University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

ScholarWorks@UARK

Theses and Dissertations

12-2017

The Postmodern Novel in Saudi Arabia and America

Mohammed Lafi Alshammari
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd

Part of the American Literature Commons, Comparative Literature Commons, and the Near and Middle Eastern Studies Commons

The Postmodern Novel in Saudi Arabia and America

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

by

Mohammed Alshammari
University of Hail
Bachelor of Primary Education in Arabic Language, 2006
Yarmouk University
Master of Arts in Arabic Language/Literature and Criticism, 2009

December 2017
University of Arkansas

This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

_____
M. Keith Booker, PhD
Dissertation Director

_____   _____
Adnan Haydar, PhD   Susan Marren, PhD
Committee Member   Committee Member

Abstract

In the early twenty-first century, Saudi Arabia is a global economic power that stands as an equal among the other members of the most powerful economic organizations, including as the Group of Twenty and The World Trade Organization. As a result of this economic status and of Saudi Arabia never having been colonized, recent Saudi novels (especially those published after 2001) can usefully be read postmodern, rather than as postcolonial—the usual paradigm in readings of contemporary Arab novels. To establish a reference point, a comparative approach that engages Saudi and American postmodern novels is applied in this dissertation through the critical lens of Fredric Jameson's theory of postmodernism. I rely on the postmodern features which are listed in M. Keith Booker's *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and The Cold War: American Science Fiction and The Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964*. *Girls of Riyadh* by Rajā al-Sani', *Throwing Sparks* by Abdo Khal, and *Super Sad True Love Story* by Gary Shteyngart share postmodern features such as schizophrenia, fragmentation, and suspicion toward grand narratives, which demonstrate instability of personality. Weak historical thinking permeates *The Dove's Necklace* by Raja Alem, *Life on Hold* by Fahd al-Atiq, and *No Country for Old Men* by Cormac McCarthy. The resulting effect of late capitalism, a weak utopian imagination, shapes the outcomes of *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* by Yousef al-Mohaimeed, *Days of Ignorance* by Laila al-Johani, and *City of Glass* by Paul Auster. Although the project of modernization has not yet been fully completed in Saudi Arabia, the expression of postmodern characteristics is clear in twenty-first century Saudi novels, as might be expected due to Saudi Arabia's economic positioning in the late capitalist model.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. M. Keith Booker who gave me the most valuable opportunity that made a big positive difference in my life. This dissertation would not have been done without Dr. Booker's guidance. Also, I am very grateful to Dr. Adnan Haydar for his professorial guidance and fatherly advices that kept stress levels down during difficult days. In addition, I would like to express a special gratitude to Dr. Susan Marren for her willingness to join my committee at a late hour in the project. Her kindness is a model that should be emulated and followed.

Furthermore, I am very beholden to my wife for her love and support. I would like to thank my family for their support. I would like to express my appreciation to Sultan Alfarhood for his friendship. I am very thankful to al-Jouf University for the financial support.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents: Lafi and Dabyah

Table of Contents

Introduction

The declaration of the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia occurred on

September 23, 1932. The first Saudi commercial oil well was discovered on March 4, 1938. The

emergence of the oil industry in Saudi Arabia accompanied the global shift of capitalism from its

second imperialist phase to the third phase characterized by the domination of international

corporations,[1] in which the world economy continues to operate. International corporations

cannot ship their products overseas without oil, which means oil is one of the most crucial

commodities in the global market. Subsequently, Saudi Arabia has become one of the more

important players in the global economic system in the contemporary era. This participation

helps Saudi Arabia to build relationships with powerful countries such as the United States of

America. These relationships encourage Saudi Arabia to align with Western countries, not

against them. In short, Saudi Arabia endorses the West and Saudi Arabia is an essential part of

late capitalism whose cultural logic, for Fredric Jameson, is postmodernism.

Postmodernism, as the "cultural logic of late capitalism" serves as the main critical and

interpretative principle in this dissertation, and discussion of the Saudi novel after 2001 as a

postmodern novel will form the main topic of my dissertation. In addition, discussing the

postmodern American novel provides a significant reference to aid me in revealing whether the

Saudi novel after 2001 may be a postmodern novel. Discussion of the Saudi novel should not be

isolated from a consideration of the postmodern American novel because the postmodern

American novel and the postmodern Saudi novel are both being written under the domination of

late capitalism. However, the representations of postmodern culture in the postmodern Saudi

novel and the postmodern American novel may be different because the political and social

---

[1] I rely on Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.*

contexts are different as well. In other words, while the similarity between the Saudi novel and the American novel is due to the domination of late capitalism, the difference is due to the different social and political conditions of Saudi Arabia and the United State of America.

In this dissertation, there are six Saudi novels which will be discussed as primary texts, and three postmodern American novels[2] that will be discussed as reference points through which to demonstrate postmodern characteristics in the Saudi novel[3]. Saudi novels published between 2001-2011 are the focus of this dissertation because this historical period started with the catastrophe of 9/11 and it ended with the beginning of Arab Spring. I will not discuss the Saudi novel after 2011 because Arab Spring has not been over yet. After 9/11, the Saudi novel has become to criticize the traditional discourse which leads to suspicion metanarrative. Also, as a consequence of this catastrophe, Saudi novelists write novels that endorse clearly western culture such as films and music. This endorsement is associated with some postmodern feature such as the instability of personality. Over the course of my dissertation, these American and Saudi novels are discussed to determine the similarity and the difference between them. I argue that these six Saudi novels[4] might be most productively read using a postmodern perspective, and I attempt to demonstrate that, generally speaking, the Saudi novel after 2001 should be considered a postmodern novel rather than a postcolonial novel. In order to discuss this argument, I rely on

---

[2] Since postmodern American novels will be used to references, they should not be written between 2001-2011. I choose different novels which help me to discuss my argument.

[3] However, this does not mean that the dissertation will only be assigned to these six Saudi novels and three American novels. I mention some other postmodern novels to clarify the main argument.

[4] I choose texts that are written by writers who hold the Saudi citizenship; therefore, I exclude some writers such as Abdel Rahman Munif who had not had the Saudi citizenship. Also, I choose three male writers and three female writers. Ultimately, I choose texts that are not banned in Saudi Arabia. However, this issue is not important in the age of the internet that helps everyone to obtain every content.

Jameson's dialectical thinking. Indeed, my dissertation confirms that not all Arabic novels should be considered as postcolonial novels[5]. Furthermore, this argument confirms Jameson's idea that postmodernism is a global phenomenon. My dissertation is divided into three chapters, in which I consider how characteristics of postmodern cultural production can be located in the Saudi novel. In the first chapter, I discuss the representation of instability of personality. In the second chapter, I discuss the representation of history. In the third chapter, I discuss the representation of utopia.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, the Arabic novel as a whole began to acquire postmodern characteristics, such as a distrust of history and a loss of utopian hope. For example, Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, in *In Search of Walid Masoud,* utilizes some postmodern characteristics such as fragmentation and metafiction to discuss the Palestinian catastrophe. Abdul Rahman Munif, in *Cities of Salt*, depicts the booming of oil in the Arabian Peninsula through a Marxist perspective. In *Cities of Salt*, Munif criticizes the arrival of late capitalism to the Arabian Peninsula. Moreover, he describes consequences of the domination of capitalism and chronicles social changes that cause symptoms such as psychic fragmentation[6].

Changes in social and political conditions prompted the appearance of postmodernism in Arabic culture. First, the Arab world entered a new historical phase after 1948. The establishment of the state of Israel causes what is known to many Arabic speakers as the Palestinian catastrophe (*al-Nakba*). This catastrophe contributed to Arab disbelief in metanarrative. Historical narratives do not help Arabs recover Palestine. In short, many Arab

---

[5] In contemporary literary criticism, the Arabic novel has often been considered through a postcolonial approach such as Muhsin al-Musawi's book *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel: Debating Ambivalence.*

[6] I will use this term because alienation, for Jameson, is no longer accurate to describe postmodern personality (Jameson, *Postmodernism,* 90).

writers reveal disbelief in metanarrative as a loss of historical thinking. Second, in 1952, Gamal Abdel Nasser led a political revolution in Egypt with many promises for all Arabs. He championed the idea of Arab nationalism. He promised to lead Arabs to retrieve their political power. However, he was unable to fulfill his promises. Consequently, Arabs became frustrated and lost their hope. Third, the loss of the war of 1967 with Israel, referred to as "The Setback" (*al-naksa*) in Arabic, was particularly damaging to Arab hopes for the future due to the loss of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights; therefore, Arab writers, in general, lost their utopian imagination. Fourth, the emergence of oil as perhaps the most important global commodity was a great influence on Arab society. On one hand, this economic boom helped the Arabs to build relationships with many nations around the world, which gave the Arabs opportunities to read literatures of different nations. To put it in another way, in the 19th century, Arabs' relationship was with the West. However, after the booming of oil and selling it to other nations, the Arabs forged strong relationships with non-Western nations. Therefore, an important factor in the development of the Arabic novel is the deepening familiarity of Arab writers with other literatures. For example, translation into Arabic from Latin American literature, Russian literature, or South Asian literature increased. On the other hand, the booming of oil opened doors for capitalist and corporate domination over the Arab world. The Suez Canal conflict of 1952, resulting in Nasser sinking ships to block the Israeli, French, and British forces, who eventually pulled out on international recommendations, demonstrates this tension. This booming brought many international corporations to the Arab worlds. Consequently, Arabs who work for these corporations feel routinization[7], psychic fragmentation, and weak utopian imagination due to the imposition of new work conditions. In short, political, economic, and

---

[7] In this introduction, I will discuss this term briefly.

cultural factors influence the development of the Arabic novel towards a form displaying postmodern characteristics.

There are some critical discussions that aim to reveal postmodern characteristics in the Arabic novel. For example, Majidah Hāshim discusses the postmodern Arabic novel and the representation of suspicion of metanarratives[8]. Also, Muṣṭafá Jumʿah discusses the representation of subjectivity, identity, and the motherland in the postmodern Arabic novel[9]. In addition, Christina Phillips argues in her article, "The Game of Remembering: A Study of Narrative Strategies and the Postmodern Theme in Muhammad Barrada's Novel *Mithl Sayf Lan Yatakarrar": Mahkiyyat*, that postmodernism could be found in the Arabic novel. Also, *Tradition, Modernity, and Postmodernity in Arabic Literature*, edited by Kamal Abdel-Malek and Wael Hallaq, contains two essays about postmodern Arab writers. First, Sabah Ghandour in her essay "History, Religion, and the Construction of Subjectivity in Elias Khoury's *Rihlat Ghandi al-Saghir"*, discusses the representation of fragmentation that is bound to affect the formations of social and political institutions, the economic and class structure, and mainly our readings of history and tradition. In particular, Ghandour discusses how Khoury uses the complexity and history of the language to write about history, the Lebanese civil war in this case. In other words, Ghandour's essay focuses on how Khoury's linguistic techniques contain fragmentation to discuss the lived experiences of extended conflict. Moreover, Magda M. Al-Nowaihi, in her essay "Committed Postmodernity: Muhammad Barrada's *The Game of Forgetting*", discusses postmodern characteristics that may be found in this novel. She claims

---

[8] Hāshim, Majidah H. *Al-riwāyah Al-ʿarabīyah Mā-Baʿd Al-Ḥadāthīyah: Taqwīḍ Al-Markaz-Al-Jasad-Taḥṭīm Al-Sardīyāt Al-Kubrá*. 2013. Print.

[9] Jumʿah, Muṣṭafá A. *Mā Baʿda Al-Ḥadāthah Fī Al-Riwāyah Al-ʿarabīyah Al-Jadīdah: Al-dhāt, Al-Waṭan, Al-Huwīyah*. ʿAmmān: al-Warrāq lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzīʿ, 2011. Print.

that *The Game of Forgetting* has "no linear movement or progression and very little action in this work, no adventure or plot that can be easily summarized" (Boullata, Abdel-Malek, and Hallaq 368).

Although these critical discussions of the postmodern Arabic novel attempt to reveal the representation of postmodern characteristics in the contemporary Arabic novel, they do not link the postmodern Arabic novel to the domination of late capitalism. Therefore, they do not concentrate on some significant postmodern features such as the weak utopian imagination. In this dissertation, I discuss the postmodern Saudi novel, which is a part of the Arabic novel, to reveal how the domination of late capitalism causes the emergence of some postmodern characteristics after 2001. The participation of Saudi Arabia in the global economic system indicates that the postmodern Saudi novel is a direct consequence of late capitalism. Therefore, this factor, in my opinion, distinguishes the postmodern Saudi novel from the postmodern Arabic novel that appears in some regions in the Arab world.

Furthermore, the political and social factors that are mentioned above show why the majority of Arab writers focus on criticizing colonialism. However, it is unfortunate that critics have collapsed the diversity of experience of Arab writers from different nationalities into a single postcolonial category. Saudi cultural discourse does not concentrate on criticizing colonial discourse for a number of reasons[10]. First, Saudi Arabia has never been colonized; therefore, Saudi writers have not experienced colonialism and they are not reacting against it in the context of their own experience. Subsequently, Saudi writers do not generally have an antagonistic attitude toward the West. Second, the economic power of Saudi Arabia distinguishes it from

---

[10] Also, there is a stereotypical image that is Saudi culture is a conservative. In fact, most of Saudi novels or poetry are written by liberal artists. Conservatism is in the religious discourse, but other aspects of culture are almost not conservative.

some Arab countries, particularly outside of the Arabian Gulf. In other words, while Arab

countries are against Western dominance over the global economic system, Saudi Arabia

considers Western countries as partners. Consequently, the discourse of Saudi culture differs

substantially from the discourse of culture in other Arabic speaking countries that have had

colonial legacies and that are not as economically powerful.

The completion of modernization, which is, for Jameson, a distinct boundary between

modernism and postmodernism, is worth mentioning before the discussion of the Saudi novel.

Jameson claims that "postmodernism is what you have when the modernization process is

complete and nature is gone for good" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* ix). John Duvall explains how

Jameson uses this notion to distinguish how modernism and postmodernism respond to

modernization: "modernism is incomplete modernization, while postmodernism is the result of

complete modernization" (Duvall 4). This idea is controversial because there is no society that

has a completed modernization. For example, in the United States of America, Amish people do

not use any type of modern technology. Also, in every advanced modern society, there are some

conservative people who believe in some radical ideology that does not belong to the

contemporary era. There is, however, an element of scale.

Saudi society may be considered simultaneously as modern and traditional[11]. In this case,

Saudi society has not had a completed modernization. Therefore, the question may be asked

whether or not it is possible to consider Saudi culture as postmodern. First, it is difficult to prove

the completed modernization in a specific society because every society has some outdated

social norms or beliefs. Second, in the age of globalization, many aspects of modernization such

---

[11] There are some social improvements such as woman driving, which are supported by the government, are challenged by some religious people.

as using new technology or social media may be found everywhere in the world. Third, in terms of modernization, Saudi Arabia has very sophisticated industrial complexes that show how Saudi society is familiar with modernization in a technological sense. This modernization is a consequence of the Saudi economic system. Ultimately, the combination between modernization and tradition is an important factor in my dissertation because this combination distinguishes between the postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel. In my opinion, although modernization is not completed in Saudi society, the Saudi novel may be read through postmodern perspectives because the Saudi novel is written under the domination of late capitalism. This domination is more an important factor than the completion of modernization. In short, this dissertation does not aim to discuss whether Saudi society has a complete modernization or not, but this dissertation focuses primarily on discussing some postmodern characteristics that may be found in the Saudi novel that has been published after 2001. The rapidity of change in Saudi society, without doubt, has been economically driven.

The rapid transformation of Saudi society from a nomadic society to a modern society influences some aspects of Saudi culture, including the novel. The influence of economic power may be found in different social aspects. First, the number of educated people and the literacy rate has increased rapidly. Second, the government of Saudi Arabia encourages policies through which many young people have been sent to study abroad in order to facilitate cultural and informational exchange with different countries. Third, the labor-intensive and highly specialized nature of the oil industry requires that more laborers are hired from different nations. Therefore, Saudi people have been exposed to and become familiar with laborers' cultures. Consequently, all of these conditions have influenced the development of the postmodern Saudi novel.

To better understand the development of the postmodern Saudi novel, a brief account of the development of the Saudi novel is useful. This development may be divided into four historical phases[12]. The first phase was the beginning of the Saudi novel (1930-1959). In this historical period, Saudi novelists published fifteen novels (Ḥasan Ḥāzimī 56). *Al-Taw'aman* (*The Twins*) by Abd al-Quddus al-Ansari (1930) is the first Saudi novel. This novel is influenced by the Arabic novel in Egypt and Lebanon. While al-Ansari's book does not contain all the aesthetic elements of a novel, such as a coherent plot, the 1930 publication of this "proto-novel" was associated with the establishment of Saudi Arabia in 1932. In *The Twins*, al-Ansari discusses the social change in Mecca's society as it moved toward becoming a Saudi city. However, this novel does not employ the aesthetic used by many novels to criticize society (Al-Naami 37-40); instead it concentrates on offering social sermons. In short, the beginning of the Saudi novel can be characterized as a weak emergence in terms of its aesthetic of social critique; hence, Saudi novelists took a long time to write a literary novel.

The second phase of the development of the Saudi novel was what some critics call the maturation of the Saudi novel (1959-1980)[13]. There is a consensus among literary critics that *Thaman Al-Tadhiyah* (*Price of Sacrifice*) by Hamid Damanhuri is the first literary Saudi novel. Damanhuri graduated from Alexandria University in 1945, which indicates that he probably read Egyptian novels and Western novels that had been translated into Arabic. Therefore, he was aware of the shape of Western aesthetics. His novel inspired other Saudi novelists, including

---

[12] For more information about the development of the Saudi novel, see: Al-Naami, Hassan. *The Saudi Novel: Its Current Status and Its Metamorphosis*. Ministry of Culture and Information. Riyadh, 2009.

[13] See: Ḥasan Ḥāzimī, Khālid Yūsuf. *Muʿjam Al-Ibdāʿ Al-Adabī Fī Al-Mamlakah Al-ʿarabīyah Al-Saʿūdīyah: Al-riwāyah, Madkhal Tārīkhī, Dirāsah Bibliyūjrāfīyah Biblūmitrīyah*. Bāḥah: Nādī al-Bāḥah al-Adabī, 2009.

female writers, to write literary novels. In my opinion, Saudi novelists in this phase were

influenced heavily by Naguib Mahfouz's realist novels. Also, Saudi students, who were sent to

study in Western universities in the 1960s and 1970s, influenced the development of the Saudi

novel.

      The third phase of the development of the Saudi novel took place in the 1980s and the

1990s. At the end of the seventies and in the early eighties, many Saudis who studied in Western

universities returned to Saudi Arabia with a deeper understanding of modernism and early

evidence of the changes of postmodernism. Therefore, there was a literary battle between

conservatives and moderns[14] that determined the development of Saudi literature. In this phase,

Saudi novelists began writing experimental novels. Also, the Saudi novelists no longer relied

primarily on Arabic novels. Instead, Saudi novelists began to be influenced by global writers

such as Gabriel García Márquez and Ernest Hemingway. This phase witnessed the appearance of

some important Saudi novelists such as Ghazi Al Gosaibi and Abdo Khal. In this phase, the

Saudi novel witnessed the establishment of different literary schools. For example, Khal started

his literary writing as a modernist writer before moving on to exploring and experimenting with

postmodernist techniques in his late novels, while Abdulaziz Mesharri is known as a member of

a realist movement of Saudi novelists who focuses on portraying and discussing the movement

of people from villages to cities and how this movement affects the social life in Saudi Arabia.

Cities of Salt by Abdel Rahman Munif was written at this stage. This literary work may be

considered as a postmodern Saudi novel if we overlook Munif's citizenship[15].

---

[14]Regarding this conflict see, ʿAbd Allāh Ghadhdhāmī's book *Ḥikāyat Al-Ḥadāthah* (*The Story of Modernism in Saudi Arabia*).

[15] Munif (May 29, 1933 – January 24, 2004) was born to a Saudi father and an Iraqi mother in Amman, Jordan. He studied in Iraq, Egypt, and France before he returned to work in Iraq. He did not obtain Saudi citizenship.

The fourth phase of the development of the Saudi novel occurred after 2001. In this phase, Saudi Arabia became a member of the Group of Twenty which represents the twenty most powerful economies in the world. In addition, in this phase, Saudi Arabia became a member of the World Trade Organization. Membership in these powerful organizations, which dominate the global economy, indicates that Saudi Arabia is clearly one of key participants in the operations of late capitalism, and Saudi novelists grapple with the implications of this. Its participation in the global economic system influences the individual personality because this economic system focuses on increasing production that relies on more working and routinization, which may have existed before 2001, but it becomes more extreme in this historical period. This routinization along with other issues such as psychic fragmentation cause instability of personality. Also, in this stage, Saudi novelists face the global issue of terrorism. This issue, which is predominantly linked to Islam in Western media, has caused some fundamental changes in Saudi culture. For example, Saudi novelists have begun to reread the Islamic heritage and attempt to criticize it. Also, some Saudi novelists have started to express their suspicion toward metanarratives. Thus, these novelists lose their ability to think historically. Also, in this stage, the Saudi novel has a weak utopian imagination which is a consequence of the domination of late capitalism, such as in *The Doves' Necklace,* and radical ideology, as in *Where Pigeons Don't Fly*. Furthermore, in this phase, the Saudi novel has been considered globally after several Saudi novelists were awarded significant international literary prizes. For example, in 2009, Abdo Khal's novel *Throwing Sparks* won The International Prize for Arabic Fiction, the most prestigious and important literary prize in the Arab world. Also, in 2011, Raja Alem's novel *The Doves' Necklace* shared the same prize with a Moroccan novelist Mohammed Achaari. In short, at its current point in its development, the Saudi novel after 2001 may be seen as a postmodern novel.

In contrast to the more recent emergence of the Saudi postmodern novel, the appearance of the postmodern American novel can be detected in the 1960s with writers whose literary works are characterized by several features. These features distinguish these writers from their predecessors in the modernist era. The American novel in the 1960s and beyond has fragmentation, playfulness, irony, parody, pastiche, instability of historical thinking, unstable personality, an inability to make a distinction between reality and fiction itself, and weak utopian imagination. American novelists who are considered as representative of the postmodern era in American culture include many novelists such as Kurt Vonnegut, Thomas Pynchon, Paul Auster, Don DeLillo, and Cormac McCarthy. In general sense, American novels written since the 1960s have been considered as postmodern novels (Booker, *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War* 2).

Discussion of the historical background of postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism may be used to illustrate the historical background of the postmodern American novel. Generally speaking, postmodernism appears as a consequence of the failure of the modernist enterprise to prevent humanity from encountering serious dilemmas such as devastating world wars. Postmodernism as theory and as a cultural feature appears in the end of the 1950s or the early 1960s (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 1). The shifting from modernism to postmodernism, for Jameson, was necessary because "radical alternatives, systematic transformations, cannot be theorized or even imagined within the conceptual field governed by the word 'modern'… Ontologies of the present demand archaeologies of the future, not forecasts of the past" (*A Singular Modernity* 215). Some critics such as Ihab Hassan discuss postmodernism by concentrating on its limited aesthetic and epistemological domains, but Jameson discusses postmodernism as a phenomenon which must be understood as a broad historical phenomenon.

According to Jameson, postmodernism is not just a literary, aesthetic, or architectural movement that is characterized by particular aspects, but it represents a historical phenomenon that dominates all facets of global culture. In this sense, Jameson theorizes postmodernism as a movement that represents the historical situation of late capitalism. Jameson relies on Ernest Mandel who describes the period which followed World War II as late capitalism. This historical phase of capitalism is characterized by the domination of multinational or transnational corporations. Jameson explains this new phase of capitalism as

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

This new economic system is associated with new forms of media interrelationship, computers, and automation (Tally, *Fredric Jameson: The Project Of Dialectical Criticism* 92). Jameson clearly points out that the domination of capitalism in its latest phase causes a global hegemony of culture: postmodernism. Consequently, Saudi Arabia's participation in the global capitalist system creates an environment in which the Saudi novel may be seen as a postmodern novel.

Moreover, for Jameson it is noteworthy that, despite the fact that international corporations dominate the globe, global culture may not be seen as postmodern. For him, some cultures may survive the postmodern era. He concentrates on heterogeneous entities such as Third World literature, African-American literature, British working-class rock, women's literature, gay literature, and *roman québécois* (Booker, *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War* 20). However, this view may be challenged because not all Third World literature can be read as surviving in the age of postmodernism. Certainly, the Saudi novel once could be

categorized as Third World literature, but this novel may, and should, be now read from a different angle because this novel is produced out of a Saudi economy that relies heavily on the global capitalist system. Therefore, it is quite possible to detect several postmodern features in the Saudi novel.

Although defining postmodernism is complicated and requires considerable effort, it is necessary to do so before any analysis of the postmodern Saudi novel. The difficulty of finding a solid definition of postmodernism is attributed to the way in which critics discuss this phenomenon. Every critic discusses postmodernism from a different angle. For example, Jean-Francois Lyotard defines postmodernism as a movement marked by a skepticism about grand metanarratives; Baudrillard sees postmodernism as a flow of ultra-technological images; Jameson, as mentioned, views postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism. However, there is a measure of consensus among scholars that postmodernism may be employed to represent and interpret cultural phenomena from the 1960s until the present. As such, understanding aspects of the culture of this historical period may help to understand what postmodernism is.

As mentioned above, postmodern critics discuss postmodernism from various perspectives; therefore, every critic concentrates on particular characteristics. This diversity influences the discussions of the main argument of what constitutes postmodernism. For the purposes of my dissertation, I concentrate on analyzing the Saudi novel since 2001 through postmodern characteristics summarized in Keith Booker's *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and The Cold War: American Science Fiction and The Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964*. These characteristics are crisis in belief or a radical suspicion toward totalizing metanarrative, instability of personal identity, instability of historical continuity, weak utopian imagination, a

collapse of the tradition of Aristotelian logic, a collapse of the distinction between art and reality, a collapse of the distinction between high culture and low culture, and playfulness and parody (Booker 24-25). I focus on these characteristics because they help to understand what postmodernism is in a broadly historical sense. Notably, these postmodern characteristics are intricately related to each other; therefore, some features cause other features. For example, the suspicion of totalizing metanarrative may generate an inability to think of history as a linear continuum. Subsequently, losing the ability of thinking in terms of historical continuity, or "historical thinking," may cause a weak utopian imagination.

Discussion of the suspicion of metanarrative and the instability of "historical thinking" should be done before the discussion of weak utopian imagination, because the former may be seen as factors leading to the appearance of the latter. The radical suspicion toward totalizing metanarratives is a significant postmodern characteristic that was first conceptualized by Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition*. He explains that grand stories are an essence of the discourses of modern religion, politics, philosophy, and science. For Lyotard, these grand stories represent what he calls metanarrative. This metanarrative is a form of ideology that attempts to convince individuals to believe in a false sense of the totality of historical events. A metanarrative relies on a set of cultural elements and academic disciplines that use rhetorical techniques to show how things work or are connected in this world. The metanarrative aims to legitimate political positions and justifies the appearance of some of the events in history. For example, in science, scientific discovery is represented in the form of 'epic' narrative. This way of recounting scientific discovery enables science to maintain its powerful position in the political and social context. As Lyotard explains, "[t]he state spends large amounts of money to enable science to pass itself off as an epic: the State's own credibility is based on that epic" (Lyotard 28).

However, for Lyotard, this empowerment vanishes in the postmodern era. Subsequently, postmodernism, for Lyotard, consists of "little narratives."[16]

Having suspicion toward metanarratives indicates that people no longer rely on linear progress over time to understand their reality, which means they lose their ability to maintain a historical continuity of thinking. Apparently, history does not make sense because many historical dilemmas have not been solved. People come to realize that they live in an unpredictable time. For example, a rapid technological change makes people feel that their present is completely disconnected from the past and makes them unable to conceptualize what could happen in the future, which means their present is disconnected from the future. The inability to think historically is associated with the issue of unstable personal identity, which are both postmodern characteristics.

Ultimately, these features cause another postmodern characteristic: weak utopian imagination. History, which contains many examples of massacres, religious conflicts, politically motivated violence, and wars, does not demonstrate that people are on the path to obtaining a perfect society, which, in the postmodern period, means history is not a useful source to lead or inspire humanity to achieve an ideal society. Jameson, in his critical approach, has argued that the current time does not have a strong utopian imagination. He attributes this dilemma to the domination of late capitalism. The feature of the weak utopian imagination has some obvious symptoms, the most important of which are routinization combined with psychic fragmentation.

---

[16] It is worth mentioning that Perry Anderson, in *The Origins of Postmodernity*, explains that the principal metanarrative meant by Lyotard is Marxism. For Anderson, Lyotard's positive assessment of postmodernism is fundamentally anti-Marxist (Anderson 32). This assessment contradicts Jameson. In this dissertation, I agree with Jameson because metanarrative does not yield a positive outcome; therefore, it leads to other negative consequences, such as the instability of personality.

The discussion of postmodern characteristics is associated with some postmodern concepts that should be discussed. First, the postmodern allegory is one of the important terms in this dissertation. The term of allegory is not a postmodern concept per se. In postmodern theory, there are some critics, such as Paul De Man and Craig Owens, who discuss this term. Their discussions rely on the Walter Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Benjamin says, "Allegory. . . is not a playful illustrative technique, but a form of expression, just as speech is expression, and, indeed, just as writing is" (Benjamin 162). In this sense, a conventional term is revived in the age of postmodernism that attempts to break its relationship with tradition. Jameson sees this revival of allegory as an important reinvention because it reveals the condition of the present cultural and theoretical moment. Postmodern allegory, for Jameson, is

> a generalized sensitivity, in our own time, to breaks and discontinuities, to the heterogeneous (not merely in works of art), to Difference rather than Identity, to gaps and holes rather than seamless webs and triumphant narrative progressions, to social differentiation rather than to Society as such and its 'totality,' in which older doctrines of the monumental work and the 'concrete universal' bathed and reflected them-selves. (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 167–68)

Indeed, postmodern critics are pioneers of invoking the term of allegory not as a trope. Joel Fineman explains how both psychoanalysis and allegory are ways to thematize the dream to know and the desire to interpret, and therefore both offer the same prevailing paradigm for critical inquiry as pursuit of the deep structure underneath surface manifestations (Longxi 214). In this dissertation, the term "allegory" is invoked not just a linguistic trope, but as a vehicle that reveals how a cultural structure is inherited in every literary work. Here, I rely on Owens's claim "allegory can no longer be condemned as something merely appended to the work of art, for it is revealed as a structural possibility inherent in every work" (Owens 64).

Second, in this dissertation, the application of routinization is derived from Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. In this book, he explains how capitalism forces

every aspect of life under capitalism to be scheduled and controlled. Weber uses both

"rationalization" and "routinization" as terms to describe this phenomenon. I agree with Booker

that routinization is the preferable term because

> Weber's discussion of this phenomenon places a special emphasis on the way in which
> the modern capitalist world has become bereft of magic and of any sense that the
> marvelous can occur. The diminished Utopian imagination of the 1950s can thus be seen
> as a consequence of routinization, while the growing popularity of science fiction in the
> 1950s can be related, at least in part, to a desire to recover some sense of the marvelous,
> to gain some reassurance that the very technologization that was helping to make life
> routine might also help to make it magical once again. (Booker, *Monsters, Mushroom
> Clouds, and the Cold War* 18)

 This diminished utopian imagination be found in the postmodern Saudi novel. It is worth

mentioning, for Jameson, that the term of routinization in Weber's works is similar to Georg

Lukacs's "reification" and Michel Foucault's "disciplinary" (Booker 18).

After defining postmodernism in such a way as to demonstrate that the Saudi novel after

2001 should be read as a postmodern cultural production, this dissertation completes several

tasks. First, this dissertation aims to challenge the Western categorization of all Eastern cultural

discourses as postcolonial discourses[17]. Simply put, not all countries were colonized.

Additionally, this view is insufficient because the relationship between the West and the East no

longer relies on the opposition. In the age of the domination of international corporations, the

West and the East are potentially equally dominant. Therefore, it is not surprising to see an

Eastern country influence a Western country because the Eastern country has financial power.

Second, this dissertation aims to confirm Jameson's notion that postmodernism is the cultural

logic of late capitalism by expanding on his idea that postmodernism is primarily a cause and a

symptom of western culture. Postmodernism is a potentially global condition which may be

---

[17] Muḥsin Jāsim Mūsawī's *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel: Debating Ambivalence* and Stefan G.
Meyer's *The Experimental Arabic Novel: Postcolonial Literary Modernism in the Levant* .

found in a non-Western context as long as that culture's economic system is a participant in late

capitalism. Third, this dissertation aims to distinguish between the Saudi novel and the Arabic

novel. The Saudi novel may be seen as a postmodern novel rather than a postcolonial novel

because Saudi novelists have not experienced colonialism and because the Saudi economy is a

significant participant the global economic system, although there are key differences between

the Saudi and American postmodern novel. Fourth, this project aims to confirm that the Saudi

novel endorses Western cultural discourse rather than criticizing it.

The first chapter discusses the instability of personality in the postmodern American

novel and the postmodern Saudi novel. The theme of unstable personality is an essential part of

postmodernism because the perception of identity or personality has changed in the age of the

domination of international corporations and globalization. The discussion of the instability of

personality may be associated with two important issues: psychic fragmentation and

routinization. Here, psychic fragmentation is a consequence of the domination of late capitalism

and is used in a postmodern sense. This psychic fragmentation is theorized by Jameson in his

efforts to periodize postmodernism, in which he shows that the world has witnessed radical

technological developments with radical influences on the structure of personality. Thus,

Jameson concentrates on two important key features of postmodernism which are pastiche and

schizophrenia[18].

The first novel discussed in the first chapter is *Girls of Riyadh* (2005) by Raja' al-Sani'.

This novel is translated by Raja' al-Sani' and Marilyn Booth. This novel is controversial for two

reasons. First, it caused a critical literary battle in Saudi Arabia because some critics think this

novel is not a literary novel. For them, it is not a literary text because this novel uses daily

---

[18] I discuss the theoretical framework in the beginning of each chapter.

language. Also, it is not literary text because it is comprised of emails not of chapters. In other words, *Girls of Riyadh*'s plot is comprised of emails that are sent by the narrator to many readers every Friday night. Every email represents a chapter of this novel. Therefore, critics hesitate to consider *Girls of Riyadh* a literary novel. Second, this novel criticizes social norms in Saudi society. *Girls of Riyadh* contains vitriolic attacks on religious people. Also, this novel criticizes how people honor some social norms as holy. However, some readers think that *Girls of Riyadh* provides a misleading perception of Saudi society because this novel reflects aristocratic vision about the whole society.

Girls of Riyadh is an epistolary novel. The narrator sends emails every Friday night to mass audiences. These emails, which comprise the novel's chapters, are about four young women's lives. These young women, all from the elite class in Saudi Arabia, are Gamrah, Sadeem, Michelle, and Lamees, though these are not their "real" names. Gamrah, a girl from a rich family, marries Rashed, whose father is a businessman. However, this marriage fails because Rashed, who is a Ph.D. student in the United States, loves his Japanese girlfriend. Therefore, Gamrah gets divorced after she becomes pregnant by Rashed. In the novel, she fights against Saudi social criticism of divorced women. After her divorce, she attempts to rely on herself in starting her own business. Lamees is depicted as a smart and rich young woman, a student in medical science. She has many relationships with men. She has a twin who is smart too, but she opposes Lamees's relationships. Despite her attempts, she cannot maintain a successful relationship, and she blames her failures on how Saudi men think about love. In the end of the novel, Lamees marries a colleague. Michelle, a Saudi-American girl whose mother is an American, is from a rich family, and like Lamees, she has many failed romantic relationships with men. In this novel, Michelle criticizes how Saudis think about romantic relationships.

Finally, Sadeem, like Lamees and Michelle, has several failed relationships. In the end of the novel, she gives up her dreams to ever have a relationship based on true love with a man. Therefore, she marries her relative.

In *Girls of Riyadh*, al-Sani' criticizes Saudi society. She depicts aristocratic characters who attack middle and working classes and she blames the frustrations of the characters on how Saudi people think. In this dissertation, I discuss how belonging to an aristocratic class, which dominates Saudi politics and the economic system, influences the construction and instability of the characters' personalities. Their personalities are consequences of the routinization and psychic fragmentation caused by ideals and norms held by the Saudi aristocratic class. In this novel, each of the characters live in Saudi Arabia, but they isolate themselves from the entire society.

The second novel discussed in the first chapter is *Throwing Sparks* (2009) by Abdo Khal, which was translated into English by Michael K. Scott. This novel is the first Saudi novel to win the International Prize for Arabic Fiction. This novel provides an excellent example of the literary depiction of unstable personality. The discussion of instability of personality in this novel is done through the postmodern allegorical approach because this instability is not completely a consequence of the domination of the late capitalist system. In this novel, the instability of personality may be seen as a consequence of psychological problems. However, I attempt to show that psychological problems cannot be isolated from the influence of wealth and power. In *Throwing Sparks,* the instability of personality is characterized as psychic fragmentation.

Throwing Sparks is narrated by the main protagonist, Tariq who is depicted as a miscreant. Tariq lives in a very poor neighborhood not far away from a huge palace. Everyone who lives in this neighborhood aspires to enter the palace. The novel talks about three men:

Tariq, Essa, and Osama. Essa brings Tariq and Osama to work in the palace. Osama is brought to

work as a procurer. Tariq is brought to do a special job which is raping the master's opponents.

Tariq describes the unethical life inside the palace. For example, the master of the palace brings

many girls every night. Essa loves the master's sister, which causes serious trouble for him.

Therefore, the master asks Tariq to rape Essa. The master dominates almost every business

transaction he takes part in. The master's power, which represents the economic system, makes

Tariq a fragmented person. In the novel, his personality when he rapes the master's victims is

different from his personality when he sits with his girlfriend. Khal depicts the unethical life

inside the palace as expressing a dystopian view of society. This novel depicts how only a

handful people dominate society. In short, *Throwing Sparks* shows how these people corrupt life.

Furthermore*, Throwing Sparks* talks about the life of marginalized groups. In this novel,

people are divided into two groups: a small number of powerful people and the vast number of

"other" people. The majority of the people in the novel cannot maintain a stable personality. For

example, Tariq is a psychically fragmented character who does not know why he follows the

master's orders. Therefore, he cannot determine his place within the social system. This novel

discusses taboos in order to reveal the truth about society. Concentrating on marginalized groups

and discussing uncommon topics such as homosexuality may be considered a postmodern

tendency. At its core, this novel discusses the social status of marginalized groups to show how

their humanity has been taken. Also, this novel aims to show why these marginalized groups

cannot obtain a better life. *Throwing Sparks* attributes the main factor that dehumanizes

marginalized groups to the domination of powerful people who derive their power from the

capitalist system. This domination takes the real meaning of life from marginalized groups and

force them to do unethical jobs. In short, *Throwing* Sparks implies all social problems of marginalized groups are consequences of the domination of capitalism.

Psychic fragmentation and routinization may cause the instability of personality. However, in *Throwing Sparks*, this issue is more dangerous because it is related to unethical purposes. In the novel, the master's power forces Tariq to do the most unethical job in the palace, but the most significant dilemma is that he does this job as routine. Also, the domination of the capitalist system causes another problem which is psychic fragmentation. For example, in *Throwing Sparks*, Tariq is the most psychically fragmented person among all people in the palace because his job is unacceptable. In this sense, psychic fragmentation may be considered as a consequence of human abuse, but it may not be isolated from the influence of power and wealth as the license to perform these kinds of abuses result from power and wealth. In short, in this novel, powerful people always ask their employee to do unethical jobs to gain more wealth and power. Tariq is a fragmented person and his narration is fragmented as well.

The postmodern American novel that will be discussed as a reference is *Super Sad True Love Story* by Gary Shteyngart (2010). This novel is an epistolary novel that talks about the relationship between Lenny Abramov, who is of Russian and Jewish descent, and Eunice Park, a Korean-American woman. The epistolary form of this novel is comprised of Lenny's diaries and Eunice's online posts. Lenny and Eunice meet in Rome. They love each other and attempt to help each other, but Eunice leaves Lenny for Joshie Goldman, Lenny's boss. This abandonment shows how social and political conditions impact Eunice who cannot maintain a stable personality. At the end of the novel, she leaves Joshie because conditions of dystopian life do not help her to obtain a stable personality. *Super Sad True Love Story* talks about how the corrupted political system may lead to dystopian life in its depiction of invading Venezuela and the

economy being crippled by debt. This novel implies that this corrupted political system causes many dilemmas that lead eventually to the fragmentation and the routinization. Also, in this novel, using social networks causes a psychic fragmented personality. The plot of *Super Sad True Love Story*, which is built on social media communication, is similar to the plot of *Girls of Riyadh*. However, *Super Sad True Love Story* concentrates on the influence of late capitalism on the structure of people's personalities while the plot *Girls of Riyadh* concentrates on criticizing social norms of Saudi society.

The second chapter will discuss the representation of history in the postmodern American novel and the postmodern Saudi novel and aims to answer the main question of this chapter: do the postmodern American novel and the postmodern Saudi novel represent stable historical thinking? Basically, I discuss history in this chapter from a Marxist perspective. In Marxism, history is not "the doings of Kings and princess" but it is the consequence of class struggle. Karl Marx and Engels points out "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle" (Karl Marx 6). In other words, history is a consequence of mode of production. In Marxist theory, the mode of production includes culture, ideology, politics, and economy defined as relations of production and force of production. Jameson demonstrates that history itself is inaccessible. However, people can read history through its textual manifestation or "(re)textualization" (*The Political Unconscious* 67). In short, Marxism is the only approach that utilizes cultural works to understand "the essential mystery" of history (*The Political Unconscious* 3).

Jameson's conception of history helps to understand how the historical development of the Saudi novel represents the sequences of domination of late capitalism over Saudi society after the oil boom in the last century. Jameson demonstrates that in the postmodern era

individuals lose their ability to maintain constant historical thinking. He attributes the instability

of historical thinking to the domination of late capitalism. In the next chapter chapter, Rajāʾ

Ālim's novel *The Dove's Necklace* (2011) will be considered as a meditation that helps to access

Mecca's history. In addition, this novel can be considered as a primary text to determine whether

or not the Saudi novel after 2001 represents the instability of individuals or society to engage in

constant historical thinking.

The plot of *The Dove's Necklace* (2011) is about a crime investigation. This novel was

translated into English by Adam Talib and Katharine Halls in 2013. The narrator is a

neighborhood of Mecca called Abu Alroos' (the Many-Heads) where the crime happens. The

neighborhood, as narrator, is supposed to be a witness of the past, the present, and the future

because the place, the neighborhood, is presented as immortal. The narrator concentrates on

many historical facts and shows how Mecca has changed in the contemporary era. However, the

narration reveals that this neighborhood cannot maintain historical thinking because dynamic

political and social changes prevent it from connecting the past with the present. These changes

are attributed to the domination of materialistic developments in Mecca. These developments are

consequences of the domination of capitalist corporations that invest in Mecca. For example, the

narrator meditates on the tall buildings that are owned by international corporations.

The narration of the plot begins with the neighborhood's description of a girl found

murdered on the street. No one knows who the girl is because her body is decomposed. There are

many characters, but the most important character is the detective Nasser. This detective is a

resident of the neighborhood. Therefore, he is supposed to know who the victim is. He suggests

some names of girls who have disappeared from the neighborhood. He assumes the victim is one

of these girls. Among these names is Azzah, who loves Youssef. Her beloved knows everything

about the history of Mecca. Here, Youssef, as a reader of history, represents the instability of personality and the instability of historical thinking. The second potential name is Aisha, who marries Ahamed. Ahamed's father is a trash collector, but Ahamed becomes a personal escort for a very important person. Ahamed's personality is fragmented because it is dominated by his employer's capitalist ideology. Aisha gets divorced and has a very bad car accident. Therefore, she is sent to be healed in Germany where she falls in love with a German man. In her computer, Nasser finds many draft emails. Ālim utilizes these emails as metafiction to comment on the plot itself. In addition, these emails show Aisha as a psychically fragmented person because her personality is changed after she returns from Germany. Therefore, she is depicted as a fragmented person whose personality is unstable.

The second part of *The Dove's Necklace* takes place in Spain. In this part, new characters who are related to other characters in the first part appear to show how a small number of people dominate life. For example, Noura is an alias for Azzah who lives with a businessman, Khaled. This businessman possesses hotels in Mecca and Spain. His companies destroy many landmarks in Mecca, which means that the architectural and cultural history of the city disappear along with them. Also, this shows how international corporations dominate the globe. Therefore, in this part, of the novel historical thinking cannot be maintained by residents of the neighborhood. Thus, Ālim depicts a postmodern feature which is instability of historical thinking, but Ālim also uses metafiction, intertextuality, parody, and pastiche to highlight the instability of historical thinking.

Consequently, *The Dove's Necklace* may be considered as a postmodern novel for several reasons. First, this novel has a very fragmented plot. The narrator talks about every character separately from other characters. The narrator aims to describe the social, psychological background of every character. Second, the narration that is done by an unusual non-human

narrator may be seen as magical realism, a key form of postmodernist narration. Third, the author includes technology in the plot to insist on how this technology destroys the boundary between real life and fiction. Also, Aisha's emails are used to comment on the plot itself, which means Ālim utilizes metafiction. Finally, the title is a parody as it is a title of a book that was written by Ibn Hazm in Al-Andalus in 1022 AD that was a cycle of poems depicting the art and subterfuge of carrying on a love affair. For Ibn Hazm, love is a very important human behavior. However, in the novel, love loses its importance under the domination of materialistic life. The title of the novel shows how intertextuality is used to produce parody.

  Life on Hold (2004) by Fahd al-Atiq and translated by Jonathan Wright is discussed in the second chapter. *Life on Hold* is basically about the life of a Saudi man who encountered the economic and social development in the 1970s and the 1980s. This novel begins with a depiction of the life of the main protagonist, Khaled. He is an educated person who holds a college degree and possesses a job. Khaled used to work for a company which is full of corruption, and he is depicted as a person who has an artistic sensibility. The narrator follows Khaled's life from his youth till his manhood. This life is divided into phases: before the economic boom and after the economic growth (*tafra)* in Saudi Arabia[19]. The narrator describes Khaled's life in his family's old house to represent Saudi society before significant economic growth, while Khaled's life in his family's new house represents Saudi society after the economic growth. Thus, the narrator describes social, economic, and political life in Saudi Arabia. In the new house, his young brother becomes an extremist person.

---

[19] In the 1970s and the early of 1980s the price of oil had increased which helped Saudi Arabia to improve its people's lives by giving financial supports to them to build modern houses and creating jobs. Also, this economic growth strongly affected all social aspects of life in Saudi Arabia.

Khaled's family possesses this new house after receiving financial aid from the government. This support is a consequence of the development of Saudi economy in the 1970s and the 1980s. It is obvious that the narrator aims to concentrate on the influence of the economic boom on Saudi society. The narrator compares Khaled's life in the old house with his life in the new house. Also, the narrator spotlights how the economic boom changes Khaled's personality. The narrator describes Khaled's life in the old house as a simple life, while his life in the new house is complex and contains phony social norms. The most important point in the novel is how consumerism and materialism dominate Saudi life. The narrator focuses on how Khaled cannot maintain historical thinking to understand political and social changes in Saudi Arabia.

Moreover, *Life on Hold* discusses the relationship between the economic boom and the appearance of radical religious ideology in Saudi Arabia. This economic boom helps some extremist people to make propaganda for radical ideology by having resources to produce advertisement and recoding cassettes. In this novel, Khaled's brother is radicalized by extremist ideology. This radical ideology imposes new social norms that were not common in the past. This novel aims to provide some historical facts about Saudi society. However, the main character is depicted as a person who cannot maintain a link between the past and the present. Therefore, in *Life on Hold,* Khaled cannot understand the economic, political, and social conditions in his present moment. Therefore, Khaled's instability of historical thinking causes a weak vision that cannot criticize the status quo.

The postmodern American novel that shows a lack of historical thinking and that will be discussed as a reference point for these Saudi novels is *No Country for Old Men*, by Cormac McCarthy. This novel is a narrative about fighting over money. The participants in this battle are

Sheriff Ed Tom Bell, Llewelyn Moss, who is a Vietnam veteran, and Anton Chigurh, a psychopathic killer and schizophrenic character. This novel takes place in the southwestern part of the United States. Meanwhile, when Moss is hunting in the desert, he comes across many human remains at the deadly scene of a conflict between groups of drug traffickers. In the scene, Moss finds a case that contains two million dollars. One of the drug traffickers is still wounded and asks Moss for water, but he does not have it. After Moss returns home, he decides to return to the scene to deliver water to the wounded man. However, Moss is seen by men who own the drugs and money. Then, he runs and returns home. Thereafter, he asks his wife to go to her mother's home as he attempts to evade the gang's pursuit. The initial drug dealer sends Anton Chigurh, who enjoys killing, to retrieve the money. Simultaneously, Bell, as a man of law enforcement, participates in the battle because he aims to impose the law by capturing Moss and Chigurh. During this short time, Chigurh traces Moss and kills many innocent people who encounter him on his journey to retrieve the money. In the end, almost all people who are connected to the money are killed except Chigurh and Bell.

In the third chapter, I discuss the contradiction between utopia and ideology in the postmodern American novel and the postmodern Saudi novel. The main argument is that the postmodern American novel and the postmodern Saudi novel can be read through the dialectic of ideology and utopia. Subsequently, I argue that the postmodern American novel and the postmodern Saudi novel contain the contradiction of socio-historical content in late capitalism. This argument aims to detect whether or not the postmodern American novel and the postmodern Saudi novel are characterized by a weak utopian imagination. I follow Jameson's theory in *Political Unconscious* that considers ideology as a closure and utopia as a response. In this sense, utopia aims to open the ideological closure through the process of the imagination of alternatives

to the status quo. In short, the dialectic criticism that aims to reveal the relationship between ideology and utopia can help to determine whether the utopian imagination is weak or not.

In the third chapter, *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* (2009), by Yousef al-Mohaimeed, will be discussed. This novel, translated by Robin Moger, is about a young Saudi man, Fahad, who has many difficulties with Saudi society. Al-Mohaimeed discusses many social and political issues such as racism and the unsuccessful coup that happened in 1979 in Saudi Arabia. He concentrates on the influence of this coup on the appearance of the radical ideology in Saudi Arabia. Al-Mohaimeed criticizes the domination of religious police in Saudi life. Al-Mohaimeed implies this domination has stolen the essence of life in Saudi Arabia. Also, al-Mohaimeed shows how the domination of the religious police changes the relationships between people. Also, he shows how this domination influences people's thinking. In short, this novel shows that the domination of religious ideology is the main factor for many social and political problems in Saudi society.

Fahad is a son of a member of the unsuccessful coup. His father discovers his ideology is an illusion after he is released from prison. His father left a suitcase that contains his book notes and some papers that show how his ideology did not help him to achieve a better life. Fahad lives with his mother and his sister after his father dies in a car accident. Unfortunately, his mother, Suha, remarried his uncle, his father's brother. His uncle is a radical person who takes advantage of his position as a religious man. Fahad is depicted as a young artist. He has romantic relationships with some women. His mother suffers from cancer. Her husband believes in spiritual treatment; therefore, he brings an Egyptian man to recite Quran for Suha. Her husband and his friend think that there is a djinn inside Suha. In order to extract the devil from Suha, they lash her. This lashing causes Suha to die. After his mother is dead, Fahad meets his girlfriend in

a Starbucks. However, the religious police capture them because this type of meeting is prohibited. Therefore, he decides to go to the United Kingdom.

Where Pigeons Don't Fly is about the contradiction between utopia and ideology. Religious people impose their ideology on the entire society. They do not distinguish between Muslims and non-Muslims because the one who disbelieves in their ideology is their opponent regardless of his/her religion. The conflict between Fahad and religious people shows the contradiction between utopia and ideology. Also, this conflict reveals the weakness of the representation of utopia in the postmodern Saudi novel. In *Where Pigeons Don't Fly*, Fahad leaves the country. He migrates to the West. His "bad utopianism" does not change the status quo, but only escapes it. The representation of weak utopia in this novel shows how the social context may influence the postmodern novel. In the postmodern American novel, the weakness of utopia is attributed to the domination of late capitalism. However, in the postmodern Saudi novel, the weakness of utopia is attributed to the dominations of late capitalism and the domination of radical ideology. Also, Al-Mohaimeed highlights the relationship between radical ideology and capitalism by describing Fahad's uncle as a businessman who exploits his religious missions to buy and sell commodities such as fragrances. However, Al-Mohaimeed's novel concentrates primarily on the influence of ideological domination.

The second novel that will be discussed in the third chapter is *Jāhilīyah* (*Days of Ignorance*) (2007) by Laylá al-Juhanī. This novel is translated into English by Nancy Roberts. It is about a relationship between a white girl, Leen, and a black man, Malek. They love each other, but they cannot get married because social norms refuse the marriage between a white woman and a black man. Leen's young brother discovers his sister's relationship with Malek and plans to kill Malek. This novel describes the materialistic development of Saudi society. However, this

development does not help to obtain social justice. Al-Juhanī implies that economic

development, which is a consequence of the oil boom and participation in a capitalist system,

does not help people to achieve a better life. This novel may be seen through the dialectical

process of ideology in terms of racism and through utopia, represented by the possibility of love

and tolerance. The plot mentions how the United States uses the Security Council to legislate the

invasion of Iraq. Al-Juhanī implies unjust actions occur at different levels in the contemporary

era such as in a situation of marriage in Saudi Arabia or in a global decision of invasion of

another country. She implies that ideology closes any opportunity to achieve a better life.

Therefore, this novel contains a weak utopian imagination. The contradiction of utopia and

ideology in *Jāhilīyah* may be seen in some African-American novels. However, the domination

of social norms, that prohibit the marriage completely, distinguish this novel from the

postmodern American novel.

  The postmodern American novel that is to be discussed as a reference is *City of Glass* by

Paul Auster. This novel is detective fiction. In *City of Glass*, the protagonist, Quinn, a writer of

detective fiction, receives a misdirected phone call. The caller asks about a private investigator,

Paul Auster, to protect Peter Stillman from his father who will be released from prison and who

will come after his son. After several calls, Quinn appropriates Auster's identity and takes the

job. In the end, Quinn does not find the father and he cannot find Stillman's family. The most

important issue in *City of Glass* is that the protagonist cannot criticize the status quo and imagine

a better life. Therefore, his attempts to protect Stillman Jr. fail. This shows that the representation

of utopian imagination is weak in this novel.

  In conclusion, the participation of Saudi Arabia in the global economic system may be

seen as a factor for the appearance of the postmodern novel in Saudi Arabia. This economic

factor also helps to discuss the similarity between the Saudi novel and the American novel. However, the economic factor differentiates the Saudi novel from other Arabic novels that emerge from postcolonial contexts. The issue of modernization and tradition may help to illuminate the differences between the postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel. Saudi novels written after 2001 may be seen as a postmodern novel. In order to prove this argument, I choose six Saudi novels as primary texts, with three American novels as references. In this dissertation, I rely on Jameson's theorization of postmodernism. Ultimately, my dissertation contains several purposes. First, the dissertation aims to challenge the stereotypical image in the West that considers all Eastern cultural discourses as postcolonial discourses. This view is insufficient because the relationship between the West and the East no longer relies on the opposition for definition. In the age of the domination of international corporations, the West and the East are potentially equally dominant. Therefore, it is not surprising to see an Eastern country exert financial pressure on a Western country. Second, this dissertation aims to confirm Jameson's notion that postmodernism is the cultural logic of late capitalism by expanding on his idea that postmodernism is primarily a cause and a symptom of western culture by suggesting that postmodernism is a global culture which may be found in non-Western cultures as long as that culture's economic system is a participant in late capitalism. Third, this dissertation aims to distinguish between the Saudi novel and the Arabic novel. The Saudi novel may be seen as a postmodern novel because Saudi novelists have not experienced colonialism and because the Saudi economy is a significant participant the global economic system, although there are key differences between the Saudi and American postmodern novel. Fourth, this project aims to confirm that the Saudi novel endorses Western cultural discourse rather than criticizing it.

Chapter One: The Instability of Personality

In this chapter, there are some key questions to answer: do characters in the novels under discussion integrate contradictory aspects and tendencies into a coherent, overarching sense and view of themselves? In other words, do characters maintain a continuity of personal past, present, and future? If they cannot integrate the past and the present to conceptualize the future, they cannot maintain a coherent identity. Do characters in the postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel have stable personalities? Also, what are the main factors that cause stability or instability? In this chapter, the argument is derived from Jameson's argument of the "psychic fragmentation'' of the postmodern personality (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 90). He attributes the instability of personality to the domination of late capitalism. I argue that Saudi Arabia's participation in the global economic system causes such radical change over such a short period of time that the instability of personality becomes more evident as a method of communicating a postmodern condition. Also, I argue the instability of personality in the postmodern Saudi novel is not only a consequence of the domination of late capitalism, but this instability of personality may be considered a result of social and political conditions. In short, the economic, social, and political contexts characterize postmodernity in Saudi Arabia.

This chapter is divided into four parts. First, I discuss how critical descriptions of the instability of personality in the postmodern era. This theoretical discussion relies essentially on Jameson's discussion of the instability of personality. Second, I investigate the representation of the instability of personality in *Girls of Riyadh* by Rajā al-Sani' to illustrate how Saudi Arabia's participation in the global economic system produces the instability of personality. Third, I explore the instability of personality in *Throwing Sparks* by Abdo Khal. Although this novel links the instability of personality to a psychological problem, I attempt to draw out the influence

of wealth and power as a contributing factor to the focal character's mental illness. Fourth, I discuss the instability of personality in *Super Sad True Love Story* by Gary Shteyngart as a consequence of the domination of late capitalism. I also discuss how some postmodern features such as schizophrenia, fragmentation, cynical reason, and suspicion toward grand stories cause or reflect the instability of personality. In other words, discussing other postmodern features, which may be found in these texts, may reveal narrative strategies that represent the instability of personality. This investigation connects to my larger argument about how we should read the Saudi novel as postmodern as opposed to postcolonial.

According to Friedrich Nietzsche, "a man is the animal which is able to make promises" (Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals* 1). In this sense, a person has the ability to remember what he once said or did. Memory helps man determine his wishes and define a plan to accomplish them in the future. Once a man cannot link his past to his present or his present to his future, he cannot establish a coherent sense of his personality. Then, it is possible to define the coherent personality as the meaningful connectivity between the personal past, present and future. This indicates the unification of identity. When a person cannot integrate what happened in his past into his present or cannot integrate his future into his present, he cannot maintain a temporal continuity. This means he cannot construct a coherent story about his position in the world. Subsequently, this man suffers from an instability of personality.

In the postmodern era, some critics and philosophers, such as Michel Foucault, pay attention to the structure of personality. However, Fredric Jameson's contribution is the most influential because he links his discussion of the structure of personality to the influence of modes of production. In his theoretical approach, Jameson argues that the instability of personality is a consequence of what he calls depthlessness in the postmodern era (Jameson,

Postmodernism 6). He argues that this depthlessness leads to a weakening of historicity. The weakness of historicity has two main forms: weak historical thinking and weak private temporality. Either of these varieties of weak historical thinking leads to the crucial point in the postmodern era: the schizophrenic sense. However, in the context of the postmodern American and Saudi novels, the representation of the instability of personality will be somewhat different in each national context. Hypothetically, this instability may be attributed to the domination of late capitalism because the postmodern American and Saudi novels are written under the age of late capitalism. Nuances in the varieties of the instability of personality may be attributed to social differences between American and Saudi societies.

For Jameson, writers in the postmodern era cannot provide a personal literary style that distinguishes them from each other. Therefore, postmodernist writers rely on pastiche and parody to produce cultural works. He explains that

> Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of any laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists. (*Postmodernism* 17)

Pastiche is utilized to mask the weakness of personal literary style. Therefore, this literary technique becomes very common among postmodern writers. In addition, the function of pastiche and parody in postmodern culture produces what Jameson calls "the death of the subject" (*Postmodernism* 20). Consequently, the personal identity vanishes and is replaced with a postmodern form of psychic fragmentation.

Furthermore, Jameson explains that in the age of the domination of late capitalism, the sense of alienation has increased; therefore, people cannot maintain a stable personality. Thus, people have experienced in the postmodern era what he calls "psychic fragmentation". He writes

that "alienation is, first of all, not merely a modernist concept but also a modernist experience (something I cannot argue further here, except to say that 'psychic fragmentation' is a better term for what ails us today, if we need a term for it)" (*Postmodernism* 90). This dissociation results from a feeling of the lack of meaning. It also affects expression at the personal and textual levels. One who feels psychic fragmentation cannot represent his identity; psychic fragmentation causes a textual fragmentation that then characterizes postmodern cultural works.

The presence of the schizophrenic sense in texts is a crucial feature because it attempts to provide an account that is reflective of the experience of postmodern culture. The schizophrenic sense provides access to understanding other postmodern characteristics such as fragmentation. Jameson claims that "Lacan's account of schizophrenia [is] useful here not because I have any way of knowing whether it has clinical accuracy but chiefly because—as description rather than diagnosis—it seems to me to offer a suggestive aesthetic model" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 26). In addition, for him, the schizophrenic sense has a relationship with linguistic malfunctioning. This relationship may be revealed by

> way of twofold propositions: first, that personal identity is itself the effect of a certain temporal unification of past and future with one's present; and, second, that such active temporal unification is itself a function of language, or better still of the sentence, as it moves along its hermeneutic circle through time. (Jameson *Postmodernism* 26–27)

Jameson explains that when a writer cannot unify the past, present, and future of his/her utterance, he probably cannot maintain a stable identity in his/her experience of life. The sentence here is used as a microcosm of the biographical experience. The schizophrenic sense causes the instability of identity that is associated with psychic fragmentation. The discussion of the instability of identity and its relationship to other postmodern issues be further explored later in this chapter in the context of *Girls of Riyadh* by Rajā al-Sani', *Throwing Sparks* by Abdo Khal, and *Super Sad True Love Story* by Gary Shteyngart.

Moreover, any discussion of the instability of personality in the postmodern era would be incomplete without proper attention being paid to the simulacrum. French sociologist Jean Baudrillard explains the function of the simulacrum in the postmodern era. For him, images or signs go through four stages: they are the reflection of a basic reality, they mask the basic reality, they mark the absence of a basic reality, and they bear no relation to any reality (Baudrillard 1). Basically, he points out the function of images in blurring the difference between reality and art. Consequent to the fourth stage, there is hyper-reality. For example, characters that are utilized in Disney franchise theme parks cause hyper-reality because people cannot determine whether they are in a real world or fictional world. The simulacrum, which is closely associated with and a product of the development of technology, causes an instability for individual subjects to determine whether they live in a real world or a fictional world. Therefore, these individuals cannot maintain a stable personality. In the dissertation, this notion may help in the discussion of *Girls of Riyadh* and *Super Sad True Love Story*[20].

Girls of Riyadh may be considered a postmodern novel for following reasons. First, it satirizes modernism in Arabic literature by mocking modernist writers. This is an example of metafiction. Postmodernism is a logical result of the failure of modernism to solve many dilemmas. Jameson claims that "most of the postmodernisms emerge as specific reactions against the established forms of high modernism, against this or that dominant high modernism which conquered the university, the museum, the art gallery network, and the foundations" (qtd in Foster 111). In *Girls of Riyadh*, the narrator mocks modernist culture. She says:

> I have never felt even slightly moved or influenced by those modernist poets who
> compose a *qasida* of thirty lines in which they talk about nothing! I do not get any

---

[20] In the second chapter, this notion may help to link instability of personality to weak historical thinking in *The Dove's Necklace.*

> pleasure from reading about *the festering pus on the forehead issuing from behind the haunch of eternal grief.* (al-Sani' 60)

She criticizes how modernist poetry contains very ambiguous poetic images and language that are not accessible to many people. In addition, she implies that modernist culture, principally modernist poetry, does not meet people's needs. *Girls of Riyadh* may be considered a specific reaction to the established forms of high modernism in Saudi literature in the last century. In this sense, al-Sani' aims to write a novel that is accessible to a general, non-specialized population because it discusses their daily needs. Thus, *Girls of Riyadh* rejects and challenges modernist literature.

Second, *Girls of Riyadh* contains some postmodern characteristics. In this novel, the most important theme is mockery of social norms in Saudi Arabia. This theme is achieved using postmodern features such as playfulness and irony. By way of illustration, the narrator quotes poems by the modernist poet Nizar Qabbani, not to endorse modernist literary style, but to mock collective thinking in Saudi Arabia[21]. In other words, she utilizes Qabbani's poems to expose the parody and satire in the collective thinking in Saudi Arabia. For instance, she says, "I am in sync only with Nizar's essential lines, lines that not a single one of those new poets (with all due respect to them) has been able to compose, despite their simplicity" (al-Sani' 60). Although she mocks most modernist poets who use ambiguous poetic language, she relies on Qabbani's poems to criticize the collective thinking of Saudi society. To put it in another way, she attributes the main reason for Saudi society standing against romantic relationships to the ambiguous poetic language of Arabic poetry. In this sense, she implies that modernist poets do not help society to

---

[21] Although this novel mocks modernist poetry, it relies on the Qabbani's poetry to criticize the collective thinking of Saudis. Here, this endorsement involves only Qabbani's treatment of gender. However, this endorsement does not insist on Qabbani's insistence on the need for modernization and change in the Arab world because this novel shows modernization is failed.

get rid of the domination of traditional social norms. In sum, although *Girls of Riyadh* mocks the

modernist project, it utilizes Qabbani's poems to insist on irony and playfulness to criticize the

domination of social norms. Thus, the representation of rejecting high modernism and insisting

on depthlessness and playfulness may contribute to the postmodern nature of *Girls of Riyadh*.

Third, rejecting the high poetic modernist language and insisting on the accessibility of

narrative language connects to blurring boundaries between reality and fiction in *Girls of Riyadh*.

In this novel, it is not clear whether the narrator is referring to fictional characters or real people.

In the postmodern era, boundaries between real and fictional worlds have vanished. Brian

McHale argues, in *Postmodernist Fiction*, that postmodernist works contain the blurring of

boundaries between reality and fiction. McHale points out that

> Postmodernist fiction deploys strategies which engage and foreground questions [...]
> [that] bear either on the ontology of the literary text itself or on the ontology of the world
> which it projects, for instance: What is a world? What kinds of world are there, how are
> they constituted, and how do they differ?; What happens when different kinds of world[s]
> are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated? (McHale
> 10)

The reader of *Girls of Riyadh* may think about these questions because this novel contains an

obvious technique to produce a blurring of boundary between the real and fictional world. For

instance, the narrator in the first chapter says, "Ladies and Gentlemen: You are invited to join me

in one of the most explosive scandals and noisiest, wildest all-night parties around" (al-Sani' 1).

Here, the reader may anticipate he/she will read a personal diary. In other words, *Girls of Riyadh*

may talk about events that happen in the real world. However, the book has literary components

such as character, plot, setting, dialogue, and point of view. This confusion is increased when the

narrator says, "one of the guys reading my e-mails offered to collect them, once the last one

appeared, and to organize them into chapters for a book to be published. That way everyone

could read them" (al-Sani' 188). Here, the novel is not clear if it is talking about real people or

portraying fictional characters as real ones. The ambiguous vision shows that *Girls of Riyadh* may be considered a postmodern novel that provides the blurring vision of the boundary between the real and the fictional world.

However, blurring the boundary between the real and fictional world may blur the boundary between realism and postmodernism in *Girls of Riyadh.* Basically, discussing the representation of literary characteristics determines whether this novel is a realistic or postmodern novel. In this sense, fragmentation may determine the representation of postmodernity in *Girls of Riyadh*. Discussing real issues does not mean that the novel is realistic; Jameson, for instance, considers *Ragtime* a postmodern novel rather than a historical novel[22]. In this sense, the only way to determine whether *Girls of Riyadh* is a realistic or postmodern novel is to discuss its literary features. As mentioned above, *Girls of Riyadh* is postmodern rather than a realistic one partly because it contains the instability of personality that is associated with other postmodern characteristics.

It is possible to find a realistic novel that contains the instability of personality, but a factor that causes this instability may help to distinguish between the realistic and postmodern novel. As mentioned above, Jameson attributes temporal discontinuity to the domination of late capitalism, rather than simply seeing it as a mental illness. It is worth mentioning that the instability of personality in *Girls of Riyadh* is not only a consequence of some social factors, but it may be seen as a result of economic growth in Saudi Arabia. At first glance, a reader may attribute the appearance of the instability of personality to the domination of some social norms. However, economic growth, which is a consequence of Saudi Arabia's participation in the global economic system, causes the instability of personality.

---

[22] See *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* p 21-25.

Girls of Riyadh criticizes the domination of some social norms in the collective thinking of Saudis. In *Girls of Riyadh,* there is a manifest discourse that concentrates on criticizing the social norms, as well as a concealed discourse that portrays economic conditions in Saudi Arabia. Revealing the concealed discourse may show the structure of characters' personalities. In addition, revealing the concealed discourse may help to explain why this novel may be considered postmodern. In my opinion, the domination of social norms and economic development cause the instability of personality. In this sense, while the representation of the instability of personality in the postmodern Saudi novel is a result of the domination of social norms, the instability of personality in the postmodern American novel is, for Jameson, a consequence of late capitalism.

In *Girls of Riyadh,* the representation of instability of personality is associated with some postmodern characteristics. First, in *Girls of Riyadh,* schizophrenia is an important characteristic that is linked to social contradictions. The narrator opens *Girls of Riyadh* with a statement that provides a profound idea about the plot. For the narrator, the scandals are unique because they show some social contradictions such as the contradictory treatment of women in Saudi society. In Saudi society, some people allege that women are treated nicely, but in fact women cannot obtain the same rights as men. These social contradictions produce people who "live in this world but do not really experience it, seeing only what we can tolerate and ignoring the rest" (al-Sani' 1). She implies that women do not experience equal treatment and this condition goes largely ignored in the contemporary era which indicates that there are contradictions between what people allege and what women experience. Rationally, a woman who finds her experience in the contemporary era of the contradiction of social promises feels the schizophrenic sense. Subsequently, the narrator implies that characters who experience social contradictions suffer

from schizophrenia. They cannot maintain a temporal continuity. In other words, characters'

experience in the past is disconnected from what they experience in the present. Also, their

present is disconnected from their future. In short, the social contradiction may cause the

instability of personality in *Girls of Riyadh*.

Moreover, in *Girls of Riyadh* temporal discontinuity is not only a consequence of social

contradictions, but it may be associated with the technological development that is a result of the

domination of late capitalism. In this novel, the narrator shows how her personality is unstable.

This instability may be attributed to the technological development that helps people to

experience new personalities that might be different from their real personality. For instance, the

narrator says, "My hair is now fluffed and teased, and I've painted my lips a shameless crimson

red. Beside me rests a bowl of chips splashed with chili and lime. Readers: prepare yourselves.

I'm ready to disclose the first scandal!"(al-Sani' 3). Here, when she sits in front of her computer

in full makeup ready for internet consumption, she has a new personality that may be different

from her normal personality. At first glance, the narrator implies that the social contradictions

drive her crazy. However, the most significant point here is that the narrator portrays her as a

schizophrenic person because her personality is changed when she uses technology. Larry

McCaffrey points out that, in the postmodern era, the influence of the rise of technology may

produce essentially reproductions or abstractions – images, advertising, information, memories,

styles, simulated experiences (McCaffery 4). This simulated experience may be found in *Girls of*

Riyadh, which shows how technology has influenced the structure of personality. By way of

illustration, the narrator, as mentioned above, resembles other people who engage in simulated

experiences as a consequence of the domination of technology in the postmodern era. Hence,

they have the instability of personality.

Generally speaking, economic growth (*tafra)*, which is related to Saudi participation in the global economy, is an important factor that causes the instability of personality because what Saudis experienced before economic growth is disconnected from what they experience during and as a result of economic growth. In addition, what Saudis experience after economic growth is disconnected from *tafra's* promises*.* In this sense, economic growth does not help people to integrate their experiences in the past with what they experience in the present. Moreover, this *tafra* does not help them integrate their future into their present. Importantly, historical outcomes of *tafra* might not have appeared without the domination of globalization. In other words, in Saudi Arabia, the economic growth is associated with the arrival of international corporations, which brings globalization.

In *Girls of Riyadh,* economic growth opens gates for cultural globalization to bring Western pop culture that influences the structure of Saudi culture. Subsequently, this cultural globalization causes some defects inside the structure of the Saudi personality. Apparently, cultural globalization causes postmodern characters who may be seen as schizophrenic or fragmented. In this sense, people may "live in a perpetual present with which the various moments of his or her past have little connection and for which there is no conceivable future on the horizon" (Jameson, *Postmodernism and Consumer Society* 119). For example, in *Girls of Riyadh*, Faisal's Valentine's Day gift to Michelle includes "a little black bear holding a crimson velvet heart. When you pressed on the heart, the tune of Barry Manilow's song 'Can't Smile Without You' came floating out" (al-Sani' 58). Here, Faisal is depicted as a fan of Western music. In other words, Western music influences Faisal's personality in building a romantic relationship with Michelle. However, Faisal cannot sustain his relationship with Michelle to marry her because social norms do not allow this type of romantic relationship to end in a happy

marriage. In this sense, Faisal has multiple personalities: one believes in social norms and another in some aspect of cultural globalization including music or celebrating Valentine's Day. Subsequently, Faisal is schizophrenic; therefore, his personality is fragmented. This crucial problem may be seen as a consequence of cultural globalization. To put it in another way, cultural globalization does not unify Faisal's personality. In addition, cultural globalization does not help him to fight against social norms. Then, he cannot unify his experience which indicates his instability of personality. In short, in *Girls of Riyadh*, Faisal gives up his romantic relationship with Michelle because his fragile personality cannot allow him to maintain it.

As mentioned above, in the postmodern era, the instability of personality is associated routinization. In Saudi society, economic growth has changed some social aspects. Therefore, Saudis have begun practicing some social norms that might not have happened without economic growth. By way of illustration, celebrating weddings was very simple before the growth of oil prices. Economic growth changes this simplicity by imposing some social practices such as adding some new aspects to the celebration of the wedding, which eventually changes the meaning of the wedding. For instance, *Girls of Riyadh* starts with a description of Gamrah's wedding, at which her friends Sadeem, Michelle, and Lamees are her bridesmaids. Al-Sani' aims in the depiction of the wedding and the bridesmaids to show that every Saudi wedding has the same protocol (routinization). In Saudi weddings, girls dress up to attract the boys' mothers because this strategy "is the most foolproof path to a quick marriage proposal in our conservative society" (al-Sani' 4). She implies that attending a wedding is not a social event for celebration, but it is a way to get married. For example, Gamrah's sisters come over to tell Sadeem that "so-and-so had been asking questions" (al-Sani' 4). For Sadeem, this wedding may be "this first pearl

to roll off the necklaces" (al-Sani' 4). In short, al-Sani' shows why Saudi girls attend weddings and how they repeat the same approach which is a part of routinization in Saudi culture.

In addition, the routinization, in *Girls of Riyadh*, may be considered a symptom of the domination of late capitalism because it has been exacerbated by emergence of consumerism that is a consequence of economic growth. In other words, the appearance of consumerism is usually accompanied with routinization. Subsequently, the combination of consumerism and the routinization may affect the stability of the Saudi personality. Al-Sani' shows how the routinization of attending weddings is associated with consuming luxury global brands of clothes or chocolate that is imported from Europe. For instance, in the Lamees's wedding, Sadeem "took on some light duties such as ordering the chocolates from France" (al-Sani' 231). In this novel, characters including Lamees and Sadeem are students who do not have jobs. In this sense, these girls, especially Sadeem, do not have enough money to buy luxury goods. However, these girls and some guests are required to consume goods to create new personalities. This social contradiction shows that in the age of consumerism, which appeared in Saudi Arabia after the economic development in the 1980s, many social aspects have changed. This change influences the structure of the Saudi personality. In other words, people are required to consume goods to behave appropriately in social contexts. In addition, people attend social events, not to celebrate, but as a scheduled social obligation. In this sense, these people have schizophrenic personality because their personality outside the social event is different from their personalities when they attend the social event. In short, people participate in some social events as a part of routinization, but this participation is very complex when it is done in the capitalist system.

Subsequently, the routinization, which is associated with consumerism, may be associated with what Jameson calls "the waning of affect" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 10).

Jameson illustrates that, in the postmodern era, people lose the ability to feel anything at all. He says, "the liberation, in contemporary society, from the older *anomie* of the centered subject may also mean not merely a liberation from anxiety but a liberation from every other kind of feeling as well, since there is no longer a self-present to do the feeling" (Jameson *Postmodernism* 15). It is obvious in *Girls of Riyadh* that Gamrah's friends who attend her wedding do not have a feeling of happiness. They are liberated from feeling. For example, Sadeem does not show any feeling in the wedding. The narrator shows that Lamees and Sadeem dance in the wedding not because they feel happiness for their friend, but because they aim to attract "older women who devote themselves to arranging marriages" (al-Sani' 8).

Furthermore, the waning of affect may be associated with fragmentation. Jameson insists on the significance of the importance of psychic fragmentation which, for him, replaces alienation in the postmodern era. In *Girls of Riyadh,* fragmentation may be considered a consequence of Saudi participation in the global economic system and the influence of social norms. The economic growth in Saudi society influences people's personalities. People who consume western commodities and endorse western values practice personalities that might not represent their authentic identities. They practice different personalities when they participate in certain social events. In other words, economic opportunity gives people new personalities, but these personalities might be different in relation to social conditions. In short, while the economic system creates a new personality, social norms change the personality which produces another personality. This dilemma shows the appearance of the instability of personality. For example, Michelle, who used to live in the United States, is a member of an aristocratic family. Therefore, she endorses western values. She celebrates Valentine's Day with her beloved Faisal who gives her an enormous basket filled with dried red roses and red heart-shaped candles (al-

Sani' 58). Apparently, Faisal and Michelle have personalities which are influenced by their economic-social positions. However, they cannot maintain their personalities; therefore, they have multiple personalities because social norms and ideological constraints force them to practice a different attitude. For instance, Faisal gives up marrying Michelle because her family is not a member of a tribe. In this sense, Faisal and Michelle are fragmented because they cannot maintain their personality within their economic and social conditions.

As mentioned above, there is a relationship between the schizophrenic sense and the influence of technology, but postmodern critics link the appearance of psychic fragmentation to technological development as well. To put it bluntly, in the contemporary era, the capitalist system benefits from the development of technology to produce more physical products and technological commodities. Frequently, consuming technology forces people to isolate themselves from others or from their real personality. Apparently, the development of technology may increase feelings of psychic fragmentation. Baudrillard claims that the postmodern era is the age of the simulacrum. For him, in the postmodern world, people cannot distinguish between 'real life' and 'simulated life' (or 'simulacrum') (Baudrillard 3). In this novel, the narrator's on-line persona reflects simulacrum. In other words, In *Girls of Riyadh,* as mentioned above, the narrator isolates herself from others when she writes her emails. Yet, she also isolates herself from her real personality. In this sense, sitting in front of the computer creates another personality that may be disconnected from her real personality, one revealed through changing her appearance even though she is alone. Therefore, the narrator may be seen as psychically fragmented. Subsequently, she suffers from an instability of personality.

In addition, the structure of psychic fragmentation may be found in the structure of narrative language. Al-Sani''s narrative structure shows temporal discontinuity as evidenced by

the narrator's inability to distinguish between the past tense and the present tense. Jameson argues that "active temporal unification is itself a function of language, or better still of the sentence, as it moves along its hermeneutic circle through time"(Jameson, *Postmodernism* 27) . He elaborates, suggesting that when the individual cannot unify the past, the present, and the present in his/her writing, he/she cannot maintain a stable personality. This inability to unify the past, the present, and the future in writing appears at the novel's end, which should be written in present tense. For example, the narrator says, Lamees "wrote from Canada, where she and Nizar are doing their graduate studies, to congratulate me on the wild and crazy idea of writing these e-mails"(al-Sani' 280). In short, a combination of the past tense and the present tense in one sentence shows what, in Jameson's words, is "the breakdown of the signifying chain, therefore, the schizophrenic is reduced to an experience of pure material signifiers, or, in other words, a series of pure and unrelated presents in time" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 27).

Furthermore, in the postmodern culture, psychic fragmentation of personality may produce a fragmented structure in the novel. In M. Keith Booker's words, "the formal fragmentation of postmodern texts is closely related to the increasing psychic fragmentation of individual subjects" (Booker, *Postmodern Hollywood* xviii). *Girls of Riyadh* is criticized due to the lack of a cohesive narrative thread or the plot. Some readers consider this book as women's gossip, not as a literary work. The main reason they critique *Girls of Riyadh* is the fragmented narrative structure. Jameson points out the in the influence of psychic fragmentation and aesthetic features of a cultural work. He says:

> What happens in textuality or schizophrenic art is strikingly illuminated by such clinical accounts, although in the cultural text, the isolated signifier is no longer an enigmatic state of the world or an incomprehensible yet mesmerizing fragment of language but rather something closer to a sentence in free-standing isolation. (Jameson *Postmodernism* 28)

 This point may be found in the narrative structure of *Girls of Riyadh*. For instance, every email, which is supposed to represent a chapter, explores a sub-story which is disconnected from preceding or subsequent emails. In other words, there is no narrative thread that connects all chapters (emails) of *Girls of Riyadh* together. In addition, some emails themselves are completely fragmented. For instance, in the fourth chapter, the narrator describes Gamrah's new life in Chicago. She says, "Gamrah began her new life in absolute fear and trepidation. She felt like she died of terror every time she walked into the elevator that took her up to the apartment they shared on the fortieth floor of the Presidential Towers" (al-Sani' 25). She then jumps suddenly and without transition to talking about Gamrah's honeymoon in Italy. She says, "At that time, after dinner in the elegant hotel restaurant, Gamrah had made an irrevocable decision that this would be her true wedding night, something for which she had waited too long" (al-Sani' 26). The narrator's psychic fragmentation is reflected in the structures of narration. The reader cannot find a suitable thread to guide them in following the narration. Therefore, some readers, or even some literary critics who do not know what postmodern works are, criticize the narrative structure of *Girls of Riyadh*[23] for jumping from scene to scene without a reason or overall plan.

The narrative structure of *Girls of Riyadh* does not only contain fragmentation, but it also provides other postmodern characteristics which may help to categorize this novel as postmodern. The narrative structure, in *Girls of Riyadh,* is obviously associated with metafiction. The term metafiction means "fiction about fiction, or a fiction that comments on its own fictional

---

[23] Saleh Mued Al-Ghamdi, who is a professor in King Saud University, writes an article entitled "Reading in *Girls of Riyadh* and its meaning." He describes narrative structure of this novel as weak. He gives examples of this weakness such as the weak narrative language. Also, he considers introductions of chapters as autobiography which means he is not aware of the concept of metafiction. However, he thinks this novel is significant for the Saudi novel because it may influence the development of the Saudi novel.

status" (Baldick 151). To put it succinctly, metafiction is a fiction that highlights some issue of its fictional writing style as well as a fiction that talks about itself. Surely, this type of fiction is aware presciently of its own epistemological and ontological literary composition[24]. In *Girls of Riyadh*, the narrator writes an introductory comment in every email (chapter). These introductory comments may be seen as metafiction. The Saudi novel barely contains this technique of narration. This literary style is designated to serve a certain role in the structure of narration in a novel. In *Girls of Riyadh*, metafiction that appears as introductory comments in every chapter serves to manifest some issues such as women's right. In other words, introductory comments make remarks on social orders.

Furthermore, in *Girls of Riyadh,* metafiction helps to illustrate the representation of the instability of personality and criticism of collective thinking in Saudi society. First, metafictive elements in *Girls of Riyadh* comment on the personalities of characters by referencing their personalities in relation to the emails that constitute much of the novel. These comments help to explore the personality of every character and remind the reader about the structure of the novel. For example, the narrator comments on Gamrah's personality, describing her as passive (al-Sani' 56). The narrator implies that Gamrah is not confident about herself. Also, the narrator comments on Sadeem's preoccupation with love. In addition, the narrator comments on Michelle's personality, which is more western than Saudi (al-Sani' 109). However, the narrator comments on what the denominator is that may be found in every character. For the narrator, the denominator is seeking the blessing of love. In my opinion, the latent meaning that may be

---

[24] The term metafiction is linked to postmodernism. Linda Hutcheon in her book *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* defines the term metafiction as a narcissistic narrative, which means metafictional novels rely on self-referential and self-commenting on its own fictional composition (Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative* 1).

extracted from the narrator's metafictive commentary relates to the instability of personality. The narrator refers to this instability of personality by commenting on the characters' reactions to the novel. They respond to the novel of emails. For instance, Gamrah suffers deeply from the instability of personality; therefore, she "blew up at [the narrator] and threatened to cut off all ties if [the narrator] didn't stop talking about her" (al-Sani' 280).

Second, introductory comments in every chapter that may be considered metafiction are utilized to criticize the collective thinking of the Saudi people. Certainly, al-Sani' does not only aim to criticize social norms, but also aims to ridicule them. In this sense, this mockery can be described as the postmodern characteristic of playfulness. For instance, in the beginning of the third chapter, the narrator writes, "To all of those who abandoned whatever they were doing in order to urgently ask the brand of my bright red lipstick: It is new on the market and it is called: Get your nose out of my business and get back to reading about things that actually matter" (al-Sani' 20). Here, the narrator comments indirectly on how Saudis leave important issues to concentrate on some superficial issues. She shows how her readers do not comment on what happens in the second chapter. For instance, they do not pay attention to the social segregation of men and women. Also, they do not discuss how rich families have some luxuries that are not available to other people such as preparing precious parties that cost thousands of Saudi *Riyal*. In short, the introductory comment, in a metafictional mode, criticizes collective thinking with a sense of playfulness. In this sense, *Girls of Riyadh* may be considered a postmodern novel.

In addition, introductory comments reveal playfulness and satire that are common in postmodern culture. Indeed, Ihab Hassan mentions that, while modernism has a purpose,

postmodernism relies on play[25]. In this novel, the narrator shows her uncertainty about her novel. The narrator does not see it as a serious book that has a certain purpose. She says:

> One of the guys reading my e-mails offered to collect them, once the last one appeared, and to organize them into chapters for a book to be published. That way everyone could read them. *Ya salam*! [Oh, wow!] That's really something. For me to have a novel all my own! A book that would be displayed in bookstores and hidden in bedrooms. A book that some people would beg others to bring from oversees [*sic*] […] After all, I have been so diligent, using addresses of subscribers to Yahoo and Hotmail and other service providers […] publishing a book would mean revealing my name […] Do my friends deserve to undergo such a sacrifice? (al-Sani' 188-9).

The narrator implies that her book is not a serious literary book; it is just aggregated emails.

Here, she implies that she had been commenting on actual events as a part of the fictional plot.

She considers the threat that exposure would cause for her and her friends, and this makes her question whether her book could be a literary work. She implies that her emails do not represent a serious literary work, but they are series of "scandals and noisiest, wildest all-night parties around" (al-Sani' 1), which are not always considered high literary topics. Thus, she thinks that her readers should not ask her to publish her emails. In other words, she implies her emails do not have a serious purpose; therefore, she mentions some Saudi writers such as Turki Al-Hamad, Ghazi Al- Qusaibi who publish serious literary works. Her indication for these writers shows that her novel loses serious purposes.

Furthermore, this inability to determine a purpose may be reflected in the instability of personality. In *Girls of Riyadh*, al-Sani' portrays characters as girls who do not have obvious purposes. In *Girls of Riyadh*, characters do not mention any profound issues whether in politics

---

[25] He discusses postmodern characteristics in an article entitled Toward a Concept of Postmodernism in his book *The Postmodern Turn Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture*.

or the economy. For instance, the narrator says that Sadeem "recalled suddenly the demonstration she and her classmates had been prohibited from participating in, in those days, when all of the Arab nations were protesting to show support for the Palestinian Intifada and the *Al-Aqsa* Mosque uprising" (al-Sani' 65). The narrator shows clearly that Sadeem is not interested in a serious issue and has been steered away from political participation by those around her. Yet, Sadeem's generation is interested in some superficial issues such as "the scandalous behavior of Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky" (al-Sani' 65). Here, the narrator describes how characters do not think profoundly. In addition, the narrator attributes losing a sense of purpose in life to a character's limited experience, which is a consequence of being prohibited from participating in any serious events (al-Sani' 65). Losing purpose may influence the personality. Therefore, Sadeem, as an example, has an unstable personality. Her unstable personality, which is a consequence of limited experience, does not help her turning away from thinking about her boyfriend, Waleed. In short, this absence of purpose may be seen as a symptom of the instability of her personality.

Losing purpose indicates the much larger pattern of disbelief in metanarrative, which becomes a common issue in the postmodern era. The radical suspicion toward a totalizing metanarrative is one of several significant postmodern characteristics that may be found in the Saudi novel. *Girls of Riyadh* contains some tendencies that show suspicion of what Lyotard calls "grand stories." For example, the narrator says:

> After reading *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, Essentials of Psychoanalysis, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, On Narcissism* and *Totem and Taboo*, Sadeem gradually realized that Freud, with all his totems, tomatoes, cucumbers and green salad vegetables, was not going to be much help in solving her problem! Sigmund was not about to yield an explanation of why Waleed had left her. (al-Sani' 67).

The narrator shows how psychoanalysis as one of many "grand stories" that does not provide an alternative for the status quo. Sadeem cannot find a solution for her problem in psychoanalysis

and tosses it aside. In this sense, the narrator implies that grand stories are not the best way for

solving problems. Subsequently, the failed outcome of grand stories influences the structure of

the personality of Sadeem. She gives up relying on Freud's works; hence, she trusts Um

Nuwayyir who does not have a degree in psychoanalysis. Instead of formal training, she has her

own analysis from observation of men and women in the Gulf states (al-Sani' 67). Sadeem's

rejection for Freud's works may be considered a suspicion toward a metanarrative. Also, this

suspicion shows Sadeem's personality is unstable because she stumbles between disbelieving in

metanarrative and believing in Um Nuwayyir's naïve explanation. In other words, Sadeem's

disappointment in not finding a convincing explanation in Freud's works forces her to rely on

naïve explanations. Consequently, the failure of grand stories causes the instability of

personality.

Furthermore, in *Girls of Riyadh,* the rejection of elite culture, including literary

movements or philosophical schools, functions not just as a way of continuing the revolution

against modernism, but it may be seen as an aspect of the suspicion toward metanarrative. The

importance of this rejection is that the narrator aims to show the reader that her novel does not

rely on grand elaboration of the truth. For instance, she says while flipping through the pages of

a popular magazine containing extensive popular commentary about her emails:

> I was most interested in what the literary lions had to say. I didn't understand a thing,
> naturally. One said I was a talented writer who belongs to the metaphysical surrealistic
> expressionist strain of the impressionists' school, or something like that. The pundit
> observed that I am the first to be able to represent all these things. If only this big mouth
> knew the truth! I don't have the slightest idea what these words even MEAN, let alone
> know how to combine them in some meaningful way! But deserved or not, it is indeed
> gratifying to be the subject of such panegyric. (Hey, at least I can match their vocabulary
> now and then!) What do I think about impressionist metaphysical surrealism? It's
> positively, absolutely PUFFSOULISTIC! (al-Sani' 158)

The narrator does not deny cognition of some literary and philosophical schools only, but she

mocks these schools. In other words, she refuses to be duped by the ideologies of philosophical

schools. Therefore, she implies that she insists on her experience to criticize social system. Subsequently, Girls *of Riyadh* contains a parallel between the refusal of the legitimating ideology, which is represented by grand stories "and the attitude of self-reflexivity or ironic knowingness which other, more aesthetically oriented theorists have identified at the heart of postmodern culture" (Nicol, *The Cambridge Introduction* 13). Also, the narrator implies that critics who repeat literary schools' names do not help to change the status quo because they cannot simplify philosophy to help people to call for change. Therefore, she considers the mention of her emails and online handle by a critic is just panegyric and does nothing to change the truth.

In addition, in *Girls of Riyadh*, rejecting elite culture is rejecting the silence that characterizes the avant-garde. Umberto Eco elaborates that irony, in the postmodern novel, may not be an empty or cynical sign, but it may be seen as a negotiation, or a strategy to reject the silence to which avant-gardism leads. Eco says, "The postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognizing that the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: by with irony, not innocently" (qtd in Nicol, *Postmodernism* 111). In *Girls of Riyadh,* when the narrator says, "What do I think about impressionist metaphysical surrealism? It's positively, absolutely PUFFSOULISTIC!" (al-Sani' 158), she obviously mocks avant-garde schools. This irony implies that although these avant-garde schools existed, no one knows what these schools are. She implies that if avant-garde schools engaged with people, they would have known, but avant-garde schools were silent. Therefore, the narrator mocks these schools and people who still believe in them.

Apparently, in *Girls of Riyadh*, ironic knowingness may be utilized to insist on what is called cynical reason. According to Peter Sloterdijk, there is a different understanding of how

ideology, as false consciousness, works. He argues that cynicism is enlightened false

consciousness (Sloterdijk 5). He also illustrates that cynicism shows a sophisticated issue:

although people know that ideology is false and attempts to dominate reality, they believe in

ideology anyway. For him, cynicism is a dominant operating mode in contemporary culture. In

Girls of Riyadh, the ironic knowingness insists on the cynical reason as the only way to criticize

the dominant ideology. In addition, in *Girls of Riyadh*, the cynical reason or ironic knowingness

demonstrates playfulness. For example, the narrator says:

> Sitting in my own silent room, I can practically hear the blasts of condemnation and
> profanity coming from Saudi and Arab men among my readers when they see this verse
> posted. I wish you men could understand it as I believe Nizar Qabbani intended it to be
> understood . . . Oh, Nizar, in love there's been no one before you and there will never be
> anyone after you, even if your compassion toward women isn't due to a mutation in one
> of your male chromosomes but rather to the suicidal end of your poor sister's tragic love
> story. So it seems, I'm sorry to say, that no woman among us will find her own Nizar
> until after she has finished off one of his sisters. (al-Sani' 24–25).

In this introduction to the fourth chapter of *Girls of Riyadh,* there are comments on the plot itself.

This ironic knowingness aims to mocks the collective thinking in Saudi Arabia. She implies that

people may know how ideology shapes their thinking regarding love, but they still do it anyway.

In short, she relies on cynical reason to mock social norms.

Moreover, in *Girls of Riyadh,* the cynical reason should not be isolated from the influence

of political and economic conditions. In my opinion, al-Sani's relying on the cynical reason

shows an important issue that is related to the influence of modes of production in Saudi society

and the movement of history. This cynical reason shows how the narrator is aware of ideology,

but she cannot get rid of it because political and economic conditions cause disillusionment. In

other words, modes of production do not provide promising political and economic conditions to

change social norms. Therefore, the narrator in the whole novel implies that she is aware of the

domination of social norms' ideology, but she cannot suggest a way of change because modes of

production do not produce political and economic conditions that may help to change the status quo. In this sense, the narrator, who is aware of ideology but cannot get rid of it, may have an unstable personality because of this conflict between the awareness of ideology and inability of rejecting its influence, which divides the personality instead of unifying it.

In addition, the influence of the political and economic system does not only cause mental issues such as the cynical reason, but it causes physical problems that may impact the structure of postmodern personality. In the late capitalist era, postmodern architecture and urban design may influence the structure of personal identity. In *The Condition of Postmodernity*, David Harvey explains the influence of postmodernist architecture and urban design on space in the contemporary era. The structure of space may influence the structure of personality. Routinization, in a postmodern sense, may appear in postmodern space. In the contemporary era, some business deals and aristocratic celebrations take place in luxury hotels. In Saudi Arabia, after the appearance of economic growth, people changed where they would celebrate. By way of example, some people celebrate in some luxury hotels which may be considered examples of postmodern architecture. In *Girls of Riyadh*, the graduation of Lamees and Tamadur Jeddawi and Mashael Al-Abdulrahman take place in one of Riyadh's grand hotels where Sattam, who worked out the bank transactions for Gamrah and Sadeem's party-planning business, came into the restaurant with a group of businessmen (271–2). However, in the scene, Sattam, Gamrah, and Sadeem do not come over to greet each other. In this sense, the postmodern architecture of the grand hotel is not built to challenge the social norms that prevent men and women from sitting together--this hotel is designed for a capitalist purpose. Therefore, in *Girls of Riyadh*, Sattam, Gamrah and Sadeem cannot develop any genuine sense of their personal identities, again

revealing an instability of personality. This instability of personality may be seen as a consequence of all aspects of capitalism including postmodern space.

Ultimately, in *Girls of Riyadh*, the representation of the instability of personality, which cannot integrate the past into the present to imagine what the future will be, is characterized by symptoms such as the schizophrenic sense and fragmentation. However, discussing the instability of personality and its symptoms must be discussed in connection to political, economic, and social conditions. As mentioned above, this novel follows the lives of aristocratic girls in Riyadh. This social class cannot appear without the influence of economic conditions. As mentioned above, economic growth that was an outcome of increasing oil prices in the global market equipped them to consume western commodities as well as cultural productions such as music. The conflict between the economic position of aristocratic girls and their experience in Saudi society shows the schizophrenic sense because these girls cannot justify their lives. The consequence of the schizophrenic sense is the instability of personality. In addition, the instability of personality may be considered an outcome of the inconsistency between the political system, which is willing to open gates with the Other (especially Western countries), and some social norms. This inconsistency causes the appearance of multiple personalities such as Faisal's divided personality. In short, some social norms cause fragmentation that may be considered a sign of the instability of personality. Ultimately, all economic, political, and social condition show the movement of history as an outcome of modes of production. Therefore, the representation of personality cannot be isolated from the movement of history and the influential of modes of production.

As mentioned above, *Girls of Riyadh* combines the influences of social norms and economic growth on the structure of instability of personality. Also, *Girls of Riyadh* relies on an

unconventional narrative structure which indicates that this novel may be considered a postmodern novel. However, the Saudi novel, *Throwing Sparks* by Abdo Khal, concentrates on the influence of economic growth on the movement of Saudi society. Also, this novel follows the common structure of postmodern narration that contains common features such as fragmentation. *Throwing Sparks* conjures some postmodern issues, such as the status of homosexuality in the age of late capitalism and how the meaning of identity is changed in the contemporary era. This novel is discussed through the allegorical approach that helps to show how the main protagonist's psychosocial problems cast light on life in the postmodern era.

It is worth mentioning that *Throwing Sparks* contains some postmodern characteristics that help to illustrate the representation of the instability of personality. First, *Throwing Sparks* comments on a historical phase from the 1970s to the first decade of this millennium. In this sense, it is possible to find that Khal relies on metafiction to show the epistemological and ontological levels in the literary composition of this novel. In other words, *Throwing Sparks* comments on its fictional style and speaks about the movement of history in Saudi Arabia. This point could be discussed through Linda Hutcheon's term, historiographic metafiction. However, for my purposes, I will not concentrate on whether *Throwing Sparks* is completely aware of what happened in history or not. The main point is, *Throwing Sparks* relies on metafiction to comment on the key issue of the influence of economic growth (*tafra*) on Saudi society. By way of illustration, Tariq, the main protagonist, mentions some historical events that happened in the past such as the collapse of stock market in Saudi Arabia (Khal 299). Tariq does not speak about these events directly and instead lets his narration comment on them. For example, Tariq talks about how Issa, one of this novel's characters, loses his stock shares. Tariq says, "His entire account was wiped out in one stroke, down to the last piaster on the paper statement. Issa was

left to wander the streets naked and deranged, hurling abuse at the high and mighty of the city"

(Khal 300). Khal's metafiction diminishes the epistemological and ontological boundary

between his novel and history. This novel comments on its own fictional style and other

historical facts. In this sense, *Throwing Sparks* may be considered a postmodern novel.

Second, the metafiction in *Throwing Sparks* diminishes the epistemological and

ontological levels between fiction and reality. Khal borrows some issues from reality to utilize in

the novel. For instance, Tariq depicts how Hamed Abu Gulumbo, a fisherman in the novel, sings

poetic improvisation which is a sort of pop culture in Saudi Arabia (Khal 41). Also, in the Arabic

edition of *Throwing Sparks,* Khal attaches a piece of printed Islamic calendar to the end of the

novel, causing confusion about whether this book should be considered a fiction or not.

Moreover, the last part of the Arabic edition of *Throwing Sparks* contains biographies of every

girl who used to attend the Master's parties in the Palace. These biographies further confuse the

reader's sense of whether these are biographies about fictional characters or real names. The

blurring of fiction and reality illustrated by Brian McHale *Postmodernist Fiction* may be seen as

a postmodern feature in *Throwing Sparks.*

Third, in *Throwing Sparks,* intertextuality is utilized to elaborate the representation of

postmodern characteristics. The title, *Throwing Sparks*, may be considered as an example of

intertextuality. Khal borrows this title from a Quranic verse that describes Hell as a place that

"throws sparks [as huge] as a fortress" (*The Noble Quran* al Mursalat 77:32). Intertextuality is

associated with the sense of satire. Khal utilizes this depiction to show that marginalized people

suffer in this life because they live under the domination of an unjust system which treats them

as vehicles for increasing wealth. Tariq says, "I served no other purpose; only when [the Master]

had a victim in tow would everyone scurry around the Palace looking for me as if in search of a

lost key" (Khal X). Khal implies that Tariq, who is a member of a marginalized people, is forced

to do an unethical job considered to be a punishment for him as well as his victims. Here, Khal

implies that marginalized people suffer from punishment before they die; therefore, people, for

Khal, who think Hell is the only place that throws sparks as huge as fortresses or palaces, are

phony. Here, the intertextuality mocks how some people believe that the only place for

punishment is Hell. Also, Khal utilizes the intertextuality to insist on the essence of playfulness

or satire in this novel. Therefore, the intertextuality functions to support two postmodern

characteristics: suspicion toward metanarrative and playfulness.

Throwing Sparks is one of several Saudi novels that discuss marginalized people and how

they are treated in society. Discussing marginalized people may be seen as an important issue in

the late 20th century and the early 21st century. There are some theories that discuss this issue,

such as feminism. However, many of theories do not focus primarily on the relationship between

modes of production and marginalized people who are treated unfairly in order to increase

production. The Jamesonian approach may help to illustrate the influence of this relationship on

marginalized people from different aspects. The most important aspect is the structure of

personality of marginalized people in the age of late capitalism's domination. *Throwing Sparks*

concentrates primarily on how marginalized people lose their essential rights to be treated as

human beings.

As mentioned above, economic growth (*tafra*) happened in the 1970s and 1980s in Saudi

Arabia. The timeline of *Throwing Sparks* starts with the beginning of economic growth and

continues to the first decade of this millennium. The timeline starts when a huge palace was built

on the shore of Red Sea in the north Jeddah. Tariq, the main protagonist, implies that the palace

was established in the seventies. He narrates his life inside the palace, which lasts for more than

thirty-five years. His story ends when he attempts to kill the master of the palace in the end of

2008. Here, it seems that Khal utilizes the establishment of the palace as a symbol of the

economic growth which is a consequence of the participation of Saudi Arabia in the global

economic system. For instance, Tariq says, "The Palace was a watershed in our lives. It marked a

point in time, the transition of an era-from 'before' to 'after'- as surely as any calendar.

Whenever the older generation recounted our history, they would make clear the period by

appending 'before the Palace was built' or 'after the Palace was built'" (Khal 78). Tariq implies

that the establishment of the palace had changed his neighborhood and its history. Therefore, it

influences the personalities of people who aspire to enter the Palace. In this sense, *Throwing*

Sparks concentrates on the influence of economic growth on Saudi society. In short, the

discussion of the establishment of the palace and Tariq's life inside the palace may be considered

a postmodern allegory that reveals the influence of postmodern conditions on his personality that

in turn affects his historical thinking.

It is worth mentioning that there are other Saudi novels that discuss social conditions of

marginalized people in Saudi Arabia, but *Throwing Sparks* is a unique novel because it focuses

on the influence of economic conditions on the appearance of marginalized people in Saudi

society. While some Saudi novelists discuss marginalized people from a gender perspective or

regional angle, Khal discusses this social class from an economic perspective. Therefore, in

Throwing Sparks, marginalized people include:

> a motley collection of people from the southern part of the country-the Ghamad, the
> Zahharis, the Qahtanis, the Shahranis, the Asiris, the Yamis, the Jazzanis--and a
> hodgepodge of Bedu from outlying desert areas. There were also expatriate communities
> of Yemenis, Levantine Arabs, Egyptians, Sudanese, Somalis and Eritreans as well as
> Indians, Afghans, Indonesians, Chadians, Chinese and Kurds, and Bokhari Uzbeks,
> Turkmen, and Kyrgyz who has fled the hell-hole of the Soviet Union. (Khal 131)

Here, all these people who are from different races and countries live together in one neighborhood implying that this novel does not focus on racial or regional factors in the process of classifying these people. In *Throwing Sparks,* all the people who are mentioned are "catapulted together, this multifarious assemblage of humanity spread deep into the neighborhood, sharing the daily grind of life all the while dreaming of escape" (131). Khal implies that these people share one economic condition; therefore, they are forced to live in this place with its oppressive conditions.

Furthermore, discussing how political and economic conditions shape marginalized people is associated sometimes with the representation of dehumanization. In *Throwing Sparks,* there is a relationship between the late capitalist system and dehumanization. Subsequently, this relationship has impacted postmodern culture. Lyotard, in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, points out how violations from capitalism and technology influence the structure of human subjectivity, which is ultimately dehumanized. His claim is an extended discussion of the influence of technology on humanity in his prominent book, *The Postmodern Condition*. He says, "The system seems to be a vanguard machine dragging humanity after it, dehumanizing it in order to dehumanize it at a different level of normative capacity" (Lyotard 63). In this sense, for Lyotard, the process of dehumanization is a consequence of the influence of non-humans: technology and capitalism. In this sense, the representation of dehumanization in *Throwing Sparks* is a consequence of economic growth resulting from Saudi Arabia's participation in the global economic system. As a result, this novel may be considered a postmodern novel.

Throwing Sparks focuses primarily on the process of dehumanizing people in the age of the domination of technology. Tariq describes how the master humiliates Uncle Muhammad, a loyal person to the master's father, by pelting him with his shoe (Khal 252). Also, Tariq describes

how the master humiliates him by asking him to do an unethical job. However, in this novel, this humiliation is associated with technology. Tariq says, "Once when the Master had phoned to see where I was, he had shouted, 'I'll send you back to the streets where you came from'" (Khal 268). Here, the Master humiliates Tariq by threatening to send him to the street. This phrase, which contains the threatening implication, has only one meaning: the Master considers Tariq to be a worthless creature. Also, Tariq says, "The Master had tossed me back in [to rape his opponents], keeping me submerged to rust and corrode like a piece of metal abandoned in a dank and murky pit. I had grown accustomed to living exposed and raw" (Khal xii). The Master dehumanizes Tariq even further by forcing him to dehumanize other people.

Furthermore, Tariq shows that the phone, as an example of technology, does not help him but instead conveys a dehumanizing message. Khal implies that technology is a vehicle for dehumanizing people. For instance, Tariq says, "At the end of these sessions the Master had taken to handing me photos or video recordings of the victims" (Khal ix). He shows that the Master utilizes technology by taking photos and filming videos when Tariq rapes the Master's opponents. In this sense, technology is used to dehumanize Tariq and opponents; they do not dare to challenge the Master as he would instantly make mincemeat of them. Therefore, in *Throwing Sparks,* Tariq cannot maintain a stable identity that is able to integrate the past into the present to predict the future on the horizon. Subsequently, *Throwing Sparks* may be considered a postmodern novel. This description of life inside the palace is a postmodern allegory that shows how postmodern conditions, which are associated with technology, shape Tariq's postmodern personality.

One important characteristic which may be found in *Throwing Sparks* is the inability to unify the past, the present, and the future. In this novel, this characteristic is discussed through an

allegorical approach to show how postmodern conditions produce temporal discontinuity. This temporal discontinuity, as mentioned above, shows the representation of instability of personality. In *Throwing Sparks*, on one hand, Tariq narrates his life in his poor neighborhood and his experience of doing the unethical job in the Palace as his past. On another hand, he implies he will get rid of the past and open a new page for his present in the end of the novel. However, Tariq does not see any possibility of unification of his experience (his past) with his new life (his present). In other words, he disconnects his present from his past. For example, Tariq considers his past as reality while his present as imagination. For him, his reality disconnects from his imagination, which has killing the Master as its goal. Therefore, he gives us the idea of killing the Master because he does not see any opportunity to improve his life in the future (349). In short, Tariq's experience, which reveals his instability of personality, is an example of a postmodern allegory

Additionally, the inability to unify the past, the present, and the future may be found in Tariq's narrative language. His language oscillates between the past tense and the present tense. Jameson points out that if we are unable to unify the past, present, and future of the sentence, then we are similarly unable to unify the past, present, and future of our own biographical experience or psychic life (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 27). *Throwing Sparks* should utilize past tense throughout its narration, but in some places, Tariq uses the present tense. For example, Tariq narrates his last days in the palace and depicts how his life is destroyed metaphorically. He says, "The earth opened up and I fell head first, seized with terror" (Khal 347). Here, he narrates his experience in the past tense. However, when he aims to narrate his future or the consequence that he will anticipate it, he does not use the future tense. He keeps the past tense to narrate about the future. He says, "There was no longer a place for me on this earth" (Khal 347). Here, his

psychic life influences his language; hence, he cannot maintain the unification of the past, the present, and the future. In short, this novel suggests that traumatic abuses that cause genuine psychological problems may be considered postmodern allegories of the influence postmodern conditions on the postmodern personality.

Furthermore, the narrative language of *Throwing Sparks* shows how Khal depicts the influence of wealth and power associated with economic growth on the representation of instability of personality. *Throwing Sparks* implies the influence of economic growth on Saudi society. Also, *Throwing Sparks* implies that economic growth, which is supposed to liberate people, does not help marginalized people to obtain freedom. Therefore, Tariq says, "Slavery has not been abolished" (Khal 248). He mentions that the relationship between wealth and power through history makes him think that all workers in the palace "are slaves even if it does not feel like it" (Khal 248). In addition, the domination of a few people who have wealth and power destroys morality and crushes whatever and whoever comes in its way (Khal 248). Consequently, Tariq says, "I knew that there was not much left in the vial that was my life, and what remained had become so stale and musty that even I turned away in disgust" (Khal 248–49). Apparently, instability of personality that is a result of trauma can cause genuine psychological problems. However, in this novel, these psychological problems cannot be isolated from the domination of wealth and power. In other words, the economic factor cannot be neglected; therefore, discussing this novel through postmodern allegory approach can help to reveal how wealth and power shape instability of personality.

Moreover, in *Throwing Sparks* wealth and power can shape space, causing *heterotopia*. In the postmodern era, political, economic, and social conditions influence many aspects of life including space, which affects subsequently the structure of personality. Some postmodern

critics discuss the structure of space in the postmodern era, but the most significant discussion of the influence of space on personality comes from Michel Foucault's theory. Foucault points to *heterotopia* as an important concept describing the relationship between space and personality. In David Harvey's words, this notion of *heterotopia* describes

> the coexistence in 'an impossible space' of a 'large number of fragmentary possible worlds' or, more simply, incommensurable spaces that are juxtaposed or superimposed upon each other. Characters no longer contemplate how they can unravel or unmask a central mystery but are forced to ask, 'Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of myselves is to do it? (Harvey 48)

In this sense, heterotopia may be found in *Throwing Sparks*, since the space of the palace influences the structure of Tariq's personality. Khal shows that the palace, which is a consequence of economic growth, is not an ideal place; hence, it ultimately influences Tariq's personality in negative ways.

In *Throwing Sparks*, coexistence is impossible in the palace. The plot shows that all the people inside the Palace impose upon each other. The palace, which contains heterotopia, shapes its inhabitants' personalities. Thus, the palace's residents are fragmented. For instance, after Tariq forces Tahani into sexual relationship, he is brought to the palace. In the palace, Tariq has two personalities: a personality that loves Tahani and a personality that is a sexual tool for the Master. Tariq says, "I could not free myself of Tahani's memory. I would come back to remind me of that first delectable taste of fruit in season that lodges itself deep inside" (Khal 11). In addition, he says, "Tahani was one of my victims" (Khal 11). It seems that he has two personalities. However, these personalities are not supposed to coexist, but the power of the Palace imposes every personality upon the other. In another example, Osama, whose job is finding prostitutes and bring them to the palace, suspects that Tariq rapes Tahani. Osama cannot do anything because he is afraid of the Master. At the same time, he is forced to live with Tariq in the Palace. Tariq says, "We agreed not to talk about Tahani so as to avoid bitter rows and all-

out hatred. For each of us to be able to sleep at night in our cocoons of regret, we lay down the

bone of contention between us and refrained from digging it up" (Khal 11–12). Here, Osama has

a fragmented personality that is willing to work with Tariq in the Palace and it aims to seek

revenge on Tariq for his role in Tahani's calamity. The Palace imposes Osama's fragmented

personality to coexist.

Furthermore, in the postmodern era, the architecture of space may reveal the structure of

personality. David Harvey, in *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of*

Cultural Change, illustrates the relationship between postmodernism and architecture and urban

design in the contemporary era. He distinguishes between the notion of space in modernism and

postmodernism. He argues that

> Above all, postmodernists depart radically from modernist conceptions of how to regard
> space. Whereas the modernists see space as something to be shaped for social purposes
> and therefore always subservient to the construction of a social project, the
> postmodernists see space as something independent and autonomous, to be shaped
> according to aesthetic aims and principles which have nothing necessarily to do with any
> overarching social objective, save, perhaps, the achievement of timeless and
> 'disinterested' beauty as an objective in itself. (72).

In *Throwing Sparks*, the palace is portrayed as an independent place that is not related to the city.

For instance, Tariq says, "The Palace was visible from every direction and anyone entering

Jeddah would see it … the Palace stood right across from our dilapidated neighborhood, but its

massive walls and gates were well fortified against our avid curiosity" (Khal 14). In my opinion,

the most significant point is how the postmodern space cuts its social relationships with society.

In this novel, the palace is located in Jeddah, but there are no social relationships between who

lives inside the palace and the people of Jeddah. In other words, it is obvious that the architecture

of the palace is independent and autonomous.

This point is important because the rejection of a relationship with the outside may cause

the instability of personality. For example, in *Throwing Sparks,* the Master is portrayed as a

sybaritic person. Tariq describes him as a man who "sought every pleasure, and each new pleasure came the pursuit of the next; his drive to hedonism was as unrelenting as it was insatiable" (Khal 5). His personality inside the palace is completely different from his personality outside the Palace. Tariq portrays the Master's schizophrenic personality. For instance, Tariq says:

> The Master's craggy face featured prominently in the mass-market newspapers. The depiction was invariably angelic, portraying him as someone who relieved the suffering of the huddled masses in the swoop of his wings […] a headline above one of the shots lauded his donation of ten million riyals to a special-needs charity. (Khal 3–4)

He does not do charitable works to build social relationships with the outside. He does these works in a self-promoting manner to gain more celebrity by ensuring the appearance of his photos in newspapers. The postmodern space, which is represented by the palace, produces a fragmented personality for the Master. He does not need to build a real relationship with people because his Palace grants him independence. However, his personality inside the palace is different from his external, public personality, which indicates that he is an unstable person.

In addition, wealth and power do not only aim to influence the structure of personality through the structure of the postmodern architecture. Wealth and power also attempt shape the structure of personality through the commodification of emotions and ideas. The process of the commodification of emotions and desires may cause the instability of personality. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels illustrate how capitalism aims to dominate every kind of production and the world market; therefore, capitalism aims to commodify everything. In the contemporary era, the most crucial dilemma concerns capitalist efforts to commodify abstract ideas and emotions. In Saudi Arabia, commodifying abstract ideas is associated with economic growth. For example, religious people commodify their ideas when they record them on cassettes to sell in the market. In this sense, the domination of capitalism

may change how people believe or feel. This domination may be found in the process of the commodification of desire. Therefore, the natural meaning of desire is changed. In other words, people try to fulfill their desire, not as a basic task in this life, but as a tool to make money. In *Throwing Sparks*, sexual desire is changed to help the Master get more power. Tariq does not have a complete homosexual desire until he enters the Palace. In the palace, he is forced to practice only homosexuality. His sexuality becomes a commodity that is utilized by the Master to defeat his opponents. Tariq shows that the Master considers him as a material thing that does a certain task. Tariq says, "Only the Palace looking for me as if in search of a lost key" (Khal x). This process of commodification of Tariq's sexual desire makes him think that he is not more than raw material (Khal xii). One who has this type of feeling about himself cannot maintain a stable personality. Thus, Tariq says, "A darkness I had never previously known descended on me, and I became desperate to hide from everything and everyone, including myself" (Khal 31).

Furthermore, producing commodities is associated with routinization, another influence on the structure of personality. In the contemporary era, when the process of commodification of emotion and ideas is associated with routinization, it becomes a serious problem. To put it another way, changing the meaning of desire from its natural sense to a material sense and linking the desire to routinization causes a serious instability of personality. For instance, Tariq is asked to practice sexual activities not because he wants to, but because his Master wants him to. He does these activities on a regular basis for a long time; in the novel, he had served in the palace thirty-five years). Tariq says:

> I no longer remembered the exact sequence of events [raping the Master's opponents]: they flashed helter-skelter through my memory and I mixed up where and when they occurred. What I did know was that when I crossed the threshold of the Palace gates I stepped into an infernal life and became enslaved. (Khal 3)

First, Tariq's job in the Palace is raping people, which indicates that he does this job on regular basis. Subsequently, he feels routinization in one way or another. Second, he cannot recall the sequence of events of the rapes or which rape a specific event belonged to, which means that he does it routinely. Consequently, his sexual desire has been commodified and is linked with routinization. Therefore, his personality is not stable which makes it difficult for him understand why he perpetrates these sexual activities. Also, he cannot integrate his past, his sexual activity in the palace, into his present; hence, he cannot see any possibility on the horizon in the future.

Moreover, economic growth, which produces the process of commodification, may cause the death of the subject. In *Throwing Sparks*, the protagonist Tariq is not a bourgeois person. In other words, Tariq is not an autonomous person. In the Saudi novel, it is common to find educated protagonists from the middle class, but Tariq does not meet these criteria. Jameson argues that in the postmodern era there is "the 'death' of the subject itself -- the end of the autonomous bourgeois monad or ego or individual -- and the accompanying stress, whether as some new moral ideal or as empirical description, on the decentering of that formerly centered subject or psyche" (*Postmodernism* 15). The end of bourgeois subjectivity, in *Throwing Sparks*, may be found in Tariq, who cannot maintain a stable identity because the Master dominates him once he enters the Palace. Here, the end of Tariq's subjectivity may be complicated because some readers may say his subjectivity has vanished because he is enslaved. However, he is not a slave. He is a person dominated and exploited by the capitalist Master to serve a capitalist ideology. Tariq indicates that he does not have an autonomous ego. Certainly, the death of Tariq's ego affects the stability of personality. Therefore, Tariq cannot maintain temporal continuity for his life.

In addition, for Jameson, "the end of the bourgeois ego" coincides with what he calls "the waning of affect." Jameson points out that "the waning of affect, however, might also have been characterized, in the narrower context of literary criticism, as the waning of the great high modernist thematics of time and temporality, the elegiac mysteries of durée and memory" (*Postmodernism* 16). In this sense, for Jameson, postmodern subjectivity is liberated from bourgeois feeling or emotions. Tariq, in *Throwing Sparks*, feels the waning of affect because he no longer experiences feelings or emotion inside the palace. For instance, Tariq used to have dreams before he entered the palace, which shows his life used to be dominated by time; hence, he says:

> Back in the days when the neighborhood's inhabitants swirled around the Palace full of hopes and dreams, boys stood and pointed at its towering walls and heads were filled with lush dreams of fertile ground behind the massive gates … we sit and rake through our memories in the hope of collecting some scraps from a long-buried past. (Khal 23)

However, these hopes and dreams are diminished once Tariq enters the palace, indicating that he loses temporality and memory. In this sense, Tariq has a postmodern personality that suffers a waning of affect. Therefore, he is, in Jameson's words, "dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time" (*Postmodernism* 16). Finally, because Tariq loses his ability to think temporally due to the domination of the Palace, he loses his stable personality.

The temporal discontinuity or fragmented personality in the novel is associated with a fragmented plot. The plot is fragmented because it does not have a linear timeline. This discontinuity of the plot may show the instability of personality. As mentioned above Jameson elaborates that one who cannot unify his temporal language, probably cannot unify his experience. Subsequently, postmodern cultural production and literary works contain fragmentation. Apparently, as mentioned above for Jameson, a loss of temporal continuity leads to another dilemma, specifically that schizophrenic sense that produces instability of personality.

Thus, "this schizophrenia also, for Jameson, can be seen in the formal fragmentation of the narratives themselves, leading to the production of postmodern 'schizophrenic' texts by authors such as Samuel Beckett" (Booker, *Literature and Politics Today* 249).

In *Throwing Sparks*, Tariq's narration of certain events ends only to begin again at a later time. Indeed, the whole plot of *Throwing Sparks* is fragmented and does not have one storyline[26]. For instance in the third chapter, Tariq narrates about his neighborhood that has many names: the Pit, the Saltmine, the Depths of Hell, or simply the Firepit, all designations which resonate with suffering and describe life in a miserable neighborhood (Khal 34). Next, he narrates the story of his grandfather and how he came from Hadhramaut in Yemen and how he married Tariq's Turkish grandmother Saniyya. Then, he portrays life in his neighborhood and how most children are "fatherless and clung to mothers worn down by the daily grind of their lives and the battle to keep their frail children alive" (Khal 37). Eventually, he talks about his relationship with Tahani. It seems his narration about life in the neighborhood and his childhood ends when he portrays the Palace. However, the depiction of his neighborhood and his childhood are not completely over. He returns to narrate about his neighborhood in the middle of his depiction of the New Year party in the Palace. Then he continues to portray the palace (Khal 40–58). Tariq's inability to maintain a unification of psychic experience, which is represented in his inability to link the past to the present and the future, is reflected in the narrative structure of *Throwing Sparks.* In short, the instability of personality may be found in the structure of the plot of this novel.

---

[26] There are many examples that show the fragmentation in the plot of *Throwing Sparks.* Here, I will mention few examples to show how the instability of personality is reflected in the fragmentation of the plot.

Furthermore, in *Throwing Sparks,* the fragmented narrative structure is associated with a cynical reason: Tariq is aware of how unethical and brutal his role in the Palace is, but he continues to fulfill his function. The narrative structure shows that Tariq knows how the Master's ideology dominates everyone in the palace, including Tariq. Also, he insists that he is not pleased with what he does. Therefore, he says, "I have been carrying around this old carcass of mine for half a century" (Khal 3). He implies that he has a complete submission to the Master to excite him (Khal 5). Here, Tariq is aware of how this submission negatively influences his personality, but he still obeys the Master because he cannot encounter the capitalist power of the Master. Tariq says, "There was no escaping him, even after I eventually moved out of the palace, and into my own place" (Khal x). This obedience coupled with complete awareness shows that Tariq practices cynical reason. Tariq shows his understanding of the old Marxist notion of false consciousness, but he still does it not to show how this submission is ironic. In other words, Tariq implies that his effort of showing cynicism is not as way of making fun of what happens in the palace, but instead aims to reveal his knowledge about how his life is ideologically shaped.

Moreover*,* in *Throwing Sparks*, cynicism leads to a suspicion toward metanarratives. Khal, who is considered a liberal writer, has attacked some fundamental ideas in Arabic culture. His tendency toward the reform of Arabic thinking manipulates the narrative structure of *Throwing Sparks*. For example, Tariq says:

> I have been struggling with my beliefs day after day for fifty years. I have come to realize that history is made up of deviants, grafters, thieves, opportunists, panderers, fornicators, pederasts, megalomaniacs and connivers. Low lifes advance the story of mankind as much as saviours. (Khal 9–10)

Tariq manifests a strong suspicion toward some grand stories. Also, he rejects history that contains metanarratives because this history is made up to favor specific groups, not all people. The first aspect of suspicion toward metanarrative is his doubt that religions can work to spread

social quality of life among societies. Also, Tariq says, "Religion is a long, dark tunnel: we pick and choose our way through it to justify our goals, both honorable and immoral. We follow the passage all the way into the subterranean workshop that stitches and cuts cloth to suit every mood, whether bright or downcast" (Khal 9). He shows that religions aim to manipulate minds, not to free them.

In addition, Tariq implies that the knowledge of Dr. Bannan, a psychologist who works in the palace, does not help to understand the structure of the Master's personality. Tariq portrays Dr. Bannan as a person who "would talk about his past and pontificate on fate" (Khal 30). Tariq implies that Dr. Bannan's knowledge does not help him to improve his social position; therefore, he is, in the Palace, no more than the Master's "partner at the card game *balut*" (Khal 31). Here, Tariq shows that Dr. Bannan's specialization in psychology does not help him rid himself of the Master's domination. Subsequently, Tariq hints that Dr. Bannan's knowledge is not a reliable source to link what happens in the past, like his experience in the Palace, with his present. He says, "His endless quest for a way out of the snare consisted of making presentations at various low-level conferences and publishing mediocre political articles in second-rate newspapers that nobody read" (Khal 30). Here, Tariq shows that the grand stories that Dr. Bannan believes in are not a suitable way to solve his problems. Dr. Bannan's field is portrayed as commodified as well. In short, his disbelief in knowledge's power or his consideration that powerful people control knowledge production betrays a suspicion of grand stories.

As mentioned above, *Throwing Sparks* discusses some postmodern topics such as homosexuality and identity. Foucault discusses postmodern subjectivity. For him, there is a relationship between identity, in general, and power. Foucault illustrates how the histories of

practices in law, penology, and medicine have dominated people and diagnosed them as

criminally insane or ill. He says:

> The general juridical form that guaranteed a system of rights that were egalitarian in principle was unsupported by these fine, every day, physical mechanisms, by all those systems of micro-power that are essentially non-egalitarian and asymmetrical that we call the 'disciplines' such as exams, hospitals, prisons, the regulation of workshops, schools, the army. (Foucault 222)

Throwing Sparks shows how powerful practices and the practices of the powerful

compartmentalize people into different social categories. In this novel, apparatuses such as the

Palace and capitalist ideology produce this categorization or diagnosis. In *Throwing Sparks*,

Tariq shows how these apparatuses discipline his personality. He says, "At the Palace, I

belonged to a group known as 'the punishers,' a label reserved for people whose despicable

deeds were considered beyond the pale …[t]he punishers were housed in a remote section of the

Palace" (Khal 28–29). Tariq shows that the exercise of power destroys humanitarian

egalitarianism in the Palace. In this novel, the system inside the Palace (or even outside)

excludes homosexual people and makes them marginal people because they stand outside

normative traditional social values. Hence, their subjectivities are different from other

subjectivities in society.

Moreover, Foucault's discussion of the postmodern subjectivity connects to Jameson's

most influential notion, cognitive mapping. Straightforwardly, cognitive mapping shows how the

postmodern subject encounters difficulty to understand or locate its own place within the world

system (Booker, *Literature and Politics Today* 249). Jameson describes this influential term as

follows:

> an aesthetic of cognitive mapping -- a pedagogical political culture which seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system -- will necessarily have to respect this now enormously complex representational dialectic and invent radically new forms in order to do it justice […] The political form of Postmodernism, if there ever is any, will have as its vocation the invention and projection

of a global cognitive mapping, on a social as well as a spatial scale. (Jameson,
Postmodernism 54)

Jameson's conceptualization of cognitive mapping has two sources: Kevin Lynch's practical

study of urban space and Louis Althusser's theoretical discussion of ideology (Jameson,

Postmodernism 51). While Lynch discusses the influence of existential conditions of urban cities

on individuals, Jameson extends this view to show that individuals, in the age of international

corporations, face difficulties as they "map and remap along the moments of mobile, alternative

trajectories" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 51). Also, while Foucault discusses the influence of

power on the postmodern subject, Jameson extends this view to contain the dialectical view of

the influence of late capitalism on the structure of the postmodern individual subject. In other

words, "Foucault's cartography of power is not absolutely inconsistent with the historical

mapping of the production of space in Jameson, but their methods and goals are quite different"

(Tally 410). Ultimately, Jameson's cognitive mapping may help to understand the representation

of instability of personality in *Throwing Sparks.*

In the novel*,* Tariq narrates how individuals cannot locate their own places within the

Jeddah system after the Palace was built. In other words, these individuals have a serious

dilemma that causes difficulties in cognitive mapping. By the way of illustration, building the

Palace changes the map of Jeddah; therefore, the two places where people in Jeddah used to

swim, the Plage and al-Hamra, "fell into disuse after [their] access became unsafe" (Khal 40).

Subsequently, this change in the map of Jeddah impacts people and their businesses. For

instance, Uthman Kabashi, who used to build affordable boats, gives his business up after "he

saw all heavy earthmoving equipment on the shoreline, preparing to start work on the Palace

foundation" (Khal 42). Consequently, Uthman leaves Jeddah to Port Sudan after he fails to locate

himself in the new map of Jeddah. Yet, Uthman is not alone: all the fishermen "finally

acknowledged the new reality they had to contend with and realized that their beloved fishing spots had as little substance as the bleeding colours of brightly hued turbans floating in the water" (Khal 43).

In addition, Khal does not overlook the influence of cultural globalization on mapping Jeddah's space. In other words, the cognitive mapping, in *Throwing Sparks,* may be considered a consequence of the domination of late capitalism whose aspects include cultural globalization. Tariq mentions that al-Hamra, a neighborhood, is changed because "the city's mayor turned it [al-Hamra] into a promenade adorned with sculptures by international artists and kept gleaming by an army of labourers" (Khal 41). These sculptures are not derived from the domestic culture; hence, they change the place as they produce a new meaning for the promenade. In other words, new international artists' sculptures, which are part of cultural globalization, cause existential confusion for people; hence, they cannot understand themselves within the new system of Jeddah. This existential confusion causes new meaning of the social relevance and purpose of the promenade. To put it bluntly, cultural globalization causes existential confusion that produces an inability for the person to locate himself in a changed space. Hence, it affects how people think about themselves or even understand social activities. In short, one who cannot locate himself within the map of his existence cannot maintain a stable personality. Obviously, *Throwing Sparks* shows how people cannot understand the new map of Jeddah; therefore, they cannot maintain a stability of personality. Consequently, this novel contains a significant postmodern characteristic that is cognitive mapping, which ultimately makes it a postmodern novel.

Discussing the representation of postmodern characteristics in the Saudi novel cannot be successful without a comparison with the postmodern American novel. In this chapter, *Girls of Riyadh* and *Throwing Sparks* will be compared to *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010), by Gary

Shteyngart, to achieve this purpose. This novel describes a future world dominated by technology. This novel is an epistolary novel that explores the relationship between Lenny Abramov, a man of Russian and Jewish descent, and Eunice Park, a Korean-American girl. This novel is comprised of Lenny's diaries and Eunice's online posts. Lenny and Eunice meet in Rome. They love each other and attempt to help each other, but Eunice leaves Lenny for Joshie Goldman, Lenny's boss. This abandonment shows how social and political conditions impact Eunice, who cannot maintain a stable personality. Also, at the end of the novel, she leaves Joshie because conditions of dystopian life do not help her to obtain a stable personality. *Super Sad True Love Story* portrays the way in which the corrupted political system may lead to dystopian life. Examples of this in the novel include invading Venezuela and a domestic economy crippled by debt.

In *Super Sad True Love Story,* the representation of technology may help to reveal the representation of the instability of personality. In this novel, while Lenny, the main protagonist, does not trust technology and attempts to show his hatred to technology, he loves to read printed books. He says, "I've spent an entire week without reading any books or talking about them too loudly. I'm learning to worship my äppäräti's screen[27], the colorful pulsating mosaic of it, the fact that it knows every last stinking detail about the world, whereas my books only know the minds of their authors" (Shteyngart 78). However, this worship does not prevent him from preserving his books when he is forced to vacate his apartment (Shteyngart 310). This contradiction between his hatred and his obsession with technology reveals the fragmentation of his personality. In other words, the contradiction between using äppäräti and reading printed

---

[27] It is the novel's equivalent of iPhone

books shows that Lenny cannot maintain a unified personality. He does not understand his era when he insists on reading printed books.

Furthermore, Lenny's obsession with printed books and his aversion to the domination of technology may be considered a representation of nostalgia that is associated with pastiche. In *Super Sad True Love Story*, the domination of technology causes the nostalgia, but the representation of nostalgia may not appear without pastiche. As Jameson points out, there is a relationship between nostalgia and pastiche; in this novel, there is a relationship between using äppäräti and nostalgia for our present time (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 19). In this novel, äppäräti is a device that imitates the function of the iPhone in the present time. Then, using äppäräti may be considered as a pastiche of using iPhone. Simultaneously, using äppäräti reminds Lenny of the missing past which indicates the representation of nostalgia.

In addition, in *Super Sad True Love Story,* the representation of technology is associated with the representation of depthlessness. In this novel Shteyngart depicts characters as portraying "depthless rather than affective connection: they rely on technological devices to compare themselves to others and to form an identity by contextualizing themselves against other in a larger group" (Lanzendörfer 44). For illustration, this depthlessness appears when Lenny meets a beautiful girl across the bar. He says, "I touched my heart with the back of my äppäräti, trying to fill it with warmth, my natural desire for love" (Shteyngart 89). This girl sends back data that gives Lenny a low ranking, which leaves him disappointed. In this regard, Lenny relies on technology to reveal his emotion to the girl, thus losing his ability to access any depth of emotion. In this scene, the main player is the äppäräti, which can read emotions to convert them to numbers that determine the ranking of people. Subsequently, people are superficial because

they communicate in and place value on digitized representations of personalities. In short, their personalities are nothing without technology, which indicates their personalities are depthless.

Moreover, the representation of technology may reveal the postmodern as a dystopian vision. Narrative language contains an essence of irony in *Super Sad True Love Story*. This satirical implication is associated with a dark vision of what happens in his society. Then, his narrative language implies an ironic dystopian vision. According to Booker and Thomas, "Dystopian fiction tends to have a strong satirical dimension" (*The Science Fiction Handbook* 65). In *Super Sad True Love Story*, Lenny mocks his people's obsession with technology (äppäräti). For instance, he says:

> Four young people committed suicide in our building complexes, and two of them wrote suicide notes about how they couldn't see a future without their äppäräti. One wrote, quite eloquently, about how he 'reached out to life,' but found there only 'walls and thoughts and faces,' which weren't enough… all [of them] are bored out of [their] fucking minds. (Shteyngart 270)

The narrative language, which contains this sense of irony, aims to depict that the future will have circumstances that may be worse than the present. This depiction is an essential idea in dystopian novels that depict a world that is worse than our present world. Here, *Super Sad True Love Story* depicts how American society in the future will be worse than American society in the present because people are manipulated by an obsessive capitalist system and its technology's domination. In short, in this novel the representation of technology shows the postmodern characteristics of weak utopian impulses that are represented by ironic narrative language.

In addition, this narrative language may show that a totalizing use of technology in a late capitalist state causes more than a dystopian vision. By way of illustration, Lenny shows how living under the domination of capitalism is unpredictable. This unpredictability leads to a temporal discontinuity which may be eventually found in the structure of language. For example,

Lenny says, "The way we live now, you can never be too sure" (Shteyngart 119). Here, this dystopian vision shows that Lenny cannot integrate his experience in the past and his unpredictable future into his present. In other words, he implies that the future is unpredictable. Then, considering the present as a prior phase of the future does not make sense, because this present does not help to anticipate what the future will be. In this sense, his narrative language provides simultaneous examples of a dystopian vision and an instability of personality.

Moreover, as Jameson elaborates, one who cannot sustain an accurate linguistic structure cannot maintain a stable personality. Also, ironic language and a dystopian vision show that Lenny cannot integrate his past and future into the present, which indicates that he cannot unify his personality. Lenny supposedly narrates about some events that happened in his past. For instance, Lenny says, "As for me, I was now the odd man out. It would take a while for my boys to get used to my return" (Shteyngart 87). Thus, his narrative language should be in the past tense. However, he shifts between the present and the past. Here, Lenny's narrative language shows instability in its structure, indicating, as Jameson explains, that this inability of unification of language shows instability in the unification of psychological experience.

Furthermore, in *Super Sad True Love Story,* technology influences characters' language. In this novel, Lenny cannot understand abbreviation by Eunice. For instance, "LPT she said. 'TIMATOV. ROFLAARP. PRGV. Totally PRGV.' The youth and their abbreviation. I pretended like I knew what she was talking about" (Shteyngart 22). His inability to understand how young people had altered daily language in his era shows that he cannot participate in the cultural mainstream of his era. His failure to understand what happens in his present time shows that he cannot reconcile the past, what he reads in printed books, into the present, the domination of technology, to predict what will happen in the future.

In *Super Sad True Love Story*, the experiences of schizophrenia may be found in the narrative language, which indicates Lenny's personality structure. As mentioned above, Jameson illustrates that the experience of schizophrenia is an appropriate description of living in the postmodern era. This experience may cause instability of integrating the past into the present to predict the future. Once again, the experience of schizophrenia produces temporal discontinuity (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 11). For instance, he says, "Oh, dear diary. My youth has passed, but the wisdom of the age hardly beckons. Why is it hard to be a grown-up man in this world?" (Shteyngart 26). Obviously, he is not just anxious or alienated; his problem is deeply self-destructive. As is clear in this novel, the main problem is the domination of capitalism. Then, in this novel, the experience of schizophrenia is, as Jameson points out, a consequence of the capitalist system domination in its third phase.

Instability of linguistic structure and temporal discontinuity may reveal another postmodern characteristic, fragmentation. In postmodern culture, fragmentation undermines the structure of personality. In the postmodern era, the schizophrenic sense, for Jameson, displaces the dominant modernist mode of alienation of the subject. This sense of fragmentation cannot be isolated from the domination of capitalism. In *Super Sad True Love Story,* Lenny depicts Eunice as "a tiny fragment of a human being in purple leggings, pouting at something terrible I may have done, anger in her wrinkled forehead, the rest of her absorbed by her äppäräti, checking out expensive stuff on AssLuxury" (Shteyngart 99). Lenny implies that Eunice is a fragmented person because the social, political, and economic context impose certain conditions that influence her personality. In other words, consumerism causes fragmentation for Eunice. Ultimately, she cannot maintain a stable personality. This instability may be found in her emails. For instance, she says, "And then this Korean girl Grace was talking to me for hours. She's really

sweet and tries to make you feel like she's on your side … she got all this information about how my father beats my mother … I don't know why I told her any of it and I felt really vulnerable the whole night" (Shteyngart 173). Her fragmented personality is reflected in her narration. Her narration does not provide a coherent linear plot. In addition, her narration does not concentrate on one issue, but she instead discusses many issues at the same time.

Indeed, Shteyngart implies that social norms may be a factor of the fragmentation, but his reference could not be isolated from his indication that the main factor is the domination of late capitalism. For example, in Eunice's chat with her sister, it seems that she has difficulty dealing with her family's social norms (Shteyngart 170–72). Although she has a boyfriend and she lives in a society that supports this type of relationship, she cannot tell her family because her mother insists on her behaving as a "role model" for her sister. Therefore, Eunice does not tell her sister about her relationship because Lenny is not Korean. That way, she avoids looking like a girl who breaks her family's social norms. Also, in this novel, although Eunice lives in an advanced society and uses advanced technology, she cannot think differently from her parents. In short, the domination of social norms causes fragmentation.

Furthermore, the fragmented personality may be reflected in the fragmented plot. In *Super Sad True Love Story*, the structure of narration is divided into parts: one part is narrated by Lenny and another is narrated by Eunice. These two parallel narrations show the representation of fragmentation in this novel. Also, it appears that *Super Sad True Love Story* has a chronological line of narration because the plot begins on June 1 and it lasts for six months. For instance, Lenny narrates Eunice's meeting with his parents in the Long Island. Then he stops suddenly to narrate about his first love, a Korean girl he met in twenty-five years ago (Shteyngart 128). In addition, Shteyngart depicts Eunice as young person who dislikes reading. Her narration

is comprised of emails with her family and friends. Reasonably, her narration does not contain a coherent imagination for the structure of the plot because the essence of emails does not require rational language to narrate the plot. Consequently, her narration represents a fragmented plot.

Indeed, the dual narrative structure of the plot contains metafiction. First, as mentioned above, the narration by Lenny is different linguistically from the narration by Eunice. However, they comment on each other, causing the novel to act as metafiction. In other words, some emails by Eunice comment on preceding chapters by Lenny. By way of illustration, the chapter, "The Sinners' Crusade", narrated by Lenny, is about the celebration of the Fourth of July in the age of a totalitarian state. Then he talks about his meeting with Eunice's family (Shteyngart 178–96). The following chapter, "I'll Love Him Even More", by Eunice, comments on what happens in the preceding chapter. For instance, Eunice teens (emails) to her friend and says, "So now my mom is mad at me too. Dinner with la famiglia was a disaster, as you rightfully predicted. Why on earth did Lenny think he could charm my parents?" (Shteyngart 197). Her comments, which indicate how the novel comments on its plot, may be considered metafiction.

Second, in *Super Sad True Love Story*, the monologue is employed to comment on the plot itself. By the way of example, Lenny talks to himself about how he should treat Eunice. He says, "Lenny! [He] said aloud. You are not going to screw this up. You've been given a chance to help the most beautiful woman in the world" (Shteyngart 100). Also, he utilizes the monologue to indicate the movement of the plot indirectly. As Lenny says, "Joshie may slam the door on you, may watch your heartbeat stutter to a stop in some public hospital bed" (Shteyngart 100). He indicates how his relationship with Eunice will end after the intervention of Joshie. In short, the monologue is employed in a metafictional manner to comment on the plot itself.

Third, in *Super Sad True Love Story*, Lenny comments on books and articles. His comments are utilized to cast his opinion about the movement of the plot. For instance, he says, "*The Unbearable Lightness of Being* was a novel of ideas set in a country that meant nothing to her [Eunice], set in a time--the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968--that might as well not have existed as far as Eunice was concerned" (Shteyngart 274–75). His comments are about the movement of plot that depicts Eunice as a person who dislikes printed books and does not have any enthusiasm to understand concepts that are represented in Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Here, his comments about Eunice's relationship with books should not be isolated from the main point of *Super Sad True Love Story*, specifically the depiction of a dystopian life in the age of late capitalism. Lenny asks Eunice if she understands what he reads from Kundera's novel. She says, "I've never really learned how to read text … just to scan them for info" (Shteyngart 277). Then Eunice "had opened up her äppäräti and was concentrating on the last shopping page stored in its memory before communication collapsed" (Shteyngart 277). Lenny implies that in an age of consumerism and technology, people neglect reading books and focus on superficial habits such as pursuing fashion news.

Fourth, in *Super Sad True Love Story* contains what Linda Hutcheon calls historiographic metafiction. She also defines this term:

> Historiographic metafiction refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact or fiction. It refuses the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity. (Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* 93)

In this novel, Eunice's mother mentions some historical events that happened in Korea as commentary discussing dystopian life in the age of totalitarian states. For instance, she says,

"Now even in Fort Lee we see a tank on Center Avenue. Very scary for me, like in Korea in the 1980 long time ago when there was Kwangju trouble and many people die"[28] (Shteyngart 47).

In *Super Sad True Love Story*, the representation of the instability of personality is associated with the representation of suspicion toward metanarrative. One who does not trust grand stories cannot integrate his past into his present to predict the future because his past, which relies on grand stories, does not make sense in the present time. This representation appears in the narrative language of the novel. For instance, Lenny says,

> I was caught unaware by the line "Why should we tarry when Jesus is pleading? / Pleading for you and for me." The English language was dying around us, Christianity was as unsatisfying and delusional an idea as it has ever been ... I felt sorry for Jesus. Sorry that the miracles ascribed to him hadn't actually made difference. (Shteyngart 187)

Here, he does not trust metanarrative; therefore, he claims that he lives in an unpredictable or incomprehensible world. He says, "Sorry that we were all alone in a universe where even our fathers would let us get nailed to a tree if they were so inclined or cut our throats if so commanded--see under Isaac, another unfortunate Jewish shmuck" (Shteyngart 187). It seems that the grand stories do not help Lenny to understand the universe. In other words, grand stories do not provide a rational narrative of history to help an individual integrate his past into the present to consider what the future will be.

Moreover, in *Super Sad True Love Story*, Lenny rejects the attempts of grand stories to determine who people are. In other words, he refuses the idea that grand stories use their power to shape people's personalities. When he meets Eunice's family in church, he mocks how the church members feel shameful. Lenny says that he "wanted to get up and address the audience. [They] have nothing to be ashamed of ... [They] are decent people. [They] are trying. Life is very

---

[28] She refers to what happened in the city of Gwangju when the army killed at least 200 people in1980.

difficult ... [They] are better than this angry man [priest]. [They] are better than Jesus Christ"

(Shteyngart 190). He calls for a revolution against the domination of metanarrative by throwing

away the idea of shame and modesty, the influence of ancestors, and the self-appointed father

who claims to be a steward of God (Shteyngart 190).

In *Super Sad True Love Story*, the instability of personality may be considered a

consequence of consumerism. However, the domination of consumerism determines identity and

destroys the personality. On one hand, Lenny implies that in order to shape his identity,

regardless his age or gender, he should consume because consumerism is the only way to give an

identity that may be appropriate for the essence of his relationship with Eunice. He says, "This

shopping was not just for me or for her. It was for us as a couple. It was for our future together"

(Shteyngart 212). On another hand, consumerism causes the instability of personality. In this

novel, shopping with Eunice and spending the equivalent of ten thousand yuans on goods does

not help him to obtain a unified personality. In other words, instead of helping him to maintain

temporal continuity, consumerism destroys his personality; therefore, he says, "I may have been

poorer, but you couldn't confuse me for the overaged faux-hipster that had entered the UNRC

three hours ago" (Shteyngart 212).

Overall, *Super Sad True Love Story* reveals how postmodern characteristics appear in the

contemporary American novel. This is a postmodern novel that contains characteristics that were

also present in the Saudi novel. However, the social, political, and economic contexts of *Super

Sad True Love Story* are different from the postmodern Saudi novels. Therefore, representations

of these features in the postmodern American novel and the postmodern Saudi novel are

consequences of different factors. However, representations of postmodern characteristics show

that both the postmodern American novel and the Saudi novel are involved in the context of and react to the global economic system.

In conclusion, the instability of personality in the postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel is a consequence of several factors. While *Super Sad True Love Story* contains the instability of personality as a result of the domination of late capitalism, *Girls of Riyadh* contains the instability of personality as a result of economic growth and social norms. The discussion of the representation of the instability of personality is associated with the discussion of postmodern characteristics. In this chapter, the discussion of postmodern features shows how some postmodern characteristics cause or reflect the instability of personality. Also, in this chapter, the discussion of postmodern characteristics is a part of the discussion of the main argument, which is that the Saudi novel may be read through postmodern theory. Discussion of the representation of the instability of personality reveals some similarities and differences between the postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel.

The postmodern Saudi novel and the American novel contain some common postmodern features which reveal the similarity of the novels. The narrative structures of *Girls of Riyadh* and *Super Sad True Love Story* are, to a certain degree, almost the same. As mentioned above, the narrative structure of *Girls of Riyadh* is comprised of emails and discusses romantic relationships, while *Super Sad True Love Story* is about the relationship between Lenny Abramov and his romantic-interest Eunice Park depicted in part through emails. Also, the narrative structure of *Super Sad True Love Story* is comprised of diary entries by its first-person narrator. Similarly, the narrative structure of *Girls of Riyadh* is comprised of emails. In addition, narrative structures of both *Girls of Riyadh* and *Super Sad True Love Story* are epistolary forms, and the technological version of this form may be seen as a postmodern feature utilized in both

works. These epistolary form shows the inherently fragmentary nature of *Super Sad True Love Story* and *Girls of Riyadh.* Moreover, their narrative structures comment on the fragmentary nature of electronic communication. In short, in this chapter, discussing the representation of postmodern characteristics in *Super Sad True Love Story* in comparison to Saudi novels shows that Saudi novels may be considered a postmodern in both form and content. In this chapter, the novels contain suspicion toward metanarrative, metafiction, routinization, psychic fragmentation, and the influence of technology.

In contrast, in this chapter, some postmodern features in postmodern Saudi novels and the postmodern novel show how each novel has its own unique set of postmodern representational devices. For instance, in *Super Sad True Love Story*, the postmodern dystopian vision is a powerful feature. In contrast*, Girls of Riyadh,* and *Throwing Sparks* do not contain an obvious dystopian vision. In this sense, each novel contains some postmodern features, but these features are employed differently due to the context. While the Saudi novel does not concentrate on capitalism as the primary issue, the postmodern American novel is an authentic example of the influence of capitalism on literature in the contemporary era. On the one hand, *Super Sad True Love Story* concentrates on the consequence of the domination of late capitalism that produces terrible economic affairs by pushing the world towards globalization and privatization. For example, Joshie Goldman, Lenny's boss, says that "this country makes nothing. Our assets are worthless" (Shteyngart 179). Certainly, focusing directly on the influence of late capitalism shapes the structure of characters' personalities. Therefore, the important characteristic in *Super Sad True Love Story* is the instability of personality. Also in *Super Sad True Love Story,* the instability of personality is reflected in the linguistic problems of the narrative language. In addition, this novel demonstrates depthlessness, which is a result of the influence of technology.

This depthlessness influences the structure of Lenny's personality. On the other hand, *Girls of Riyadh* and *Throwing Sparks* focus on the influence of social norms on the structure of the Saudi personality. However, these novels do not neglect the influence of Saudi participation in the global economy on the structure of personality, even if the representation remains more buried in both novels than in their American counterpart. In this chapter, the postmodern Saudi novel concentrates on parody and irony to criticize the domination of social norms.

Chapter Two: Weak Historical Thinking

According to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "the history of all hitherto existing society

is the history of class struggles" (*Manifesto of the Communist Party* 48). This struggle is how

workers fight to obtain justice. In this sense, there is the oppressor and the oppressed, who

represent the Hegelian dialectical process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis—the synthesis being

revolution, and consequently, new modes of production. History, in the Marxist view, is a

consequence of the modes of production. This Marxist perspective contributes a profound

understanding of history and can also be applied to literature. In literary studies, for Jameson,

critics should understand that "there is nothing that is not social and historical—indeed, […]

everything is 'in the last analysis' political" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 20). Thus,

Jameson says, "always historicize," which means, for him, critics should interpret a text within

its larger framework of social reality. In this sense, every literary text, whether it discusses

historical events or not, should be read considering Jameson's slogan. Therefore, literary analysis

cannot be completed without heeding to the socio-historical context of a literary work.

The main argument of this chapter is derived from Jameson's theory: the postmodern

novel has weak historical thinking because it is written in the age of late capitalism. I argue that

the economic, social, and political context of Saudi Arabia, which causes the instability

personality, produces weak historical thinking of the postmodern Saudi novel; the Saudi novel

demonstrates weak historical thinking differently than the postmodern American novel. In this

sense, the argument aims to point out that the participation in the late capitalist system is not the

only factor of weak historical thinking. This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part

contains the theoretical discussion of weak historical thinking. Second, I explore the

representation of weak historical thinking in *The Dove's Necklace* by Raja Alem. This weak

historical thinking is linked to the influence of international corporations on the history of Mecca. Third, I discuss the representation of weak historical thinking in *Life on Hold* by Fahd al-Atiq. I investigate the influence of Saudi economic growth on the movement of Saudi history. Fourth, I discuss the representation of weak historical thinking in *No Country for Old Men* by Cormac McCarthy. Precisely, I discuss the relationship between weak historical thinking and other postmodern features such as the instability of personality, fragmentation, historiographic metafiction, and suspicion toward metanarrative. In other words, I discuss postmodern characteristics with a concentration on the representation of weak historical thinking. In this sense, the discussion the representation of weak historical thinking is a part of the discussion of the main argument of how the Saudi novel may be read as postmodern novel rather than a postcolonial novel.

Discussing postmodern characteristics in the postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel may be done with a dual concentration on the framework of Saudi history and American history in the postmodern era. The main argument of this dissertation may not be isolated from Jameson's slogan "always historicize". The primary goal of this dissertation is to prove that the Saudi novel may be read through the optic of postmodernism, especially as theorized by Jameson. One postmodern feature is weak historical thinking. In this chapter, the Saudi novel and the American novel will provide a frame to view the movement of history and how this movement is represented in these novels. As mentioned in the first chapter, postmodern characteristics may be considered as a bundle that can influence each other. Therefore, the representation of historical thinking, as a postmodern characteristic, is associated with the representation of the instability of personality. In this sense, as Jameson illustrates profoundly, it is possible to find a fictional character who suffers from temporal discontinuity and loses his

historical thinking because the one who cannot integrate his past into his present will fail to expand this integration to contain a broad sense of the movement of history. As discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation, when the past is disconnected from the present and the future is disconnected from the present, the postmodern subject perceives that the movement of history does not make sense. Hence, the postmodern individual does not rely on the past to understand what happens in the present and the postmodern individual does not rely on the present to predict what will happen in the future

As mentioned above, postmodern characteristics in the Saudi novel grant accessibility for understanding the movement of history in Saudi Arabia. In this sense, discussing the postmodern Saudi novel may show the influence of the modes of production on Saudi history. Therefore, discussing the representation of postmodern characteristics in the Saudi novel should not neglect the socio-historical context of literary texts. In this chapter, I do not discuss how novelists rewrite history, but I aim to see whether novelists or their protagonists criticize the modes of production that produce history. Thus, this chapter interrogates the postmodern Saudi novel's consideration of history as either something that should be remembered or as a vehicle for investigating the present. Some critics discuss the representation of history in the Saudi novel, but they do not concentrate on the influence of the modes of production on historical thinking in the Saudi novel[29]. In this sense, Jameson's approach provides a guideline for understanding why Saudi novelists do not provide a strong historical imagination.

---

[29] For example, see: Al-Qahtani, Sultan. "The Novel in Saudi Arabia: Emergence and Development 1930-1989. an Historical and Critical Study." University of Glasgow (United Kingdom), 1994.

It is worth mentioning that history, for Jameson, is inaccessible by itself [30]. In addition,

the process of understanding history, for Jameson, is possible through the study of narration[31].

Therefore, narrative is a significant epistemological category that helps readers to see the world,

and narrative is "a contentless form that our perception imposes on the raw flux of reality, giving

it, even as we perceive, the comprehensible order we call experience" (Dowling 95). This view is

in line with Althusser's view of history. Althusser argues that history is a process without a telos,

a goal, or a subject, and thus present only through its effects, because no process can exist except

through relationships and effects (Althusser, *Politics and History* 193–86). Jameson adjusts this

view by stating that "history is *not* a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an

absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and that our approach to it and to the

Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political

unconscious" (Jameson *The Political Unconscious* 35). Adam Roberts explains this statement

by stating that "History [for Jameson] is not simply there, ready for us to access. It exists in only

textual forms which have to be interpreted. So interpretation is grounded, or 'horizoned,' by

history; but history can only be accessed by interpretation" (Roberts 51). In short, textualization

and narrativization are gates to access the essence of history. In addition, the process of literary

interpretation relies on what Jameson calls metacommentary which means critics, in their literary

---

[30] Since Jameson believes history can only be accessed through its texts, he concentrates on how a text may serve as a mediation to better understand history. According to Jameson mediation refers "to the relationship between the levels or instances, and the possibility of adapting analyses and findings from one level to another. Mediation is the classical dialectical term for the establishment of relationships between, say, the formal analysis of a work of art and its social ground, or between the internal dynamics of the political state and its economic base" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 35).
[31] The subtitle of *The Political Unconscious* is *Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* shows that narrative is one of the important concepts in Jameson's theory.

analyses, should comment on other interpretative readings because "texts come before us as the always-already-read" (Jameson *The Political Unconscious* 9).

The representation of history in postmodern fiction is an important issue, but postmodern critics discuss it from different angles. On the one hand, Hutcheon argues that postmodern writers often offer strong challenges to official versions of history. In her critical works, she coined the term "historiographic metafiction."[32] For Hutcheon, postmodern novelists show their awareness of history and they attempt to comment on what happened in history through their postmodern novels. In this sense, postmodern novelists try to rewrite or represent history in the postmodern novel. Historiographic metafiction is helpful term because it shows that some works, whether typical historical novels or not, may contain a sense of history. On the other hand, Jameson argues that postmodern writers lack a sense of history; hence, they cannot pose an ability to critique the domination of capitalism. I agree with Jameson because the one who cannot integrate the past into the present cannot provide profound historical thinking to criticize the influence of capitalism. In other words, I disagree with Hutcheon because the representation of history in the postmodern novel does not mean that postmodern novelists are aware of what happened in history. Otherwise, why do writers outside of the postmodern period link the present to what happens in the past? Also, why do novelists outside of postmodernism rely on the present to predict the future? This weak awareness induces postmodern writers to think that

---

[32] Hutcheon defines this term as follow: "Historiographic metafiction refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact or fiction. It refuses the view that the only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity" (Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* 93).

history does not make sense. Ultimately, as Jameson asserts, postmodern writers lose their ability to integrate the past within the present to predict the future.

The theoretical discussion of the representation of weak historical thinking will be reflected in *The Dove's Necklace* by Raja Alem. On a small scale, *The Dove's Necklace* is about a mysterious crime that happened in a Meccan neighborhood. On a larger scale, this novel is about the history of Mecca in the postmodern era. When a body is found in the neighborhood, Nasser, the detective, starts investigating. In the plot, his attempts in the investigation are not devoted to the crime itself, but he also attempts to retrieve historical documents. These historical documents will help Khaled al-Sibaykhan, who owns Elaf Holdings, the international corporation which invests in Mecca, change the history of Mecca in the contemporary era. Nasser attempts to reach two girls, Aisha and Azza, who disappeared on the night of the crime. Also, Nasser tries to meet Yusuf, who for Nasser can help in the investigation and eventually in the ultimate project, which is retrieving historical documents. All these fictional events take place in Saudi Arabia and Spain.

The Dove's Necklace discusses how Mecca has been changed in the age of late capitalism. This novel divides the movement of history of Mecca into two parts: before the Saudi participation in the World Trade Organization and after this participation. In this novel, the narrator describes Hamid al-Ashi's life[33], which spans both parts of the history of Mecca as a short snapshot of the contemporary history of Mecca. This history includes a new phase "the kingdom [of Saudi Arabia]'s accession to the World Trade Organization" (Alem 82). Then, al-Ashi's age is associated with the "heap of the kingdom's history, years of [economic] growth and

---

[33] Ashi's historical memory will be discussed in the next few pages because it provides historical context regarding Saudi women's rights in the movement of Saudi history.

plenty that had transformed the yard from the site of slave auction into al-Ashi's kitchen" (Alem 82). In short, Alem implies that the consequence of the Saudi participation in the World Trade Organization is the main factor for the process of changing Mecca's history.

In addition, *The Dove's Necklace* shows how Saudi Arabia's accession to the World Trade Organization and economic growth cause political and social changes. For example, the narrator mentions political and social events that happened in Saudi Arabia. The narrator says:

> in the years from 2004-2006 … Particularly notable was the news that a number of women had been elected to the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce. The most important photo of them [in newspapers] all was the one of Hanadi, the first young woman to obtain a civilian pilot's license, standing in front of a massive airplane with Prince al-Waleed bin Talal and her parents. (Alem 82)

She mentions Prince al-Waleed bin Talal who is considered the wealthiest person in Saudi Arabia. Here, she points to the influence of al-Waleed's economic power on some socio-historical contexts in Saudi Arabia. For instance, he attempts to improve women's rights. Mentioning some real people and the influence of economic growth in the narrative structure of this novel can be considered a postmodern technique. In addition, the Saudi novel may be seen within the scope of postmodernism, that is, for Jameson, the cultural logic of late capitalism. In this novel, the narrator shows how the influence of Saudi Arabia's accession to the World Trade Organization, as an example of participation in the system of late capitalism, has caused new political and social conditions. Certainly, these conditions, as parts of the modes of production, influence the movement of Saudi history. In addition, mentioning some real names and some historical issues blurs the boundary between reality and fiction.

As mentioned, weak historical thinking is a result of the temporal discontinuity. M. Keith Booker explains that the "schizophrenic sense of a loss of individual temporal continuity also contributed to a larger loss of any sense of historical continuity" (Booker, *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds* 24). In addition, weak historical thinking is associated with other postmodern

characteristics. Postmodern characteristics in *The Dove's Necklace* shows the possibility of reading the Saudi novel as a postmodern novel. Moreover, discussing postmodern features clarifies the representation of historical thinking and why characters lose their historical thinking.

Furthermore, *The Dove's Necklace* has some postmodern techniques that are not common in the Saudi novel. For instance, the narrator is not a typical fictional narrator. The narrator is a neighborhood: the Lane of Many Heads. First, because the narrator is not a common fictional narrator, this novel engages in experimentation. Second, the narrator insists on the movement of change in the status quo of the Lane of Many Heads. Thus, third, the narrator attempts to show its history to explain the main factor that causes the change. However, the narrator does not trust its history; therefore, the narrator says, "The only thing you can know for certain in this entire book is where the body was found: the Lane of Many Heads, a narrow alley with many heads" (Alem 11). In other words, the whole plot portrays both the history of Mecca and the text itself as untrustworthy. In the beginning, the narrator implies that all descriptions of the movement of history in Mecca are not reliable sources to understand the present. In this sense, the narrator shows inability of integrating of the past with the present which indicate a weak historical imagination. Finally, in the realist novel, the narrator is omniscient; he represents bourgeois subjectivity. However, in *The Dove's Necklace,* this type of narrator vanishes which indicates the breakdown of the bourgeois subject.

However, the narrator attempts to narrate history not to provide an accurate event-by-event account, but because people want to link their present into their past. The narrator says, "It's how I torment the people who live here, how I'm able to save them trawling through their history for some antidote to the unholy gloom they live with, something to protect them from the atomic age that's about to crush them" (Alem 11). Here, the narrator shows that people struggle

with their present; therefore, they attempt to return to the past as an antidote, but the antidote also destroys them. Subsequently, the future will crush them. The narrator implies that people cannot find anything in their history to help them to understand their present. Thus, people cannot predict their future. In this sense, they cannot maintain constant historical thinking.

As Jameson illustrates, instability of personality leads to weak historical thinking. In *The Dove's Necklace,* Yusuf is depicted as a historian. In this sense, he is supposed to provide profound historical thinking. Yusuf, however, suffers from schizophrenia or insanity. The narrator describes his feelings about Yusuf and his friends: "Young people and the schizophrenic crazes they go in for are driving a stake into my historical behind" (Alem 76). Also, Yusuf is admitted to the famous Saudi hospital, Shihar Hospital, for mental health. The narrator says, "To end up in Shihar hospital was a fate worse than death. Shihar… the name alone was considered an insult back in the Lane of Many Head in Mecca" (Alem 34). Here, the narrator aims to insist on how Yusuf's mental problem is very complex by mentioning the name of Shihar. In other words, the narrator aims to show how Yusuf's mental problem affects his personality, which will affect his historical imagination. Also, the narrator aims to depict the character of Yusuf before he is involved in the plot as a person who attempts to link the past with the present. In addition, Yusuf's insanity may be seen as a consequence of his failure to understand his present. Yusuf in his diary, which contains his letters to his beloved Azza, implies how his historical thinking is. He says, "Who would hire a guy who can only think about the first Abbasid dynasty, or at a push stretch to Islamic Spain in time to fall alongside Granada in the space of a single night and hand over the keys?" (Alem 29). He implies that his historical thinking does not go beyond the Abbasid era in the medieval period, which means his historical thinking is disconnected. In short, Yusuf's personality shows whether he has strong historical thinking or not. But this issue should

not be isolated from the influence of economic growth and the participation in the global economic system.

In addition, Yusuf's instability of personality influences his historical thinking, which is a consequence of the political and economic conditions of his present. In *The Dove's Necklace,* Yusuf shows that his historical knowledge does not help him to link what happened in the past with what happens in the present to predict what will happen in the future. It is obvious that he attributes the main factor that influences his life to the economic growth of the 1980s. He says, "I was born deformed in the 1980s and have lived on into the twenty-first century… just tell yourself you're reading about a freak who wakes up in the twenty-first century to unfurl and stretch like monsters looming before us, all these limited and unlimited liability corporations" (Alem 25). Here, international corporations attempt to change the city by investing in real estate. This interference influences Yusuf's ability to integrate his past within his present. Consequently, it influences his historical thinking. Therefore, he does not provide profound historical thinking of criticizing the domination of late capitalism. In short, Yusuf describes only the domination of international corporations only superficially. He does not provide criticism of this domination because he cannot connect the past with the present. When he says, "Who wakes up in the twenty-first century" (Alem 25), he implies that he just wakes up and faces a new historical phase that is unrelated to the past, a present for which he could not identify causative factors for this domination. In this sense, he implies that his present is disconnected from the past.

Moreover, in *The Dove's Necklace,* there are some aspects that indicate the representation of historical thinking. One of these aspects is Yusuf's interview with the international

corporation that aims to invest in Mecca. Although he knows the history of Mecca, he attempts

to work with a company that aims to change the history of Mecca. He says:

> I just got out of an interview with the recruiting team at Elaf Holdings, the company that handles most of the urban development and investment projects in Mecca, trading in soil that's worth more than enriched uranium. I was for the position of 'historical researcher' I'd be tasked with investigating potential sites for real estate development, with regard, of course, to preserving the unique nature of the Holy City (Alem 28).

Here, Yusuf is willing to utilize his historical knowledge to help Elaf Holdings to invest in

Mecca to increase its real estate value. His historical knowledge does not help him to criticize the

domination of late capitalism. Therefore, he does not link the past of Mecca with its present that

is shaped by the investments of international corporations. In other words, Mecca's present is not

related to its past. Yet, Mecca's present is a consequence of the domination of Elaf Holdings.

But, Yusuf does not think historically to reveal how this domination may change the movement

of Mecca's history in this future.

As mentioned above, in *The Dove's Necklace,* the movement of history is divided into

two historical phases: Mecca's past and Mecca's present. This movement is represented in

Yusuf's diaries that are found by Nasser. His diaries are dated with the years 1987 onward which

aligns with the age of economic growth in Saudi Arabia. The narrator says, "The defendant

Yusuf refers to his memoirs as 'windows', and he divides them into two sections: 'windows for

Azza', in which he describes the alley to his beloved, and 'windows for Umm al-Qura, [Mecca]

in which he dredges up incidents from history" (Alem 23). Here, Yusuf has public and private

perspectives which indicate a typical bourgeois thinking. This split between public and private

perspectives reveals his fragmented experience under the domination of late capitalism. In this

sense, his diaries reflect his personality which may lead to understanding his ability of the

historical imagination as a historian person. Also, his role in the plot may give an access to

understanding the movement of Mecca's history and how chapters of this movement are represented in this novel.

Furthermore, the temporal discontinuity, which shows how the past cannot be integrated into the experience of the present, may be found when Yusuf throws away his documents. Yusuf is the most schizophrenic person in this novel. After he is released from Shihar Hospital, he shows up in the Lane of Many Heads and casts his historical writings in the street. Yusuf says, "I'm not going to leave a single word behind. I've got to free myself from this deceitful sham of a life that's taken everything from me" (Alem 37). Certainly, with this type of personality, he cannot maintain stability of personality, which means he does not have the ability to think historically. He refuses to keep his efforts because he realizes that his historical project of linking the past and the present is worthless. In other words, his experience influences his historical project which means his unstable personality causes his weak historical thinking.

In *The Dove's Necklace*, the important fictional issue is the *Ka'aba's* stolen key. In particular, this novel is about solving the mystery of the theft of the key. For example, the detective who investigates the crime devotes his investigation to discover the key's location. Yusuf involves himself in this issue after he witnesses the theft. He becomes a wanted person; hence, he attempts to avoid the authorities. One of his friends provides him an accommodation in a valuable home that contains many photographic images of Mecca that represent the contemporary history of Mecca. The narrator says:

> Living in the Lababidi building all by himself has affected his ability to see the world around him for what it was. Reality was no longer a simple tissue to him: his dreams, his memories, pictures, and every word from every book he'd ever read combined to form a new reality. Yusuf himself had turned into an apparition on a thin strip of film, liable to disappear if exposed to any light source … he gradually lost the ability to make sense of the world around him. (Alem 337)

In this house, Yusuf traces the contemporary history of Mecca from different sources. By way of example, in this house, he sees some images that represent the beauty of Mecca in the past. All historical sources, including written books and historical images of Mecca, make him think about a new reality. However, this new reality is just an apparition because he cannot integrate the historical beauty of Mecca into the horrible conditions of the present. In other words, he cannot integrate historical events into the horrible present that includes the domination of international corporations and their attempts to change the landscape of Mecca. In short, for Yusuf, the present or the world around him does not make sense because he cannot find a link to connect the beauty of the past to the horrible present. This instability reveals his weak historical thinking.

In addition, historical thinking is difficult without the belief in structuring metanarratives. The most significant issue in *The Dove's Necklace* is the rejection of the whole historical narrative. This rejection, which may be considered a suspicion of metanarrative, shapes historical thinking. In other words, the whole discourse of history, which attempts to justify the present, does not make sense. By way of illustration, in this history, Mecca is depicted as a holy city where people are prohibited from causing any type of harm, including cutting trees. However, this depiction fails in the age of international corporations that change everything in Mecca. In *The Dove's Necklace*, Yusuf sees how equipment digs in the mountains to create real estate. The noise of the heavy equipment changes Yusuf's beliefs that the *Ka'aba* was not the only sacred but "Mecca's mountains were existential secrets and healing" (Alem 74). Therefore, the "great rumbling noise tore Yusuf from his past to the hungry, empty present" (Alem 74). In this sense, Yusuf starts to reject grand historical stories. Subsequently, what had been narrated in these grand stories about the holiness of Mecca is disconnected from what happens in the present when this holiness is desecrated. In other words, grand stories cannot be applied into the present. In

short, the ideologies that shaped entire societies in the past do not make sense in the age of late

capitalism. In short, disbelief in metanarratives, the holiness of Mecca in this case, shows the

disruption of tradition is postmodern Saudi novel, which moves beyond the modern.

In *The Dove's Necklace,* the plot implies that grand stories are no longer legitimized. In

other words, suspicion toward metanarrative does not mean that grand stories including historical

discourse have failed to obtain their goal which is to dominate the human mind. Lyotard argues

that:

> In contemporary society and culture—postindustrial society, postmodern culture — the question of the legitimation of knowledge is formulated in different terms. The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation. (Lyotard 37)[34]

Lyotard points out how grand stories in the postmodern era have lost their legitimacy. In this

sense, in postmodern culture, it is possible to see stories that are derived from history, but these

stories are delegitimized. In *The Dove's Necklace,* the Lane of Many Heads aims to challenge

how some people think about legitimacy of history. For example, the narrator implies some

people think the historical story of how Eve tempts Adam to leave the Sanctuary may be found

in the present (Alem 60). However, the narrator shows how this narration is no longer

trustworthy and they are delegitimized. The narrator says, "You could collect all these stories

and discover that the ram and the mare were merely a fantasy that came out of Adam's breast.

That is, Adam overcame his imagination so he could commit suicide" (Alem 61). The narrator

aims to show that it is possible to examine the credibility of grand stories and challenge them to

discover the truth. The narrator implies grand stories still exist, but they no longer have their

---

[34] Lyotard sees the loss of belief in metanarratives as good. However, I agree with Jameson, whose view of the loss of belief in metanarratives is the opposite to Lyotard's idea. Jameson's view is that the one who disbelieves in metanarratives cannot maintain a stable personality, and subsequently, he cannot maintain historical thinking.

credibility, which indicates that they are delegitimized. In this sense, history, like other grand

stories, loses its credibility. Subsequently, in this novel, characters do not trust history; hence,

they lose their historical thinking.

Furthermore, the detective Nassar attempts to investigate the crime through Yusuf's

diaries. These diaries may help to reveal two postmodern characteristics: weak historical

thinking and metafiction[35.] These diaries contribute to a view of *The Dove's Necklace* as a

postmodern novel because it does not represent history. Indeed, this novel provides people's

perspectives about history. Jameson points out that the "historical novel can no longer set out to

represent the historical past; it can only 'represent' our ideas and stereotypes about that past

(which thereby at once becomes 'pop history')" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 25). People's

perspectives about history are a consequence of the economic conditions that influence historical

thinking. This type of historical thinking, which is represented by Yusuf's diaries, does not

rewrite what happened in the past but aims to examine it through the present's condition.

However, this promising project fails because political and economic conditions cause what

Jameson calls "the weakening of historicity" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 6). The narrator

describes how Yusuf's diaries are not typical historical documents, but they provide his

perspective about the past. The narrator says, "They aren't even memories; they're a

counterattack against a disappointing reality" (Alem 95). Yusuf does not write the historical

description of what happened in the past, but he writes about the past to attack the present. Here,

he provides the main point of the representation of history in the postmodern novel. This

representation does not display strong historical thinking because the past cannot be applied to

---

[35] I will discuss the representation of metafiction at the end of the discussion of this novel.

what happens in the present. This postmodern representation of history shows the present is disappointing. Here, this attack contains another postmodern characteristic, namely nostalgia.

As mentioned above, the postmodern novel is characterized by nostalgia that is associated with weak historical thinking. For instance, in Lababidi's house, Yusuf "has devoted to pictures of Mecca's largest cluster of papermakers and booksellers" (Alem 186). In this house, Yusuf sees "a photo of the *mahmal*[36], the procession of the *kiswa*[37], moving through the Meccan streets having arrived from Egypt" (Alem 223). His meditation on this photo motivates him to imagine participation in the *mahmal*. His imagination combines images from the past and images from the present such as the appearance of Mu'az. This imagination provides an essence of nostalgia of how people celebrate and dress for the *mahmal*. The narrator says:

> Yusuf's heart stopped when he spotted the men on the roof at the left of the picture. Half-hidden behind the minaret on the roof, a man dressed in white traditional clothes seemed almost to be waving at him another man had turned toward the wall so Yusuf couldn't see him; Mu'az was watching the scene surreptitiously from behind the minaret with the two other men (Alem 233).

The photo grants Yusuf an opportunity to depict a combination of the past and the present. This combination shows his nostalgia for the past. However, either his imagination of the past and the present or his nostalgia does not demonstrate that he can link the past with the present. In my opinion, the main reason for this is due to the political and economic condition. In other words, the *mahmal* or the *kiswa* that came from Egypt no longer exist in the age of a wealthy State of Saudi Arabia. For Yusuf, the historical event of *kiswa* is not related to the present. Therefore, Yusuf's imagination, which produces nostalgia, shows his weak historical thinking.

---

[36] The mahmal was the ceremonial covered box carried on a camel which was important element of the pilgrim caravan from Cairo to Mecca. This box contained the kiswa. The narrator explains "the *mahmal* was always occasion for celebration; those gifts were like a yearly revival for the poor Hijaz" (Alem 233).
[37] The *kiswa* is Ka'aba's cover

As mentioned above, Jameson argues that postmodernism is the cultural logic of late capitalism. One aspect of this cultural logic is globalization. The domination of globalization may be associated with other postmodern characteristics such as fragmented identity and weak historical thinking. In *The Dove's Necklace,* the domination of international corporations is a key aspect of globalization. It is arguable that Mecca knew some variety of globalization before this era because many people from many cultures lived and still live in this city. However, the representation of globalization of late capitalism is different because it changes the religious exclusivity of Mecca. The narrator describes the meeting of Yusuf and Mu'az, who is the son of the Imam in Yusuf's neighborhood. The narrator says, "Yusuf walked out of the Sanctuary… all beneath the glare of the Vegas-style spotlights trained permanently on the House of God" (Alem 70). Also, the narrator describes Mu'az's style as a young man who combines global modern clothes, and religious style. The narrator says Mu'az "was a bundle of contradictions—a mixture of pious and modern stuffed into a white Chinese-made tracksuit and sneakers, crowned by an unkempt chest-length beard that looked more like a costume accessory than the real thing" (Alem 71). The narrator shows how the domination of international corporations changes the essence of the space which subsequently influences structure of identity. Therefore, Mu'az cannot maintain his authentic style, which indicates that his identity is changed. Eventually, the one whose identity has difficulty maintaining a sense of temporal continuity and is thus unable to think historically.

In addition, in *The Dove's Necklace*, the representation of globalization reveals how Western values have been endorsed in Saudi Arabia. This endorsement is a consequence of the participation in the global economic system. For instance, the narrator mentions how Prince al-

Waleed bin Talal supports Hanadi to be the first Saudi woman pilot (Alem 82)[38]. This support is

a sort of endorsement of Western values that give women more freedom. This endorsement of

globalization may help to support the main argument of this dissertation which is the Saudi novel

may be not seen a post-colonial novel because it endorses Western values[39]. Also, this

endorsement may help to reveal the representation of historical thinking. In this novel, al-Ashi

reads the story of the support of Hanadi by Prince al-Waleed bin Talal in newspapers. Al-Ashi is

depicted as a person who has been fascinated with newspapers since he was a young man, has

collected and compiled newspapers for a half century (Alem 81). This shows that he follows the

movement of history in Saudi Arabia. However, al-Ashi does not show an ability to link the past

with the present. The narrator indicates the history of women's rights indirectly. The narrator

implies the past of women's rights is disconnected from the present of women's rights. In other

words, the present improvement of women's rights in Saudi Arabia is not, for example, a

consequence of social revolutions which might have happened in the past. Here, the past does

not provide any help for women to improve their rights in the present. This improvement is not

related to the past, but it is a consequence of globalization. Therefore, al-Ashi does not show

strong historical thinking when he reads stories of improvement of women's rights because, for

him, integrating the past into the present does not make sense (Alem 82).

One of the main characters, in *The Dove's Necklace,* is Aisha, who has a car accident. She

loses her parents and becomes disabled and hospitalized in Germany. There, she has a romantic

---

[38] Hanadi Al-Hindi is the first Saudi pilot. She works for the Kingdom Holding Company which is owned by Alwaleed Bin Talal.
[39] Indeed Bill Ashcroft argues that "Globalization may now be characterized by the multiplicity of its modernities" (Ashcroft 81). He says, "Western models has been almost unavoidable. Thus, like post-colonial literatures, the most characteristic alternative modernities are those we might call hybridized, ones that appropriate and transform global cultural forms to local needs, beliefs and conditions" (Ashcroft 84).

relationship with a German man who works in the hospital. In the beginning of the plot, the

narrator mentions the body that was found in the Lane of Many Heads when Aisha disappears.

However, Nassar, the detective, finds a draft of electronic letters, which are sent to her beloved,

in her computer. In these emails, Aisha reveals the position of women in the age of economic

growth in Saudi Arabia. Also, these emails show how Aisha is a very fragmented person. In

addition, her psychological condition is revealed by her letters. The narrator says, "It was past

midnight by the time Nasser gave up in despair at the Lane of Many Heads's red herrings, the

diary's hallucinations, and Aisha's schizophrenic emails" (Alem 283). Moreover, the narrator

says, "Nasser could find no other option but to race breathlessly between Aisha and Yusuf,

who'd both fallen into a funk"[40] (Alem 278). It seems Aisha is similar to Yusuf who also suffers

from depression and schizophrenia. In this sense, Aisha in her letter shows instability of

personality. Subsequently, she cannot maintain historical thinking to provide a profound

understanding of what happens in the present.

Furthermore, the schizophrenic personality of Aisha reveals her inability to link what

happened in the past with what happens in the present. For example, in one of her emails to her

beloved, she describes Saudi women's life in the end of 20th century. She says, "An escape that

we, the women of the Lane of Many Heads in the twentieth century, had failed to achieve. We

were raised in similar subterranean worlds, and when the time came for us to be allowed out, our

faces had to be effaced with black" (Alem 44). Here, she implies in her email that society aims to

cover her with black clothes to prevent the masculine world from noticing her. However, this

society allows her to be treated in Germany under a male doctor's supervision and turns a blind

---

[40] I think the word *funk* is misleading from the original meaning. The key word in this quotation
in Arabic version is اكتئاب which means depression.

eye to her relationship with him. This contradiction between preventing and allowing her relationships with men has caused Aisha's schizophrenia.

Subsequently, Aisha's implication about women's rights is not isolated from the large scope of reality and the movement of Saudi history. She says, "The weird thing was that this regime of effacement was a sign of modernity in the Lane of Many Heads, for throughout the neighborhood's history, right up until the early twentieth century, women's faces had remained uncovered for all the world to see, for the sun to shine on" (Alem 44–45). In the early 20th century, not all women covered their faces, but in the end of that century, all women were forced to cover their faces. Here, Aisha implies the past, which contained a little bit of freedom for women, cannot be linked to the present that prevents women from their freedom. In other words, what happened in the past cannot be applied to what happens in the present. In this sense, the past, for Aisha, is disconnected from the present which indicates that she cannot sustain historical thinking.

Moreover, in *The Dove's Necklace*, the issue of the stolen key of the *Ka'aba* is the thread that links the two parts of the plot. Yusuf attempts to comment on the historical stolen key. In other words, Yusuf, in one of his letters, comments on the movement of the plot. He gives readers an initial impression of the main issue. He, as mentioned, describes himself as a person whose historical thinking does not exceed beyond the age of the Abbasid caliphate. Then, in his comments on the issue of the stolen key, he reveals whether his historical thinking is weak or not. He says, "We always come back to the key, the epitome of my nightmares. I'm searching for the keyless lock to everything that's shut off from you and me" (Alem 29). His comments do not only focus on the main movement of the plot, but they provide insight on how he thinks about the movement of history. His comment shows that he still thinks about the history of Arabs in the

Middle Ages. Also, his comments imply his inability to link the history of Arabs in the Middle

Ages with their history in the postmodern era. In short, his comments show his weakness in

historical thinking. This weakness cannot be shown without Yusuf's metafiction.

The second part of *The Dove's Necklace* concentrates largely on finding the stolen key. In

this part, readers face a new character, Nora, who is the girlfriend of Khaled al-Sibaykhan, the

owner of Elaf Holdings, the international corporation. However, in the end of the novel, the

narrator reveals that Nora "was the name Khaled al-Sibaykhan had bestowed on her…after he

stripped her of the name of Azza so that he could own her by giving her his mother's name"

(Alem 466). Nora or Azza, who used to be Yusuf's beloved, lives in Spain and she visits many

places which have Islamic heritage. In her visits, she usually comments on the places' history

and shows nostalgia for this history. Nora, as a main character in this second part, leads the plot

of *The Dove's Necklace*; therefore, she does not neglect the main issue which is the stolen key of

Ka'aba. In this part, the narrator reveals how Nora's master participates in the search of the key

not to serve the Muslim community, but to support his powerful company, which aims to change

the landscape of Mecca into a postmodern city (Alem 468–470).

Furthermore, the meeting between Nora and the woman provides nostalgia for historical

coexistence between Jews, Muslims, and Christians in the Middle Ages in Islamic Iberia, also

known as Al-Andalus. Also, the woman tells Nora how their forefathers attempted to find a great

key that opens houses of God. The woman says, "Both our ancestors left us their versions of the

key to Paradise: Ibn Hazm [a Muslim philosopher] gave us *The Necklace of the Dove*[41] and Ibn

Nagrela [a Jewish philosopher] gave us his son Joseph, who inherited his father's poetry and

---

[41] Here, as mentioned above in the introduction that there is intertextuality in the title of this
novel and the title of Ibn Hazm's *The Necklace of the Dove*.

carried on his ideals and his obsession with Eden" (Alem 416). Next, Nora realizes the difference between these great philosophers and her master. These philosophers aimed to ensure a peaceful coexistence for humanity, but her master aims to expand his wealth and change Mecca by imposing capitalist projects. These nostalgic memories show the great civilization in the Middle Ages and peaceful coexistence. However, these nostalgic memories do not help Nora to link the past with the present because the past, which includes her forefathers' contribution, does not make sense in the present, which includes her master's capitalist goals. In other words, what happened in the past may not be seen as a factor of what happens in the present. The relationship between the past and the present is disconnected, and nostalgic memories cannot fill the gap between them. Therefore, Nora, in the end of the meeting, tells her bodyguard, "I'm not interested in war of any kind, not even for the sake of a key that will unlock the four rivers of Paradise. Let's forget about the story. It doesn't concern me. Just take me back to Madrid, please" (Alem 428). Here, she gives up her historical project because late capitalism, which is represented by her master, prevents her from sustaining or acting upon strong historical thinking.

As mentioned above, the second part of *The Dove's Necklace* contains another attempt to find the key. This attempt takes place in Medina, Saudi Arabia. In this part, the detective Nasser gives up his investigation of the crime to focus on discovering the key. He joins Yusuf after he takes the amulet from Mu'az (Alem 359). This box contains a historical document that describes the key and designates who is supposed to preserve it over time. In this sense, the plot comments on the historical document. However, the historical document does not help Yusuf to solve the historical mystery. Yet, Yusuf, Mushabbab, and Nasser find in the historical document that Khaled al-Sibaykhan is supposed to keep the key. Ultimately, Yusuf realizes that giving Khaled the privilege of keeping the key is a part of a conspiracy against the history of Mecca. The

narrator says, "A single sentence uttered about that parchment pierced their dream, destroying it and expelling them" (Alem 463). Eventually, Yusuf's comments on the historical document shows his attempts to be aware of history, but in fact, his comments show that he cannot link the past with the present to create a plan for an anticipated future.

In *The Dove's Necklace,* Khalil is a character whose personality shows the influence of the domination of late capitalism. His personality is shaped by Americanization and cultural globalization. Jameson argues that "postmodern culture is the internal and super structural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 5). In this novel, Khalil is a pilot who was trained in the United States of America, but his license is suspended due to his psychological instability. Therefore, he becomes a taxi driver, but he still practices dangerous behavior when he drives. He describes himself as "a disturbed man" (Alem 55). In this novel, Khalil is depicted as a man who loses his temporal continuity completely; hence, he does not show any desire to understand the movement of history.

In addition, Khalil absorbs Americanization, which makes him a schizophrenic person because he cannot adjust himself to live in his society peacefully. Americanization is represented by his desire to follow the popular culture of consumer capitalism. Khalil shows his addiction to watching Hollywood films and his love of being scared by jungles in Hollywood movies (Alem 335). The narrator shows that Khalil watches ten movies, such as *Jaws* and *Mission Impossible,* in fifteen hours, many of which depict American military actions (Alem 372). The narrator portrays how Khalil considers military scenes as "compulsive violence" (Alem 373). Here, the narrator insists on American culture as normalized and hegemonic. In short, his passion with

American pop culture makes him live outside his society mentally. Eventually, he cannot combine his physical occupation in Saudi Arabia with his mental preoccupation with Americanization, nor can he maintain the historical imagination or any ability to reconcile past with present and imagine the future.

Moreover, Khalil is depicted as a person who does not differentiate between reality and science fiction. This issue is part of his instability of personality, which leads eventually to his collapse of historical thinking. The narrator says, "He'd begun cultivating with his first death, when at the age of twenty he encountered those science fiction liquids – 5FU, MVAC, CMV – for the first time. They were like strange weapons out of Star Wars that doctors dripped, infused, and pumped into his blood" (Alem 373). The narrator implies that all fields of science do not aim to help humanity but to destroy it. Here, this claim is a sort of disbelieving in metanarrative; therefore, Khalil asks Mu'az, "What does a person do when modern science gives up on him?" (Alem 373). Then, the narrator relates Khalil's feeling that "this modern science they talked about was like a present-day god who turned his back on Khalil and denied him his miracles" (Alem 373). In short, his complete disbelief of science and his inability to distinguish between reality and science fiction causes a very profound unstable personality. This instability of personality, as mentioned, is depicted in his strange behavior. Therefore, in this novel, Khalil does not discuss or mention Mecca's history, which means his historical thinking has collapsed. Yet, he continues to mock Yusuf's historical research.

In conclusion, *The Dove's Necklace* is not like the traditional historical novel that attempts historical realism and accuracy. Jameson demonstrates how "all historical novels no doubt in one way or another involve a mobilization of previous" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 23). Also, Jameson argues that "this historical novel can no longer set out to represent the historical

past; it can only 'represent' our ideas and stereotypes about that past (which thereby at once becomes 'pop history')" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 25). However, *The Dove's Necklace* discusses history in a dialectical way which does not present what people have already known about history, but it attempts to reread history through our experience. In my opinion, the most important point is this novel is that it, unlike other Arabic cultural works, does not consider history as sacred production. This novel challenges prior attempts that examine history in this way. But, in my opinion, characters fail to present a profound understanding of what happened in history and how it could be linked in the present. The main reason for this failure is, as Jameson explains, the domination of late capitalism. In this novel, the narrator narrates about the arrival of capitalist corporations which aim to invest in Mecca. This investment will influence the movement of history in Mecca.

Consequently, *The Dove's Necklace* does not trust history as a source of change in the status quo. In other words, this novel, as a postmodern work, is not like other historical novels that aim to convince readers that history is valuable. For example, Nora says to Yusuf, "Please, make contact with the real world around you. Come out of your bubble of history and Doomsday" (Alem 467). This novel depicts history as an illusion; therefore, Nora, who visits historical heritage sites in Spain, does not find history as a source that should be trusted to obtain a better life. She implies that history has only one attempt to grant a handful of people more power to dominate societies. Also, she finds that all people who try to change the movement of history fail, and they are buried in the cemetery of outcasts.

The Dove's Necklace attempts to stand against the domination of late capitalism by providing political content that relies on the movement of history. This novel does not aim to provide historical knowledge about what happened in the past, but it aims to use history to

discuss the present. The relationship between history and the political content is similar to Elisabeth Wesseling's claim, "Postmodernist writers do not consider it their task to propagate historical knowledge, but to inquire into the very possibility, nature, and use of historical knowledge from an epistemological or a political perspective" (Wesseling 73). Alem does not attempt to teach readers historical lessons; rather, she uses history to discuss current political and economic conditions. This discussion cannot be had without reliance on epistemological and political views that could be found in history, which is indicative of weak historical thinking. In addition, in *The Dove's Necklace*, characters suffer from instability of personality, which may be found in symptoms such as schizophrenia. This instability of personality leads to weak historical thinking. Some characters such as Khalil lose the ability of historical thinking completely.

Ultimately, Alem shows her awareness of aspects of postmodern culture. She aims to declare to her readers that she knows and understands what postmodernism is. For example, she writes "without planning to, Nora stepped into a chic hair salon whose smart window featured pictures of androgynous, ultra-modern cuts[42]" (Alem 366). Here, Alem show her knowledge about postmodern popular culture such as ungendered haircuts. Alem criticizes and explains some features of postmodernism that may be found in her society. For instance, Alem criticizes aspects of late capitalism such as skyscrapers which "all looked like spaceships that had landed on Earth to besiege the *Ka'ba* in a postmodern metallic standoff" (Alem 469). Also, Alem writes, "Their hearts [Yusuf and Azza] scarcely beat any longer. Their mouths felt dry. Yusuf was frozen in the desk chair and Azza stood motionless behind him, the scent of the postmodern *Ka'ba*" (Alem 469). Here, she writes about how Yusuf and Azza react when they see the

---

[42] In the Arabic version Alem writes مابعد الحداثية which is supposed to be translated as postmodern, but the translator chooses "ultra-modern."

postmodern design of the postmodern *Ka'ba*. In this sense, Alem shows her knowledge of what

the term of postmodernism means. Eventually, the narrative structure of *The Dove's Necklace*

combines between the detective novel and the historical novel. This tendency to mix genres is

one of the key features of postmodern novels.

The second Saudi novel discussed in this chapter is *Life on Hold* by Fahd al-Atiq (2004).

This novel was translated into English by Jonathan Wright in 2012. *Life on Hold* is about a Saudi

man who encountered the economic and social development in the 1970s and the 1980s[43]. This

novel begins with a depiction of the life of Khaled, who is the main protagonist. Khaled is an

educated person who holds a college degree and has a job. He used to work for a company which

was full of corruption, and he is depicted as a person who has an artistic sensibility. The narrator

follows Khaled's life from his youth until his manhood. This life is divided into two major

phases: before the economic boom and after the economic boom in Saudi Arabia. The narrator

describes Khaled's life in his family's old house to represent Saudi society before the economic

growth, while Khaled's life in his family's new house represents Saudi society after the economic

growth. Thus, the narrator describes social, economic, and political life in Saudi Arabia. In the

new house, his young brother starts to believe in radical ideology[44].

In *Life on Hold,* al-Atiq attempts to display the movement of Saudi history. In Saudi

Arabia, the most important moment in the development of the modes of production is the

discovery of oil in the 1930s. This discovery changes all aspects of life in the Arabian Peninsula,

---

[43] He mentions the transition from living in mud houses to concrete houses, which happened in
the sixties and the seventies. Also, he mentions historical events that happened in the eighties,
such as the occupation of The Great Mosque of Mecca by terrorists.

[44] I do not consider this novel a bildungsroman. I discuss it as engaging in dialog with that genre
which combines realism and postmodernism. Also, this dialog may help to reveal the
representation of historical thinking.

which eventully shapes the movement of Saudi history. The obvious change began in the 1950s

and still continues to this day. In this novel, the narrator says:

> He could write about a boy's life that began in the middle of old Riyadh after the modest
> economic boom at the start of the 1950s. That life faded, and another life, an adult life,
> began in the start of 1970s, when people moved out of the mud-built neighborhoods into
> suburbs where the houses were built of concrete and steel, with high walls and sealed
> windows. (al-Atiq 45)

Here, in my opinion, the narrator provides the main purpose of *Life on Hold.* This novel

discusses the history of Saudi Arabia and shows how the modes of production and economic

growth shape this history. In other words, *Life on Hold* attributes the movement of history to

economic growth.

As mentioned above, the narrator in *Life on Hold* narrates about Khaled's life. This

narrative structure shows how people comprehend their existence within the movement of

history. Georg Lukács illustrates the influence of the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars on

the beginning of the historical novel. He claims that the historical events of the French

Revolution provide "the concrete possibilities for men to comprehend their own existence as

something historically conditioned, for them to see in history something which deeply affects

their daily lives and immediately concerns them" (Lukács 24). In terms of how some historical

events may help writers to write history through their own daily lives, *Life on Hold* concentrates

on Khaled's existence or experience to write the movement of history in Saudi Arabia.

Therefore, the meaning of history in this novel may be different from historical books that

register new Saudi history. The difference between *Life on Hold* and historical books may be

found in their representation of political content.

The narrative structure of *Life on Hold,* which concentrates on Khaled's life, may be

discussed through Jameson's idea of the national allegory. Jameson argues that all third world

literatures are to be read as what he calls "national allegories."[45] For Jameson, this concept

means that "the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled

situation of the public third-world culture and society"[46] (*Third-World Literature* 69). For

instance, in Khaled's psychological treatment, his psychotherapist asks him to write in his diary

(al-Atiq 44). Then, he decides to write his history that starts from his grandfather's journey to

Riyadh contemporary to the establishment of Saudi Arabia. Also, this history, which comprises

the novel itself, mentions the development of the Saudi economy and society. Ultimately, this

personal history, or this novel, mentions some historical events that happened in Middle East in

the 20th century. For my purpose, I will rely on the representation of the national allegory of

Khaled as a gateway that provides access to the movement of history in Saudi Arabia.

As mentioned above, a discussion of the representation of history in the postmodern

novel cannot be had without discussing the representation of temporal continuity. Although *Life*

on Hold concentrates on Khaled's life and the instability of his personality, this novel aims to

show the movement of history in Saudi Arabia. This history is depicted as a consequence of

political and economic changes that happened in the 1960s through the 1980s, which is the

timeline of this novel. As mentioned above, Althusser points out that history is inaccessible.

Also, Jameson illustrates how the narration helps to understand the movement of history. In

addition, Jameson explains his three horizons[47] to analyze the structure of narration to understand

---

[45] Jameson argues that third-world cultures are not postmodern. In my opinion, Saudi culture is a little bit different because the economic power of Saudi Arabia makes Saudi culture is not completely third-world culture. Also, using Jameson's term "national allegories" does not mean that I consider Saudi culture as non-postmodern. I rely on this term to discuss only the movement of Saudi history.

[46] There are some critics such as Aijaz Ahmad who criticizes Jameson for this article. Their discussion is not my primary concern in this dissertation.

[47] For Jameson, these horizons are "first, of political history, in the narrow sense of punctual event and a chroniclelike sequence of happenings in time; then of society, in the now already less

history. These critical approaches show that discussing the structure of Khaled's personality or considering him as a national allegory helps to understand the representation of the movement of history in Saudi Arabia.

This brief discussion of the representation of temporal discontinuity helps to discuss the representation of history in *Life on Hold.* As mentioned above, this novel follows the main protagonist's life and the reader can take this life as a mask of the movement of history in Saudi Arabia. In this sense, this novel grants the reader access to understanding the history of Saudi Arabia in the age of economic growth. As Jameson points out, history is an absent cause that cannot be approached by itself (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 35). *Life on Hold'*s narration reveals the absent movement of the history of economic growth in Saudi Arabia. Also, *Life on Hold* provides the political unconscious of economic growth and how it changes social norms. In short, the textualization of *Life on Hold* shows the representation of history in Saudi Arabia, and whether the characters have an ability of a strong historical imagination.

Khaled is depicted as having a schizophrenic personality and he does not trust his experience; he cannot understand the development of history. The narrator says:

> Then he entered a state of delirium, reliving what he had experienced and felt, wavering between reality and what he always imagined to be reality, in waking dreams and troubled dreams at night. And there was always the problem of the soul and the body, the symbol of the angst he tried to read in people's eyes so that he could relax a little. (al-Atiq 8–9)

The narrator implies that Khaled has deep a psychological problem which makes him unable to understand himself. Also, this psychological dilemma makes him unable to trust his experience because it does not make sense for him. This type of person, who cannot trust his experience,

---

diachronic and time-bound sense of a constitutive tension and struggle between social classes; and, ultimately, of history now conceived in its vastest sense of the sequence of modes of production and the succession and destiny of the various human social formations, from prehistoric life to whatever far future history has in store for us" (*The Political Unconscious* 75).

cannot expand his thinking from temporal to historical thinking. Khaled is depicted as a person whose historical thinking is almost gone.

This chapter focuses on discussion of postmodern characteristics that are associated with instability of personality and the representation of historical thinking. As explained in the first chapter, there is a relationship between the instability of personality and suspicion toward metanarrative. This relationship could be found in Khaled's experience with psychiatry. In this novel, he has difficulties adjusting himself to his society and building social relationships with his family and friends. Then, he visits a psychiatrist, but this psychiatrist does not convince Khaled to start the treatment because he does not trust the psychiatrist's knowledge or the grand narrative of psychiatry. Khaled decides to give up on psychiatry after his psychiatrist asks him some questions which do not make sense for Khaled. The narrator says, "[Khaled] remembered the previous psychiatrist's questions: 'what do you drink? Do you masturbate? Do you love God? … Do you pray regularly?' He asked the psychiatrist, 'What does prayer have to do with it?' 'You just answer and I'll tell you who you are' the psychiatrist said, and laughed" (al-Atiq 11). Subsequently, "He left the clinic frustrated, and resolved never to visit doctors again" (al-Atiq 12). Here, Khaled seems to become suspicious of psychiatry as metanarrative. As a result, he cannot maintain temporal continuity to unify his experience. Subsequently, he cannot expand his view to think historically.

Generally speaking, *Life on Hold* is about rejecting ideology. In other words, this novel concentrates on criticizing ideology in its relation to the modes of production. Specifically, Al-Atiq attempts to criticize radical ideology. In this sense, this novel shows how ideology may shape the movement of Saudi history. The history of Saudi Arabia in the age of economic growth contains some ideological conflicts. The most important historical event is the rise of radical

Islamic ideology. *Life on Hold* concentrates on how radical Islamic ideology deludes some young Saudis. This focus is not free from the refusal of metanarratives, especially the traditional explanation of Islamic doctrine. For instance, the narrator says, "He had heard about strange tumors appearing in society, about horrible crimes … pathological religiosity … about young men who died in Afghanistan in the name of jihad" (al-Atiq 18–19). In this novel, al-Atiq criticizes clerics who support the radical ideology. This criticism shows suspicion toward grand stories in a radicalized version of traditional Islamic discourse. The narrator relates that a cleric attempts to convince Khaled to believe in radical Islamic ideology. Khaled says ironically, "He wanted me to listen to him, then to follow him, then attend his lectures, then distribute his cassettes, and in the end he would have booked me a one-way ticket to Afghanistan, while he would have stayed comfortably here at home with his wives" (al-Atiq 29). This mockery is a good example of the representation of metanarrative because Khaled rejects a fundamental ideology of jihad presented by the cleric, which means he refuses to accept how clerics explain this fundamental ideology. Then, this refusal of this metanarrative leads to disbelief in the ideology that produces the metanarrative. Next, this disbelief in ideology may be considered a refusal of the modes of production because ideology is a part of these modes. Khaled's rejection of the modes of production, which shape history for Marxists, causes weak historical thinking.

In addition, in *Life on Hold,* Khaled is depicted as a depthless person who does not care about his nation's grand issues. In this sense, Khaled has an obvious suspicion toward metanarrative. For instance, the narrator says:

> He could leave aside those momentous issues that people have written off as history because they weren't interested in them in the first place. He could leave aside Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Arab-Israeli wars, King Faisal's oil boycott of America, the occupation of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by Juhaiman, the peace agreement between President Sadat and Israel, the Lebanese civil war, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, then the invasion of the world by modern communication devices,

and the American occupation of the Middle East, because who was he to take an interest in these major matters—matters that now seemed laughable? (al-Atiq 45)

Here, the narrator summarizes the most important historical events that happened in the second half of the last century. He shows his mixed feelings about regional and global historical events, yet he considers them "laughable events" which do not deserve his attention. In this sense, his rejection of the significance of these historical events shows that he does not recognize the connections of these events to his present. This rejection is a part of his suspicion toward all grand stories in Arabic culture. Consequently, Khaled shows his suspicion toward the modern history of Arabs which means he loses his historical thinking. In short, he who does not think about history seriously will not maintain historical thinking.

Moreover, Al-Atiq insists on the influence of the modes of production and economic growth on Khaled's personality. For Khaled, "Life had lost its appeal since the first signs of what they called the economic boom, which had granted people loans to build new houses in the new suburbs" (al-Atiq 90). The influence of this economic growth makes Khaled unable to locate himself within the new suburbs. Then, he loses his stable personality because his experience in the old suburbs, which represents his youthful phase, is disconnected from his experience in the new suburbs, which represents his manhood. In short, the modes of production influence the structure of Khaled's personality and Khaled's ability to think historically.

Many Saudi novelists concentrate on the influence of spatial change or the movement from the village to the city in the age of economic growth. In Saudi Arabia, economic growth, which is a result of participation in the global economic system, produced new maps of Saudi cities in the 1970s and 1980s. The Saudi novel discusses the transformation from the village to the city and how this transformation affects the structure of Saudi society. However, *Life on Hold* is not like realistic Saudi novels that discuss transitioning from the village to the city. *Life*

on Hold concentrates on remapping the city itself as a result of economic growth. Then, this novel shows how the change of space affects the structure of people's personalities and their social relationship. For example, "The journey between the clinic and home was new and unfamiliar, as if Riyadh changed into something else, something like the sterile concrete house that they had recently moved into and they called a villa" (al-Atiq 12). Here, Khaled does not provide a comparison between the city and the village, as is common in the realistic Saudi novel, but he describes changes in his city before and after economic growth.

In addition, the representation of remapping Riyadh makes Khaled unable to perform cognitive mapping. Khaled does not show a profound understanding of his social and cultural surroundings. He attributes social changes in Saudi society to economic growth. In this sense, Khaled cannot maintain a profound cognitive mapping process and cannot locate himself within the social and cultural context. Subsequently, he cannot locate the social and cultural surroundings within history. For instance, the narrator describes Khaled's inability to cognitively map Riyadh: "The days were much the same in this city, which did not know if it was pious or decadent" (al-Atiq 12). Then, Khaled shows how his inability to understand the social context, which causes his inability of understand the city itself. The narrator describes the city: "Everyone was constantly running, but they didn't know where they were going. Young men chased breathlessly after business with no guarantee of success" (al-Atiq 96). People do not know what they are doing in this city. They attempt to invest in business, but they do not understand how their life goes; therefore, there is no guarantee of success. This inability to understand the city affects social context, which means people will not understand the movement of history. The inability of cognitive mapping is associated with weak historical thinking because a man who is

not able to locate himself within the social context will not be able to broaden his view to locate social and cultural surroundings within the movement of history.

Furthermore, while many Saudi novels of the 1980s focused on social relationships, *Life on Hold* concentrates on one outcome of changing space, routinization. From the beginning, the narrator focuses on the influence of how the days "are all much alike" (al-Atiq 1). In this sense, the narrator aims to show the monotony of life in this era. Therefore, the narrator shows how the protagonist, Khaled, sees life as phony because living "in this city of masks, the days have been much the same in their tedium since distant time" (al-Atiq 2). In other words, this novel shows how routinization influences all aspects of life. By way of illustration, Khaled finds that his life is full of routinization; therefore, he finds his dreams "turned into monotonous drudgery" (al-Atiq 3). Here, Khaled, as a fragmented person, thinks routinization makes life phony. Hence, Khaled is depicted as "a frustrated [person who] dropped the precious thing he was holding and it broke into small fragments" (al-Atiq 4). He is frustrated; hence, he gives up everything which may affect his historical imagination. In this sense, the narrative structure of *Life on Hold* combines an apparent contradiction of radical change and radical sameness. In other words, there is a radical change in the economic system. However, this radical change in the economy produces radical sameness, which may be found in the representation of routinization in social aspects of life in Saudi Arabia

Consequently, routinization makes Khaled unable to distinguish between days and this means he cannot combine his past and present. Therefore, Khaled does not show any ability to think historically. Although this novel narrates the movement of history in Saudi Arabia, it does not show strong historical thinking. In other words, the structure of the plot implies the development of Saudi society and how Saudi people encounter a life of routinization, which

indicates the movement of history in Saudi Arabia. However, Khaled thinks what happened in the past is not related to the present because the domination of routinization prevents him from strong historical thinking. The only important point is that this novel attributes routinization to the domination of late capitalism. Khaled says, "It's boom time, the age of the rich, the powerful, and wellborn, not the age of the poor, the sick, and the dreamers" (al-Atiq 15). In short, in *Life on Hold,* the representation of routinization is linked to the structure of personality and weak historical thinking.

For Khaled, living in a phony life causes psychic fragmentation. *Life on Hold* contains the representation of psychic fragmentation which is attributed to economic growth in Saudi Arabia. In this novel, feelings of psychic fragmentation are not limited to old people who feel nostalgia for social norms, which are changed in the late capitalist era. Khaled says, "he felt like a lost and useless creature" (al-Atiq 15). He implies that his existence in this world does not make sense. Here, this feeling may be seen as alienation because Khaled cannot adjust himself with his society. Indeed, his feeling is more complicated than alienation because he thinks that there is no necessity for his existence. This feeling is a consequence of economic growth. Because he feels psychic fragmentation in his present, his experience in the past and his imagination of the future do not make sense. In short, the one who feels psychic fragmentation cannot maintain temporal continuity. Subsequently, he cannot maintain strong historical thinking. In addition, this representation of psychic fragmentation, which is a result of economic growth, may help to explain how the socio-historical context of Saudi Arabia differentiates the postmodern Saudi novel from the postmodern American novel. Jameson points out that postmodern subject is deeply fragmented to feel alienation. Some reader may consider Khaled's

situation as contradictory to Jameson's idea. In my opinion, it is not necessary that the representation of psychic fragmentation in this novel must confirm Jameson's idea.

Furthermore, in *Life on Hold*, economic growth not only causes psychic fragmentation, but it also produces conspicuous consumerism. In other words, in Saudi Arabia, economic growth causes the appearance of consumerism. Conspicuous consumerism changes many social practices and social relationships in Saudi society. In *Life on Hold,* al-Atiq attempts to register the history of Saudi consumerism and show its influence on the movement of Saudi history. For example, Khaled has a conversation with his friend, Walid, who is mistreated by his girlfriend's father. Walid describes his girlfriend's house: "All the walls in this house are covered in glass cabinets full of books and antiques. Can you imagine? How can they read when they spend all their time shopping or in hotels or out on the town. […] That house is a testament to the consumer lifestyle that has taken root among us" (al-Atiq 30–31). Here Walid attempts to show that the consumer lifestyle is a new lifestyle which was not known in the past, but it becomes common in the present. In this sense, there is no relationship between the past, which did not know consumerism, and the present, which witnesses and performs consumerism. In other words, the present, which contains consumerism, is disconnected from the past. Consequently, the influence of consumerism prevents Walid and Khaled from strong historical thinking because the relationship between the past and the present, for them, does not make sense.

In addition, the structure of the plot of *Life on Hold* is not just an overview of the history of Saudi Arabia in the age of economic growth; it also allows access to some symptoms that show that strong historical thinking has been weak among Saudis. In this novel, the narrator attempts to display some social practices that have changed in Saudi society. For instance, Walid talks with Khaled about how Saudi society has changed. He says:

> But have you noticed? Everything's gone to pieces. People's relationships have gone to pieces, the work-place has gone to pieces, and family relationships have gone to pieces. We're sunk in huge religious, political, and economic contradictions. Real neighborhoods are dead, real society is dead, real people are dead, and we can no longer pull ourselves together again to get out of this giant mess. (al-Atiq 32)

Here, social relationships have changed and become weak, which means people do not trust their experience in their society. Then, they do not trust their present and they have nostalgia. In this sense, for them the good past is disconnected from the bad present. Therefore, they cannot think coherently enough to restore themselves and escape their present, which also means there is no future on the horizon. In short, the loss of strong social relationships as a result of consumerism and individualism is a symptom that may reveal weak historical thinking.

Furthermore, all social, political, and economic changes, which are associated with economic growth, cause anxiety and fear for people. In other words, people encounter new types of political and social practices which are not related to what happened in the past; therefore, they feel fear. In short, what happened in the past cannot be applied to the present. Consequently, the past is disconnected from the present. By way of example, the narrator shows how Khaled's childhood was full of excitement, but in his present time,

> his senses had been dulled, his view of things was apathetic, and the infrequent events that took place around him were unimportant and unexciting. But here he was, suddenly aware of his existence, and troubled about it, as though expecting the pressure cooker that long been boiling to suddenly explode and reveal the truth. (al-Atiq 36)

Khaled is depicted as a person who fears everything in his life. This fear may make Khaled unable to maintain strong historical thinking. For him, the positive past of childhood is disconnected from the horrible present, which contains excitable and selfish people (al-Atiq 36). In this sense, the relationship between the past and the present does not make sense. Therefore, this discontinuity makes him frightened and anxious, which prevents him from having strong historical thinking.

Moreover, the narrator shows that there is not a logical relationship between the past and the present in the age of economic growth in Saudi Arabia. The past, which contained famine, is not related to the present, which witnesses prosperity. The narrator narrates about Khaled's grandfather. He says:

> so, at the start of the last century, four farmers from a village in the Riyadh area, driven by hunger, went out looking for a new life … they prayed, and walked on until their dates ran out and they had only a little water … during the night, one of the four gave the other men a strange look … ran off with all his remaining strength … this man had had a feeling that his three companions, who were in fact his cousins, were thinking of eating him … this man was Khaled's grandfather. (al-Atiq 46–48)

The narrator shows how Khaled's grandfather lived in a very difficult era. Also, his father lives in a very modest neighborhood. However, his family's social status is changed suddenly when the government decides to give them financial aid to build their villa. The narrator says that Khaled "went back home and his mother greeted him with the news that they were going to move the next month to the new house ... a spacious villa" (al-Atiq 85). Al-Atiq aims to show that people who once suffered from hunger and famine live in spacious villas in the age of economic growth. However, there are no factors in their past to help them obtain prosperity in the present. In short, in this novel, the narrator shows that the relationship between the past and the present is not logical because there is not a logical relationship between the age of famine (the past) and the age of prosperity (the present). Then, the past is disconnected from the present.

In conclusion, the narrative structure of *Life on Hold* displays Khaled's situation at the end of the 1980s which is, for Saudis, the end of a major phase of economic growth[48]. In this phase, Khaled ceases believing in almost everything. He is depicted as a person who does not show an ability to understand his life which means he cannot understand the movement of

---

[48] Saudi Arabia's first phase of extensive economic growth was from the beginning of seventies until the end of the eighties. In my opinion, the second economic growth between 2006 to 2014 was associated with the increase of the price of oil.

history. The narrator portrays Khaled's condition after he encounters horrible events, such as his brother's killing in Afghanistan, as a person who cannot understand his new era. All these events make Khaled think that his life is mystery and uncertainty (al-Atiq 105). Here, he implies that economic growth did not bring real prosperity. Indeed, it makes his life miserable, which affects his personality; therefore, his historical thinking is weak. In other words, the one who thinks his own life is a mystery cannot expand his view to maintain constant historical thinking.

In addition, the discussion of symptoms of weak historical thinking leads up to an obvious representation of the inability to understand the movement of history. In *Life on Hold,* Khaled does not only have symptoms of weak historical thinking, but he shows clearly his inability to understand what history means. The narrator says:

> The future might be what he was already going through, what he had been waiting for and what he would continue to await. It might be here now, facing him down like a man, like a pillar of fire, and here he was still without a family or a house of his own. Behold the future! He almost felt he could touch it as it swept like a breeze around the place where he lay in pain. Not only did he feel out of place in his father's house, in this city, for no good reason, he felt he was inferior to everyone else (al-Atiq 26–27).

Here, Khaled cannot distinguish between the present and the future. In other words, he cannot integrate the past within the present to see the future on the horizon. Indeed, he does not see a future for himself. The main factor which produces this historical confusion is rapid economic growth that in turn influences his personality. In short, the narrator does not demonstrate historical thinking. The narrator attempts to portray historical confusion as a crucial issue. Khaled loses his ability to distinguish between historical phases. Therefore, he cannot maintain strong historical thinking.

In this view of history, in the age of economic growth, life is meaningless. In *Life on Hold,* this meaninglessness is associated with the appearance of the postmodern society. For example, Khaled sees that his society has "gone to pieces." He points out how people no longer

have strong social relationships. Therefore, for Khaled, losing social relationships makes people concentrate on religion. Khaled attributes this issue to political and economic conditions (al-Atiq 32). In other words, al-Atiq aims to show how religious, political, and economic conditions change the social structure of Saudi society. The most significant outcome of this change is destroying the Saudi family's social values. For instance, the narrator shows how Khaled's relatives stop "visiting his mother except on important occasions" (al-Atiq 95), whereas before, they would likely have visited much more often. The relationships between members of the Saudi family are considered the most important social value in Saudi society. Losing these social values, for Khaled, makes life meaningless. His loss of confidence in the social values of the Saudi family causes his loss of faith in the movement of history because this movement does not make sense to him. The narrator describes how Khaled "noticed how Riyadh had become a hive of activity without producing anything real and without the most basic elements of real life" (al-Atiq 96). In other words, losing social values of the family in the present makes a person give up thinking about the future because the present will not help to achieve a better life in the future. In this sense, he cannot maintain strong historical thinking.

The representation of historical thinking in the postmodern Saudi novel may be compared to the postmodern American novel. This comparison may help to see that the Saudi novel is a postmodern novel rather than a postcolonial novel. The representation of historical thinking in the postmodern Saudi novel is different from the postmodern American novel due to the difference of social, political, and economic contexts in Saudi Arabia and United States. For instance, the representation of historical thinking in the Saudi novel is weak due to the influence economic growth and the domination of radical ideology. The influence of economic growth may be considered as a part of the domination late capitalism which affects weak historical

thinking in the postmodern American novel. However, the influence of Islamic radical ideology[49] may not be found in the postmodern American novel because the social and religious conditions in United States of America differ from the Saudi context.

In this chapter, *No Country for Old Men* by Cormac McCarthy is considered an example to demonstrate the representation of weak historical thinking in the postmodern American novel. *No Country for Old Men* does not discuss a particular historical event clearly, but it may be considered as an access point to understand the history of border crossing in the Southwest of the United States of America. In other words, the narration and textualizaion of *No Country for Old Men* helps to relate the history of the region in the historical period that follows World War II. This novel contains some important representations of violence and social development in that historical period. Ultimately, the narrative structure of *No Country for Old Men* contains literary themes such as the collapse of Aristotelian logic, the new western genre, and fragmentation, which may reveal the representation of historical imagination.

In *No Country for Old Men,* the discussion of the representation of weak historical thinking may be started with the discussion of the title itself [50]. This title shows that in the present time there is no space for old people or they do not understand the present time. Either way, old people have a problem with the movement of history that produces the status quo. In this sense, their experience in the past does not help them to understand how the present is shaped. For them, the relationship between the past and the present is unrelated. Therefore,

---

[49] Criticizing this radical ideology has become a common issue in the postmodern Saudi novel after 9/11.

[50] The title is derived from William Butler Yeats's poem "Sailing to Byzantium." This poem shows there is no place for transcendent art in the contemporary era. The first line, "That is no country for old men," refers to prosaic art in this world. In this sense, old people, who seek beauty in art, cannot find a place in the artless new world.

Sheriff Ed Tom Bell, a World War II veteran, complains to Uncle Ellis of his inability to understand the present. His complaint may be seen an example of nostalgia for the past. In this sense, the title shows that old men cannot integrate their past within the present to predict the future.

As mentioned, the title shows how old people may not locate themselves within their society; therefore, Sheriff Ed Tom Bell narrates about social changes in his county. First, his narration reveals that these social changes cannot be isolated from the domination of the modes of production. Then, social changes may reveal the movement of history in Sheriff Ed Tom Bell's county. Second, his narration shows some postmodern features that characterize the narrative structure of *No Country for Old Men.* In other words, his narration about these social changes appears in his comments on the plot itself, which may be considered metafiction[51]. Sheriff Ed Tom Bell comments on the plot after almost every chapter. His comments include his criticism of social change and political context. These comments may reveal his historical thinking. In other words, Sheriff Ed Tom Bell's comments show whether or not he can integrate the past into the present to predict the future.

It is worth mentioning that in *No Country for Old Men,* violence and social development are associated with the influence of the modes of production which were common in that historical phase, such as consumerism. The modes of production affect the movement of history which cannot be accessed without the text. McCarthy does not neglect the influence of late capitalism. He mentions some aspects of consumerism such as buying goods not to maintain the basic level of life, but to misuse these goods. For example, Moss purchases a shotgun and a tent from a sporting goods store not to survive, but to misuse them in his fight. Also, Moss "went to

---

[51] I will discuss the relationship between these comments and the fragmented plot.

Wal-Mart and bought some clothes and a small nylon zipper bag to put them in"(McCarthy 89).

Here, McCarthy insists on naming examples of conusmerism and emphasizes a major global

symbol of late capitalism, Wal-Mart. Subsequently, living in the age of consumerism may affect

historical thinking. In other words, consumerism makes a consumer think only in the immediate

moment, which means that a consumer does not invoke the past and does not think about the

future. This may found in Moss's thinking because it does not integrate the past with the present;

he focucses only on his immediate moment without paying attention to the past or what will

happen in the future. The influence of consumerism becomes more dangerous when it is done to

commit violence.

Initially, Sheriff Ed Tom Bell narrates about a young man who kills his girlfriend. The

sheriff attempts to show the most important point, which is that people are emotionless. Georg

Lukács illustrates that history involves all aspects of human life, including the materialistic and

emotional (Lukács 27). For him, the historical novel must replicate human progress and the

struggle of classes in history. In this regard, the plot of *No Country for Old Men* shows human

progress in the historical period in southwest Texas. Also, the plot of how life loses its meaning

when people are emotionless indicates the movement of history. This emotionlessness may affect

the historical imagination. McCarthy shows how people may lose their ability to think

historically when they lose their emotion. In the first chapter, Sheriff Ed Tom Bell attempts to

maintain his emotion, but he is influenced by the killer who does not care about humanity.

Sheriff Bell says, "I thought I'd never seen a person like that and it got me to wonderin if maybe

he was some new kind … what do you say to a man that by his own admission has no soul?"

(McCarthy 3–4). Bell is affected by this killer. Then, his ability to sustain historical thinking,

which relies on the integration of the past into the present to predict the future, may be affected

as well. Therefore, he says, "but he [the killer] wasn't nothing compared to what was comin down to the pike" (McCarthy 4). Bell implies what he sees through his career shows there is no alternative on the horizon, which means his historical imagination is disconnected because the present is not related to the future. In other words, he cannot rely on the present to predict the future.

Furthermore*, No Country for Old Men* contains a sense of lamentation for the past. This lamentation is associated with several issues which reveal the representation of weak historical thinking. McCarthy depicts Bell as a character who cannot get rid of the lamentation for the past. In this lamentation, Bell shows his inability to understand what happens in the present. Therefore, he displays how the present is disconnected from the past. In other words, Bell's experience in the past cannot be applied to the present. In *No Country for Old Men*, Bell does not show a broad sense of understanding the movement of history. Bell goes to meet Uncle Ellis to talk with him about his failure as sheriff and citizen (McCarthy 250–80). Also, he likes "to hear about the old timers … the old time concern that the sheriffs had for their people has been watered down some" (McCarthy 64). This lamentation for days gone by prevents him from understanding the present. In this sense, for Bell, the old timers are disconnected from the present. In short, the sense of lamentation may reveal some postmodern characteristic such as nostalgia and weak historical thinking.

In addition, the sense of lamentation is associated with some issues such as alienation, the change of the western genre, and violence. Discussing these issues may reveal the representation of weak historical thinking in *No Country for Old Men*. First, Sheriff Bell struggles with his life in the present. He cannot adapt himself to his society. He fails to deal with people around him. He attributes this alienation to people's lifestyles. Therefore, living this style of life makes him

unable to understand people around him. He says, "Point bein you don't know what all you're stoppin when you do stop somebody" (McCarthy 39). Subsequently, his job as law enforcement officer becomes more dangerous because he cannot understand how a new type of people practice in his society (McCarthy 38).

Moreover, Bell's aversion to new technology is an example of psychic fragmentation. The display of new technology makes him feel strange, which leads him to feeling psychic fragmentation. He implies that the one who dislikes new technology is not a member of his own era. For instance, he says, "I don't know that law of enforcement benefits all that much from new technology. Tools that comes into our hands comes into their too… I don't like havin to hunt with the safety on a gun" (McCarthy 62). Here, he thinks new technology equalizes the field between a law enforcement officer and his opponents. In this sense, a law enforcement officer loses his distinctive power in society. Also, he implies that he does not take advantage from new technology; hence, his life in the present is not like his experience in the past. In this sense, because he does not use new technology, he does not understand his society which makes him feel psychic fragmentation. Subsequently, he cannot maintain a strong understanding for the development of history in his society which contains new social practices; Sheriff Bell says, "People didn't know what to wear" (McCarthy 63). He implies that he is alienated in this society which becomes more and more unfamiliar to him. Ultimately, he cannot keep up with the historical development which includes new technology and new social practices. In this sense, his inability to understanding the historical development may reveal his weak historical thinking.

The alienation may lead Sheriff Bell to criticize new social norms in the contemporary era. This criticism shows his inability to understand how people accompany the development of society. This inability shows that Sheriff Bell is unable to understand his present. In other words,

Bell fails to maintain strong historical thinking that relies on the experience in the past to understand new social norms in the present. For instance, he says:

> Young people anymore they seem to have a hard time growing up. I don't know why. Maybe it's just you don't grow up any faster than what you have to… what we thought was that when the next generation come along and they don't want to raise their children neither then who is goin to do it? (McCarthy 158–59)

He shows his inability to understand why people neglect important social practices, such as raising their children. In this sense, he relies on his experience in the past to criticize the present. Thus, for him, he cannot distinguish between social, political, and economic conditions in the past and the present, which means that Sheriff Bell cannot process the development of history and how every era has different the modes of production which influence the movement of history in its era. In short, Sheriff Ed Tom Bell's criticism for new social norms may reveal his weak historical thinking.

In *No Country for Old Men,* McCarthy illustrates how Bell's experience as a veteran of World War II prevents him from maintaining strong historical thinking. He gets a medal after the war, but he mocks himself for this medal because his friends are dead and he does not attempt to help them (McCarthy 195). In this novel, McCarthy shows it is difficult for Bell to rely on what happened in the war to imagine a better life in the present. This failure may be found in Bell's description of the 1960s. During that decade, consumerism influenced the lifestyles of people. Bell cannot imagine a better life. For instance, he compares the thirties and the sixties and how life has changed. His comparison is derived from a result of a survey that shows, in the thirties, common problems in schools were "runnin in the hallways. Chewin gum. Copyin homework" (McCarthy 195–96). However, the same survey shows how life had changed in the 1960s and common problems in schools were "rape, arson, murder. Drugs. Suicide" (McCarthy 196). Here, Bell compares life before and after the war. In this novel, Bell does not trust the horrible past to

obtain a better present. Thus, he has dystopian vision for the chaotic future. For instance, in his conversation with a woman who is wondering whether his granddaughter will be able to have an abortion, he says "I'm goin to say that not only will she be able to have an abortion, she'll be able to have you put to sleep" (McCarthy 197).

Furthermore, Bell attempts to show that the present faces a real threat, which prevents characters from integrating the past into the present to predict the future. Bell's feeling of a miserable life in the present may be found in his idea about the meaning of violence. In this novel, McCarthy does not deny the existence of violence, but he depicts violence as done through new tools which make the representation of violence different from the traditional western genre. For instance, Bell describes two boys from California and Florida who travel around the country to kill people (McCarthy 40). They kill many innocent people for no reason. In this sense, violence in the new western genre is done without an obvious purpose, which is not a common factor in the traditional western genre. Also, Bell tells how "a woman put her baby in a trash compactor." Then, he wonders, "Who would think of such thing?" (McCarthy 40). The main point here is that Sheriff Bell is not able to understand why violence is getting new aspects, which means he does not have a full understanding of the influence of the modes of production and its related political system and economic conditions on the movement of history, which includes social issues. Subsequently, Bell's discussion of new violence may be considered a gate to access his historical thinking. In this sense, he does not understand his present nor does he trust this present to predict the future. Therefore, he says, "I suppose just try and figure out what might be headed this way [for the country] … it keeps getting harder" (McCarthy 40). Here, he cannot predict the future of the country because his present does not help him. In short, he implies the future is disconnected from the present, which shows weak historical thinking.

As mentioned above, violence is done with new tools, which prevents Bell from strong historical thinking. However, the most important point is that this new representation of violence shows how the movement of history becomes senseless. In other words, everything in this life does not make sense[52]. By way of illustration, Chigurh does not show why he kills innocent people. For example, in his conversation with the gas station proprietor, Chigurh intends to kill him for no reason. He is emotionless and for him, violence is senseless. In other words, in this novel, Chigurh commits violence for no reason and no purpose[53]. Then, readers may realize that a life that containing senseless violence is senseless as well. Subsequently, the movement of history is senseless. Therefore, McCarthy portrays Chigurh, whose violence is senseless, as a character careless about the movement of history.

Furthermore, Chigurh's conversation with the gas station proprietor reveals an important point about the influence of the system of justice on historical thinking. In the Marxist approach, the movement of history is a consequence of the influence of the modes of production. The modes of production influence the system of justice that is a part of the superstructure; it is what Althusser calls it an ideological state apparatus. In my opinion, McCarthy aims to show that the representation of the unfair system of justice reveals the influence of the unfair economic system. In *No Country for Old Men*, the narrator implies that the system of justice is broken. The representation of the strange understanding of the system of justice, which is represented by

---

[52] This issue cannot be explained without Jameson's claim about postmodern culture. For him, postmodern culture is "the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 5).

[53] There is a difference between the representation of senseless violence and the presentation of violence in the modernist novel, in which violence may be considered sacrificial death or death with purpose. Hemingway's fictions are one of best examples of sacrificial death. René Girard, in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, discusses ritualistic sacrifice.

Chigurh, is associated with the collapse of the traditional Aristotelian logic. In this novel, the gas station proprietor faces a strange justice, which makes him think about whether this life has the system of justice or not. In short, in the age of the domination of late capitalism, people cannot determine whether or not they have the system of justice which is supposed to help poor people not be subjugated by the wealthy. In my opinion, McCarthy shows how the representation of a broken and non-logical system of justice is a consequence of an unfair dominant economic system, which may impede historical thinking.

Indeed, Chigurh's weak historical thinking cannot be isolated from his psychological personality. As mentioned, he is a psychopathic killer, which shows that Chigurh has an unstable personality. Also, as mentioned above, Jameson links the weak historical thinking with weak temporal continuity. In other words, a weak personality will not maintain strong historical thinking. Actually, Chigurh's unstable personality causes a complete loss of historical thinking. In this novel, the narrator does not provide readers any chronological narration about Chigurh's personality or background. Chigurh, in his few conversations in the novel, does not provide significant information about his past. Then, he does not show any ability to integrate his past into his present to predict the future. In other words, readers do not know Chigurh's chronological experience, but they know a little bit about other characters. In my opinion, McCarthy intends to portray Chigurh as a character who loses his historical thinking completely. Thus, Chigurh is depicted as a character who does not show any ability to maintain a mental grasp on the movement of history. In short, his deep psychological problems cause his crucial loss of a historical imagination. Indeed, some readers may think Chigurh's personality may be found in, for example, nineteenth-century realist fiction that means he may not be a postmodern character. In my opinion, his psychological problem is a consequence of his era's economic

system. For example, he works for a capitalist person who wants the money to be retrieved. In other words, although Chigurh is depicted as a killer who commits crime for no reason outside of working toward a capitalist purpose.

In addition, in *No Country for Old Men*, the narrative structure concentrates on the representation of faded ethics, which indicates the collapse of the tradition of Aristotelian logic. This collapse is associated with weak historical thinking. In this novel, the reader cannot determine who is a good or bad character. For instance, Bell and Chigurh aim to kill or capture Moss. This situation makes Carla Jean wonders who the real source of danger is when she replies, "Who's he in trouble with then?" to Bell's claim that "It's not me he's in trouble with" (McCarthy 127). In this sense, for Carla Jean, there is violence whether it comes from a good or bad source. In other words, there is no boundary that can help to determine the representation of violence in this novel. This issue may be seen as an example of a collapse of the tradition of Aristotelian logic which means people no longer can define a series of polar oppositions such as Good versus Evil and Us versus Them (Booker, *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds* 24). In short, In the postmodern era, there is a collapse of explanations concerning what is ethical or evil. This collapse may be similar to Friedrich Nietzsche's nihilism, in which there is "no meaning at all, everything lacks meaning" (Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* 1). Since people in the postmodern era cannot determine what is good or bad, they exist in a nihilistic state. Subsequently, they cannot maintain the ability to integrate the past into the present because every boundary, whether between evil and ethics or between the past and the present, has faded. In short, they cannot maintain strong historical thinking.

In postmodern culture, some art works seem simple, naïve. It is hard to describe *No Country for Old Men* as simple or naïve as a whole, but it is obvious McCarthy depicts Moss as a

naïve person. This depiction reveals whether or not Moss is able to maintaain strong historical

thinking. In this novel, Moss comes across a bloody battle between drug smugglers. Moss finds

that one of these smugglers is wounded and asks Moss for water. After Moss takes money, he

returns to bring water to the wounded man. However, Moss is trapped by other smugglers.

Therefore, Moss says to himself, "There is no description of a fool … that you [Moss] fail to

satisfy" (McCarthy 27). Here, McCarthy that implies the strucutre of personality of Moss may

not lead to a comprehensive understanding of history. In this novel, Moss is a veteran of the

Vietnam war, which means he is supposed to grant access to some understanding of this

historical event. However, readers are informed from the beginning of the novel that Moss is a

fool because he returns to the scene of the crime and puts himself in jeopardy. Thus, readers will

not trust him. In other words, Moss does not have a comprehensive personality; hence, he will

not have strong historical thinking. In this novel, Moss does not show any ability to integrate his

experience in the war into his dealing with the scene of the crime to predict a safe resolution for

him and his family.

As Jameson points out, in the postmodern era, the individual cannot sustain his language.

Thus, the individual, for Jameosn, cannot sustain the stability of personality. Then, the individual

cannot maintain strong historical thinking. This instability of personality may be found in the

narrative structure of the plot. The narrative structure, especially the past that is narrated by Bell,

has very serious linguistic problems, which include grammatical and spelling issues. These

linguistic problems reveal the instability of personality, which leads to the instability of historical

thinking. Subsequently, his narrative language may be not trustworthy as an access to

understanding the historical period that followed World War II. In short, in *No Country for Old*

Men, the representation of the historical thinking is weak because there is no historical thinking with fragmented language.

In addition, in *No Country for Old Men,* the problematic narrative language affects the structure of the plot. Then, the obvious postmodern feature which characterizes this novel, is fragmentation. The chronological development of the plot is fragmented. The timeline of the plot, which is supposed to narrate the pursuit of Moss, is interrupted by Bell's narration about his experience in the past or about his criticism for the present. Also, the structure of the narration is fragmented as well. In other words, chapters of this novel are not serial because they are interrupted by Bell's comments in some chapters. Eventually, the fragmented chronological development and the fragmented narrative structure of the plot indicate that characters may maintain historical thinking.

In *No Country for Old Men,* there is a skepticism of grand stories, especially suspicions toward conservatism. Bell is depicted as a conservative person. For instance, he says, "If you could of told em that there would be people on the streets of our Texas towns with green hair and bones in their noses speakin a language they couldn 't even understand, well, they just flat out wouldn't of believed you" (McCarthy 295). However, in this novel, Bell is skeptical of his beliefs in conservatism. This skepticism may reveal the representation of historical thinking in this novel. His skepticism does not occur accidentally, but it a consequence of a long chain of experiences. In this sense, his skepticism is influenced by the modes of production. His skepticism may be found in his struggles with believing in God. For example, in his conversation with Uncle Ellis, Bell says, "Do you think God knows what's happenin?" (McCarthy 265). He visits his uncle to discuss with him his struggle with his life. This struggle is about everything including his skepticism of the power of God. Then, McCarthy implies that Bell has suspicions

towards religion as a part of grand stories. Subsequently, he will not maintain a stable historical imagination. In other words, his skepticism affects his ability to integrate the past into the present to predict the future.

In conclusion, in this chapter, every novel has a unique narrative structure which may not be similar to other narrative structures. This inconsistency of narrative structures may raise a question why these novels have been chosen in be discussed in this chapter. Indeed, this inconsistency is intended to show that some post-9/11 Saudi novels may be read as postmodern novels. Also, the selected Saudi novels demonstrate some postmodern feature which may be found widely in postmodern American novels. Although these novels are not similar, they are not completely different. As mentioned in the introduction, it is very difficult to argue that a postmodern Saudi novel is exactly similar to a postmodern American novel because these novels are written in different socio-historical contexts.

No Country for Old Men, as a reference, is not chosen to demonstrate how postmodern Saudi novels have the same narrative structure, but *No Country for Old Men* is chosen to show that consistency between the postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel is difficult. Also, this novel is chosen to be a reference for the postmodern Saudi novel for a reason. Some readers think Saudi novels, which are discussed in this chapter, are realistic novels rather than postmodern novels. However, the narrative structure of *No Country for Old Men,* as an example, demonstrates that some novels combine realistic themes with postmodern characteristics. In other words, *No Country for Old Men* helps to explain why Saudi novels may be read postmodern novels even though their plots are realistic.

The socio-historical contexts of novels, which are discussed in the chapter, distinguish between them. In this sense, although these novels are discussed to demonstrate the

representation of postmodern features, these novels are not similar in many novelistic aspects.

First, when *The Dove's Necklace* concentrates on the history of Mecca in the age of late

capitalism, *Life on Hold* focuses on the influence of economic growth and radical ideology on

Saudi society. *No Country for Old Men* is about a sheriff who aims to capture criminals. These

different topics distinguish between these novels. Second, the difference between these novels

may be found in the narrative structure itself. The narrator is an important element of the

narrative structure. These novels have different narrators who are not similar. For instance, in

The Dove's Necklace the narrator is the place, the neighborhood, itself which indicates some sort

of experimentalism. Also, in this novel, the plot is narrated by other narrators including some

characters. The plot of *Life on Hold* is narrated by one narrator constantly. However, in *No*

Country for Old Men, the plot is narrated by different narrators including Bell himself.

Third, the most significant difference between these novels is the representation of

political and social changes. On one hand, in the Saudi novel, the political and social changes are

depicted as radical changes that break connections between the past and present. In other words,

when Saudi novels discuss how Saudi society has changed, these novels show that pre-modern

Saudi society prior to the 1970s is completely different from this modern society in the

contemporary era. On another hand, in *No Country for Old Men*, the representation of change is

not radical; rather, it is a constant change. The difference between these representations of

political and social change is attributed to the socio-historical contexts that are influenced by oil

industry and economic growth.

Furthermore, the discussion of Saudi and American novels shows some similarities. First,

the similarity may be found in the textual mixture that is common the postmodern novel. As

mentioned above, the narrative structure of *No Country for Old Men* combines realism and

postmodernism. The narrative structure of *The Dove's Necklace* has a textual mixture of the detective novel and historical novel. In terms of the literary combination, the narrative structure of *Life on Hold*, which includes realism and postmodernism, is similar to the narrative structure of *No Country for Old Men*. Second, as mentioned above, these novels have weak historical thinking that is a consequence of the instability of personality. Third, the representation of weak historical thinking is associated with some postmodern characteristics. For example, these novels have fragmented characters. Also, these novels have a fragmented narrative structure. Fourth, these novels rely on metafiction to comment on some historical events. Fifth, *The Dove's Necklace* and *No Country for Old Men* contain nostalgia and lamentation for the past. Finally, the narrative structures of these novels foreground the private perspective, which may be found in Yusuf, Khaled, and Bell. This private perspective is isolated from public perspective regarding some political and social issues. In this sense, characters have bourgeois thinking and personality that may be seen as fragmented.

Chapter Three: The Weak Utopian Imagination

Fredric Jameson claims in *Marxism and Form* that utopia is the ultimate goal of human life. This chapter will consider the weak utopian imagination as the ultimate consequence of the instability of personality and weak historical thinking that characterize postmodernism[54]. In other words, Jameson illustrates that the instability of personality leads to weak historical thinking which eventually causes the weak utopian imagination. The term utopia is derived originally from the Greek. This term is comprised of two opposing/different meanings: eutopia (good place) and outopia (bad place). Thus, this term indicates "a state of impossible perfection which nevertheless is in some genuine sense not beyond the reach of humanity. It is here if not now" (Kumar 3). Though the historical root of the term utopia appeared indirectly in Plato's *Republic,* its first appearance in English was in Thomas More's book, *Utopia.* In this book, More describes Utopia as a perfect society that may exist in an imaginary place. The discussion of utopia has attracted many philosophers up to the present. The most important philosopher who discusses utopia in a practical sense is Karl Marx because he considers utopia as an ultimate historical final phase for humanity. Marx's contributions to the discussion of utopia influence Fredric Jameson, who is the most important postmodernist critic in the 21th century. Jameson discusses utopia as a practical desire not as an imaginary desire.

The discussion of the notion of representation of utopian imagination is essential to the discussion of postmodern characteristics in the Saudi novel and the American novel. In this sense, the discussion of the utopian imagination is embedded in the discussion of the main argument of this dissertation which is that the Saudi novel can be read through the postmodern

---

[54] Indeed, this consideration, which is derived from Jameson's theory, is a thread that links all chapters together.

approach. In this chapter, the argument is derived from Jameson's theory which asserts that the postmodern era produces weak utopian imagination as a consequence of the domination of late capitalism. Discussing the representation of utopia cannot be isolated from Jameson's dialectical double hermeneutic approach to utopia and ideology. I argue that the postmodern Saudi novel is like the postmodern American novel in that it is informed by a dialectical relationship between utopia and ideology, which shows the weak utopian imagination. This weakness in the postmodern American novel, as Jameson argues, is a consequence of the domination of late capitalism. However, I argue that in the postmodern Saudi novel, the weak utopian imagination may be considered a consequence of other factors, such as radical Islamic ideology, which has increased alongside economic growth[55], and racism.

This chapter is divided into four parts. First, I address the theoretical discussion of the dialectic of utopia and ideology. Second, I investigate how the conservative ideology produces weak utopian imagination in *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* by Yousef al-Mohaimeed. Third, I discuss the influence of racism on the weak utopian imagination in *Days of Ignorance* by Laila al-Johani. Fourth, I explore the conflict of utopia and ideology in *City of Glass* by Paul Auster. In addition, this chapter focuses on how a social-historical contradiction, which is produced by modes of production, emerges in the postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel as antinomies. Also, this chapter will discuss whether these novels criticize social-historical contradictions. Simultaneously, this chapter discusses whether these novels provide an imaginary alternative to the status quo. The discussion of the representation of the weak utopian imagination is not isolated from the main argument of this dissertation. In other words, the

---

[55] Discussing the weak utopian imagination in the postmodern Saudi novel will not neglect the participation of Saudi Arabia in the global economic system; hence, the domination of late capitalism may cause this weakness.

discussion of the weak utopian imagination includes discussing some postmodern characteristics such as fragmentation, the instability of personality, weak historical thinking, suspicion toward metanarrative, and metafiction, among others.

This investigation of postmodern characteristics helps to establish the Saudi novel as a postmodern novel rather than a postcolonial novel. In this chapter, the discussion of the weak utopian imagination relies on Jameson's dialectical approach. Jameson illustrates in his seminal book, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, how examining the dialectical relationship between ideology and utopia can tell readers whether the utopian imagination is weak or not. He insists on the significance of what he calls a "negative hermeneutic" and a "positive hermeneutic" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 291–292). Jameson says,

> Such is then the general theoretical framework in which I would wish to argue the methodological proposition outlined here: that a Marxist negative hermeneutic, a Marxist practice of ideological analysis proper, must in the practical work of reading and interpretation be exercised simultaneously with a Marxist positive hermeneutic, or a decipherment of the Utopian impulses of these same still ideological cultural texts. (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 296)

In addition, Jameson points out that literary works are informed by specific ideologies, but can also include utopian impulses that strive to move beyond the limitations of those ideologies. This dialectical relationship shows that ideology is carried in the text to shape audiences' minds and prevent them from any change in the status quo. Simultaneously, the text carries utopian impulses that aim to resist the text's the ideological closure and provide an imaginary solution for ideological domination. The term "ideological closure" is explained in different ways. Linguistically, this term implies that a text contains its open and closed meaning that affect the process of coding and decoding of preferred meaning. In this chapter, this term is employed to show that a text contains the hidden power of ideology that leads readers' minds to think that the

status quo is the only project that should be maintained. Furthermore, the discussion of the dialectic of ideological closure and utopian impulses cannot be isolated from the social-historical context of the text. For Jameson, every literary text represents a social-historical contradiction which may be found "in the social infrastructure" (Jameson, "Of Islands and Trenches" 90). In addition, Jameson sees every literary text as containing "the realm of thought and ideology, or in the superstructure—namely the antinomy" ("Of Islands and Trenches" 90). Moreover, for Jameson, the response to this ideological domination, which is instigated by the text itself, is the utopian impulse.

Indeed, Jameson's idea cannot be isolated from Ernst Bloch's argument about what he calls the "cold stream" and "warm stream" in Marxism (Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* 205). For him, cold stream is the ideological analysis, and warm stream is the analysis of utopian surplus. Bloch says, "There are in ideology certain figures which condense, perfect and give significance to what exists which are known as archetypes when mainly referring to condensing, as ideals when mainly referring to perfection, as allegories and symbols when mainly referring to significance" (Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* 148). In this sense, ideology, for Bloch, has dual dimensions: a dimension of mystification, techniques of manipulation and domination, and a dimension of utopian surplus (Kellner and O'Hara 15). Bloch's contribution to the discussion of utopia is comprehensive and profound. In this chapter, for my purpose, I will rely on his discussion of how conservative religious ideology suggests an anti-utopian orientation. He refers to religious people as those who "mumble". These religious people according to him

> were the first to make the Christian religion into opium for the people, they were the first to project the infinite worth of man which the Bible taught in the other world, utterly into the other world, where it no longer bites and does not harm earthly worthlessness ... they confined the hugely preached claims of what is commensurate with us in an other-world in order to keep them away from this world (Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* 1279–80)

He shows that changing the status quo, for conservative religious people, may produce horrible consequences. In this sense, these religious people represent anti-utopia because they believe imposing utopian orientation upon people may lead to awful results[56].

As mentioned above, ideology and utopia are two dimensions that should be discussed to understand the movement of history. First, in traditional Marxism, the most basic definition of ideology characterizes it as a form of "false consciousness" that makes people have a misleading view of the world. However, more recent Marxist thinkers have provided a more complex understanding of ideology. Therefore, Louis Althusser insists that ideology is not simply an illusion but a necessary illusion because no social system can function without an ideology (Althusser, *For Marx* 235). In this sense, the representation of utopia cannot be determined without the necessary illusion of ideology. Therefore, the discussion of the concept of ideology must precede the discussion of the representation of utopia.

It is worth mentioning that, for Jameson, the concept of ideology is not false consciousness, "but rather one of structural limitation and ideological closure" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 52). Here, Jameson derives the concept of closure, which is an important term in my analysis in this chapter, from Althusser. According to Althusser, "An ideology is both theoretically closed and politically supple and adaptable. It bends to the interests of the times, […] it moves, but with an immobile motion which maintains it where it is, in its place and its ideological role" (Althusser, *Reading Capital* 142). As mentioned above, the term of closure describes how ideology limits and constricts a way of structuring the world. In other words, this

---

[56] Bloch's explanation of how conservative religious ideology prevent people from obtain utopia can help in the discussion of how in *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* religious ideology cause the weak utopian imagination.

term shows how ideology is a closed system. In addition, for Jameson, the manifestation of

ideology may be found in the narrative structure of a text. For him,

> ideology must always be necessarily narrative in its structure, inasmuch as it not only
> involves a mapping of the real, but also the essentially narrative or fantasy attempt of the
> subject to invent a place for himself/herself in a collective and historical process which
> excludes him or her and which is itself basically nonrepresentable and nonnarrative.
> (Jameson, *Fables of Aggression* 12).

In this chapter, the novels under discussion are cultural texts with narrative structures that

conceal ideological closure. In this sense, these novels contain historical and social

contradictions. Ultimately, ideological closure, which is concealed in the narrative structures of

these novels, influences the representation of utopian imagination in the novels themselves.

Understanding the discussion of the definition of ideology is important because many critics

cannot agree upon a singular definition. In other words, these critics have discussed the difficulty

of the concept of ideology. For instance, Terry Eagleton claims that

> The word 'ideology', one might say, is a text, woven of a whole tissue of different
> conceptual strands; it is traced through by divergent histories, and it is probably more
> important to assess what is valuable or can be discarded in each of these lineages than to
> merge them forcibly into some Grand Global Theory. (Eagleton 1).

In short, it is difficult to find a perfect definition for ideology. Therefore, in this chapter I will not

attempt to discuss how critics define ideology, but I will demonstrate how critics explain the

function of ideology in literary texts.

Althusser's account of the function of ideology in literary texts is an important

explanation because it helps to reveal how ideology functions to maintain the status quo. He

argues that

> Ideology represents in its necessarily imaginary distortion, not the existing relations of
> production (and the other relations that derive from them), but above all the (imaginary)
> relationship of individuals to the relations of production and the relations that derive from
> them. What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations
> which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals

> to the real relations in which they live. (Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State
> Apparatuses" 155)

Althusser points out that ideology actually creates subjectivity, rather than acting on a subjectivity that pre-exists. In addition, ideology creates an illusion of coherence, wholeness, and reality. According to Althusser's view, ideology attempts to govern reality. Hence, ideology is a closure that attempts to convince readers to maintain the status quo. Althusser's account of the function of ideology is reflected in Jameson's explanation of how an ideological consciousness causes certain limits or a closed system (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 47). In sum, the function of ideology is to force some people to recognize that radical utopian change is impossible.

In this chapter, the postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel are discussed to reveal the function of ideology. This function may be summarized in three parts[57]: determining how people think, legitimizing the dominant political power, and preventing people from changing the status quo. Saudi novels attempt to criticize the dominant ideology. However, in the Saudi novel, criticism of the dominant ideology does not delegitimize its political and social power. Indeed, even literary texts that challenge the dominant ideology are not free from the domination of ideology itself. Eagleton explains that supporting the political and social order do not necessarily rely on mystification and delusion. For Eagleton, refusing the dominant ideology may be seen as a strategy of ideology itself (Eagleton 5). In short, despite the fact that some postmodern Saudi novels criticize the dominant ideology, they are not completely free

---

[57] These three features are derived from Eagleton claims: "a dominant power may legitimate itself by promoting beliefs and values congenial to it … denigrating ideas which might challenge it; excluding rival forms of thought, perhaps by some unspoken but systematic logic; and obscuring social reality in ways convenient to itself" (Eagleton 5–6).

from the domination of ideology. In sum, Saudi novels contain ideology that attempts to shape people's thinking, which limits their utopian possibilities. Also, Saudi novels do not delegitimize the political power structure. Finally, Saudi novels show how the dominant ideology forces people to maintain the status quo.

The second dimension of dialectical criticism is utopia. According to Kumar, "Utopia describes a state of impossible perfection which nevertheless is in some genuine sense not beyond the reach of humanity. It is here if not now" (Kumar 3). Utopia is the most significant concept in Jameson's dialectical approach. He defines utopia as "the ultimate ethical goal of humanlife […], a world in which meaning and life are once more indivisible, in which man and the world are at one" (Jameson, *Marxism and Form* 173). However, the most relevant definition of utopia by Jameson can be found in his book *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*: "the question of Utopia would seem to be a crucial test of what is left of our capacity to imagine change at all" (xvi). However, his best discussion of utopia can be found in *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions.* For Jameson, a utopian project is an essential catalyst to change the status quo. In addition, Jameson distinguishes between what he calls "the Utopian genre or text as such" and "a Utopian impulse which infuses much else, in daily life as well as in its texts" (Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future* xiv). In Jameson's approach, utopia functions to counter the domination of ideology. In other words, ideology aims to construct a closed system and preserve the status quo while utopia aims to open this closed system and change the status quo.

Utopian works provide dual functions: revealing and criticizing the defects in current society on the one hand, and providing an imagination for a radical alternative on the other hand (Tally 21). Kumar argues that utopia is "more than a social or political tract aiming at reform,

however comprehensive. It always goes beyond the immediately practicable, and it may go so far beyond as to be in most realistic senses wholly impracticable. But it is never simple dreaming. It always has one foot in reality" (Kumar 3). For Jameson, providing alternative utopian imagination is weak in postmodern culture. He attributes the weak utopian imagination to the domination of late capitalism. In *The Post-Utopian Imagination,* M. Keith Booker explains that the domination of late capitalism causes weak historical thinking, which in turn may produce weak utopian imagination[58]. In addition, Booker points out, "The loss of faith in historical metanarratives was accompanied by a weakening of the Utopian imagination, and in particular by a loss of faith in the possibility that Utopian dreams might actually be realized" (Booker, *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War* 24). In short, the weak utopian imagination, which may be associated with some postmodern characteristic such as weak historical thinking or suspicion toward metanarratives, means that literary texts cannot effectively criticize the status quo and therefore cannot provide an alternative utopian solution to change the status quo.

This theoretical discussion may be employed in *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* by Yousef Al-Mohaimeed and translated by Robin Moger. *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* is about the life of Fahd, the main protagonist. In this novel, Fahd's family is made up of his father, Suleiman, his mother, Suha, and his sister, Lulu. His father, who is a political prisoner, dies in a car accident. His mother marries Suleiman's brother, who is a religious man. After Suleiman is released from the prison, he takes care of his cellmate's son, Saeed. Then, Saeed becomes Fahd's best friend. Saeed and Fahd have relationships with girls. Fahd's best girlfriend is Tarfah, who is arrested with him by religious police after his mother dies. Therefore, he decides to emigrate to the United Kingdom.

---

[58] I rely on this view to link all chapters during my discussion for the main argument.

Where Pigeons Don't Fly reveals the influence of economic growth in the 1980s on Saudi society. This novel may be considered an access point to view the movement of Saudi history from the 1980s onward. This historical phase witnesses the rise of radical ideology. This novel reveals the influence of radical ideology on the structure of Saudi society. As a result, this novel contains the dialectal relationship between ideology and utopia. Although this novel narrates about a recent historical phase that is shaped by economic growth and its associated modes of production, this novel concentrates on how radical ideology influences the movement of history in Saudi Arabia in the postmodern era.

It is worth mentioning that *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* contains some postmodern characteristics. This novel is similar to some postmodern Saudi novels such as *Girls of Riyadh* in that it criticizes modernist literature because it is unreadable. For instance, Saeed rejects going to a poetry evening with Fahd because he does not "feel like modern poetry, and anyway [he doesn't] understand any of it" (Al-Mohaimeed 94). In addition, *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* has additional postmodern characteristics such as fragmentation, metafiction, disbelief in metanarratives, instability of characters' personalities, weak historical thinking, and weak utopian imagination.

In *Where Pigeons Don't Fly*, Fahd is frustrated from the domination of conservative ideology in Saudi Arabia. He escapes his society to start a new life in the United Kingdom. Also, this frustration is associated with weak utopian energy because he does not fight to improve his society. In this novel, Fahd and his girlfriend, Tarfah, lose their utopian imagination when they are arrested by religious police. Fahd and Tarfah go to Starbucks to have a cup of coffee. Tarfah says, "I don't know. To be honest, the morning is a scary time" (Al-Mohaimeed 5). Their romantic meeting turns tragic when a religious man reaches Fahd to investigate his relationship

with Tarfah, which makes Fahd and Tarfah feel fear. This fear makes Fahd reveal his weak

utopian energy. The narrator says, "And so it was, in this country of fear and confusion, that

Fahd was transformed in an instant from confident and collected to flustered, uncertain and

defeated" (Al-Mohaimeed 11). Here, Al-Mohaimeed implies that this society cannot be an ideal

society. In addition, he implies the ideology, which is represented by the religious police,

imposes a closed system. This system causes fear. There is no utopian energy with feeling of

fear. Ultimately, Fahd and Tarfah lose their utopian dreams of a better life in Saudi Arabia.

During his arrest near Starbucks, Fahd evokes some real arrest stories by religious police

that have happened in Saudi society. For instance, the narrator describes the following scene:

> Fahd thought of all the stories he had read in the papers of people trying to make a run for
> it … a young man fled with his girl and driving wildly they collided with a reinforced
> concrete barrier and died … a story from Tabuk, another from Sharqiya, a third from
> Ha'il and now… this time the papers would write of a young woman from Starbucks who
> committed suicide by throwing herself into the roaring torrent of King Abdullah Road.
> (Al-Mohaimeed 7)

This scene recalls Brian McHale's argument about the postmodern blurring of boundaries

between reality and fiction. Also, this recollection shows how the plot comments on itself and

real stories. In addition, this recollection reveals a very weak utopian imagination. In other

words, Fahd implies that his story with Tarfah will have the same horrible consequences, which

means Fahd cannot imagine a better solution for him and Tarfah. Indeed, he does not have

utopian imagination. He only imagines death for his girlfriend. In this sense, he cannot criticize

the status quo to provide an alternative utopian solution. In short, al-Mohaimeed just describes

what happens in real life and in his fictional stories, which indicates his weak utopian

imagination that shapes the narrative structure of *Where Pigeons Don't Fly*.

Al-Mohaimeed attempts to historicize the radical ideology that is represented by religious

police. The narrator compares Fahd's arrest to Suleiman's arrest due to Suleiman's participation

in the occupation of the Grand Mosque of Mecca in 1979. The narrator says, "With his exaggerated air of exquisite dignity and grace, the sheikh with the cream *mashlah* looked exactly like the man who had whispered in the ear of Fahd's father, Suleiman, twenty-five years before" (Al-Mohaimeed 12). Yet, al-Mohaimeed goes further to the 1940s and the 1950s when radical people refused any modern aspect. For instance, "They banned the motorbike, which they referred to as 'Satan's steed', and whenever they found a young man in possession of one, they would confiscate it" (Al-Mohaimeed 22). Here, the narrator aims to reveal that the ideology promoted by Suleiman is the same ideology that imposes a closed system upon his son and prevents him practicing normal life. In this part, the narrator suggests that the root of radical ideology that is derived from certain religious books. The narrator mentions names of books such as *Instigation and Dissuasion* and *The Night Ride to Jerusalem and the Ladder.* In doing this, the narrator aims to comment on the historical root of the radical ideology. However, the narrator's comments do not provide any sort of criticism for the historical root of the radical ideology. In addition, these comments do not provide an alternative utopian vision.

Moreover, al-Mohaimeed does not only try to historicize radical ideology, but he attempts to reveal that radical ideology is a dangerous approach to shape society. In order to reveal this, he provides a critical analysis of the structure of the relationship between radical groups. For example, the narrator says, "The trip was the occasion of the final meeting between the Brothers in Buraida and the Salafist Group that would continue on the path to the Grand Mosque. There was affection and dialogue between the two parties before it turned into hostility and mutual loathing" (Al-Mohaimeed 68). Indeed, al-Mohaimeed implies that the only utopian project is rejecting all these radical groups. However, his utopian imagination is not very practical because he does not criticize these groups' relationship with political and social context.

Also, he does not provide an alternative utopian solution. Additionally, his efforts in revealing

the conflict between radical groups imply that the present that witnesses radical ideology is

precisely duplicated from the past that witnessed the conflict between the radical groups.

Different contexts are ignored and not historicized. Therefore, al-Mohaimeed, in the novel,

attempts to show that no utopian project may be found in the future.

Furthermore, al-Mohaimeed discusses the history of the region in the contemporary era to

reveal that radicalism is associated with the political conflict in the Middle East. In this sense,

Where Pigeons Don't Fly shows how radicalism and political conflicts of the region influence the

movement of history in Saudi Arabia. For instance, the narrator narrates that Suleiman returns to

Buraida in January 1991 "fleeing the indiscriminate Russian missiles" (Al-Mohaimeed 73). Here,

al-Mohaimeed writes about the Gulf war of 1991. In this novel, al-Mohaimeed implies that the

past, which has radicalism and political conflicts, is not a reliable source to obtain utopian

change in the present or in the future. This weak utopian imagination, which is caused by the

political conflict, may be found in Suleiman's words: "What would prevent the erratic and

unseeing missile from turning away from the airbase" to hit his apartment? (Al-Mohaimeed 73).

Thus, he flees with his family to Buraida, which is not an ideal place for him after his horrible

experience with radical groups in this city. In other words, the political conflict limits Suleiman's

ability to think of a better place for his family; hence, he returns to a city that witnessed his

terrible past. In this sense, he loses his utopian energy.

As mentioned in the second chapter, historiographic metafiction may help to explain how

fictional works comment on the novel's plot and on historical events. The narrative structure of

Where Pigeons Don't Fly relies on historiographic metafiction to comment on what happened

during the occupation of the Grand Mosque of Mecca in 1979. The narrator narrates in detail

how this occupation was accomplished. For example, the narrator explains that, when Mashabab

entered the cell where Suleiman was detained, he told Suleiman everything about plans for the

occupation[59] (Al-Mohaimeed 45). This detailed narration provides a historical commentary about

this significant historical event in the movement of Saudi history because this occupation has

caused political and social changes in Saudi Arabia[60]. However, this metafictional commentary

does not criticize the political and social context of the occupation. This metafictional

commentary criticizes the occupation and its radical ideology, but it does not criticize modes of

production, including economic conditions or political and social contexts that may have

contributed to this occupation. Finally, this metafictional comment does not provide an

alternative utopian vision and aims instead to sustain the status quo. This metafictional

commentary implies that any change will lead to horrible consequences like the occupation of

the Grand Mosque of Mecca in 1979.

This metafictional commentary points out the historical contexts of radical ideology,

which is criticized by Fahd. His criticism and mockery for this historical root of ideology may be

considered utopian energy. However, this utopian energy does not help to change the status quo.

For instance, Fahd mocks his father's historical experience in implementing radical ideology in

the occupation of the Grand Mosque of Mecca in 1979. He says, "Father, did you want to make

them pay attention to you? Did you? Then may you go to hell, you and your senile father and

your outdated, backward ideas, for you will bring this ignorant country nothing save more

ignorance!"(Al-Mohaimeed 26). He mocks how his father used to believe in radical ideology

---

[59] This metafictional comment on how this occupation had been done is the seventh part of the plot of *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* in the Arabic version of this novel in pages 45-50. However, this part is completely deleted from the English version for no reason.
[60] In particular, the rise of the discourse of awakening Islam that has caused some cultural changes such as banning cinema in Saudi Arabia.

because this ideology limits his life with Tarfah by imposing a closed system that prevents them from practicing a normal life. However, his mockery does not provide an alternative solution, which indicates that this mockery has weak utopian imagination.

In addition, Suleiman's break from radical ideology is supposed to have utopian energy that may help Fahd to avoid the conflict with this ideology. In order to warn Fahd of the dangers of radical ideology, Suleiman leave a briefcase that contains letters. In these letter, Suleiman writers to his son about how radical ideology is very dangerous and how radical ideology can block any opportunity of change. For instance, the narrator says, "Suleiman left of his secret life to Fahd for one reason: his fear that his son might become embroiled in the activities of extremist groups ... take up arms or strap an explosive belt to his body" (Al-Mohaimeed 16–17). This an actual legal will from Suleiman shows his willingness to abandon the radical ideology, but it does not have criticism or a practical utopian alternative solution to help his son to avoid a conflict with radical ideology in the future. In this sense, this actual legal will does not meet the requirement of the utopian imagination.

As mentioned above, ideology in general aims to promote political power and social order. In *Where Pigeons Don't Fly*, this reinforcement is obvious. Suleiman leaves a letter that reveals how his belief about changing the status quo is a worthless project. Suleiman says:

> My son, keeping hold of that which reminds you of tragedy will prevent you forgetting it, and so you will be able to avoid the things that led me into its trap. All I ask of you is that you keep it safe after I am gone and remember that the ultimate destiny of the political parties and religious groups that vex the government is extinction, failure, and psychological torment. While your contemporaries are seizing their opportunities, and succeeding, you will have wasted the best years of your youth chasing after lost dreams (Al-Mohaimeed 20)

Indeed, this letter does not provide any sense of changing the status quo, but it shows the attempt for providing an alternative utopian solution is a worthless project. Also, the letter promotes the

ideological closure that attempts to limit every opportunity for changing the status quo. In this sense Suleiman's letter attempts to maintain the political power and social order. In addition, the letter conflates radical ideology and political opposition, which means this letter provides an illusion. This illusion is the essence of the function of ideology. This ideological illusion produces fear of any attempt to change the status quo. In other words, with this ideological illusion, there is no utopian energy.

Furthermore, in *Where Pigeons Don't Fly,* the narrative structure does not only completely represent the ideological closure, but this novel provides utopian imagination. However, the important question is, how does the representation of utopian imagination in this novel attempt to open the ideological closure? In this novel, although Suleiman has a horrible experience with the radical ideology, he attempts to find a utopian life for this family. However, his attempts fail because he relies on consumerism. The only utopian imagination for Suleiman is to take his family to Sinbad's park, which resembles Disneyland. Here, the alternative imagination is consumerism in this park. Suleiman seems to escape his experience with the radical ideology by practicing consumerism. In this sense, Suleiman's consumerism does not help his family to obtain a better future. In other words, consumerism does not defeat the domination of the radical ideology.

Social contradictions in Saudi society cause weak utopian imagination. In this novel, the narrator aims to show that ideology attempts to describe Saudi society as an ideal society that does not have any unacceptable social norms such as homosexuality. This social contradiction of what people practice and what they claim shows that why Fahd and Tarfah have weak utopian imagination. By way of example, Tarfah tells Fahd about how her classmate's attempts to make engage her in a homosexual relationship. The narrator says:

> Sameera, or Sameer[61] as the other girls called her, would dash from her family home in Shubra, a full-length *abaya*… Her stride was broad and manly and she never stopped chasing after the soft, brown-skinned girls… [Sameera] pleaded with her [Tarfah] to give it a try for a few minutes: just a hug and a clinch, and if she [Tarfah] enjoyed it then she would kiss her a few minutes more. (Al-Mohaimeed 53–54)

In front of her family, Sameera dresses is such a way as to disguise her homosexuality. However, when she is far from their domination, her behavior and her clothes exposes her homosexuality[62]. The point that is made by al-Mohaimeed is how some people contradict social norms. In this novel, Sameera tries to flirt with Tarfah, who ignores her and considers this action as "strange and painful" (Al-Mohaimeed 54). Then, Tarfah comments on what happens by telling Fahd. She says, "Life in Riyadh was full of contradiction. No one cared how you were: your poverty, hunger, sufferings and woe; yet at the same time everyone thought that you were easy, that anyone could do with you as they liked" (Al-Mohaimeed 58). Her comments reveal how contradictions in social relations make her feel that there is no better life in the future. In this sense, she cannot imagine an alternative utopian life for the status quo. This weakness is a consequence of the ideological closure of social contradiction of Saudi society. However, by mentioning poverty, Tarfah does not neglect the economic condition. In other words, the ideological closure of social contradiction of Saudi society, for Tarfah, is associated with economic conditions to produce weak utopian imagination.

Moreover, in *Where Pigeons Don't Fly,* the ideological closure of the social contradiction of Saudi society may be found in the representation of persecution of women's rights. In this novel, this representation reveals weak utopian energy for changing the status quo. Al-Mohaimeed attempts to reveal what his society claims about appropriate treatment of women.

---

[61] Sameera is a feminine name. Sameer is a masculine name.
[62] Here, in my opinion, al-Mohaimeed provides a misleading image about what Saudi women's clothes. Indeed, what Sameera wears when she is with her friends is common nowadays.

Also, he portrays what women really encounter every day. In short, he attempts to reveal the contradiction of what Saudi society claims about women's rights and how this society treats women. Al-Mohaimeed's efforts show that weak utopian imagination is the result of ideological closure in society. For example, Tarfah tells Fahd how her cousin, who works as pharmacist, is sexually harassed by a man (Al-Mohaimeed 55). Then, Tarfah says, "Just imagine! Can you believe this society? These people? That's real frustration" (Al-Mohaimeed 56). Fahd also expresses his frustrations: "If the legislator…would have issued severe laws that would commit anyone convicted of harassing women years in prison" (Al-Mohaimeed 56). Al-Mohaimeed uses Tarfah and Fahd to reveal how women are treated in their society. Their concerns show their frustrations, which indicate the weak utopian imagination. Indeed, Fahd criticizes the status quo and attempts to provide a solution by putting people who commit sexual harassment in prison. His suggestion is employed in Saudi Arabia, but it does not solve many issues regarding women's rights. In my opinion, Fahd's suggestion shows his weak utopian imagination because this suggestion does not criticize the ideology that supports men and prevents women's rights.

As mentioned above, Fahd's suggestion to improve women's rights cannot be considered as a utopian solution because Fahd proposes a structural change without a deeper ideological change. Instead, Fahd relies on irony as a utopian solution for women's rights. For instance, Fahd discusses the health ministry's decision that imposes a certain uniform code for all female health staff, including doctors who "were forbidden from wearing jeans, were required to cover their hair, must have no gold or other jewelry … had to use rubber-soled shoes that made no sound when they walked, with heels less than five centimeters high" (Al-Mohaimeed 50). Fahd continues, telling Saeed ironically:

> Just imagine: every female doctor and pharmacist will put a little ruler in her bag and when she gets a new pair of rubber-soled shoes, out with the ruler to check if the heel's

higher than five centimeters ... I've got an idea! Why don't they lay carpet in the hospital corridors, so the doctors' and nurses' shoes don't make a sound. (Al-Mohaimeed 51)

Fahd mocks the health ministry's decision. This mockery shows his reaction, but this mockery does not challenge the decision to change it. He just mocks it, but he does not do anything else such as writing or using his talent in painting to express his idea. Indeed, his ironic approach provides the solution that every female doctor should carry a ruler to measure her rubber-soled shoes. Although this solution is ironic, it may be considered as utopian imagination. But, this utopian imagination is weak because it cannot affect change, for example, in the female doctors' status quo.

Furthermore, irony is associated with a dark vision of the present. Saeed's response to the decision reveals his weak utopian imagination. For instance, he says, "Living in a time like this, and in this place in particular. Bizarre things like this could lead to the creation of bitterly dark art and theater. Unfortunately, art itself is also under attack and outlawed" (Al-Mohaimeed 51). Saeed's response does not provide a practical utopian imagination that may help to change the status quo. His response has a dark vision of life which indicates that he cannot imagine a better life in the future. In short, Saeed's response reveals the representation of weak utopian imagination.

Where Pigeons Don't Fly is like the majority of postmodern Saudi novels that attempt to criticize radical ideology. The critique of radical ideology in *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* is portrayed through different aspects. In this novel, the most significant point is the account of how some religious people take advantage of their religious knowledge to make money or fulfill their desires. For instance, the narrator describes Fahd's uncle, who is a religious man, as beneficiary: "His ostensible purpose for travel was to call non-Muslims to Islam, but it was there that he obtained large quantities of agarwood oil jars and boxes full of huge, high-quality incense

sticks to sell in the mosque" (Al-Mohaimeed 87). His uncle uses religious fundraising to support his foreign trips to spread Islam. However, he takes advantages from these trips by bringing commodities to the Saudi market and marrying additional women. Al-Mohaimeed implies these types of religious people take advantage of ideology not in order to achieve justice for everyone, but to increase their wealth. In this sense, ideology produces illusion for everyone who trusts these religious people. Al-Mohaimeed's criticism may be seen through Bloch's explanation of how conservative religious ideology has anti-utopian orientation. However, in this novel, al-Mohaimeed's criticism is directed toward religious people, not at the ideology itself. Therefore, his criticism cannot help to obtain a better life. In short, because he does not criticize the ideology itself, he cannot provide a utopian imagination.

The plot of *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* comments on how historical narratives are constructed, which indicates historiographic metafiction. This historiographic metafiction, as Hutcheon points out, is a characteristic of the postmodern novel. In addition, the historiographic metafiction helps to reveal the representation of the utopian imagination. For instance, the narrator comments on some historical events such as terrorist attacks against Saudi Arabia as well as the catastrophe of 9/11. The narrator describes how some domestic and international terrorist attacks "terrified him [Fahd] to think that people here were in crisis, hostile to anything advocating progress" (Al-Mohaimeed 219). Then, the narrator shows how Fahd links terrorist attacks to its historical roots in a few historical events, such as prior radical rejection of the telegram and the radio (Al-Mohaimeed 219) because these innovations were thought to be from Satan. Subsequently, Fahd comments on these historical events as a consequence of the domination of radical ideology, which declares anyone who disbelieves in this ideology as "an apostate whose killing was permissible by law" (Al-Mohaimeed 220). Here, Fahd implies that

the domination of radical ideology knows only killing its opponents. His indication shows

obtaining a better life is impossible.

In addition, Suleiman comments on important historical events that change the movement

of history in Saudi[63]. His comments may give access to understanding his historical thinking,

which leads to his utopian imagination. His comments describe the situation of participants in the

occupation of the Grand Mosque of Mecca in 1979. Suleiman reveals his regrets about the

illusion of the ideology (Al-Mohaimeed 272). He implies that the illusions of radical ideology

guided him to the prison where time stopped for him, which indicates he lost his dreams. In

addition, he describes his dark moments when he amused himself by breeding cockroaches (Al-

Mohaimeed 272). In these comments, which are part of a letter for his son, Suleiman encourages

Fahd to avoid radical ideology and stand with the political power. In this sense, Suleiman's

advice is a result of his mistrust of his personal experience and the movement of history in

general. Therefore, his advice reveals his weak utopian imagination.

Moreover, the representation of dystopian impulses and the weak utopian imagination

cannot be isolated from weak historical thinking. Also, weak historical thinking cannot be

isolated from the modes of production that influence the movement of history in Saudi Arabia.

Fahd implies that what happened in the past is disconnected from the present; therefore, the

movement of history does not make sense for him. For instance, the narrator says, "Fahd always

wondered what happened to this country, so completely changed from the land it had been two

centuries before: black oil, wide well-lit streets, towering buildings and skyscrapers" (Al-

Mohaimeed 349–40). The narrator implies that the impoverished desert of the past is

---

[63] Suleiman's contribution to the narrative structure shows the fragmentation of the plot which
may help to make *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* as a postmodern novel.

disconnected from the wealthy city in the age of oil. In other words, the narrator shows how the discovery of oil, which makes Saudi Arabia a member of the global economic system, does not help to obtain an alternative utopian project.

Furthermore, the narrative structure shows that the modes of production do not help to differentiate the past and the present. In other words, the plot implies that the domination of radical ideology makes people think their era is similar to their parents' era. Therefore, they think any attempts to improve their life are attacks on their culture. By way of illustration, the radical ideology, as mentioned above, rejects modern innovations such as the telegram and the radio, and insists on traditional healing over modern medicine. In this novel, this rejection is depicted as an attempt for radical ideology to sustain the status quo. Subsequently, the radical ideology stands against any attempt to find an alternative solution. In other words, ideological closure is against the utopian project. This conflict may be found in the persistence of past traditions into new modes of production; thus, they think the past and the present are one era. For instance, the narrator says,

> Those people never died … They've just evolved and changed their outer appearance. The man who once wrapped a white turban around his head and accused anyone who wore the *aqqal* of godlessness is the same fellow who these days wears the *thaub* that stops midway down his calf and accuse those who wear long *thaub* of wantonness, godlessness and hypocrisy. (Al-Mohaimeed 345)

The narrator implies that in the age of the discovery of oil, people's thinking is similar to their forefathers' thinking. In this sense, the modes of production do not help people to understand their time. Simultaneously, the failure to differentiate past and the present indicates people's weak historical thinking. This historical thinking leads to weak utopian imagination; therefore, the narrator shows that there is no utopian alternative for the status quo.

In *Where Pigeons Don't Fly*, the narrative structure describes how some Saudi people believe in metanarratives such as religious discourse. Also, this novel shows that disbelieving in metanarrative may cause horrible consequence such as death. In this sense, the domination of radical ideology is an example of Bloch's explanation of how conservative ideology produces anti-utopian orientation. By way of illustration, after the religious police arrest Fahd and Tarfah, religious officers accuse Fahd of using a power of wizardry to manipulate Tarfah. The narrator describes how "Fahd stayed staring towards them anxiously. He remembered a newspaper report he had read a year back about a witch who been seen by the men from the Committee [the religious police] fleeing her flat on a broomstick after they had raided it and discovered prayer-beads, amulets and charms" (Al-Mohaimeed 242–43)[64]. Here, Fahd looks to religious officers anxiously as he worries about the potential of these serious accusations, which may lead him to execution. In this sense, the narrator describes how radical ideology controls Fahd's destiny. Therefore, Fahd loses his utopian imagination. In short, the narrator aims to describe how belief in dominant metanarratives keeps people alive and how disbelief in these metanarratives may cause death.

Furthermore, al-Mohaimeed shows how radical ideology not only prevents people from achieving a more utopian society, but it also prevents them from basic aspects of life such as modern medicine. In *Where Pigeons Don't Fly,* Fahd's mother, Suha, is diagnosed with cancer. However, her husband, who is Fahd's uncle, rejects all modern medicine and attempts to heal her by reciting the Quran. While reciting the Quran, they flog Suha because they think there is a

---

[64] The narrative structure of this novel contains real stories that are reported in Saudi newspapers about how women accused of being witches had been arrested in Medina in 2006. In this sense, this novel has what Brian McHale explains about blurry boundary between reality and fiction in the postmodern novel.

devil inside her. This flogging causes her death. Fahd considers what they did to his mother a crime; hence, he asks the authorities to open an investigation. However, he cannot overcome his uncle's power, which stops the investigation. In this sense, he implies there is not a utopian solution when radical people dominate life. Thus, Fahd "recalled an absurd incident reported by the newspapers in which the relatives had relinquished their rights following the death of their son" (Al-Mohaimeed 331). He invokes some real stories to show the domination of radical ideology, which promotes flogging patients to extract the devil. Al-Mohaimeed's allusions to real stories shows that Fahd loses his utopian imagination.[65] Indeed, Fahd shows his dark vision of his society that may reveal his rejection of metanarratives. For instance, he says, "This is a crazy country, galloping after myths and dreams"[66] (Al-Mohaimeed 358). He considers the metanarratives that shape people's lives an illusion. Also, this rejection of metanarrative shows his weak utopian imagination.

In addition, the discussion of flogging patients to extract the devil shows the representation of the dystopian imagination. The narrative structure provides dystopian impulses that do not only show the limitation of utopian energy, but also show that obtaining utopian alternative for the status quo is impossible. For instance, Fahd says, "Just think, Mother, what kind of wasteland we're living in. A few days ago, the *Shura* Council discussed setting limits on the beating allowed in traditional healing. As easily as that! In other words, it admitted that the beating itself was legal" (Al-Mohaimeed 335). He does not only lose his utopian imagination, but he also attempts to show his dystopian thinking about his society. This dystopian imagination

---

[65] This calling may be considered an example of the blurry boundary between fiction and reality.
[66] The translator translates أوهام as dreams. However, in my opinion, the accurate translation for this word is illusion. Therefore, his translation may mislead the discussion of disbelieving in metanarrative.

is a consequence of the ideological closure of the political power that is represented by the *Shura* Council. In short, the ideological closure in the rejection of modern medicine and legalization of the traditional healing that relies on flogging patients reveals the representation of dystopian impulses.

Eventually, his mother's death and his arrest make Fahd decide to escape his society. The idea of escaping the status quo may be considered a selfish utopianism because it avoids proposing an alternative to the status quo. As mentioned above, Fahd has a dystopian vision. He says:

> My God ... How can people bear to live in a racist conspiratorial society, a society that hates and cheats and dupes and gossips and steals and murders, a society for which I have a representative sample at my fingertips: my uncle, Yasser [Fahd's cousin], and Thuraya [one of Fahd's girlfriends]? True, there are selfless friends like Saeed, and there are those in search of certainties and absolutes, like my father, Mushabbab, and then there are those, like me, like Lulua and Tarfah, and Sami, who are lost. But just thinking of it makes me want to vomit. (Al-Mohaimeed 374)

As a consequence of this dystopian vision, Fahd migrates to live in the United Kingdom. He says, "I have to emigrate: anywhere in the world. I must leave this place and as soon as possible" (Al-Mohaimeed 357). His decision reveals his bad utopianism. In other words, he just describes his society as racist, conspiratorial, and so on. However, he does not provide any criticism that may lead to social change. He does not provide an alternative imagination to replace the status quo. The only solution for him is to escape it. Therefore, his utopian imagination is weak.

Furthermore, the narrative structure of *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* discusses racism as an ideological closure that prevents Fahd from obtaining the utopian imagination that may help him to change the status quo. Racism is depicted through his relationship with Tarfah. He cannot think of marrying her because they are from different a race. The narrator says, "Whenever Tarfah mentioned her surname she would add that she didn't come from the family of the same

name who owned a huge shopping center in Riyadh. 'We're not tribe's men!'" (Al-Mohaimeed 224). In this novel, Fahd does not criticize this social segregation and does not provide an alternative solution that may open this ideological closure. Therefore, in *Where Pigeons Don't Fly,* the utopian imagination is weak.

The second Saudi novel investigated in this chapter is *Days of Ignorance* by Laila al-Johani. This novel has been translated into English by Nancy Roberts. This novel is similar to *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* because they both show how the dominant ideology inhibits utopian imagination. Al-Johani's novel concentrates on social segregation specifically and racism in Saudi society generally while *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* mentions racism within the discussion of radical ideology. The narrator describes a romantic relationship between Leen, a white Arab woman, and Malek, a black man. In this novel, Malek and Leen attempt to break the taboo that prevents Arab women from marrying black men. Their attempts fail because Leen's brother, Hashem, discovers their relationship and beats Malek to death. In *Days of Ignorance*, Hashem denies Leen's relationship with Malek even though Hashem has many relationships with girls. This contradiction reveals Hashem's unstable personality. In addition, Hashem gets revenge against Malek not only because he has a relationship with Leen, but also because he is a black man. After Malek is hospitalized, Leen visits him with her father. In this novel, Leen's father rejects the idea of marrying his daughter to a black man because he cannot challenge the domination of social norms that reject this marriage. While the plot concentrates on the romantic relationship between Leen and Malek as an example of social segregation, this plot does not neglect other social issues such as women's rights and the social status of undocumented immigrants in Saudi Arabia. The narrative structure of *Days of Ignorance* comments on political

issues such as the Iraq War and some historical events such as the historical story of the marriage of al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf and Um Kulthum.

In *Days of Ignorance*, al-Johani aims to show that the domination of ideology does not only prevent utopian imagination, but it also causes serious social problems. This novel starts with the description of Hashem's fears after he beats Malek. This description shows the consequences of the domination of ideology. In other words, the ideological closure prevents Hashem from accepting his sister's relationship with Malek. This ideological closure encourages him to commit a crime. Subsequently, he feels fear because he knows if Malek is dead, he will be killed. The narrator says, "If Malek had died, he would die, too. They'd be sure to punish him" (al-Johani 4). In this sense, his racism closes his mind to find an alternative solution. In addition, his ideology puts him in jeopardy. In my opinion, the plot aims to show that the domination of ideology puts life in jeopardy.

In this novel, the portrayal of beating Malek shows al-Johani's indication of how the domination of ideology causes some problems such as ambiguity, uncertainty, and humiliation. The narrator says, "Everything around him [Malek] seems vague and uncertain. He didn't know anymore whether he was dead or alive" (al-Johani 7). The narrator describes Malek's emotional state: "All things that had broken his spirit, the one that had hurt the most was loneliness ... he had been beaten mercilessly, and pain had left his spirit in tatters. Pain, humiliation and the better sense of having been duped" (al-Johani 8). Here, al-Johani shows the result of a racist ideology: pain, humiliation, and loneliness. All these horrible consequences happen to Malek due to Hashem's violent rejection of interracial relationships. Indeed, the plot shows this problem becomes more serious when a lover is a black man. In this case, the ideology of bigotry and racism dominates the scene, which means all opportunities of finding a utopian solution vanish.

In *Days of Ignorance*, al-Johani attempts to show that the ideological closure of Malek's death cannot be associated with an environment that supports love and hope. In other words, the domination of racism causes hatred and violence. Because of this, in this novel, obtaining love and hope is almost impossible. For instance, Hashem has many relationships with women, but he does not love them. The narrator says of Hashem's previous girlfriend, "Had he loved her? Love wasn't something he'd been looking for at the time. He'd often wondered whether he would ever love a woman…of all the women who'd passed through his life…all of them had come and gone without pain, regret, or…hope. He'd forgotten a lot of them" (al-Johani 20). Here, after al-Johani writes about Hashem's racism, she writes about the meaning of love in his life. Through her portrayal of Hashem's racism, al-Johani implies that a racist person cannot have love. In other words, she implies that the ideological closure of racism stops any opportunity for love.

In addition, Hashem's understanding of the meaning of love reveals his schizophrenic personality. The discussion of his personality may reveal his relationship to utopian thinking. As mentioned above, Hashem has many temporary relationships with women. For example, the narrator says that Hashem "smiled to himself. His father could never imagine how many women he'd known. He'd been busy with them for years…if that were the case, he would only use his car for the sake of being with a woman" (al-Johani 15). It is obvious his relationships are just for his desire, not for love and obtaining a better life in the future. Furthermore, he allows himself to have relationships, but he attempts to stop his sister's relationship with Malek. In order to stop her relationship, he tries to find evidence to show his father. The narrator shows how Hashem "is searching her room [Leen's room]" to find "a shred of evidence to justify to his father the way he'd been raging against her" (al-Johani 11). In addition, Hashem says, "He's [Malek] laid her. The animal's laid her! He's laid her" (al-Johani 17). The narrator asks, "How had he [Hashem]

failed to notice? He'd been busy laying other women" (al-Johani 17). In this sense, al-Johani attempts to portray Hashem as schizophrenic. Indeed, in this chapter, the representation of schizophrenia may be different from the first chapter of this dissertation, which relies on Jameson's account of schizophrenia as consequence of the domination of late capitalism. In this chapter, schizophrenia may be considered a result of the domination of ideological masculinity that provides power for men, but prevents women from obtaining power. In my opinion, both representations of schizophrenia reveal the representation of the utopian imagination. In this novel, Hashem's schizophrenic personality reveals that there is no hope in a society that encourages Hashem to fulfill his desire and prevents his sister from the same desire because in this society, it is shameful for a woman to have a premarital relationship with a man. In short, al-Johani aims to show that Hashem's schizophrenic personality is symptomatic of a society that cannot develop any sense of utopian imagination.

The plot not only narrates what happens to Malek and Leen, but it also provides a comparison between Leen and Hashem's subjectivities in a patriarchal society. In this society, there is a conflict between men and women. Men dominate society completely, and women attempt to challenge this domination and open the ideological closure. This conflict may be found in the conflict of Leen and Hashem. In this sense, this conflict may reveal the representation of the dialectic of ideology and utopia. The discussion of utopia and ideology cannot be isolated from personalities of Leen and Hashem. In other words, the discussion of Hashem's personality may reveal how his ideology shapes this personality. Subsequently, his personality may reveal his utopian imagination. In this novel, Hashem is depicted as a lazy person who does not like his job. In contrast, Leen is depicted as a devoted person who likes her job and attempts to improve her skills. For instance, "When Hashem had been unemployed for

nearly two years, his mother had pressed his father to find him a job…So his father rented one of the numerous little kiosks located along the northern wall of Al Baqi' Cemetery and filled it with souvenirs, prayer beads, and prayer rugs. When his father told him about the kiosk, he was gripped with melancholy" (al-Johani 20). He dislikes his job and thinks this job causes depression for him; therefore, he says, "I'm not going back to the kiosk. I'm going to die" (al-Johani 20). In contrast, Hashem wonders why his sister loves her work and why she reads many books. He wonders how her job or reading and writing make her satisfied. The narrator says, "When he saw her engrossed in her paper or books, writing or reading, or sitting at her computer screen reviewing something she'd written, he envied her, since he realized that she did what she did out or pure enjoyment" (al-Johani 29). In my opinion, the comparison between Hashem and Leen indicates that Hashem's personality is not capable of changing his status quo. In this sense, he cannot provide an alternative utopian solution to improve his life. Also, his dislike of reading and writing indicates that he cannot provide an alternative utopian imagination for a better life in the future because, in my opinion, there is no utopian imagination with a low level of education and limited social skills. In other words, Hashem's personality shows that he does not want to work hard to improve his life or his knowledge. Apparently, he does not have social skills and knowledge; therefore, he cannot provide a utopian imagination for a better life in the future.

Furthermore, portraying Hashem as a strange person shows that he cannot criticize his status quo and cannot imagine an alternative utopian solution. The narrator says that Hashem's mother "reconcile[d] herself to his other habits—like eating rice with bread, only taking bath in the morning, not wanting anyone to talk to him after he woke up until all his senses were functioning one hundred percent… she noticed that he was tense and that what felt like a heavy stone lay on his chest" (al-Johani 26). Some people may not consider these habits strange.

However, in this novel, al-Johani insists the habits that characterize Hashem's personality are strange. Al-Johani aims to show how his unreasonable rejection of Leen's relationship with Malek is associated with his strange habits. Subsequently, the plot, in my opinion, shows how Hashem fails to obtain a utopian vision of his sister's future with her beloved because his personality and strange habits do not allow him to think outside of the status quo.

In this novel, racism is embedded in a patriarchal ideology. In Saudi society, racism may be different from other societies because the social context is different. For example, tribal people do not marry non-tribal people or those of African descent. Indeed, in Saudi society, the patriarchal ideology, as dominant ideology, shapes what people think about others. For instance, Leen's father does not allow his daughter to marry Malek because he thinks this marriage is against the social norms. The narrator says that Leen's father "wondered if he was rejecting Malek because he was black, or because other people would reject him. For a moment he suspected that he was being pulled into the mire along with the others, and that all he had looked at was color" (al-Johani 115). The narrator continues, "Her father has said to her 'people will never look at anything but his color, and they'll punish you and I don't want you to suffer'. Little had her father known that her brother would be the first one to punish her" (al-Johani 40). Here, the ideological closure is complicated because the father is dominated by the dominant ideology and the father relies on the patriarchal ideology in order to dominate Leen. In this sense, al-Johani implies that Saudi women face double layers of ideological closure. Therefore, these women cannot obtain a better life in the future. In this novel, Leen cannot fight against her father's patriarchal ideology, which means she cannot fight against the dominant ideology in Saudi society. Consequently, she cannot change the status quo. This failure of changing the status quo reveals the representation of the utopian imagination.

In addition, as mentioned above, Hashem searches Leen's room to find any evidence of his sister's attempts to disgrace them to show his father. The narrator says Hashem "hadn't taken any photo or letter that he could fling in his father's face, saying 'Look what I found in her room, Dad! See it with you own eyes, and don't make excuses for her. Your daughter's going to cause us a scandal!" (al-Johani 11–12). In addition, the narrator reveals that Leen sees him searching her room, but she does not do anything. The narrator says, "As he left the room, he tried to avoid looking at her in the eye" (al-Johani 12). In my opinion, al-Johani attempts to show an important point that Hashem, as a man, attempts to control his sister's life. She, as a woman, has few if any options to resist masculine oppression. In this novel, Leen does not criticize the status quo, but she tries to find support from her father who eventually follows social norms of patriarchal society. In this sense, Leen does not have a strong utopian imagination that can open the ideological closure of masculinity.

Furthermore, in *Days of Ignorance*, Leen does not criticize the status quo because this ideology itself causes a great illusion for women. This illusion stops women from finding a logical solution to avoid the patriarchal domination. For example, Hashem's girlfriend tells him "What goes around comes around, Hashem. You've got a sister, and some day you'll be sorry" (al-Johani 17). She tells him this after he harasses his girlfriend because some people say that a harasser's woman will be harassed as punishment for his crime. In this sense, her belief stops her from finding a logical way to punish him, such as suing him in the court. Similarly, Leen finds Hashem having sex with a minor, but she does not criticize him. She just says, "Show some fear of God in the way you treat people's daughters, Hashem" (al-Johani 30). Here, the narrator shows what Leen's personality is. She does not criticize her brother's behavior, but instead says some

ideological slogan. As a result, she does not attempt to provide a utopian solution to change the status quo.

Moreover, ideological closure may be found in Leen's relationship with her father. Her father and brother are similar in that they both obstruct attempts at changing the status quo. They attempt to shape her subjectivity by imposing their patriarchal ideology on her. In this novel, Leen's father seems to support her and encourages Hashem to understand his sister. Leen's father says, "Try to understand your sister's situation, Hashem, and accept her the way she is. I know my daughter, so you should try to know your sister" (al-Johani 12). Here, the domination of masculinity controls Leen's subjectivity. In other words, her subjectivity is not known without her father's permission. In my opinion, al-Johani utilizes Leen's relationship with her father to reveal that status of women's rights in Saudi Arabia. Women, regardless their ages or social status, are dependents of male guardians. In this sense, Leen's father, as a guardian, gives his son permission to access Leen's social status. However, her father does not help her to change the status quo. Moreover, her father imposes an ideological closure on her to prevent her from an alternative utopian solution. He stops Leen from marrying Malek. In short, although Leen's relationship with her father is good, this relationship reveals how her father's ideology attempts to shape Leen's subjectivity. Subsequently, this relationship does not help Leen to obtain her utopian dream, which is marrying Malek.

In addition, Hashem does not try to understand her sister's situation, which means he does not attempt to find an alternative utopian solution. When a person believes completely in his/her ideology, this person rejects any attempts to improve his/her situation. The consequence of rejecting any attempts to open the ideological closure is that the ideology itself provides an extreme decision that maintains the status quo. For example, in this novel, Hashem rejects any

suggestions to understand Leen's relationship with Malek because he holds extremely racist beliefs. Hashem says, "God damn the animal. He's worse than animal. And God damn her. She's an animal, too." Then the narrator shows how Hashem thinks about his role of authority in the matter, "The animal! If only her father had given him authority over her" (al-Johani 11), which suggests he wants to kill her as well. Subsequently, he makes an extreme decision: killing Malek. In this novel, the ideological closure of racism does not only close any attempt to find an alternative utopian solution, but it also blinds any logical thinking. Thus, the utopian imagination is almost gone.

Moreover, in *Days of Ignorance*, al-Johani implies that the domination of ideology prevents life from moving forward. This implication may be found in the portrayal of both Hashem and Leen's lives. The narrator shows how Hashem thinks his life is hopeless; he perceives that his life does not move forward. As mentioned above, this hopelessness can be found in his reaction to his job in the kiosk. In other words, the narrator attempts to show that Hashem's life does not move forward because he is not qualified to do so. In my opinion, through Hashem's character, al-Johani attempts to provide a stereotype of young Saudis who do not want to work hard to make money. Al-Johani shows how these types of Saudis instead find masculinity as supportive power for them. In this sense, Hashem, as an example, will not obtain a better life in the future, which means he maintains the status quo of masculinity because it benefits him. In this novel, Hashem's attempts to maintain his power over his sister do not prevent his life from moving forward, but his attempts lead him to end both his future and Malek's future by beating Malek to death. In short, the domination of ideology prevents Hashem from obtaining a worldview outside of the status quo, which would have allowed his life to move forward.

In addition, Leen has a situation similar to Hashem's. In this novel, patriarchal society prevents Leen's life from moving forward. In my opinion, al-Johani provides a snapshot of Saudi girls' lives through Leen. Al-Johani shows how Hashem has social supports while Leen does not. For example, in this novel, Hashem can drive and hang out with friends, but his sister cannot do that because patriarchal power isolates her and privileges Hashem over her. Though al-Johani does not mention the patriarchal domination directly in this novel, she does imply that Leen's life is restricted to her room because the patriarchal power prevents her from enjoying her life outside (al-Johani 29). In other words, al-Johani implies Leen's life does not move beyond her room and her work because the ideology of the patriarchal society limits any opportunity for women to move freely in public, which means these women cannot change their status quo. This inability to change the status quo can be found in Leen's life. In this sense, the narrative structure, which shows how the ideology of the patriarchal society prevents Leen's life from changing and moving forward, does not have a strong utopian imagination.

In *Days of Ignorance*, al-Johani shows that the absence of conversation between people causes bigotry that then leads to horrible consequences. In this novel, there is no interlocutor between Leen and Hashem. Also, legal restrictions close the door for Leen's relationship with Malek when she understands that he cannot obtain the Saudi citizenship. She talks with Malek by phone and says, "Let me go before I hurt you with my words. I don't want to do that, and if I go on talking, it's bound to lead to pain.' 'Watch out, then, for the Leen I know, so that she won't hurt the Leen I love.' Click ... and she hung up" (al-Johani 91). Al-Johani implies that Leen and Malek seek an alternative utopian life for their status quo, but how can they achieve this with the absence of the understanding? In this sense, the utopian imagination is weak when people lose their ability to understand each other. In addition, the narrator says, "One time Malek had said to

her [Leen], 'You're really stubborn about your ideas'" (al-Johani 50). Leen's intolerance to

other's ideas closes the opportunity for utopian imagination.

Al-Johani portrays Leen's situation through the allegorical approach, which may reveal

women's historical context in Saudi Arabia. In addition, this discussion may reveal the

representation of the utopian imagination. In this novel, when Leen waits for Malek to wake up

from the coma, her mother comes to take her home because her mother thinks Leen's waiting is

shameful. The narrator says:

> The rage pent up from all the years past had begun flowing in her veins. It was the rage of
> a ten-years-old girl who'd come to an early awareness that she wasn't wanted but didn't
> understand why, the isolation that had confined her spirit, the loneliness that had sapped
> her, the neglect, the disregard, and the belittlement of everything she'd ever accomplished
> in her life. For more than twenty years she hadn't meant a thing to her mother. (al-Johani
> 61)

In my opinion, al-Johani implies that Leen's situation is an example of many Saudi girls who are

neglected. Like Leen, these girls are not understood. They do not obtain their rights. From this

context, the reader may extract the social situation of Saudi girls. Al-Johani implies how this

social context may cause girls like Leen, who has been nothing and nobody for twenty years, to

want to change the status quo.

In addition, Leen is a social worker who works in the Hospitality Home. Also, Leen

shows that her fate is not different from girls who are like prisoners in the Hospitality Home. Her

relationship with Malek starts when he attempts to write a report about girls who stay in the

Hospitality Home. Through this, he comes to know Leen. One day, Malek asks her to read to

him what she writes in her notebook about girls. She provides him with some stories about girls

who escape their families because they encounter horrible treatment, such as forced marriages to

old men (al-Johani 67). The most important point that al-Johani insists on through this example

is that Leen is not different from these girls. The narrator says, "What would have led her [Leen]

to believe that she was different from the other female around her?" (al-Johani 81). The narrator gives the reason that makes Leen like every Saudi girl, whether inside the Hospitality Home or outside, saying, "Was she different because, if she wanted to, she could drive a car without her father objecting? Was she different because she'd managed to get her own ID card?"[67] (al-Johani 81). Here, al-Johani implies that Leen and every Saudi girl cannot drive or even cannot obtain their ID card independently without a male guardianship. In my opinion, al-Johani implies that the social situation of Saudi girls does not present many options that offer a better life in the future. Also, in this novel, al-Johani attempts to describe the social situation of Saudi girls, but she does not provide a practical utopian imagination to change the status quo. Therefore, the representation of the utopian imagination may be considered weak.

As mentioned above, Leen writes her observations about girls in the Hospitality Home in her notebook. For instance, she writes:

> When they brought her to the Home for the first time, she [Muznah] was recovering from her illness…she was fifteen years old…Fearfully, she asked, 'Are you going to send me back? I don't want to go back.'… I knew she had probably been raped. However, I knew he was her husband, and I realized who and what she meant when she said, it hurts me (al-Johani 68)

Leen comments on a controversial issue, which is that some young girls are forced to marry old men. Her comments reveal the main issue in the plot, which is how women are treated in Saudi Arabia. Also, her comments describe the condition of marital rape visited upon young women. Although her comments contain some criticism, Leen does not provide a strong criticism that may change the status quo. In addition, her comments do not provide an alternative solution that

---

[67] It is worth mentioning that this novel was published in 2007 which means that there have been some social improvements in terms of women rights in Saudi Arabia.

may improve women's rights. In this sense, her comments, as metafiction conveyed through her diary entry, reveal her weak utopian imagination.

In terms of postmodern characteristics in this novel, the narrative structure contains historiographic metafiction. In my opinion, al-Johani relies on some historical stories to show how Arab women have been treated for a long time. Al-Johani writes about the story of the marriage of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf [68] and Umm Kulthum, the daughter of Abdullah ibn Ja'far. He agrees to the marriage when Hajjaj ibn Yusuf pays "a dowry of 2 million dirhems in secret, and 500,000 dirhems in public" (al-Johani 119). This marriage outrages al-Walid, the son of the Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan[69]. Al-Walid gets angry because he thinks Umm Kulthum's father "took the best of Abd Manaf, and gave her in marriage to a lowly servant of the Thaqif tribe" (al-Johani 119). This story reveals the root of social separation in Arabic culture. Although Hajjaj is Arab, al-Walid refuses this marriage and asks his father to force Hajjaj to divorce Umm Kulthum. Al-Walid's reaction shows how history contains a complicated social separation between tribes. Also, in this story, when some tribes attempt to insult others, they describe them as black. In this sense, this story reveals the root of racism in Arabic culture. The narrator comments on this story: "Her father said, I can't put my daughter in harm's way" (120). This comment shows Leen's father's refusal as a consequence of long historical racism. Also, this comment implies her father is not brave enough to help his daughter to achieve what she wants. In this sense, this comment implies that Leen's father cannot change the status quo. In addition, this historiographic metafiction implies the present cannot provide a utopian solution

---

[68] Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf (661-714 AD) was the most powerful governor of Iraq in the age of the Umayyad Caliphate. His tribe is *Thaqif* lived in Taif in Saudi Arabia.
[69] Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (646-705) was the 5th Umayyad caliph.

for women's rights because the past had a history that cannot support change in the present. Therefore, the future will not provide a better life.

Furthermore, in *Days of Ignorance*, the fragmented narrative structure is a postmodern feature, which can be found in two aspects. First, the narrative structure does not follow the fictional thread. For instance, in the beginning of the plot, the narrator narrates about how Hashem beats Malek violently. Then, the narrator narrates about the difference between Leen and Hashem's personalities. Also, the narrator narrates about Malek's relationship with Leen, but the narrator does not talk about how this relationship starts until the last third of the plot. Second, in the beginning of every chapter, the narrative structure has an introductory statement about the Iraq War. These introductions follow this war from the beginning until the fall of Baghdad in 2003. Readers may not be able to see the relationship between these introductions and the plot itself, however, they may notice an obvious fragmentation.

The Saudi novels, which are discussed in this chapter, may be compared to Paul Auster's detective fiction, *City of Glass*. This novel is about Quinn, who is a writer of detective fiction. In the beginning of the novel, Quinn receives a misleading call. The caller is looking for Paul Auster to help him with a very serious threat. Indeed, the main action in the novel revolves around this call. Quinn assumes Auster's identity to follow Peter Stillman, who is released from the prison after he is convicted of the crime of physical maltreatment of his son, Peter Stillman Jr [70]. Peter Stillman is depicted as a professor whose academic interests concentrate on theology and language. Peter Stillman locks up his son for nine years to investigate God's language, which he thinks that a child who is isolated from people will speak. Stillman Jr and his wife hire Quinn

---

[70] For my purpose, I refer to the father as Stillman and to the son Stillman Jr.

to track down the father to make sure that he does not aim to hurt his son again. However, at the end of the novel, Quinn's attempts fail.

City of Glass is chosen to be a comparative reference for several reasons. First, Paul Auster's narrative language, which describes the plot in detail, is similar to the narrative language of the postmodern Saudi novel, which pays great attention to details. For instance, *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* contains a detailed description of the plot. Second, *City of Glass*'s plot discusses experiences that are highly unpredictable. These experiences may limit the utopian imagination. This unpredictability can be found postmodern novels that depict life as irrational and not normal. Third, the obvious representation of metafiction may be considered as reference to the discussion of metafiction in the postmodern Saudi novel. In short, the discussion of postmodern characteristics in *City of Glass* helps to illustrate postmodern features in the Saudi novel.

As mentioned above, the plot of *City of Glass* concentrates on the representation of unpredictable experience. As previously mentioned, Quinn receives a wrong-number call from a stranger who asks for someone else, not for Quinn. The narrator says, "Much later, when he was able to think about the things that happened to him, he would conclude that nothing was real except chance. But that was much later. In the beginning, there was simply the event and its consequences" (Auster 3). The narrator implies that what happens in this life is not logical. Thus, he implies that life is unpredictable. Logically, what happens in the present is a result of what happened in the past. The narrator says, "The world was outside of him, around him, before him, and the speed with which it kept changing made it impossible for him to dwell on any one thing for very long" (Auster 4). He implies that people cannot rely on their experiences to predict the future because it is possible they will encounter an unpredictable event that is not a result of their

experience. The wrong-number call in Quinn's present is not a consequence of his past experience. The representation of anti-rationalism shows that the narrator cannot provide an imaginary utopian solution for the status quo because his experience in the present undergo an unpredictable event that influences his ability to predict the future.

In addition, the narrative structure of *City of Glass* shows the influence of routinization on Quinn's thinking. For instance, the narrator says, "Because he spent no more than five or six months on a novel, for the rest of the year he was free to do as he wished. He read many books, he looked at paintings, he went to the movies. In the summer he watched baseball on television; in the winter he went to the opera" (Auster 3). Here, Although Quinn does different activities in the summer and winter, he repeats the same activities every season, which indicates that Quinn has a seasonal routinization. In this sense, Quinn cannot link the past with the present to predict the future. Hence, in this novel, Quinn is depicted as a writer who writes not to provide an alternative utopian solution for the status quo, but to make money. In this sense, the one who writes not to change the status quo considers writing as a routinized lifestyle to make money. In other words, Auster implies when one considers writing as a way of making money, writing is dominated by routinization. This writing cannot provide the dual functions of utopian imagination: criticizing the status quo and imagining alternative utopia.

Moreover, in *City of Glass,* this routinization influences Quinn's project of protecting Stillman Jr. Routinization causes Quinn's weak utopian imagination. In this novel, Quinn is an employee who is required to follow instructions. For instance, the narrator says, "He would arrive early, never later than seven o'clock, and sit there with a take-out coffee, a buttered roll, and an open newspaper on his lap, watching the glass door of the hotel. By eight o'clock Stillman would come out, always in his long brown overcoat, carrying a large, old-fashioned

carpet bag. For two weeks, this routine did not vary" (Auster 58). The consequence of this routinization is that Quinn begins to think about giving up his project and he is discouraged. The narrator shows the consequence of routinization, saying:

> Much later, long after it was too late, he realized that deep inside he had been nurturing the chivalric hope of solving the case so brilliantly, of removing Peter Stillman from danger so swiftly and irrevocably, that he would win Mrs. Stillman's desire for as long as he wanted it. That, of course, was a mistake. But of all the mistakes Quinn made from beginning to end, it was no worse than any other. (Auster 63)

Here, Quinn loses almost everything. His utopian project vanishes because of the routinization of following Stillman in the thirteen days without accomplishment (Auster 63). Hence, "Quinn returned home that evening out of sorts" (Auster 63). The routinization makes him think of abandoning ship because Quinn can follow Stillman to the end of time and still nothing would happen (Auster 64). Here, Quinn begins to lose his utopian project; therefore, "He had to admit that nothing was sure: it could well have been meaningless" (Auster 69). In short, this loss is a consequence of the domination of routinization.

Furthermore, in *City of Glass,* Quinn loses his ability to understand the world. This inability shows Quinn's weakness in cognitive mapping. In other words, Quinn cannot locate himself within the space because, to him, "New York was an inexhaustible space" (Auster 4). The narrator shows how this conception of space affects Quinn's personality. The narrator says that New York "always left him [Quinn] with the feeling of being lost. Lost, not only in the city, but within himself as well" (Auster 4). Here, the one who considers himself a lost person cannot criticize his present condition and cannot imagine a way to move beyond it. In other words, the inability of cognitive mapping influences Quinn's personality, which indicates he cannot imagine an alternative utopian solution for the status quo.

As mentioned above, Quinn is a detective fiction writer and his personality is unstable. This instability of personality appears when he decides to take Auster's identity to protect Stillman Jr from his father. He relies on fictional characters such as Max Work to build a plan to help Stillman. The narrator says, "He had, of course, long ago stopped thinking of himself as real" (Auster 9). In this sense, he cannot maintain a stable personality, which indicates he cannot provide a practical utopian solution to change Stillman's status quo. The narrator says:

> Since finishing the latest William Wilson novel two weeks earlier, he had been languishing. His private eye narrator, Max Work, had solved an elaborate series of crimes, had suffered through a number of beatings and narrow escapes…In the triad of selves that Quinn had become, Wilson served as a kind of ventriloquist, Quinn himself was the dummy, and Work was the animated voice that gave purpose to the enterprise. (Auster 7)

This instability of personality shows how certain conditions, such as considering writing as a way of making money, diminish Quinn's ability to distinguish between life and fiction. Instead of relying on his experience in life, Quinn relies on fictional characters to protect Stillman Jr, which means he cannot integrate his experience in the past with his role in tracking Stillman to envision a practical plan to protect Stillman Jr or imagine a utopian future for him. Consequently, his attempts to protect Stillman have failed.

Furthermore, in *City of Glass*, the instability of personality is a result of psychic fragmentation. This psychic fragmentation may influence the representation of the utopian imagination. In this novel, the most important point is that economic conditions dictate the way that psychic fragmentation is represented. For instance, Quinn says, "To remember what it feels like to wear other people's clothes…And the strange sense I would have of climbing into his skin. That is probably a start. And then, most important of all: to remember who I am. To remember who I am supposed to be" (Auster 40). Quinn implies that he is psychically fragmented because wearing other people's clothes destabilizes his identity. He does not know

his identity. This loss of identity, which indicates psychic fragmentation, reveals the

representation of the weak utopian imagination because the one who does not know his identity

cannot envision utopian imagination. Quinn says, "Who are you? And if you think you know,

why do you keep lying about it? I have no answer. All I can say is this: listen to me. My name is

Paul Auster. That is not my real name" (Auster 40). He implies that there is no difference

between him and Stillman, who is also not sure who he is. In other words, Quinn implies that he

resembles Stillman because they lose their identities. In this sense, he between himself and

Stillman who has psychological problems and whose personality is also unstable. In short, he

does not criticize the status quo and he does not provide an alternative solution to change his

situation. He simply compares his situation to Stillman's.

Moreover, the plot of *City of Glass* diminishes the ontological boundaries between reality

and fiction. Blurring of this ontological boundary is found in *City of Glass*'s character Quinn,

who assumes Paul Auster's identity. Auster, the author, is a quasi-character in this novel. The

reader of *City of Glass* cannot really tell whether Paul Auster writes about a real story or fictional

plot. Brian McHale, as mentioned in the first chapter, discusses this postmodern feature. I agree

with Bran Nicol in that this novel "destabilize[s] ontological boundaries, for reading Auster's

name in the story makes us question whether Auster is really the novelist or whether the story is

not fiction but true" (*The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction* 180). In this sense, the

plot of *City of Glass* blurs the boundary between reality and fiction, which allows insight into the

potential of utopian imagination. Auster implies that people rely on fictional characters to exist.

Auster's blurring of the boundary between reality and fiction may be considered a reference

point for the postmodern Saudi novels that contain this postmodern characteristic.

In addition, the narrative structure of *City of Glass* shows an obvious use of metafiction[71]. Auster even attempts to provide a definition of the concept of metafiction and intertextuality. The narrator says, "What interested him [Quinn] about the stories he wrote was not their relation to the world but their relation to other stories" (Auster 7). Nicol states that "*City of Glass* thus underlines the fact that postmodern detective fiction is not simply geared towards mounting a critique of classic detective fiction, but is about our engagement with literature itself " (Nicol, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction* 183). This engagement, as exemplified in Quinn's interest in how stories relate to each other, is clearly metafictional. For example, the narrator comments on what detective fiction is. The narrator says, "The detective is one who looks, who listens, who moves through this morass of objects and events in search of the thought, the idea that will pull all these things together and make sense of them" (Auster 8). Indeed, Auster shows that the work of the detective parallels that of readers of fiction Also, the narrator comments on stories and experiments that attempt to explain what the original language of people is (Auster 33–35). In addition, Quinn writes his comments about Stillman's movements, which may be considered metafiction in the red notebook (Auster 39). Moreover, at the end of this novel, the narrator shows the narrative structure's self-reflexivity. The narrator says, "What will happen when there are no more pages in the red notebook?" (Auster 129). Here, this is an obvious metafictional reference that shows how Quinn disappears when his words run out which; the plot comments on itself to show why the author has stopped writing the plot of the novel. These comments show how the narrative structure of *City of Glass* engages strongly metafictional elements.

---

[71] This obvious metafiction is one of reason that encourages me to choose *City of Glass* as comparative reference for the postmodern Saudi novel because this metafiction shows whether or not Saudi novelists utilize metafiction.

Furthermore, the representation of metafiction may reveal suspicion toward metanarratives. In other words, the narrative structure of *City of Glass* does not only rely on metafiction to comment on the plot itself, but it also relies on metafiction to reveal how stories and experiments, which are parts of metanarratives, influence people's thinking. For instance, after the narrator comments on other people's experiments with the original language, the narrator says, "It had been years now since Quinn had allowed himself to think of these stories. The subject of children was too painful for him…If Stillman was the man with the dagger, come back to avenge himself on the boy whose life he had destroyed, Quinn wanted to be there to stop him" (Auster 35). Here, Quinn dislikes experiments. Quinn's rejection for these experiments shows that he does not believe in grand stories, like an original language, which prompted these experiments. In this sense, Quinn's rejection indicates that he has suspicion toward metanarratives. Yet, Stillman does not believe that knowledge is useful. He thinks that knowledge aims to fool people. In his conversation with Quinn about his scientific projects, Stillman says, "So did everyone else. I fooled them all" (Auster 79). Stillman suggests that his scientific research was able to fool people rather than help them to improve their lives. Here, Stillman himself does not trust his knowledge, and this shows that he disbelieves in knowledge in relation to grand stories. This disbelief in metanarrative cannot be isolated from the weak representation of utopian imagination in the narrative structure of *City of Glass*. In other words, the one who does not believe in metanarratives cannot trust history itself, assuming metanarratives are parts of the structure of history. It follows that the one who does not trust history cannot integrate the past into the present to predict the future. Losing the ability to imagine the future means losing the ability to imagine an alternative utopian solution for the status quo.

The discussion of metafiction helps to reveal the possibility of utopian imagination. As mentioned above, Quinn is hired to protect Stillman Jr from his father. In order to understand what Stillman aims to do, Quinn goes to the library to read Stillman's book, which is entitled *The Garden and the Tower: Early Visions of the New World*. This book is "divided into two parts of an approximately equal length, 'The Myth of Paradise' and 'The Myth of Babel.' The first concentrated on the discoveries of the explorers, beginning with Columbus and continuing on through Raleigh" (Auster 41). This book shows Stillman's ideas about the dialectical relationship between ideology and utopia. In my opinion, the first section, "The Myth of Paradise", represents utopia, while the second section, "The Myth of Babel", represents ideology. In this book, Stillman relies on real works by Columbus and Peter Martyr to explain his ideas about the potential perfect place. Then, the narrator shows Stillman's comments on what these people write about the perfect place. The narrator says:

> From the very beginning, according to Stillman, the discovery of the New World was the quickening impulse of utopian thought, the spark that gave hope to the perfectibility of human life—from Thomas More's book of 1516 to Gerónimo de Mendieta's prophecy, some years later, that America would become an ideal theocratic state, a veritable City of God. (Auster 42)

Here, Stillman shows how the discovery of America may be seen as a utopian project. However, this utopian project is associated with the ideological closure found in the genocide of Native Americans. In other words, Stillman's comments, which may be considered metafiction because he comments on historical events, show the dialectical relationship between utopia and ideology. In addition, his comments show how ideological closure dominates the status quo.

Consequently, the influence of ideological closure on the status quo makes Stillman discuss the Fall in the second part of his book. Stillman's discussion relies on a historical event that reveal whether his historical thinking, and subsequently his utopian imagination, is weak or

not. The narrator says that Stillman's book "began with a historical survey of the various exegetical traditions concerning the story, elaborated on the numerous misreading that had grown up around it, and ended with a lengthy catalogue of legends from the Haggadah" (Auster 43). In addition, Stillman comments on a book that is entitled *The New Babel* by Henry Dark[72]. His comments aim to provide an understanding of the historical context of the Tower of Babel. Also, Stillman aims to elaborate on the relationship between evil and good. He takes the construction of Babel Tower as a historical event to show how this relationship between good and evil began after the fall from paradise. Stillman utilizes this historical context to see whether history had a utopian place. Thus, Stillman concludes, "For utopia was nowhere—even, as Dark explained, in its 'wordhood.' And if a man could bring forth this dreamed-of place, it would only be by building it with his own two hands" (Auster 46). Also, Stillman says, "History would be written in reverse. What had fallen would be raised up; what had been broken would be made whole" (Auster 48). He implies the movement of history does not continue to achieve the logical consequence. In other words, he implies what happens in the present cannot be linked to the past. Utopia, as a historical category, cannot be achieved if the movement of history does not provide a convincible continuity. Consequently, because Stillman thinks history loses its continuity, he loses the utopian imagination. Stillman's weak historical thinking and the weak utopian imagination may have caused him to lock his son up in order to implement an experiment that was aimed at discovering what Stillman believed to be the original language of people.

In this novel, ideological closure does not only maintain the status quo, but it moves beyond thought alone to reinforce the status quo with violence. Quinn follows Stillman when he arrives at the train station. He attempts to write Stillman's movements in his red notebook. The

---

[72] Henry Dark is a fictional character who is depicted as John Milton's secretary.

plot shows how the utopian imagination is represented through Stillman and Quinn. As mentioned above, Stillman wrote a book about evil and good. He comments on this book, "You see, there never was any such person as Henry Dark. I made him up. He's an invention" (Auster 78). Henry Dark is an orthodox character who reflects Stillman's ideas. Quinn concludes that "Stillman had not forgotten Henry Dark" and deduces that "Stillman was far more dangerous than previously imagined" (Auster 71). This demonstrates that Stillman has an ideological closure that prevents him from imagining an alternative utopian solution for the status quo. Yet, Stillman may attempt to harm Stillman Jr. because this ideological closure forces Stillman to maintain the status quo, which is dominating Stillman Jr. in order to solve Stillman's scientific problems.

In addition, Quinn's attempts to follow Stillman make him unable to concentrate on his project. Depicting Quinn as a lost person reveals his weak utopian imagination. The narrator says, "[Quinn] had never seen anyone so lost in his own thoughts" (Auster 56). The narrator implies that Stillman cannot change the status quo as a researcher because he is too lost in his own thoughts to engage in practical planning. Therefore, Quinn "began to feel cut off from his original intentions, and he wondered now if he had not embarked on a meaningless project. It was possible, of course, that Stillman was merely biding his time, lulling the world into lethargy before striking" (Auster 60). Quinn realizes that his attempts to protect Stillman Jr. are a worthless project because Stillman himself does not have a plan. Because of this, his project is meaningless. Following Stillman as he collects worthless items shows that Quinn does not have a plan. He just tracks Stillman and writes his red notebook some notes about what Stillman is doing. He does not use his intelligence to determine a practical plan for protecting Stillman Jr. In

this sense, Quinn loses his utopian imagination because he participates in a worthless project, which means he will not change the status quo.

Moreover, the participation in this aimless project causes instability of Quinn's personality. Then, Quinn loses his utopian imagination. This sequence of actions may be found in what the narrator says about Quinn's personality. The narrator says, "Using aimless motion as a technique of reversal, on his best days he could bring the outside in and thus usurp the sovereignty of inwardness … And if there were no thoughts available to him, if his own inner life had been made inaccessible, then there was no place for him to retreat to" (Auster 61). The narrator shows how participation in the meaningless makes Quinn lose order in his internal thought processes. He then loses his emotions. Subsequently, he cannot locate himself within a place, which means he loses his ability to imagine a better place.

Indeed, in *City of Glass*, Quinn's instability of personality leads to weak historical thinking. In the narrative structure, Quinn's inability of historical thinking cannot be isolated from his failure to protect Stillman Jr. The narrator says, "It was all a question of method. If the object was to understand Stillman, to get to know him well enough to be able to anticipate what he would do next, Quinn had failed" (Auster 65). The narrator implies that Quinn should learn Stillman's historical context, including his studies' methods and Stillman's reliance on history in his studies. Also, the narrator explains why Quinn fails in his project. For instance, the narrator says, "He had started with a limited set of facts: Stillman's background and profession, the imprisonment of his son, his arrest and hospitalization, a book of bizarre scholarship written while he was supposedly still sane, and above all Virginia Stillman's certainty that he would now try to harm his son" (Auster 65). The narrator implies that Quinn cannot understand the historical context of Stillman's situation. Subsequently, Quinn finds that "the facts of the past seemed to

have no bearing on the facts of the present" (Auster 65). Here, the narrator shows how Quinn cannot maintain strong historical thinking to link Stillman's past with the present to predict what he will do in the future. The narrator says, "By watching Stillman, the theory was that he would learn what his intentions were toward Peter. He had followed the old man for two weeks. What, then, could he conclude? Not much" (Auster 90). The narrator implies that Quinn's project to protect Stillman Jr. has failed. In other words, Quinn's weak historical thinking causes the failure which may be considered as a utopian project to change Stillman Jr.'s status quo.

The representation of weak utopian imagination is associated with fragmentation. In other words, a fragmented person cannot achieve the strong, constant historical thinking required to by the utopian imagination. As mentioned above, Stillman seems to have no purpose; hence, Quinn, as a detective, is affected. Losing the purpose of the project makes what Stillman does day-to-day fragmented. As a result, Quinn's thinking is fragmented as well. The representation of fragmentation may be found in Stillman's philosophical conversation with Quinn because they cannot concentrate on one issue. In this conversation, Stillman says:

> You see, the world is in fragments…The principle of the principle, the method of operation. You see, the world is in fragments, sir. Not only have we lost our sense of purpose, we have lost the language whereby we can speak of it. These are no doubt spiritual matters, but they have their analogue in the material world. (Auster 75)

Stillman shows how life is fragmented and he explains aspects of this fragmentation such as fragmented language. The narrator ask, how can a man who has a radical belief in fragmentation provide a utopian vision? Stillman claims that he aims to bring the pieces of the world together. However, in this novel, his radical ideology, which shapes his knowledge and his experiments, prevents him from unifying the fragmentation because it does not accept any experimental solutions that do not correspond with this ideology. Stillman does not try to find an alternative

utopian solution. In other words, the ideological closure prevents him from imagining utopian solutions to the fragmentation of the world.

In addition, the representation of fragmentation appears in Quinn's writings in the red notebook, from which the plot of *City of Glass* is derived. The narrator says, "There were moments when the text [in the red notebook] was difficult to decipher, but I have done my best with it and have refrained from any interpretation. The red notebook, of course, is only half the story, as any sensitive reader will understand" (Auster 130). This plot shows that Quinn's fragmented personality is reflected in his fragmented writings in the end of the plot. The narrator says, "He began to weigh his words with great care, struggling to express himself as economically and clearly as possible. He regretted having wasted so many pages at the beginning of the red notebook, and in fact felt sorry that he had bothered to write about the Stillman case at all" (Auster 128). Here, the narrator shows how Quinn's fragmentation influences his writing. The important point is that the one whose personality is fragmented cannot provide a strong utopian imagination in his writing. The narrator says, "As for Quinn, it is impossible for me to say where he is now. I have followed the red notebook as closely as I could, and any inaccuracies in the story should be blamed on me" (Auster 130). He implies that he finds unreadable writing in the red notebook and he tries to compile it before publishing it as *City of Glass*. Here, the narrator implies the plot derived from Quinn's writing in the red notebook is fragmented. This fragmented writing shows that Quinn gives up his project and he disappears, which means he has abandoned his utopian project.

The narrator shows that Quinn suffers hysteria and confusion. This confusion may reveal the weak utopian imagination. Also, this confusion may help to reveal how ideological closure prevents Quinn from his utopian project. For example, the narrator says:

> Quinn wondered, for example, why he had not bothered to look up the newspaper reports of Stillman's arrest in 1969…He asked himself why he had taken Auster's word for it that Stillman was dead…He wondered what would have happened if he had followed the second Stillman instead of the first. (Auster 127)

Here, the narrator implies that Quinn fails to accomplish his utopian project because he relies on his beliefs. In other words, his ideology dominates his initial planning for the alternative utopian solution. This domination makes him get confused and hysterical; therefore, Quinn sits in Stillman Jr.'s apartment to write. However, his writing does not provide any utopian imagination to change his status quo or Stillman's status quo. In other words, the ideological closure prevents Quinn initially from providing practical utopian imagination to change the status quo of Stillman Jr. Therefore, the initial domination of ideological closure causes hysteria that reveals that Quinn cannot concentrate on the utopian solution.

Generally speaking, the utopian project aims to find a better place in the future. In *City of Glass*, the utopian imagination does not predict this utopian project. Quinn loses his utopian thinking and cannot imagine what will happen in the future. For instance, the narrator says, "The last sentence of the red notebook reads: What will happen when there are no more pages in the red notebook? At this point, the story grows obscure. The information has run out, and the events that follow this last sentence will never be known. It would be foolish even to hazard a guess" (Auster 129). Quinn discourages even thinking about the future, which suggests that he loses his utopian energy to change the status quo. Subsequently, losing the energy to criticize the status quo and provide an alternative utopian project to replace this status quo means a weak utopian imagination.

In conclusion, as utopia is, for Marxists, the ultimate historical process, the discussion of the utopian imagination is the ultimate chapter of this dissertation. This discussion comes after the discussion of an instability of personality and weak historical thinking because these two

issues contribute to weak utopian imagination. Although the three novels under examination in this chapter discuss different topics, their comparison is relevant for the following reasons. First, these novels show how some postmodern characteristics are employed to discuss the dialectic of utopia and ideology. In this sense, postmodern features illustrate the influence of ideology on utopia to prove the main argument of this dissertation. Second, these novels show that weak utopian imagination may not be a result of the domination of late capitalism. In other words, the weak utopian imagination may be a consequence of other factors such as racism and bigotry, which are not necessarily independent of capitalism. However, the illustration of how these factors produce weak utopian thinking should not be completely isolated from economic conditions in the contemporary era.

The conjunction of the weak utopian imagination and other features of postmodernism shows that the Saudi novel can be read as a postmodern novel. In this chapter, comparing postmodern characteristics highlights similarity between the postmodern American novel and the postmodern Saudi novel. They are not completely similar because they are from different socio-historical contexts. However, they share some postmodern features. Shared representations of weak utopian imagination are associated with suspicion toward metanarrative in all three novels under discussion. Second, the postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel have fragmentation, but this fragmentation is attributed to different factors. For example, in the postmodern American novel, fragmentation is a consequence of the late capitalist system. In the postmodern Saudi novel, fragmentation is a result of the domination of both radical ideology and the patriarchy. Third, the postmodern American novel and the postmodern Saudi novel employ metafiction. Fourth, characters in the postmodern American novel and the postmodern Saudi are unstable, and has been argued throughout this dissertation, the instability of personality causes

weak historical thinking in the postmodern American novel and the postmodern Saudi novel. Finally, this chapter focuses on the weak utopian imagination as a postmodern feature which may be found in the postmodern American novel and the postmodern Saudi novel.

Although *Where Pigeons Don't Fly*, *Days of Ignorance*, and *City of Glass* are all postmodern novels, they demonstrate different responses to bigotry, individualism, social hierarchy, future resolution, East/West positionality, and money due to their origins in different socio-historical contexts. The postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel discuss bigotry as an ideological closure that governs characters' minds. These novels show how bigotry prevents characters from obtaining utopian imagination that can change the status quo. However, in this chapter, the Saudi postmodern novel and the postmodern American novel attribute bigotry to different factors. For instance, in *Where Pigeons Don't Fly*, bigotry is a consequence of modes of production that produce radical ideology. In *Days of Ignorance*, bigotry is a result of political power and social conventions that promote the patriarchal domination. In *City of Glass*, advocating to scientific research may produce bigotry; therefore, Stillman exploits his son's life to do his scientific experiments which lead Stillman to prison and his son to a mental hospital. In short, in the Saudi postmodern novel and the postmodern American novel, bigotry is one of the ideological closures that produces the weak utopian imagination. However, these novels discuss this issue from different angles.

Second, the representation of individualism and social collectivism differentiates the postmodern Saudi novel from the postmodern American novel. In *City of Glass*, the plot concentrates on how an individual's ideology affects another individual's life. In other words, the plot shows how Stillman's ideology affects his son's life. This novel does not discuss social problems such as women's rights. In *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* and *Days of Ignorance*, plots

concentrate on how collective thinking affects people's lives. For instance, *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* shows how radical ideology, as a dominant ideology, shapes people's thinking and prevents them from practicing normal life. In *Days of Ignorance*, the plot focuses on how political power and social order produces a patriarchal ideology that affects women's rights. In short, these novels contain weak utopian imagination that is a result of the domination of ideology. However, these novels show that the representation of individualism and social collectivism displays how the ideological closure of every text can be different dues the difference of socio-historical context.

Third, there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between social hierarchy and the representation of ideology. In the postmodern Saudi novel, social norms such as tribalism dominate Saudi society. This society promotes patriarchal ideology which provides men social power over women. For instance, in *Days of Ignorance*, the ideology of tribalism grants society power to differentiate between men and women. Leen's father, whose worldview is informed by society and social norms, attempts to dominate Leen and prevents her from obtaining the utopian dream that is marrying Malek. In the postmodern American novel, the social norms are simply less restrictive. In *City of Glass*, Auster does not pay attention to social norms or a patriarchal ideology. For example, he shows that Stillman's Jr wife encounters a threat from Stillman not because he believes in certain social norms or actively supports patriarchal ideology. In this sense, Auster attempts to show how life in the postmodern era is not predictable for all people.

Fourth, in *City of Glass*, the plot reaches a deadlock. For instance, Quinn cannot protect Stillman Jr. from his father. Also, Auster cannot find Quinn at the end of the novel. In this sense, the utopian imagination is completely blocked in this novel. In *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* and *Days of Ignorance*, the possibility of achieving utopian change is different because it depends on

the essence of the ideology itself. For instance, in *Days of Ignorance*, Leen cannot find a utopian solution that can change her status quo because she is a woman. Also, this novel shows that women cannot make their decision to escape the patriarchal domination because they cannot travel without permission from their male guardians. Generally speaking, many postmodern Saudi novels discuss women's rights, however plots often reach deadlocks because of the difficulty encountered when resisting patriarchal domination. However, in *Where Pigeons Don't Fly*, the plot does not reach a complete deadlock because Fahd is a man who can travel without seeking permission. For instance, in the end of the novel, he migrates to United Kingdom. In this sense, his escape represents bad utopianism because he just avoids the conflict with the radical ideology, not trying to find another solution that helps to get rid of this ideology.

Fifth, the postmodern American novel and the postmodern Saudi novel discuss the representation of the East and the West. Although these novels show that the representation of the East and the West reveals weak utopian energy, this representation is different due to the socio-historical context of every text in this chapter. In *City of Glass*, Auster sees the East as a historical source of knowledge, but he portrays this knowledge as a factor that does not help people to improve their lives. In this novel, this knowledge attempts to dominate people's lives. In *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* and *Days of Ignorance*, the representation of the West is not only a source of knowledge, but also a source of colonialism, modernity, and technology. In short, in *City of Glass*, the weak utopian imagination is a consequence of the historical source of knowledge that comes from the East. In *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* and *Days of Ignorance,* the weak utopian imagination is a result of the East itself. Thus, al-Mohaimeed implies that escaping the East may lead to an alternative utopia for the individual, but this is devoid of the possibility of social change.

Finally, in this chapter, the postmodern American novel shows that money shapes people's relationships. For instance, in *City of Glass*, Quinn's relationship with Stillman Jr's family is determined by money. Also, money determines Quinn's relationship with Auster. In contrast, the postmodern Saudi discusses how social norms dominate society and shape people's relationship. *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* and *Days of Ignorance* do not focus completely on the role of money, but they concentrate on how society shapes people's relationships. For instance, in *Days of Ignorance,* the racist ideology of Saudi society shapes Leen's relationship with Malek. Also, the patriarchal ideology determines Leen's relationship with her father. In *Where Pigeons Don't Fly*, collective thinking of radical ideology shapes Fahd's relationship with other people includes his mother, sister, and girlfriend.

Conclusion

Postmodernism is, for Jameson, the cultural logic of late capitalism. This characterization is derived from Ernest Mandel, who in *Late Capitalism* identifies three historical moments of capitalism: freely competitive capitalism (characterized by industrial capital), monopoly capitalism (characterized by imperialism), and late capitalism (characterized by the domination of multinational corporations). Historically, the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia roughly accompanied the beginning of late capitalism. The economic power of the oil industry enables Saudi Arabia to be one of a handful of essential players in the global economy in the contemporary era. Also, this participation enables Saudi Arabia to be a member of the most powerful global economic organization, the Group of Twenty. The participation in the global economy has influenced the historical development of Saudi society. In this sense, the movement of history, which is a consequence of modes of production, is reflected in the cultural Saudi discourse including the novel.

For Jameson, postmodernism appears after complete modernization. Also, for Jameson, postmodernism is global, but it is just more prevalent in the West. However, his view about a complete modernity may be challenged because there are no specific criteria to define which societies have a complete modernity. In this dissertation, the main argument is derived from Jameson's contribution to postmodern theory. I argue that the Saudi novel published after 2001 may be read through postmodern angles and should not be read as a postcolonial text. Postmodern American novels act as a reference to show how the Saudi novel contains some postmodern features. I discuss six postmodern Saudi novels published between 2001 and 2011 and three American postmodern novels. These Saudi novels are written by novelists who hold the Saudi citizenship and are not banned in Saudi Arabia.

The postmodern Saudi novel is different from other postmodern Arabic novels. In the postmodern Arabic novel, novelists have suspicion toward metanarrative after the Palestinian catastrophe. Therefore, Arab novelists criticize the West as a colonizer. However, Saudi writers have not experienced colonialism; therefore, they do not criticize western discourse. Saudi novels attempt to endorse western values rather than challenge them. Second, the postmodern Saudi novel reflects the cultural logic of Saudi participation in the global economy. In this sense, the economic power of Saudi Arabia distinguishes the postmodern Saudi novel from the Arabic novel. Thus, in this dissertation, I argue that the Saudi novel should be read from a postmodern perspective because the postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel represent the cultural logic of late capitalism. Despite significant differences in social, economic, and political conditions, a number of postmodern characteristics are shared between Saudi and American texts.

Some critics, such as Hassan al-Naami, divide the historical development of the Saudi novel into three phases. The first phase, the beginnings, lasted between 1930 and 1959. This phase witnessed the first Saudi novel, The *Twins* by Abd al-Quddus al-Ansari. The second phase is known as the maturation of the Saudi novel (1959-1980). In this phase, Saudi novelists are inspired by Arab novelists. The most common literary school, which dominate this historical moment, was realism. The third phase, for some critics, is the 1980s and beyond. In this historical moment, Saudi novelists write modernist novels inspired by global writers. I propose that the historical period after 2001 is the fourth phase of the development of the Saudi novel. In this phase, Saudi novelists express their suspicion toward metanarratives. In addition, Saudi Arabia's participation in the Group of Twenty and globalization creates economic conditions in which Saudi novelists explore the instability of the postmodern Saudi personality. For example,

Raja Alem's characters representative of globalization, like Khaled al-Sibaykhan, have a schizophrenic personality when they deal with women's rights.

Critics such as Baudrillard, Jameson, and Lyotard discuss postmodernism from different angles. This variety of points of view shows why it is difficult to find a consensus in terms of the definition of postmodernism. In this dissertation, I rely on Keith Booker's summary of postmodern characteristics (Booker, *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds,* 24–25). This summary helps me to determine the link that connects this dissertation's chapters. Booker shows the causal pattern in which some postmodern characteristics may cause other characteristics. For example, the radical suspicion toward metanarrative causes weak historical thinking. This relationship between postmodern features helps me to divide this dissertation into three chapters: instability of personality, weak historical thinking, and weak utopian imagination. According to Booker, the instability of personality causes weak historical thinking that leads eventually to weak utopian imagination. In postmodern theory, there are many theoretical concepts, but in this dissertation, I utilize two terms: postmodern allegory and routinization. Postmodern allegory helps to show that not every postmodern aspect in the postmodern Saudi novel is a consequence of the domination of late capitalism. Routinization helps to show controlling and scheduling life causes other problems of a fragmented personality that lead to weak historical thinking

In the first chapter, I argue that the postmodern American novel and the postmodern Saudi novel portray instability of personality. In this chapter I discuss *Girls of Riyadh, Throwing Sparks,* and *Super Sad True Love Story.* Although the three novels are postmodern novels, they do not contain same postmodern characteristics. The narrative structure of *Girls of Riyadh* is similar to that of *Super Sad True Love Story* in that they are epistolary novels that rely on technology to spread electronic "letters" that comprise each novel's chapters. Also, *Girls of*

Riyadh and *Super Sad True Love Story* show the role of technology in creating a schizophrenic environment. However, these novels do not attribute schizophrenia solely to the influence of technology. On one hand, *Girls of Riyadh* attributes schizophrenia to social norms and patriarchal domination. On the other hand, *Super Sad True Love Story* attributes schizophrenia to the domination of late capitalism. Meanwhile, *Throwing Sparks* discusses schizophrenia not as a consequence of technology, patriarchal domination, or late capitalism, but as a result of human abuse. This abuse is a consequence of the domination of wealth and power of the Master.

In addition, like *Super Sad True Love Story, Girls of Riyadh* is metafictional. These novels comment on the plot itself. *Throwing Sparks* does not comment on the plot itself, but it comments on the movement of social changes in Saudi Arabia. In this sense, in *Throwing Sparks,* the representation of metafiction is similar to Linda Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction. Also, the narrative structure of each text reflects the erosion of self uniquely in each text. The fragmented narrative structure of *Girls of Riyadh* is similar to *Super Sad True Love Story* due to the influence of technology on the plot itself. However, al-Sani' and Shteyngart discuss the representation of technology from different angles. In *Throwing Sparks,* fragmentation is a result of psychological problems which are not isolated from the domination of wealth and power. In short, in the first chapter, all three novels have fragmented narrative structures that reveal the lack of a continuous view of self, each in their own specific contexts and with their own strategies.

Moreover, all three novels show the influence of routinization on the structure of personality. In my opinion, every novel has a specific representation of routinization, but they share the same meaning that shows how life is scheduled and regimented. *Girls of Riyadh* shows that routinization is a consequence of consumerism and the patriarchal domination that limit

people's lives. In *Super Sad True Love Story,* routinization is a result of the system that is represented by Lenny's job. His boss asks him to work hard every day to increase their profits. In *Throwing Sparks,* the representation of routinization is a consequence of the domination of the Master. This routinization is associated with psychological problems because Tariq is scheduled to do an unethical job. Therefore, the representation of routinization causes a serious instability of personality.

In the first chapter, all three novels demonstrate suspicion of metanarratives. In these novels, suspicion reveals the representation of instability of personality. Although three novels contain rejection of the grand stories and link this rejection with the instability of personality, they attribute the suspicion toward metanarratives to different factors. In the postmodern Saudi novel, the main reason that causes disbelief in grand metanarratives is the domination of traditional ideology. In the postmodern American novel, the main reason is the domination of late capitalism.

In contrast, the social and political context of the postmodern Saudi novel imposes some postmodern characteristics that may not be common in the postmodern American novel. When cynical reason is common in the postmodern Saudi novel, dystopian vision is common the postmodern American novel. The postmodern Saudi novel focuses primarily on criticizing why people believe in ideology when they know that this ideology limits their lives. The postmodern American novel criticizes the domination of late capitalism, but it does not criticize why people live under the domination of capitalism or why they do not revolt against it. In this sense, this novel does not provide a utopian alternative solution, which indicates that *Super Sad True Love Story* has a dystopian vision. On the contrary, in *Girls of Riyadh,* the narrator criticizes characters because there is a potential alternative solution. The narrator implies that some characters have

an opportunity to revolt against the domination of traditional ideology. In this sense, the postmodern Saudi novel contains cynical reason that indicates some utopian energy.

In addition, the narrative structure may show the differences between the postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel. As mentioned above, although *Super Sad True Love Story* and *Girls of Riyadh* are epistolary texts, their narrative languages are not similar. *Super Sad True Love Story* has some spelling and grammatical problems intended to reflect informal communication patterns. However, *Girls of Riyadh* and *Throwing Sparks* do not have serious linguistic issues. These postmodern Saudi novels are mostly written in formal Arabic language that does not show obvious influence of dialect. In addition, the narrative structure of postmodern novels relies on intertextuality that indicates parody and irony. For example, as mentioned above, the title of *Throwing Sparks* is derived from the Quran. In my opinion, the political and social context prevents Saudi authors from criticizing some fundamental social issues; therefore, these authors utilize intertextuality to convey their ironic vision when *Super Sad True Love Story* do not rely completely on intertextuality to criticize social norms or political issues. In short, narrative structures that contains linguistic problems, intertextuality, or irony show how the political and social context distinguishes between the postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel.

The second chapter discusses the representation of weak historical thinking. As Jameson points out, temporal discontinuity leads to weak historical thinking. In other words, one who cannot construct a coherent story about his experience cannot integrate what happened in the past with what happens in the present to predict what will happen in the future. In this sense, there is a relationship between the instability of personality, which is discussed in the first chapter, with weak historical thinking. In the second chapter, weak historical thinking is associated with other

postmodern characteristics. In the sense, the discussion of weak historical thinking is a part of the discussion of the main argument. In other words, the discussion of weak historical thinking reveals other postmodern characteristics that show the Saudi novel can be read as a postmodern novel.

Indeed, the discussion of weak historical thinking shows similarity between the postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel. In the second chapter, the three novels that are discussed are *The Dove's Necklace* by Raja Alem, *Life on Hold* by Fahd al-Atiq, and *No Country for Old Men* by Cormac McCarthy. The similarities between these three novels result from economic context. These novels discuss some issues which reveal weak historical thinking while discussing some aspects of late capitalism. For example, these three novels discuss the influence of consumerism in the age of late capitalism. They show how consumerism influences personality. Subsequently, they show how consumerism produces weak historical thinking. The discussion of consumerism is associated with suspicion toward metanarrative, metafiction, and fragmentation.

In addition, in the second chapter, some postmodern features that are associated with the representation of weak historical thinking reveal the difference between the postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel. In *No Country for Old Men,* McCarthy shows how Aristotelian logical thinking cannot be found in the contemporary era. This collapse of Aristotelian logic shows how some characters cannot maintain a coherent story about their experience; therefore, they cannot expand their historical thinking to link the past to the present. This postmodern feature is not found the postmodern Saudi novel. In my opinion, the main reason that helps Saudi novelists to maintain Aristotelian logic thinking is that they do not live in a complete late capitalist society.

In *Life on Hold,* the representation of weak historical thinking is associated with cognitive mapping. This feature is common in the postmodern American novel especially in the early phase of postmodernism. American writers in the 1960s and 1970s discuss cognitive mapping because the social, economic, and political transformation made people unable to locate themselves with this change. However, in the contemporary moment, people may adapt themselves to live in this world. In this sense, the postmodern Saudi novel is similar to the postmodern American novel in its early phase. Therefore, *Life on Hold* is not similar to *No Country for Old Men*, which does not belong the early phase of the postmodern American novel. In short, social, political, and economic conditions impact cognitive mapping in the postmodern Saudi novel. *The Dove's Necklace* is not similar to other novels that are discussed because this novel shows that history is no longer legitimized. This important feature reveals a serious weakness in historical thinking in the postmodern Saudi novel.

In the third chapter, I argue that the postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel share the characteristic of weak utopian imagination. This weakness of the utopian impulse is not isolated from weak historical thinking. Jameson points out that instability of personality causes weak historical thinking which produces weak utopian imagination. In this chapter, I discuss the dialectical relationship between ideology and utopia. This dialectic shows how ideology attempts to dominate life with the goal of convincing people that the status quo is the only utopian project. Also, the dialectic of the utopian and the ideological shows how the concept of utopia attempts to open the closure of ideology in order to provide an alternative utopian solution to change the status quo. In this chapter, I discuss the dialectical relationship between ideology and utopia in *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* by Yousef al-Mohaimeed, *Days of Ignorance* by Laila al-Johani, *and City of Glass* by Paul Auster.

The third chapter discusses weakness in the utopian imagination as an aspect of postmodernism. This discussion of weak utopian imagination reveals that the Saudi novel can be read as a postmodern novel, while the dialectic of utopia and ideology shows the social contradiction in every text. In this sense, the representation of the weak utopian imagination reflects the social contradiction, which means this representation in the postmodern Saudi novel is not similar to the postmodern American novel. In the third chapter, the similarity of the novels does not mean that they are identical; these novels contain some postmodern features that reflect different social contradictions. These novels share some common postmodern characteristics such as suspicion of metanarrative, instability of personality, weak historical thinking, historiographic metafiction, and fragmentation.

In the third chapter, the novels show that the political and social context can distinguish between the postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel. *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* shows how social contradiction characterizes Saudi society. Also, this novel may be seen as an example of Bloch's explanation of how radical ideologies have anti-utopian orientation. In addition, *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* attempts to reveal the gulf between what Saudi people claim and what they practice. Their actions in daily life contradict what they claim. This novel shows that people who claim to leverage women's rights, yet they dehumanize women. This social contradiction reveals the representation of weak utopian imagination. In addition, *Days of Ignorance* reveals the social contradiction of how some Saudis treat black people. This contradiction produces a serious deadlock that prevents Leen from marrying Malek. Indeed, the discussion of women's rights is a primary issue in postmodern Saudi novels that are discussed in the third chapter. In contrast, *City of Glass* does not concentrate on social contradiction, but it focuses on how ideology limits opportunities for change to the status quo.

In addition, in *City of Glass,* the representation of weak utopian imagination is associated with some postmodern characteristics that are not found in *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* and *Days of Ignorance*. For example, the plot of *City of Glass* shows how routinization prevents Quinn from engaging utopian impulses that can help him to change the status quo. Also, the issue of routinization is associated with cognitive mapping, leading to a condition of weak utopian imagination. In contrast, postmodern Saudi novels do not contain routinization and cognitive mapping. In addition, *City of Glass* discusses unpredictable experience that are not found in postmodern Saudi novels that are discussed in the third chapter. However, *Where Pigeons Don't Fly* contains bad utopianism that is not found in *City of Glass.*

In short, several themes can be seen from the analysis of the literary representations of postmodern characteristics. First, this dissertation explored postmodern features and linked them to the economic, social, and political contexts which show that the Saudi novel published after 2001 can be read as a postmodern novel. Second, Saudi Arabia's significant participation in the global economic system creates conditions under which postmodern characteristics appear and are foregrounded in the Saudi novel. This participation is not the only primary factor. There are some factors such as the domination of social norms, racism, and patriarchal domination. In other words, the difference of the postmodern Saudi novel and the postmodern American novel is due to the differences of the sociopolitical and ideological contexts in each country. Third, I agree with Jameson that postmodernism is the cultural logic of late capitalism in western societies which have completed or very nearly completed the project of modernity. This view can be expanded and challenged to see whether postmodernism may be found in non-capitalist societies that do have a complete modernity. Fourth, all Saudi novels, which are discussed in this dissertation, endorse western values which indicate that these novels do not focus on colonial

issues. The endorsement shows that the Saudi novel is a postmodern rather than a postcolonial one. Fifth, the postmodern Saudi novel has weak utopian imagination, but this weakness contains some utopian impulses. In other words, the postmodern Saudi novel shows how social norms and radical ideology prevent people from achieving or even imagining a better life. However, the postmodern Saudi novel criticizes social norms and radicalization, which shows that the postmodern Saudi novel attempts to change the status quo.

One important implication of this dissertation is that cultural communication between nations should not focus only on media. The discourse of the postmodern Saudi novel shows that radicalization is a serious threat to Saudi society. In this sense, the Saudi novel is unlike other cultural productions such as media because the postmodern Saudi novel provides insight into how radicalization is fought. Therefore, those looking to understand Saudi postmodern culture should look to literature as a promising medium because it problematizes issues and pulls them apart, in contrast to some media sources that provide biased images and sound bites about the Other. Second, postmodernism should not be linked only to the influence of late capitalism because there are some other factors that cause postmodern features. Third, Jameson's idea about the third world literature can help to read this literature from different angles. What he calls "national allegory" can help in discussions of the movement of history to reveal whether or not third world literature has weak historical thinking. Fourth, Jameson's contribution to postmodern theory is important that should be employed in the discussion of world literature in the contemporary era. This contribution unifies world literature, not dividing it like postcolonial theory does. Fifth, globalization creates conditions in which some eastern cultures endorse western values. In this sense, some writers, like the Saudi novelists investigated in this dissertation, think western culture is not imposed upon them and rather provides a way they can

be a part of and participate in the global system. Finally, the division of historical development

of the Saudi novel into three phases is no longer useful because the Saudi novel's historical

development witnesses a new phase that appears after 2001. This phase represents the

postmodern Saudi novel.

Works Cited

Al-Atiq, Fahd. *Life On Hold*. Trans. Jonathan Wright. Cairo; New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2012. Print.

Al-Johani, Laila. *Days of Ignorance*. Trans. Nancy Roberts. Qatar: Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Publishing, 2014. Print.

Al-Sani', Rajā. *Girls of Riyadh*. Trans. Marilyn Booth. New York: Penguin Press, 2007. Print.

Alem, Raja. *The Dove's Necklace*. Trans. Katharine Halls and Adam Talib. New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2016. Print.

Al-Mohaimeed, Yousef. *Where Pigeons Don't Fly*. Trans. Robin Moger. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014. Print.

Althusser, Louis. *For Marx*. Trans. Ben Brewster. London: Verso, 1977. Print.

---. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. 2nd ed. London: NLB, 1977. 127–86. Print.

---. *Politics and History: Montesquieu, Rousseau, Hegel and Marx;* Trans. Ben Brewster. London: NLB, 1972. Print.

---. *Reading Capital*. Trans. Étienne Balibar. New York: Pantheon Books, 1971. Print.

Anderson, Perry. *The Origins of Postmodernity*. New York: Verso, 1998. Print.

Ashcroft, Bill. "Alternative Modernities: Globalization and the Post-Colonial." *Ariel*. 40.1 (2009): 81–106. Print.

Auster, Paul. *The New York Trilogy*. New York: Penguin Books, 2006. Print.

Baldick, Chris. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford [England]; New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. Print.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1984. Print.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Trans. John Osborne. New York: Verso, 1985. Print.

Bloch, Ernst. *The Principle of Hope*. Vol. 1. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986. Print.

---. *The Principle of Hope*. Vol. 3. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1986. Print.

Booker, M. Keith. *Literature and Politics Today: The Political Nature of Modern Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. N.p., 2015. Print.

---. *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War: American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964*. N.p., 2001. Print.

---. *Postmodern Hollywood: What's New in Film and Why It Makes Us Feel So Strange*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2007. Print.

Booker, M. Keith, and Anne-Marie Thomas. *The Science Fiction Handbook*. Chichester, UK; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Pub., 2009. Print.

Boullata, Issa J., Kamal Abdel-Malek, and Wael B. Hallaq, eds. *Tradition, Modernity, and Postmodernity in Arabic Literature: Essays in Honor of Professor Issa J. Boullata*. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2000. Print.

Dowling, William C. *Jameson, Althusser, Marx: An Introduction to The Political Unconscious*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992. Print.

Duvall, John N. *Productive Postmodernism: Consuming Histories and Cultural Studies*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002. Print.

Eagleton, Terry. *Ideology: An Introduction*. London· New York: Verso, 1991. Print.

Foster, Hal, ed. *Postmodern Culture*. London: Pluto Press, 1985. Print.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1977. Print.

Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999. Print.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. New York: London: Routledge, 2004. Print.

---. *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*. N.p., 2014. *Open WorldCat*. Web. 8 Mar. 2017.

Jameson, Fredric. *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*. London: Verso, 2005. Print.

---. *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981. Print.

---. *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971. Print.

---. "Of Islands and Trenches: Neutralization and the Production of Utopian Discourse." *The Ideologies of Theory Essays, 1971-1986*. Vol. 2. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988. 75–101. Print.

---. "Postmodernism and Consumer Society." Ed. Foster Hal. *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (1983): 111–125. Print.

---. *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press, 1991. Print.

---. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act.* Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell Univ.Press, 1981. Print.

---. "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." *Social Text* 15 (1986): 65–88. Print.

Kellner, Douglas, and Harry O'Hara. "Utopia and Marxism in Ernst Bloch." *New German Critique* 9 (1976): 11–34. Print.

Khal, Abdo. *Throwing Sparks*. Trans. Tabet Maia and Scott Michael K. Doha, Qatar: Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Publishing, 2014. Print.

Kumar, Krishan. *Utopianism*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1991. Print.

Lanzendörfer, Tim. *The Poetics of Genre in the Contemporary Novel*. N.p., 2016. Print.

Longxi, Zhang. "Historicizing the Postmodern Allegory." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 36.2 (1994): 212. Print.

Lukács, Georg. *The Historical Novel*. Trans. Hannah Mitchell and Stanley Mitchell. London: Merlin Press, 1962. Print.

Lyotard, Jean-François, Geoffrey Bennington, and Brian Massumi. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. Print.

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Foreign Languages Press, 1972. Print.

McCaffery, Larry. *Storming the Reality Studio: A Casebook of Cyberpunk and Postmodern Science Fiction*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991. Print.

McCarthy, Cormac. *No Country for Old Men*. New York: Vintage Books, 2005. Print.

McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. New York: Methuen, 1987. Print.

Nicol, Bran. *Postmodernism and the Contemporary Novel: A Reader*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002. Print.

---. *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction*. Cambridge, UK: New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Print.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. Walter Kauffman. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. Print.

---. *The Will to Power*. Trans. Walter Arnold Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1967. Print.

Owens, Craig. "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism Part 2." *October* 13 (1980): 59–80. Print.

The Noble Quran: English Translation of The Meaning and Commentary. Madinah: King Fahd Complex for the printing of the Holy Quran, 1999. Print.

Shteyngart, Gary. *Super Sad True Love Story*. New York: Random House, 2010. Print.

Sloterdijk, Peter. *Critique of Cynical Reason*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987. Print.

Tally Jr, Robert T. "Jameson's Project of Cognitive Mapping: A Critical Engagement." *Social Cartography: Mapping Ways of Seeing Social and Educational Change*. Ed. Rolland G Paulston. Vol. 1024. New York: Garland, 1996. 399–416. Print.

Tally, Robert T. *Utopia in the Age of Globalization: Space, Representation, and the World System*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Print.

Wesseling, Elisabeth. *Writing History As a Prophet: Postmodernist Innovations of The Historical Novel*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1991. Print.