sup>

One of the strongest advocates of the translation of Western works was the well-known Lebanese poet, critic, and thinker Michael Nuaima (1889-1988). He strongly advocates the importance of translation, explaining that it is an essential stage in the development of Arabic literature, and he wholeheartedly accepts it without any reservation because he believes that the Arabs are badly in need for the Western education and technology, but they don't have the courage nor the will to admit this in public. He argues that since we don't have enough literary and scientific knowledge, which is available in the West, so without delay or procrastination, we should borrow, and procure it to our countries through translation. Nuaima writes:

We are in a stage of literary and social development in which we have become aware of many intellectual needs. These needs were never known to us before our recent contact with the West. We have not a sufficient number of pens or brains to satisfy these intellectual needs. Therefore, let us translate.<sup>146</sup>

Nuaima was courageous enough to challenge the other (then) strong party who were reluctant and against the translation of Western works for fear of their negative impact on our moral values and because they believed it to be a kind of cultural occupation.

It must be noted that in addition to the above-mentioned factors that contributed to the emergence of a new genre of literature, that the Printing Press

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<sup>145</sup> Ziad Elmarsafy, *Sufism in the Contemporary Arabic Novel* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 12.

<sup>146</sup> - Moosa,93.

is one of the most important factors which had positive effects on the development of literature and widening the circles of readers. Through the translation and Printing Press, we could see all kinds of literary production. Books of medieval literature were printed by the non-governmental publishing houses. As a result, a wide range of books have become available to wide circles of readers. "The reading public itself was not only growing in numbers but also exhibiting new literary predilections, different from those of the lucky few who had been the main connoisseurs of literature in pre-modern times."<sup>147</sup>

The translated books played an important role in enlightening the people and widening the knowledge of the readers.

In addition to the contributions of al-Tahtawi and Jalal, Nuaima and the others mentioned above, regarding the development of Arabic literature, there were other intellectuals such as Bishara Shadid and Yusuf Sarkis who contributed to Arabic literature as well to the translation activities. This helped in introducing the Western literary writing forms and styles to Arabic fiction and drama and helped in developing and revitalizing it. For example, Bishara Shadid translated Alexander Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1871), while Yusuf Sarkis translated Jules Verne's *Cinq Semaines en Ballon* (1875), and so on it went. The reception of such translated works was highly appreciated and liked by the Arab reading public, and as a result, the translation movement flourished immensely.

Hamdi Sakkut claims that within the early decades of the twentieth century, more than a hundred novels had been translated from the French and the

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<sup>147</sup> - Badawi, 42.

English languages into Arabic.<sup>148</sup> Most of the novels translated from these two languages were love stories, historical and oriental tales, science fiction and detective stories. In translation, the stories were often rearranged and translators often took liberties and made changes in the form of the original novels in order to satisfy the taste of the Arab reading public like what Jalal did with Molière's *Tartuffe* through Egyptionazing the characters' names and sometimes converting them to Islam. Sometimes the translators attributed the works they translated to themselves without any acknowledgment to the original author of the work. Some even went further and published their works under the names of famous Western writers for financial gains.

As for the language used in the translated works, Sakkut says that it was in artificial rhyming prose or in colloquial Arabic. But with the passing of time and the spread of private publishing houses, from 1870 onward the translators used clear, and simple prose language in their translations of foreign books.<sup>149</sup>

Regardless of the misuse of some of the translators to the texts they translated during this stage, it must be acknowledged that they are credited for introducing the Arab readers to new Western literary genres such as the novel and drama. In other words, the influence of translating Western works was of great benefit to all the genres of Arabic literature. The majority of the Arab writers, in one way or another, were positively influenced by Western literature, especially the novel. Through the translation, Arab writers, particularly novelists, learned the Western techniques of novel writing. Moreover, a number of literary terms were borrowed and assimilated into Arabic. This helped them

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<sup>148</sup> - Sakkut, 15.

<sup>149</sup> - Sakkut, 15.

master the techniques of the new genres well enough. Additionally, translating Western novels helped in increasing the reading public in the Arab world because it offered them a lot of pleasure and instruction.

Although there were some who regarded the imported Western modern literary forms as a kind of cultural invasion that must be fought and called for preserving and using the original Arabic heritage and culture; another group regarded the imported literary genres as part and parcel of a universal civilization which all societies would sooner or later adopt. Sheikh Mohammad Abduh (1849- 1905 ), the Islamic scholar, and thinker whose works brought extensive changes in Islamic thought, the educational and legal systems, recommended that it would be best to embrace and adopt these changes without losing further time or effort to invigorate the static Arabic heritage as soon as possible.

## **2.2. Transition from Arabic Traditional Novel to the Modern Novel**

Some conservative intellectuals and thinkers successfully made great efforts to revive the *maqama* (a classical genre of elegant, highly stylized Arabic prose) and thus revive and invigorate Arab narratives by assimilating European modernity to it. It is worth noting that some Arab prominent writers such as the Lebanese Nasif al-Yazji(1800-1871), a principal figure in Arabic *Nahda*, Ahmad,al-Shidaq (1805-1887)the Lebanese Maronite Christian who later converted to Islam, al-Muwaylihi( 1858-1930), and the poet Hafiz Ibrahim(1872-1932), to mention but a few, returned to using *maqama* in the writing of their novels.

Al-Muwailihi's *Hadith Isa ibn Hisham (The Narrative of Isa ibn Hisham or (A Period of Time)* (1907) is a good example, says Nuri Gana, which shows "the transition of Arabic prose from *maqama* to the novel, ridding the latter of the stylistic adornments and restrictions of the former."<sup>150</sup> Yet, it can be argued that the Arabic novel did not completely get rid of all the formal aspects of the *maqama*. Although partly narrated in *maqama*, *The Narrative of Isa ibn Hisham* has long been acknowledged as a significant event and an achievement in the development of modern Arabic novel. In other words, it must be admitted that *maqama* worked as an important connection and link between the narrative genres of the earlier period of Arabic literary history and the beginning of the modern fictional genres in the twentieth century. When Muhammad al-Muwailihi borrowed the name 'Isa Ibn Hisham' from the *maqama* of Badi al-Zaman al-Hamadhani and used it as the title of his book, critics regarded it as a clear indication that al-Muwailihi acknowledged his literary obligation and respect to the great master of the *maqama* genre. Allen, briefly explains the importance of *Isa ibn Hisham* as a link between the old and the modern in regards to the Arabic novel. He writes

The transitional nature between the old and the new has been projected in the meeting of the two characters of the book: the narrator 'Isa ibn Hisham' ( a writer who lived in Cairo at the turn of the last century) and a Pasha ( Ahmad al-Manikali, who, when alive, served as Mohammad Ali who ruled Egypt from 1805 to 1848 ,and whom al-Muwailihi resurrected from his grave in Imam al Shafi's Cemetery in Cairo, though he forgot to send the Pasha back to his grave at the end of the book.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup>: Gana,6.  
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[https://www.academia.edu/29004442/A\\_Period\\_of\\_Time\\_Hadith\\_Isa\\_ibn\\_Hisham\\_by\\_Muhammad\\_al-Muwaylihi\\_By\\_Roger\\_Allen](https://www.academia.edu/29004442/A_Period_of_Time_Hadith_Isa_ibn_Hisham_by_Muhammad_al-Muwaylihi_By_Roger_Allen).

*The Narrative of Isa ibn Hisham* had an effect on the Egyptian educational system, for it was prescribed and taught in the secondary schools in 1927.

Nuri Gana, points out that the reason for the return of some Arab writers such as Hafiz Ibrahim,(1868- 1932), Muhammad Lutfi Jumaa, Elias Khouri, and Ahlam Mosteghanemi, to name only a few, to the traditional *maqama*, rhymed prose, and relying on episodic narration was a kind of resistance to the European cultural domination during the colonial scramble of the Arab world in the nineteenth century.<sup>152</sup> The enlightened thinker, Imam Muhammad Abduh, the Egyptian Islamic jurist, a scholar of religion and social reformer, encouraged the reading and translating of Western books including good novels and emphasized their benefits to Arab readers. A positive outlook and an advisory opinion (*Fatwa*) coming from such a highly distinguished thinker encouraged Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti (1876-1924) and other writers and translators to wholly espouse the Western novel form. They were confident that the novel could serve educational, moral, and social purposes. Among the eminent writers who believed this were Ali Mubarak (1823-1893), who published *Alam al-din*, Ahmad Shawqi ( 1870-1932, the great Arabic poet laureate, and playwright who was among the first to lead the modern Egyptian literary movement, and the one who introduced the genre of poetic epics to the Arabic literature and wrote a number of historical plays, *Cleopatra* is one of his masterpieces. In addition to the above, we have, Mohammad Husayn Haykal (1886-1956) who wrote the well-known novel *Zainab* which a lot of critics and scholars regard as the first modern Arabic novel.

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<sup>152</sup> - Gana,6.

Jayyusi claims that although the translation and adaptation of Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti to Edmond Rostand's play *Cyrano de Bergerac*, François Coppee's play *Pour la Couronne*, Alphonse Karr's novel *Sous le Tilleuls*, and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's novel, *Paul et Virginie* from French literature into Arabic were loose due to his poor knowledge of foreign languages, still, his contributions were highly praised in the Arab world because of his clear, vivid style and his good choice of words, in addition to the romantic nature of the works. Al-Manfaluti is considered a leading member of the nineteenth century Arabic Literary Renaissance. He created a change in the style of Arabic literature that corresponds and agrees with the methods of European literature.<sup>153</sup> Moreover, Jayyusi says that al-Manfaluti tried his hand in writing long short stories based on the adversities and problems of the Arab societies in the early decades of the twentieth century, but was more successful in describing the tragic conditions of the poor and the way poverty and immorality lead to adversity. In other words, Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti succeeded in establishing himself as one of the greatest short-story writers of the 19th century in the Arab world. In his writings, he exhibited unrestrained sympathy for the poor, the underprivileged people, the widows, orphans in a manner that showed he was a kind-hearted person of deep humanity. In his narration, al-Manfaluti proved to have wonderful skill in using lucid language, imagery, metaphors, allegory, and irony.<sup>154</sup>

The prominent poet, essayist, and novelist Gibran Khalil Gibran (1883-1931) who wrote most of his well-known works in English and lived most of

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<sup>153</sup> - Jayyusi.14-15.

<sup>154</sup> - Jayyosi, 14-15.

his life in America was a pioneer in writing long short novels. In his works, he attacked and severely criticised the ills of the Arab societies such as fanaticism, ignorance, and the wide-spreading of recession in the Arab countries. *Brides of the Prairies* and *Rebellious Spirits* are two of the most well-known of his long-short novels. Gibran was a key figure in a Romantic movement that transformed Arabic literature in the first half of the twentieth century and contributed to its development. He, like al-Manfaluti, was influenced by the European modernists of the late nineteenth century.

Another eminent writer of that period was the Palestinian Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (1920-1994). Jabra was one of the most leading novelists, poets, critics, painters, and translators in the Arab world. He contributed extensively in developing and modernizing of the Arabic novel. He was the first Arabic translator to translate William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury* in which Faulkner uses the stream of consciousness technique in his narrative. Furthermore, Jabra translated thirty books from English into Arabic, among which were a number of Shakespeare's plays such as *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Coriolanus*. Moreover, some of his works in Arabic were translated into English, French, Spanish, Italian, Slovak, and Serbo-Croatian. In addition to his contributions in translating Western works, within four decades or so, Jabra published more than 60 literary works in Arabic and English. In describing him and his works, Salma Jayyusi says that Jabra is a novelist with rich thought and imagination, has immense artistic vigour and creativity. Moreover, he has great love and passion for his occupied country. It is to be noted that most of his works are autobiographical, and rotate



about his own experiences.<sup>155</sup> To illustrate this, Jayyusi cites Waleed, the main character in his fascinating novel *al-bahth 'an Waleed Mas'oud*, (*In Search for Waleed Masoud*), as a good example to support her claim that he is almost the duplicate copy of the author Jabra himself, especially in his zealous quest for companions, and friends. Moreover, the two (Jabra and Waleed) lived and overcame the same circumstances, and situations before they rise to high standards of literary and artistic levels<sup>156</sup>

Literary historians and critics differ considerably concerning the first Arabic novel. Some assert that it is the novel of the Lebanese Salim al-Bustani (1847-1884 ) *al Hayam fi Jinan al-Sham* (*Passionate Love in the Gardens of Damascus*,1870), a historical Romance, which was an admirable literary achievement that appeared in serialized episodes in 1870 in his magazine *al-Jinan*( *Gardens*). Others have a different opinion and claim that the first modern Arabic novel is *Zainab*, by Mohammad H. Haykal. Moosa, in his *Origins of Modern Fiction*, maintains that al-Bustani not only influenced the younger generations of Arab writers but also may have, in a roundabout manner, changed the viewpoints of the would-be novelists to the importance of the novel as a successful means for making history easier to understand, and more enjoyable to read.<sup>157</sup> He, truly, among other writers espoused the Western novel form without any reservations. Al-Bustani and Yusuf Sarkis popularized the genre of the *Historical Romance* through translations published serially in magazines. It is estimated that more than one hundred novels were translated from French literature alone in the first decade of the twentieth century.

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<sup>155</sup> - Jayyusi, 29.

<sup>156</sup> - Jayyusi, 29.

<sup>157</sup> - Moosa,197.

Moreover, a large number of English novels by Sir Walter Scott, William Make Peace Thackeray, Charles Dickens, Arthur Canon Doyle, and others, were translated into Arabic.<sup>158</sup>

In addition to the writers mentioned earlier in this study, another group successfully tried their hands to write novels about the Arabic Islamic history and make it as their main theme. This group authored original novels as a means for moral instruction. The Christian Lebanese immigrant to Egypt, Jurji Zaidan (1861-1914) was the most prominent figure in this group. Zaidan wrote twenty-three historical novels that “outshone in literary merit the works of Salim al-Bustani and his fellow writers.”<sup>159</sup> In order to attract his reading public, Zaidan flavoured his novels with a tinge of surprises, adventures, love stories, murder, and intrigue amid the true historical events to make them more palatable and enjoyable to read. Zaidan was prolific in his production which had a great influence on the vision and moral attitudes of the reading public in Egypt and the whole of the Arab world. In 1892 he founded his magazine *al-Hilal* which is still in existence up to date. Commenting on Zaidan and his historical novels, Roger Allen says that he was not only a key channel of acquainting the Arab readers to the Western history and science but also was enthusiastic to inform and familiarise them with the characteristics and features of the Islamic and Arab history through his numerous novels which helped in developing a new cultural perception. He wrote more than thirty-seven

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<sup>158</sup>- Peter Melville Logan, *The Encyclopaedia of the Novel*. Ed.( West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2011),60.

<sup>159</sup> - Sakkut,17.

historical novels imitating the style and technique of Sir Walter Scott with the intention of achieving the above-mentioned goals.<sup>160</sup>

Although Jayyusi admires Zaidan's novels, admitting that they appeal to his readers at the same time, she criticises them in her book *Modern Arab Fiction* saying that they cannot be considered modern. Jayyusi observes that they are not modern –they are pre-modern) in which they describe, and shed light on the unattractive side of the Arab culture at the time. The characters, according to Jayyusi, are neither round nor dynamic; they undergo no significant changes throughout the story. They are either good or bad, virtuous, or mean, brave or cowards, and the reader can predict their behaviours and responses beforehand.<sup>161</sup>

I believe that Jayyusi's classification of Zaidan's novels as pre-modern was based on a thorough knowledge of the theories of criticism. Zaidan's novels lacked the features and characteristics of modernism such as fragmentation, open-endings. In his narrative, Zaidan never used the stream of consciousness technique which is considered as one of the main characteristics of Modernism.

As mentioned earlier, the modern Arabic novel began in the second half of the nineteenth century with translations mainly from both the French and the English literature, especially in Egypt and Lebanon. Some literary critics claim that Muhammad al-Muwailihi's *The Narrative of Isa Ibn Hisham*(1907) was the first real modern Arabic novel. Others disagree and believe that the first Arabic novel was Mahmud Haqqi's *Adhra' Dinshaway* (1906), (*The Virgin of Dinshaway*). A third group asserts that Muhammad Hussain Haykal's novel

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<sup>160</sup> - Allen, *The Arabic Novel : An Historical and Critical Introduction*,26.

<sup>161</sup> - Jayyusi,4.

*Zainab* (1913 ) was the first Modern Arabic Novel. Roger Allen does not consider al-Muwailihi's *The Narrative of Isa Ibn Hisham* a good novel because it lacks both good characterization and the development of characters through action. Moreover, the narrative was written in episodes that took four years, which made the thread of narrative extremely contrived and often invisible. Contrarily, Najib Mahfuz, the Egyptian novelist who won the 1988 Nobel Prize for Literature had a completely different opinion. He had great esteem both for al-Muwailihi's *The Narrative of Isa ibn Hisham*, and says that he considers it as the first Arabic and Egyptian modern work of fiction. Mahfuz says that Despite the fact that *The Narrative of Isa ibn Hisham*, critics did not give it its worth of praise and criticism. He considers it a great fictional work that focuses on the Arab cultural heritage and tradition through its plain usage of *maqama* technique. The concentration on criticising the ills of the Egyptian and Arab societies has determined the shape and form of the Egyptian works of fiction up to the present time. The fact that nobody can deny or overlook, the novel had a great impact on most of Mahfuz's generation of writers.<sup>162</sup>

However, Allen argues that *The Virgin of Dinshaway*, from a technical point of view, cannot be classified as fiction nor a true novel. It is a journalistic reportage and it is better to be classified as a historical account or incident rather than a novel.<sup>163</sup> According to many critics Allen was accurate and relevant concerning his criticism of *The Virgin of Dinshaway*. It cannot be classified as a true novel for the above- mentioned reasons.

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<sup>162</sup> - <https://arablit.org/2013/10/09/tawfiq-al-hakim-and-the-true-birth-of-the-arabic-novel>

<sup>163</sup> - Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*, 29.

The emergence of the modern Arabic novel cannot be attributed to one particular writer or one specific factor, but to a number of factors combined together. One of these factors is the French occupation to Egypt(1798) which brought with it scholars and scientists in different fields of knowledge and technologies. Additionally, Mohammad Ali Pasha's strong zeal to Westernize Egypt and making it a strong, modern country cannot be excluded in the rise and development of the novel in Egypt. He sent students in educational missions to Europe and allowed translating scientific Western books into Arabic. Khedive Ismael's educational reforms, especially bringing the first Arabic Printing Press to Egypt had its great positive impact as well. Moreover, the appearance of periodicals and magazines, the translation of Western works by Muslim Syrian and Lebanese Arab Christian writers, all combined together contributing, in one way or another, in the development and evolution of this new genre in the Arab world.

The role of the Press in spreading cultural awareness and cultivating the spirit of nationalism among the common people in the last decades of the nineteenth century cannot be belittled or disregarded either. It helped in raising the morale and the sense of nationalism among the Egyptians in order to oppose the foreign occupation and helped in building the Egyptian and Arabic Identity. Newspapers and journals were established and helped to encourage young writers and educated people to write and discuss important issues which were taboos in the past. Some newspapers and journals also published short stories, initially translations from European languages. Some were devoted to the

publication of entertainment literature such as novels and plays.<sup>164</sup> Some of the newspapers published novels in instalments and became known till this day for that. *Al-Ahram* was and still up to now one of these newspapers. The printing press continued its role in increasing the publication of books. Most of the twentieth-century Arab eminent novelists like Mahfuz published their works in instalments in *Al-Ahram* newspaper. Moosa points out that with the increase of the reading public, the number of journals increased in substantial numbers, attracting new readers to the translated Western fiction. The translated novels were published in single issues and in instalments. The readers apparently liked what they read, and many of the reading public bought the journals merely for the fiction they published.

Needless to say that the journals and periodicals played an important role in the development the Arabic novel, for instance, Zaidan published all his historical novels in *al-Hilal*, the journal he founded when he first came to Egypt.

Only a few of the writers mentioned above succeeded in involving their characters in an authentic setting. Mohammad Hussayn Haykal was one of the few who undertook this task. In 1913 Haykal wrote a novel about a tragic love story based on his personal experience from contemporary real life in the Egyptian countryside and gave it the title of *Zainab*, but published it under a pseudonym. His homesickness while he was in France, made Haykal describe the Egyptian countryside lovingly which gave the novel a realistic setting. Some critics maintain that Haykal preferred his novel to be anonymous rather

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<sup>164</sup> - Allen, *The Arabic Novel : An Historical and Critical Introduction*, 25.

than publishing his name on it. This, according to some critics, would excite the curiosity of readers and thus gain more publicity. *Zainab* is a story about the hard life of women in the Egyptian patriarchal society, particularly in the countryside with its nomadic customs and norms. It talks about the divisions of rural classes and the hard life of the poor peasants. It is also a story of the relationships between people of different social and economic and educational classes where Haykal faithfully and without exaggeration depicts the lack of volition allowed to women at the time. The story ends with the death of Zainab, the main female character by chest disease.<sup>165</sup>

Most Egyptian critics regard *Zainab* as the first modern novel. It was admired and well-received both by the critics and the reading public alike and as a consequence, it was republished in 1929. Haykal became a distinguished figure in the field of Arabic literature. Hamdi Sakkut points out that in 1929, the same year after its republication [*Zainab*] was chosen for cinema and made into a film. Haykal's contemporaries of writers realized that they too might be as successful as Haykal if they tried their hands and wrote autobiographical novels based upon their own personal experiences.<sup>166</sup> Consequently, a large number of autobiographical novels started to appear in Egypt and other parts of the Arabic world. At that period, emerged a group of writers who were called 'The Egyptian Modernists'. Their writings were not restricted to fiction alone but encompassed other literary forms such as drama, literary criticism, poetry, politics, amongst other forms. Taha Husayn, Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad, Abd al-Qadir al-Mazini, and Tawfiq al-Hakim were members of this school.

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<sup>165</sup> - Jayyusi, 19.

<sup>166</sup> - Sakkut, 18.

The first novel to appear after *Zainab* was al-Mazini's autobiographical novel in 1931. Its title was *Ibrahim al-Katib*, (*Ibrahim the Writer*). It was received with enthusiasm although some critics claim that al-Mazini plagiarized whole parts of it from a Russian novel he previously translated. Al-Mazini's novel *Ibrahim the Writer* is about two ill-fated love stories of the hero, an author with the same name as the writer. William Maynard Hutchins says that it is not a historical *romance*, al-Mazni's novel deals with real human relationships falling apart due to their own doings.<sup>167</sup> Al-Mazini did not write anything to criticise the existing social or political system of the country, a fact that made him different from his contemporary short story writers of the period whose writings were full of social and political criticism. Al-Mazini's *Ibrahim the Writer* was criticised for its weak structure, but this did not diminish its artistic value. The reading public was introduced, for the first time to a highly cultured Egyptian man of thought in a piece of fiction. Al-Mazini played an important role in the development of the modern Arabic novel especially the autobiographical genre.

Al-Mazini was followed by the eminent playwright, novelist and short-story writer *Tawfiq al-Hakim* (1898- 1987). Al-Hakim was one of the most imaginative writers in the Arab world who played a substantial role in the development and improvement of the Arabic novel and drama, as Mahfuz admits.. In his novel *Awdat al-Ruh* (*Spirit's Resurrection*) 1933, al-Hakim avoided the artistic flaws found in the works of both Haykal and al-Mazini. According to Sakkut, *Zainab* suffered from an excessive preoccupation with the

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<sup>167</sup>- William Maynard Hutchins, *Tawfiq Al-Hakim: A Readers Guide* ( Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers,2003),18.



descriptions of nature, which sometimes dominated the events and actions in the novel. Haykal's *Zainab* and al-Mazini's *Ibrahim the Writer* respectively, are inappropriately filled with intellectual thinking in the conversations and dialogues of their characters irrespective of their differing levels of social and educational backgrounds. In *Ibrahim the Writer*, Al-Mazini does not present his characters with sufficient individuality.<sup>168</sup> We do not find these flaws in al-Hakim's novels particularly in *The Spirit's Resurrection*. His descriptions of natural scenes are short and excellently relevant. His characters speak and behave according to their age and social status and each maintains his individuality. His other novels *Yawmiyat naeb fi al-aryaf*, (*Diary of a Country Prosecutor*) in 1936, *Osfur min al-sharq* (*A Bird from the East*) in 1938, and *al-Ribat al-muqaddas* (*The Sacred Bond*) in 1944 were well received both by the reading public and critics alike in spite of his use of the colloquial language instead of using the standard Arabic in his dialogues. Sakkut mentions that a French critic was delighted with *Diary of a Country Prosecutor*, which was translated into English in 1944, for its sparkling wit and satire. This French critic commented that the reader of this novel, because of his or her pleasure in reading, forgets the idea of social reform, which was what motivated al-Hakim to write it in the first place.<sup>169</sup> Hutchins reports that, in an interview in *Ahram Weekly*, Mahfuz (the Egyptian Noble Prize Winner for Literature in 1988) said that Al-Hakim's "works were truly landmarks in the evolution of the Arab novel-writing. In the truest sense, they represented and helped shape a new age ... my direct mentor was al-Hakim. *Awdat al- Ruh* (*Spirit's Resurrection*) I

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<sup>168</sup> - Sakkut,22.

<sup>169</sup> - Sakkut, 22.

believe, marked the true birth of the Arabic novel.”<sup>170</sup> It is worth highlighting that Haykal, al-Mazini, al-Hakim, Mahfuz, al-Aqqad, Taha Hussein, Jabra I. Jabra, and others all used their personal experiences to describe life in their novels. Life, in their novels, was an amalgamation of fiction and biography. Pure fiction would come in the near future.

Another innovator of twentieth-century Arabic literature and thought was Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad ( 1889-1964), an Egyptian journalist, poet, and literary critic. Al-Aqqad published *Sara* ( 1938), which was the only novel he wrote in his literary career. It was based on a personal romance experience with the only woman he loved. His views of women were those of respect and appreciation and were included in some books in which he demanded the full participation of women in building the Egyptian society. Here, it must be noted that al-Aqqad was one of the leading men of letters who contributed to the modern and new literary form of the Arabic novel. Al-Aqqad was greatly influenced by the 19th-century English philosopher, satirical writer, essayist, and historian Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881).<sup>171</sup>

In addition to al-Aqqad, al-Mazini, Haykal, and al-Hakim, we have the distinguished Sudanese novelist al-Tayyeb Salih(1929 -2009) another major contributor to the Arabic novel who wrote his masterpiece *Mawsim al-Hijra ila ash-Shamal* (*Season of Migration to the North*), which was rightly classified as a Post-colonial novel. This novel was written in Arabic and was translated into more than twenty languages. It received great critical attention and brought new vitality to the Arabic novel. It is worth highlighting that al-Tayyeb Salih’s

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<sup>170</sup>- William Maynard Hutchins, *Tawfiq Al-Hakim: A Readers Guide* (Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers,2003), 18.

<sup>171</sup>- <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Abbas-Mahmud-al-Aqqad>

writings played an important role in attracting attention to the Sudanese novel. It is observed that Arabic Literature is overwhelmed with social criticism, “it is committed literature depicting the bitter realities of life. Al-Tayyeb Salih managed to return to the roots of his culture, capturing the mystery, magic, humour, sorrows, and celebrations of rural life.”<sup>172</sup>

Taha Husayn (1889-1973), known all over the Arab world as the doyen of Arabic literature, and is considered as the greatest figure in modern Arabic literature for his bold suggestions for educational, literary and social reforms. In addition to his religious education in Azhar, the blind Taha Husayn had three Ph.D. degrees, one from Cairo University, the second from Sorbonne and the third from the University of Paris. He was appointed as Minister of Education in Egypt in 1950 and was responsible for creating free and Mandatory Education. His best-known book is the autobiographical novel *al-Ayyam (The Stream of Days)*, which is considered as one of his major literary works. It was published in instalments in *al-Hilal* Journal in 1926-1927, then was published as a book in 1929. Badawi, in his book *Modern Arabic Literature*, maintains that it was a biography which was apparently written for his daughter. The first part of *The Stream of Days* talks with insight and some irony about his childhood before he left his village to study in Cairo.<sup>173</sup> *The Stream of Days* is a good example of a Bildungsroman that younger novelists could profit from by imitating his lucid narrative technique.

Needless to say, that Taha Husayn was a prolific writer, whose writings encompassed various topics and fields of knowledge. His works consisted of

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<sup>172</sup> - [https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/70692.Tayeb\\_Salih](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/70692.Tayeb_Salih)

<sup>173</sup> -Badawi, 228-29 .

novels, critical essays, poetry, translation, even politics was one of his interests. Moreover, he wrote of Greek and Roman thought, traditional and modern literature. His book *fi al-Shi'r ajjahili (In the Pre-Islamic Poetry)* 1926, created a great deal of controversy and unprecedented literary debates. Some of his adversaries and Islamic hardliners accused him of blasphemy and of literary imprecision. In this book, Husayn claims that some parts of the pre-Islamic poetry were unauthentic, he even went further to say that some of its lines and stanzas were not composed by pre-Islamic poets but were inserted decades or centuries later after the emergence of Islam and have been falsely attributed to pre-Islamic poets. Husayn was severely attacked for this. Matti Moosa, in his book *Origin of Arabic Fiction*, quotes *al-Manar* Journal abusing him saying “that Egyptian university professor who, blind of both sight and mind intends to divest the Egyptians of their religion, language, origin, literature, and history, transforming them into a European nation.”<sup>174</sup> Up to date his book still a subject of literary debates.

Among the pioneers who contributed to the modern Arabic novel was Mahmud Tahir Lashin(1894-1954) who played an important role, especially in the development of the short story, and to a lesser extent in the development of the novel. Mahmud Tahir Lashin was a member of *The New School* who was advocated by Professor Ahmad Daif, one of the eminent professors who studied in France and said that the Egyptians need a kind of literature that portrays their inner daily life, and the Egyptian culture with its social classes. The Egyptians want literature that portrays the Egyptian customs and traditions that deal with

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<sup>174</sup> - Moosa,292.

the farmers in their farms, the upper-class people in their mansions and palaces, the teachers in their schools, in short, the Egyptians want an Arabic literature in form and content.<sup>175</sup>

Lashin was one of the new school members who strove to depict the faults of Egyptian society in a realistic way without any exaggeration. His focus was on the Egyptian society as a whole believing that it is the society that determined the individual's behaviour, not the other way around. In other words, Lashin, in his writings focused on social realism rather than romanticism. In his novel, *Hawa bila Adam* (1934) (*Eve without Adam*) reveals that he has a significant skill as a novelist. This novel is free from any autobiographical content, moreover, the well-known literary critic, Hilary Kilpatrick, says that "the outcome [of Lashin's novel] appears as a natural development from the interaction of characters and their environment."<sup>176</sup> This was exactly what Lashin did in his novels and short stories, the characters interacted with their environment.

With the emergence of Najib Mahfuz (1911-2006), the novel in Egypt and all over the Arab world was finally established and developed better than poetry, drama or even the short story. Mahfuz "is regarded as one of the first contemporary writers of Arabic literature, along with Tawfiq al-Hakim, to explore themes of existentialism. He authored thirty-four (34) novels, and over 350 short stories, dozens of movie scripts, and five plays over a 70-year

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<sup>175</sup> J. Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt* (The Netherlands: Leiden E.J.Brill, 1984),250.

<sup>176</sup> - Hilary Kilpatrick, *The Modern Egyptian Novel* (London: Ithaca Press, 1974),51.

career.”<sup>177</sup> Salma Jayyusi maintains that the Nobel Prize award for literature in 1988 to Mahfuz, “was not simply a recognition of a single author’s achievement but also an acknowledgment of the fact that the Arabic novel had reached a distinction on a global scale.”<sup>178</sup> The realist novels of Najib Mahfuz began to appear successively one after the other in the mid of the 1940s. During his time, the Arabic novel entered a new era; an age of full maturation. In his novels, Mahfuz did avoid the flaws that could be found in the writings of some of the Egyptian and Arab novelists. Roger Allen maintains that Mahfuz set himself the task of tying together of all the various strands of the novelist’s craft by undertaking a systematic survey of the themes and techniques of Western fiction. Over a period of five decades, Mahfuz has taken the city as his major theme: the city – in this case, is Cairo, the capital of Egypt and to a lesser degree, Alexandria, the second biggest city in Egypt. He talked about the ambitions and pains of the middle- class workers, traders, and bureaucrats. He is widely recognized as the founding father of the modern Arabic novel.<sup>179</sup> In his novels, Mahfuz plunges deep into his characters’ minds and souls. He makes his readers know the motives and the driving forces that lead his characters to behave in a certain way. Sakkut points out that Mahfuz “listens to the most intricate psychic resonances in each act and occurrence. How a person driven to the brink of suicide feels in his fatal final moments? What does a young woman who has previously always lived honestly and respectably feel when she is about to embark on a career of prostitution?”<sup>180</sup> As mentioned

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<sup>177</sup> - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naguib\\_Mahfouz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naguib_Mahfouz)

<sup>178</sup> - Jayyusi,21.

<sup>179</sup> - Allen, *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*,185-186.

<sup>180</sup> - Sakkut,26.

earlier, Mahfuz makes his readers know what goes into his characters' minds and hearts. A lot of critics see that Mahfuz is no less than the great Western writers in England, France, Germany, America or any other great writers anywhere in the world.

Needless to say that Mahfuz wrote a substantial number of novels, some of them are among the classics of the Arabic Literature such as, *Mockery of the Fates*, *Midaq Alley*, *The Thief and the Dogs*, *Adrift on the Nile*, *al-Harafish*, *Al-thulathiyya* (translated as *The Cairo Trilogy*- its three volumes *Bayna al-qasrayn* (1956); translated as *Palace Walk* in 1990), *Qasr al-shawq* (1957) translated as *Palace of Desire* in (1991) and *Al-sukkariyya* (1957) translated as *Sugar Street* in (1992) which extends to half a century of Egypt's quest for national identity and modernisation over three different generations.<sup>181</sup> Some critics see it as the greatest family long story of modern Arabic Literature and the work that esteems and admires middle-class morality, principles, and culture. It must be noted that Mahfouz, in this Trilogy is influenced by the Nobel Prize-winning English author John Galsworthy's Forsyte Saga. He successfully paints an accurate and delicate picture of the social customs as well as folk songs, tales, popular wisdom, common proverbs in the Egypt of the 1930s and 1940s.

Careful and analytical reading of his works makes us realize that they are an amalgamation of different modes and styles. His writings encompass the realistic novels, naturalistic novels, family sagas, novels of the absurd, existentialist novels, magical realism, he even uses the stream of consciousness

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<sup>181</sup> - <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/naguib-mahfouz-414043.html>

technique used by some Western modernist novelists such as James Joyce, Kafka, and Virginia Woolf, Faulkner and many others. It is worth highlighting that his novels represent different literary schools and different kinds of narrative modes (first person, second person and third person.)<sup>182</sup>

His novels carefully and delicately portray the lower middle class of the Egyptian people, particularly in Alexandria and Cairo in the 1930s 1940s and the years during the Second World War. Trevor Le Gassick, in his book *Critical Perspectives On Najib Mahfouz*, says that the “drab state of affairs, ruthless poverty, frustration, dismal confinement and despondency in petty government officials and lower middle class are dissected and exposed.”<sup>183</sup> in Mahfuz’s novels. By describing truthfully, faithfully, and convincingly the dreadful state of the life of the common people in Egypt without any exaggeration, the reader becomes assured that Mahfuz intended to protest and show his dissatisfaction with the existing political, economic and social situation in his country, hoping that the leaders of the country will take notice and do urgent reforms. Sakkut goes in line with Le Gassick when he quotes the British critic Howard Brinton commenting on Mahfuz’s writing style which:

makes many of our 'post-modern' novels, convoluted with guilt at even trying to write a story, look decadent and—well, plain stupid. His narratives are modern, subtle, at times anguished, but written with a faith that the most complex behaviour and the most secret machinations of the psyche can be described in the simplest of prose. If something is true, however difficult, good writing can make it understood by anyone who can read.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> - Sakkut, 27.

<sup>183</sup> - Trevor Le Gassick, *Critical Perspectives On Najib Mahfouz* ( Washington D.C.: Three Continents Press,,2006), 85-86.

<sup>184</sup> - Sakkut,29.



Arab, Western critics and writers have great esteem for Mahfuz and, most if not all of them, believe that he is the founding father of the modern Arabic novel, and rightly deserves the Nobel Prize Award for literature. His distinction and domination over the Egyptian and Arab novel writers during the 1960s and 1970s motivated some of the younger generations to try their hands and adopt contemporary Western novel techniques used by illustrious novelists as Kafka, Faulkner, Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and others. Their attempts were a kind of protest against and dissatisfaction of the Egyptian existing version of social realism which was a vogue in the State cultural apparatus and the romantic escapist fiction in Egypt and the Arab world.<sup>185</sup> Kilpatrick observes that without the challenge of these younger experimenters to the then existing novelistic conventions such as the omniscient narrator, the commitment to the chronological sequence of events, close ending plots, clarity of exposition and the concept of the active, not to say, positive hero, when judged on their merits, leave much to be desired. It is worth highlighting that these writers played an important role as pioneers.<sup>186</sup>

A substantial number of these young writers in the last decades of the twentieth century began to make a name for themselves as novelists. These writers confess their gratitude to Mahfuz and admit reservedly that they all have been greatly influenced by him, but they are independent of him and each of them has his own style and technique of writing. Kilpatrick argues though they are young, their works technically are better than those of their predecessors. These young writers are very well acquainted with the new techniques of

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<sup>185</sup> - Hilary Kilpatrick. *The Egyptian Novel From Zainab to 1980*. in Badawi, 258.

<sup>186</sup> - Kilpatrick, 259.

European modernists and postmodernists, therefore they are highly selective and careful in their imitations, and borrowings from the Western novel.

It is worth highlighting that only after a large number of Arab writers have accepted wholeheartedly and without reservations the Western novel conventions that the Arabic, particularly, the Egyptian novel has reached the maturity phase, especially in 1988 after the awarding of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Najib Mahfuz. Getting the Nobel Prize for Literature means that the Egyptian novel has reached the stage of maturity, and obtained global acknowledgment.

The translation of some of the Egyptian novels to other languages, particularly into English and French is another indication that it has matured and reached an international level. Sunallah Ibrahim's novella *The Smell of it* published in 1966, Naeem Attiya's novel *The Mirror and the Lamp* published in 1966 which talks about a fear-ridden household ruled by a dictatorial and authoritarian father shows, in allegory, the kind of the experimental Egyptian novel that criticises the political system and the government ruling Egypt at that time. Something that had never been done before.

Only after the 1967 Israeli- Egyptian war and the humiliating defeat of the Egyptian army by the Israeli army that Egyptian writers and novelists could raise their voice, write, discuss and criticise publicly in plain prose, through their newspapers, magazines, articles, and novels and convey what they feel and think to their reading public. In other words, it was a new phase of the Egyptian novel. Kilpatrick maintains that the range of the themes discussed in the novels has considerably increased, and the novelists now have become freer

to use the colloquial language in their narrative without fear of criticism or reproach. Their writing techniques have become more sophisticated and refined.<sup>187</sup>

The political, economic and social changes that took place in Egypt in the 1960s, and 1970s which later have their positive impact on the maturity and development of the Egyptian novel. These changes offered a diversity of topics for the writers to talk about and discuss without any kind of fear or apprehension.

### **2.3. The Novel in North Africa and Libya**

It must be acknowledged that the majority of the reading audience in Egypt and in most of the Arab countries are well-informed and more familiar with the Egyptian novels and novelists than with the novel in Libya, Algeria, al-Maghreb, Tunisia or even in Lebanon and the rest of the other Arab countries. Roger Allen observes that there are countries in the Arab world whose literature has been largely neglected by both Arab and Western scholars and these are al-Maghreb, Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya.<sup>188</sup> This may be because of most the writers in these countries, except in Libya, write in French instead of writing in Arabic even though the governments of al-Maghreb, Tunisia and Algeria encourage writing in Arabic. Moreover, there were certain circumstances during the Arab Literary Renaissance (*nahda*) that contributed to make Egypt the Mecca of the Arabic culture. One of these was the civil war in Syria in the 1850s which forced the Syrian and Lebanese men of letters to emigrate to Egypt due to the open-minded and rational educational policies adopted by

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<sup>187</sup> - Kilpatrick (qtd. In Badawi), 269.

<sup>188</sup> - Allen, *The Arabic Novel : An Historical and Critical Introduction*, 19.

Mohammad Ali, the ruler of Egypt, in addition to the religious tolerance and the strategic geographical situation of Egypt. All of these factors combined together contributed to make Egypt the literary and cultural centre of the Arab world.

Additionally, an illustrious Iraqi writer explains the reasons that made the reading Arab audience more acquainted with the Egyptian novelists than writers in Iraq or any other Arab country. This writer says that the Iraqi writers produced far fewer novels than their counterparts in Egypt and Syria. For this reason, the Iraqi readers not only chose to read the literary production of the Egyptian novelists as a substitute but also favoured the novels which have been printed in Egypt and not in Iraq.<sup>189</sup>

What this Iraqi writer says sums up the dominance of the Egyptian novel in all of the Arab countries. Nonetheless, there are a substantial number of distinguished North African novelists who wrote in Arabic and whose works have attracted the attention of Arab readers. To mention a few of these novelists, we have al-Tahir Wattar, Abd al-Hamid ibn Hadduqa, and Wasini al-Araj from Algeria, and Abd El-Karim Ghallab, Mubarak Rabi, Abdallah al-Urawi, Muhammad Zafzaf from Al-Magreb. From Tunisia, there are Mahmud al-Masadi, Muhsin bin Diyaf, al-Bashir Khurayyif, Muhammad al-Salih al-Jabiri, to mention only a few. In Libya, Sadiq al-Nayhum, Ahmad al-Faqih, and Ibrahim al-Kuni are some of the leading novelists. Mauritania has thus far not produced any novel to compare with their fine achievements in poetry.<sup>190</sup>

Ali Mustafa al-Musrati (b.1926), the well-known Libyan writer and historian expressed his dissatisfaction and anger of the Arab media and Arab scholars for

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<sup>189</sup> - Jamil Said, *Nazarat fi al-tayyarat al-adabiyya al-haditha fi – al –Iraq*( Cairo: Ma'had al-dirasat al- Arabiyya al- Aliyya, 1954), 7,8, also 25.

<sup>190</sup> - Sakkut,116.

underrepresenting and neglecting the cultural activities in Libya. He complains saying:

The cultural history and the course of literary creation in Libya have been mistreated by some contemporary Arab historians. They have completely ignored this distinguished Arab and Muslim country, writing about every other country and era except Libya, whether that is due to their ignorance and lack of research, or to sheer indifference.<sup>191</sup>

Elvira Diana, an Italian researcher at the Università Degli Studi "G.d'Annunzio "di Chieti –Pescara (Italy), agrees with al-Musrati concerning ignoring the cultural activities in Libya by the Arabic and Western media. She records her admiration for the Libyan cultural activities in general and the novel in particular. In her article "*Libyan Narrative in the New Millennium: Features of Literature on Change*", she maintains that only lately that Arab and Western literary critics and intellectuals paid attention to the cultural production in Libya, which helped in defying the boycott imposed on Libya for several years during Gaddafi's regime, which had its negative impacts on the Libyan cultural activities. Diana goes on to say that the full development of the Libyan novel was "from the mid-eighties onwards when written works of the novel genre were considered worthy enough to compete with the giants of Arab literature, some of which are included in the list of the best 105 Arab novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century selected by the Arab Writers Union."<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup>- Elvira Diana, "*Libyan Narrative in the New Millennium: Features of Literature on Change*" [www.arablit.it/rivista\\_arablit/Numero5\\_2013/02\\_diana.pdf](http://www.arablit.it/rivista_arablit/Numero5_2013/02_diana.pdf), 26.

<sup>192</sup> - Elvira Diana, *Libyan Narrative in the New Millennium: Features of Literature on Change* [www.arablit.it/rivista\\_arablit/Numero5\\_2013/02\\_diana.pdf](http://www.arablit.it/rivista_arablit/Numero5_2013/02_diana.pdf)

Al- Musrati says that Libya has a number of distinguished writers and intellectuals who wrote in all kinds of literary genres, poetry, the short story, drama, and the novel in particular.

The fact to be acknowledged is that classical and oral folk poetry and short story were the main literary forms in Libya up to the mid-sixties of the previous century. Wail Hassan observes that other genres such as modern prose and the short story began as late as 1936 and they started to show signs of development three decades after the Libyan independence in 1951, particularly after the economic changes that took place in Libya as a result of the discovery of oil in 1958.<sup>193</sup>

However, the dominant genre in the 1960s was the short story. This was due to some social factors in addition to the lack of private Publishing Houses in Libya until the late sixties of the previous century. It was difficult for ambitious young Libyan writers to find private Printing Houses where they could publish what they write. Unlike the Egyptian and Syrian journals and periodicals which used to serialize long works, the Libyan Journals and periodicals were reluctant and unwilling to do the same because they are owned by the government. Additionally, there were a lot of political restrictions and censorship which hindered writers and novelists from publishing their works in the governmental Publishing Houses. These Publishing Houses only publish the works which propagate the government's policies and go in line with the policy of the existing regime. Some novelists had to publish their works abroad and those

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<sup>193</sup> - Hassan,311

suffered from poor distribution of their works and consequently met considerable financial problems.

It is worth noting that there is no consensus concerning the exact date of the beginning of the Libyan novel. Fatma al- Hagi, the prominent Libyan writer and novelist points out that the “Libyan novel occurred later than the novel in Egypt and the Arab East. The delay was attributed to social, political and economic factors within the country itself; for instance, during the Italian colonization, Libya was shut away from the Western world.”<sup>194</sup> On the other hand, Sakkut argues that the novel in Libya began to appear in the 1950s. Sakkut adds, in that period more than forty novels written by twenty novelists. He adds that of the twenty novelists, three emerge as the most prominent in Libya, namely, Ahmed Ibrahim al-Faqih, born in 1942, Khalifa Mustafa, born in 1944, and Ibrahim Alkoni, born in 1948. Despite the lack of consensus among critics and literary scholars about the exact date of the emergence of the Libyan novel, the majority of critics agree that it began in 1961. A substantial number of literary critics agree with the al-Hagi in asserting that the first Libyan novel was *Etirafat Insan (Confessions of a Human Being)* published in 1961 by Mohammad Farid Siyyala (1927- 2008). Siyyala worked as a teacher, then a journalist who later on founded his own newspaper, the *Olympiad*. The plot of *Confessions of a Human Being* deals with the protagonist’s dissatisfaction with traditional (pre-arranged marriage) which was neither based on love nor the choice of the married couple, but based on the whims and wishes of the parents in accordance to the traditions and conventions of the

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<sup>194</sup> - Fatima Al- Hagi, *The Concept of Time in Five Libyan Novels*, a Dissertation for the PhD Degree presented to School of Modern Languages ( Durham University, 5 June 2008), 2.

patriarchal society in which they live. The protagonist is a Libyan doctor who lives in France and gets involved in sexual relations with two European girls. The story is put forward through the doctor who reveals his secrets to one of his friends called Salim. The theme of the story revolves around women's education and their rights in the Libyan society.<sup>195</sup>

Fatma al-Hagi points out to a biographical document and directs attention to a novel titled *Mabruka*, written by Hussayn Bin Musa as the first Libyan novel, published in Syria in 1937. *Mabruka* is a historical novel that deals with the events of the Libyan resistance to the Italian occupation of Libya in 1911. Unfortunately, *Mabruka* was censored and banned from circulation by the French authorities in Syria due to the protestation of the Italian colonizer.<sup>196</sup>

In fact, until the 1960s and early 1970s people in Libya preferred poetry to the novel. Novels at that period of time were simple in structure and development of their characters. Their themes were limited to some of the society's ills. Certain topics such as politics, corruption of the politicians, women's rights were taboos. But after the establishment of the Libyan Writers' Union in 1976 positive changes occurred on both the novel and the reading audience. In the 1980s, it was noticed that the publications of the Libyan novel increased immensely. The 1990s witnessed a favourable reception of the novels of certain writers such as Ahmad Ibrahim al-Faqih and Ibrahim Alkoni both in Libya and in other parts of the Arab World. The themes of al-Koni's novels were unique. They deal with the desert, its animals and plants, the Tuareg, their identity, beliefs, traditions, myths, and rituals. Roger Allen in his book, *An*

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<sup>195</sup> - Wail Hassan, 313.

<sup>196</sup> - Al- Hagi,3.



*Introduction to Arabic Literature*, observes that al-Koni “introduces his readers to an unfamiliar landscape and environment, the nomadic tribes of the deserts of North Africa. He takes his readers far from the modern cities of the Middle East and places them into a transient society that invokes many of the images and values of the earliest stages in the Arabic literary tradition.”<sup>197</sup>

However, the Libyan novel portrayed the existing social and economic changes that took place in the country throughout the last century. Novelists discussed the Italian occupation of Libya and its ramifications from 1911-to 1943. That period, as Wail Hassan asserts, “was a period of genocide, displacement, and exile followed by a short period of British and French colonial administration up to the Libyan independence in 1951 and especially after the discovery of oil, which saw the emergence of widespread literacy, print capitalism, and urbanization, until the military takeover of 1969.”<sup>198</sup>

In their novels, Libyan novelists urge for personal freedom of their reading audience and make it as one of the main themes. Moreover, they discuss the maltreatment of women in the patriarchal Libyan society and the dominance of the males over the females.

The discovery of oil and the introduction of the private printing press helped both the writers and the reading audience in Libya. As a result, the Libyan novel began to witness some developments exemplified in the wide range of themes discussed such as loss of traditional values, building a national identity, feminism, and the rights of women, to mention only a few.

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<sup>197</sup> - Allen, “ *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*”, 188.

<sup>198</sup> - Hassan, 311.

One of the major contributors to the Libyan novel is al-Sadiq al-Nayhum (1937-1994), a prominent novelist, critic, and essayist. Al-Nayhum was not prolific in novel writing; but was credited for writing one of the first Libyan coherent novels *Min Makka ila Huna* (1970) (*From Mecca to Here*) and two novellas—*al-Gurud* (*The Monkeys*) in 1973 and *al-Hayawanat* (*The Animals*) in 1984. Al-Nayhum was a very well educated person who mastered six languages- German, English, French, Hebrew, Finnish and Aramaic. He was a professor at the University of Helsinki, Department of Oriental Studies 1968-1972.<sup>199</sup> Furthermore, al-Nayhum was a well-known essayist who wrote in *al-Haqiqa* newspaper which was the most read newspaper in Libya in the sixties and early seventies of the last century until it was censored and later on banned from publication during Gaddafi's regime. His works and articles were widely read all over the Arab world.

The plot of *Min Makka ila Huna* tells the story of Massoud al-Tabbal, a poor black Libyan fisherman whose dream is to go to Mecca for pilgrimage accompanied by his wife. They move from the city of Benghazi to a beautiful small seaport town called Sussa. In order to improve his fishing activity and hasten his pilgrimage, Massoud buys a motor for his small boat in order to be able to fish sea turtles and sell them to an Italian settler who has a seafood restaurant. He tells his story to a Sheikh. The Sheikh does not like the idea and says that turtles are sacred and it would be *Haram* (religiously forbidden) to fish them. He even frightens Massoud that whoever catches them is defying God's Will. Masoud is not convinced of the Sheikh's warning and continues the

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<sup>199</sup> - Hassan, 313.

fishing activity. One day the boy who works with Masoud drowns in the sea. The Sheikh says that this is a punishment from God for defying His commands. Masoud feels disheartened and defeated, moves house back to Benghazi again. The novel deals with the struggle between the old and the new, modernity and tradition and the authority and power of men of religion over simple illiterate people.

Ahmad Ibrahim al-Faqih ( born in 1942) is a modernist and one of the most illustrious writers of novels and short stories who belongs to the generation of the writers of the 1960s. *Al-Bahr la ma'a feeh ( No Water in the Sea )* is al-Faqih's first collection of short stories published in one book in 1965. This collection won the first award of the Libyan Royal Commission of Fine Arts. Needless to say that al-Faqih is a prolific writer who published five novels, a substantial number of short stories, plays, and essays. His voluminous novel *kharat al-Ruh (Maps of the Spirit)*, published in 2008 is perhaps the longest novel in Arabic literature.<sup>200</sup> It consists of twelve parts and deals with the Italian occupation of Libya.

Al-Faqih's other novels are *Huqul al Ramad (Fields of Ashes)*, published in 1985, and his trilogy *Sa'ahabuka Madinatan 'ukhra (1991, I Shall Offer You Another City)*, was chosen as one of the best one hundred Arabic novels, *Hadhihi Tukhum Mamlakati (These Are the Borders of My Kingdom)*, and *Nafaq Tudiahu Emra'a Wahida (A Tunnel Lit by One Woman)*. In his works, it is noticed that 'the woman' is either a symbol for an intelligent cause or the image of the backwardness of the society. Moreover, al-Faqih almost always

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<sup>200</sup> - Hassan, 314.

deals with the conflict between the old and the new, the values of the countryside patriarchal society versus modern urban values. Al-Faqih portrays this in his novel *Fields of Ashes*. In this novel, we find its beautiful heroine, Jamila revolts against the traditions of her small, isolated desert village and goes to study in a Teachers' Training Institute in a neighbouring village. The women in the other village get jealous of her beauty and youth, become worried that their husbands may get infatuated by her. They accuse Jamila of being a witch who practices black magic and loose behaviour. Sakkut observes that the main objective of this novel is “to portray certain manifestations of social backwardness and some of the negative features of the isolated village, shut off and apart, clinging to patterns of life inherited from past generations. In his novels, the reader becomes acquainted with the old Libyan customs, values, superstitions, magic, tombs of holy men, and flattery before figures of authority.”<sup>201</sup> Al-Faqih magnificently portrays these negative phenomena rampant in the Libyan society without any exaggeration or interference from his part.

It is worth highlighting that his works, along with the works of Ibrahim al-Koni attracted international attention to the Libyan novel; some of his works were translated into foreign languages. In the 1991 Beirut's Book Exhibition' *Nafaq Tudhi 'hu imra'a wahida* (*A Tunnel is Lit by One Woman*) won the award of the best novel and was translated into English as ( *Gardens of the Night*).

Women contributions to literature in Libya were not different from the contributions of men. They too placed primary attention and concern to folk

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<sup>201</sup>- Sakkut, 144.

poetry. Folk poetry was the only known genre to them up to the earliest decades of the twentieth century. Only by the mid of the century women tried their hands to non-fiction prose and short story writing. Wail Hassan claims that the most well-known women folk poets are Umm al-Khayr Abd al-Dayyem(1889-1934), and Fatima Othman (1927-2007). These two women poets composed distinguished poems instigating people to resist the Italian occupation. In addition to these two women poets, there were others who composed songs such as the famous social worker Khadija al-Jahmy(1921- 1996.)<sup>202</sup>The first Libyan novelist and short story writer was Mardiyya al-Naas born in the city of Derna in 1949. She started her writing activities in the sixties when she was young by contributing to a number of journals and periodicals in the two biggest cities in Libya, Benghazi, and Tripoli. Ahmed al Faqih, the Libyan novelist and short story writer says that al-Naas “dedicated part of her creative talent to writing novels about the place of women in society, *Ghazala* (1976) is her only book of short stories.”<sup>203</sup> Al-Naas wrote her first two novels, *Shay’ Min al-Dif’* published in 1966( *Some Warmth*), and *The Blue Envelop* (1969). These were the first two Libyan novels written by a woman. *Shay’ Min al- Dif’* fights pre-arranged marriage and calls for the right of women to choose whoever they love as husbands. Women must have a place in the society where they lives. Al-Naas deals with a variety of social issues, especially those that touch her gender, moreover, she uses her creativity calling for a better society to live in.

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<sup>202</sup> - Hassan, 318.

<sup>203</sup> - Ahmad al-Fagih, *The Libyan Short Story: A Research and Anthology* (USA: Xlibris Corporation, 2008), 242.

Ibrahim al-Koni (b.1948) is the most well-known Libyan novelist whose books won international recognition and esteem for their unique depiction of the Saharan desert and the Tuareg society who lives there. He was born and educated in the small village of Ghadamus, in Fezzan, located in the Saharan region in the Southern part of Libya. He worked as a journalist in Libya, then went to the Soviet Union where he studied philosophy and literature at the Gorky Institute in Moscow and obtained a Master Degree in Literature in 1977. Al-Koni worked as a diplomat in a number of countries like Switzerland, Poland, and the Soviet Union. “Like al-Nayhum, he has lived most of his life in Europe, and like other Libyan writers, al-Koni began with the short story genre. His first collection being *al Salat Kharij Nitaq al-Awgat al-Khams* ( 1974), translated as (*Praying Outside the Space of the Five-Prayer Times.*)<sup>204</sup> Al-Koni wrote over eighty books, forty of them are novels which have been translated into over thirty-five languages. I will be discussing *The Bleeding Stones*, *Gold Dust*, and *The Seven Veils of Seth* in the coming chapters.

Wail Hassan in his *Oxford Handbook* says al-Koni is a unique novelist and the themes and the topics he deals with are also unique.

His [al-Koni’s] novels present the inhabitants of the Saharan world- animals, jinn, plants’ and humans—as co-existing equals...He is a student custodian of myths and epics and also an inventor of them...He challenges the colonial and nationalistic views of the Saharan borders and the idea of progress through modern technology, seeing it as greed and exploitation of man, animals, and plants.<sup>205</sup>

As mentioned above, all of al-Koni’s novels focus on the Libyan desert where he gives us a faithful and comprehensive picture of the real-life there. He

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<sup>204</sup> - Hassan, 315.

<sup>205</sup> - Hassan,316.

portrays the valleys, the caves, the mountains, the desert plants and animals' traits and how the desert people overcome all of its difficulties in order to survive. Through his description, we become acquainted with the Tuareg's customs, beliefs, and traditions, laws, and mythologies. In short, al-Koni tries to prove that Tuareg is an ancient nation who have been victimised, suppressed and persecuted. He believes that Tuareg deserve to live in peace in a state of their own.



## Chapter Three

### 3. The Bleeding of the Stone: A Challenge to Western Mainstream



<http://heracliteanfire.net/2010/06/26/the-bleeding-of-the-stone-by-ibrahim-alkoni/>

#### *The Bleeding of the Stone*

*“ I’d rather have jinn as neighbours than people, ... God protect us from the evil of  
People!”<sup>206</sup>*

Ibrahim al-Koni’s *Nazeef al-Hajar* (1990), translated into English as *The Bleeding of the Stone* in (2002 ), is a magical realist novel that in its core is considered both as a political and literary work of fiction. In his narratives, we

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<sup>206</sup> - Ibrahim Alkoni, *The Bleeding of the Stone*, Translated by Jayyusi and Christopher Tringly, Northampton, Massachusetts: Interlink Publishing Group, Inc.2002,18.



notice that al-Koni approves Tuareg's postcolonial peaceful resistance of the aggressors and links it with their traditions, beliefs, and mythologies.

The novel tells the story of a Tuareg nomad who lives in peace and harmony with his father and mother in the southern part of the harsh Libyan desert and does not have any neighbours since his birth until newcomers arrive and turn his life upside down.

In this novel, as well as in all his other novels, al-Koni frequently uses the magical realism mode of narrative writing in which he blends the magical with the realist as a means to change the existing reality of his people, the matriarchal Tuareg tribe, and criticize the capricious, unjust shocking practices directed against them. In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, the mythical and historical elements along with the magical are amalgamated to give a real picture of the desert, and a portrayal of the sufferings of the Tuareg people who reside the land which stretches from the southern part of Libya, southern Algeria to northern Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger.

The mode of writing used in al-Koni's novels is most appropriate and suits his aim of peacefully resisting, challenging and subverting the existing reality of the marginalized Tuareg in their country of origin. He uses magical realism to present the Tuareg's case to the whole world through the characters of his novels in order not to be hurt by the existing dictatorial regime at the time of writing his novels.

As a writer from the Tuareg minority, he believes that his people are oppressed in their homeland, for the existing regime at the time (Gaddafi's regime) does not allow them to communicate in their Tamashg language in

public or to give their children Barber names. Moreover, al-Koni uses this mode of narrative to destabilize the colonial, and national narrative discourse and to convey his people's question to the whole world. In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, al-Koni shows that not only the Tuareg, but the desert animals and plants are endangered and subject to extinction as well- a fact that is somehow unnoticed by many.

Ibrahim al-Koni does not publicly classify his style of writing to any literary type, and claims that his writings are not in any way political, but critics classify him as a post colonialist writer, and magical realism is the prevailing literary mode in his novels. In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, and in most of his other novels, al-Koni tries to challenge the Western mainstream discourse; he, therefore, illustrates the postcolonial experience of the persecuted and silenced Tuareg who cannot even have the right to register their children Berber names in the Civil Registration Offices, in accordance to Libyan Law number 4, article 3 for the year 2001. Berber, against their will, are forbidden of using their fathers' and grandfathers' names and compelled to give their children Arabic names in order to be registered officially. Al-Koni believes that they were and still are victims of the Africans, Arabs and Westerners alike.

As mentioned in chapter one, the Sykes-Picot agreement drawn in 1916 by France and England, with the approval of other European countries divided Africa and the great Saharan desert and demarcated the borders between its countries which had dramatic effects on the Tuareg people because it resulted in restricting their free travel and transportation from one place to another in a space which they believe is originally theirs for thousands of years. The Europeans first came under the false pretext of being explorers to study and civilize the African countries then their real intentions and schemes of colonisation became clear. Their real purpose is to divide and rule in order to improve their economic status and to find new markets for their products. By

drawing political borders between the African countries, they disregarded the ethnic structures of the local tribes they came to subjugate and exploit.<sup>207</sup>

Al-Koni in the following quotation refers to the tragic consequences of the Sykes-Picot agreement and the catastrophic division of the desert between five countries (Libya, Niger, Mali, Algeria, and Nigeria). He likens the floods which took the Tuareg by surprise and tore them into pieces to the Sykes-Picot agreement. *In the Bleeding of the Stone*, al-Koni describes the body of Asouf's mother is torn into pieces by the floods which took her by surprise at night:

The floods had taken them by surprise, driving the old mother from the cave, and he'd found her remains three days later in Abrahoh... Stones had torn away her limbs as she was swept on and on. Her head was disfigured, and the bushes had plucked the short silver hair from her small head., leaving it almost naked...He couldn't, there in the long, broad wadi, find the other remains. Whenever he found a piece of her body, he'd place it in his bag, climb up the heights and bury it there, so that his martyred mother had five graves along the tops of the wadi, each far from the other. The memorial stones stood like signposts, condemning the unknown transgressor.<sup>208</sup>

The Sykes-Picot agreement was drawn secretly by the said European countries, and its dramatic consequences took the Tuareg people by surprise. It divided their Great Saharan Desert into small pieces, distributing it between five countries. Al-Koni likens the hearts of the Europeans to stones. By doing so, the Sahara has become disfigured devoid of its old value, it has become barren( almost naked). Moreover, Asouf's mother represents the Tuareg homeland( the desert), as Ziad Elmarsafy asserts in his book *Sufism in the*

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<sup>207</sup> - <https://www.temehu.com/Libyan-People.htm>

<sup>208</sup> -*The Bleeding of the Stone*, 68.

*Contemporary Arabic Novel* saying that al-Koni symbolises the mother as the earth( the desert) and the father as heaven .<sup>209</sup>

According to al-Koni, the homeland of the Tuareg is the wild and sterile but spiritually wholesome desert, before its division by the damned ‘unknown transgressor’. For al-Koni, Tuareg’s desert, and the nomadic way of life has become under threat of change and extinction.

al-Koni uses fiction to address the fraught political dangers that his Tuareg people face... the ancient Tuareg territory has been suffocated by the newly created nation- states imposed upon it...Tuareg situation; scattered as they are across five officially recognised states, the Tuareg locate their true homeland in the desert and all that it signifies.<sup>210</sup>

The five graves in which Asouf buries the limbs of his mother represent the five countries “Libya, Niger, Mali, Algeria and Nigeria”<sup>211</sup> among which the colonizer divided the desert.

In *The Bleeding of the Stone* and in the majority of his other novels, al-Koni always in his narrative implies that Tuareg is an ancient nation- a civilization that has its own history, customs, traditions, laws, mythologies, therefore, the Tuareg people have the right to establish their own state like those of South Sudan, Kosovo, and Bosnia. In an interview with Jalal Muwwad, in his T.V program ‘Nugat Nezam’ on Arabia TV. Channel, al-Koni wonders about the reasons which make the whole world deny the Tuareg people their legitimate

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<sup>209</sup> -Ziad Elmarsafy, *Sufism in the Contemporary Arabic Novel* ,( Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2012),115 .

<sup>210</sup> - Sam Clarke, *Lost in Space: Crisis of the Nation and Homeland in Contemporary Arabic Fiction* [https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross\\_fac/iatl/reinvention/archive/bcur2012specialissue/clark\\_e/](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/iatl/reinvention/archive/bcur2012specialissue/clark_e/)

<sup>211</sup> - William M. Hutchins , Translator’s Notes . *Anubis: A Desert Novel* (Cairo , New York : The American University Press. 2014), vii.

rights to be a nation; for the world insists on looking at them as a tribe. Al-Koni says that the world

denies the Tuareg their right of establishing a state of their own. South Sudan established a state, Bosnia established a state, Kosovo established a state...the world denies one of the oldest nations in the world the right of establishing a state. Herodotus, in his books, states that this nation influenced the Greeks. Greece borrowed from it its culture ...The Tuareg were victims three times. In the past, France distributed their lands between four countries. The Tuareg were victims of African Dictatorships in Mali, and Niger ...They were victims of Arab Dictatorships in the North in Algeria and Libya. This is what should be known from the outset. (*'Nugtat Nezam'* Arabia TV Channel, Jalal Muawad). ( Translation mine).

Susan McHugh in her article "*Hybrid Species and Literature: Ibrahim-Koni's 'Composite Apparition'*" describes the Tuareg and their whereabouts, says that they are:

tribes people historically have been known to inhabit the deepest Sahara, ranging from eastern Libya and southern Algeria to northern Burkina Faso, and their caravans cross most of Mali and Niger in between. Through details in al-Koni's novels, their story unfolds as one of systematic persecution that derives from their allegiance to no single nation but rather to a way of life that is inseparable from the grazing animals of the open desert.<sup>212</sup>

Al-Koni believes that the existence of the Tuareg is threatened in many ways as an ancient nation that lives in the Great Sahara of North Africa, their original place of residence. For al-Koni, Tuareg is not a tribe as some believe they are, but a nation like that of the Arab, Persian, and the Roman nations. To prove his point, he argues that this nation is mentioned in the books of Herodotus, the great Greek historian. In the epigraph by which he begins Chapter six of his novel *The Bleeding of the Stone*, al-Koni quotes Herodotus saying:

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<sup>212</sup> - Susan McHugh, "*Hybrid Species and Literature: Ibrahim al-Koni's 'Composite Apparition'*", 285- 302.

In Southern Libya, on the heights of Nasamouniyyin, the Gramants [ a group of Libyan tribes] live in a place rich with beasts. They are a people who shun others, fearing to speak with them. They use no weapons at all, and have no knowledge of how to defend themselves.<sup>213</sup>

Al-Koni alludes that the people whom Herodotus has mentioned in the quotation above are, the Tuareg, the first ancestors of Asouf, the protagonist of *The Bleeding of the Stone*. Hamdi Sakkut, the author of *The Arabic Novel: Bibliography and Critical Introduction*, points out that “Assuf, is of this tribe, as were all his forefathers.”<sup>214</sup>

Asouf is too shy like a little girl; he avoids people and is afraid to speak with caravan people to barter one of his goats for some barley or wheat. Stays away and watches them from a long distance from them. He returns to his mother empty handed unable to finish the deal. Al-Koni here wants to convey the idea that Asouf represents the Tuareg described by Herodotus, and thus proves that they have been in this part of the land for thousands of years. Asouf, throughout the novel is described as a peaceful person who detaches himself from other people, and as Herodotus says( shuns people). He does not know how to defend himself even against Cain who humiliates him and finally crucifies him at the end of the novel.

Susan McHugh in her article *Hybrid Species and Literature: Ibrahim al-Koni's 'Composite Apparition'* says that al-Koni always regards “the Sahara as the cradle of civilization, and of his own tribes-people –‘among the very first of history’s “first peoples.”<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 27.

<sup>214</sup> - Sakkut, 148.

<sup>215</sup>- Susan Muchugh, “ *Hybrid Species and Literature: Ibrahim al-Koni's 'Composite Apparition'*”, 285- 302.

In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, al-Koni makes it clear that the Libyan Sahara is the homeland of the Tuareg who have been there for thousands of years. He, therefore, begins his novel depicting Asouf, the Tuareg Beduin grazing his herds of goats in Wadi Matkhandoush. Asouf is described as a Tuareg who knows every inch of the desert. He seems to have adapted himself to the hardships of desert life. Moreover, he is portrayed as a person familiar with the caves and historical paintings and engravings on the rocks, and of everything in this space. The paintings and engravings are regarded as evidence that this desert is theirs, and these paintings are the works of Asouf's great ancestors who used to inhabit this part of the world for thousands of years.

The mighty rock marked the end of a series of caves, standing there like a cornerstone. Through thousands of years, it had faced the merciless sun, adorned with the most wondrous paintings ancient man had made anywhere in the Sahara.<sup>216</sup>

Al-Koni shows the historical importance of this part of the Sahara and draws the readers' attention to the interest of tourists who come from different parts of the world to see and study these amazing historical places. These paintings have become a:

focus for Christian tourists, who came from the most distant countries to see them, crossing the desert in their special desert trucks to gaze at the stone, their mouths open in amazement before its enigmatic splendour and beauty. Once he'd even seen a European woman kneel in front of the rock, murmuring indistinct words, and he'd known instinctively the words were Christian prayers.<sup>217</sup>

Al-Koni stresses the importance of these historical places and feels that it is his duty to document them because he knows that they are threatened as well. It is Asouf who has found these treasures during his tours of grazing his herd of

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<sup>216</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 2.

<sup>217</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 3

goats, and he is the one who is protecting them. McHugh says that in recent years some of the neo-colonialist dictator Muammer al-Gaddafi's soldiers had intentionally shot at them.<sup>218</sup> Al-Koni believes that this heritage of the Tuareg needs international protection because they carry a message from the ancients to the people of modern times. According to him, not only the Tuareg people who are threatened, but also the animals, plants, and stones which represent their heritage are threatened of extinction as well. He, therefore in his novel shows that the relationship of the native Asouf with this part of the world is a relation of belonging, of love, adoration, and allegiance. Asouf, pledges to guard these historical treasures for free. He feels it his duty to guard and protect them and refuses to take money from the head of the Department of Archaeology for guarding the Wadi Matkhandoush and all other historical places.

It is worth highlighting that al-Koni in his narrative presents the valleys, mountains, and landscape of the desert in Berber names as Timbuktu, Massak Satafat, Massak Milat, Mitkhandush, 'Abrahu, Wadi Aynesis, Tadrart, Akakus mountain, the caves of Tassili, to mention just a few, to assert their Tamazight origin, and he does this in clear defiance and challenge to the Libyan Law of Personal Status, number 4 article 3 of 2001 which prohibits using names and places in any language other than Arabic.

Al-Koni, as a post-colonialist writer who has a sense of mission toward his people, attempts to break the silence in a loud cry to draw the world's attention to the danger of the foreign invasion of the southern part of Libya where the

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<sup>218</sup> - McHugh.



Tuareg live. The intruders do not have any concern for Tuareg's heritage nor the desert's wildlife and its historical treasures. In his narrative, we notice that he draws the reader's attention to the importance of this neglected part of the world and shows that it is violated and intruded upon by the foreign newcomers, Cain, Parker, Masoud, and Captain Bordello who, according to al-Koni represent, and embody colonial powers. Al-Koni tells us that this intrusion has begun with the arrival of "the companies searching for oil and underground wealth. Then, a few years later, came the invention of the devilish weapon specially designed to violate the Hamada and destroy the peaceful herds."<sup>219</sup> Throughout the novel we notice that along with the desert animals, the historical places, the life of Asouf, the main character are also threatened. Asouf in the novel is an individual who represents the entire Tuareg race.

Unlike the postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha who claims that there is no pure race, and who believes in the importance of hybridity between races, al-Koni has a completely different opinion. Al-Koni, in his narrative, asserts that Tuareg is a race that differs from the neighbouring races, therefore they should not mix with other communities for fear of losing their identity. According to the Law of their ancients, communication and mixture with other races are banned, and as a result, they must keep themselves detached from other communities. Only harm will come through mingling with strangers.

Asouf's father always keeps telling his son to avoid mixing with foreigners if he wants to live in peace and harmony with the milieu surrounding him.

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<sup>219</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 86-87.

Foreigners will definitely bring harm and destruction to any place they come to.

He explains his belief to his son in the following quote:

How can I be a neighbour of men ...I can't live near anyone. That's what my grandfather taught me, and that's what I must teach you. All I want is peace. Do you understand?<sup>220</sup>

Asouf follows his father's advice and prefers to live alone in the desert, the homeland of his ancestors away from the urban life which colonial powers bring with them. Unfortunately, the Arabs, Cain, and Masoud intrude and constitute a threat- a real threat to everything Asouf loves and cherishes.

It is noticed that at the beginning of the novel, Asouf, the Tuareg Bedouin is living alone in peace with his father and mother in the southern part of the harsh Libyan desert without having any neighbours since his birth. Asouf who grazes his herds of goats is believed to be a descendant of the jinn, those supernatural creatures that can metamorphose into human or animal shape. Asouf is the last descendant of a family of desert Bedouin who belongs to these creatures. His father says that "The Jinn are like people. They are divided into two tribes; the tribe of good and the tribe of evil. We belong to the first tribe- to the Jinn who chose good."<sup>221</sup> This is a common belief among the Tuareg people, that they are different from other races.

Asouf very often guides foreign tourists who come to this part of the desert to see the historical engravings, writings on the rocks and the paintings on the walls of the caves in the valleys of Tassili. No one knows the desert, its secrets, and mysteries as much as Asouf does. The desert is the homeland of his ancestors that is why he has a mystical relationship with its sands, mountains,

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<sup>220</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone. 21.*

<sup>221</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone.4.*

valleys, and animals. For Asouf, the desert is not just a desert, it is a symbol of his existence. He loves everything in it, particularly the wild animal called *waddan*, a desert sheep, that lives in the mountains and highly cherished for its Godly secrets and for its meat. The people of the desert, particularly the older generation and the Sufis believe that there is a divine secret in this animal and its meat. A desert Sufi dervish says, "Take Oil from Gharyan, dates from Fazzan. And meat? The *Waddan*. The *waddan* is truly something different...I have tasted all kinds of meats when I used to eat meat. The divine secret resides in the *waddan*."<sup>222</sup> This is what makes Colonel Parker crazily seeks it and encourages Cain to hunt it for him.

Unfortunately, the privacy and peace of the indigenous Asouf who identifies himself with the desert animals, caves and valleys, and knows exactly that the hideouts of the *waddan*. They are disturbed and threatened by the coming of two strangers in a Land Rover. They turn out to be Arab hunters named Cain and Masoud. They come from the north and ask Asouf to find the *waddan* for them. Cain, the son of Adam, says, they are told that Asouf is the only person in Massak Mallat, who knows where the *waddan* could be found because he lives with jinn and herds of *waddan*. Al-Koni implies that Asouf is the only inhabitant of the desert before the arrival of the Arabs, exemplified in Cain and Masoud. According to al-Koni, the desert solely belongs to the Tuareg who are represented in Asouf, and no other people or race ever shared them or lived with them in it. Moreover, al-Koni hints that with the arrival of Cain and his friend Masoud everything in the desert got disturbed and changed to the

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<sup>222</sup> - *The Bleeding Stone*, 109.

worst. Even the animals became restless, “Satan entered the goats”, who took evident pleasure in butting”<sup>223</sup> each other. The other races who came recently to the desert are likened to Satan.

Cain and Masoud want to hunt the *waddan* depending upon Asouf’s natural and inborn knowledge of the Sahara. They know that Asouf is an excellent tracker and the only one who knows the whereabouts of this rare animal. For this reason, Cain and Masoud ask for Asouf’s help and assistance. This is not done through peaceful means but through threat and violence. Cain threatens him: “If you don’t show us where the *waddan* is, you’ll regret it, believe me! I’ll make you see stars, and at midday too. I mean it.”<sup>224</sup> A hint from al-Koni that occupiers use knowledge and force to achieve their goals. This reminds us of what Prospero has done with Caliban in Shakespeare’s play “*The Tempest*”. The Island was Caliban’s until the arrival of Prospero who dominated over everything. Also it reminds us of what Napoleon said when he first set foot on the Egyptian soil.

Al-Koni is a post- colonialist writer who advocates peaceful resistance. In this respect, he does not agree with Frantz Fanon who believes in violence in combating the coloniser to regain their freedom and their rights. According to Fanon, the colonisers always achieve their goals through knowledge and the use of military power, not by peaceful means. The colonised, according to Fanon, must use violence to end the colonisation and domination to retrieve their freedom and native identity. They, according to him, must subvert the colonisers’ discourse, reject, challenge the colonisers’ values, language, and

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<sup>223</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 2.

<sup>224</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 94.

traditions, and fight back. Al-Koni illustrates this in *The Bleeding of the Stone* when Cain, son of Adam threatens to kill Asouf if he refuses to obey his commands and does not show him the hideouts of the *waddan*. Cain uses force to get what he wants. Like Fanon, al-Koni is against the assimilation of the colonised in the coloniser's culture but disagrees with Fanon in using force to achieve Tuareg goals. Al-Koni advocates peaceful resistance. In this novel, Asouf does not use violence against Cain nor fights back. He follows his father's advice who says, "I tell you. Be patient. How can you live in the desert without patience? The man who was never granted its contentment will never be happy there. I tell you. Use patience and cunning, they are the secrets of the desert."<sup>225</sup> I interpret the use of 'cunning' means the use of wisdom in fighting back. This can be done through the use of fiction instead of plain prose to fight and criticise the status quo in which the Tuareg find themselves in these days.

Unlike Fanon, al-Koni and Homi K. Bhabha both are not advocates of violence as a means of resistance. Like Bhabha, al-Koni sees that the hybridity of the colonised and coloniser during the period of colonisation will definitely result in subverting and obliterating the colonised culture and identity. When hybridity takes place, a third culture and third identity are created. This means that the colonised native Tuareg's culture and identity will negatively be affected, and in the long run, the natives will lose their ethnic identity and culture and adopt the coloniser's because they are the weaker part. Al-Koni believes that a return to their ancient traditions and pre-modern past is the best strategy of resisting the coloniser. The kind of hybridity in which al-Koni

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<sup>225</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 55

believes in is animal-human hybridity as in *The Bleeding of the Stone* and *God Dust*, but definitely not hybridity between the coloniser and colonised.

In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, he describes the desert, its beauty, the simple way of the Tuareg's life and culture, implying that they are different from other ethnicities. He gives a completely different picture of the desert from that found in the western canon. In the very beginning of the novel- in the setting, he describes warmly and in great detail the natural beauties of the desert, its wildlife, mountains, valleys, caves, caverns, the prehistoric paintings, engravings on the rocks, and on the walls of the caves, the simple, peaceful life of Asouf as he grazes his herds of goats. He describes how differently he practices his religious rituals in order to prove that the Tuareg is a nation with a history and civilisation. When Asouf starts to say his prayers, he does not face Mecca but faces the great rock where some ancient pictures and writing engraved on it.

Al-Koni points out that Asouf's life and culture are based on the teachings of his father and forefather before him. He, therefore, alludes that the best way for the Tuareg to preserve their heritage and race from extinction is to live separately and not to mix with strangers. Throughout the novel, Asouf is depicted as a living example representing the oppressed Tuareg tribes in the Sahara desert and North Africa. Although he is treated inferiorly as (*the other*) by Cain, he does not use force or violence to fight his enemies back, he uses peaceful means in resisting the desert occupiers. He adamantly refuses to show the stranger Cain the places where the *waddan* could be found. He cunningly tells him that "There aren't any *waddan* here. And besides, it's difficult to hunt.

Very difficult.”<sup>226</sup> When threatened of death if he doesn't show them where he has hidden the *waddan*, Asouf comments disapprovingly about Cain's brutality and uncontrolled appetite and greed for eating meat saying, “Only through dust will the son of Adam be filled”<sup>227</sup>. This answer which infuriates Cain and makes him insist on punishing Asouf severely for his refusal and his courageous answer.

A whole chapter is devoted to Cain's foreign origin and to his brutality. Cain, the son of Adam is an Arab infant found alone in the desert “thrusting his head into the open belly of a gazelle, licking at the blood and dung”<sup>228</sup> and picked up by a passing caravan. Al-Koni insinuates that Cain is a blood thirsty person since his birth, moreover, he is portrayed as a ‘foundling’, not born in the desert which means that he is not an aboriginal native; he and his friend Masoud both represent the Bani Hilal and Bani Salim Arab tribes who came in caravans from the Arabian Peninsula as conquerors a few years after the Islamic conquest of North Africa. They settled in Libya in the eleventh century accompanied with their families. Parker, the American captain who works at the Hweilis American Air Base represents the West. Parker has provided Cain with a helicopter, guns, and ammunitions to search for the rare desert animals and hunt them, which results in the migration of both man and animal from their homeland, and almost causes their extinction.

Al-Koni gives the impression that both the Arabs and westerners embodied in Cain, Parker, and Captain Bordello are the main cause of disturbing, and

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<sup>226</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 32.

<sup>227</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 132.

<sup>228</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 81.

destroying the desert and Tuareg's nomadic way of life in the desert. They distorted their culture, tradition in addition to helping in the extinction of all that Asouf represents. Cain, Masoud, and Parker are addicted to eating gazelle's meat, particularly Cain who cannot live restfully for two consecutive days without eating gazelles' meat. At the end of the novel, when Asouf refuses to cooperate, the Arab Cain brutally kills him which gives an indication that the Arabs and westerners alike have participated in destroying the desert, its wildlife, and even more they constitute a threat to the existence of the Tuareg themselves.

In his narrative, al-Koni focuses on the desert and its generosity, and at the same time exposes the ingratitude, and denial of the colonisers to its natural bounties. Al-Koni illustrates this in the dialogue between Parker and Cain. Parker admits to Cain "I wonder if either of us could put up with them[thorns]...You can't stand the desert thorns. I know. You'd like to reap the fruits without the sun and the dust. You'd like to hunt gazelles in silk gloves...You don't love the desert."<sup>229</sup>

Westerners portray the desert as an empty space even though the world today is living from the energy it provides, and material that comes from it. These days almost 90% of the water in Libya comes from the southern part of the Libyan desert, the 'Man-made river' is an excellent example.

Al-Koni focuses on the life and history of Tuareg and tries to mirror the rottenness and destruction that have taken place in the desert after the exposure

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<sup>229</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 110.



to the Western civilisation and technologies represented in John Parker, Captain Bordello, and the arrival of the Arabs represented in Cain and Masoud.

In *The Bleeding of the Stone* al-Koni gives the desert its voice through portraying his people's cultural identity, myths, laws, and traditions using the magical realist mode of writing. At the same time he portrays Asouf, and the rare Saharan *waddan*, together as victims to the brutality of the newcomers. Asouf and the desert animals have become targeted and in danger of extinction, therefore Asouf tries to avoid mixing with them. Cain, the greedy Arab gazelle and *waddan* hunter, with the help of Parker, the American who provides him with American technology such as a Land Rover, a modern machine gun and ammunitions, all have contributed in the crime of wiping out the desert gazelles. With the new equipment provided by Parker, Cain now:

could slaughter the whole herd in a single raid, with just one or two gazelles escaping if luck smiled on them. As the number of slain animals grew, so did the amount of meat he ate. He'd breakfast on one gazelle, lunch on another and have a third for his supper, with still one more if he happened to have a guest, some passing herdsman, perhaps, or a merchant from a caravan.<sup>230</sup>

Asouf adores everything in the desert, particularly its animals. He knows its mountains, caves, and valleys as he knows the palms of his hands. He has learnt all the mysteries of the Sahara and its animals from his father, who in turn had learnt them from his forefathers. He wants his son to be familiar with the physical features and traits of the Sahara desert animals and their temperaments.<sup>231</sup> He teaches Asouf that animals are as clever as humans, may be cleverer. He tells him not to "think that animals can't understand, because

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<sup>230</sup> -*The Bleeding of the Stone*,90.

<sup>231</sup> - Hamdi Sakkut *The Arabic Novel: Bibliography and Critical Introduction* 1865 – 1995, Cairo. NY: The American University Press, 2000, p. 149.

they can't speak the way you do. They're cleverer than either of us<sup>232</sup>!”  
Moreover, he teaches him other things for example, he tells him that animals know and respect their places of living and how to protect themselves. He asks him:

What does the gazelle say to himself, when he sees the enemy of living creatures?' He says, 'The plain.' 'What does the *waddan* say when he sees the enemy of living creatures?' He says, 'The mountain.' To the gazelle the mountain is a trap, whereas to the mountain goat, the *waddan*, the plain represents a snare<sup>233</sup>.

The message which Asouf's father wants to convey to his son here is that man is the enemy of all creatures, therefore, Asouf should keep away from him, and to choose the right place to stay away from him- the desert is the best place. Mixing with this creature will definitely bring harm and destruction.

Asouf's father tells his son: “ I'd rather have jinn as neighbours than people.”<sup>234</sup> He recites a *mawwal* he has heard from one of the Sufis. The *mawwal* says:

*The desert is a true treasure  
For him who seeks refuge  
From men and the evil of men.  
In it is contentment...*

Al-Koni as a postcolonial writer focuses on exposing the brutality, wickedness, and greed of Cain, Masoud, and Parker. They have come to the desert and disturbed everything in it, causing a lot of harm to its wildlife. They sarcastically admit their meanness and brutality to themselves. Parker and Cain reveal their brutality toward desert animals in the following quotation when they accuse each other of killing the last gazelle in it. Cain cynically blames Parker that he is the most person to blame for killing all of the desert animals.

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<sup>232</sup> -The Bleeding of the Stone, 19

<sup>233</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 19.

<sup>234</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 18.

Parker is an accomplice in the crime of wiping out gazelles through providing Cain with an automatic gun, a Land Rover, and later a helicopter in order to make Cain's mission of hunting the desert animals much easier.

If I wiped out the gazelles, you helped me do it. You gave me the trucks and the guns, you ate your fair share of the bag- more than your fair share. You are the one who wiped the desert gazelles, after hammering my ear all those fairy tales about the poor beast's meat having divine secrets lurking in it. You're the biggest criminal of the lot.<sup>235</sup>

In *The Bleeding of the Stone* al-Koni, uses Asouf as a binary to Cain, Masoud, and Parker. He compares Asouf's love, appreciation, and endurance of the desert's hardships to the disrespect of Cain and Masoud of the desert, its scorching sun, and unforgiving climate. Although they are equipped with an automatic gun machine, a car and other things, but they need Asouf's knowledge and experience to hunt the legendary *waddan*. When Cain forces Asouf to go with them in search for the *waddan* in their Land Rover, Cain starts cursing the desert using obscene language. As Asouf never in his life has heard this vile language before, he feels disgusted by Cain's vile words and feels that he is personally insulted as well. "What had the desert done to deserve these insults?"<sup>236</sup>, Asouf says. Cain complains of the severe heat of the desert climate. "The sun's been beating down ever since the morning. I'm telling you, it's hell! God, what can you do to get away from this desert sun... We have put up with the sun, but we can't go on without the *waddan*?"<sup>237</sup>

As mentioned earlier, it is noticed that in *The Bleeding of the stone*, and in most of his novels, al-Koni is concerned with the Berbers' (Tuareg, Tebu, and Amazigh) case. He believes that though they are the aboriginal residents of

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<sup>235</sup> - *The bleeding of the Stone* , 110.

<sup>236</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 75.

<sup>237</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 31.

Libya and the Sahara, they are marginalized, persecuted, and are denied of their social, political and human rights. They are ruled by foreigners like the Italians who occupied Libya in 1911, the Americans who established military bases in Tripoli and other places in the south, the Arabs who descend from the tribes of Bani Hilal and Bani Salim.

Al-Koni, in his narrative, creates a powerful binary between Cain, Captain Bordello, Parker, and Asouf, the indigenous Tuareg inhabitant of the land. Asouf symbolizes the desert's inhabitants and their heritage. He is portrayed as a person of true love and affection to the space he lives in; he respects its traditions and abides by its laws and rules. Asouf and his father regard hunting the *Waddan* as a taboo, because they are aware that this animal is rare, sacred and endangered, therefore they hunt it only when pressed by dire need. Gail Ramsay, in her article, "*Breaking Silence of Nature in an Arabic Novel Nazīf al-ḥajar*", explains this idea as follows:

Indeed, hunger is a real existential factor pressing on the father to hunt the moufflon for its meat. But he is also checked by his convictions that moufflon is the "Spirit of the mountain." In fact, the moufflon is closely related to, or even an incarnation of, an ancient tribal deity to whom Asouf and his father are bound by an oath not to kill. This means that killing a moufflon has become a taboo and a person who challenges this taboo by hunting and killing this animal must be provided with protecting amulets or else, expect repercussions.<sup>238</sup>

Al-Koni portrays the Tuareg as people who have their own rules and laws that govern them. The father had warned his son against being extravagant in his hunt, "never to hunt more than one gazelle each trip"<sup>239</sup>, and never to hunt a pregnant animal because it is a sin. A famous magician in Kano also warned

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<sup>238</sup> -Gail Ramsay, *Breaking the Silence of Nature in an Arabic Novel Nazīf al-ḥajar* by Ibrāhīm al-Kawnī, 149- 171.

<sup>239</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*,37.

him not to hunt gazelles too hard. Contrarily, Cain and Parker are proud of killing dozens of gazelles, even worse they killed a she-gazelle with its fawn together at the same time.

In addition to their love and care for the desert animals, they are depicted as people who preserve and guard the prehistoric paintings engraved on the rocks and in caves. Al-Koni tells us that these paintings tell stories, legends of the ancient people who inhabited this region and the way of life they used to live. The paintings show hunters pursuing different kinds of desert animals, and portray women with great breasts. Asouf is the one who discovered these treasures which tourists from all over the world come and visit and study.

Al-Koni tells us that Asouf and all desert indigenous dwellers exemplify balance, and caution with the resources of the desert. Contrarily, Cain and his American friend Parker are extravagant and wasteful in their consumption of the desert's natural resources.

As a postcolonial writer, al-Koni provides us with a beautiful, faithful, captivating, and comprehensive representation of the desert and the territory he was born and raised in. He gives us a detailed, and engrossing picture of valleys, mountains, and caverns there. Through his eyes, we learn a lot about the desert animals, their traits and natures. Through his description of the images on the rocks and on the walls of caves we see the historical treasures of the desert. The engraved prehistoric drawings tell us of many exciting Tuareg legends. *The Bleeding of the Stone* gives a completely different picture of the desert from the one found in the travelogues written by Western travellers and adventurers like Lawrence of Arabia in his book *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.

Al-Koni, through his main character, teaches his readers about the importance of patience and the significance and worth of water in the desert. From the very beginning of the novel, we notice Asouf's love and unity with the desert; he is in harmony with its hard climate and is used to the scarcity of water. He adapts himself to its life, although there is not enough water, he does not curse the desert and the life in it like what Cain does, on the contrary, when he cannot find water, he "plunged his arms into the sands of the *wadi* to begin his ablutions in readiness for his afternoon prayer"<sup>240</sup> as Muslims always do when they find no water for ablution, they do what is known as *tayamum*. When there is no water Muslims use sand or stones or the leaves of trees for ablution.

Asouf's feeling of peace and complacency is interrupted by the "roar of the engine from afar, he [Asouf] decided to hurry and give God His due before the Christians arrived"<sup>241</sup>. The arrival of the newcomers disturbs Asouf's peace and tranquillity. The roar of the engine and the car symbolize Western industrialisation, and modernization which is going to change the entire life in the desert, and urbanize it.

Al-Koni through his narrative introduces us to the beauties of the desert and its secrets such as reading the tracks of animals and humans. He introduces us to the strong relationship between the desert dwellers and their animals, particularly gazelles and *waddan* as we have never been introduced before to something like it.

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<sup>240</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone* , 1.

<sup>241</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone* , 2.

Contrarily, al-Koni portrays Cain, Masoud, and John Parker as people who have neither love nor affection to the desert or its fauna and flora. John Parker sarcastically tells Cain. The Arab Cain, the antagonist of Asouf is proud of wiping out all the gazelle herds in the Hamada al Hamra. Cain is careless about the desert and its wildlife. He loves gazelle blood, and cannot sleep without tasting gazelle's meat- the meat must be in every meal he takes, "I'm proud to say I personally ate the last gazelle in the northern desert"<sup>242</sup> and sees no problem in this. He "had little thought for the rules of nature. His concern was to hunt as many gazelles as he could, and so quench the flames between his teeth and calm his belly, then, sell the rest to the American officer at the camp."<sup>243</sup> Asouf, on the other hand, has lived on barley bread since his youth. He says. After a bad experience in hunting the *waddan*, he swears never again to cause harm to his brother who 'are also human,' and vows never again to butcher them or eat their meat: "Whoever can eat the flesh of the *waddan* will also be ready to eat the flesh of man."<sup>244</sup>

Asouf cannot understand the brutal behavior of Cain, Masoud, Parker, and the others toward these beautiful, and majestic animals, "I just don't understand. Why should this wicked creature man chase such an angel, to kill and fill his belly with it? And why should man be so hungry that he feels he has to spill the blood of this lovely creature?"<sup>245</sup>

Al-Koni feels that the desert is in a constant, and speedy change due to the urbanization of its features at the hand of the newcomers. He fears that one day

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<sup>242</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 14.

<sup>243</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 158.

<sup>244</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 65.

<sup>245</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 45.

Tuareg and their culture may fade away. Therefore, he feels that his mission is to record everything that concerns Tuareg's life in his writing. He tries to depict the customs, traditions, laws, and the way of life of its people as if asking the Tuareg new generation to preserve them and not to assimilate in the culture of the occupiers. He cunningly alludes to some forgotten or ignored periods of historical incidents ( the coming of Bani Hilal and Bani Salim Arab tribes to Libya). In fact, al-Koni, in this novel uses fiction to remind the world of these important historical incidents and their impact on the Tuareg. He, deliberately hints to the origin of Cain, saying that he is a foundling, not one of the original dwellers of the land. Meanwhile, every now and then, al-Koni alludes that the origin of Asouf and his ancestors go back to the peaceful Gramantis tribes, as mentioned by Herodotus.

In *The Bleeding of the Stone* Al-Koni uses a number of magical realism incidents where he mixes the real with the magic in a splendid way such as in the incident of the metamorphosis of Asouf into a *waddan* which is regarded as a substantial proof of the successful act of peaceful resistance brought about through supernatural powers. Al-Koni employs a new mode of literary writing through which he could express his dissatisfaction with the political, social, and cultural status of the Tuareg in Libya.

Asouf goes to the village of Ghat because the desert has been hit by a long period of severe drought which has cost him the loss of all his herd of goats. On **his** arrival to Ghat he is caught by the Italian forces that occupy Libya at that time. The Italians want to enlist and train him in their army along with other Libyan youths in order to fulfil their dream of expanding the Italian empire in



Africa by occupying Abyssinia ( now known as Ethiopia). The following extract is, in one hand realistic, and on the other magical. The magical realist mode is quite clear in this novel where he blends magic with realism.:

[...] something the people of the oasis constantly recounted, around which they wove legends. The young men told them how they'd witnessed a miracle for the first time in their lives. [...] a man breaks loose from his captivity and change into a *waddan*, then run off toward the mountains, bounding over the rocks like the wind, heedless of the bullets flying all around him. Had anyone ever seen a man transformed into a *waddan*? Had anyone ever seen a person escape the Italians' guns, running on until he vanished into the darkness of the mountains? The wise oasis Sufis, enraptured, rocked their heads from side to side and threw incense into fire, convinced one and all that this man was a saint of God. That evening they went to the Sufi mosque and celebrated a *dhikr* through the night in praise of God and in homage to the saint, filled with joy that the divine spirit should come to dwell in a wretched creature of this world... That was the first and last time Asouf met with the people of the oases. He went to Massak Mallat, where he pastured his camels.<sup>246</sup>

Susan McHugh in her article “*Hybrid Species and Literatures: Ibrahim al-Koni's 'Composite Apparition'*”, comments on this incident where al-Koni blends the magical (the metamorphosis) with the real, the concentration camps that the Italians built in several parts of Libya. His objective is to expose the most atrocious and shameful crimes of colonialism. McHugh says:

In seeking refuge at the oasis, he accidentally becomes a witness to a far greater tragedy. The ‘Italians’ guns’ obliquely refer to what is perhaps the least known and most horrific genocide of the twentieth century, that is, the Italian colonial authorities’ confinement from 1929 to 1933 of what is estimated to be over a hundred thousand nomadic North African tribal peoples, who were then starved to death alongside their herds in barbed-wire enclosures later used as models for the Nazi death camps. Driven by hunger to his ‘first and last encounter with the oasis people’ at a time and place in which countless others like him died in detainment, the fictional herdsman’s capture by colonial military forces seems tantamount to the death sentence, from which he is delivered by his fantastic transformation into a *waddan*.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone* 73- 74.

<sup>43</sup> - S McHugh - 2012 ['Composite Apparition'](http://www.academia.edu/.../Hybrid_Species_and_Literatures_Ibrahim_al-Koni).

The above quotation clearly illustrates Asouf's refusal of the Italian occupation and prefers to transform into a *waddan* rather than live in captivity under the rule of the occupier.

Al-Koni uses the magical realism technique in many other captivating scenes in *The Bleeding of The Stone* which serve his purpose of revealing the brutality of man toward man and animal. One of the most interesting and fascinating incidents is when al-Koni portrays a marvellous human conversation among a herd of gazelles that talk about saving a man, his wife, and child from dying of thirst in the desert ( the child, later on, turns out to be Cain). Their discussion is about whether this creature is worth the sacrifice – is he to be trusted? One gazelle argues that man is worth sacrifice, but another gazelle says that man is treacherous by nature and cannot be trusted. The gazelles ask for a volunteer so that the thirsty child and his family might drink of her blood and live. The discussion continues as no one comes forward. One of the gazelles strongly refuses to volunteer because he believes that humans are evil creatures who come to the desert merely for hunting and enjoy slaughtering rare desert animals such as gazelles and *waddan*. The older gazelle explains the advantage of sacrifice saying that the sacrifice will be offered to God, not to the evil, greedy human being. She then asks that if any of the gazelles wants to volunteer so that the suffering child and his parents would drink her blood and survive. When no one of the animals agrees to sacrifice its life, the older gazelle volunteers and offers herself as the sacrificial victim even though she has her small gazelle with her.

The herd watched him( the man) curiously. All older beasts were gazing at the sight, all sad on his account. Various discussions broke out, then the oldest gazelle addressed us.

“ God’, she said, ‘honored all creatures and gave them life. Then, to test their endurance, He set them in the desert. He placed His secret in the scarce water, and He placed a further secret in dreadful sacrifice. He also sacrifices himself to save another’s life sees into that secret and wins immortality. A son of men is about to die of thirst. Nothing can save him but blood.’

Here a pitiless gazelle broke in.

“‘The sons of men,’ this gazelle objected, ‘ are evil and murderous. Have you forgotten, honored mother, how they spilled the blood of so many scores of our tribe in that fearful slaughter? How can we sacrifice ourselves for an accursed butcher?’

“The gaunt old mother smiled. ‘Sacrifice, she went on, sadly and patiently, ‘knows nothing of bargains, and doesn’t look to the soul for which the sacrifice is made. Sacrifices belong to Almighty Creator. And don’t you see, my good fellow gazelles, that nursling angel lying in the woman’s arms? He’s committed no crime, had part in no slaughter.’

“‘Don’t be taken in by that,’ a mean spirited gazelle shouted.‘ He may look innocent now. Wait until he’s older and kills scores of beasts from our herd!’”<sup>248</sup>

Without any doubt, the above extract shows al-Koni’s mastery of magical realism which he uses to reveal his sympathy towards desert animals and to expose the cruelty and brutality of man toward the desert and its animals. Al-Koni is referring to Cain when one of the gazelles says that “Nothing can save him but blood.”. Ironically, the gazelle who says that man could be trusted is the one who is shot in the belly by Cain’s gun and is killed along with its fawn. It also foreshadows the meanness and brutality of Cain who when has grown up kills the last gazelle in the desert. Cunningly, al-Koni alludes to the persecution of the Tuaregs by the Libyan Arabs now.

In her book *Two Questers in Twentieth-century North Africa: Paul Bowles and Ibrahim al-Koni*, Imen Y. Cozzo maintains that postcolonial critics classify

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<sup>248</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*,102.

al-Koni as a ‘magical realist’ writer, “some literary critics such as Elliott Colla, Meinrad Calleja and Susan McHugh, regard al-Koni’s literary mode of writing as one of magical realism. Moreover, Cozzo adds that al-Koni’s magical realist genre of his novels classify him as one of the pioneers in this genre in Arabic, and it is important to study his novels from this perspective.”<sup>249</sup> In his oeuvre, particularly in the novels which are chosen to be scrutinized in the current dissertation study, namely *The Bleeding of the Stone*, *The Seven Veils of Seth*, and *Gold Dust*, it is observed that there is an emphasis on animal-human comparisons and metamorphoses; therefore, as the above- mentioned critics suggest, al-Koni is different and unique in his use and employment of magical realism.

F.F. Moolla in his article “*Desert Ethics, Myths of Nature and Novel Form in the Narratives of Ibrahim al-Koni*” confirms the originality and uniqueness of Alkoni’s works of fiction and that his style in magical realism is different from Latin American writers. He writes:

in some respects, Alkoni’s work is dissimilar from the work of other African and Latin American writers of his generation because of a penetrating focus on the natural world and animals.<sup>250</sup>

Moreover, he uses Sufism, and religion, and concentrates on the desert and makes it the setting of all the incidents of his fiction. Sakkut draws our attention to the uniqueness of al-Koni’s style. In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, it is noticed that al-Koni quotes verses from the Holy Qur’an, the Bible, Herodotus, Ovid,

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<sup>249</sup> Imen Aya Cozzo, *Two Questers in the Twentieth –Centuries North Africa: Paul Bowel and Ibrahim Al-Koni*, Cambridge Scholar Publishing, Newcastle: UK. 216 (P. 202)

<sup>250</sup> - F.F. Moolla

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283189189\\_Desert\\_ethics\\_myths\\_of\\_nature\\_and\\_novel\\_for\\_m\\_in\\_the\\_narratives\\_of\\_Ibrahim\\_Al-Koni](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283189189_Desert_ethics_myths_of_nature_and_novel_for_m_in_the_narratives_of_Ibrahim_Al-Koni) [accessed Nov 22 2017].

Ibn Arabi, Sophocles, and other sources and uses them as epigraphs or beginnings to his chapters. Sakkut says:

The quotations which preface the beginnings of many chapters epitomize or interpret the coming episodes. Appropriate quotations from the Holy Qur'an, the Old Testament, al-Naffari, Ibn Aarabi, Herodotus, Ovid, Sophocles...The first introductory quotation at the opening of the novel intimates epigrammatically what follows. It is a verse of the Qur'an of portentous significance for the novel. "*There is not an animal on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms) communities like you*" The reader will find the significance of this verse confirmed in the novel.<sup>251</sup>

It must be highlighted that Cain, son of Adam in the novel has a clear symbolic meaning. To illustrate this, al-Koni uses an extract from Genesis at the beginning of the novel showing the brutality of Cain in killing his brother Abel. Cain in the novel symbolises the Quranic and Biblical Cain. Moreover, al-Koni uses this quotation to foreshadow the ruthless killing of the mother gazelle and its fawn and the killing of Asouf at the hand of Cain at the end of the novel:

And it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. And the Lord said into Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? And He said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which has opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and vagabond shall thou be in the earth.

-Genesis4:8-12

Over and above using verses from the holy Qur'an, Genesis, and adages from various philosophers and thinkers, we notice that al-Koni introduces us to Sufism and Sufi thought in *The Bleeding of the Stone*, *Gold Dust* and in some of his other novels such as *The Lunar Eclipse*. Al-Koni introduces us to Sufism through one of his characters in *The Bleeding of the Stone*. The American

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<sup>251</sup> - Sakkut, 150.

officer, John Parker at the Hweilis Air force Base had been chosen to run a camp set in a strategic area on the Naffousa mountain, in the southern part of the Libyan Desert. Parker studied philosophy at the University of California. He was fascinated by a statement written by a French writer who says: “it was the Maghreb that had brought Sufism down from its throne of heavenly philosophy, to the common soil of everyday life. Here in these countries, in contrast to the Arab East, there seemed no difference between the wise sage, the simple dervish, the pious saint- they all looked like wandering beggars!”<sup>252</sup> Parker was attracted by a paragraph in the book of the French writer which caused Parker’s addiction to the eating of gazelle meat. Al-Koni writes:

The author of the book had quoted a passage from an unknown Sufi traveller, who’d written as follows ‘The truth lies in grazing beasts. In gazelles, God has placed the secret and sown the meaning. For him who tastes the flesh of this creature, all impotence in the soul will be swept away, the veil of separation will be rent, and he will see God as He truly is.’<sup>253</sup>

With these ideas in mind, Parker seizes the opportunity of being in this area to mingle with Sufis and dervishes. He is astonished by their commonly held conviction that gentle animals are the most worthy in saintliness and receptivity to the divine spirit of all creatures. Moreover, the dervish Sufi tells him that a lot of strange diseases can only be cured by gazelle meat. He is charmed of what he has heard and ask for gazelle meat at once. Through the use of a helicopter, and all the military facilities in the military Air Base, Parker, and Cain after slaughtering all gazelles in the desert, they have turned to the *waddan*.

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<sup>252</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone* 106

<sup>253</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 106.

Al-Koni cites many examples of Sufism in a number of his novels. For instance, in *The Lunar Eclipse*, al-Koni uses Sufism as a means of resisting the Italian colonisers. When the Italians arrest Sheikh Ghuma, leader of the resistance, they ask him about the reason that he fights them with such zeal and violence defending a barren empty space which is almost void of all means of life. Ghumma's only answer that "the desert is freedom. This freedom comes, however, at a price."<sup>254</sup>

According to Ghumma, living poor and short in everything provided that he is free is all that he hopes for. Freedom is the basis of virtue and pride.

The pride of the desert people is abstinence, (*Zuhd*). The term 'Zuhd', here is translated as 'abstinence' carries with it significant religious overtones; it implies indifference to worldly goods in preference to the promise of the Hereafter and its cardinal virtue among mystics and ascetics in the Islamic tradition.<sup>255</sup>

Although the desert life is very harsh and severe, one of its main features that it brings its inhabitants closer to God and the fulfilment of their fate as spiritual human beings.

According to Sakkut, al-Koni's point of view of Sufism is stated through Asouf, the protagonist of *The Bleeding of the Stone*. Asouf lives alone, as a recluse completely,

absorbed by the desert animals and thoroughly acquainted with their secret glances and peering stares. 'Asouf, himself possessed, has come to believe that the *waddan* is possessed—possessed by the spirits of the mountains, by the spirit of his father, by the spirit of the Creator. He has lived on barley bread since he was a youth, and the *waddan* saved his life once.'<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Stephen M. Hart and Wen-Chin Ouyang *A Companion to Magical Realism*, Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge: UK. 2005, 243.

<sup>255</sup> -Stephen M. Hart and Wen-Chen Ouyan, 239

<sup>256</sup> - Elmarsafy, *Ibrahim al-Koni's Hybrid Aesthetic*, 151.

In a strange episode of his life, Asouf finds himself overcome by an odd desire to hunt the legendary *waddan* –a desire he cannot resist.

Some unknown power was pushing him to it. He forgot the vow, forgot his father's fate. Wonderment, beyond his power to resist, drove him on. His father had said, and so his mother, that the spirit of the *waddan* attracts, stupefies, robs a man of his mind, takes all his will away. Then the hunter finds himself dispossessed, led away, haunted, leaping on his own four limbs as he chases the beast over the smooth, hard rocks.<sup>257</sup>

In order to catch the *waddan*, Asouf throws a noose over the horns of the mighty *waddan*. The legendary animal is too strong for Asouf, and the animal leaps madly, drags him over the most merciless rocks and cliffs of the mountainous area of the desert. Although in great pain, injured, lacerated, and bleeding, Asouf does not let go of the rope but keeps holding it, in hope that the *waddan* will ultimately get tired and drop from exhaustion. In a sudden wild movement, the *waddan* jumps from the abyss into the unknown darkness of the cliff, throwing 'Asosuf over the edge of the cliff. Asouf falls from the cliff down a steep mountainside. He spends a dreadful night hung there between life and death. He begins to feel desperate and thinks of letting loose the hold of his hand on the ledge to end his life because he cannot stand the pain anymore. Asouf recalls his father's advice of patience. The desert needs patience at the times of hardships and adversities. He remembers his poor mother, his herd of goats, the beautiful gazelles, the caves, the valleys. He cannot leave all the beautiful things in the desert, and loosen his hold from the cliff and end his life.

After a very painful, tiring night Asouf heard footsteps above his head. Then he hears nothing, there is complete quiet. He hopes to hear something, suddenly he has felt something touch his hand. To his amazement, it is a piece of rope. At

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<sup>257</sup> - *The bleeding of the Stone*, 46.



first, he could not believe what he has seen. To make sure it is a rope, he clutches it firmly. There is something at the top , but because of the dark he cannot not see what it is. Whatever it is, it has pulled him up strongly. At last that thing succeeds in getting him out of the precipice. Asouf wants to know who it is that has saved him. He cannot not believe his eyes; it is the *waddan* that he has been trying to hunt. Asouf sees the *waddan*

raise that great head, crowned with the legendary horns, and face the mysterious thread that heralded dawn. The faint, divine glow within which the secret of life forever dwells anew. Suddenly, in the dimness of the glow, he saw his father in the eyes of the great, patient *waddan*. The sad, benevolent eyes of his father, who'd never understood why man should harm his brother man, who'd fled to the desert, choosing to die alone in the mountains rather than return to men. The eyes that had chosen a cruel freedom without ever quite knowing why.

““From his place, covered with its greedy stones,’ he cried out in a choked voice, as if communing with his God.

““You’re my father. I recognized you. Wait. I want to tell you--”

“He lost consciousness.”<sup>258</sup>

Asouf is as amazed because he has recognised or imagined he recognised his father’s eyes in the *waddan*’s eyes. Asouf is not sure who has saved his life of certain death – it might be the *waddan* that he has been trying to hunt or his father who might have metamorphosed into a *waddan*?

The above scene is an excellent example of magical realism because the *waddan*, in reality, cannot drop a rope down the cliff nor can pull it up and save Asouf’s life. But realism and magic are blended in a life-like description of the incident, make the reader in a state of bewilderment. Al-Koni’s description of the desert, its rocky mountains which tear Asouf’s skin seem to be so real and life-like. This description makes his foreign readers live the hard experience of Asouf and feel the pain and harshness of desert life, and the

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<sup>258</sup> - *The bleeding of the Stone*, 60-61.

process of being dehumanised by foreigners. Al-Koni, through Asouf, the protagonist of *The Bleeding of the Stone*, introduces his reader to the aboriginal Tuareg's past and shows that they have suffered the brutality of desert intruders whether they are Italians or Americans for they have turned his people into denigrated others.

In the last scene of the novel when Asouf refuses to show Cain the hideouts of the *waddan*, the greedy and furious Cain climbs the rock, fetters and crucifies Asouf, bends over his head, passes the knife over his neck, cuts his throat, and cut off the head from the body, and throws it on a stone in front of the giant rock. Asouf's blood drops on the stone that was half-buried in the sand of the temple.

“On the stone, the mysterious Tuareg alphabet resembling the symbols of Kano soothsayers was written the following:

I, the High priest of Matkhandoush, prophecy, for the generations to come, that redemption will be at hand when the sacred *waddan* bleeds and the blood issues from the stone. It is then that the miracle will be born; that the earth will be cleansed and deluge cover the desert.<sup>259</sup>

The spilling of Assouf's blood on the stone of the temple makes an ancient Tuareg's prophecy come true. The prophecy says that salvation will come only when the blood of the sacred *waddan* is spilled over the temple's stone. Asouf represents the *waddan* As soon as Asouf's blood drops over the stone, rain begins to fall, the drought is over and a new life begins.

It is worth highlighting that Asouf's refusal to betray the desert animals has cost him his life and has resulted in his crucifixion and beheading. Al-Koni wants to convey the message that although the Tuareg have suffered a lot by

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<sup>259</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*,134-135.

their aggressors, they, like what Herodotus says, are peaceful people, and through peaceful resistance, they, one day will resurrect again and obtain what they aspire for.



## Chapter Four

### 4. The Seven Veils of Seth: A Paradise in Hell

Ibrahim al-Koni in *The Seven Veils of Seth* as well as in most of his other novels presents the North African desert, where the Tuareg live, as a contradictory place which, according to his writing, could be viewed both as a paradise and hell at the same time. He describes it as an empty space of a harsh environment, nevertheless full of activity, rich with natural resources and cherished by the Tuareg people who inhabit. It gives water generously only to the faithful of its dwellers. According to the old Egyptian and Tuareg legends, Seth is the malevolent god who murders the good god of agriculture Osiris his brother, the good god of agriculture, to become the king. Isan/ Seth is a desert-wandering soothsayer and advocate of desert life, comes to a peaceful, fertile oasis, throws a strange powder in the spring of the oasis which pollutes its water, and in consequence causes the miscarriage of its women, unsettles and disturbs the oasis' peace and quiet stays for a long time, and begins to create problems to its inhabitants. Seth/Isan is the protagonist of *The Seven Veils of Seth*, persuading Master Merchant and the other people of the oasis to abandon living in the oasis where they dwell and live in the desert. The newcomer Isan from the first moment of his arrival starts criticising everything in the peoples' life, creating a lot of problems. No one in the oasis knows anything about him, nor about his intentions. Having polluted the oasis' water, Isan tells Master Merchant that since water in the oasis is contaminated, it is better for them to live in the desert. He starts to enumerate the advantages of living in the desert, he says that:

Life in a land without water is easier than life in a land where the water is contaminated...The desert is never stingy with its water for the faithful. The proof is that we have never heard a nomad dying of thirst unless this was a punishment for an unknown offense or unless a nomad had stopped migrating.<sup>260</sup>

Al-Koni is saying the desert has its own rules that its dwellers should respect, and follow in order to enjoy its fruits.

Al-Koni uses the desert as his setting to draw a lot of magical and real incidents where his readers become confused and are in doubt whether to believe that the mythical elements in it are natural or supernatural. In *The Seven Veils of Seth* as well as in most of his other novels, he employs ancient Tuareg myths and amalgamates them with ancient Egyptian mythology and Islamic Sufism. He, therefore, asserts that Egyptian and Tuareg myths are historically related to each other; he even goes further to say that Tuareg mythology influenced Egyptian mythology. In support of this allegation, Amira El-Zein in her article “*Mythological Tuareg Gods*” quotes Alfred Wallis Budge (d.1934), saying that the “Egyptian god Osiris was originally a Libyan god. He writes that all the texts of all periods show that he was a native god of North-East Africa and that his origin is most probably Libyan.”<sup>261</sup> William Hutchins agrees with El-Zein regarding this point confirming that Ibrahim al-Koni himself has clearly stated that he strongly believes that the ancient Egyptian culture is a part of the Tuareg heritage. Al-Koni claims that some of the Tuareg have chosen to

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<sup>260</sup> - *The seven Veils of Seth*,255- 256.

<sup>261</sup> - Amira El-Zein, “*Mythological\_Tuareg\_Gods\_in\_Ibrahim\_al-Konis\_Works*”, <https://www.academia.edu/25703260/>, January 2015.

live in the Nile Valley while others have preferred the desert as their place of living and settlement.<sup>262</sup>

Al-Koni refers to this through the character of Isan who asks Tuareg to abandon living in an urban city or oasis ( the Nile Valley and live in the desert instead. Living in an urban place will definitely make them lose their identity.

It is to be noted that all of al-Koni's novels deal with issues that touch directly the Tuareg's identity, traditions and culture; he, therefore employs their oral literature, idioms, metaphors and maxims in his narrative. It is to be noted that he shows that his people believe in supernatural powers, and in their myths. His aim is to attract the reader's attention to Tuareg's different way of life, their myths, and their features to show that they are a nation that deserves to have their own entity and their own place of living.

One of the of Tuareg's myths in which they believe that they are different is that they come from a tribe of jinn. Stephan Leder claims that "there is a widespread opinion that all the inhabitants of the desert descend from jinn."<sup>263</sup> Jinn according to them, are able to metamorphose and take the shapes of animals such as the *waddan* like what happened in the *Bleeding of the Stone* or take the shape of humans or reptiles as in *The Seven Veils of Seth*. Seth takes the shape of a snake, then metamorphoses into the Fool's sweetheart when the Fool stabs him with a knife. The Fool believes that Isan the stranger who has

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<sup>262</sup> William Hutchins, *Scarecrow*, Austin: Centre for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Texas, 2015, P ix.

<sup>263</sup> - Stefan Leder, H. Kilpatrick, B. Martel- Thoumain, ( Eds), *Studies in Arabic and Islam: Proceedings of the 19th Congress: Halle 1998*: Leuven, Paris- Sterling, Peeters Publishers. 2002, 237.

come to their oasis will cause a lot of troubles to its people and to the oasis itself; he, therefore, decides to kill him and rid the oasis of his mischievous plans. The Fool tells his people how he has tried to kill him. He has seen Isan (Seth) asleep and bareheaded, his ears are large like those of a donkey. When the Fool stabs him with a knife, he, at first has metamorphosed into a snake, then he changes into the shape of a girl.

One other feature of the Tuareg people is that they believe in the communication between humans and jinn and might get married to each other even if they come from different species. It must be highlighted that Isan's outward appearance is an amalgamation of human and animal features. He has very long ears that resemble the ears of a donkey. He always keeps "his serpentine veil around his head to hide from the world his ears, which the shrew had recently linked to donkey ears."<sup>264</sup>

Another remarkable feature of Tuareg is that men wear the veil to cover their mouths, ears, and nose, as they believe evil spirits could enter the body from any of its openings. According to them, the mouth, in particular, is considered the most important part of the face, therefore, it must be always covered because it is the most likely to be an entry point of pollution, and evil spirits.

Al-Koni teaches his readers some of the strange customs of the Tuareg. For instance, he lets one of his characters explain the importance of the veil to desert inhabitants, particularly the Tuareg. Temari, one of the seven beautiful nymphs in *The Seven Veils of Seth* that Isan meets at the pool when he has first

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<sup>264</sup> - *The Seven Veils of Seth*, 19.

arrived the oasis, advises him to always use a veil to cover his head especially the mouth. Temari confirms this point when she tells him, “Be careful never to expose your head in a woman’s presence again...Avoid letting a woman see you without your veil.”<sup>265</sup> According to Tuareg’s tradition, men should never be bareheaded. When a man does not wear a veil and exposes his head, people will be able to know his inner thoughts and all his intentions become exposed and known to others. Al-Koni tells us that Tuareg’s Law urges the man to cover his head and mouth with a veil and shows this through one of his characters in the novel when the nymph Temari tells Isan that “the mouth is the weak spot that led to (our) expulsion from the orchard and turned our world into a desert...The mouth is man’s weak spot.”<sup>266</sup>

In addition to the veil, Tuareg also always cover their bodies with large blue robes to distinguish themselves from other ethnicities.

Moreover, Tuareg always wear amulets around their necks which they believe that they protect themselves from evil spirits. They sometimes wear several ones at a time as protection from Jinn, black magic, and the evil eye. It is worth noting that each amulet is written for a certain kind of protection if the amulet is lost, then that person is most likely to be exposed to danger any moment.

Leder et al claim that Magic plays an important role in Tuareg lives; he says, “Amulets and talismans are widely used and no traveller sets out for the desert without them.”<sup>267</sup> The amulets are inscribed by sorcerers and witches. These

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<sup>265</sup> - *The Seven Veils of Seth*,12.

<sup>266</sup> - *The Seven Veils of Seth*,15.

<sup>267</sup> - Stefan Leder , H. Kilpatrick, B. Martel- Thoumain, ( Eds), 237.



sorcerers and witches use certain ancient incantations and write them in an attractive and decorated shape on the veils and turbans to look strange and distinguished. The incantations consist of confusing and disordered words which are uttered and narrated in a fixed and special way<sup>268</sup> to drive off Jinn and evil spirits. In this way, they believe they are safe and protected.

Leder et al add that the desert is full of strange, invisible creatures:

nomads believe that the desert is inhabited by invisible or hidden creatures, *ahl al-khafa* or demons... frisks in the desert routs...resembling humans, but free from physical limitations, they have great freedom of action, and in al-Koni's books, they are responsible for all the surprises which nomads meet in the desert. The desert is the motherland of jinn and mystery.<sup>269</sup>

When desert wanderers and dwellers meet in al-Koni's novels and they are not sure of the decent of each other or of the stranger's background, they usually ask one another whether they are Jenny or humans. Al-Koni confirms this point when the Spectre, one of his characters in *The Seven Veils of Seth* says, "In the caverns of Tassili we frequently meet human beings with the body of a jinni and jinn with human bodies."<sup>270</sup> They believe that a Jinn can shift shape and do harm to people. They can take the shape of humans, animals, insects, and many other shapes. When Seth sees the seven beautiful young women beside the spring of the oasis, he is amazed by their beauty and is not sure whether they are human beauties or beautiful jinn. He asks them in jest "Do I see female jinn or beautiful women?"<sup>271</sup> Tuareg believe in magic and superhuman powers and that Jinn can communicate and interact with humans,

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<sup>268</sup> - Stefan Leder, H. Kilpatrick, B. Martel- Thoumain, ( Eds), 238.

<sup>269</sup> - Stefan Leder , H. Kilpatrick , B. Martel- Thoumain, ( Eds), 236.

<sup>270</sup> - *The Seven Veils of Seth*, 134.

<sup>271</sup> - *The Seven Veils of Seth*, 8.

but a dispute has taken place between these two species. One of Tuareg myths, according to Leder et al, is that “The Jinn were the indigenous inhabitants of the desert and people were their guests who then stole their treasures, gold, and diamonds; this led to war between the two species, and finally the jinn hid themselves and have been doing harm to people until this day.”<sup>272</sup> In order to protect themselves from the harm and malice of Jinn and demons, Tuareg avoid using gold because it intimidates jinn and brings misfortune.

Al-Koni regards Tuareg mythologies and heritage as essential constituents in fiction, he, therefore employs these mythologies creatively in his novels which is considered by many critics that he is doing so because he feels committed and responsible to protect, preserve and record Tuareg heritage in his writing lest one day they might be swept away and become extinct by modernity.<sup>273</sup> Al-Koni is worried that Tuareg’s culture and traditions might one day be absorbed and dissolve into the Arabic culture and traditions. He feels that it is the duty of the Tuareg elites, whom he considers himself one of them, to defend their heritage, moral values and records all these in writing.

Fazia Aitel, the author of *We are Amazeghen-Berber Identity: The Development of Algerian Berber Identity in Twentieth-Century Literature and Culture* discusses the problems that face the Berber and their identity. She says that Berber identity is assimilated and dissolved in the Muslim and Arab identity.

When we turn to the question of Berber literature, it is not surprising to discover that Berbers are either absent or drowned within the general

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<sup>272</sup> - Stefan Leder, H. Kilpatrick, B. Martel- Thoumain, ( Eds) 236.

<sup>273</sup> - Fahndrich, Hartmut. “*The Desert as Homeland and Metaphor: Reflections on the Novels of the Tuareg Writer Ibrahim al-Koni.*” *Arabic Literature: Postmodern Perspectives*. Eds. Angelika Neuwirth et al. London: Saqi Books, 2010. 331-41

aesthetic and discourse. Indeed, Berber writers and their literary production are not usually identified as such but, rather, have been assimilated into their respective national origins (Algerian, Moroccan). Berber writers have been taken for granted or dissolved into broad and generic terms, such as Maghrebian, Muslim, and Arab.<sup>274</sup>

Al-Koni stresses the importance of keeping, and preserving the Tuareg's heritage, culture, and identity, and insists on talking about them almost in every page of his novels. He does not want his people nor their culture to assimilate in the predominantly Arab and Islamic culture. He agrees with Fazia Aitel that if he does not do that, it will fade away and be forgotten or dissolve with time. Amira El-Zein agrees with Fazia Aitel that Berber identity and way of life are about to fade away and replaced by the Muslim and Arab identity. She points out:

nomadic activities are dwindling in most parts of the territory where the Tuareg move—i.e., across Algeria, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Libya—and many among the younger generation migrate in search of jobs or for political reasons. In addition, it is becoming almost impossible to herd due to the changes in the environment and the exploitation of uranium mines, especially in the Niger. This has led to one of the most striking changes in this nomadic way of life in which they smuggle trade or carry animals and which they use when they move across borders.<sup>275</sup>

In order to overcome the problems that face his people due to the political and environmental changes, we notice that al-Koni in most of his novels, particularly the above mentioned two, ingeniously documents, records their heritage in writing and gives us a detailed picture of Tuareg's way of life, their thoughts, rites, their everyday practices, cultural traditions, religious beliefs, legends, folklore, and myths. Through his novels, we are introduced to their

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<sup>274</sup> - Fazia Aitel, *We are AmaZeghen- Berber Identity: The Development of Algerian Berber Identity in Twentieth-Century Literature and Culture*( 2014) Florida: University Press of Florida, 2014, 22.

<sup>275</sup> - Amira El-Zein.

Amazeghen names, gods, laws, proverbs, metaphors Amazeghen names of valleys, mountains, and caverns.

Al-Koni is a Tuareg who has lived in the desert, knows the real dangers and threats that face them and threaten the desert because he has experienced them at first hand. He is not like most of other writers who write art for art's sake; he has set in his mind a purpose of making Tuareg case and their issues known throughout the whole world to preserve their national identity and culture from extinction.

Al-Koni's novels acquaint readers throughout the world with the Tuareg's heritage, their struggle for survival and through his fiction the world has become well informed of the desert, its people, the traits of animals and kinds of plants in addition to the damage inflicted on them by the voracious foreign companies which invaded the desert excavating for uranium, oil, gold and other treasures.

In Both *The Seven Veils of Seth*, and *The Bleeding of the Stone*, al-Koni tries to unmask the disgraceful acts of the foreign countries, and parties that have taken part in destabilising the life of the Tuareg and have turned it into a living hell. These parties have helped in the extinction of most of the Saharan animal and plant life, particularly gazelles and *waddan*. In *The Seven Veils of Seth* al-Koni alludes to the immense environmental damage and pollution that have taken place in the desert due to the arrival of foreign companies there. These companies have started excavating in the desert, searching for oil, uranium, gold and a lot of other materials, for they know that the desert is rich

with them materials, paying no attention to the safety and interests of the indigenous dwellers.

Al-Koni alludes to the radioactive dust of uranium that polluted the desert's air, and land, contaminating the underground water and disturbing Tuareg's life. Cordula Meyer, a German journalist working for the German weekly 'Der Spiegel' in her article "*Uranium Mining in Niger: Tuareg Activist Takes on French Nuclear Company*" claims that Avera, a French company has been excavating uranium in Niger and selling it to European countries for their nuclear purposes and thus making a lot of money. Cordula says that a Nigerian Tuareg activist named Almoustapha Alhacen severely criticizes Avera, "claiming that water and dust have been contaminated and Tuareg workers are dying as a result of Avera's mining activities."<sup>276</sup> This Nigerian local activist, according to Cordula, has founded an environmental organization in one of the northern Nigerian cities. Alhacen argues that the apparent "dark side of Areva's operations: millions of tons of radioactive waste, contaminated water and caused serious illnesses."<sup>277</sup> The German journalist believes that a lot of people are dying of mysterious diseases in connection with mining for uranium. Moreover, she points the finger of accusation toward Germany's biggest bank *Deutsche Bank* for financing and lending money to Avera enabling it to operate its uranium mines and building nuclear power plants.

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<sup>276</sup> - Meyer, Cordula, '*Uranium Mining in Niger: Tuareg Activist Takes on French Nuclear Company*', *Spiegel Online International*, 4 February 2010, available at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/uranium-mining-in-niger-tuareg-activist-takes-on-french-nuclear-company-a-686774.html>,

<sup>277</sup> --- Meyer, Cordula.

Al-Koni alludes to the crimes of environmental pollution committed against Nigerian Tuareg by Avera in his novel *The Seven Veils of Seth*. He therefore begins his novel by introducing a stranger( Seth / Isan) coming to a quiet, peaceful, unnamed oasis, throws a strange powder in the spring of the oasis which pollutes its water, and in consequence causes the miscarriage of its women, unsettles and disturbs the oasis' peace and quiet. When he shows up in the oasis, he begins turning their lives topsy- turvy. He questions and criticises their settled life in the oasis, and ridicules everything they have been using and believing in to administer their society which he calls a life of lethargy. Isan is a strong believer of nomadic life, therefore, he loathes and criticises sedentary life. According to Seth, sedentary life will gradually make them lose their heritage and identity. As nomads, only through travel and migrating from one place to another they will find themselves and restore their identity.

The majority of the people in the oasis begin to view Isan as a threat and an ill-omened person because of the affliction that affected women's wombs and because of the severe drought that hit the oasis. Since his arrival, calamities have started to fall on the oasis, and the oasis has not seen a drop of rain. Master Merchant tells Isan that fingers of suspicion have begun to point at him, especially after refusing the hospitality of the Chief Master who invites him for dinner. His refusal of the invitation to dinner provokes the suspicion of the oasis dwellers. Seth/ Isan prides himself that he never attends banquets nor accepts the invitation of anyone. "According to local custom, abstention is a scheme. Withdrawal from society is always considered a conspiracy by

customary law.”<sup>278</sup> Additionally, he prefers residing in the cemetery as his refuge, saying that the best place “to reside in is not next to the living, but beside the dead.”<sup>279</sup>

Among the myths of the Tuareg which al-Koni tells us that they strongly believe that the arrival of strangers is forerunner either of good or bad omen. “The footprints of some strangers fill with heavy rain. The footprints of other foreigners are cracked with draught. On the heels of some strangers comes joy. On the heels of others comes foul play.”<sup>280</sup> Since the arrival of Seth calamities begin to fall on the oasis one after the other. Isan/ Seth, in the novel, represents the foreign companies that have come to the desert creating a lot of problems to its dwellers.

The arrival of Isan also creates problems, incites the inhabitants’ curiosity and scorn because of his arrival to the oasis on the back of a she-ass, rather than on a camel as the desert people commonly do. As soon as Isan arrives he seeks the oasis’s pool, gets undressed and plunges himself completely naked in it. He recites some ancient incantations, then scatters a secret powder into the spring. “The suspect particles flashed in the light as they fell and then scattered over the water’s surface. He watched them quickly spread zealously like entranced mystics-to contaminate the entire pool.”<sup>281</sup> This mysterious powder contaminates the oasis’ water, an unknown disease has spread among the women in the oasis causing the miscarriage of pregnant women exactly as

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<sup>278</sup> - *The seven Veils of Seth*, 103.

<sup>279</sup> - *The Seven Veils of Seth*, 45.

<sup>281</sup> - *The Seven Veils of Seth*, 20.

Avera's radioactive dust that contaminated Niger's underground water causing a lot of mysterious diseases. The she-ass which Isan uses for transportation represents the vehicles the foreign companies use as their means of transportation- something that desert people have never seen before. Moreover, because of the strong heat in the desert, Europeans and Westerners always wear shorts only, a thing the Tuareg are not used to and regard it as shameful and ridiculous.

Furthermore, al-Koni stresses the point that now Tuareg are not as free to migrate from one place to another as they used to do in the past. Migration and free transportation from one place to another in the desert "is made untenable by the political predicament of the Tuareg: their land has been claimed, both by nation-states and, more specifically, by foreign corporations who mine the desert for uranium."<sup>282</sup> In this novel, al-Koni shows how the West affected negatively Tuareg's way of life, and alludes to the shocking consequences of mining and excavating uranium in certain Tuareg territories in the desert. Cordula Meyer says that Tuareg in these regions "are finding fewer and fewer pastures for their cattle, and people are affected by fatal illnesses."<sup>283</sup>

Al-Koni ingeniously alludes to the disastrous ecological effects that Avera's mining causes to the desert and its inhabitants. It contaminates desert water and the radioactive dust was the main cause for the death of a lot of people and animals. Meyer, in her article, writes:

The Greenpeace activists showed up last November and stayed for nine days. They found elevated levels of radiation everywhere. A sand sample taken near the mine in Akokan contained 100 times more radioactive material than

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<sup>282</sup> - Sam Clarke, "*Lost in Space: Crisis of the Nation and Homeland in Contemporary Arabic Fiction*"

<sup>283</sup> - Meyer.



normal sand. In the streets of Akokan, the Greenpeace team apparently even measured radiation levels that were 500 times normal levels.<sup>284</sup>

Al-Koni here refers to Avera's radioactive dust comparing it to the powder which Isan scatters in the pool and contaminates it. The fatal effect of this dust is not restricted to water contamination; its disastrous effect exceed that. It extends to plants and animals as well. When exposed to the desert winds, Meyer further writes that this dust travels throughout the desert and causes a lot of ecological and fatal health problems. The sandstorm at the end of *The Seven Veils of Seth*, which is loaded with dust destroys the oasis completely, is strong evidence to Meyer's observation.<sup>285</sup>

Al-Koni refers to the disastrous effects of the radioactive dust of uranium in the following quote:

The animosity was not merely apparent in the storm's violence but revealed itself as well in the heavy dust borne by the winds. The tempest burst free of its bonds shortly after sunset, like a demonic jinni and attacked the oasis with a savagery people had not experienced, not even in the pillaging attacks the oasis experienced in ancient times... People passed on news of livestock wiped out, palm trees destroyed, sword dunes advancing from the south toward the spring, and crops strafed by flying dirt.<sup>286</sup>

Before the arrival of the stranger, the oasis was a safe haven and a permanent abode for the people of the desert who founded a prospering society that has its own marketplace where they buy, sell, make deals, and discuss various issues of their inner life. After the arrival of the stranger to the oasis, all things in it have deteriorated and it changed from a safe haven into a source of illness, devastating cancer inflected a huge number of its dwellers. Al-Koni refers to this in the miscarriage and infertility cases of the women and the

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<sup>284</sup> - Meyer.

<sup>285</sup> - Meyer.

<sup>286</sup> - *The Seven Veils of Seth*. 283-284.

mysterious cases of deaths in the novel. He shows that the harmful effect of the uranium dust is not limited to the contamination of underground water, it has affected the Tuareg socially, economically and politically as well. Sam Clarke, the author of *“Lost in Space: Crisis of the Nation and Homeland in Contemporary Arabic Fiction”* says that because of the severe drought, and the effects of searching for oil and uranium, some of the Tuareg have moved to settle in north, and consequently have begun to lose contact with their true heritage and identity. Clarke quotes Sabry Hafez who labels the oasis as “the spatial opponent of the desert and as a site for the negation of all its values’, for any ‘flight to the oasis implicitly declares the decay of the desert, a carnal sin in the Law of the desert.”<sup>287</sup> Al-Koni implies that the effects of western civilisation is extremely dangerous on the natives of the desert. A lot of them have begun to abandon the desert and move to the northern towns and cities( Tripoli and Benghazi) looking for jobs and an easy life.

The oasis’ inhabitants are used to have visitors coming from different parts of the world, These visitors are always welcome whereas Isan is an annoying and disturbing one. Unlike most, he does not use camels for his transport. Instead, he comes to the oasis on the back of a she-donkey. The head of the tribe criticises him for this, and asks in disgust: “How can you expect our elders not to think ill of you when you arrive on the back of a jenny as if you were the accursed Wantahet\*, who has been the butt of jokes for generations?”<sup>288</sup> What adds insult to injury is Isan’s refusal to accept several offers of hospitality,

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<sup>287</sup> - Same Clarke.

<sup>288</sup> - *The Seven Veils of Seth* 75.

\* ( Wantahet, according to al-Koni is the Demon, Iblis, or Mephistopheles)

including a welcoming dinner, and strangest of all, he chooses to reside in a tomb in the cemetery of the oasis. The oasis' prominent people are perplexed regarding what to make of him. The Fool is the only one who suggests killing Isan before he causes more harm and damage in the oasis. An insinuation of using violence as what Fanon calls for. But everyone in the oasis was strongly against using force.

According to Egyptian mythology, Seth (Isan ) is thought to be the “god of the desert, storm, disorder, and warfare.”<sup>289</sup> The night before the Fool's execution for his attempt to kill Seth/Isan, a lot of supernatural phenomena have occurred in the oasis. Some believe that Isan ( the god of storm and disorder) is the one who has sent the sandstorm to the oasis which has created disorder and destruction and caused in the disappearance of the Fool in the desert. In addition to his power of creativity, Isan has the power of destruction, and fertility at the same time. At the beginning of the novel, he causes the miscarriage of the beautiful nymphs, then restores their sterility and impregnates them by means of his amulets. He tells the Head Merchant that five of the six beautiful nymphs have been impregnated by means of depositing his amulets in them, but the sixth nymph is barren. He explains that Tamanokalt is barren and that he “cannot bring dead bones to life.”<sup>290</sup>

In *The seven Veils of Seth*, the stranger reveals the secret of his names to one of the six beautiful nymphs he met at the spring that he has seven different

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<sup>289</sup> -F.F. Moola, *Desert ethics, myths of nature and novel form in the narratives of Ibrahim al-Koni*

<sup>290</sup> - *The Seven Veils of Seth*, 241.

names or veils, “I have seven names. They are my veils.”<sup>291</sup> They are ‘Isan’, ‘the strategist’, ‘Serpent’, ‘Gnosis’, ‘Curse’, and ‘Mirror’, but most of the time he introduces himself as “Isan which also refers to the names as amulets.

Some of the people in the oasis suspect that he is an ill-omened person because his arrival has brought drought and mysterious diseases in the oasis. As a result, some of the oasis dwellers have begun to leave the oasis preferring to live in the desert saying that, “life in a land without water is easier than life in a land where the water’s contaminated.”<sup>292</sup> The author here refers to the Tuareg who prefer to live in the desert and preserve their identity rather than living in the urban cities in the north and lose contact with their heritage.

The majority of the people see that Isan ( the stranger) must be punished or expelled from the oasis. Although he is seen by the Fool throwing the suspect powder in the pool and suggests that he should be killed before he causes more harm, but the sage and the diviner do not agree to this because they do not consider this as evidence justifying his killing. They explain that they are governed by an ancient Law which they cannot violate or surpass- if they do, they will severely be punished by the gods. They see that “throwing herbs into the water can hardly be considered proof.”<sup>293</sup> Tuareg’s Law does not allow them to punish or use force against a stranger for an unsubstantiated accusation. They prefer to solve the problem peacefully rather than using force contrary to what Frantz Fanon calls for.

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<sup>291</sup> *The seven Veils of Seth*, 166.

<sup>292</sup> - *The seven Veils of Seth*. 255.

<sup>293</sup> - *The Seven. Veils of Seth*. 273

Al-Koni wants to convey the message that the Tuareg are not savage, primitive or uncivilized people. In his narration, he stresses the point that Tuareg has their own culture that is not imported or created by the West. Tuareg are not mindless; they have their own philosophy of life, they have their own values, they have their own Law through which they can solve their problems and conflicts. Whenever there is a serious matter like the fatal diseases which inflicted the oasis, the sages always convene and hold long debates in order to reach the proper solution to the problem in question. Everything is decided according to their ancient Law that they all respect and adhere to.

Through the tragic scene of the sandstorm which has destroyed the Tuareg's abode in the desert, al-Koni's message to the whole world that the strangers and foreigners are the ones who are responsible for all the calamities inflicted on them. Although Tuareg nomads do not want to abandon their principles and insist on living as nomads in the desert, al-Koni portrays them as people who are forced to live in two different spaces; some have chosen to live in the oasis while others prefer the nomadic desert. The majority believe that "Sedentary life is lethargy followed by death."<sup>294</sup> Al-Koni argues that living in two different spaces negatively affects their identity. Moving to the cities and assimilating with the people in the north will result in certain death to Tuareg identity.

Al-Koni in *The Seven Veils of Seth* and *The Bleeding of the Stone* emphasises that foreign companies such as Avera and colonial powers

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<sup>294</sup> - *The Seven Veils of Seth*. 48.

exemplified in Isan, Parker, and Cain do not have any respect for the Laws and traditions of the desert people, on the contrary, they spare no effort to show their scorn and disgust of them. Al-Koni, therefore sees that Tuareg should keep their distance from desert invaders, and never to trust them nor surrender their affairs to them. Al-Koni uses his characters in his novels to point out explicitly to Tuareg's predicament and make Tuareg's case known worldwide. His objective is to preserve their language, heritage, and identity, therefore he makes one of his characters articulate what al-Koni sees as the solution to their problems.

For us to convey the truth to the people, we must keep our distance from them (foreigners)...If we keep pace with them, they will draw us down to their world. If we pretend to approve their games, they will multiply their foolishness, assuming that we share their passion. If we cede an inch to them, we will lose ourselves and become one of them forever.<sup>295</sup>

Al-Koni as a Tuareg believes only through keeping themselves to themselves, and not mingling with others. Tuareg may protect themselves against the aggressors and the foreign companies who have caused environmental damage in the desert, and in turn affected their nomadic way of life, especially in the areas where these companies are mining for uranium and gold.

Al-Koni as an insider who has spent his childhood and part of his adulthood in the desert knows a lot about Tuareg's mythology, chooses to use the magical realism narrative mode where it is hard to distinguish and differentiate between magic and reality. He uses this mode of writing as a kind of peaceful resistance in order to protect Tuareg heritage before it sweeps by time as he expects.

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<sup>295</sup> . *The Seven Veils of Seth*, 51-52.

Moreover, his novels introduce the readers to Tuareg's real way of life and his novels are considered as written records. Al-Koni tries to confirm that Tuareg's way of life as desert people should not be changed because they want to keep their identity as Tuareg, and according to him even if a change in their way of life takes place, it will not be a successful one. Only through the backing of a return to the indigenous heritage and tradition, the Tuareg can resist the colonial modernity of the west and its political concepts.

Al-Koni succeeds in achieving all his goals especially in exposing the physical, economic, and moral damage inflicted the Tuareg people and their environment by the desert intruders and foreign companies.

## Chapter Five

### 5. Gold Dust: Man-Animal Brotherhood

In *Gold Dust* as well as in the majority of his other works, Ibrahim al-Koni focuses on the ancient Tuareg culture and tradition where he introduces the readers to the unrecorded laws, rites and beliefs of the desert people which most outsiders know so little about. It is worth noting that al-Koni as an educated Tuareg has a sense of mission toward his Tuareg people, feels that it is his duty to arouse the sympathy of his readers towards this part of the world and the creatures that live there whether animals or humans. In order to achieve this mission successfully, al-Koni uses the magical realism mode of writing to give a true picture of the Sahara, its people, their myths, way of life, their struggle for survival, and the predicaments they face in their daily life.

In *Gold Dust*, *The Bleeding of the Stone*, and *The Seven Veils of Seth* magical realism, then is employed as a way of resistance against the dominating western discourse of writing, the foreign occupation, the domineering Arabic culture, aiming to preserve the traditions and rituals of his predecessors. In the above-mentioned novels, the author is not restricted by any boundaries between the real and the magical, the natural and supernatural. In addition to preserving his people's heritage and informing the outside world about the predicaments of the Tuareg and exposing the injustice of foreigners, al-Koni's aims to teach the new generation of his people how to behave and act in the present world which threatens everything they believe in, in order to keep their ethnic identity alive. Al-Koni uses this technique in his novels in order to be able to depict and



emphasise the values of the Tuareg community, preserve their oral heritage and tradition in written records and at the same time use it as a veil or cover and present his political views without being harmed by the existing regime at that time.

Unlike most novelists who use the city as the setting for the incidents of their novels, believing that the incidents of the novel always revolve around the city and the people who live there, al-Koni has a completely different opinion. Conversely, he takes the desert as the setting and makes it the protagonist of all of his novels. He, therefore, is considered a pioneer in this new experience. Susan McHugh in her article *Ibrahim al-Koni's 'Composite Apparition'* writes that Al-Koni's work is "praised as pivotal for re-orienting the novel form away from urban – or 'oasis' (another of al-Koni's preferred terms) – settings, and toward the desert countryside. More precisely, it is not the arid and semi-arid landscapes but rather the rich social fabrics of desert dwellers that typify the work of this prolific writer."<sup>296</sup>

Cozzo in her book *Two questers in the Twentieth-Century North African Desert: Paul Bowels and Ibrahim al-Koni* points out that al-Koni in his novels stresses the point that in the desert there must be a sense of balance between man and the available resources in the desert. Cozzo quotes Said Ghanemi in his *Epic Ceiling* who says that the economic system of the desert is based on

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<sup>296</sup> Susan Mchugh

“the economy of the necessary”, in which he means that the desert inhabitants are thrifty and concentrate only on what is essential to survive.”<sup>297</sup>

Before discussing *Gold dust* in detail, I see that it is essential to give a brief summary of the novel in order to provide the reader with the main happenings to make the analysis of the novel as clear as possible.

In *Gold Dust* (1990), al-Koni’ reveals his sense of environmentalism and animism and his esteem and respect of Tuareg’s love of the desert and their animals. This is clearly depicted in the unusual, strong relationship between Ukhayyad, the protagonist of *Gold Dust*, son of the head of the biggest and noblest tribe in Ghadames, and his piebald thoroughbred Mahri camel. The intimacy between Ukhayyad and his Mahri is both physical and spiritual relationship.

*Gold Dust* tells the story of Ukhayyad, a Tuareg Saharan nomad and his closest companion, the piebald Mahri camel, a noble thoroughbred that he gets as a gift from the chief of the Ahaggar tribes the minute Ukhayyad has reached the age of adulthood. Ukhayyad loves his gift dearly, and the camel becomes his companion and best friend. He always boasts and brags of its beauty everywhere he goes, because as he says his Mahri “is graceful, long-legged. He’s well-bred. He’s fierce and loyal.”<sup>298</sup> In describing this remarkable Mahri, one of the characters in the novel says that "He is no camel. He's a human being in camel's skin"<sup>299</sup>. Unfortunately, the Mahri is infected by a malignant

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<sup>297</sup> - Imen Ayari Cozzo, *Two questers in the Twentieth –Century North African Desert: Paul Bowels and Ibrahim al-Koni*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016, 194

<sup>298</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 6.

<sup>299</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 97.

dermatological disease(mange) as a result of his sexual adventures with a number of she-camels that almost cost the camel and his owner their lives. Ukhayyad sacrifices himself and stands beside his camel and follows the advice of Sheikh Musa, a Sufi from the western ends of the desert, from Fez, the land of teachers of Islamic law. Sheikh Musa suggests that Ukhayyad takes his camel to Hamada Al Hamra and let the camel graze for two or three days where there is a magical herb called Silphium in order to be cured of his skin disease, otherwise the camel will certainly die. Desert people believe that this herb is miraculous and can cure a lot of diseases. The camel is miraculously cured by eating the magical herb called Silphium or Assiyar that grows only in Hamada Alhamra in the southern part of the Libyan desert.

Ukhayyad's father wants him to get married to his aunt's daughter so that Ukhayyad inherits the leadership of the tribe in accordance to the Tuareg's maternal Law, but Ukhayyad disobeys him and gets married to Ayur, a stranger who comes with her relatives from a different area. The girl and her family are strangers who come to the oasis where Ukhayyad lives escaping from a severe drought that has hit many parts of the desert for a long time. Ukhayyad's father disowns him and cuts him off from inheritance.

Ukhayyad's wife begets a son at the same time the Italians wage war all-over the northern Libyan coast and the desert. The Italians overcome the Libyan resistance, and famine expands across the desert. Unable to feed his wife and son, Ukhayyad is forced to pawn his Mahri to Dudu, a stranger who has come to the oasis in a suspicious visit to his cousin, (Ukhayyad's wife).

The Mahri escapes from his new master several times and returns to Ukhayyad his real owner. This forces Ukhayyad decide to get him back because he “no longer can stand their being apart.”<sup>300</sup> Dudu seizes this opportunity and sends Ukhayyad word that he can retrieve his Mahri back on the condition that he divorces his wife because he loves her and wants her as a wife for himself. Ukhayyad is shocked by this disgusting offer at first, but eventually, he agrees for the sake of his son and wife whom he cannot find the means to support them because of the famine. When Ukhayyad divorces his wife, Dudu insists that Ukhayyad take a handful of gold dust as a gift for his brave decision. At first, Ukhayyad refuses and says that gold brings bad luck. Gold, he says “blinds and corrupts even the best of people.”<sup>301</sup> But Ukhayyad finally yields to Dudu’s persistence and takes it. Dudu’s insistence that Ukhayyad takes the handful of gold dust turns out to be a carefully planned trick. Rumour spreads throughout the desert that Ukhayyad has sold his wife and son to one of the rich foreigners for a handful of gold dust. Shocked by Dudu’s deception, Ukhayyad decides to wash away the shame, and only the blood of Dudu will cleanse this shame. On the night of Dudu’s wedding to his ex-wife, Ukhayyad finds him splashing water in the pool, “undressed, with no veil to cover his heart. His ears were suddenly huge, and flopped like those of a donkey.”<sup>302</sup> He aims at Dudu and fires two shots, the first one missed its target but the second tears Dudu’s throat and kills him. Ukhayyad sprays the handful of gold dust in the pool and runs away toward the mountains.

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<sup>300</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 100.

<sup>301</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 148.

<sup>302</sup> - *Gold dust*, 144.

In *Gold Dust*, al-Koni concentrates on the inner life of Tuareg's society, their hard life in the desert, their beliefs, customs and insinuates that their values, way of life differ from the values and way of life of the people anywhere else. For outsiders, the desert means scarcity, aridity, bareness, and dryness, compared to the luxurious urban cities where people live. Al-Koni spares no effort to draw the attention of his foreign readers to this strange and unknown part of the world where the Tuareg live. Moreover, he uses magical realism because through it he would be able to introduce Tuareg's culture and beliefs, and confirm that it differs from the dominant western culture and their way of life. In his narrative, things are introduced from the desert dweller's point of view, not through the point of view of the western dominant culture which is governed by scientific and logical rules. Magical realism provides postcolonial writers like al-Koni with the means to attack and criticise the writing conventions of the western dominant culture. It also enables him to criticise the despotic regime in Libya in a veiled way without being harmed. "Magical realism forms a new decolonized space of narrative which is not already taken by the assumptions and techniques of European realism."<sup>303</sup>

Al-Koni shows the difference in the values and attitudes between the two cultures and illustrates this by giving an example of Ukhayyad's attitude regarding the reason for his piebald's illness. When Ukhayyad sees mucous and black bile comes out of the Mahri's mouth because of his fatal skin disease, the first thing that comes to his mind that his camel is envied and cast by an evil eye. He does not attribute his Mahri's disease to any logical or scientific

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<sup>303</sup> -Mehri Ramzi, Leyli Jamili, "Magical Realism As postcolonial Device in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*" *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol.2 No.5. March 2012.

reasons, but, as is common in most of the people in the desert, he attributes it to an 'evil eye'. According to Ukhayyad:

black bile- sign of the evil eye. The soothsayers all agree on that. So, he had been envied for his piebald. The evil eye had been behind everything that had happened. According to the teaching of the soothsayers, envy is stronger than poison. And the eye of the envier is deadlier than a poisoned arrow, the blow of a sword, or the thrust of a dagger. It's deadlier than any weapon.<sup>304</sup>

Gary R. Varner, the author of *The History and Use of Amulets, Charms, and Talismans* explains the evil eye (an envious person's glance) and its effects as follows:

Casting the evil eye is when someone who is filled with envy infects by a glance or by words of praise someone of tender age, someone born recently, and changes what is perfect into something which is worse: like the Devil who envied Man and by his jealousy and opened the door for death to enter the world...Children and fine livestock were often the victims of evil eye. Cows would experience a loss of milk and a frantic wildness which always resulted in collapse. Horses afflicted by the evil eye would sweat and tremble and grow weaker daily.<sup>305</sup>

Stephan Leder, H. Kilpatrick, B. Martel- Thoumain, H. Schoing, the authors of *Studies in Arabic and Islam* claim that Tuareg resort to spiritual and supernatural powers to protect themselves against, danger, demons or evil eye. They recite some Suras from the Qura'n such as *the basmala* and other Qur'anic verses. They believe that "it is good to insert scraps of paper with Qura'nic verses in gazelle's skin; they recite the *Verse of the Throne* – preferably backward – and in their witchcraft, they combine pagan and Muslim forms with practices of their own."<sup>306</sup> When Ukhayyad has been on the run and

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<sup>304</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 36-37.

<sup>305</sup> -Gary R. Varner, *The History and Use of Amulets, Charms and Talismans*, Morrisville, North Carolina: Lulu Press Inc., 2008, 11-13

<sup>306</sup> - Stephan Leder, H. Kilpatrick, B. Martel- Thoumain, H. Schoing, *Studies in Arabic and Islam*, Leuven, Paris Sterling, VA: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2002, 238.

afraid to be caught by the bounty seekers for killing Dudu, he says farewell to his piebald, prays that he would meet the piebald soon but “forgot to seal his plea with the *Throne Verse*, or any Sura of the Qura’n for that matter.”<sup>307</sup>

Ukhayyad is sure his rare and graceful Mahri has been cast by an evil eye because he believes that his Mahri is the envy of all tribes in the desert. After seeing Ukhayyad’s piebald, the Sheikh of a neighboring tribe praises the Mahri saying that the line of this piebald became extinct throughout the desert a hundred years ago. Therefore, he feels it is their responsibility as desert inhabitants to save this rare species and preserve it from extinction. Consequently he:

orders that the she-camels be brought before the Mahri. That day, Ukhayyad witnessed for the first time how males impregnate females. They led a white she-camel and forced her to her knees on the open ground. They hobbled her fore and hind legs. Then they led rutting piebald to her and gathered around them. The camel kneeled down on top of her until it seemed to Ukhayyad that the poor she-camel’s ribs would break. She frothed and squealed and vomited frothing spit. When her tail blocked him from entering, one of the men wrenched it out of the way.”<sup>308</sup>

Moreover, the Mahri represents the line of the Tuareg people themselves is about to be extinct and need international protection before it is too late.

In the above quotation, it is noted that al-Koni gives us a wonderful picture of what the Tuareg do in order to preserve rare animals for fear of extinction, and also show us how camels mate, and what the people do to help the camel perform the mating properly.

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<sup>307</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 153.

<sup>308</sup> - *Gold Dust* 16.

Using the magical realism mode of narrative, al-Koni cites other examples of man- animal extraordinary relation in the scene of the mad journey Ukhayyad and the thoroughbred Mahri shared together. After their horrible journey in the desert, their two bodies are bleeding and their skins are torn off.

Okhayyad:

stretched out over the camel's back, gluing himself to the wet flesh. The red flesh was sticky to his touch, the blood not yet dry. Ukhayyad's body, now also naked, fused with the viscous flesh of the Mahri. Flesh met flesh, blood mixed with blood. In the past, they had been merely friends. Today, they had been joined by a much stronger tie. Those who become brothers by sharing blood are closer than those who share parentage. A mother might give birth to two boys without their ever becoming brothers. As long as their blood does not mingle, they can never share this deeper bond. Becoming someone's brother is easier said than done.<sup>309</sup>

Ukhayyad says that they are brothers by blood now and should not be apart from each other. The hardship they have shared united them together and have become one entity. Man and animal are both threatened in the desert.

Al-Koni tells us that in Tuareg myths, animals and humans are one and establishing a single entity. Amira El-Zein maintains that animals and humans “speak the same language that Anubi calls ‘the forgotten language,’ a language he remembers after drinking the gazelle's urine.”<sup>310</sup> It must be admitted that that al-Koni sometimes repeats himself in his novels. Here we notice that he repeats the incident of drinking the animal's urine in his novel *Anubi* is repeated in *Gold Dust*. The only difference is in the first it is gazzele's urine but in *Gold Dust*, it is camel's urine.

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<sup>309</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 47

<sup>310</sup> - Amira El-Zein.



Al-Koni stresses the importance of water implying that nobody can live without it for more than a few days. Man may do anything to have a drop of water in order to stay alive in times of extreme thirst. McHugh points out that in al-Koni's novel *Anubis* the protagonist says that "Water is blood that has lost its true colour"<sup>311</sup>, and in *Gold Dust* al-Koni, defines thirst as 'the worst enemy one can have in the Great Sahara, and explains that water as 'the most potent source of protection in the desert'. McHugh adds that al-Koni's draws an impressive picture of how people and animals live in the desert; they depend on each other. Moreover, McHugh observes that "at particularly grim moments, for instance, when characters lost in the desert resort to drinking animal urine – worst of all, camel pee, a 'thick, salty, and syrupy' liquid – they are not presented as debased but rather as enlightened."<sup>312</sup>

In a terrifying situation, having been dragged over rocks and cliffs in the arid desert, thirsty, dehydrated to the point of being on the edge of death, Ukhayyad licks the urine that is trickling down the thigh of his camel- a camel that is his friend and companion for so many years. Ukhayyad and his piebald get lost in the wide and open desert as a result of Ukhayyad's insistence to find the magical herb to cure his camel of his fatal skin disease.

Having eaten from the magical herb, the Mahri falls on his front knees, then shakes and shudders again. Obviously, the pain in the camel's belly is intolerable, becomes restless and cannot not remain in any position or in one place. The camel gets mad, runs in a frantic speed and heads toward the mountains. In a terrible state between life and death, Ukhayyad with difficulty

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<sup>311</sup> - *Anubi*, 180.

<sup>312</sup> - Susan McHugh.

ties his right hand to the tail of the furious camel for fear of losing him. After the camel calms down, Ukhayyad gets on its back and talks to him as if it were a human being. Ukhayyad on the verge of death because of thirst asks the camel to save his life and lead him to the nearest well:

All my water is spelled out during our Journey. Now you must save me. We will head for the nearest well in the lower valleys. Do not attempt to carry me to the oases. I'll die before we get very far along the road. There's not a single drop of water in me, I can't store water like you. Do you understand? You do not want to lose your old friend, your new brother.<sup>313</sup>

Al-Koni, in *Gold Dust*, uses magical realism in a lot of incidents, but the scene in which the piebald leads Ukhayyad to a well when he is on the verge of death because of thirst and dehydration is perhaps one of al-Koni's finest examples of magical realism. When Ukhayyad finds no pail on the mouth of the well, he has no other way but to tie one of his ankles to the camel's tail using the leather reins, dangles himself into the well. He "wanted to tell him [the piebald] what to do as he plunged into the abyss. The piebald lavished the young man with attention, covering him with his lips and licking his face... Man and camel spoke to one another, as brothers by way of gesture."<sup>314</sup> When Ukhayyad has satisfied his thirst from the water of the well, "The piebald had carried out his unspoken command- he had pulled him out of the freshwater sea."<sup>315</sup>

The above scene illustrates the Tuareg's belief in the inseparability of the human and animal and the strong connection and trust between the two species. Tuareg believe that if any harm touches one species, the other will be harmed as

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<sup>313</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 47.

<sup>314</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 50.

<sup>315</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 51.

well. Al-Koni begins his novel with an extract from the Bible to illustrate his people's connection with their animals:

*For that which the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befallth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. (Ecclesiastes 3:19-20)*

Ukhayyad even goes further in his belief in the equality between man and animal when he trusts Sheikh Musa, the Sufi who says that animals are loftier and more reliable, trustworthy than humans and make the best friends. Ukhayyad does not trust humans as much as he trusts and love animals, and is suspicious of the real intentions of humans, especially strangers. According to Susan McHugh, al-Koni, in depicting the dangerous journey of Ukhayyad and his Mahri clearly points to the fact that the life of the Tuareg, their animals and culture are threatened, and have little chance for survival in their desert homeland.<sup>316</sup>

When the Mahri was in great pain after eating the magical herb called Silphium which grows nowhere since the fall of Rome but in the desolate field of Maimoun in the Hamada al-Hamra, Ukhayyad implores God to ease his Mahri's sufferings. Raises his both hands to the sky and flood of tears fall from his eyes, he implores, "Lord, divide his share of pain. Let me be the one to lighten his burden. He has already suffered much... Take away some of his pain and place it on my shoulders."<sup>317</sup>

Professor Gail Ramsay, in her article "*Breaking the Silence of Nature in an Arabic Novel: Nazīf al-ḥajar by Ibrāhīm al-Kawnī*" argues that al-Koni brings

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<sup>316</sup> - Susan McHugh,

<sup>317</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 36.

to light up to date serious subjects of our age such as the intimate and strong, “fraternal bond between all living creatures on the face of the earth and prohibiting, even criminalizing the brutal destruction to which nature is exposed and the sanctity of life.”<sup>318</sup>

Although Islam is the basic religion of the Tuareg, it is noticed in *Gold Dust*, al-Koni is keen to highlight that the Tuareg sometimes mix between their ancient Law and conventions and the Islamic Law ( *Shariat*) in certain instances. Al-Koni illustrates this in the incident when Ukhayyad kills Dudu. According to ancient rites and customs, Tuareg postpone dividing the inheritance of the murdered person till he or she is avenged. The money and the precious belongings of the murdered cannot be touched or divided among the members of the family and his kin till the murderer is caught and punished for his crime. After killing Dudu, Ukhayyad is chased and killed by some professional bounty hunters who claim to be Dudu’s kinfolks but in reality, they seek their share of his inheritance.

Initially, they were men who claimed to be his kin to inherit some of the wealth Dudu left behind. The man’s unavenged blood now stood between them and their fortune, for it was custom in the desert to insist that a murdered man be avenged before his inheritance was divided. Thus, they began to seek Ukhayyad in earnest, not out of love for Dudu, but in order to carve up the spoils as quickly as possible.<sup>319</sup>

Amira El-Zein, the author of, “*Mythological Tuareg Gods in Ibrahim al-Koni’s Work*” contends that al-Koni emphasises the idea that despite the fact of embracing Islam for more than a thousand years, and immensely influenced by

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<sup>318</sup> - Gail Ramsay, in his article “*Breaking the Silence of Nature in an Arabic Novel: Nazīf al-ḥajar by Ibrāhīm al-Kawnī*”

<sup>319</sup> - Ibrahim al-Koni, *Gold Dust*, translated by Elliot Colla. New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2008, 148.

the Arabic language, but they “have continued to maintain their old beliefs, and endeavour to keep these traditions alive, fighting against the tendency among Muslim Arabs to look down on this heritage as “pagan” or *jahili* (ignorant).”<sup>320</sup>

Al-Koni in *Gold Dust* cites some events in which Tuareg violate their Islamic faith. In chapter six of the novel, al-Koni says that many of the Tuareg people visit the shrine of a Saharan god deep in the southern part of the Libyan desert when they want to cure one of their sick people, believing that the buried person in the shrine is a saint who has miraculous curing powers. Tuareg visit the shrine of this Saharan god and sacrifice animals to him. They spill the blood of their offerings before the shrine in the hope that their sick people be cured. In *Gold Dust* Okhayyad:

prostrated himself, raised his hands and cried, “O lord of the desert, god of the ancients! I promise to offer up to you one fat camel of sound body and mind. Cure my piebald of his malignant disease and protect him from the madness of Silphium! *You are the all- hearing, the all- knowing.* Then he poured dust from the shrine all over the Mahri’s half- consumed body, then lay down and slept.”<sup>321</sup>

Ukhayyad acts in accordance to ancient Tuareg beliefs when he takes a handful of dust from the shrine and sprays it over the body of his sick piebald and vows to offer a sacrifice if the Saharan god cures his piebald. Moreover, he articulates some Pagan supplications such as ‘lord of the desert’ and ‘god of the ancients, then recites some Qura’nic expressions like ‘the *all-knowing* and ‘the *all-hearing*’.

Everyone in the tribe knows that Ukhayyad’s father is an abiding Muslim, but women come first place in his life. He argues that even to the Prophet

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<sup>320</sup> - Amira El-Zein, “*Mythological Tuareg Gods in Ibrahim al-Koni’s Work*”

<sup>321</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 30.

women come first place, and always supports his statement by repeating one of the Prophet's sayings (*hadith*), '*The three dearest things to me in your world are: women, perfume, and most of all-prayer*'. Ukhayyad here amalgamates between Islam and Paganism in his supplications.

It is worth noting that in the majority of his novels, al-Koni refers to Sufism, a "mystical Islamic belief and practice in which Muslims seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through the direct personal experience of God."<sup>322</sup> Sufism plays an important role in the lives of Tuareg people. *Gold Dust*, as well as *The Bleeding of the Stone*, inform us about some Sufi sects, their concepts, notions and the relation between man and his creator. Al-Koni introduces us to two of Sufi sects ( Tijaniya and Qadiria) in this novel through Sheikh Musa, one of the novel's characters. Sheikh Musa teaches Ukhayyad a lot about the secrets of life and death according to the concepts of Sufism. Sheikh Musa teaches Ukhayyad to be patient all the time and not surrender easily when facing difficulties or fatal situations exactly as what Asouf's father does in *The Bleeding of the Stone*. Asouf's father teaches his son that the secret of the desert is patience. Likewise, Sheikh Musa tells Ukhayyad to be patient and never panic. Sheikh Musa says that 'death is closer than one's jugular vein and still remoter than the ends of the earth.' These are foreshadowing to what is going to happen to Asouf. He remembers these lessons when he was about to let go his hand of the cliff and fall in the pit, But he remembers the lessons of Sheikh Musa and his father about patience help him a lot. Moreover, Sheikh Musa advises Ukhayyad never to regret what he has done toward his Mahri

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<sup>322</sup> - <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sufism>

because “a beautiful thing can be bought only at a great price. And health is the most beautiful thing in the world. So have no regrets about what you have been through.”<sup>323</sup> Al-Koni, here, is sending a covered message to his people to be patient and face their predicaments courageously.

Furthermore, al-Koni introduces us to the differences between Tijaniya and Qadiriya Sufi sects. Tijaniya is the sect that is named after its founder, Sheikh Ahmad al-Tijani (1737-1815 A.D). Tijaniya is an important Sufi sect in Africa, particularly in Libya. Qadiriya Sufi sect is named after Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani (d. 1166 A.D). Sheikh Musa says that he has witnessed dervishes of Tijaniya brotherhood in Adrar oasis in a state of ecstasy, and have acted strangely. They spin widely, and when one of them is in ecstasy, he draws out a knife and thrusts it into his chest in the hope to enjoy having a chance of meeting God<sup>324</sup>. Sheikh Musa, who is from the Qadiriya sect regards the Tijanis followers as heretics. The two sects are not in good terms with each other and differ in their understanding and practices of the Islamic faith. Sheikh Musa picks a fight with them whenever he meets anyone of that sect. Al-Koni points out that “War broke out from time to time between the adherents of the two sects. The hostilities had even reached far into the desert wilderness itself, carried to the distant pastures by wandering dervishes and itinerant travellers who accompanied the long–distance caravans.”<sup>325</sup>

In *Gold Dust*, al-Koni uses Sheikh Musa as a backdrop to introduce us to some of Tuareg’s strange customs. Sheikh Musa tells Ukhayyad that his camel needs to be castrated if he wants perfection for his camel. The camel has to pay

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<sup>323</sup> - *Gold Dust* , 55.

<sup>324</sup> - *Gold Dust* 54-55.

<sup>325</sup> - *Gold Dust*,55.

for his sins and that it and has to be cleansed. Although the camel's new skin has toughened after its fatal disease, and the wounds have healed, but Sheikh Musa tells Ukhayyad that the camel's body is still carrying sin in it, therefore he needs to be purified. He has to remove the cause of this sin first of all. Ukhayyad is reluctant to do this and explains that he cannot come to this decision by himself, but needs to take the consent and approval of his camel first.

Ibrahim al-Koni intertwines the lives of man and animal together in a unique style. In a dialogue between Ukhayyad and his Mahri, in which Ukayyad tries to convince him that castration is necessary for this critical situation, therefore, it has to be performed. He tells his camel that, "Sheikh Musa says, the root cause must be removed. Splendour is no easy thing to attain, everything demands its own sacrifice. You won't be in pain for long."<sup>326</sup> When the camel showed signs of refusal, Ukhayyad suggests that he should not rush into decisions that he would regret later. "Without purification, you will never attain beauty and never meet God. I admit it is a nasty business, but we have no other choice."<sup>327</sup> Here Al-Koni aligns with Fanon who believes that the root of all evil comes from strangers who must be totally cleansed. The dermatological illness of the camel was due to his mixture with strange she-camels, and the result was disastrous. He, therefore, must avoid mixing with them, exactly as what Fanon advises the colonised to avoid the colonisers, boycott their language and never use it.

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<sup>326</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 57.

<sup>327</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 59.



Magical realism provides al-Koni with the means to introduce non-logical and non-scientific accounts of things such as having an intelligent dialogue with his Mahri and talking about the strange customs of his people like the castration operation.

Al-Koni has shown us how camels mate, now he mirrors another custom of the Tuareg's nomadic culture and ancestral beliefs. He impressively depicts how the castration of the piebald is performed. On the morning of the operation day, the people of the tribe gather around the targeted animal, some of them spend most of the time struggling with the animal attempting to remove the camel's testicles, the root of sin. In addition to the castration, it is the custom of the Tuareg that the camel must swallow his testicles to be completely purified, therefore, they spend most of the afternoon forcing the camel to swallow them.

Professor Wendy B. Faris, the author of *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Demystification of Narrative*, contends that "one of magical realism's paradoxical projects is how to be grounded in history but not crushed by it."<sup>328</sup> It is worth highlighting that in *Gold Dust* Ibrahim al-Koni, through his narrative attempts to bring back Tuareg's neglected, ancient, traditions and unwritten civilisation by referring to these customs and also to the paintings and images engraved in the walls of Tassili caves deep in the Libyan desert.

Al-Koni uses the scene of the cave at the top of one of the mountains as a hiding place for Ukhayyad to escape from the bounty hunters who are chasing him, simply as a backdrop to reveal that the Tuareg have an ancient civilisation that dates back to almost ten thousand years.

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<sup>328</sup> - Faris, Wendy B. *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Demystification of Narrative*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004, 59.

Ukhayyad hides in the cave, shuts the entrance from within with rocks, and “squeezes his body into his new jail... and sleeps sitting— knees bent to the chest.”<sup>329</sup> The next morning Ukhayyad observes that the walls of the cave are covered with various colourful paintings of the ancients. One of the drawings is of a group of hunters holding spears, others holding bows. The hunters are chasing a *waddan* with large horns, the animal tries in vain to escape heads toward a distant mountain. It is obvious from the drawing that the *waddan* is exhausted, and that there is little hope for him to escape, a foreshadowing for the Ukhayyad’s failure to flee from his bounty hunters and is doomed to be killed. Man and animal always share the same fate in al-Koni’s novels.

The bounty hunters succeed in smoking Ukhayyad out of his hiding place by “burning, cutting, and torturing his beloved Mahri, but not before a *waddan* gives him his chance to escape and save himself.”<sup>330</sup> At first, Ukhayyad escapes the bounty hunters because a huge *waddan* ram has erased all Ukhayyad’s tracks in front of the cave where he is hiding and has left his droppings instead. The huge *waddan* sacrifices himself for Ukhayyad’s sake. Ukhayyad believes that God has sent this *waddan*, but unfortunately is killed by the bounty hunters.

As a postcolonial writer, al-Koni has written *The Bleeding of the Stone*, *The Seven Veils of Seth*, and *Gold Dust* his novels as both political and literary novels that link the lives of the Tuareg with the lives of animals and the environment they live in. For instance, in *Gold Dust* we find several incidents, al-Koni refers to the role played by the Tuareg in resisting the French and

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<sup>329</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 153.

<sup>330</sup> - Susan McHugh.

Italian invasion of the desert. He utilises the scene of Ukhayyad's romantic adventures with the girl in the neighbouring tribe to allude to the part played by the Tuareg in resisting the foreign invaders and driving them out of their homeland. When Ukhayyad is caught trespassing the neighbouring tribe's territory flirting with one of their girls, the Sheikh of that tribe wants to smooth things over, says he is pleased to receive the son of the Sheikh of Amanghsatin in their parts. He explains that Ukhayyad's father, "earned the honour of having stopped the foreign attackers and halting their intrusion into the desert."<sup>331</sup>

In this scene, al-Koni refers to the French and Italian invasion of the Libyan desert and to the resistance of the Tuareg tribes who have succeeded in keeping the invaders away. The Tuareg have never been in good terms with foreigners, and are always suspicious and at war with them. This is clearly alluded in the herder's ( Dudu's servant) advice to Ukhayyad who tells him never to trust foreigners, and that he should always treat them as enemies. Unfortunately, Ukhayyad learns this lesson too late. In a soliloquy we see that he regrets trusting a foreigner ( Dudu) and pawns his camel to him. In a soliloquy, Ukhayyad says: "However much you think about the souls of foreigners, however smart you are, however many times you revise your interpretations, there are always more secrets to be found in them. It does not matter how clever or brilliant you are –the weapons of foreigners are always more lethal than your own."<sup>332</sup>

In *Gold Dust*, man and animal understand and talk to each other by the gesture. The thoroughbred piebald almost has human features, and sometimes is

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<sup>331</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 14.

<sup>332</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 118.

thought to be loftier than a human. The *waddan* sacrifices himself for the sake of Ukhayyad that he believes that he is a divine messenger sent by God. Al-Koni likens the Tuareg's situation in the desert to that of Ukhayyad, the piebald and the innocent *waddan*, when Ukhayyad enquires: "Why did the innocent always fall at the hands of the most malevolent creature? My God- why do such people kill every messenger that is sent to them?"<sup>333</sup>

When reading any of Al-Koni's novels, the reader feels that he or she is not reading a fairy tale, but a magical realist novel that bears the stamp of al-Koni who is quite different from all other magical realists.

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<sup>333</sup> - Gold Dust, 158.

## Conclusion

This thesis has employed magical realism and postcolonial theories which al-Koni has used as vehicles to restore the cultural identity of the subaltern Tuareg in the North African Desert and to portray their threatened existence and how they are represented in the said space. The study focuses on three novels of the Libyan Tuareg writer Ibrahim al-Koni, namely *The Bleeding of the Stone*, *The Seven Veils of Seth*, and *Gold Dust* and investigates his real reasons and intentions behind his choice of this mode of writing in his novels.

The dissertation stresses the importance of this literary technique for postcolonial writers in the countries which had first-hand experience with colonialism like al-Koni, who through his narrative subverts the Eurocentric writing conventions and the traditional interpretation of reality. He tries through this mode of writing to convey his people's voice to the whole world. In other words, he uses it as a writing back from the periphery because he sees it as the most suitable, powerful and effective means to oppose and resist the culture, way of life and the domination colonial powers. Al-Koni uses it to give a true and authentic picture of the desert and the nomadic Tuareg people and how they are negatively represented in Western mainstream discourse.

The viewpoint of the study is based on the hypothesis that the author of the above-mentioned works has used magical realism as a postcolonial mode of resistance to expose the negative representation of the Tuareg people in a space which he believes is originally theirs and to show that they are victimised and

treated as inferior others. The Tuareg according to him, are not groups of tribes but an ancient nation that has its civilisation, has ancient history, and therefore, should be treated accordingly.

The study proves that through using this technique he is trying to achieve the Tuareg's aspirations of gaining international recognition of their linguistic and cultural particularity and to be re-located from the margin to the centre and make their voice heard. Through this mode, he tries to challenge and subvert the domineering Eurocentric narrative discourse which gives a false picture of the non-European and non-western societies. It allows him to express different approaches to reality other than the Western outlook to it.

The study shows that al-Koni is classified as a rebel whose main aim is resisting the colonials and restoring the threatened Tuareg's cultural heritage, their lost self-confidence and identity. It also proves that *The Bleeding of the Stone*, *The Seven Veils of Seth*, and *Gold Dust* are postcolonial, political and literary novels that link the lives of the Tuareg with the lives of animals and the environment they live in. The lives of man and animal in the desert is tragic, and always insinuates that the harm that affect any one of them will certainly affect the other.

In *Gold Dust* we find several incidents, al-Koni refers to the role played by the Tuareg in resisting the French and Italian invasion of the desert. He utilises the scene of Ukhayyad's romantic adventures with the girl in the neighbouring tribe to allude to the part played by the Tuareg in resisting the foreign invaders and driving them out of their homeland. When Ukhayyad is caught trespassing the neighbouring tribe's territory flirting with one of their girls, the Sheikh of

that tribe wants to smooth things over, says he is pleased to receive the son of the Sheikh of Amanghsatin ( Asouf's father) in their parts. He explains that Ukhayyad's father, "earned the honour of having stopped the foreign attackers and halting their intrusion into the desert."<sup>334</sup> In *The Bleeding of the Stone* al-Koni shows that foreigners disturbed everything in the desert. Even animals. With the arrival of Cain and Masoud to the desert even the animals became restless, "Satan entered the goats", who took evident pleasure in butting" each other. Foreigners who came recently to the desert are likened to Satan.

Al-Koni adopts the post-colonial and magical realism mode in order to be able to portray the victimized Tuareg, their past traditions, legends customs, laws, and mythologies, which he believes as the best way of combating colonialism and acquainting the world with the Tuareg's cause.

Moreover, this thesis proves that al-Koni, in his oeuvre always, directly or indirectly, asserts that the Tuareg are historically the aboriginal inhabitants of the North African Sahara and affirms that they have been living there for more than ten thousand years. He, therefore, portrays the desert, the historical paintings on the rocks and in the walls of the caves in Tassili mountains, trying to prove that the Tuareg are an ancient nation that has its own heritage, history, civilisation, which influenced the ancient neighbouring Egyptian civilisation. He tries to send a message saying that although they are the aboriginal inhabitants of the land, are unfairly marginalised, denigrated and treated as inferior tribes both by most of the Arabs and the international community as well.

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<sup>334</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 14.

This study clearly demonstrates the Tuareg's struggle for survival in order to peacefully gain international recognition of their presence and to preserve their culture, and beliefs. In an interview, al-Koni says that his people are victims of the international community and that they should have the right of forming a state of their own like what happened to suppressed minorities in Kosovo, Bosnia, and South Sudan. In Libya, where the Tuareg live, there is one recognised language, Arabic, and Islam is the sole religion of the country. For al-Koni, this is a kind of suppression and denial of the Tuareg's language, myths, cultural heritage and identity which he feels that it is his duty to unmask and to resist and subvert the Western mainstream discourse in his fiction.

Al-Koni makes use of the magical realism mode of writing because he knows that through it he can concentrate more on legends, myths, the mysterious, and the defamiliarization, magic, metafiction, and metamorphosis among other things. In the three novels that have been analysed, we find that the mythical and historical elements along with the magical are amalgamated to give a real picture of the desert. He portrays the sufferings of the Tuareg people who live in the desert which stretches from the southern part of Libya, southern Algeria to northern Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. In addition to the above, he stresses the importance of historical places and feels that it is his duty to document them in writing because he knows that they are threatened and need international protection.

The study stresses the importance of Postcolonial Literature and rejects the idea which some literary critics claim that Postcolonial Literature will lose its value with time because it initiated as a response and revolt against colonialism.



They argue that its importance and value will end with the departure of the colonisers from the colonised countries and the declaration of independence. The study confirms that their idea has been proved wrong because the social, political, cultural, and economic impacts of colonialism still exist and act in many shapes and forms up to the present day even after gaining independence. To prove this, the study has shown that al-Koni's postcolonial novels and are considered as a kind of writing back against the domineering, biased Western mainstream discourse, and their racial practices in the colonised countries. The above three novels by al-Koni are excellent examples of that.

Additionally, the thesis shows that al-Koni was influenced by the postcolonial theories of the most prominent scholars in the field of Postcolonialism like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Frantz Fanon, Spivak, Bill Ashcroft, Gayatri Spivak and shows that he agrees with them in certain points and differs with them in others. Some, like Frantz Fanon advocate violence against the colonisers, others like Bhabha is against the use of violence. But all of them agree in unmasking the Western discourse and expose its imperial ways, and real purposes which according to their theories, serve in the continuation of the European and the domination of Western countries and their control over the ex-occupied countries. The influence of the above-mentioned post-colonial theorists could clearly be seen in al-Koni's novels in which he revolts against the conventions of the Eurocentric discourse, and challenges its foundations.

Moreover, the study has found out that al-Koni revolts against the Western belief that the basis of the novel is the city where relationships and events take

place. Al-Koni succeeds in subverting this concept of the novel saying that man is the most important element in the novel. He proves his theory by writing more than forty novels making the desert as his setting, not the city. His novels revolve around the desert and the inner life of the marginalised Tuareg minority in Libya the North African desert.

In the three novels under study we have reached to the conclusion that he revolts against the domination of the insider and outsider invaders of the desert, and struggles to expose their ways of marginalising the Tuareg, forcing them to abandon their native language and culture in an attempt that they assimilate in a different culture which is not theirs. The Tuareg and the desert are the basis and cornerstone in which all the incidents of his novels revolve around.

Among other things, the study has shown that one of the reasons for al-Koni's choice the magical realism mode of writing is his own safety reasons. He knows that it is risky to write and criticise the real situation of socially, culturally marginalised and excluded Tuareg in plain prose, he, therefore feels obliged to use this technique and write from exile. Those who criticise or oppose in most of the Arab countries are either imprisoned, killed, kidnapped, chased or hunted throughout their lives. Al-Koni refers to this in his novels. For instance, his characters have gone through shocking experiences and suffered extreme violence for opposing and rejecting strangers. Ukhyad the protagonist of *Gold Dust* has been tracked and killed by the non-native bounty hunters who come from an unknown place. Asouf the hero of *The Bleeding of the Stone* is brutally killed by Cain the Arab foundling, and gazelle and *waddan* hunter. In order not face the same destiny of Ukhayyad, Asouf, and the Fool, al-

Koni has chosen to write from Switzerland the country of his exile and uses the magical realism technique through which he can challenge, and resist the insider and outsider invaders and be safe.

Al-Koni's novels are told from an insider's point of view, and this made his readers see things as they really are. In his novels, al-Koni discusses taboo subjects. He has resorted to fiction in order to distance himself and appear less involved, while at the same time be able to criticise and write freely about the drastic conditions of the Tuareg by making the heroes of his novels speak for him and thus could express all that is in his mind without exposing his life to danger. Unlike those theorists who argue for the possibility of assimilation and equality, al-Koni is against assimilation in the coloniser's culture. He shows this in the Tuareg's complete rejection of the foreigner's culture and way of life. Asouf who represents the Tuareg race and the protagonist of *The Bleeding of the Stone* is known as the one who "is happier living in an empty desert than being with other people"<sup>335</sup> as Herodotus says that:

In Southern Libya, on the heights of Nasamouniyyin, the Gramants [ a group of Libyan tribes] live in a place rich with beasts. They are a people who shun others, fearing to speak with them. They use no weapons at all and have no knowledge of how to defend themselves.<sup>336</sup>

Al-Koni quotes Herodotus in order to prove that the Tuareg have been in this part of the world for thousands of years and that no other race shares them in it. Asouf, throughout the novel is described as a peaceful person who detaches himself from other people as in Herodotus' words ( shun others). Al-Koni believes that Asouf and his father are descendants of the tribe Herodotus

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<sup>335</sup> -*The Bleeding of the Stone*, 12

<sup>336</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 27.

is talking about in his description the southern Libyan tribe who live in a region that abounds with animals. These people do not have weapons and do not know how to defend themselves. Furthermore, they do not mix with other ethnicities. When Asouf asks his father for the reasons of living detached from other people and shunning others, the father's answer was that, "Anyone choosing the good has to flee from people, to make sure no evil comes to him"<sup>337</sup> Moreover, he tells his son that he cannot live or mix with other ethnicities, because his grandfather taught him this way and that's "what I must teach you."<sup>338</sup> For this reason Asouf and his father reject the social communications of strangers and townspeople because they are certain that they are the cause and basis of evil and prefer to live in seclusion, detached from them in and thus they would live alone in the desert in peace and tranquillity.

One of the findings of this study is al-Koni's continual use of the elements of violence and death in most of his novels. He uses them to send a message to the international community emphasising and exposing the brutality and horrible crimes committed by foreigners toward the Tuareg people. He hints that the Tuareg are not safe even when they have tried to shun people and live alone in the desert away from the urban and modern cities with their legendary animals in order to preserve their lives and nomadic ancient culture, foreigners have come there, and started to disturb their peace and harmony. In his novels, al-Koni illustrates the strangers' crimes and brutality in heart-stopping and violent scenes in which he tries to draw the attention of the international community to the real and true situation of the Tuareg people along with their

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<sup>337</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 4.

<sup>338</sup> - *The Bleeding of the Stone*. 21.

animals are threatened with extinction at the hands of the occupiers. In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, Asouf is brutally killed and his head is chopped off in a merciless way by the stranger Cain for *waddan*'s and gazelle's meat. In *Gold Dust* Ukhyyad is killed and his thoroughbred camel heartlessly tortured by Dudu's kin who come from a different part of the land for gold dust. As with *The Seven Veils of Seth*, the Stranger Isan/Seth comes to a peaceful oasis, causes a lot of chaos and disturbs its people. He contaminates the water of the oasis with a mysterious powder that infects the inhabitants and results in numerous cases of miscarriage among pregnant women in addition to the death of a number of people. The arrival of the mysterious stranger Isan to the oasis arises the curiosity of the oasis dwellers when he challenges and ridicules their traditions and customs by stripping himself from his clothes and veil in the presence of some of the oasis' women.

Moreover, al-Koni, through using magical realism in his fiction has made us see and understand that the desert's flora and fauna, and its people, are threatened of extinction. He clearly illustrates this in *The Bleeding of the Stone* when Cain brags that he is the one who has wiped out the gazelles and now is turning to wipe out the legendary and sacred *waddan* as well with the help of the equipment and weapons supplied by the American John Parker.

In *Gold Dust*, *The Bleeding of the Stone* and *The Seven Veils of Seth*, al-Koni alludes that the Tuareg have never been in good terms with foreigners, and are always suspicious and at war with them. This is clearly indicated in the herder's ( Dudu's servant) advice to Ukhayyad when he tells him never to trust foreigners, and that he should always treat them as enemies. In *The Bleeding of*

*the Stone*, the author shows that the desert is violated and intruded upon by the foreign new-comers, Cain, Parker, Masoud, and Captain Bordello who, according to al-Koni represent, and embody colonial powers. Al-Koni tells us that this intrusion has begun with the arrival of the companies searching for oil and underground wealth. The death and violence experienced by man-and animal in the desert help in creating a kind of international sympathy with the Tuareg people and contribute to conveying to the world that the Tuareg's nomadic culture is threatened as well.

One of the study findings is that al-Koni is worried that Tuareg's culture and traditions might one day be absorbed and dissolve into the Arabic culture and traditions. He feels that it is the duty of the Tuareg elites, whom he considers himself one of them, to defend their heritage, moral values and records all these in writing. In his fiction, al-Koni is trying to revive and Tuareg cultural heritage because he, like Fanon, knows that the main objectives of the coloniser is stripping the colonised of their identity.

Al-Koni as a Tuareg writer is committed to his people and through his fiction is playing a significant part to free his people of getting rid of the coloniser and instigate them to preserve their cultural heritage and identity. He believes the best way to save his people's Tuareg identity is to distance themselves and castoff any foreign culture and stick to their own ancient traditions, values, and customs and reject the outsider's culture. Al-Koni stresses the importance of keeping, and preserving the Tuareg's heritage, culture, and identity, and insists on talking about them almost in every page of his novels. He does not want his people nor their culture to assimilate in the

predominantly Arab and Islamic culture. It must be noted that though the Tuareg are Sunni Muslims but still mix their Islamic beliefs with their Pagan beliefs. This is illustrated in *The Bleeding of the Stone* when saying his prayers, Asouf does not face Ka'aba( Mecca) and in place of that he directs his prayer and prostrates toward a huge pagan rock image. Almost the same thing takes place in chapter six of *Gold Dust* the. Al-Koni says that many of the Tuareg people visit the shrine of a Saharan god deep in the southern part of the Libyan desert when they want to cure one of their sick people, believing that the buried person in the shrine is a saint who has miraculous curing powers. Tuareg visit the shrine of this Saharan god and sacrifice animals to him. They spill the blood of their offerings before the shrine in the hope that their sick people be cured. In *Gold Dust* Okhayyad:

prostrated himself, raised his hands and cried, "O lord of the desert, god of the ancients! I promise to offer up to you one fat camel of sound body and mind. Cure my piebald of his malignant disease and protect him from the madness of Silphium! *You are the all- hearing, the all- knowing.* Then he poured dust from the shrine all over the Mahri's half- consumed body, then lay down and slept."<sup>339</sup>

It is observed that there is an emphasis on animal-human comparisons and metamorphoses. Critics suggest that al-Koni is different and unique in his use and employment of magical realism. He uses Sufism, and religion concentrates on the desert and makes it the setting of all his novels. Moreover, Al-Koni quotes verses from the Holy Qur'an, the Bible, Herodotus, Ovid, Ibn Arabi, Sophocles, and other sources and uses them as epigraphs or beginnings to his chapters.

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<sup>339</sup> - *Gold Dust*, 30.

Ukhayyad acts in accordance to ancient Tuareg beliefs when he takes a handful of dust from the shrine and sprays it over the body of his sick piebald and vows to offer a sacrifice if the Saharan god cures his piebald. Moreover, he articulates some ancient Tuareg supplications such as ‘lord of the desert’ and ‘god of the ancients, then recites some Qura’nic expressions like ‘the *all-knowing* and ‘*the all-hearing*’.

In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, *Gold Dust*, and *The Seven Veils of Seth* we notice that al-Koni shows the reasons that the Tuareg shun races and prefer to keep themselves to themselves.

In *The Bleeding of the Stone* al-Koni uses magical realism as a kind of resistance and blends the magical ( the metamorphosis) with the real ( the concentration camps) in order to refer to the dreadful genocide committed against the Libyans as a kind of punishment and to get rid of those who oppose the coloniser. This is illustrated when the scene when the Italians arrest Asouf and in order to enlist him in the Italian army but Asouf metamorphoses and takes the shape of a *waddan*, escapes and disappears in the mountains. This scene shows Asouf’s refusal to join the occupier’s army and prefers to take the shape of an animal rather than live in captivity under the rule of the occupier, assimilate and accept the occupation as a *Quo Vadis* .

The study shows al-Koni uses a number of magical realism incidents where he mixes the real with the magic in a splendid way such as in the incident of the metamorphosis of Asouf into a *waddan* in *The Bleeding of the Stone* which is regarded as a substantial proof of the successful act of peaceful resistance brought about through supernatural powers. In this magical realism has been



employed to express his dissatisfaction with the political, social, and cultural status of the Tuareg during the occupation and after gaining independence.

In the three novels under discussion, we notice that there is a recurrent tension between modernity and nomadism. For instance, in *The Seven Veils of Seth* it is suggested that the desert is the source of human knowledge, wisdom, and life. Al-Koni expresses this idea through Seth/Isan, the protagonist of the novel who several times criticises urban life and says it leads to death. McHugh supports this idea and claims that al-Koni believes that the desert is the basis and the origin of human civilisation, and that the Tuareg are “among the very first of history’s “first people” as the inheritors of humanity’ ancient past<sup>340</sup>.”

The conflict between nomadism and modernity is illustrated in *The Seven Veils of Seth*. In this novel, we notice that there are two conflicting parties— one party struggles to preserve and stick to nomadic lifestyle exemplified in Seth/Isan who regards modernity leads to lethargy and certain death, while the other party exemplified in the dwellers of the oasis who struggle for stability and modernity. The conflict between nomadism and modernity is also found in *The Bleeding of the Stone* which quite clear in the conflict between Asouf and the invaders of the desert( Cain, Parker, and Bordello).

Al-Koni in his novels is defending the nomadic lifestyle of the Tuareg. Through travel and migration from one place to another the Tuareg will find themselves and restore their identity. In *The Seven Veils of Seth* as well as in the other novels al-Koni stresses the idea of the nomadic life-style which,

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<sup>340</sup> - McHugh, Hybrid Species and Literatures: Ibrahim al-Koni’s ‘Composite Apparition’”

according to him, restores the Tuareg's identity and the Tuareg are in constant search for this identity. This is shown and exemplified in the character of the Fool who is looking for his father throughout the events of the novel. Al-Koni, in the said novel, accentuates the idea that the desert has been polluted and negatively affected by the Western civilisation as in the case when the newcomer Seth pollutes the pool of the peaceful oasis. He claims that the Tuareg's identity and their cultural heritage will fade away and, with time dissolve or replaced by another identity if they leave their nomadic lifestyle and choose to live in the city.

Al-Koni in *The Seven Veils of Seth*, *The Bleeding of the Stone*, and *Gold Dust* emphasises that the strangers represented in the foreign companies that excavate for uranium such as the French company 'Avera' and colonial powers exemplified in Isan, Dudu, Parker, and Cain play a major part in polluting the underground water in the desert and in exterminating desert animals and causing a lot of people to abandon the desert and go to live in the urban cities. They also have no respect for the Laws and traditions of the desert people and spare no effort to show their scorn and disgust of them. As a kind of resistance, al-Koni sees it essential that the Tuareg should never trust them, and keep their distance from all kinds of strangers, and never surrender their affairs to them.

Furthermore, he feels that the desert is in constant and speedy change due to the urbanization of its features at the hands of the newcomers. He fears that one day their culture may dissolve in another culture. As a Tuareg writer, he feels

that his mission is to record their customs, traditions, laws, and everything that concerns their daily life in writing.

Additionally, the study confirms the originality and uniqueness of al-Koni's works of fiction. His work in many details differs from the works of most Latin American and African magical realist novelists. As has been noticed in the above-mentioned analysis of the three novels, he focuses on the desert and makes it his setting, he concentrates on the nomadic lifestyle of the Tuareg people, their beliefs, and mythologies. Al-Koni quotes extracts from the Bible, the Qura'an, quotes from Sophocles, Herodotus, Ovid, Ibn Arabi, and others and uses them as epigraphs or beginnings to his chapters. In addition, he introduces his readers to Sufism and the differences between some of its sects like Tijaniya, and Qadiriya.

Al-Koni gives the impression that both the Arabs embodied in Cain, and the westerners embodied in Parker, and Captain Bordello are the main cause of disturbing and destroying the desert and Tuareg's nomadic way of life. Foreigners distorted their culture, tradition in addition to helping in the extinction of all that Asouf represents. Al-Koni feels The desert has formed Tuareg's identity but unfortunately has been assailed by the foreigners who come from different parts of the world. The Tuareg now feel lost between two identities, the Arab Islamic identity, and their ancient Tuareg identity. Al-Koni has taken the responsibility of restoring their Tuareg identity and recording their nomadic lifestyle and cultural heritage in writing. He seeks to acquaint the world to the real case of the Tuareg and thus gets international recognition

that they are a nation no less than that of the Arabs, the Persians, and the Romans.

This study has reached the conclusion that al-Koni's use of the magical realism mode of writing in *The Bleeding of the Stone*, *The Seven Veils of Seth*, and *Gold Dust*, is a kind of peaceful resistance so that his marginalised and suppressed people may one day get international recognition and achieve their dream of an independent state which has its own language and culture as described by Herodotus who confirms that they have been living in this part of the land for thousands of years.

In resisting the occupiers, al-Koni agrees with Fanon that his people should boycott the invaders' culture, and abstain from using their language in order to keep and preserve their cultural heritage and identity, but does not agree with Fanon in using violence. This has been shown in *Gold Dust* when Ukhayyad gets married to a stranger, his father disowns him. Asouf's father in *The Bleeding of the Stone* teaches his son not to mix with foreigners, "How can I be a neighbour of men... I can't live near anyone. That's what my grandfather taught me, and that's what I must teach you. All I want is peace." The main difference between al-Koni and Fanon is that the latter believes in using violence against the coloniser while al-Koni believes in peaceful resistance as the case with Asouf in *the Bleeding of the Stone*. Moreover, al-Koni does not agree with Homi Bhabha who believes in hybridity between the coloniser and the colonised and says that there is no pure race. Contrary to Bhabha, al-Koni asserts that the only hybridity he believes in is between man and animals, like the hybridity between Ukhayyad and his camel in *Gold Dust*.

The earlier analysis clearly shows that al-Koni's works are acknowledged as works committed to the Berber in general and the Tuareg in particular. He refuses the idea that his literary production is assimilated into the Arabic literature even though it is written in Arabic, that is why he uses Tuareg and Berber names for his characters in all his novels. All the places of mountains, caves, and valleys are named in Tuareg language (Tamasheq). Non-Tuareg characters in his novels are always associated with evil and destruction such as Cain, Parker, Bordello, Dudu, and others.

The study concludes that he uses his novels to point out explicitly to the predicament of the Tuareg and make their case known worldwide. It shows that his objective is to preserve their language, heritage, and identity, therefore he makes one of his characters in *The Seven Veils of Seth* articulate what al-Koni sees as the solution to their problems.

For us to convey the truth to the people, we must keep our distance from them (foreigners)...If we keep pace with them, they will draw us down to their world. If we pretend to approve their games, they will multiply their foolishness, assuming that we share their passion. If we cede an inch to them, we will lose ourselves and become one of them forever.<sup>341</sup>

Answering one of the thesis's questions, al-Koni uses his fiction as a means of resisting the oppression and suppression that has befallen the Tuareg. He believes that the Tuareg are victims of insider and outsider foreigners (the international community) who have reduced them into a tribe rather than a nation that has lived for thousands of years in the biggest and most beautiful desert in the world and has their own history, civilisation, and culture.

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<sup>341</sup> . *The Seven Veils of Seth*, 51-52.

The thesis suggests that al-Koni struggles for the international recognition of the cultural and linguistic rights of the Tuareg. He is sending a message that the Tuareg should have their linguistic and cultural particularity which have been the core of their interests.

In his novel *The Bleeding of the Stone*, al-Koni draws beautiful pictures of the Saharan Desert, the complexities of the Tuareg people's culture and traditions. According to him, the desert, its animals, the rituals of its people are very important elements in preserving the Tuareg people's cultural heritage and identity. Having been born and raised in the desert and has first-hand experience with the rituals and beliefs and Tuareg mythology, al-Koni brings these alive in his fiction. In his novels, al-Koni emphasises the idea that the place where one was born in and had spent your childhood and youth in remains with him forever. According to some critics, this means that as evidence of his commitment to preserve the history and cultural heritage of his people who are under the threat of being swept away by modern civilisation. He, therefore, portrays the Tuareg's old customs, legends, and mythologies, and attempts to give a true picture, contrary to the false picture drawn in the Western mainstream discourse and classics.

Additionally, he always tries to reveal that there is a conflict between the nomadic Tuareg culture, traditions and values and the Western culture; he, therefore, makes the desert as the setting of all of his novels. Furthermore, it is noticed that he always emphasises the idea that the nomadic people, desert animals like the *waddan*, and gazelles are threatened of extinction. Consequently, he believes that the best way for al-Koni to save the Tuareg

society is through recovering and reviving their nomadic traditions, customs and cultural heritage which is always at odds with the Western culture and modernity. One of the consequences of the confrontation between the two different cultures during colonisation is the transformation of identity. The coloniser always tries to enforce their culture on the colonised.

This study reveals clearly the reasons that led al-Koni to choose the magical realist mode of writing in the said three novels. The postcolonial novelist Ibrahim al-Koni almost always uses magical realism in his fiction rather than writing in plain prose in order to criticise and expose, the political, and economic situations through his novels. He always uses fiction rather than writing in plain words to criticise, and expose the political, social, and economic situations of his people through his characters in order to be safe. In other words, he uses this technique as a kind of resistance against the foreigners who have invaded his homeland and threatened the Tuareg life-style, their cultural heritage, and existence aiming to obtain international recognition of their linguistic and cultural particularity and to change the place from the margin to the centre and make their voice heard.

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