

**A Thematic Investigation of Saudi Women's Fiction, 1958-2016**

**A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of  
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Word Count 77,526

### **Abstract**

This thesis offers a thematic investigation of Saudi women's novels between 1958 and 2016, following the genetic structuralist approach developed by Lucien Goldmann in the 1960s. It thus establishes and provides a nuanced understanding of two strong relationships: one between the Saudi women's novel and Saudi society, and another between the thematic development of the Saudi novel and the development of Saudi women's status in all spheres. Having situated the selected works historically within their socio-political, socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-religious contexts, the study revolves around two main axes. It firstly investigates the thematic engagement of Saudi women's novels and secondly explores their thematic development along with the development of Saudi women's status in all social, economic, political and cultural fields. The close reading of the selected works proposes to divide the designed timeframe into three historical phases according to the novels' successive world visions: tragic (1958-1989), hopeless and bewildered (1990-2004), and critical (2005-2016). In addition, following Goldmann's related main intellectual processes of comprehension and explanation, the thesis demonstrates that the novels under scrutiny engaged with significant historical moments and that their themes develop accordingly in tandem with the development of women's conditions. The analysis discloses that both the themes and the common world visions of the chosen novels are strongly tied with the social status and concerns of Saudi women of all social classes in each historical phase, due to contemporaneous socio-economic, socio-political and socio-religious factors. The thesis also demonstrates that the dominant visions of the internal structures of the chosen novels in each phase have a homologous relationship with the external social structures and the life histories of their authors, who reflect the virtual consciousness of their social groups.

### **Declaration**

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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### **Dedication**

The most fervent wish of my beloved grandfather, Ibrahim, was to see me achieve my ambition by completing this thesis and being awarded my PhD. He passed away in 2019, while I was still working towards this target, so it is to his precious memory that this dedication is addressed.

*Dearest Grandfather, I have now fulfilled the covenant that I made to you.*

*To your soul I dedicate this thesis with love and eternal appreciation.*

### **Acknowledgements**

*I BLAME ALL of you. Writing this book has been an exercise in sustained suffering. The casual reader may, perhaps, exempt herself [himself] from excessive guilt, but for those of you who have played the larger role in prolonging my agonies with your encouragement and support, well...you know who you are, and you owe me.*

Brendan Pietsch, *Dispensational Modernism*

I have cited Brendan Pietsch because assuming at times, work on this thesis has indeed been ‘an exercise in sustained suffering’, it was nevertheless well worthwhile. I am exceedingly grateful to certain people for the invaluable encouragement and assistance they have provided throughout my PhD journey.

My research was made possible by the generous support of Professor Zahia Smail Salhi, to whom I am eternally indebted for her discerning readings, constructive criticism, inspiring suggestions and comments, constant support and admirable patience. I am also grateful to both Dr Anastasia Valassopoulos of the Department of English Literature, who continued to co-supervise my work, and to Professor Margaret Littler of the Department of German Studies at the University of Manchester, for their inspiring discussions and suggestions and professional guidance. I would like also to express my appreciation to Dr. Dalia Mostafa from the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Manchester and to Dr. István Kristó-Nagy from the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter for kindly agreeing to examine my thesis.

I am deeply beholden to my wife, Zahra, for her constant patience, encouragement and love since I started my studies abroad in 2011 at Wayne State University, USA, sustained when I moved to the University of Manchester to complete my postgraduate studies. My deep gratitude to her is difficult to convey in words. I wish to thank my children, Taleen, Ziyad and Mohammad, for their efforts in providing me with joyful moments. For their full

contribution and impact on my life, which cannot be adequately acknowledged, my greatest and heartfelt appreciation is given to my parents, Ayisha and Khloufa, who have long waited for this achievement.

I owe special thanks to the Saudi Arabian Government through al-Baha University for giving me financial support and for this valuable opportunity to complete my doctorate in Manchester.

Thanks are also extended to all close relatives and friends who have supported my studies in Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom, without whom I would not have reached this point of completion. Thank you all.

To all of them, I owe much of what is best in this thesis, and the responsibility is of course entirely mine for errors and omissions that may have escaped our combined vigilance.

## Translation Notes and Transliteration System

All translations of the quotes from Arabic texts are my own unless otherwise stated. I have used the IJMES system of transliteration throughout.<sup>1</sup>

### Consonants

Arabic    Roman

ء            ʾ

ب            b

ت            t

ث            th

ج            j

ح            ḥ

خ            kh

د            d

ذ            dh

ر            r

ز            z

س            s

ش            sh

ص            ṣ

ض            ḍ

ط            ṭ

### Vowels

آ ā

و ū

ي ī

#### Doubled:

يَـ iyy (final form ī) iy (final form ī)

وَّـ uww (final form ū)

#### Diphthongs:

وَ -au

يَ - ai

#### Short:

أ a

و u

ي i

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ijmes.chass.ncsu.edu/docs/TransChart.pdf>.

ظ	z
ع	'
غ	gh
ف	f
ق	q
ك	k
ل	l
م	m
ن	n
هـ	h
و	w
ي	y

### **Aims, Rationale, Key Research and Structure**

The main objective of this thesis is to provide a thematic analysis of Saudi women's fiction written between 1958 and 2016, following Goldman's structuralist approach. To that end, it situates these novels within certain significant socio-political, socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-religious contexts to investigate their thematic engagement and development alongside the development of Saudi women's status in all fields. It then poses the following key research questions:

Firstly, have the themes contained in the representative Saudi women's novels of each historical phase engaged with the chosen significant societal episodes?

Secondly, what worldviews are characteristic of the fiction representative of each phase?

Thirdly, have the novels' themes developed in parallel with Saudi women's social, cultural, economic, and political conditions?

Finally, what are the significant mediating factors that have promoted a specific worldview in the novels of a certain historical period in a particular society?

#### **Rationale of Thesis and Contribution to Scholarship**

Despite the marked increase in the production of Saudi women's novels and the dynamic development this reflects, the number of critical studies of these works remains relatively modest. Through the reading of these novels, especially those published since the 1990s, this study has discovered that this genre has witnessed not only a notable numerical increase, but also a considerable development in its thematic and artistic diversity. Literary critics in SA consider the 1990s to be the decade in which Saudi women's novel attained significant thematic and artistic maturity, as it tackled various culturally and socially sensitive subjects.<sup>2</sup>

The proliferation of these novels on one hand and the lack of critical attention to them on the

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<sup>2</sup> Al-Nu'amī (2004). p.9., & H. Al-Manāshira. (2008). *Dhākiratu Riwayātu al-Tis'inat: Qirā'a fī al-riwāya al-'arabiyya al-Sa'ūdiyya* [Memory of the nineties'

other have motivated me to conduct the present research in order to contribute to the critical examination of Saudi literature.

Although Goldmann's approach appeared long ago in Western literary criticism and was applied to Arabic literature in general, it remains new to Saudi literary criticism, especially that of the novel. Therefore, this study is the first to apply this theory to the Saudi novel and it is hoped that it may pave the way for further academic studies on Saudi women's novels following the Goldmannian approach. According to Goldmann's proposition, understanding literary texts requires them to be read and analyzed within their historical, social, cultural, political and economic contexts and circumstances. Therefore, to investigate the thematic engagement of the selected novels, the study pursues a contextual reading, confident that studying any literary work in the context of its creation will contribute to a more profound understanding. The context is not always sufficient to account for the meaning of the literature, because literature is more than a mere reflection of reality, as Goldmann's approach makes clear. The thesis therefore explores the thematic engagement of Saudi women's novels with certain historical events and contexts in SA between 1958 and 2016. It identifies the worldview of each selected text, and then examines the thematic development of the Saudi women's fiction along with the development of Saudi women's conditions in all domains of their society. The chosen time period is extremely important, as it includes factors and consequences that have contributed significantly to dramatic social transformations within SA. However, the study reads the selected texts in light of particular contextual elements. These are; the proliferation of oil, the intellectual and religious conflicts following the Gulf War, the ideological spread of globalization and the events of 9/11, as detailed in the historical survey in Chapter 1. The thesis focuses on those certain elements over other contextual elements, such as the country's sovereignty, its unification, its minority politics

and its religious sects, due to the former elements' important impact, direct and indirect, on SA and its people.

Oil wealth, 'the engine', is one of the most important factors contributing to social change and development in SA; its direct impact can be seen in every sphere of Saudi life. Indeed, oil wealth has influenced the entire Arab and Islamic region and the political and economic relationships between nations, compounded by the ramifications of the Gulf War and 9/11. The Gulf War was a cultural shock to the Saudi government and society alike, markedly heightening levels of social and critical awareness, subsequently sharpening citizens' realization that essential civil rights were unrecognized in their society. This consciousness can be seen both in ideological conflicts between citizens and the government, and in intellectual disputes between conservatives and modernists, which increased significantly in the 1990s. Both the Gulf War and 9/11 facilitated Saudi novelists' engagement with this new reality and encouraged them to tackle various human and social issues both inside and outside SA. In addition, Saudis first had access to the internet in 1999, helping them to interact with the wider world. Of particular relevance here, Saudi women novelists have now gained access to a new public sphere in which to establish contact with critics and publishers both inside and outside what is known as the most conservative society in the world. For all these reasons, the current study concentrates on the novels of Saudi women written and/or published since the emergence of the genre in 1958, up to 2016, against the backdrop of the chosen contextual moments.

### **Thesis Structure**

The thematic analysis of the Saudi women's novel since 1958 is organized in this thesis into six chapters, as follows.

The introductory chapter offers an overview of social structure in Saudi Arabia (SA henceforth) and discusses the important active role of ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb in shaping the thoughts of the Saudi regime and people. It examines factors contributing significantly and directly to social transformations in SA, namely the discovery of oil, the Gulf War, globalization, and the 9/11 events, and discusses some ideological and intellectual preoccupations of Saudi public opinion.

Chapter Two sets out the methodological approach adopted, surveys the literature on the Saudi women’s novel and identifies a research gap. This chapter also discusses the history of the Saudi novel, including the women’s novel, and the issue of its critical reception in the relevant studies.

Chapter Three offers a genetic structuralist analysis of the Saudi women’s novel from 1958 to 1989, investigating the extent to which it engaged with changing socioeconomic conditions in SA and in turn the extent to which it was influenced by them. Two thematically representative novels are examined for the purpose of this analysis.

Chapter Four follows the same pattern in its Goldmannian analysis of two Saudi women’s novels taken to represent the period from 1990 to 2004, with particular reference to the socio-political upheaval of the Gulf war and its aftermath in SA.

Similarly, the analysis of the two final novels in Chapter Five concerns the changing and difficult socio-cultural and socio-religious conditions in SA between 2005 and 2016.

Chapter Six concludes the thesis by summarizing its most important findings and results, as well as making suggestions for further research.

## Chapter 1

### An Introduction to Saudi Arabia

#### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the major factors that have affected Saudi society, along with the continuous development of Saudi women's roles from 1958 to 2016, the timeframe of this study. Since the present research investigates the thematic engagement of the Saudi women's novel since 1958, it is important to gain an overview of the social and cultural conditions of Saudi society since the unification of the Kingdom of SA in 1932, while focusing on the main direct and indirect factors that have driven the nation's social transformation.

The four main factors that have shaped modern SA society are: the development of the oil industry, the Gulf war, the events of 9/11, and the effects of globalization. This background information helps us to understand the nature of Saudi society in general and the status of women in Saudi society in particular. In addition, it will enable us to appreciate the significance of the aforementioned factors in triggering and stimulating social transformation in SA.

This chapter contains a general introduction followed by five main sections and a conclusion. Section one will be devoted to the general background of SA: social life, and factors of social transformation, and will also discuss the social structure of Saudi society and the inordinate influence of ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb and his revivalist movement on the formation of the modern Saudi government and the shaping of Saudi identity. Section two which is titled '*The Impact of Oil*' will explain the extent of the direct effects of the oil industry on Saudi social transformation since it was discovered in 1938 in Dhahran. Section three will be allocated to

investigating the direct effects of the Gulf War on the Saudi government and citizens alike, as the Gulf War created some ideological movements and conflicts between SA citizens and their government. Section four will analyze the extent to which globalization has directly affected Saudi social transformation, and also it will determine why the great implications of globalization on Saudi society began from the late 1990s. The last section will be allocated to the direct and important impacts of the events of 11 September 2001 on Saudi society and the social transformation that ensued. This section will investigate how the 9/11 events have affected SA more than any other Arab and Islamic country, including other Gulf States. In addition, it will determine how the 9/11 events have globalized local social Saudi issues and have directly or indirectly urged the Saudi government to rapidly make changes to SA society especially those correlated with human rights, interreligious and intercultural dialogues.

## **1.2 The General Background of Saudi Arabia: Social Life, Factors of Social Transformation**

The Kingdom of SA stands at the center of the Arabian Peninsula and encompasses approximately 80 percent of its land. It is bordered by Kuwait, Iraq, and Jordan in the north and Oman and Yemen in the south, with Qatar, United Arab Emirates and the Arabian Gulf on its east coast, and the Red Sea on the west.

It is composed of different regions in terms of climate, culture, traditions and customs, which were united under the Kingdom of SA in 1932.<sup>3</sup> The traditional regions of the kingdom are Hejaz, Najd, ‘Asīr, the Southern region, and the Eastern region. In addition, for different commercial or religious purposes, each of the above regions is somewhat different culturally and ethnically from the others. For instance, the Hejaz region mainly includes the two holy cities, Mecca and Medina, while the primary port city of Jeddah is considered the most

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3 T. Jones, (2010). *Desert kingdom: How oil and water forged modern Saudi Arabia*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, pp. 24-25.

ethnically diverse and multicultural region in SA. The Hejazi people are accordingly considered more educated than the people of the other SA regions. This is not solely due to the fact that Mecca, in particular, has always been one of the most famous trading cities in SA, but also because of the Hejazi people's close contact with foreign-educated Arabs and non-Arab Muslim people. These would have come for religious purposes, like performing the Hajj, or to study at the many religious schools established in Mecca and preferred to settle down in the Hejaz region. Their settling in this region could either be for political reasons, such as when their own countries had been colonized, or for spiritual reasons.<sup>4</sup>

According to the Saudi General Authority of Statistics, Saudi population in 2018 has exceeded 20,700,000.<sup>5</sup> The basic structure of Saudi Arabian (SA henceforth) society is composed of tribal and non-tribal groups, but it is mostly considered as a tribal society because the majority of the people belong to a tribal kin system which exercises power over all people who belong to it. In domestic affairs, each tribe has its own tribal customs, which are usually different from other tribes' customs and even from the law of the government itself. In the case of punishment, for instance, the tribe may apply punishment rules to its male and female members when they break these rules or do anything against its customs. The manner of punishment is usually different from the punishment stipulated in the Shari'a or Islamic law. As regards foreign affairs, the system of a tribe in the case of dealing with another tribe or a non-tribal group is very similar to that of any government in its way of dealing with other governments in situations of either peace or war.<sup>6</sup>

Further, when all the SA main regions were united in 1932, the loyalty and obedience of people resided in the tribes to which they belonged more than to the government to the point

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4 M. Al-Rasheed, (2013). *A most masculine state: Gender, politics, and religion in Saudi Arabia*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, pp. 9,12., & 'A. Al-Khudr, (2011). *Al-Sa'ūdiyya: Sīrat dāwla wa mujtama': Qirāa fī tajrubat thilth qarn min al-tahaūlāt al-fikriyya wa al-siyasiyya wa al-tanmawiyya* [Saudi Arabia: The Bibliography of the State and the Society: Reading in the Experience of the Third Century of Intellectual, Political, and Developmental Transformations], (2nd ed.). Beirut, Lebanon: Arab Network for Research and Publishing, p. 303.

5 Saudi General Authority of Statistics. (2016). Retrieved from: <http://www.cdsi.gov.sa/en/indicators/1>. Accessed, 09 January 2019.

6 'A. Al-Ghadhdhāmī, (2009). *Al-Qabīla wa al-Qabā'iliyya aw Hawīyyat mā ba'd al-Ḥadātha*: [The Tribe and the Tribalism or Postmodern Identities]. Morocco: Arab Cultural Center, p. 158.

that King ‘Abdulaziz struggled to win the loyalty of the various tribes. The measures that his government used to win loyalty were by: (1) The intermarriage between Al Saud and the families of tribal leaders in order to build a robust relationship with the tribes in the regions of the kingdom. King ‘Abdulaziz, had in fact married into different tribal families. The objective of ‘Abdulaziz was to ensure a positive effect of the tribal leaders on their followings by directing loyalty towards the government.<sup>7</sup> (2) By settling tribes in new locations. This method has succeeded, although some of those sedentary tribes or Bedouins have continued to follow their tribal customs and practices strictly.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.2.1 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and the Formation of Saudi Identity

The Saudis follow the Islamic Ḥanbalī doctrine<sup>9</sup>, which was reformed by the Najdī leader and theologian Muhammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (1703-92) in the middle of the 18th century. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb followed the Ḥanbalī jurisprudence that had been followed by scholars in Najd, where he began to receive his religious education<sup>10</sup>. This Islamic reform movement (known as ‘Wahhabism’) did propose to shape the true faith of Islam as it was practiced during the era of Prophet Muhammad, and to exclude all innovative and pre-Islamic pagan beliefs that Islam had absorbed as *bid‘a*. This is because during the 18th century, people enforced some pagan practices such as worshipping trees, graves, rocks, and so on as intermediaries (*Wusaṭā’*) between themselves and God. Monotheism, therefore, is one of the most significant principles of Wahhabism. The Wahhabi doctrine was at first militarily and politically promoted by Muḥammad ibn Saud, who was the governor of the town of Al-Dir‘iyya during that time and the founder of the first Kingdom of SA in 1744. His support significantly contributed to rapidly spread Wahhabism throughout Najd. The Monarch and

7 T. Niblock, (2006). *Saudi Arabia: Power, legitimacy and survival*. New York, NY: Routledge, p. 33.

8 P. Menoret, (2005). *The Saudi enigma*. Beirut, Lebanon: World Books, p. 87.

9 It is one of the main three Sunni doctrines (Islamic jurisprudences): Maliki, Shafi‘i and Hanafi.

10 ‘A. Al-‘Uthaymīn, (2009). *Muhammed ibn ‘Abd al-wahhab: The man and his work*. New York, NY: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., in association with the King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives, pp. 20, 29.

the Sheikh both agreed on a successful verbal agreement that the military and political support for the Sheikh was to work for the cause of Islam, and to establish an Islamic state under the control of Muḥammad ibn Saud and his family.<sup>11</sup> Since then, the Wahhabi doctrine has widely spread throughout the regions of the kingdom. Wahhabism played a major role in establishing the first and second Saudi states. Similarly, it has played a significant role in constructing the current SA and its national identity. The Al Saud have indeed supported Wahhabism and made Wahhabi Islam the dominant religion of the current state.

Notwithstanding this, there have been many Islamic jurisprudential doctrines and approaches, especially in the Holy Mosques, as they had been the places for Islamic teachings<sup>12</sup> prior to the establishment of the current Kingdom. However, to construct a new unity or nationalism, King Abdulaziz declared in 1932 that the state was applying the *Shari'a* law, which goes by the Wahhabi interpretation of the Ḥanbalī doctrine, and he invited the 'Saudi' nation to be unified under Wahhabi Islam to create a new unity: 'Wahhabi religious nationalism'.<sup>13</sup> In that regard, the other three Sunni Islamic approaches and the Shi'i approach and sects did not have the power to cooperate with the Ḥanbalī approach to encourage the various religious customs, traditions, and practices in the new Kingdom.<sup>14</sup>

Such work has led to the spread of the Wahhabi dogma and the rejection of any religious differences that depart from the Wahhabi interpretations of the oneness of God. According to Yamanī, in the early nineteenth century, Wahhabis had seen the different Islamic religious Hejazi customs and traditions, particularly those that correlated with celebrating Prophet Muḥammad's birthday, reverence of the dead, visiting of shrines, etc., as impurity and

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11 Al-'Uthaymīn, p. 55., & H. Lackner, (1978). *A house built on sand: A political economy of Saudi Arabia*. London, England: Ithaca Press, pp. 10, 11.

12 Al-Rasheed, p. 10.

13 Al-Rasheed, pp. 14, 16., & M. Yamanī, (2009). *Cradle of Islam: The Hijaz and the quest for identity in Saudi Arabia: The challenge of the new generation in Saudi Arabia*. London, England: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., p. 2 of Introduction.

14 Al-Rasheed, pp. 13, 64.

heresy. Additionally, Wahhabis tried to abolish traditions and Meccan culture and identity, as these practices were, according to their religious view, bad innovations.<sup>15</sup>

Over more than seven decades, Saudi society was greatly affected by Wahhabi teachings. Wahhabi scholars have slowly accommodated the rapid transformations of their time and the social, political, or economic issues experienced by Saudi society. They have not updated the religious discourse to correspond with the new political, social and economic transformations. Rather, they applied the same old *fatwas* that were based on the forbiddance of any social case that might invoke traditional forbidden or permissible Islamic legal norms. As a result, Wahhabi scholars' many *fatwas* were deemed unsuitable for everyday life, and this has created some types of violence and terrorism by some extreme Islamists towards Anti-Wahhabi opposition groups.<sup>16</sup> For example, after the Juhaymān's uprisings in Mecca in 1979, the *Ṣaḥwa* movement in the 1980s and 1990s and the Jihadi violence in 2003 have both created critical, extreme and radical religious opinions among individuals, government and religious scholars alike, which the Saudi government has been working hard to change in recent times.<sup>17</sup>

With regard to Saudi women, unlike women in other Muslim countries, according to Al-Rasheed, Wahhabi religious nationalism has imposed many restrictions on them. It has postponed the social development of Saudi women and their political and public participation, including in the education sector, the workforce, and gender equality in general including dress code and the ban on women's driving. All such restrictions were mainly due to the number of Wahhabi scholars who issued *fatwas* on all aspects of women's lives 'from marriage to wearing high heels',<sup>18</sup> which have resulted in the exclusion of women and made their issues hard to resolve. According to al-Rasheed, 'Wahhabi religious nationalism' in this

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15 Yamanī (2009). pp. 4, 10

16 Al-Khudr, p. 65.

17 Yamanī (2009). pp. 68-69.

18 Al-Rasheed, p. 15.

context works as a politicized religious tradition aiming to establish ‘a homogeneous nation out of a fragmented, diverse, and plural Arabian society’.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, Saudi identity has been affected by Wahhabism in all aspects of life. It is today suffering from a split personality of different religious viewpoints: radical and liberal opinions, which the Saudi government has paid much attention to since the internal political efforts raised in the 1970s.

### 1.3 The Impact of Oil

Oil in SA was discovered in 1938 in Dhahran, in the Eastern province, by the Standard Oil Company of California, whose name the government of SA changed from the California-Arabian Standard Oil Company (CASOC) to the Saudi Arabian-American Oil Company, ‘Aramco’, in 1944. This was a step towards nationalizing the oil company, which the Saudi government successfully completed by acquiring Aramco in 1988.<sup>20</sup> The SA government and society became economically heavily reliant on the oil-producing wealth that is considered the ‘engine’ of the SA economy, from then until the present. The price of oil is not stable due to changing global political and economic circumstances. However, the years from 1973 until 1982 witnessed an unprecedented oil price increase.

The two main reasons for the sharp oil price increase between 1973 and 1982 are: First, during that time SA became the largest oil-producing country in the world;<sup>21</sup> and Second, the impact of the succession of political events witnessed by the Middle East on SA from 1973 to 1980 (in particular the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the Iranian Revolution, and the Iraq-Iran War). In addition, Saudi oil prices remained relatively high from 1991 to early 1995 (including the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. pp. 15, 16.

<sup>20</sup> A. Aldakheel, (2012). *The development of the economy in Saudi Arabia*. (1st ed.). Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Sāqī, p. 89.

<sup>21</sup> A. Philowitz, (2013). *Saudi Arabia, Islam, and oil*. United Kingdom: Createaspace Independent Pub., p. 35.

Gulf war), and from 2001 to 2014 there were some price fluctuations.<sup>22</sup> SA had played a major role in supporting Arabs in the Yom Kippur War by decreasing oil production, banning the export of oil to countries that supported Israel, including the United States of America, increasing the global oil price, and finally by financially supporting Arab countries that participated in the war. Further, during the Gulf war the Saudi government greatly increased its defense forces and provided foreign troops to maintain the security of the kingdom from the Iraqi intervention, and to liberate Kuwait. Although SA engaged in all these regional political activities, the oil revenue remained high because the government increased oil production, and raised the price of domestic and foreign sales, in order to underwrite the cost of its military investments.<sup>23</sup>

After the oil recovery and the unprecedented high prices of 1973–1982, the price of oil had decreased sharply by 1985, and production was down to less than 4 billion barrels per day, from more than 11 billion barrels in 1981.<sup>24</sup> This was due to the fluctuations of the world oil market price with which Saudi oil was associated. However, new oil policies and plans that the government, in cooperation with OPEC and non-OPEC countries, activated in 1999 protected oil prices for subsequent years, enabling them to remain high after the sharp decrease of the late 1995-1999.

There is no doubt that the oil boom has greatly contributed to the renaissance of intellectual and social life in SA. The direct impact of oil can be seen in the increased material prosperity of the nation, reflected in increased government revenue. The indirect impact of oil can be seen in the ideological, cultural, and social lifestyle of Saudis, including customs and traditions. However, before discussing how sudden oil wealth significantly and directly caused social transformations, we need to note that as a result of the unexpected increase of

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22 B. Haykel, T. Hegghammer, and S. Lacroix, (eds.). (2015). In: *Saudi Arabia in transition: Insights on social, political, economic and religious change*. (1st ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, pp. 16, 72.

23 'A. Aldakheel, pp. 331, 332., & Haykel, Hegghammer, and Lacroix, (eds.), pp. 27, 81.

24 Haykel, Hegghammer, and Lacroix (eds.), p. 72.

oil revenues during the compressed time period between 1973 and 1982, society and government alike experienced a significant cultural shock.

The manifestations of the ‘cultural shock’ can be seen in the government’s vision of development, and in the lifestyle of individual Saudis. The oil wealth transformed SA into a modern country in all aspects of life. Before the oil boom of the 1970s, most Saudi citizens had a rural/Bedouin life, relying on ranching, fishing, animal husbandry and trade. According to Saudi economist Aldakheel, in his book *The Development of the Economy in Saudi Arabia*, the society suffered from poverty, low wages and incomes, and the consequent spread of disease. There was poor housing, with many people living in mud houses. The government in this context did not focus on what could be done to develop the lifestyles of citizens or enhance their professional skills. Rather, it mainly concentrated on the infrastructure of the country.<sup>25</sup> This generated a strange phenomenon: the simultaneous existence of both a developing country, along with a population of citizens with backward and illiterate lifestyles. Their lives underwent a sudden and a major change during the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>26</sup>

The discovery of oil permitted the government to adopt a series of five-year plans for national development from 1970, which continues to this day.<sup>27</sup> The five-year development plans devised during the 1970s prioritized the establishing of telecommunication services and transport. The five-year development plans of the last two decades highlighted improvements in education and health services, and diversification of economic resources.<sup>28</sup> However, the benefits of these national projects were limited by the lack of professional management and economic expertise.

The sudden oil wealth allowed the government to concentrate effectively on new and massive long-term projects involving infrastructure which enhanced the material development of the

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25 ‘A. Aldakheel, pp. 88, 355.

26 G. Al Qosaibi, (1989). *Al-tanmiya wajan liwajh* [The development face to face]. (2nd ed.). Jeddah, KSA: Tihāma Publication, p. 42., & Al-Khudr, p. 48.

27 N. Rashid, and E.Shaheen, (1992). *Saudi Arabia and the Gulf war*. Missouri: International Institute of Technology, Inc. (IITI), p. 37.

28 Philowitz, p. 14.

country between 1973 and 1982. These projects included establishing industrial sites, airports, highways, cities and similar major facilities. The focus on educating and training citizens, and improving public services, came late. The concentration on infrastructure development in the period observed, between 1973 and 1982, required the highest level of government spending on infrastructure and construction, which generated the view that projects costing a few million SR (Saudi Riyal) could be classified as ‘small’ operations.<sup>29</sup> Massive projects were implemented without taking into account the balance between the national budget and the budget reserved for ‘approved’ projects. This was because cultural shock negatively affected the government’s vision for developing the country and its people during that time.

Since the mid-1980s Saudi oil revenues have gradually decreased. In addition, because of the lack of comprehensive long-term economic strategies, the cost of ongoing projects, the shortage of skilled management, and the increase in the population,<sup>30</sup> the government has found itself facing some important challenges:

- 1- A budget deficit of approximately 50 billion SR in 1985.<sup>31</sup> Lack of social and educational development in suburbs and rural areas.
- 2- Unequal development whereby society in general has become richer, while a large proportion of the population, in villages and rural areas, remains poor.<sup>32</sup>
- 3- Lack of progress with important social issues such as political, economic and civil rights, and gender equality.<sup>33</sup>
- 4- The emergence and increase of unemployment and underemployment for both genders during the 1990s.<sup>34</sup>

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29 Al Qosaibi, p. 39.

30 ‘A. Aldakheel, p. 106.

31 Ibid., pp. 93, 359.

32 Ibid., p. 88.

33 Al-Rasheed, p.2.

34 Philowitz, p. 14.

As mentioned above, oil wealth has allowed the government of SA to invest greatly in the development of many spheres, including the infrastructure of the kingdom, since the 1970s, when the government's series of five-year plans initiated the process of development that continues to this day. Investment in material development has enabled the establishment of new industrial and, military resources, modern cities, airports, highways, and hospitals and welfare facilities. In addition, technical, transport, and internet services have been provided for all regions. New and existing facilities have been equipped with full technical requirements, for example medical equipment for new hospitals.<sup>35</sup> The Saudi government's investment in the industrial sector has been growing rapidly since the 1970s. The Yanbu' and Al-Jubail petrochemical industrial cities were established on the Arab Gulf and on the Red Sea in 1975 as a significant step for the government's development plan to diversify its financial resources by producing minerals, rather than relying on revenues from crude oil.<sup>36</sup> By means of its oil wealth, the Saudi government has recently expanded the development of industrial areas, aiming to increase their number to 34 cities in 2014, across various provinces – an increase of 31 cities on the 3 cities that existed in the 1970s: Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam. In 2001 the Saudi government established the Saudi Industrial Property Authority (MODON) to organize and control the development of these Saudi industrial areas.<sup>37</sup>

Industrial development in SA has been promoted by the Saudi Industrial Development Fund (SIDF) since 1974, a source of interest-free soft loans. SIDF aims to provide medium- and long-term loans for national and international investors to expand or establish new, privately owned factories in industrial areas. Between 1974 and 2005, more than 2,731 medium- and long-term loans have been issued with an estimated total value of approximately 51,973 million SR. Since 1974, SIDF has successfully promoted massive industrial developments.

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35 Rashid and Shaheen, p. 22.

36 Philowitz, p. 16.

37 Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Industry. (2016). Retrieved from: [http://www.modon.gov.sa/en/aboutmodon/Pages/about\\_modon.aspx](http://www.modon.gov.sa/en/aboutmodon/Pages/about_modon.aspx). Accessed, 01 July 2016.

The number of industrial units that have been established steadily increased to 6,471 in 2013, an increase of 6,273 industrial manufacturing units, since there were only 198 in 1974. These industrial plants include different facilities such as schools, hospitals, colleges, and other services, which permit national and international investors, employees and their families to settle in such areas.<sup>38</sup>

The military sector has not been isolated from the advantages of the oil wealth. The total spending of the Saudi government on this sector has exceeded several hundred billion US dollars since the early 1970s. This is because the Saudi government has been at the center of geo-political activities related to maintaining security not only for the kingdom, but also for all Gulf States. The government has had to face internal and external terrorism, and other significant political activities, ever since the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. During these years, the government faced and dealt with crises including the takeover of the Grand Holy Mosque by Juhaymān Al-ʿUtaybī and his followers, the first and second Gulf wars, the 9/11 attacks, al-Qaeda terrorist attacks on SA since 2003, and the War in Yemen since 2015.<sup>39</sup> These situations explain why SA has spent a great deal on armament, including increasing the numbers of troops and the range of military resources in order to deal with defense crises and to achieve success in national and international conflicts. Such events have encouraged the government to spend on military infrastructure and to increase manpower using the years of high oil revenues to equip its military forces. The government has spent over a hundred billion US dollars on defense since then. Figures from the US Department of Defense show that during all the years of high oil revenues, SA spent massively on military requirements. For instance, the spending on political equipment and troops peaked during the Gulf war in 1991, and increased again in 2001 due to the unexpectedly high oil price. Because oil

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38 Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Industry: National Industrial Strategy. (2009). Retrieved from:

[http://www.modon.gov.sa/ar/IndustrialCities/Documents/National\\_Strategy\\_for\\_Industry.pdf](http://www.modon.gov.sa/ar/IndustrialCities/Documents/National_Strategy_for_Industry.pdf), p. 18., & Saudi Industrial Development Fund. (2016). Retrieved from: <http://www.sidf.gov.sa/en/IndustryinSaudiArabia/Pages/IndustrialDevelopmentinSaudiArabia.aspx> Accessed, 13 July 2016.

39 Haykel, Hegghammer, and Lacroix, (eds.), p. 19.

revenues were low between 1995 and 2000, the government reduced the equipment purchases to 33% of previous spending.

Oil wealth has also facilitated investment in the construction of modern-style buildings in the kingdom. In 1975, the government established the Real Estate Development Fund (REDF), which provided non-interest loans in order to establish modern housing and residential complexes in different provinces and cities in the country. According to statistics provided by REDF, the capital sum that the government specified for the organization has peaked recently. In 1975, it was estimated at 250 SR million. Today, more than 269.8 SR billions in loans have been provided to Saudi nationals, which has facilitated the building of more than one million modern residential complexes in different parts of the kingdom.<sup>40</sup>

Such modern industrial and military cities have helped to implement the visionary idea of King Abdulaziz of settling tribal Bedouins in new locations, to redirect their loyalty to the government instead of their tribes. Many Bedouins have therefore moved to the aforementioned modern industrial locations. Bedouins who preferred to stay in their villages have therefore also benefited from the country's oil wealth. The government has paid attention to them since 1962, when the Saudi Agricultural Bank (SAAB) was founded. SAAB has provided non-interest loans for agricultural projects, farm machinery, and modern agricultural tools for Bedouins in villages.<sup>41</sup> Because of the oil wealth, the lifestyle of Saudi Bedouins in both cities and villages has improved greatly.

Transformation due to oil wealth in SA has included the educational field. Previously, education was provided in the mosques and the *Katātīb*, and students were taught Islamic subjects and some literacy skills. However, the government's attention to formal education began, first by establishing the Ministry of Education in 1954. Its authority was restricted to

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40 Real Estate Development Fund. (2016). Retrieved from: <http://redf.gov.sa/ar/Statistics/Pages/Statistics4.aspx>. Accessed, 09 August 2016.

41 J. Presley, (1984). *A guide to Saudi Arabian economy*. Hong Kong: The Macmillan Press Ltd., p. 112.

the males' education only, as females' education was forbidden by the religious authorities ('*Ulamā*') until 1960, as will be discussed in a subsequent section.

Since the 1960s, the government has considerably developed the educational domain. The sixth five-year development plan was devoted mainly to education and health services, with a budget of 216.6 SR billion, which is 51% of the government's total specified budget for the developing of these sectors within the same developmental plan.

Statistics show that the number of schools in the kingdom has expanded greatly in recent times, from 226 in 1951, to 3098 between 1969 and 1970, to in excess of 35,397 schools in 2013, serving male and female pupils in all regions. Further, unlike in the past, today, a variety of educational choices is available for pupils, including private schools that are characterized by offering non-religious education with compatible curricula in modern arts and sciences and the like.<sup>42</sup>

The higher education sector has developed rapidly, due to the significant interest of the government and sudden oil wealth. Similar to secondary education, the Saudi government has paid much attention to higher education that has undergone significant development since the late 1950s, when the government established the first Saudi university, the University of Riyadh (now called King Saud University) in 1957. Until 1984, the number of Saudi universities was seven government run-universities only. Today, the number of higher education institutions has exceeded 58–30 public and 28 private institutions, which contain more than 140 colleges offering a broad range of subjects.<sup>43</sup> The Saudi government's intention is to develop the education system and to achieve worldwide recognition and higher academic ranking.

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42 M. Yamanī, (2000). *Changed identities: The challenge of the new generation in Saudi Arabia*. London, England: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, p. 49.

43 Saudi Ministry of Economy and Planning. (2014). Retrieved from: <http://www.mep.gov.sa/wp-content/plugins/pdf-viewer-for-wordpress/web/viewer.php?file=/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/31-.pdf>. Accessed, 09 August 2016., p. 161., & al- Fārsy, F. (1982). *Saudi Arabia: A case study in development completely revised and updated edition*. London, England: KPI Limited, p.181.

Another significant sector that has benefited from the oil wealth is medicine. The Saudi government has paid much attention to this domain since the discovery of oil in 1938. In the early part of the 20th century, it brought Western and non-Western well-trained doctors to treat the royal family members only, and this step was gradually expanded to medical facilities for nationals. Until the 1950s, many diseases, such as malaria and trachoma, were rampant due to poverty and the lack of medical treatments that society was suffering from, as the oil industry was still under developed. In addition, there were only around 20 Western, Arab and Muslim doctors in the entire country.<sup>44</sup> However, since the first five-year development plan from 1970-1975, the Saudi government has allocated specified substantial amounts to the development of the health and education sectors and their services in each subsequent five-year development plan.

The transportation and communication sector in the kingdom is another field that was greatly influenced by the oil industry. Before the discovery of oil, the roads were unpaved and the only vehicles of transportation were animals such as camels and horses. In addition, the kingdom had neither international airports for the purpose of foreign relationships, nor domestic services for the government and nationals. The seaports of the kingdom were also limited to some commercial and religious purposes, like the Islamic seaport in Jeddah, which is allocated these two main purposes. The number of seaports in SA has increased gradually since the discovery of oil to reach nine multi-purpose seaports in nine different regions. Six of them are devoted to domestic and international commerce, two are allocated to industrial production, and one is specified for mining.<sup>45</sup>

The communications and telecommunications services also benefited from the oil revenues. Since 1948, telecommunications have been greatly developed, with the beginning of radio broadcasts, followed by the establishment of the first television station in 1965. Added to

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<sup>44</sup> Lackner, p. 81.

<sup>45</sup> Saudi Ministry of Transport. (2016). Retrieved from: <https://www.mot.gov.sa/en/Pages/default.aspx>. Accessed, 09 August 2016.

that, telecommunications have recently expanded in all cities, towns and villages. In 1994, the Internet was operated in SA for some educational, medical, and research institutions only, and was only made available to the entire population since 1999.<sup>46</sup> The main two reasons will be explained in the '*Globalization Section*' of this chapter. In addition, there are now several Arabic and English broadcast stations in SA, which show a variety of Arabic and international channels.<sup>47</sup>

#### **1.4 The Impacts of the Gulf War on Saudi Society**

Wars are often historical turning points for the history of any country, wherever they might occur in the world. Wars can bring many changes and transformations in all fields of society. Undoubtedly, they can positively or negatively affect the relationships between the participating countries and their nationals. Further, they can also change the lifestyle and the traditions of people and alter their ideologies and their views of every aspect around them. The Gulf War in 1990 influenced the relationships among the Gulf States as the Gulf War was a significant regional and global event. It culturally shocked Saudi society, as it created tensions between the government and some religious and intellectual nationals regarding the participation of American troops to defend the Saudi regime from possible Iraqi forces, and also to liberate Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion. Such tension has since made some Saudi Islamists launch a number of dangerous attacks against their own and foreign governments. That was most visibly seen in the events of 11 September 2001, as 15 of the 19 perpetrators were Saudis.

As explained earlier, SA ideology is anchored in Wahhabi Islam; since it emerged it aimed to return Islam to the original form and to teach people in the Arabian Peninsula their true

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<sup>46</sup> J. Determann, (2014). *Historiography in Saudi Arabia*. London, England: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., p. 18.

<sup>47</sup> Philowitz, p. 18.

religion.<sup>48</sup> SA contains the two foremost Islamic holy mosques, in Mecca and Medina, which are visited by Muslims from all around the world for worshipping and performing the Hajj. Within and around these two cities, many Islamic schools were established and a number of Muslims from all around the world have settled.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, it is no exaggeration to state that the application of the *Shari'a* system and the Islamic teachings in SA have become items of keen interest to the majority of Islamic countries.

This section continues with a focus on a discussion of the ideological religious movements' growth in SA. Such movements formed the Saudi religious and intellectual consciousness and thought that reached the peak point both during and in the aftermath of the Gulf War, and greatly reflected on the SA social transformation.

During the first year of the Gulf War, the Saudi government cooperated with the American government to send some troops to the northeast border of SA in order to defend themselves against a possible Iraqi attack and to liberate the state of Kuwait. This step drew serious criticism from religious figures and intellectuals and also from national and international states regarding the Saudi policy of allowing foreign non-Muslim armies to enter the land of the two holy mosques in Mecca and Medina. Such opposition voices were expressed by different religious schools of thought at that time, mainly, the Muslim Brotherhood, the *Ṣaḥwīs*, the Shiites, the Neo- *Ṣaḥwīs*, and Al-Qaeda.

#### **1.4.1 The Muslim Brotherhood**

The Brotherhood's ideology was constructed by Hassan Al-Banna in 1928 in Egypt and it is based on the idea of Jihad against enemies of Islam and the call to Islam.<sup>50</sup> The Brotherhood's ideology was diffused to SA from 1954, when a few Egyptian Islamic

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48 Lackner, p. 10.

49 Al-Rasheed, p. 9.

50 S. Lacroix, (2011). *Awakening Islam: The politics of religious dissent in contemporary Saudi Arabia*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, p. 38.

‘brothers’ (*Ikhwān*) started moving to the Gulf States due to the harassment from President Jamal Abdul Nasser. The majority of them moved to SA in particular, and the Saudi government had given them political refuge because of the high risk of torture and death by Nasser.<sup>51</sup> The number of the Egyptian Brotherhood members increased in the following years, especially in the 1970s, due to the economic boom. The Brothers who traveled to SA worked as teachers. Most of them were teaching in religious universities such as Imam University, the Islamic University, and Umm Al-Qura University. They thus transferred their Islamic Brotherhood ideology into Saudi society by teaching and by editing the curricula at all educational levels.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, they introduced their ideology to the field of religious graduate studies of creed, which had been monopolized by Wahhabi scholars.<sup>53</sup> There, the Muslim Brothers gave lectures that included a rejection of the West and a call to Islam, which was similar to that of the Wahhabi mission but with some differences. The Brotherhood sought to change concepts, like social justice, equal distribution of wealth and anti-colonialism. Wahhabis, in fact, did not think of such concepts before, as they did not concern themselves principally with applying the Islamic religious principles to political affairs; in that area they were respectful and deferential to their Al-Saud rulers. That created some conflicts among the followers of the two trends immediately after the end of the Gulf War.<sup>54</sup>

#### **1.4.2 *Al-Şahwa al-Islamiyya* “Islamic Awakening” Movement**

The increased number of Egyptian Muslim Brothers in SA in the 1970s created the foundation for the movement to emerge. They edited the Saudi educational curricula and reformed the concepts of some religious ideas for Wahhabis in the decades prior to the Gulf War. The Şahwa developed in the 1980s and the following decade. The concentration of the

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51 R. Lacey, (2010). *Inside the kingdom*. London, England: Arrow Books, p. 54.

52 Lacroix, pp. 40, 43-45.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

54 Lacey, p. 56.

Islamic Ṣaḥwa movement in SA lay in re-explaining “the call to Islam” and also, “the calling for virtue and the prevention of vice”, which are two of Wahhabism’s most significant principles.<sup>55</sup>

During the 1980s, the Ṣaḥwa overwhelmingly dominated all social domains and issues except the fields of literary and cultural productions. The latter was dominated by the modernists, of whom the majority had obtained their higher education from abroad, but especially from Western universities. The Ṣaḥwa adherents were very concerned about such modernism, and they considered the modernists as liberals and secularists according to their viewpoint, as they were implicitly calling for social modernism in their modern literary criticism.<sup>56</sup> In 1985, ‘Abdullah al-Ghadhdhāmī (1946-) published his book entitled *Al-Khaḥī’a wa al-Takfīr (Sin and Expiation: From the Structuralism to the Deconstruction)* which included some Western literary theories, particularly those of Roland Barthes, and it was devoted solely to literary criticism. This book was received differently and the reactions to it were sharply critical from the first Ṣaḥwī intellectuals that had graduated with MA and Ph.D. degrees in religious studies from the Saudi higher education system that had been Islamized by the Muslim Brothers. Immediately after al-Ghadhdhāmī’s publication of his book, Muḥammad al-Milibārī (1931-1992) was the first to write on al-Ghadhdhāmī’s book and against modernity without even reading the book, within three years he wrote more than 30 articles. The sharp shift was when ‘Awad al-Qarnī (1957-) published his book that was entitled *Al-ḥadātha fī Mizān al-Islam (Modernism in the Light of Islam)* in 1988. This book was met with great popular acclaim in society, as it was prefaced by Sheikh Ibn Baz (1910-1999), who approved its content. Al-Qarnī claimed that modernism was brought to spread Western thoughts, and

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55 Al-‘Uthaymīn, pp. 114, 145.

56 Al-Khuḍr, p. 73.

that it also contains conflicts with Islam and the creed, and that literature and literary studies were just pretexts to spread Western thoughts in the conservative society.<sup>57</sup>

All these important events prior to the Gulf War paved the way for the Ṣaḥwa to become more dominant in society, as during and after the Gulf War its discourse became critical and harsh. During that interval, Saudi Ṣaḥwīs were considerably prominent in presenting lectures, publishing articles in newspapers and distributing cassettes criticizing the political policy of the Saudi government. They rejected the participation of the US armies and maintenance of military bases in the kingdom after the War. The government took action directly, as in 1994 it arrested some of the Ṣaḥwī opponents: the two head Islamist preachers, Safar al-Ḥawālī (1955-) and Salmān al-‘Awda (1956-), for example.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, immediately after the end of the Gulf War, Ṣaḥwīs sent two letters to King Fahd concerning reforming some religious, social, political and economic aspects.

The first one was written in May 1991 and was entitled *Khitāb al-Matālib* (Letter of Demands), which was signed by approximately 400 intellectuals. This letter focused on new issues for debate by Saudi citizens, including social justice and equality, a fairer distribution of wealth, the development of the Islamic religious institutions, and reviewing the qualifications of the members of the Consultative Council. The second letter appeared in July 1992 and was entitled *Mudhakkirat al-Naṣīḥa* (*the Memorandum of Naṣīḥa*) or, in short, the *Naṣīḥa* (Advice), and was signed by 110 Ṣaḥwīs and academic intellectuals. Six of them were the founders of The Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights ‘*the Sharī‘a*’ that was established in May 1993.<sup>59</sup>

The Shiite population in SA is considered a minority compared with the large majority of Sunnis in the state. In 1979 Saudi Shiites organized an *Intifāda* (religious-political

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57 Lacroix, pp. 135, 140.

58 Menoret, p. 124., & Haykel, Hegghammer, and Lacroix, (eds.), p. 18, 21.

59 Lacroix, pp. 180, 184, 186., & Al-Khudr, p. 83.

demonstrations), protesting against the Saudi government's unequal treatment in practicing their religious doctrines in SA. However, although the Shiite population is considered a minority, the views of the anti-Shiite Saudi *Ṣaḥwīs* were radical and unforgiving. They began in 1991, when some *Ṣaḥwīs* claimed that the Saudi Shiites should be killed, as they were guilty of apostasy, or that the Saudi government should ban their practices in governmental administrative circles. Moreover, the *Ṣaḥwī Nāṣir al-ʿUmar* (1952-) also advocated excluding the Shiites from the Kingdom of SA as it is the Kingdom of *Tawḥīd* (monotheism).<sup>60</sup>

### 1.4.3 Al-Qaeda

The War in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union in 1979, along with the Iranian Islamic revolution, brought all sorts of Islamic ideologies from various Islamic countries, including SA, to fight under the umbrella of Jihad. SA and the US supported the Jihadists to fight against the Soviet Union in the Afghanistan War and to spread Wahhabism internationally to stop the growth of the Shiite Islamic movement. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, after the Soviet Union War ended, Osama Bin Laden secretly established the al-Qaeda (the Basis) organization, which included a number of Saudis who had just heard of the establishment of the Jihadi organization.<sup>61</sup> Al-Qaeda members played a considerable role and carried out some global attacks against the Saudi government and the United States in protest at the establishment of US bases i.e allowing the presence of non-Muslim military in the land of the two holy mosques. The first attack by al-Qaeda in SA was the Riyadh Car bombing in 1995, in which five Americans were killed. It is important to state here that SA experienced another attack in 1996 called the al-Khobar Towers bombing, in which 19 Americans were killed. The attack was executed by some opposing Saudi Shiites who had taken the opposite position of the Saudi government to the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979 first, and from the political

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<sup>60</sup> Lacroix, p. 183.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 109-110, 115.

policy second. Both terrorist attacks were the Islamic groups' reactions against the Saudi government's political policy in dealing with the US.

Al-Qaeda attacks by Saudi Jihadists executed by the al-Qaeda's branch in the Arabian Peninsula in SA happened first in 2003 and were followed by four important attacks in various regions until 2005.<sup>62</sup> The government in all these positions and other religious-political demonstrations resorted to asking the Neo-Şahwī activists to stop Jihadists from joining al-Qaeda by influencing public thought. However, al-Qaeda's global attack outside SA was executed on 11 September 2001, when they bombed the World Trade Center in the US, which created global tension and has created transformations in all areas of life in SA.

## 1.5 Globalization

It seems very difficult to define the concept of globalization as it has various meanings and a single agreed definition of globalization does not exist. The terms 'globalization', 'globalism', 'globalize', 'globalized', and 'globalizing' themselves are considered modern, with their usage beginning in the 1960s. Publications containing the title Globalization or other related words have increased from 34 in 1994 to 284 publications in 2000, and none of the sources were published before 1987.<sup>63</sup>

Globalization 'refers to all those processes by which the peoples of the world are incorporated into a single world society; the global society'.<sup>64</sup> Roland Robertson (1938-), a prominent sociologist and theorist in globalization, defined the concept in 1992 in the following terms: 'Globalization [as it] refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole... both concrete global

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62 Lacroix, pp. 245, 255., & Haykel, Hegghammer, and Lacroix, (eds.), p. 23.

63 M. Waters, (2001). *Globalization*. (2nd ed.). London, England: Taylor & Francis Routledge, eBook, p. 2.

64 M. Albrow, & E. King, (1990). *Globalization, knowledge, and society: Readings from international sociology*. London, England: Newbury Park, Sage Publications, p. 9.

interdependence and consciousness of the global whole.<sup>65</sup> Globalization also refers to the ‘development, concentration, and increasing importance of worldwide connections.’<sup>66</sup> In addition, globalization, according to Manfred, means ‘a multidimensional set of social processes that create, multiply, stretch, and intensify worldwide social interdependencies and exchanges while at the same time fostering in people a growing awareness of deepening connections between the local and the distant.’<sup>67</sup>

Globalization thus means the overreaching of worldwide interconnectedness, interactions, and transactions in the spheres of politics, economy and socio-culture. The outcome of globalization in these aforementioned domains affects most people everywhere, across-borders, in the entire world, and in the formation of homogeneous cultures among them.

The views as to the impact of globalization on societies are, however, controversial. To many ex-colonies, globalization means Westernization, Colonization, or Americanization. Accordingly, they consider globalization as creating the idea of world winners and losers, with the Western empire as the winner. In addition, they look at globalization as a force to destroy the local cultures and spread colonial cultures. On the other hand, others see globalization as positive and beneficial. Globalization can increase cross-border opportunities, further everyday living choices, and can create the homogeneous culture, economy and global political systems among societies in the world.<sup>68</sup>

Although the term ‘globalization’ is considered modern, the process of globalization itself has, in fact, deep historical roots, but has become a strong wave in the modern era, particularly since the nineteenth century, coinciding with the technological revolution. The global commercial trade has existed for many centuries. In addition, with regards to literature, there is no doubt that Plato’s theory of simulated reality and his logician student, Aristotle’s

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65 Waters, p. 2.

66 J. Osterhammel, & N. Petersson, (2005). *Globalization: A short history*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, p. 26.

67 S. Manfred, (2003). *Globalization: A very short introduction*. (1st ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc., p. 13.

68 D. Held, (2000). *A globalizing world? Culture, economy, politics*. London, England: The Open University, pp. 12,14.

critical observations on poetry, have affected world literature and literary criticism. Equally, the novels of Victor Hugo and the writings of Shakespeare have influenced world literature and drama. Indeed, views on its origin were still debatable until recent times. Many studies have found that globalization is a historical process and refers back to a much earlier period. Scholars Anthony Hopkins and Christopher Bayley, for instance, argue that the wave of globalization goes back to antiquity.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, discovering the origin of globalization has not been accomplished in this short overview, as this thesis is not the right place to exhibit and discuss the debatable views on the matter. However, generally speaking, the most agreed view upon the origin of the globalization's process is that the process of globalization started during the nineteenth century due to the technological revolution, which undoubtedly has permitted the whole world to become more interconnected, increasing therefore worldwide connections from a thousand years ago.<sup>70</sup>

### **1.5.1 Globalization in Saudi Arabia**

Globalization has affected countries of the East and the West alike. The political, economic, and social transformations in societies all around the world due to globalization are obvious. Such transformations can be seen in international relations, democracy, social justice, freedom, etc. However, the impact of globalization on societies are currently notably increased due to the improvement and the expansion of media technologies and mass communications, as they are the main pragmatic and productive medium for spreading globalization around the world. Media technologies have significantly promoted the growth of the idea of the 'global village' or the 'global circulation', where technology has made communities throughout the world become more interconnected and overreached, as we see today in social media, on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, for instance.

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<sup>69</sup> Determann, p. 15.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

The manifestation of globalization on political, economic and social transformations in SA has been accelerating more evident than at any time in the past. This is in fact because the great impact of globalization began paving the path to Saudi society from the late 1990s, due to the ban on access to the Internet for the public in the kingdom being lifted in January 1999.<sup>71</sup> As explained earlier, the Internet was operated in SA in 1994 for some educational, medical, and research institutions only, and has only been available to the entire population since 1999. The main two reasons behind the prohibited access were the following. Firstly, the government concern about problematic security issues and the increased amount of national opposition to its politics that grew in different regions in the aftermath of the Gulf War, which is the period between 1994 and 1999.<sup>72</sup> Secondly, the religious extreme conservatives had also to give their agreement on the suitability of the new technologies to be used by people in the kingdom. Religious conservatives have not concentrated on the security issue, but rather on the increased exposure to viewing unveiled women. Images and videos was their major concern, as they are religiously forbidden. Indeed, such religious conflict with the modern world started a few years after the kingdom's unification. Al-Ghadhdhāmī, a Saudi intellectual, in his book *Al-Faqeeh al-Fadhā'ī*, cited some actual stories regarding the position of religious extremists against modernization. For instance, from the period from the 1930s to the late 1940s, religious extremists refused to allow telegrams in the kingdom, amplifiers in the holy mosque (they were pronounced 'the devil's screams'), and the teaching of painting and foreign languages in the holy city of Mecca were forbidden. However, it is reasonable to state that the religious radical view of modern ways increased during, and in the aftermath of the Gulf War. In the early 1990s, when satellites were being operated in SA, extreme religious conservatives launched, on the mosque platform, the prohibited declaration for people who watch television via satellite or to bringing them home. This was because

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71 Ibid. p. 18.

72 Al-Khudr, p. 430.

satellites might exhibit some forbidden and immoral programs that aim to spread the Western intellectual invasion to Saudi families.<sup>73</sup>

However, due to the government's courageous position and its royal decrees on the matter, and the benefits of such technologies in education and the development of the kingdom, the religious conservatives have gradually begun to accept the new means of technology. Islamists, who radically objected to the notion of TVs in the 1960s, and satellites and the Internet in the 1990s, are now in competition to appear on satellite channels and on social media. *Al-Sāḥāt al- 'Arabiyya* forum<sup>74</sup>, for instance, was one of the most significant websites in the 1990s, including approximately 80,000 Arab participant members, of which the majority were from SA. This forum has hosted many Islamists and later became a hotbed for discussing the global events of 9/11. Their rapid and notable representation on such means of technology was before their dominant appearance on satellite television and social media as we see today.<sup>75</sup>

The government's prospective vision to correlate SA with the world in each arena in fact began in the 1960s, with the establishment and development of its radio, TV and journalism stations, and several technical institutions and commissions: King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST), King Abdullah University for Science and Technology (KAUST), and the Saudi Communications and Information Commission, for example. Furthermore, with regard to the number of users of the Internet in SA, statistics confirm that the number of Internet users in SA has increased sharply from 200,000 in 2000 to more than 16,000,000 in 2013, and this number is remarkably increasing.<sup>76</sup> Also, to keeping pace with modernity, the government has pressed the governmental ministries and all civil, military and religious

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73' A. Al-Ghadhdhāmī, (2011). *Al-faqih al-fadhā ī: Tahwūl al-khitāb al-dīnī min al-minbar ela al-shshāsha*. [The Transformation of the Religious Discourse from the Platform [Mosque Platform] to the Screen]. Morocco: Arab Cultural Center, pp. 13-15.

74 An Emirate forum existed in 1997 and is considered one of largest sufficient Arab forums for political, social and religious issues. For more details, see: Al-Khudr, p. 250.

75 Al-Khudr, pp. 429, 431.

76 Saudi Communications and Information Technology Commission. (2016). Retrieved from: <http://www.citc.gov.sa/en/Pages/default.aspx>. Accessed, 23 September 2016.

institutions, to actively exist on social media; to be in direct contact with internal and external people of interest for the discussion of important social ideas and issues. Thus, the reasons for the delayed visible impacts of globalization on Saudi society until the late 1990s were political and, on a large scale, religious, with Islamists having rejected such aforementioned modern means of technology.

The political, economic and social transformations that have occurred in SA due to the direct influence in the aforementioned arenas in the kingdom are discussed below. In the political sense, the government established the Saudi consultative council, *Majlis al-Shūra*, in 1992. The government's idea of the council is to substantially encourage and promote public participation in official matters. In this council, most of the government regulations and decisions are studied, discussed, and then findings are presented to its members, who vote to make a decision. Due to the considerable attention of the government to the public's participation in the council's speeches on decision-making, the number of participants increased from 60 members in the first council term to 90 in the second term, and to 150 members in the fourth term. Membership of the consultative council is based on the governmental selection of knowledgeable and qualified citizens of both genders.<sup>77</sup> Another direct implication of globalization in the political sector is represented in the municipal elections, which reflects the expansion and the desire to include national participants in decision-making. Municipal elections take place every four years, with their concentration on local issues: public gardens, rubbish, roads and streets, etc. The second election was held in 2005 and the third in 2011. In both elections, the participants were male citizens.

The direct global impact on Saudi politics is also seen in the establishment of King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue (KACND) in 2003. The center aims to reinforce the concept of national unity and encourages the idea of national dialogue among individuals in the kingdom

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<sup>77</sup> For more details, visit the website of the Saudi Shura Council in the following link: <https://www.shura.gov.sa/wps/wcm/connect/ShuraEn/internet/home/>. Accessed, 26 September 2016.

from all educational levels, various intellectual beliefs and even Islamic sects. The center contributes to the discussion of a wide variety of significant local issues in all fields. Participation in the center is open to all members of society, including youths. Up to now, the public could be involved in the process of decision-making unless they were participants, as participants in the center were selected solely by the center's administration. The center is considered to be a great step towards achieving national unity and promoting the idea of accepting different viewpoints among nationals.<sup>78</sup>

The economic sphere has also been affected by globalization. The Saudi government has sought to globalize its economy since the development of the oil industry in 1938. The historical international trade of oil since the 1930s with a number of countries including the UK and the USA, indicates the rise of the Saudi global economy. Further, the promotion of SA to the local industrial development generated the Saudi Industrial Development Fund (SIDF) in 1974, which is a source of providing medium and long-term loans and interest-free soft loans for national and international investors. Between 1974 and 2005, more than 2,731 medium and long-term loans have been issued, with an estimated total value of approximately 51,973 SR million.<sup>79</sup>

Furthermore, as a giant step to globalizing the Saudi economy, since December 2005, the kingdom has been a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which is a governmental organization driven by the member states. Joining WTO has contributed to expanding the Saudi market to include international investors, increasing employment opportunities for nationals, and also providing opportunities for Saudi companies to cooperate and partner with well-known world companies.

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78 For more details, visit the website of King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue: (KACND) in the following link: <https://www.kacnd.org/>. Accessed, 27 September 2016.

79 Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Industry: National Industrial Strategy, p.18. Accessed, 27 September 2016.

Just recently, in 2016, Muḥammad bin Salmān, the Crown Prince, announced the economic vision of SA in 2030 that aims to diversify the economy away from oil. To begin to apply the vision, he has signed several agreements and memoranda of understanding with the world's largest companies in the United States, the United Kingdom, and China to invest and to develop the public service sectors in SA. These agreements included, establishing and developing more than 80 essential projects, such as Neom, Riyadh metro, and the Red sea resort, etc.<sup>80</sup>

The effects of globalization can also be noticed on the authority of parents, lifestyle and the language of individuals and the mass media, such as satellite television, which is a considerable source for such rapid global influence. According to Manuel Castells, the television environment is:

A culture in which objects and symbols are referred to television, from the shapes of home furniture to acting styles and themes of conversation. The real power of television, as Eco and Postman have also argued, is that it sets the stage for all processes that intend to be communicated to society at large, from politics to business, including sports and art. Television frames the language of societal communication.<sup>81</sup>

Globalization has also affected the public education system and language use in the kingdom. Many foreign public and private language institutions have been established over the past three decades. In addition, the government has encouraged Saudis to learn English in the public educational arena to acquire knowledge and sciences as most sciences have been either written or translated into English. Added to that, the government aims to encourage the teaching of English as an international medium to communicate and exchange experiences and local cultures with international speakers.<sup>82</sup> Consequently, “Code-Switching” from

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80 For more details, visit the website of Saudi Arabia's 2030 Vision in the following link: <http://vision2030.gov.sa/en>. Accessed, 12 October 2017.

81 M. Castells, (2010). *The rise of the network society: Economy, society and culture Vol.1: The information age: Economy, society and culture* (Information Age Series). (2nd ed.). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, p. 364.

82 A. Al-Khateeb, (2015). *The impact of English language on the public education system in Saudi Arabia in the globalization era: A critical analysis of the situation*, BluePen Journals Ltd., p. 4.

Arabic to English, for instance, as a powerful and a lingua franca language, has made its way into daily Saudi conversations. English words such as hello, okay, bye and many others have emerged from new technology, especially the Internet, and now form part of daily conversations.<sup>83</sup>

## **1.6 The Events of 11 September 2001**

The reaction of the Saudi regime, society and the Arab and Islamic world to the 9/11 events was one of shock and dismay. However, there is no doubt that these events were received in a completely different manner on the global scale. Fifteen of the perpetrators in the attacks were Saudis, which directly impacted Saudi international relations, especially with the US as well as the transformation of Saudi society. These events have also raised questions about the religion, culture, human rights, and the status of women in SA and globalized Saudi local religious and political issues making the SA a focus of world attention, as it received harsh international criticism and accusations from governments, especially the US, in the mass media. Such foreign reactions have led the SA government in a direct or indirect way to reconsider the Islamic discourse that had dominated it for a long time.<sup>84</sup> That is because since then Wahhabism was severely criticized in Western and American politics and media as the reason for shaping such radical religious thought resulting in the launch of terrorist suicide attacks against the West and the US.

The Saudi government has taken a number of dramatic and important steps to avoid and absorb Western anger in the aftermath of 9/11. For example, in 2004 it closed the headquarters of the al-Ḥaramain Islamic Foundation (AHIF) charity in Riyadh, after the US alleged that it was financially supporting terrorism. In addition, it has instructed the Ministry

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83 A. Jalal, (1999). *Globalization and Arab development*. Beirut, Lenanon: Center for Arab Unity Studies, p. 178.

84 Al-Khudr, p. 602.

of Education to reform the curricula at all educational levels after the US report that they promote terrorism by practicing violence and harm against Western countries as a whole.<sup>85</sup>

The government has also sought to expand the dialogue to include people from different religions, cultures and beliefs. Therefore, a few years after the foundation of King Abdullah International Center for Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue (KACND) in November 2012, SA, in cooperation with the Republic of Austria and the Kingdom of Spain, agreed to establish the King Abdullah International Center for Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) among people from different religions and cultures in Vienna. The center's first aim is to establish an intercultural and interreligious dialogue, universally promoting the concepts of peace and coexistence, and the understanding of people from different religions and cultures. The next aims are to support conflict prevention, reject discrimination that is based on religion or culture, and build a sustained peace dialogue with governments and religious leaders.<sup>86</sup>

Furthermore, in 2004 the SA government established the non-profit and independent National Society for Human Rights (NSHR) in Riyadh which is a clear sign of the direct global impact of 9/11. NSHR is directly and solely supported by the Saudi government, and aims to protect the rights of nationals and residents in and across the borders of SA. The NSHR annual report depicts its sufficient role in discussing and covering various issues in many human fields, in all regions of the kingdom.<sup>87</sup> In 2012, the King Abdullah University for Sciences and Technology (KAUST) as the first mixed-gender university was established near Jeddah city overlooking the Red Sea.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, the number of students who have pursued their higher education in universities abroad increased dramatically in the post-9/11 period. Many male and female students have joined the King 'Abdullah foreign scholarship program across

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85 Lacroix, p.129., & Al-Khudr, p.133.

86 For more details, visit the website of King Abdullah International Center for Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue in the following link: <http://www.kaiciid.org/>. Accessed, 26 October 2016.

87 For more details, visit the website of Saudi National Society for Human Rights in the following link: <http://nshr.org.sa/en/>. Accessed, 26 October 2016.

88 For more details, visit the website of King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in the following link: <https://www.kaust.edu.sa/en>.

many developed countries around the world, which was launched in 2005. It is currently regarded as the most significant educational developmental project for preparing qualified students and for connecting Saudi society with people from other cultures. The number of Saudi students has increased dramatically from 7,520 students in 1975 to 70,000 male and female students in 2009.<sup>89</sup>

## **1.7 Conclusion**

This chapter drew a general introductory overview of the Saudi social structure, and discussed the role played by ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb in shaping the ideology of the Saudi state and society. The factors that have significantly and directly contributed to the making of social transformations in SA, are the discovery of oil, the Gulf War, globalization, and the events of 9/11. The direct impact of each of the previous factors on the Saudi social transformation are apparent in terms of lifestyles, traditions, old concepts and ideologies. In addition, the chapter discussed the ideological and intellectual trends that preoccupied public opinion in Saudi society, which will serve as a backdrop for the forthcoming chapters.

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<sup>89</sup> Saudi Ministry of Higher Education: Scholarships to Studying in the USA (Saudi Ministry of Higher Education: Scholarships to Studying in the USA. Retrieved from: <http://us.mohe.gov.sa/ar/Documents/book%20amarika.pdf>), p.15. Accessed, 26 October 2016., & al- Fārsy, p.186.

## Chapter 2

### Methodology and Literature Review

#### 2.1 Introduction

This thesis situates itself in the domain of the sociology of literature. It follows the sociological approach of genetic structuralism that was founded and developed by Lucien Goldmann in the 1960s, to investigate the thematic engagement of Saudi women's novels within the designated timeframe of 1958 to 2016. Having situated these novels in their socio-political, socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-religious contexts in chapter one, this chapter will begin by exploring the history of the Saudi novel with main focus on Saudi women's novels and their thematic development along with the development of Saudi women's status in all fields.

I contend that there is a strong relationship between the thematic development of Saudi women's novels and the development of their society, and that genetic structuralist theory is suitable for investigating this relationship. This argument is strengthened by the significant proliferation of novels written by Saudi women since 1990. According to the Saudi Literary Bibliography, 388 such novels were published between 1990 and 2016, whereas only 20 were published prior to 1990.<sup>90</sup> This thesis is set to study the Saudi women's novel, rather than the Saudi feminist novel, because the former is a more comprehensive topic. Feminism is concerned more narrowly "with the marginalization of all women: that is, with their being relegated to a secondary position."<sup>91</sup> In addition, the feminist novel is written by both men

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90 K. Al-Yousof, (2018). *The Saudi literary bibliography*. Riyadh, KSA: King Saud University Press, pp. 37, 58.

91 W. Guerin, & E. Labor, & L. Morgan, & J. Reesman, & J. Willingham, (1999). *A handbook of critical approaches to literature*. (4th. ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press, p. 196.

and women and is committed to exploring issues (social, economic, political etc.) as they affect women only, whereas the women's novel is written by females only but may deal with issues affecting men or women and with any general subject.

## 2.2 The History of the Novel in Saudi Arabia

Poetry has been the predominant literary genre in the Arabian Peninsula before, and even since, the foundation of the Saudi state, due to the strong relationship of the SA tribes with the Arabic poetic tradition.<sup>92</sup> However, discussing the history and the emergence of the novel in SA necessitates reference to the establishment and emergence of this genre in the Arab world. This genre is relatively new to Arabs and their culture, and Saudi writers discovered the novel via the works of other Arab writers, especially those from Lebanon and Egypt. Hence, the novel is considered a new genre in the Saudi literary scene, and its origin is marked by 'Abdul-Quddūs al-Anṣārī's (1906–1983) novel *al-Taw'amān (The Twins)*, which was published in 1930. The author and his novel are both considered by the literary community to be pioneers in the history of the Saudi novel. Subsequently, various male authors wrote novels in SA before the genre reached its maturity in 1959, when Ḥāmid Damanhūrī (1922–1965) published his novel *Thaman al-Tadḥiya (The Price of Sacrifice)*. The writing attempts of Ahmad al-Subā'ī, who published *Fikra (An Idea)* in 1947, and Muḥammad 'Alī Maghrabī, who published *al-Ba'th (The Resurrection)* in 1948, are all representatives of the early Saudi novel, a point agreed upon by discerning critics.<sup>93</sup>

Al-Ḥāzimī claims that the period between 1924 and 1945 represents the foundation era of modern Arabic literature in SA, as education and journalism witnessed a notable

92 T. Husayn, (1933). *Literary Life in the Arabian Peninsula*. Al-Hilāl Journal.

93 Nādī Al-Qaṣīm Al-Adabī (eds.). (2003). *'Aqdān Min al-Ibdā' al-Adabī al-Sa'udī* [Two Decades of Saudi Literary Invention], Qaṣīm, KSA: Nādī al-Qaṣīm al-Adabī, pp. 232, 237. Ḥ. Al-Nu'amī, (2013). *Ba'd al-Ta'weel: Muqārabāt fi Khitāb al-Sard* [An Interpretation: Approaches to Novelistic Discourse] (1st ed.). Riyadh, KSA: The Literary Club, p. 139.

development during that period, and Saudi literary writers gradually formed stronger connections with other writers from across the Arab world.<sup>94</sup> Because of the oil wealth, education, journalism, the press and printing became key literary and cultural influences, which promoted the emergence and development of SA literature in general, and the novel in particular, which developed remarkably during this period. Saudi journalism became prominent, along with various Arabic and translated literary texts, and these raised issues both inside and outside Saudi literature at that time. Periodical journals like *Umm al-Qurā* (1924), *Ṣawt al-Hejāz* (1932) and *al-Manhal* (1937) published Arabic-written and foreign-translated stories, novellas and segments of novels on their pages for SA readers, before the publication of SA novels began in the 1970s.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, the Saudi literary and cultural scenes have been influenced by printed prose literature written and translated by Lebanese and especially Egyptian authors and translators. This influence became more visible after the sending of the first Saudi government-sponsored wave of students to Egypt in 1927, which included a group of Saudi intellectuals and novelists. During the twentieth century, Egyptian cultural impact had contributed to the creation of a Saudi literary and cultural scene, as Egyptian journals and printed Arabic books invaded the Hejaz region, which inspired some Saudi literary critics and intellectuals later on to call for breaking from Egyptian cultural dominance.<sup>96</sup>

The textual and thematic aspects of the early SA novel reflect the influence of many prominent Arab authors. For example, Ṭāhir Salām's novel *Fl-tushriq min Jadīd (May it Rise Again)* published in 1982, was inspired by the literary historical trend employed by Lebanese

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94 M. Al-Ḥāzīmī, (1981). *Fann al-Qiṣṣa fī al-Adab al-Sa'ūdī al-ḥadīth* [The Genre of Story in the Modern Saudi Literature]. Riyadh, KSA: Dār al-'Ulūm, p. 11.

95 S. Al-Qaḥṭānī, (1994). *The novel in Saudi Arabia: Emergence and development 1930–1989: A historical and critical study*. (Ph.D. thesis, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK). Retrieved from: <https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.261678>, pp. 18–40. Accessed, 20 June 2016

96 Ḥ. Bā-Faqīh, (2016). *Ṭāha Ḥusayn wa al-Muthaqqafun al-Sa'ūdīyūn* [Ṭāha Ḥusayn and the Saudi Intellectuals]. Beirut, Lebanon: Dār Alintishār Al-'arabī, pp. 37–40.

novelist Jurjī Zaydān.<sup>97</sup> The theme of the first Saudi novel, *al-Taw'amān*, which had a didactic and religious approach, was about the pride of Islamic and Arab identity set against the colonial West, and included the theme of Pan-Arab nationalism as also seen in works by Ghazi al-Qosaibi and Ibrahīm al-Ḥumadān. In addition, the influence of Arabic literature can be seen in the adventure themes employed in early Saudi novels, as well as in *al-Barā'a al-Mafqūda* (*Lost Innocence*) by Hind Bā Ghaffār (1972). These themes were evident and predominant in early Arabic novels generally.<sup>98</sup>

### 2.3 The Saudi Women's Novel

Saudi women began writing novels in 1958, when Samīra Khāshugjī published *Wadda 'tu Āmālī* (*I said Goodbye to my Hopes*). Although there thirty years, which separate the start of men and women's novels, the first mature male novel was published in 1959, as explained above.

The delay in the introduction of formal education for Saudi females, because of the tribal resistance to female education was not only a major factor in the delayed emergence of the Saudi women's novel, but it also hindered the development of their social and cultural status.

It is both interesting and important to discuss the critical reception of the early (pre-1980) Saudi women's novels, in order to challenge prevailing assumptions that many Saudi critics have either ignored or decried Saudi female novels solely due to their poor literary value. Others argue that these early female novels do not belong to the Saudi social and cultural environment, and they do not represent Saudi women's reality and dilemmas.

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97 Al- Nādī al-Qaṣīm al-Adabī (eds.), p. 234.

98 Al-Nu'amī, (2013). 42., 'A. Badr, (1976). *Taṭawwūr al-riwāya al-'arabiyya al-ḥadītha fī Miṣr* (1870-1938) [The evolution of the Modern Arabic Novel in Egypt (1870-1938)]. Cairo, Egypt: Dār Al-M'ārif, p.73, 133., A. Dīb, (1989). *Fann al-riwāya fī al-mamlaka al-'Arabiyya al-Sa'ūdiyya bayn al-nash'a wa al-taṭawwūr* [The Novel in Saudi Arabia: Emergence and Development] (1st ed.). Cairo: Al-Maktaba Al-Muhammadiyya, pp. 29, 366., & 'A. Al-Wahhābī, (2005). *Women's novel in Saudi Arabia: Its emergence and development in a changing culture*. (PhD. thesis, the University of Manchester, Manchester, UK). Retrieved from: <https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.496392>, p. 170. Accessed, 20 May 2016.

While Saudi and Arab critics generally agree that al-Anṣārī's novel *al-Taw'amān* was the first Saudi novel, they consider Muḥammad Nour Jouharī's novel *al-Intiqām al-Tabī'ī* (*The Natural Revenge*) published in 1935, Ahmad al-Subā'ī's *Fikra* published in 1947, and Muḥammad 'Alī Maghrabī's *al-Ba'ith* in 1948, as the earliest attempts at forming the modern novelistic genre. However, Al-Qaḥṭānī, Juraidī and many others state that such early works belong to the genre of the long story or the novella, and do not display the artistic requirements of the modern novel.<sup>99</sup> More to the point, because *al-Taw'amān* in 1930 suffered from lack of an artistic approach and was written with an ideological didactic objective, which is natural, as it was the first Saudi novel,<sup>100</sup> critics considered *Thaman al-Taḍḥiya* to be the first proper Saudi novel.

However, critics did not apply the same artistic criteria to Saudi women's novels of the pre-1980 period, especially the works of Samīra Khāshugjī, who wrote six novels, and Ba Ghaffār, who wrote the first Saudi adventure crime novel in 1972. Saudi women's novels were largely ignored or given minimal critical attention as demonstrated in al-Qaḥṭānī's (1994), M. al-Ḥāzimī's (1981), al-Shanṭī's (1990), and Ḥ. al-Ḥāzimī's (2000) studies.

With regard to the contextual aspect, some critics, for instance al-Ṣamādī (1981), Bakrī Ameen (1985), al-Saqqāf (1999) and al-Nu'amī (2009), argued that novels published before 1980 do not belong to Saudi literature except via the nationality of their authors.<sup>101</sup> This is because the settings, characters and events in these novels are not from Saudi society. Furthermore, according to al-Ṣamādī (in the context of criticizing Khāshugjī's novels) and al-Nu'amī, Saudi women's pre-1980 novels were not representative of Saudi social and cultural

99 S. Juraidī, (2012). *Al-Riwāya al-Nisā'iyya al-Sa'ūdiyya: Khitāb a-Mar'a wa Tashkīl al-Sard* [The Saudi Women's Novel: Feminist Discourse and Narrative Formation] (2nd ed.). Beirut, Lebanon: Mu'asasat Dār Al-Intishār, p.14., & Al-Qaḥṭānī, pp. 7, 13, 56.

100 Ḥ. Al-Nu'amī, (2004). *Raj' al-Baṣar: Qirā'āt fī al-riwāya al-Sa'ūdiyya* [The Return of Vision: Readings in the Saudi Novel] (1st ed.). Jeddah, KSA: The Cultural Literary Club, p. 8.

101 Al-Nu'amī, (2013), pp. 150-153., N. Al-Ṣamādī, (1981). *Dirāsa fī Adab al-Mar'a al-Sa'ūdiyya al-Qaṣṣī* [A Study in Saudi Female Fictional Literature], p. 519. Vol. 1, No. 4., & K. Al-Saqqāf, (1999). *Dilālatu al-Makān fī al-Naṣṣ al-Riwā'ī 'ind al-Riwā'iyya fī al-Mamlaka al-'Arabiyya al-Sa'ūdiyya* [The Significance of the Place in Narrative Text of the Female Author in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia]. Riyadh, KSA: Ālam al-Kutub, pp. 3-4. Vol. 21, No. 1.

context, nor do they depict Saudi women's social concerns. In addition, the writers' experiences are both individualistic and foreign, obtained during a period of studying or living abroad, in a variety of other countries. Furthermore, al-Nu'amī argues that we cannot consider the 1960s to be the historical beginning of Saudi women's novel when these women had only just started to learn to read and write as they had only just obtained their right to education. According to him, writing a novel requires at least twenty years' practice for the acquisition of literary taste and writing. Also it requires writing skills, a wealth of knowledge, and complex ideas, which Saudi women were lacking at that time, and which Saudi pioneer female novelists benefited from as they had all obtained their education from foreign countries.<sup>102</sup>

The main question we can ask here is whether pre-1980 Saudi women novels needed to reflect Saudi society and Saudi women's concerns in order to truly be considered a part of Saudi literature? More to the point, if assuming that Saudi women novelists during that time produced their works within Saudi cultural and social contexts, would they be able to reflect the issues and concerns of Saudi women?

Traditional criticisms of novels written by Saudi women during the 1960s and 1970s have so far been incompatible with consideration of the historical and social conditions in which the novels were written. Therefore, discussing the novels in their historical and social contexts might answer the above questions, as well as provide a different angle from which to consider traditional critical viewpoints on this issue.

Undeniably, the settings, events, and characters in most Saudi women's novels before 1980 were set apart from Saudi society, and these novelists had benefited from their further education and experience abroad in writing their novels. However, the function of the novel

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102 H. Al-Nu'amī, (2013). *Ba'ḍ al-Ta'wīl: Muqārabāt fī khiṭāb al-sard* [An Interpretation: Approaches to Novelistic Discourse]. (1st edn.) Riyadh, KSA: The Literary Club, pp. 150-151.

is not restricted to reflecting the concerns and issues within one's own society: the novel is capable of tackling more than that; it can also tackle historical, emotional and fictional themes, among others. This aspect seems to be an inherent feature of early writing in SA. For instance, in Ghālib Ḥamza Abū al-Faraj's novels, places, characters and events are located outside Saudi society. In all his novels, he deals with issues in both Arab and European societies, while he also exposed significant social issues typical of Saudi society, as in his novel *al-Shayātīn al-Ḥumr (The Red Devils)*.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, in some of his early novels, such as *Thuqbun fī Ridā' al-Layl (Hole in the Night's Robe)*, Ibrahīm al-Ḥumadān tackled the issue of pan-Arabism. Likewise, Samīra Khāshugjī, whose early novels covered emotional themes outside the Saudi social context, her focus shifted later on to Saudi society as in her novel in *Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū' (Tear Drops)*.

From a thematic angle, looking at the novels written by Saudi women during this early period we find ten novels out of twenty-one tackled romantic/love themes, and one novel has an adventure crime theme.<sup>104</sup> On the one hand, this shows that such novels are not required to reflect the social issues and concerns of Saudi women, as reflecting the society or locating the settings in a specific community are not essential for the writer. On the other hand, by tackling emotional themes, Saudi women's novels of this period were moving into a taboo and forbidden thematic area of Saudi culture. In fact, this theme was considered taboo for Arab novelists, regardless of their gender or nationality. Haykal's *Zaynab*, published in 1914, was originally titled *Manāẓir wa Akhlāq Rifīyya (Rural Views and Morals)* to cover its emotional theme, which could not be approached since it was considered a culturally and socially sensitive issue during his time. Therefore, even though he was male, he published his novel under the pseudonym "Egyptian Farmer" to avoid social ostracism and conflict with

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103 Dīb, pp. 200-201.

104 S. Al-Jam'ān, (2013). *Khiṭāb al-Riwāya al-Nisā'iyya al-Sa'ūdiyya wa Tahawwūlatih* [The Discourse of the Saudi Women's Novel and its Transformations] (1st ed.). Riyadh, KSA: The Literary Club, p. 149., & Juraidī, p. 22.

the culture and customs of Egyptian society during that period.<sup>105</sup> The same applies to the Gulf region. The story *Yawma Inzāl al-Sufun* (The Day of Landing the Ships), published in 1943 in Bahrain, was written by an unknown author who gave his name as ['] (ع), and obscured the setting of his novel because of the story's love theme. This was done in order to avoid colliding with the culture and customs of Bahraini society, as romantic/love relationships between the two genders were considered a taboo issue at that time.<sup>106</sup>

The context of Saudi women is supposed to be different due to their “exceptionalism” in society. This is due to social norms imposed by the religious norms and the tribal structure of Saudi society. Therefore, the expression of women's issues and concerns at this time, such as their right to education, forced marriage, and emotional issues such as love and the relationship between the two genders, were considered offensive and were prohibited by society's social restrictions.<sup>107</sup> Although Saudi women started to gain their education in SA during that time, the social customs and habits have inevitably prevented them from writing about their personal issues. In addition, their lack of an artistic angle and techniques, as agreed by all critics in SA, hampered them from attempts to express their feelings on certain issues in their conservative society. For example, expressing deep social or emotional themes, as Khāshugī did, was at that time considered socially and culturally unacceptable. In *The Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf*, al-Mana confirms this notion in respect to the Saudi poet Sultāna al-Sudayrī's first poetry collection: “It [the poetry collection] nevertheless contains lyrical love poems, which is perhaps why the poet published the collection under a pseudonym. It was unacceptable in the Najd – especially at that time – for a woman to write

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105 S. Al Sayyid, (1976). *Ittijāt al-Riwāya al-Maṣriyya Mundhu al-Ḥarb al-ʿālamīyya al-Ththāniya ilā Sanat 1967* [The Direction of the Egyptian Novel from the Second World War to 1967]. Cairo, Egypt: Dār Al-Mʿārif, p. 65., & Badr, pp. 65, 124, 146.

106 I. Ghalūm, (2000). *Al-Qiṣṣa al-Qaṣīra fī al-Khalīj al-ʿArabī: al-Kuwait wa al-Bahrain: Dirāsa Naqdiyya Tʿiliyya* [The Short Story in the Arabian Gulf: Kuwait and Bahrain: A Critical and Original Study]. Beirut, Lebanon: Al-Muʿassasa al-ʿarabiyya Liddirasāt wa al-Nnashr, pp. 248-249.

107 Juraidī, p. 16.

openly about love''.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, more than two decades later, Zainab Ḥifnī, who wrote the story collection *Nisā'un 'ala khaṭ al-istwā'* (Women on the Equator) in 2001, was banned from writing for three years, and was banned from traveling abroad for five years, after she released her stories. Likewise, the social and religious reactions that accompanied the novel *Banāt al-Riyadh* (*Girls of Riyadh*) for a decade, following its release in 2005, affected its author's personal life since she risked losing her government scholarship to study abroad because of her novel.<sup>109</sup> These are real examples of the difficulties faced by women who reflected Saudi society in their novels, even if they lived and were educated in that society. In such cases, the novels reflected the criticism the novelists faced in society. As a result, one way or another, these novels were interpreted by their readers as autobiographical.<sup>110</sup> This explains why Samīra Khāshugjī, and many other Saudi female novelists, chose to set their novels outside of the Saudi environment and to write under a pseudonym such as *bint al-Jazīra al-'Arabiyya* (*Daughter of the Arabian Peninsula*), as affirmed by Prince Muḥammad bin Nawwāf in the preface to Khāshugjī's novel *Dhikrayāt Dāmi'a* (*Tearful Memories*).<sup>111</sup>

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the usage of the pseudonyms continues to exist even in the third phase that runs from 2005-2016 in this thesis. The most important reasons for that are as follows. The first is simply because they wanted to separate the narrative and authorial self from the personal self. Examples include Saudi female novelists who wrote under the pseudonyms Wafā' al-Baḥr (*Loyalty of the Sea*), al-Muhājira, Victoria al-Ḥakīm, and many other pseudonyms. This is because the themes in these novels, for example, do not contradict with their social and cultural norms, which made this to be likely the first and main reason.

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108 S. Al-Mana, (2008). *The Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf*, in Radwa Ashour, Ferial J. Ghazoul, Hasna Reda-Mekdashy (eds.), *Arab Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide 1873–1999*, 254-75. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, p. 258.

109 Interview on al-'Arabiyya Channel, see: Iḍā'āt program. (2006). Retrieved from: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ox8\\_SyyyJlk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ox8_SyyyJlk). (Avaliable on YouTube: 24/3/2017)., & Interview on al-'Arabiyya Channel, see: Iḍā'āt program. (2005). Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuarLAcE8>. (Avaliable on YouTube: 24/3/2017).

110 K. Al-Rifā'ī, (2009). *Al-Riwāya al-Nisā'iyya al-Sa'ūdīyya, Qirā'a fī a-Tārīkh wa al-mawḍū' wa al-Qadhiyya wa al-Fann* [The Saudi Women's Novel: Readings in History, Themes, the Women Question and Art]. (1st ed.) Riyadh, KSA: The Literary Club, p. 224.

111 S. Bint al-Jazīra Al-'Arabiyya, (1979). *Dhikrayāt Dāmi'a*. (Tearful Memories). Beirut, Lebanon: Zuhāyr Ba'labakkī, pp. 7-9.

Second, during this similar historical phase just like the female novelists some Saudi males have written under female pen names due to the fact that they have been breaking cultural, religious and social barriers. Such cases include Warda ‘Abdulmalik and Şeba al-Ĥerz and many others whose novels discussed social taboo issues such as, sexuality and homosexuality. Furthermore, these authors were hiding behind female and not male pseudonyms to ensure they obtain the publishers’ acceptance without entering into a male-dominated circle.<sup>112</sup>

The argument that the pre-1980 Saudi women novels should not be considered part of Saudi literature, except via the nationality of the novelists, due to their experiences being regarded as individualistic and foreign is not consistent with the prevailing literary criticism of Saudi men’s novels. The well-known Saudi poet and novelist Ghazi al-Qosaibi (1940–2010), for example, not only received his education abroad, but he wrote some of his novels during his time abroad. This did not cause his works to be regarded as non-Saudi novels despite the fact that the events and settings of some of his novels also took place in a foreign location.<sup>113</sup> Taking into consideration the classification of Saudi women’s novels according to their settings, characters, and events reflected in the texts, regardless of the citizenship of the novelists, novels by Saudi male writer Ghālib Ḥamza Abū al-Faraj’s as *Wa Iḥtaraqat Beirut* (And Beirut was on Fire) in 1982, and *Al-Masīra al-Khaḍrā’* (The Green March) in 1978, could be classified as Lebanese and Moroccan novels respectively. In addition, the novel *Wadda ‘tu Āmālī* in 1958, and some of Khāshugjī’s other novels, along with the novel *al-Barā’a al-Mafqūda* in 1972 by Hind Ba Ghaffār, could be classified as Egyptian novels, as the setting, events, and protagonists in all these novels were set apart from Saudi society. Similarly, according to this criterion, we could classify the Egyptian novels *Al-Fatāt al-*

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112 Al-Rifā’ī in his study indicates to the major role that the publishers have played which exceeds the publication process to enroll in some cases into editing the novels’ titles, content and structure to get it more attractive to the readers. See: p. 55.

113 *Shuqat al-Ḥuria* (An Apartment Called Freedom) (1999) was set in Cairo.

*Yābāniyya (The Japanese Girl)* by Ḥusayn Riyadh, and Niqūlā Ḥaddād's 1905 novel *Al-Ṣadīq al-Majhūl (Unknown Friend)*, as respectively Japanese and French novels; and so on.<sup>114</sup>

Novelists have the right to select the settings and times for the events of their novels, especially when they possess the experience and knowledge of those places, and their customs and cultures.<sup>115</sup> Although we may concede that early Saudi women novelists had limited literary abilities, their presentations of the locations where they lived or studied in their novels should be considered a positive aspect of their literary technique. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Saudi male and female novelists have undoubtedly been influenced by celebrated Arabic-written and foreign-translated novels that are accepted as technically proficient by the critical establishment. Some critics have argued that the selection of alternative settings might be regarded as a necessary feature of a technically proficient novel. This is mainly because the portrayal of accurate details is considered a feature distinguishing Saudi women novelists from early male novelists such as Ghālib Ḥamza Abū al-Faraj – who wrote about Arabic and European cities, which he did not visit before writing his novels. This led to some inaccurate textual and contextual data, which negatively affected the appraisal of his work by literary critics.<sup>116</sup> This was an issue for various early Arabic novels, whose authors' main concern in selecting alternative settings was to imitate the style and format of foreign translated novels, or to enjoy the freedom to deal with sensitive issues in their novels, while avoiding conflict with Saudi social and cultural norms.<sup>117</sup> Hence, this comprehensive discussion will challenge traditional critical views on the artistic aspects and literary features of the pre-1980 Saudi women's novels in the wider context of Saudi literature.

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114 Dīb, p. 25., & Al-Sayyid, pp. 146-147.

115 Al-Sayyid, p. 99.

116 Dīb, p. 372.

117 Al-Nu' amī (2004), pp. 38-39., Al-Wahhābī, p. 74., & Badr, p. 146.

## 2.5 Approaches Adopted in this Thesis

Bakhtin asserts that “[t]he novel as a whole is a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice [...], and it also contains fairly wide ranging discussions on various religious, philosophical, political and scientific topics (on fate, omens, the power of Eros, human passions, tears and so forth).”<sup>118</sup> Indeed, the extraordinary flexibility and capacity of the novel to deal with and accommodate multiple issues, sub-themes, voices and various discourses that may collide has situated it as the appropriate literary form for Saudi female authors to tackle new themes. This is how the novel can make us think differently about reality. Genetic structuralism, founded and developed by Lucian Goldmann in the 1960s, is a sociological approach, as it lies within a wider Marxist framework. The aim of genetic structuralist theory is to determine the structural relations between the literary text and its global context, in order to clarify such questions and determine how a social class is reflected or expressed structurally through the “world vision” of the literary work.<sup>119</sup> There are four main reasons for adopting genetic structuralism for the analysis in this thesis, over other theories from the sociological domain or elsewhere. First, it allows the present thesis to analyze texts differently from feminist criticism, which has long neglected structuralist analysis and sought to understand texts solely through the lenses of history, biography, deconstruction and psychoanalysis. Thus, Goldmann’s approach illuminates the structural relations between the literary text and its social facts and contexts. Second, Goldmann’s approach overcomes the reliance on the biography of the writer adopted by feminist criticism as a means to link the text with its social context. It also rejects the exclusive focus of Freudian psychoanalysis on personality, which according to Goldmann provides only a

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118 M. Bakhtin, (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays* (University of Austin Press slavic series; no. 1). (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, pp. 88, 261.

119 T. Eagleton, (1976). *Marxism and literary criticism*. London, England: Methuen: (This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2006), p. 16.

partial understanding of the text, because biographical analysis and psychoanalysis are correlated with the individuality of the writer only. Instead, Goldmann addresses the consciousness of the characters in the literary work as part of the collective consciousness of a certain social group that the writer belongs to and which expresses their “world vision”, as detailed below.

Being informed by the German and Swiss analyzes of phenomenological, dialectical, existentialist, and epistemological thinkers such as Kant, Lukács, Marx, Hegel and Jean Piaget, Goldmann mostly excludes Freudian psychological analysis from his genetic structuralist approach, although elements of it are also a form of genetic structuralism.<sup>120</sup> The reason for his rejection of Freudian psychoanalysis is its exclusive focus on the personality and individuality of the literary writer. According to him “The essential difference between any dialectical sociology and Freudian thought seems to me to reside in the manner of conceiving the subject... Freud thought that the subject was always and everywhere an individual.”<sup>121</sup> For Goldmann, focusing on the psychological impacts of the formation of personality and the literary work of the writer is not sufficient to explain the structures, content, and underlying motivations of cultural production. He argues: “In most cases, the bringing to light of these [mental] structures and, implicitly, the comprehension of the work, can be achieved neither by immanent literary study nor by study directed towards the conscious intentions of the writer or towards the psychology of the unconscious, but only by research of the structuralist and sociological type.”<sup>122</sup> Thus, genetic structuralism does not neglect the significance of psychological influences in forming the personality of the writer and his/her literary productions. On the contrary, the relevant biographical and psychological background of the novelist are essential for Goldmann in providing partial interpretation,

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120 L. Goldmann, (1975). *Towards a sociology of the novel*. (A. Sheridan, Trans.). London, England: Tavistock Publications Ltd., pp. 157-159, 164.

121 M. Evens, (1975). *Lucien Goldmann's sociology of the novel in relation to the British novel 1940-1960*. (Ph.D. thesis, University of Sussex. Quoted in p. 103. Retrieved from: <http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?did=1&uin=uk.bl.ethos.454977>). Accessed, 21 June 2018.

122 L. Goldmann, (1967). *The sociology of literature: Status and problems of method*. *International Social Science Journal: The sociology of literary creativity: Methodology, problems, history*, published quarterly by UNESCO. Vol. XIX No. 4, p. 496.

albeit insufficient for a full explanation of the entire literary work.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, the principles of psychoanalysis have their limitations for the present analysis because this thesis examines a relatively new body of literature that has not yet been exhaustively analyzed.

The third reason is that genetic structuralism takes into consideration both the textual and the contextual aspects of the creative literary work, in contrast to theories such as formalism, structuralism and other approaches that take no account of context when dealing with texts. Therefore, this theory facilitates a more comprehensive exploration of the content of these novels against the backdrop of social, economic and political change. The fourth reason is that although genetic structuralism has been known in the Arab world since the 1970s, and it has been adopted by many researchers and critics in the field of the novel, it has not yet been applied in studies of Saudi fiction. Additionally, it has to be highlighted that Maghrebi scholars took the lead in adopting this approach due to the familiarity of many scholars including Labīb, Laḥmdānī, Bennis, and Barādā with French cultural studies, which has allowed them to deploy this approach to their studies of literature before their fellow Arab scholars in other regions of Middle East.

It therefore seems fruitful to adopt this approach to the analysis of texts from different cultural and social backgrounds to explore the thematic development of the Saudi women's novel alongside the development of Saudi society.

Marxists and other critics and philosophers, such as Taine (1893), Lukács (1971) and Ian Watt (1999), discern a close relationship between literature and reality. Fictional genres, for instance, are correlated with life outside literature, in their depictions of social, emotional, physical and metaphysical issues, while a literature that did not correspond to reality would

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123 I. Webb, (1981). *Social class and the tragic vision in Hardy's novels: An examination of Lucien Goldmann's genetic structuralism*. (Ph.D. thesis, the University of Lancaster, Lancaster. Retrieved from: <https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.291422>), pp. 47-48. Accessed, 21 June 2018., & L. Goldmann, (1976). *Hidden God*. (P. Thody, Trans.). London, England: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., p. 19.

be a self-enclosed entity.<sup>124</sup> Indeed, this is the idea that Goldmann, a self-labeled Marxist, seeks to affirm in his theory. In his methodology, he traces the rise and development of the European novel of the seventeenth and eighteenth century alongside the development of bourgeois society and capitalism. This notion has since been challenged by several literary critics, academics and sociologists. For example, one serious critical study of Goldmann's genetic structuralist approach to the novel is Mary Evans' PhD thesis titled *Lucien Goldmann's Sociology of the Novel in Relation to the British Novel 1940-1960*.<sup>125</sup> Evans observes that Goldmann's placement of the development of novels during the 1970s and 1980s in the context of the development of "bourgeois thought" amongst the intellectual elite in three European countries—France, England and Germany—does not hold true with regard to British history. Having attempted to apply Goldmannian theory to British novels to determine whether they had developed in parallel with the development of the intellectual elite or the literary intelligentsia in Britain, as in the case of the "nouveau roman" in France, Evans found that the theory seemed insufficient for the novels of the "Angry Young Men". Hence, she suggests that the development of the nouveau roman can be considered a response to the specific development of capitalism in French society and not a general feature of capitalism in all European communities. With respect to the worldview, Evans affirms that the Goldmannian genetic structuralist method in *The Hidden God*— whereby the comprehension and explanation both of the novel's structure and of the mental structures of a certain social group/class in a particular historical time period serve to reveal the world vision of the writer's social group/class and the existence of homologous relationships between the two structures— works more successfully on novels in Britain than does the direct developmental homology between the novel's structure and the historical development of

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124 M. Diskstein, (2005). *A mirror in the roadway: Literature and the real world*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 2, 14.

125 M. Evens, (1975). *Lucien Goldmann's sociology of the novel in relation to the British novel 1940-1960*. (Ph.D. thesis, University of Sussex. Retrieved from: <http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?did=1&uin=uk.bl.ethos.454977>). Accessed, 21 June 2018.

economic conditions in Western capitalist society expounded in *Towards a Sociology of the Novel*.<sup>126</sup>

Furthermore, although Goldmann was heavily influenced by Lukács's *Theory of the Novel*, it is important to briefly acknowledge that he reformed it, developed it and added several specific concepts and principles relating to sociological analysis. These were comprehensive in range, relating to comprehension, significant structure, homology, explanation, the problematic hero, world vision, possible consciousness and real consciousness, all of which served to distinguish his methodology from previous sociological theories. All of these concepts and principles feature in the analysis presented in this thesis to illuminate both the internal structure of the selected works and their external world structure.

### **2.5.1 Comprehension of the Novel**

Comprehension, the intellectual process with which the genetic structuralist method starts, focuses on understanding and analyzing the inner coherent and integrated structure, the “significant structure” of the literary text, in this case the novel. According to Goldmann, “comprehension is the bringing to light of a significant structure immanent in the object studied.”<sup>127</sup> After grasping its internal “coherence”, this understanding of the novel’s internal structure then needs interpretation. Thus, significant structure is explained only within the wider social structure of the writer and her/his social group or class, which is achieved by the “explanation” process. The notion that is associated with comprehension is the significance of the novel’s internal structure.

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<sup>126</sup> Webb, p. 11.

<sup>127</sup> Goldmann. (1967), p. 500.

### 2.5.2 Significant Structure

The significant structure of a particular literary work is its form seen as a function necessary for a given social group or a class because it embodies the structure of their thoughts, their ideology, or “world vision”. Goldmann and Boelhower affirm that literature, like all other human manifestations and activities, has its distinguishing form and establishes a “coherent” significant structure approximating to the thoughts, aspirations, hopes, views, ideas, values etc. shared by the members of a social group or class, which arise and are developed in response to specific economic, political and social conditions in their everyday lives.<sup>128</sup> For Goldmann, in the history of culture, significant structure is the principal research tool for understanding the human sciences. As a concept, though, it is based on the “virtual/potential” and “actual/real” tendencies of human reality both at the level of cultural creations and trans-individual subjects and at the level of the historical praxis relating to a certain social group/class.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, Goldmann asserts that this or that literary work is not created by the individual; rather, the writer is a transporter of his or her expression of the trans-individual mental structures or “group consciousness” of a social group or class. Thus, literature for Goldmann is the outcome of the highly developed “coherent” consciousness of the social group, the tendencies proper to the consciousness of a specific social group, a consciousness which must be conceived as a dynamic reality and not a reflection of a real and actual collective consciousness.<sup>130</sup>

With respect to the concept of coherence, Goldmann declares that it must include a future awareness or perspective of the social group/class; therefore, it is indeed one of the most important concepts associated with the world vision of that group. Goldmann, following other

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128 L. Goldmann, (1980). *Essays on method in the sociology of literature* (W. & Boelhower ,Trans.). St. Louis, MO: Telos press, p. 14., & Goldmann (1976). p. 18.

129 Goldmann (1980). p. 14.

130 A. Swingewood, (1975). *The novel and revolution*. London, England: The Macmillan Press Ltd., Quoted in p. 23.

Marxist literary critics, adopts the concept of coherence as an important criterion for valid literary expression, because it captures not only the actual but also the potential worldview of a given group or class.<sup>131</sup>

The Goldmannian concept of significant structure has been criticized by several sociologists and literary critics (Eagleton 1976; Orr 1977; Zima 1978; Evans 1981; Cohen 1994) as problematic and non-procedural due to its looseness and ambiguity. In these readings, Goldmann's analysis of novels adopts no internal criteria that can assist in grasping the concept of the internal structure of the literary work and its significance before launching into the homologous process of explanation at the level of the external world.<sup>132</sup>

Equally, among Arab literary critics, Laḥmdānī, for instance, argues that Goldmann's concept of significant structure is ambiguous in its generality, so the analysis of that structure lacks depth. Laḥmdānī responds to this weakness by adopting his own understanding of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism to analyze the text and obtain an understanding of the various relations and conflicts between social groups in the Goldmannian process of comprehension.<sup>133</sup> He thus observes that this theory is a procedural tool sufficient for analyzing the significant structure of the novel only at the level of Goldmann's comprehension.

However, due to the limitation of this precise aspect of the text-immanent analysis of narrative structure in Goldmann's approach, we will supplement Goldman's approach with Bakhtin's dialogism as a sufficient procedural tool in terms of analyzing and observing the concept of significance and its coherence in relation to its social context.<sup>134</sup> This is because in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Bakhtin affirms that each of the ideological signs

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131 Goldmann (1976). p. 17.

132 A. Law, & E. Lybeck, (eds.). (2015). *Sociological amnesia: Cross-currents in disciplinary history*. Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, pp. 111-112.

133 Ḥ. Laḥmdānī, (1984). *Min aḥl taḥlīl sīcio-binā'ī lil-rīwāya: al-mu'allim namoudhajan*. [A Socio-textual analysis for the Novel: al-Mu'allim as case study. The University press: Casablanca].

134 Ḥ. Laḥmdānī, (1990). *Al-naqd al-rīwā'ī wa al-Idiulūjia* [The Criticism of the Novel and the Ideology]. Beirut, Lebanon: Al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-'Arabī, pp. 48, 52.

observed in the text has its reference in reality. Thus, Bakhtin's dialogism can be considered a procedural tool enabling us to specify the nature of the inner structure and its coherence by analyzing the atomic elements of texts which, according to Goldmann, must be analyzed and grasped before moving on to the homology between the dialectically related internal and external structures. In addition, the intimate interconnections between these smaller parts mean that they should be invoked while explicating the holistic vision of the novel. The thesis will nonetheless take into consideration the contradiction that may arise between dialogism and the genetic structuralist approach in the particular point of reflection. For the former, Bakhtin assumes that literature is the embodiment of real events, rather than having a structure relatively independent of social reality. This is the notion that Goldmann rejects when, as mentioned above, he requires a homologous relationship to be established between the internal and external structures after analysis of the former.

### **2.5.3 World Vision**

The concept of world vision is an important criterion in genetic structuralist methodology; during the decades before Goldmann, sociologists such as Weber (1920), Mannheim (1947) and Lukács (1971) characterized it under the notion of "collective consciousness".<sup>135</sup> Goldmann used it to denote class/group consciousness; a wide and comprehensive view of society and of individuals' dynamic relationships and interactions with the surrounding reality, including their sufferings, thoughts and feelings, cannot be seen outside of this world vision. According to Goldmann, it is "a convenient term for the whole complex of ideas, aspirations and feelings which links together the members of a social group (a group which,

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135 Goldmann (1976). pp. 15, 19.

in most cases, assumes the existence of a social class) and which opposes them to members of other social groups.’’<sup>136</sup>

For the purpose of clarity, we have to differentiate here between two kinds of consciousness that Goldmann adopted from Lukács and which are correlated with the notion of world vision: “*the Real or the Actual Consciousness*” and “*the Possible, Virtual or Potential Consciousness*”, the latter being generated from the former.

The former is the consciousness that each member of a social group can to some extent achieve in their conflict with another social group or class and which varies from one person to another within the same social group or class. This real consciousness refers to their awareness of their aspirations, social problems, issues, emotions etc. However, it is incoherent, as it cannot offer solutions or awareness of the future in a worldview for the social group or class at a certain time in a given society. This is due to “the limitations and deviations that the actions of other social groups and natural and cosmic factors cause class consciousness to undergo.’’<sup>137</sup>

Accordingly, only certain skilled literary writers can grasp and present the worldview in their literary work. Those are precisely the exceptional individuals; philosophers, intellectuals, thinkers and writers who surpass actual consciousness and reach the stage of “possible consciousness (the maximum potential “complete” consciousness)”, which they can attain when they defend their group’s or class’s ideology and offer plausible solutions or an awareness of the future in their conflict with other opposing classes or groups in their world vision.<sup>138</sup>

With respect to the consciousness of the opposing ideology of the social class/group to which the writer belongs, Goldmann was also influenced by the notion of “true and false

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>137</sup> Goldmann (1976), p. 18., & L. Goldmann, (1969). *The Human sciences & philosophy*. (Trans. from French: Hayden V. White). London, England: Jonathan Cape Ltd., p. 118.

<sup>138</sup> Goldmann (1976), p. 17.

consciousness’’ as developed by Lukács. Thus, true consciousness is when the exceptional writers ‘‘of the possible consciousness’’ adopt the ideology which belongs to their social class or group in their conflicts with other social classes or groups. Conversely, false consciousness arises in members of a social class or group whose consciousness is restricted to the real/actual by the actions of the opposing social class or group, such as working class acceptance of the bourgeois notion of a free and just exchange of labor for wages, which leads to misunderstanding or illusion in their ordinary literary works. Writers with such a consciousness accordingly adopt an ideology that is foreign to their own social class or group.<sup>139</sup>

The phenomenon of false consciousness is not central to this thesis because it is not applicable to the generality of Saudi women’s novels. However, the themes of a small number of such novels do suggest that they could be classified as manifesting this kind of consciousness. Examples are al-Muhājira’s works, Qumāsha al-‘Ulayān’s *‘Uyūn Qadhira* (2005) and Sara al-Zāmil’s *al-Mir’ā al-Mun‘akisa* (2006)<sup>140</sup>, whose authors adopt themes which reinforce the masculine values that prevent them and their social group from realizing their essential rights, demands and desires, thus working against their own dreams and aspirations in Saudi society.

The world visions applicable to each of the three historical phases studied here are discussed sequentially in the analytical third, fourth and fifth chapters of this thesis.

#### **2.5.4 Homology**

Homology is represented as the core hypothesis of the Goldmannian method. Genetic structuralism seeks to identify the significant structures within each literary work and those external to it in the group, and is in essence a continual movement, a shuttling forwards and

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139 P. Jones, (2004). *Raymond Williams’s sociology of culture: A critical reconstruction*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, p.71.

140 See Appendix, pp. 241-254.

backwards from the text to the social structure of the writer's group. The literary work is analyzed continually in terms of parts and the whole.<sup>141</sup>

The role of the homologous process thus lies in explaining how the parallel relationship between the world vision in the literary work and the collective consciousness within a wide social and historical structure relates to a particular social group or class. Indeed, Goldmann deems "that the structures of the world of the work are homologous with the mental structures of certain social groups or in an intelligible relation with them, whereas on the level of content, that is to say, of the creation of the imaginary world governed by these structures, the writer has total freedom."<sup>142</sup> Further, he argues that the form of the novel, with its complex relations, has a correlation in its complexity to that of the social group or class in the everyday life experience within a capitalist society:

The novel form seems... to be *the transposition on the literary plane of everyday life in the individualistic society created by market production*. There is a *rigorous homology* between the literary form of the novel ... and the everyday relation between man and commodities in general, and by extension between men and other men, in a market society.<sup>143</sup>

This argument demonstrates the dialectical relations between the individual and their society that Goldmann attempts to replicate in his methodology.

Based on the above, there is a close parallel relationship between the internal structure of the literary work and the wide social and historical structure in a certain time and place, which is what Goldmann means by the homology of structures. Indeed, his method of analyzing homologous structures follows Marx's methodology. The interpretation process deals with

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141 Swingewood, pp. 24- 25.

142 Goldmann (1975). p. 159.

143 Ibid., p. 7.

the small details of the text, which are considered important while we examine the comprehensive view of the text as a whole in an iterative process.<sup>144</sup>

The analysis in Chapters Three, Four, and Five seeks to reveal the parallel relationships between the internal structures of the chosen novels and the structure of Saudi society in their respective historical phases. Goldmann intended the intellectual process of ‘explanation’ to identify the internal structures of the novels and thus to identify their unity or coherence. This intellectual process helps in ascertaining the parallel relationship between the internal literary structure and the wider social and historical structures extant in that particular time and place.

### **2.5.5 Explanation or Interpretation**

Concentrating on relating each novel’s internal structure to the broader external social and historical context of the writer and her/his social group or class enhances our understanding of how the novel’s significant structure relates to the world vision, thus illuminating the visions of the works as a whole. Explanation, according to Goldmann, “is nothing other than the incorporation of this structure, as a constituent element, in an immediately embracing structure, which the research worker does not explore in any detailed manner but only in so far as such exploration is necessary in order to render intelligible the genesis of the work which he/she is studying.”<sup>145</sup> Hence, comprehension and explanation focus on uncovering both textual and contextual elements. In this context, Goldmann admits that comprehension and explanation are not mutually distinct intellectual processes; rather, they have supplementary roles or functions related to different coordinates for analyzing and understanding literary work.<sup>146</sup> Thus, these two closely related intellectual processes can

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144 Swingewood, p. 25.

145 Goldmann (1967). p. 500.

146 Ibid., p. 500.

enable and enhance our analysis of Saudi women's novels more profoundly in terms of both the textual and contextual aspects, as we are studying a relatively new body of literature that has not been exhaustively analyzed. These two processes will contribute to our exploration of Saudi women's social and critical awareness of the major issues affecting them, their essential rights, demands and desires, their views of the world, the thematic development of their novels and the engagement of those novels with relevant historical praxis and facts.

### **2.5.6 Goldmann's Problematic Hero**

The concept of the "problematic hero" predates Goldmann; it was explored by sociologists such as Lukács, Heidegger and René Girard, all of whom have influenced Goldmann. To these philosophers, including Goldmann, the novel is the story of the search for authentic values in a degraded and therefore inauthentic world by a problematic hero.<sup>147</sup> Further, although the story of the problematic hero is that of bourgeois realism and society, the novel must reject the "degraded" bourgeois values of a materialistic society whose capitalist nature renders the relationship of the individual with that of their society neither meaningful nor human, but rather an exchange value relationship. Consequently, Goldmann cites the problematic hero as a mad man or a criminal whose search for authentic values in a degraded and inauthentic society formulates the content of the novel, the parallel literary universe, which the writer creates in a particular society. To achieve the authentic values and meaning of the kind of life that has disappeared in this society, the hero of the novel must be in conflict with the society itself.<sup>148</sup> Furthermore, Muḥammad 'Azzām (1992) and Ṭāha Wādī (2002) assert that the problematic heroes of the Arabic novel, who aim to address the problems and concerns of their social group in the face of obstacles erected by the opposing group, should be either emancipated or rebellious. Emancipated heroes are educated in the

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<sup>147</sup> Goldmann (1975). pp. 3, 6.

<sup>148</sup> Goldmann (1975). p. 2., & Swingewood, pp.26-28.

West<sup>149</sup> and are influenced by its culture and humanistic values, while the rebellious ones acquire similar values, which are largely inexistent in their own society, through their readings and study. Therefore, we adopt their vision to see whether it is compatible with the problematic heroes/heroines of Saudi women's novels.

In concluding this section, it is worth mentioning that the adoption of genetic structuralism as the framework for this thesis is not intended to suggest that it offers a complete model for literary analysis, or that it is the only valid theory in the field of human sciences. Rather, its adoption stems from its originality and the novelty of its applicability to literary analysis of the Saudi narrative works discussed in this thesis. This justifies the hope that it will illuminate the investigation of Saudi women's novels and promote the understanding of their thematic engagement with their social milieu, and of their development in terms of both the thematic and artistic features of the periods in question. In common with other humanistic approaches and theories, Goldmannian theory has faced sharp and profound criticism by several literary critics and sociologists. However, this is considered a natural process outside the pure science domain and does not mean that genetic structuralism should be abandoned or neglected. Rather, we should apply it carefully, firstly because SA differs socially, politically and historically from France. The latter has great historical and global status as a colonial and capitalist power, while the former, despite now being a significant regional power and one of the world's foremost oil producers with a high-performing economy, is not yet classified as a fully developed capitalist country and is distinguished by the regulatory nature of its monarchical constitution. Hence, we apply the theory to texts produced against a background ideologically, culturally, and socially dissimilar to that in which it was formulated. Secondly,

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149 We may include the Arab countries in our assumption in the case of SA novels in general, as both 'Azzām and Wādī refer mainly to Egyptian and Lebanese novels. See: M. 'Azzām, (1992). *Al-baṭal Al-ishkālī fī Al-rivāya al-'Arabīyya al-mu'āshira* [The Problematic Hero in the Contemporary Arabian Novel]. Damascus: Al-Ahālī, pp. 12, 17, & T. Wādī, (2002). *Adabīyyāt al-rivāya al-siyāsīyya* [Literature of the Political Novel]. Cairo: al-Sharka al-Maṣriyya al-'alāmiyya linnashr- longman.pp. 20-22.

Arabic creative texts in general have always been characterized by their “exceptionalism” compared to the Western literature with regard to their treated issues, themes concerns and questions.<sup>150</sup> This is compounded here by gender issues related to Saudi women’s novels, which add further layers of exceptionalism in Saudi society. Accordingly, we cannot apply the theory here exactly as Goldmann did to the French novel, due to the distinct differences between the Saudi female novelists and writers such as André Malraux, Pascal, Racine or Alain Robbe-Grillet. Therefore, the analysis of these novels will serve to illuminate the advantages and limitations of the theoretical approach adopted.

The Goldmannian method was first adopted in *The Hidden God*, in which Goldmann analyzes Racine’s plays and Pascal’s philosophical works, while the other closely related aspect of this methodology that is mainly associated with the novel is posited in his second book, *Towards a Sociology of the Novel*, focusing on the development of form. Goldmann argues that the form of the novel has developed in response to social changes in Western capitalist economies in general and that “the collective consciousness gradually loses all active reality and tends to become a mere reflection of the economic life and, ultimately, to disappear.”<sup>151</sup>

According to Webb, Goldmann thus abandons the concept of homology between the structure of the collective consciousness and the structure of the novel, as he argues that the novel is no longer the imaginary transposition of the collective conscious structure of a particular social group. It is rather a direct transposition of the economic life into creative life, without the mediating concept of world vision.<sup>152</sup> Webb asserts that Goldmann himself recognized the deficiency of this approach, noting that when he died he was “engaged in research into the plays of Jean Genet, based on precisely the same kind of genetic structuralist method he had

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150 Laḥmdānī (1990). p. 46.

151 Goldmann (1975). p. 11.

152 Webb, p. 62.

previously used in the *Hidden God*.’’<sup>153</sup> Although Goldmann did not clearly state why he had neglected the other approach, according to Werke ‘‘the work on Genet, brief though it is, indicates far greater potential than his analyzes of the modern novel.’’<sup>154</sup>

With regard to the Saudi novel, we may agree with the Goldmannian notion and methodology, as both the emergence and the development of the novel occurred by means of the Saudi bourgeois elites, regardless of gender. However, this was a consequence of specific social transformations in SA, rather than the changes to Western capitalist economies identified by Goldmann. Additionally, there could be a direct homology between the structure of a novel and the collective group consciousness in this particular society, as will be investigated later in this thesis.

With respect to the methodology, the present study uses both of the above methodologies, adopting Goldmann’s original analytical method in *The Hidden God* as the main tool for investigating the selected novels. This methodology, based on the two Goldmannian intellectual analytical notions of comprehension and explanation, will help to identify and explore the world vision of the social group or class in the Saudi female novel at a specific time and place. The second and complementary methodological approach will seek to determine the thematic development of Saudi women’s novels as a result of their engagement with the societal transformations occurring during the historical phases concerned. Hence, these two closely related aspects of Goldmann’s methodology will help to identify the worldviews expressed in Saudi women’s novels and to analyze the thematic developments consequential on their engagement with the said social transformations.

The analysis of the novels’ internal and external structures will be based on two related and mutually reinforcing practical tools: *descriptive* and *analytical*. To understand the internal structure of each novel, we will first analyze its theme, then describe the formal element of its

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p.74.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p.74.

problematic hero, following Goldmann, alongside the world vision of the literary creation. This method will allow us to analyze the whole and the parts of the texts, then, in turn, the coherent structure of the selected samples and their world visions. After identifying and exploring the internal coherence of these world visions, we will seek to explain this internal structure. According to Goldmann, “[o]nce the research worker has advanced as far as possible in the search for the internal coherence of the work and its structural model, he must direct himself towards explanation.”<sup>155</sup>

To explain these novels, this study adopts the methodology by which Goldmann investigated the world visions of Pascal and Racine. As he did, we will shift our focus to the description and analysis of the socio-political, socioeconomic and socio-religious conditions in SA during the chosen historical phases and of the relevant biographical details of the novelists concerned.

The social transformations that have occurred in SA since the discovery of oil in 1938, in response to certain historical moments, have profoundly affected every dimension of life, including ideology, standards of living, cultural and social lifestyles, customs, traditions and relations with neighboring countries. Chapter One sets the study against the background of the historical, political, social and economic conditions in SA and discusses how they have affected Saudi society. These pages are referred to when needed in the analytical chapters in order to present the thematic engagement clearly while avoiding potential interruption of the analysis. Furthermore, although Goldmann did not consider psychological and biographical factors sufficient for the complete understanding of literature, he maintained a belief in the fundamental validity of Pascalian epistemological and dialectical thought, which Pascal summarizes by asserting “that it is impossible to know the parts without knowing the whole,

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155 Goldmann (1967). p. 506.

and to know the whole without knowing the parts''.<sup>156</sup> Therefore, the biographical background of the novelists might be useful in deepening the understanding of their novels, especially those written before the 1980s. In these cases, the novelists' experiences are treated by some literary critics in SA as individual, foreign and anomalous because they wrote their novels abroad, as discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3).

By concentrating on both textual and contextual factors, these Goldmannian tools facilitate this study's aim of describing and analyzing the thematic engagement and development in Saudi women's novels within their social and historical framework, by examining the theme and the problematic hero articulated in the internal structure of each chosen novel to identify its world vision. Further, by allowing us to trace the significant historical events and the seismic transformations in Saudi society, they will reveal the homologous structure by explaining the internal structure within the wider external one.

The division of the timeframe into three phases (1958-1989, 1990-2004 and 2005-2016) corresponds to the various world visions in each historical phase: the first features a *tragic* world vision, the second a *bewildered and pessimistic* vision and the third a *critical* vision. In fact, the effect of the aforementioned factors is seen in social transformations in terms of lifestyles, traditions, old superseded concepts, and the ideological and intellectual climate of ordinary Saudi individuals. Furthermore, the impact of these historic events and their social consequences are apparent in the concerns of the different generations. These are reflected in the diverse world visions and the extraordinary thematic developments and diversity evident in the Saudi women's novel of the specified time periods, as this thesis will show.

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<sup>156</sup> Goldmann (1976). p. 167.

## 2.6 Corpus of Novels under Analysis

This section justifies the selection of the sample of novels analyzed in this study, adding the selection of novels as a third methodological tool in addition to the two practical tools, the descriptive and analytical. In order to ensure a profound discussion and robust analysis of the topic, it was essential to choose a representative sample of novels. It is acknowledged that this choice raises questions of objectivity and subjectivity; however, the following are the main practical criteria that informed the selection:

A. To begin by listing chronologically all Saudi women's novels published between 1958 and 2016 (Appendix pp. 241-254)<sup>157</sup>, in order to identify all Saudi female novelists active during that period and to establish the total number of novels written by them. More specifically, the list includes every novel written by a woman whose nationality is SA, regardless of her place of birth or cultural background, or the extent to which Saudi society features in her novels. Thus, Samīra Khāshugjī and Hudā al-Rasheed, for instance, who have spent much of their lives in Europe, Egypt and Lebanon, and most of whose novels accordingly depict settings, characters and events set apart from Saudi society, are nonetheless regarded as Saudi novelists and their novels as part of Saudi literature. To include neither stories nor novels that cannot be classified as novels according to the artistic characteristics accepted by Arab and Western literary critics, even if their authors present them as novels.

B. To include neither novelists who have written only one novel, nor more than one novel by the same novelist for the analysis in each chapter. The first of these two exclusions alleviates the difficulty of selecting from the enormous number of published novels, especially in the post-2001 period, which has witnessed what can be called “the Saudi

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<sup>157</sup> The comprehensive list of these novels was compiled by the reliance on *The Saudi literary bibliography* by Khalid al-Yousof.

novelistic boom”. The second exclusion helps to make the study more comprehensive by broadening the range of novelists included.

C. To include neither novels that do not feature problematic protagonists, such as biographical works and those with positive or negative protagonists, nor non-polyphonic novels that are based on one ideological voice, as this can constrain the analysis in identifying ideological conflicts among social groups and their world visions.

D. To identify the recurrent main themes of the novels of each of the three historical phases, then to choose the two most strongly recurrent themes in each phase for the purpose of analysis.

The selection of themes for the purpose of the analysis was not easy, due to the diverse range of themes in the vast number of novels produced during the period under study. However, the process was useful in demonstrating how novelists’ worldviews change over the years within the chosen themes. The method also enabled the inclusion of different themes which deepened the understanding of recent Saudi history and offered a unique insight into the lives and experiences of Saudi women.

It is noteworthy that none of the chosen novels has yet been translated into English; therefore, the translations offered are the present researcher’s own. For the purpose of clarity, the thesis uses transliterations of the novelists’ names and translations for the quoted texts. The six selected novels are these:

- *Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū* [Tear Drops] by Samīra Khāshugjī (1973).
- *Lā ‘āsha Qalbī* [May My Heart No Longer Live] by Amal Shaṭa (1989).
- *‘Uyūn ‘ala al-samā* [Eyes on the Sky] by Qumāsha al-‘Ulayyān (1999).
- *Mazāmīr min Waraq* [Paper Flutes] by Nidā Abū ‘Alī (2003).
- *Sitr* [Covering] by Rajā ‘Ālim (2005).
- *Al-Urjūha* [The Swing] by Badriyya al-Bishr (2010).

The number of novels selected for analysis also requires justification. The Saudi women's novels published during the first two phases, 1958-1989 and 1990-2004, are limited both in number and in variety of sub-themes and visions, despite the considerable length of time covered. By contrast, those of the third phase, from 2005-2016, are considerably richer in the diversity of their themes and visions, and very much more numerous. Notably, 116 were published between 2005 and 2010, representing a major proportion of the output of the third phase, as detailed in Chapter Five. This abundance marks the rooting of certain ideologies that Saudi women sought to convey in their writings. Therefore, the thesis addresses the research questions by concentrating on the outputs of this period, following the above criteria, with the hope of achieving a sufficiently deep analysis to reveal the rooted and recurring ideological views conveyed by the novels during this relatively short time.

## 2.7 Literature Review

### 2.7.1 Critique: Studies of Saudi Novels

The number of studies related to the Saudi female novel in general has increased alongside the gradual increase in the number of Saudi women novelists and their deliberate choice of the novel as a means of self-expression. Some of these studies have focused on the women's novel only, while others have addressed it in only one or two chapters. What follows is a discussion of the most significant of such studies, beginning with those that consider both male and female writers.<sup>158</sup>

Al-Sayyid Muḥammad Dīb's 1989 book, *Fann al-Riwāya fī al-Mamlaka al-'Arabiyya al-Sa'ūdiyya bayn al-Nash'a wa al-Taṭawwur* (*The Novel in Saudi Arabia: Emergence and Development*), might be considered the first important and comprehensive attempt to study the Saudi fiction.<sup>159</sup> It investigates Saudi novels from 1930 to 1989 and having considered their features and publication dates, Dīb divides the emergence and development of the Saudi novel into three stages: first attempts, self-assertion, and development and modernization. The book is in two parts: theoretical and applied. The first discusses the emergence and development of the Saudi novel, while the second is devoted to thematic and literary analysis of the social, didactic, political, emotional and historical aspects of selected Saudi novels, including six written by women. Dīb excludes some male and female novels from this analysis, asserting that they lack artistic value and technique, and he does not differentiate between novels and short stories.

The book fails to recognize the important role of female authors in the emergence and development of the Saudi novel, for two significant reasons. The first simply relates to its

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<sup>158</sup> These studies are ordered chronologically.

<sup>159</sup> A. Dīb, (1989). *Fann al-riwāya fī al-mamlaka al-'Arabiyya al-Sa'ūdiyya bayn al-nash'ah wa al-ṭaṭawwur* [The Novel in Saudi Arabia: Emergence and Development] (1st ed.). Cairo: Al-Maktaba Al-Muhammadiyya.

date of the publication (1989); since then, many more Saudi women have written novels, some of which have greatly influenced the development of the Saudi novel in general. For instance, Rajā al-Sanea's *Banāt al-Riyādh* (2005) is seen as marking a turning point in the history of the genre according to some Saudi literary critics. These include 'Abdullah al-Ghadhdhāmī and Sāleḥ al-Ghāmdī, who show that subsequent novels tackle new themes and issues which are global in their approach, as well as culturally and socially sensitive in their treatment of taboo topics. Secondly, Dīb's approach is to critique Saudi women's works on the same terms as those of Saudi men, although the latter started writing novels much earlier. Dīb's methodology therefore prevents him from acknowledging the important role of Saudi women in the emergence and development of the Saudi novel. The period he covers is considered one of the thematic and artistic developments and improvements for Saudi men's novels, while marking only the beginning of the Saudi women's fiction.

The first Saudi men's novel is generally agreed to be *Al-Taw'amān*, published by Abdul-Quddūs al-Anṣārī in 1930, while the origin of the Saudi women's novel is still debated by literary critics, in terms of historical and thematic considerations which will be explained below. The Saudi women's novel which most closely parallels the emergence of the first men's novel was *Wadda'tu Āmālī* by Samīra Khāshugjī in 1958.

If we accept 1958 as marking the beginning of the Saudi women's novel, there are about thirty years separating it from the beginnings of the men's novel, during which the thematic and artistic aspects of the latter developed greatly. For example, Ḥāmid Damanhūrī's *Thaman al-Taḍhiya* (1959) reflects considerable developments since *Al-Taw'amān* in 1930. However, Dīb notes the limited artistic features of early Saudi women's novels, at a time when the artistic merits of Saudi male novels were improving noticeably. He asserts that the literary value of female novels was weak, with the single exception of Hudā al-Rasheed's *Ghadan Sayakūn al-Khamīs*: (*Tomorrow Will be Thursday*, 1976), which might be considered unique

among women's novels of its time. Dīb also argues that women's themes are generally emotional and didactic. He considers Samīra Khāshugī to be a specialist in the “emotional novel” due to her romantic style, but he does not acknowledge that certain limitations of artistic, thematic and technical range are inevitable, given that this was the beginning of the genre, whereas Saudi men had been writing novels for thirty years longer.

In these two ways, Dīb underrates the significant role that female authors have played in the emergence of the Saudi women's novel and thus in the overall development of the Saudi novel.

Covering the same time period as Dīb's book, Sulṭān al-Qaḥṭānī's thesis *The Novel in Saudi Arabia: Emergence and Development 1930–1989: A Historical and Critical Study*<sup>160</sup> traces the emergence of the Saudi novel in general, regardless of the authors' gender. It identifies the reasons for the rise of this genre in the 1980s as the ultimate result of the development of education, printing, journalism, and publishing as well as the coming of age of the Saudi intelligentsia. Al-Qaḥṭānī emphasizes that these factors underlie the appearance and the development of the Saudi women's novel in the 1980s, as they were the only educational and literary influences that promoted the development of SA literature in general and the novel in particular during that time. For example, according to the author, at the start of the period, Saudi schools and universities included sample novels in their curricula, as well as specific examples of published prose, such as short stories and novellas. Al-Qaḥṭānī, like other literary critics including Dīb, evaluates the artistic merit of written works and excludes some novels, both male and female, which he judges as lacking artistic merit. For instance, he ignores completely the novels of Samīra Khāshugī because they allegedly neither depict Saudi society accurately nor represent the lived reality of Saudi women.

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160 S. Al-Qaḥṭānī, (1994). *The novel in Saudi Arabia: Emergence and development 1930–1989: A historical and critical study*. (Ph.D. thesis, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK). Retrieved from: <https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.261678>. Accessed, 20 June 2016.

However, al-Qaḥṭānī predicts that the Saudi novel will greatly improve both thematically and artistically, and that future novelists will present original romantic themes and realistic treatments, thanks to the social and cultural transformation of Saudi society and the increased number of citizens attending home and foreign higher education institutions, enabling them to discover new knowledge and explore different cultures. Indeed, since the appearance of these two studies, Saudi authors, both male and female, have published many more novels. The Saudi women's novel in particular has developed both artistically and thematically in the intervening decades.

In 2004, Ḥasan al-Nu'āmī published *Raj' al-Baṣar: Qirā'āt fī al-Riwāya al-Sa'ūdiyya (The Return of Vision: Readings in the Saudi Novel)*,<sup>161</sup> a short book which discusses some important issues related to Saudi novels in general, regardless of the gender of their authors. He focuses mainly on the novels of the 1990s and part of the following decade, identifying the styles, techniques, and characteristics that distinguish them from those of the 1980s. He also discusses various features of Saudi novels, noting that the majority of Saudi novelists came from villages and tend to idealize village life. According to him, the main cities of the Hejaz region, the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and the port city of Jeddah, together embody the concept of urbanization and jointly represent “the city”. The city is therefore religious, reflecting Mecca and Medina, and also commercial and ethnically diverse, reflecting the port of Jeddah. Other Saudi cities, by contrast, tend to perpetuate village lifestyle and traditions, so it is normal for novelists who have lived outside of the main cities of the Hejaz, such as Nūra al-Ghāmdī, Abdulaziz Mishrī and 'Abdu Khāl, to idealize village life, traditions and customs, whereas novelists such as Rajā 'Ālim, Mahmūd Trāwrī and 'Abdullah al-Ta'zī, who live in urbanized areas, also idealize the city life which they know.

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161 Ḥ. Al-Nu'āmī, (2004). *Raj' al-Baṣar: Qirā'āt fī al-riwāya al-Sa'ūdiyya* [The Return of Vision: Readings in the Saudi Novel]. (1st ed.). Jeddah, KSA: The Cultural Literary Club.

Another important feature of the Saudi novel that al-Nu‘amī highlights is the absence of oil as a major theme, despite its historical importance in the social and cultural transformation of Saudi society since its discovery in 1938. He suggests that the reason may be that Saudi citizens have not yet understood the significance of oil in their everyday lives.

It is noteworthy that the author focuses on Saudi women’s novelistic discourse, in a section entitled *Khiṭāb al-Iqṣā’ wa al-Iḥlāl fī al-Riwāya al-Nisā’iyya al-Sa‘ūdiyya (The Discourse of Exclusion and Substitution in the Saudi Women’s Novel)*. This analysis is predicated on the assumption that what inspires Saudi women novelists is their oppression by the dominance of a social, political and cultural patriarchy. Accordingly, al-Nu‘amī’s main concerns are twofold: first, the exclusion of the real setting and the substitution of the alternative setting in the narrative discourse, which enacts the exclusion of women from power in reality; second, the exclusion of men and the substitution of women in the narrative discourse.

Later, in 2013, al-Nu‘amī published *Ba‘ḍ al-Ta’wīl: Muqārabāt fī Khiṭāb al-Sard (An Interpretation: Approaches to Novelistic Discourse)*,<sup>162</sup> a collection of academic papers on issues related to the Saudi novel in general, in which he discusses various discourses and their dimensions in terms of the key themes and issues in Saudi novelistic texts. For example, he briefly examines the cultural discourse of ‘the other’, religious and racial discourses and other topics in the Saudi novel. He also discusses, among other things, the ideological discourse between the novel and the cinema, and the historic turning point of the Saudi novel.

The most important chapter in this book for this present study is *The Saudi Women’s Novel between Two Conditions: Historical and Thematic*. Historically, al-Nu‘amī defends the claim that the Saudi women’s novel began in the 1980s rather than the 1960s, as Saudi women of the 1960s had barely begun to be educated and to overcome the illiteracy which had

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162 H. Al-Nu‘amī, (2013). *Ba‘ḍ al-Ta’wīl: Muqārabāt fī khiṭāb al-sard* [An Interpretation: Approaches to Novelistic Discourse]. (1st edn.) Riyadh, KSA: The Literary Club.

precluded them from authorship. Al-Nu‘amī states that the Saudi process of education requires at least twenty years’ practice for the acquisition of literary taste and writing skills. All female novelists during that time had obtained their education from abroad. More to the point, for reasons more fully explained in Chapter Two (Section 2.3) and Chapter Three (Section 3.2), women and girls in SA did not receive the right to study in the public system until 1960, under a royal decree establishing girls’ schools. Therefore, notwithstanding the publication of a few novels written by Saudi women, al-Nu‘amī argues that it would be illogical to designate the 1960s as representing the emergence of the Saudi women’s novel, in a society where women were only just learning to read and write. Writing a novel requires not only literacy, but skills of composition, a wealth of knowledge and complex ideas, which Saudi women were on the whole lacking at that time. Saudi women’s novels before 1980 were the product of foreign culture and society.

Al-Nu‘amī thus contends that Saudi women’s fiction prior to 1980 did not thematically represent the nature of Saudi society and that the novelists did not represent the reality of Saudi women, as neither were generated by the cultural, social and educational nature of Saudi society. For instance, the events, characters and settings of Saudi women’s novels of the 1960s and 1970s were those of other societies, because the authors’ experiences were individual and foreign, obtained during their sojourn abroad. Accordingly, al-Nu‘amī designates the 1980s as the starting point for the Saudi women’s novel, marking the appearance of the first of them to be born of the Saudi environment, such as *Ghadan Ansā* (*Tomorrow I Will Forget*) by Amal Shaṭā in 1980 and *Arba ‘a Ṣifr* (Four/ Zero) by Rajā ‘Ālim in 1987.

As to the themes discussed in Saudi women’s novels, al-Nu‘amī states that one of the most common themes is “man”. Indeed, he contends that the use of this theme has become repetitive and that successive novels reiterate the same few messages; he therefore urges

Saudi female novelists to be aware of this repetition and abandon it in favor of generating new perspectives.

Each of the studies examined so far has dedicated only a single chapter to the Saudi women's novel. However, many others have dealt exclusively with female novelists and the most significant of these will be discussed in the following section.

### 2.7.2 Critique: Studies of Saudi Female Novels

There has been a clear increase in the number and output of Saudi women novelists in recent years. They have adopted the novel as a means to explore not only matters germane to themselves, such as women's rights, social and cultural marginalization, and alienation within the Saudi community, but also more general political, cultural, social and global issues. This significant breadth of thematic range has attracted researchers to investigate the Saudi female novel separately from the Saudi novel in general. In fact, most such critical studies have taken as the domain of analysis a single aspect, theme or issue, such as a social, cultural or artistic phenomenon. This section discusses these studies chronologically.

In 2008, Sāmi Juraidī published *Al-riwāya al-nisā'iyya al-Sa'ūdiyya: Khiṭāb al-mar'a wa-tashkīl al-Sard* (*The Saudi Women's Novel: Female Discourse and Narrative Formation*),<sup>163</sup> aiming to discuss all significant elements of narrative formation in Saudi female novelistic discourse from 1958 to 2008 by applying the psychological theory of stream of consciousness. The author therefore focuses on elements of language, events, setting, and characters to discover the novelists' awareness of the issues explored in the female discourse. Juraidī also notes their use of professional narrative techniques such as monologue to shape

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163 S. Juraidī, (2012). *Al-riwāya al-nisā'iyya al-Sa'ūdiyya: Khiṭāb al-mar'a wa-tashkīl al-sard* [The Saudi Women's Novel: Female Discourse and Narrative Formation]. (2nd ed.). Beirut, Lebanon: Mu'asasat Dār Al-Intishār.

their narration, and addresses the impact of political, social, psychological, and geographical issues on the Saudi female novel.

In the second section of the book, Juraidī discusses the factors determining the emergence and development of the Saudi female novel prior to and during the three novelistic stages of the five decades covered by his study. In discussing these factors, he considers the first and second Gulf wars and the Riyadh bombings of 2003 to be the main political events shaping the narrative settings through the characters of the novels throughout the entire five decades. Juraidī treats other social, cultural, and economic factors similarly in this section, with the aim of explaining their significance in forming the setting for the female narration. In the same context, he names the final novelistic phase ‘the women’s novel revolution’, giving as his reasons the novelists’ adoption of new feminist themes and issues, along with new narrative techniques and styles.

The most significant finding of Juraidī’s study is that Saudi female novelists have utilized the new professional narrative techniques to explore their issues and the political factors that have motivated them and to shape their narrative setting. The study is considered valuable in the field of Saudi literary criticism because it constitutes a serious attempt to examine and critique the artistic structure of the Saudi female novel over the whole fifty years of its existence to the study’s date.

In 2009, the Literary Club of Riyadh published *Al-Riwāya al-Nisā’iyya al-Sa’ūdiyya: Qirā’a fī al-Tārīkh, wa al-mawḍū’, wa al-Qadhiyya, wa al-Fann* (*The Saudi Female Novel: Readings in History, Themes, the Women Question and Art*) by Khalid al-Rifā’ī.<sup>164</sup> Its purpose was to offer a general overview of four aspects of the Saudi female novel during its half century of existence. It looks into its history, themes, its handling of the issue of women and the status of the genre itself. In the introduction, al-Rifā’ī admits the limitations and

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164 K. Al-Rifā’ī, (2009). *Al-riwāya al-nisā’iyya al-sa’ūdiyya: Qirā’a fī al-tārīkh, wa al-mawḍū’, wa al-qadhiyya, wa al-fann* [The Saudi Female Novel: Readings in History, Themes, the Women Question and Art] (1st ed.) Riyadh, KSA: The Literary Club.

shortcomings of his treatment because of the variety of themes, issues and artistic structure among the novels published over such a long period.

Introducing the chapter on themes, al-Rifā'ī declares that he will address only some very broad ones, limiting his analysis to emotional, didactic, social, Islamic and insurrectionary novels. He states that 'Saudi women's novels can accommodate other big themes, such as political, historical, philosophical, adventure ... novels, but we limited our study to investigating specific novels and according to a specific view as well'.<sup>165</sup> A further limitation is in the number of novels illustrating each theme. Al-Rifā'ī discusses the didactic theme, for instance, as represented in just two novels by a single author, and none of the novels he chooses were published after 9/11.

Because al-Rifā'ī's study addresses all of the aforementioned aspects of the four observed novelistic stages, it suffers from not distinguishing between issues and themes. For example, the author writes about emotion and love twice: in section one of chapter one (The Emotional Novel), and in the section on 'the independent issue of love' in the second chapter, which is devoted to feminist issues. This mixing of the themes of love and emotion creates some confusion in differentiating between the two and is an illustration of the author's attempt to cover too wide a range of women's issues and aspects of feminism.

Al-Rifā'ī's most significant achievement is the light he casts on the Saudi female novel, providing a clear overview of all of its aspects, including its history, themes, issues and genre throughout the period covered. This study is an important contribution to its field, and a serious improvement on critical studies in the field of the Saudi female novel, where such chronological studies are small in number.

It is important to state here that the Saudi female novel emerged as an independent field of study as recently as 2005, and that most of the studies in that field have taken a feminist

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

perspective and have focused narrowly on feminist themes and issues, although many have titles suggesting that they are about the women's novel more generally. The remainder of this chapter reviews the most significant of these studies.

The first study on the Saudi women's novel from a feminist perspective is *Women's Novel in Saudi Arabia: Its Emergence and Development in a Changing Culture*, by 'Abdulrahman al-Wahhābī.<sup>166</sup> The thesis analyzes Saudi feminist novels in three stages from 1960 to 2002, and includes a short section on post-9/11 women's novels, referring specifically to the impact of the second Gulf war and discussing the style and structure of some of the novels.

The author emphasizes the impact of historical and ideological developments on Saudi society, which seems apparent in the feminist themes and issues addressed by Saudi women novelists. An important part of his analysis relates to the historical development of Saudi women's status prior to 9/11, such as their rights to study and work. In addition, al-Wahhābī points to the oil boom of the 1960s and 1970s, and its positive and dramatic role in changing Saudi society as a whole. He also acknowledges that contemporary Saudi women's novels address new themes and issues reflecting the changes affecting Saudi society after the second Gulf war; however, he neither engages with these new themes and issues, nor treats the impact of 9/11 as a major factor, because of his principal focus on pre-9/11 novels. The main significance of this work lies in its status as the first critical study to solely focus on and examine the Saudi women's novel from a feminist perspective.

*Ṣūrat al-Rajūl fī al-Riwāya al-Naswiyya al-Sa'ūdiyya 1963-2008 (The Image of the Man in the Saudi Feminist Novel 1963–2008)* by Mansūr al-Muhawwis, published in 2008,<sup>167</sup> is more comprehensive, as it attempts to investigate the cultural patterns of the image of the man. Al-Muhawwis undertakes feminist and cultural criticism to explore the opinions that women

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166 'A. Al-Wahhābī, (2005). *Women's novel in Saudi Arabia: Its emergence and development in a changing culture*. (PhD. thesis, the University of Manchester, Manchester, UK). Reterived from: <https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.496392>. Accessed 12 June 2016.

167 M. Al-Muhawwis, (2008). *Ṣūrat al-Rajūl fī al-Riwāya al-Naswiyya al-Sa'ūdiyya 1963-2008* [The Image of the Man in the Saudi Feminist Novel 1963–2008] (1st ed.). Riyadh, KSA: Mu'assasat Al-Yamāma Al-Thaqāfiyya.

hold of men and the views that female novelists reflect in their novels. The author divides the development of the Saudi feminist novel into three stages, based on its artistic features: from 1958 to 1969, from 1970 to 1979 and from 1980 to 2005. A significant element in this study concerns the appearance of features that distinguish the third stage from the previous two. The author claims that almost all of the considerable number of women's novels of this extensive stage tackle women's issues from a feminist perspective. The book is one of the most important sources in this particular context because, in addition to the above contributions, it addresses the aesthetic composition of man's image through the elements of character, time and place between 1963 and 2008.

Appearing two years later, *Nisā' bilā Ummahāt: al-Dhawāt al-Unthawiyya fī al-Riwāya al-Nisā'iyya al-Sa'ūdiyya* (*Women without Mothers: Female Selves in the Saudi Feminist Novel*) by Samāhir al-Dāmin<sup>168</sup> is another very significant source on this subject. This is because the study attempts to appraise and elucidate the development and transformation of the female self-consciousness of the feminist discourse by applying feminist criticism to analyze its core features, themes and issues. It is mainly concerned with the period since the 1990s, but al-Dāmin begins her examination in 1958, with the appearance of the first Saudi women's novel, in order to investigate the emergence of the self-consciousness of feminist discourse and to trace the transformations of that discourse throughout the entire five decades. The two main themes of the study are that of the culturally victimized personality and that of social and cultural alienation.

Al-Dāmin examines the range of issues raised in Saudi women's discourse over the period of the study, using the differences among them to divide the novelists into four categories. The first group is those who treat their issues as separate from the feminist perspective. The second comprises novelists who appear to retain patriarchal values when tackling their issues,

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168 S. Al-Dāmin, (2010). *Nisā' bilā ummahāt: al-dhawāt al-unthawiyya fī al-riwāya al-nisā'iyya al-sa'ūdiyya* [Women without Mothers: Female Selves in the Saudi Feminist Novel] (1st ed.). Hail, KSA: The Literary Club.

despite their awareness of feminism. Novelists in the third category present multiple and varied issues and themes, while the novels of the fourth group deal with romantic relationships between the two genders. A point of interest here is that the focus of the study is on the first of these categories.

Another study which has merit in the context of the feminist novel is *Development of Awareness: the Power of Society and Men in the Saudi Women's Novel (1958–2011)* by Khalid Aldakheel.<sup>169</sup> This unpublished thesis, written in 2012, focuses on two feminist themes addressed by Saudi female novelists between 1958 and 2011, namely the power of society and the power of men. Aldakheel concentrates on the development and transformation of the novelists' awareness of the effects of these two powers and on the development of stylistic features across four novelistic stages. Adopting feminist criticism and critical views of Elaine Showalter, he turns to the history of the novels and novelists on whom the study concentrates, following their techniques and characteristics through each stage.

Because of the similarities and interdependence between the notions that come under the term "patriarchy", Aldakheel fails to differentiate adequately between the two pertinent themes in his study, namely the power of society and the power of men, which are intertwined in all of the novels representing each of the four stages. These stages into which Aldakheel divides the development of the Saudi feminist novel as reflected in its treatment of the two themes are as follows. The first, "early beginnings", runs from 1958 to 1979, the second from 1980 to 1989, the third from 1990 to 2001 and the last from 2001 to 2011. What is important here are the historical circumstances and events that Aldakheel alludes to at the beginning of each stage. For example, he identifies the second Gulf war as the main factor prompting the increased number of women's novels published in the 1990s. As to the fourth stage, he

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169 K. Aldakheel, (2012). *Development of awareness: The power of society and men in the Saudi women's novel (1958–2011)*. (PhD. thesis, the University of Exeter, Exeter, UK. Retrieved from: <https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.579878>. Accessed, 12 June 2016.

considers the events of 9/11 to be among the most significant factors, along with media interest and the appetite of readers for women's novels. However, Aldakheel fails to justify describing the increased output of Saudi female novels as a phenomenon or to explain how the second Gulf war and the events of 9/11 contributed to causing this phenomenon in their respective phases.

Notwithstanding these limitations, two important contributions of Aldakheel's study are its investigation of the power of society and the power of men; two of the themes addressed by Saudi female novelists from 1958 to 2011, and its evaluation of the development and transformation of the novelists' awareness of their issues from one stage to another.

In 2013 the Saudi Literary Club in Riyadh published *Khiṭāb Al-Riwāya al-Nisā'iyya al-Sa'ūdiyya wa Tahawwulātih* (*The Discourse of the Saudi Women's Novel and its Transformations*), by Sāmi al-Jam'ān,<sup>170</sup> which sets out to chart the progress of the Saudi feminist novel from 1958 to 2009. It cannot be said unambiguously that the author fully succeeds in his stated main purpose, which is to examine comprehensively the transformations of Saudi feminist discourse throughout this extensive period of time and to cover all aspects of that discourse, including feminist themes and issues. In light of the exceptional status of women in Saudi society, the study attempts to explicate stylistic features and techniques by which female novelists have expressed and disseminated their discourse in such a socially and culturally conservative context over this half century, but while many examples are given, the analysis lacks depth.

There is a brief but important section in al-Jam'ān's study examining the impact on Saudi society of the two Gulf wars and the events of 9/11, and how the consequent social changes have in turn encouraged the development of Saudi feminist discourse. For example, the author refers to human rights and the establishment of King Abdulaziz's National Dialogue

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170 S. Al-Jam'ān, (2013). *Khiṭāb Al-Riwāya Al-Nisā'iyya Al-Sa'ūdiyya wa Tahawwulātih* [The Discourse of the Saudi Women's Novel and its Transformations] (1st ed.). Riyadh, KSA: The Literary Club.

Center, as well as to CEDAW and its significant impact on Saudi women's status. However, he does not explain how these factors have affected the status of Saudi women positively, although they have clearly changed their status. In fact, the author intends to explain their effects on the development of feminist discourse, as he argues that Saudi female novelists have benefited from political and social changes. This effect is seen in their novelistic discourses, which have tackled global political and social issues that extend beyond their feminist perspective. Al-Jam'ān makes no attempt to explain either of these issues, or ways in which they affect women's feminist discourse, stating that "the listing of all requests that are correlated with feminism will be discussed solely in the sections of these two chapters which are allocated to study the contemporary stage".<sup>171</sup>

Another important criticism of this study relates to al-Jam'ān's claim that the contemporary stage has witnessed a notable numerical increase in the number of Saudi women's novels which has raised a number of correlated cultural and social questions. However, the author neither investigates this boom nor poses these questions, let alone answers them. In addition, in the context of addressing the reasons for selecting this subject of study, al-Jam'ān considers the importance of this boom to lie solely in forming one integrated feminist novelistic discourse which joins the final stage with the previous two.

The most important finding of the study is that in terms of the new concepts of feminist issues and themes presented in the Saudi women's novel, the feminist discourse is transformed from one stage to another, resulting in the creation of a single integrated discourse. The study can be considered an important chronological survey of the transformation of Saudi feminist discourse over a period that exceeds fifty years.

*Modern Woman in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Rights, Challenges and Achievements* was published in 2017 by Hend al-Sudairy. It examines the lives, achievements and challenges of

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., p.363.

Saudi women in the past one hundred years. From her insider's perspective, al-Sudairy discusses the alienation of Saudi women, even from other Arab women, as a condition inflicted by social, cultural and patriarchal forces, including the predominantly male writers, Saudi or Western, supportive or hostile, who have falsely represented them either as ignorant and oppressed or as extravagant. Al-Sudairy scrutinizes the reactionary beliefs and practices that limit the empowerment of 21<sup>st</sup>-century Saudi women as highly educated, professionally competent participants in the reforming of their state and documents their struggles to overcome these impediments. Thus, she explores Saudi women's achievements in the spheres of education, politics, sport and the mass media in the face of persistent obstacles such as male guardianship.

However, the most important part of this book for this present study addresses Saudi women's early and contemporary (post-2000) writings, which in light of heavy social and cultural pressures and censorship were mainly concerned with social issues. Like many earlier studies, al-Sudairy's analysis is based on feminist theories. She limits her focus to the output of four contemporary novelists selected to illustrate the development and maturation of Saudi female writers. She does this in order to reveal Saudi women's awareness of their status, rights, and struggle to resist social pressures in their restricted society. She also shows how Saudi female writers have developed this awareness in their illustration of the historical, social, literary and intellectual background of Saudi women and their progress in society. Despite the restricted sample of novelists it discusses, this study is valuable for discussing a century of social history, challenging the stereotype of the mysterious Saudi woman writer of all genres and bringing her reality into focus.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the methodology adopted for the study of these novels. Adopting the Goldmanian approach for the study of SA literature is an innovative undertaking; no other researcher has considered the world vision of Saudi women's novel and their thematic engagement with significant events in SA, as well as the thematic development of selected novels alongside the development of Saudi women's status in all of the relevant domains.

Furthermore, the chapter has also served as an overview of the history and study of the Saudi novel with special focus of the Saudi women's novel. It has also reviewed existing research in the field of Saudi women's fiction and revealed that this relatively new body of literature has not yet been exhaustively analyzed in terms of themes over the timeframe adopted in this thesis. All previous studies that have investigated Saudi women's novels have either solely concentrated on the feminist discourse, or focused on the artistic and technical aspects of these novels. These shortcomings point to the need for further study of Saudi women's novels to address the questions set out at the beginning of this chapter.

The next chapter begins the analysis by examining the first three decades of Saudi women's novel writing.

## Chapter 3

### The Tragic Vision of Saudi Women, 1958-1989

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter will follow Goldmann's genetic structuralist approach to investigate the extent to which Saudi women have engaged in changing socioeconomic conditions in SA through their novels and the extent to which they have shaped this literary genre.

The first Saudi women's novel appeared in 1958 and the first historical stage of this genre in SA is considered to span the years from 1958 to 1989, which is the period covered in this chapter. As mentioned in Chapter two (Section 2.3), early Saudi women's novels were written and published in foreign countries, in Egypt in particular, by the upper-middle class elites who lived and/or studied in these countries. Therefore, it is not surprising that most novels written during these three decades were influenced by the styles and techniques prevalent in those non-Saudi environments. Through the analysis of two novels representative of this phase, namely *Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū'* and *Lā 'āsha Qalbī*, this chapter will trace the lineaments of that influence, such as the focus on one problematic hero/heroine, and the predominance of romantic, realistic, and melodramatic trends, which were common in Egypt before, during and after this time.

Significantly, the conflict in these two novels is mostly played out between two social groups/classes, while the heroine always comes from the lower social class and struggles with diverse social problems, obstacles and crises. In addition, the dominant vision of the novels of this phase appears tragic, in that the heroine, despite her bravery, resistance and aspiration for a better future, is fatalistically predestined to fail because the environment she lives in

lacks authentic values such as social and civil rights. However, the fact that the majority of the main characters in these novels are from a lower social status can make this tragic vision difficult to discern clearly.

It is therefore apposite to consider the essential criteria for the hero and vision of a work to be classified as tragic which Goldmann proposes in *The Hidden God*. First, Goldmann lists a range of characteristics that distinguish a tragic man from other men, the essential of which are as follows: the tragic man's exclusive desire and quest to reach the absolute truth and idealistic values, his all-or-nothing stand and refusal of any equivocation or compromise, and his conscious awareness of the limitations of man and of the world.<sup>172</sup> As to a set of criteria for the tragic vision, Goldmann indicates that this can be difficult to apply to all forms of tragic vision, such as those of Shakespeare and Sophocles, or the tragedy of refusal, which nevertheless can be seen as sharing one essential feature. This is the expression of a deep crisis in the relationship between a man and his social and spiritual worlds, regardless of the specific nature of the tragedy.<sup>173</sup> He identifies three criteria for the tragic vision, the first being that the novel must express a sense of fatalism or inevitability:

In the perspective of tragedy, clarity means first and foremost awareness of the unchangeable nature of the limits placed on man, and of the inevitability of death. There is no possible future reality for man in history... Tragic greatness transforms the suffering which man is forced to endure because it is imposed upon him by a meaningless world into a freely chosen and creative suffering...<sup>174</sup>

Goldmann adds that “for the tragic mind, in fact, every moment in life mingles with one single moment, that of death.” Indeed, the inevitability of death is “an immanent reality, indissolubly correlated with all events of the tragic hero in the literary work.”<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Goldmann (1976), pp. 62-63, 69.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

The second criterion for tragedy in a literary work is that absolute morality should always have priority over all other values:

For what the tragic mind accepts as its first absolute value is that of truth, and this demand is inevitably accompanied by the realization that all the possibilities offered by this world are limited and inadequate.<sup>176</sup>

The final criterion of the tragic vision is the presence of an insoluble, rather than merely unresolved, conflict or struggle in the literary work.<sup>177</sup>

Given the difficulty associated with the concept of tragedy alluded to above, Webb claims that a novel meeting any one of Goldmann's three criteria should be classified as tragic.<sup>178</sup> In line with this suggestion, our discussion of the Saudi women's novel will focus on the three individual features as formulated by Goldmann. Adopting his criteria for tragedy takes us a long way towards understanding why the Saudi women's novel of this first historical phase appeared in its particular form, especially as regards the themes conveyed.

Unlike Goldmann's analysis of the dramatic and philosophical works of Racine and Pascal, which is correlated with the noble classes and the oppression of the Jansenist religious sect in 17<sup>th</sup>-century French society, our analysis of Khāshugjī's and Shaṭa's works takes account of socio-economic conditions. This is necessary because of their direct and indirect consequences for society, as well as their impact on the novelists and their writings. The analysis thus follows Goldmann's two related methodologies concerning the relationship between novels and their socio-economic context. The current chapter starts by examining the social background of the novels, it then offers a thematic analysis in order to elucidate the internal structure of the narratives. This will be achieved without moving from within the

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<sup>176</sup> Goldmann (1976), p. 58.

<sup>177</sup> Webb, p. 88.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 17.

literary text to the world outside except when necessary. Section 3.6 on homologous structures closes the chapter by seeking to explain the comprehensive vision of these texts. This is consistent with Goldmann's approach, showing how the narratives are shaped by contemporaneous socio-economic forces.

### **3.2 Social Context**

As discussed in Chapter One (Section 1.3), SA is now one of the largest oil-producing countries in the world, but the population did not benefit directly from its oil wealth during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, as the government instead invested heavily in long-term infrastructure projects. Therefore, before the 1970s, most Saudis still relied on ranching, fishing, animal husbandry and trade, against the backdrop of a society suffering from low incomes, poverty and the consequent spread of disease. The rapid growth in oil revenues, which the Saudi regime had begun to enjoy by the beginning of the 1970s allowed the country to adopt a series of five-year development plans. However, these did not alleviate the great inequalities arising from the diversity of rural, nomadic and urban populations across the various regions of a geographically extensive national territory. Indeed, the oil-fuelled economic growth not only caused disparities among these groups; it also exacerbated some disparities between males and females in respect of educational opportunities and access to the labor market and welfare services, all of which were skewed in favor of males.<sup>179</sup>

Saudi males began to receive formal education in the 1930s, for instance, whereas females obtained their right to do so only in 1960, under a royal decree establishing the first girls' school. Although the decree was approved by Saudi religious scholars, a longstanding struggle between opponents and advocates of women's formal education continued. During the 1940s and 1950s, only elite girls of certain regions, the Hejaz and Najd in particular, had

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<sup>179</sup> A. Almana, (1981). *Economic development and its impact on the status of women in Saudi Arabia*. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, p. 3.

benefited from studying in the *kuttāb*, traditional Quranic schools where they learned the Quran and the basics of reading and writing under female supervision. During that time, some females in the main cities of Mecca, Riyadh, Jeddah and the Eastern Province had also benefited from private school education, which relied on pupils' fees and government subsidy. Before formal education became widespread, some middle- and upper-class families, especially those in Hejaz, had also sent their male and female children to pursue their studies in other Arab and Western countries. This is considered a very significant factor in the emergence of Saudi women writers, including novelists, from a society that had just begun to read and write; three such writers are Sara Bu Ḥumaid, Samīra Khāshugjī, and Hudā al-Rasheed.<sup>180</sup> Before the 1960s, the occupation of most Saudi women was that of homemaker, since they were not qualified for salaried work, so the granting of formal education has opened the door for them to gain formal education and develop their awareness of life and related issues, thus preparing them for work outside the home.

However, the very restrictive tribal patriarchy and religious authority regarding women greatly limited the choices for working women during the period in question.<sup>181</sup> In fact, the relationship between these two power sources in Saudi society is simultaneously strong and complex. The power of tribes over their people is very considerable and often exceeds even that of the government, in particular as regards women's conduct and status. Although Islam strictly opposes all types of harmful social traditions and customs that are against women, Saudi women have long been repressed by the patriarchal tribal society and its rules, which in many cases exceed Islamic doctrine and governmental regulations. It is important to recognize that while the power of Saudi tribes claims to neither ignore nor override the rule of Islam, there is, however, overlap and confusion between tribal and Islamic rules, with prioritization often naturally granted to the former, despite the fact that some tribal social

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180 Al-Rasheed, pp. 82-83, 95.

181 Almana, p. 6.

customs are fundamentally conflicting with Islam. Such confusion between Islamic rules and tribal customs is extremely complicated and difficult to change.<sup>182</sup> For example, tribal patriarchy has restricted Saudi women's participation in all areas of life and has put them under the extreme overarching authority of male guardianship, although this concept of a guardian as a cultural expression of patriarchy goes beyond the Islamic concept of a custodian.<sup>183</sup>

The basic social structure of SA has changed to accommodate different social groups since the economic boom of the 1970s and the prosperity it has brought to the country. The changes have occurred because a vast number of people have abandoned villages and small towns in favor of cities such as Jeddah, Mecca or Riyadh. In these urban environments, families from different tribes live alongside non-tribal classes and long-term foreign residents. These urbanized populations have come increasingly to treat the family, rather than the tribe, as the fundamental unit of social organization, which has helped to reduce the power of tribes in society. According to al-Ghadhdhāmī, the majority of people in urban environments have forgotten their tribes and have begun to involve themselves with new families. Further, each family in the city, whether or not it is descended from a tribal root, can construct its own rules.<sup>184</sup> Yet, while this has fostered coexistence among many social classes, society in general is still considered patriarchal because people who have moved to urban communities retain many features of the nomadic lifestyle. There appears to have been no significant erosion of tribal ideologies, as their traditional patterns are still practiced in daily life. Intermarriage between tribal men and non-tribal women is almost non-existent, but there is a gender imbalance in the tribal system according to which a tribal woman cannot marry a non-tribal man, even if he is a Muslim city dweller, whereas a tribal man can marry

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182 Al-Khudr, pp. 296-299.

183 Al-Rasheed, p. 18.

184 Al-ghadhdhāmī (2009), p. 147.

outside the tribe.<sup>185</sup> Added to this, women's issues concern religious, social and political sensitivities which continue to affect many areas of modern life. This applies particularly to gender equality and women's empowerment, issues which are sensitive to discuss and difficult to resolve.<sup>186</sup>

The suffering of Saudi women in communities that deny them authentically is evident in their subjection to a cluster of difficult socio-economic conditions including widespread poverty, lack of opportunity and denial of essential rights such as formal education and paid work, as well as the tribal and social patriarchal restrictions on almost every aspect of their lives. In that regard, social and tribal patriarchy and women's marginalization in the public and social arenas are considered two of the significant reasons for women to be producers of literary texts, as the only vehicle through which they can join public debates and express themselves. The novel was an especially flexible means of articulating their feelings and drawing attention to issues affecting them, during the decades before the events of 9/11, when they were completely excluded from participation in public arenas.<sup>187</sup> Hence, there were major socio-economic reasons for the popular expression of a tragic vision in the novels of this period. The following section considers Saudi women's literature as the vehicle of such feelings, by discussing the main theme of each of the two novels under investigation.

### 3.2 The Themes of the Novels

#### 3.3.1 *Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū* ' by Khāshugjī

As Samīra Khāshugjī had lived and studied in Egypt, she chose foreign settings for all of her novels,<sup>188</sup> except the one selected for analysis here. Published in 1973, *Qaṭarāt min al-*

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185 Yamanī (2009). pp. 81-82.

186 Al-Khudr, pp. 280-281.

187 Al-Rasheed, p. 2.

188 *Wada' tu Āmālī* (1958), *Dhikrayān Dāmi'a* (1961), *Bariqu' ainaik* (1963), *Warā al-Dabāb* (1965), and *M'ātam al-Ward* (1973).

*Dumū*<sup>189</sup> is considered, along with her other novels, to suffer from lack of artistic merit identified by literary critics in SA as a defining characteristic of the early Saudi women's novel, as detailed in Chapter two (Section 2.3). The plot of this novel, expounded by an omniscient narrator, is mostly based on sudden events and the main settings are the Najdī desert and the city of Riyadh. There is much use of the phrases “Saudi” and “in SA” with reference to most of the characters, traditions and places, apparently to familiarize non-Saudi readers with that environment. The novel, in common with all early Saudi women's fiction, is clearly influenced by the popularity of melodrama and romance, along with the trend towards realism in Egypt.

Analysis of the narrative, dialogue, voices, focalization<sup>190</sup> and action of the novel reveals that its main focalized theme is the conflict endured by the younger generation in SA, especially women's conflict with patriarchal authority. The main storyline of *Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū*<sup>1</sup> involves a problematic heroine, Dhikrā, and three main problematic characters: ‘Āmir, Ruqayya, and ‘Aṣim. The main theme revolves around women's weaknesses and their social problems and concerns in the SA patriarchal society. The story, embodied in the life of Dhikrā, begins when her recently orphaned cousin, ‘Āmir, comes from the ‘Asīr region to live at the family home of his uncle Maḥjūb, Dhikrā's father, in the Najdī desert. Maḥjūb welcomes the young man, inviting him to help in tending his livestock and to marry Dhikrā. ‘Āmir diplomatically refuses the offer of marriage claiming; “we are still young, and there is no need to hurry”;<sup>191</sup> indeed, he is 18 years old at this point and Dhikrā is only eleven. One day, ‘Āmir is herding his uncle's sheep and camels as usual when he sees Ruqayya (Maḥjūb's wife) and Dhikrā carrying firewood and offers to help them. As the days pass, he and Ruqayya fall in love but cannot express their feelings for each other because of social

189 S. Bint al-Jazīra al-‘Arabiyya, (1973). *Qaṭarāt min al-dumū* [Tear Drops]. Beirut, Lebanon: Zuhair Ba‘labakkī for Publication.

190 According to Genette (1972), the term ‘focalization’ means the ‘point of view’, ‘angle of vision’, ‘prism’ or ‘perspective’ that is verbalized by the narrator, though not necessarily his own. For more details, see Rimmon-Kenan, S. (1983). *Narrative fiction: Contemporary poetics*. London, England: Methuen, pp. 71-72.

191 Bint al-Jazīra al-‘Arabiyya, p. 36.

traditions and their regard for Maḥjūb; as she says to ‘Āmir, “my fear for you is more severe than my fear for myself in this society”<sup>192</sup>.

One day, ‘Āmir’s uncle travels to al-Kharj, a city near Riyadh, which ‘Āmir uses as an opportunity to abandon the desert and take steps to prevent his impending marriage to Dhikrā, on which his uncle continues to insist. He “enters Ruqayya’s tent slowly and cautiously”, as Dhikrā is there too, to declare his love for Ruqayya and his determination to abandon the place. Maḥjūb returns unexpectedly and upon seeing ‘Āmir with his wife in the tent, “turns into a lion” and violently attacks Ruqayya, who vainly cries out for help as her husband takes out his dagger and kills ‘Āmir. He does not kill Ruqayya at the same time, preferring to “torment her first, so that he can heal his wounds by humiliating her and then killing her”<sup>193</sup> by stoning, the traditional punishment for adultery. Indeed, he thinks that his wife and ‘Āmir have had a sexual relationship, although their mutual regard for him meant that there had been no such relationship. In response to her father’s gruesome behavior, Dhikrā collapses in shock, becoming deaf and dumb. Subsequently, she and her father move to Riyadh so that she can receive medical attention.

The omniscient, heterodiegetic third-person narrator here shows the reader how justice is conceived and how it is played out in this community. According to the narration, women’s lives in the desert are restricted by men via their traditional rules, as can be seen in the reactions of other characters. For example, the two young men who come to Dhikrā’s aid when she falls unconscious feel that Maḥjūb is unjust in applying the law against his wife without witnesses or confirmation. They wonder why the issue has been raised with “the tribal chieftain only”, rather than “being brought to the mayor or the judge”, then explain

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., pp. 55-56.

this lapse to themselves by recalling that “the tribal chieftain is an intimate friend of Sheikh Maḥjūb”’.<sup>194</sup>

When Dhikrā’s family travels to attend her uncle’s wedding in al-Kharj city, the narrator refers again to the restrictions imposed on women in the strongly patriarchal desert community:

At weddings, people can usually relax ... It releases the soul from captivity and liberates it from some of the limitations imposed by the environment. And it helps them to forget their concerns and pains ...<sup>195</sup>

The limitations that the narrator refers to are imposed by the Bedouin man who “sees the world in terms of his own community... and of its laws, customs and traditions”’.<sup>196</sup>

The injustice of Bedouin life against women, according to the narrator, is embodied in Maḥjūb’s rigid adherence to oppressive tribal traditions and customs, and the disregard of the consequences this entails for his daughter. The narrator tells us that “her father did not care or pay attention to her”’ while her mother was being stoned to death.<sup>197</sup>

The status of injustice as an overriding theme in this novel is confirmed later when Dhikrā’s father meets his intimate childhood friend, Sheikh Sāliḥ, now settled in Riyadh. Sāliḥ is shocked on being told the reasons for Dhikrā’s physical condition and sorrowfully says:

You have unjustly killed your nephew ... and the *hudud* penalty was unjustly applied to your wife [...] As long as you did not see them in the act of adultery, your condemnation is invalid [...] Ask forgiveness of God [...] and ask for mercy for yourself.<sup>198</sup>

The above dialogue begins to reveal the differences between Bedouin and urban settings in terms of forming identity, culture and consciousness. The desert stands for ignorance while

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid., pp. 60-63.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

the city represents modernity, as education and intercultural communication with other educated tribal and non-tribal people can contribute to change and the supplanting of traditional norms. The novel depicts the desert setting as beset by injustice, depression and ignorance, resulting in a tragic life for Dhikrā, while Riyadh is presented as its opposite: a place where her life changes significantly, as she develops her own identity by studying and immersing herself in modern life.

Dhikrā attends an institution for the deaf and dumb in Riyadh, where she meets ‘Āṣim, a doctor temporarily assigned to psychologically supervise all of the girls at the institution, including Dhikrā, who among them all “suffers the greatest tragedy”. ‘Āṣim who comes from a rich Hejazi family, has graduated from prestigious medical schools in Lebanon and the United States of America. After a year, Dhikrā’s health improves and she is employed by the institution following the death of the director. Later, when her health deteriorates, Doctor ‘Āṣim suggests that she should seek a transfer to a nursing post at the hospital where he works, after he has trained her. She does so and ‘Āṣim then falls in love with her and hopes to marry her, but she becomes “anxious and asks the hospital director to transfer her to Mecca to treat pilgrims at the Mina hospital, where she would feel comfortable” because she would have the opportunity “to perform the Hajj for the first time in her life”.<sup>199</sup> Although she loves ‘Āṣim she does not respond to his advances, preferring “to avoid being a burden on him because of her disability”.<sup>200</sup> While working in Mecca, however, she declares her love to him in a letter, which prompts him to tell his father of his desire to marry her. ‘Āṣim’s father violently refuses to accept Dhikrā as a daughter-in-law, seeing both her disability and her Bedouin origins as markers of a lower social class.

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., pp. 91-92.

I have educated you until you became a successful doctor. I thought you were a wise man [...] How by your Lord can you allow yourself to waste your life on a deaf wife of humble origins?<sup>201</sup>

Nevertheless, ‘Āṣim insists on marrying Dhikrā and travels to Mecca to convince her that she should travel to London for an operation, which she does. Unfortunately, this treatment fails and she returns to Riyadh, where ‘Āṣim’s father hands her a note ordering her to stay away from his son. Profoundly saddened, she decides to return to Mecca. When ‘Āṣim hears about his father’s visit to Dhikrā, they have an intense argument, after which ‘Āṣim drives away and dies tragically in a road accident.

Dhikrā then returns to the institution in Riyadh, working as a teacher of deaf and dumb children during the daytime and of old people in the evening. At night, when everyone else is in bed, she takes up her pen and writes, eventually completing a long story that she titles ‘*Dhikrayāt Kharsā*’ (Memoirs of a Deaf Girl).<sup>202</sup>

The success of this book makes Dhikrā famous and eventually becomes wealthy. People now desire to meet her and she notes sarcastically how those who disdainfully opposed her love and marriage to ‘Āṣim appear to have changed their minds as a result of their interest in her story and her new status in society. At the end of the novel, she wishes that ‘Āṣim could only see how fickle and hypocritical people are:

Oh ‘Āṣim, I wish you were here to see those who stood against our love and despised your love for me and who despised the notion of my being your partner and belittled me with nonsense talk to see them now, oh my love, how they are rushing to meet me and seek my friendship craning their necks just to see me.<sup>203</sup>

Accordingly, she makes a lifelong commitment to overturn her society’s outworn patriarchal traditions.

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201 Ibid., p. 100.

202 Ibid., p. 119.

203 Ibid., pp. 120-121.

Through these dialogues, voices and actions, the novelist depicts the suffering of young Saudis, women in particular, resulting from these traditions. It is reasonable to conclude from the above thematic discussion that the socio-economic conditions in SA, notably the oppression of women in this highly patriarchal society, served to generate the tragic vision of the novel.

### 3.3.2 *Lā 'āsha Qalbī* by Shaṭa

Amal Shaṭa, one of the most important Saudi female novelists of the first phase, has written four novels. Her first novel was published in 1980, and tackles the relationship between the Hejazi Self and the Southeast Asian Other. Since then, she has redirected her focus towards diverse issues affecting her native Hejaz region in particular and Saudi society in general, such as social change and women's rights and concerns. The novel under discussion here, published in 1989, represents the artistic development of Saudi women's fiction, by contrast with those earlier works which, as noted already, literary critics in SA generally dismiss as inferior.

*Lā 'āsha Qalbī*<sup>204</sup> has eight sections telling the stories of more than ten women of different ethnic origins in Hejaz, the most multi-ethnic region in SA. The core theme concerns the weak, needy, marginalized and vulnerable working-class women in a *ribāṭ* or hostel<sup>205</sup> in the region of Mecca and their conflict with the self-centeredness of the middle and upper-middle social classes. The novel depicts an earlier unspecified period in Saudi history, probably the 1970s, when the *ribāṭs* were still functioning in Hejaz; they were later transferred to different

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204 A. Shaṭa, (1989). *Lā 'āsha Qalbī* [May My Heart No longer Live]. Riyadh, KSA: Dār al-Rifā'ī.

205 A *ribāṭ* is a hostel usually accommodating needy women, families or vagrants and predominantly funded by rich individuals. As indicated in the text, *ribāṭs* were once common, in the Hejaz region only. For more details, see: al-Fāsī, T. (1985). *Shifā al-garām bi akhbār al-balad al-ḥaram*. Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Kitāb, vol. 1, pp. 527-537. (Quoted in Al-Wahhābī), p. 166.

areas of the Hejaz region after construction developments began around the holy mosques of Mecca and Medina in the 1980s.<sup>206</sup>

The novelist aims to convey an aspect of the social reality of women living in the *ribāṭ*, at a time before the Saudi government increased its provision of social institutions and care for the disabled. She depicts the *ribāṭ* as offering refuge to women in the city of Mecca who required social care and depended on charity. Such women are portrayed as vulnerable, socially isolated and marginalized, with nowhere else to live. During the daytime, some of them earned money by selling toys or fabrics in the market, or by baking bread and pastries for rich families, while others have long-term work such as domestic service. However, as soon as the sun begins to set, their sad memories creep in to torture them mercilessly.

Two of the main stories in the novel are those of Ḥasīna and Ḥabība (known mostly by the name of Umm ‘Āmir). They illustrate the theme of the marginalization and vulnerability of lower social class women in a selfish society. Both characters are isolated as a result of their social circumstances, as detailed below. Umm ‘Āmir refers to the *ribāṭ* as follows:

This pit in which we live is a grave for the living or those who appear to be alive! [...] It is the home of the poor and frightened [...] a kind of depository for those who are surplus to the needs of life.<sup>207</sup>

The novelist uses the flashback technique, common in this early phase of the Saudi women’s novel, to convey the events via three main problematic character narrators: Baraka, now in her seventies, Umm ‘Āmir, and Ḥasīna. These three women narrate with a single voice and vision, that of Baraka, using the free indirect third-person speech style. Setting the novel in the Hejaz, known as the most diverse region in SA, allows the novelist to portray multiple characters of diverse ethnic origins, most of whom are women. These include two resident sisters, Raḥma, who is physically disabled, and Khadīja, who is blind. Umm ‘Āmir is a

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<sup>206</sup> Al-Wahhābī, p. 165.

<sup>207</sup> Shaṭa, pp. 21-22.

Bedouin resident whose husband Ziyād has died in a car accident, while Ḥasīna is a young woman who assists Baraka, the problematic heroine, in the *ribāṭ* and works in Āl-Wahdān's palace. Other residents are Su'āda, a woman of Syrian origin, who lost her husband and children in a car accident, and Zahra al-Takrūniyya, whose name indicates her place of origin in Nigeria and who suffers from a compulsive eating disorder.<sup>208</sup> One of their shared assumptions is that the *ribāṭ* is their final destination in life and that they are merely waiting there for death to free them from their hardship. The words of Umm 'Āmir to Baraka illustrate the characters' depression, hopelessness, marginalization, sadness, weakness and disappointment:

We wounded women came here to spend our days in pain and suffering, days that may be many or few, but will be ended as we are knocked one by one into our little graves.<sup>209</sup>

Baraka tells us how Ḥasīna begins as a house-servant in the Āl-Wahdān family's palace, then leaves after experiencing many problems including quarrels and a growing tension between Ḥātim Āl-Wahdān and his wife, Sumayya, who does not wish Ḥasīna to remain because she loves the couple's child "as if she were his real mother".<sup>210</sup> Her departure prompts the omniscient narrative voice to describe the palace as "a really weak house, full of quarrels, where abandonment and contentment do not last long."<sup>211</sup> Now homeless, Ḥasīna goes to live in the *ribāṭ*, but when Sumayya dies, Ḥātim persistently asks Ḥasīna to return and take care of the motherless infant, which she does. Baraka recounts her wonderment at seeing "the girl walking behind him submissively and obediently".<sup>212</sup> Baraka's shocked surprise stems from her own hatred for Ḥātim and his family due to their self-centeredness and their

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208 There are some other characters mentioned briefly in the novel, including Hājar, Murḍiya, Suhāla, 'Āmir, Su'āda, Mafhūḍa, Ziyād and others.

209 Shaṭa, p. 22.

210 Ibid., p. 47.

211 Ibid., p.49.

212 Ibid., p.58.

disdainful treatment of Ḥasīna because she is from a lower social class. Baraka reprimands Ḥasīna: “Mr Ḥātīm only wants an easy time and cares only about his own interests [...] How long will you remain a slave to this man?”<sup>213</sup> Following this conversation in which Ḥātīm’s selfishness and self-interest are emphasized, Baraka, as an omniscient narrator, says:

And I cannot say that she objected; on the contrary, she agreed with me, but the issue was that she was negative to the point of anger. She did not try even once to represent herself positively and firmly. She did not insist on her opinion and defend her freedom, her life and future. And for this reason, for all these reasons, I wished with all my heart that she would not go back to the Āl-Wahdān house.<sup>214</sup>

Central to the theme of this novel is Baraka’s account of the life of Umm ‘Āmir, who suffers from the self-centeredness of the middle- and upper-middle classes in Saudi society. Like Ḥabība, she grew up in miserable circumstances, in a poor family. Ḥabība’s mother was very strict with her and her blind father, as she tells Baraka: “My mother was not a woman like other women. She was not a human being, but a wolf in the body of a woman.”<sup>215</sup> Ḥabība and her parents lived on charity in a small hut and although she is only twelve years old when they both die, she has no choice but to stay on there alone. She eventually finds work as a servant to a kind elderly doctor who runs a tuberculosis and pulmonary embolism clinic. She works at the clinic for five years, but is isolated from society and her life there is “monotonous and dull”, tasting “only of the bitterness of grief and suffering, and it has no smell other than the smell of disease and death”.<sup>216</sup>

One day, a rich man from the city of Ta’if, in the Hejaz region, comes to the clinic with his wife, who is sick with tuberculosis, and asks the doctor for a qualified skilled nurse to look after her at home. The doctor immediately selects Ḥabība for this task, having noticed that she is unhappy at the clinic. Accordingly, Ḥabība travels to Ta’if to work for the rich family in their vast palace. There, as narrator, she begins to reveal the differences between her class

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213 Ibid., pp. 55, 151.

214 Ibid., p. 56.

215 Ibid., p. 84.

216 Ibid., p. 88.

and that of the family as she sees their luxury and wealth at close quarters for the first time: “I felt while I was sitting in the lobby of this palace like a hungry cat ... I was ashamed of myself, my appearance and my clothes”.<sup>217</sup> It quickly becomes clear to her that she is not from the same mould as these people. Nevertheless, Ḥabība becomes very fond of Ziyād, the youngest son of the family, who frequently visits his mother. One day, he gives her some money to buy whatever she might need. She considers this a token of admiration that might become love, which allows her to declare her love for him, and he responds by promising to marry her.

For Ḥabība, love is a source of hope and happiness. As she later says to Baraka, “I had come to feel that the world had become my slave [...] and happiness was at my feet”.<sup>218</sup> However, the wide gap in social class between her and Ziyād meant that their marriage contravened the rules of the Saudi class system. As a result, they faced many objections from Ziyād’s family and other relatives: “Fire broke out all around us and there was anger from each side against us” [...] “His father boycotted him, forbade him to enter the house and prevented him from visiting his mother.”<sup>219</sup> Therefore, the young couple decide to go to Medina to “escape the problems and search for a livelihood”<sup>220</sup> away from the aggression and negativity emanating from Ziyād’s family.

Ḥabība has by now enjoyed some happiness in her life and has become the mother of ‘Āmir (hence the name Umm ‘Āmir), but Ziyād is constantly depressed and eventually dies in a car crash. After Ziyād’s death, Umm ‘Āmir is left with no resources for herself and her child, although her neighbor, Mazūna, offers to help. Mazyūna sings and dances for women at weddings and tries to persuade Umm ‘Āmir to join her. At first, she declines Mazūna’s offer, telling her: “I fear for my son’s future, especially as he is the descendant of a notable

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217 Ibid., p. 90.

218 Ibid., p. 102.

219 Ibid., p. 101.

220 Ibid., p. 101.

family’’.<sup>221</sup> However, the lack of alternatives eventually forces her to accept. Umm ‘Āmir as narrator presents Mazyūna as selfishly seeking to exploit her: “She threatened to expose me to Ziyād’s family if I refused to continue working with her’’.<sup>222</sup> Umm ‘Āmir’s fortunes change when a wealthy woman named Suhāla pays her extremely generously for dancing and singing at a private celebration. With this and other large payments, Umm ‘Āmir is able to leave Medina for Jeddah, where she begins a new life that is compatible with her values, away from those who know of her humble background.

As she continues her narrative, Umm ‘Āmir tells Baraka that it reflects the tragic effects of the social class system, which can lead the middle and upper-middle social classes to destroy their lives by breaking its rules. ‘Āmir grows up and goes to study medicine at Cairo University, where he meets a girl called Su‘ād, to whom he proposes marriage. Her family agrees, but it turns out that Su‘ād is the daughter of Suhāla, the rich woman for whom Umm ‘Āmir had danced and sung in Medina. Umm ‘Āmir decides that it would be better to hide the truth from Suhāla, because if she discovers who ‘Āmir’s mother is she will certainly force the couple to divorce. Umm ‘Āmir wonders aloud to Baraka:

Is it conceivable that this woman could accept the son of a singer to be the husband of her daughter? Never ... Never... It is my fate to bring misery to the lives of everyone I love and to destroy their happiness. [...] I killed Ziyād and now I have brought ‘Āmir to the edge of the abyss.<sup>223</sup>

Umm ‘Āmir therefore asks Nūrī, ‘Āmir’s uncle, to tell him that she died after leaving her house for the *ribāṭ* in Mecca.

Thus, the two main narrative threads of this novel reveal the inflexible self-centeredness of the middle and upper-middle classes in Saudi society and the suffering it brings to the lives of women such as Baraka, Ḥasīna and Umm ‘Āmir.

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., pp. 126, 128.

The thematic analysis of the two early novels supports the determination that the main themes of both texts embody conflicts between social groups/classes. While the core struggle in the first novel is that of women against patriarchal and tribal rules and traditions, the conflict between the rich and the poor is central to the second. Another difference is that the first novel has a single narrator throughout, whereas the second is recounted by three narrators, whose voices and perspectives are nonetheless the same, as seen in each plot of the three main stories. From the discussion in this section, it is reasonable to conclude that the socio-economic conditions pertaining in SA during the period in question served to generate the tragic vision exemplified in both novels, as a result of the highly imposed patriarchal restrictions of patriarchs on women or the self-centeredness of the upper classes in their relations with those perceived as of lower status in this community.

### **3.4 Goldmann's Problematic Hero in the Two Novels**

In each of these early novels, several main characters play key roles alongside the protagonists. In *Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū'*, the omniscient narrator presents as the main problematic protagonist Dhikrā, a woman whose life is marked by tragedy and suffering. This poor, uneducated, orphaned Bedouin girl struggles and rails against the inauthentic values and unjust realities of the patriarchal society of her time. The main problematic protagonist of *Lā 'āsha Qalbī* is its hero Baraka. This is obvious in her dialogue with other characters, which informs the reader's understanding of the conditions in which the main and secondary characters live. Baraka's life is also one of suffering. The death of her mother, a layer-out of dead bodies, leaves her unmarried, uneducated and without financial resources, so she works first as a housemaid, then selling holy Zamzam water to pilgrims. Despite her humble origins, she becomes supervisor of the *ribāṭ* where she has lived for more than thirty years,

concerning herself with other characters' lives and social affairs and supporting them with practical help and advice.<sup>224</sup>

At the time in which both novels are set, before the 1990s, much of Saudi society was characterized by poverty, illiteracy, low wages and the consequent spread of disease. These socio-economic conditions are reflected in the existing class structure, the stories of the respective heroines and their inter-class conflicts. In Khāshugjī's novel they are embodied in the descriptions of the two main settings,<sup>225</sup> the desert symbolizing ignorance and death in contrast to the vitality and modernity of the city. Shaṭa is clearly aware of the transitional condition of Saudi society under government plans first enacted in the early 1970s. She illustrates the gulf between rich and poor by contrasting life inside the *ribāṭ* with that of representatives of the upper and upper-middle classes such as Ziyād's family and the Āl-Wahdān family in their palaces, 'Āmir's wife's wealthy family and even 'Āmir himself as a famous doctor.

Both novels feature problematic tragic heroines, who search for authentic values in a degraded (patriarchal and selfish) environment. Dhikrā has had a life of suffering caused by the ignorance and inequitable tribal traditions of a patriarchal society. Therefore, authentic values for her are concerned with achieving her civil rights and overturning social injustice. Baraka has also faced many obstacles in her search for authentic values, in her struggle with other social classes and groups to achieve the civil and social rights to which she and her class are entitled. In contrast to the unity and cooperation among the characters in the *ribāṭ*, authentic values for her are embodied in liberating the women of her class from the unfairness that pervades society as a whole.

In the two heroines' struggle against their harsh socioeconomic conditions, education is portrayed as one of the most important factors. Dhikrā, orphaned, disabled, uneducated and

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>225</sup> Bint al-Jazīra al-'Arabiyya, pp. 19, 31, 35, 49, 114.

later considered a foreigner in Riyadh, challenges these obstacles through education. She prudently “takes pleasure in studying” and thereby “recovers her health and wellbeing.”<sup>226</sup> Being educated allows her first to work in the institution for the deaf and dumb, then to express the pain and tragedy of her life in her autobiography.<sup>227</sup> It also facilitates her struggle to make reading and writing key factors in the fight against tribal customs. Indeed, education is seen as equivalent to life and enlightenment as it expands her vision of life.

My love: Dhikrā will live with your memory [...] it is engraved on my heart with letters of light. The flames burn brightly in my breast and my pen translates them into pages that shine to correct the conditions of which we were victims.<sup>228</sup>

In *Lā ‘āsha Qalbī*, Baraka blames her mother for withdrawing her from her studies in the *kuttāb*, leaving her knowing nothing, understanding nothing and unqualified for any meaningful work, a young woman whose knowledge of the world is limited to “play and entertainment”,<sup>229</sup> condemned “to live life and walk its rough roads alone...”.<sup>230</sup> Indeed, this was the case of the majority of women of Baraka’s class at that time, as she implies to a criminal investigator in one of the stories:

In any case, you should know that Sabīka can read and write, so no wonder we all go to her to write a complaint, a letter, or anything.<sup>231</sup>

Furthermore, the harsh socioeconomic conditions in which Dhikrā and Baraka live make both heroines seem weak in their constant struggles against poverty and injustice, as society’s low expectations of their class are borne out in reality. Goldmann argues that it is a feature of the tragic hero/heroine to be weak in the conflict against another social group/class as a result of

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226 Ibid., p. 72.

227 Ibid., pp. 73, 78.

228 Ibid., p. 121.

229 Shata, p. 41.

230 Ibid., p. 42.

231 Ibid., p. 70.

not attaining the “absolute values” of one’s society.<sup>232</sup> According to him, the most that the tragic hero can do is to express his consciousness of the need for absolute values in his society; but these are unattainable, so he appears weak because “he cannot act and change” them.<sup>233</sup>

Both heroines are repeatedly portrayed as despairing and disappointed; this psychological effect of the harsh social reality is what makes them tragic heroines. Baraka is surprised and disappointed at Umm ‘Āmir’s description of the *ribāṭ* and its members as wounded women lying in temporary graves until the time for the permanent grave comes. Baraka says:

I was overwhelmed by this tone of crushing despair and conspiracy, as I did not expect such lava to spew from this woman’s clammy mouth [...] I returned to my room burdened with gloom.<sup>234</sup>

In addition, we can see this feeling expressed after Baraka listens to the tragic story of the blind and disabled sisters who abandoned their family to avoid being a burden on them: “She silenced me... and I contemplated her silently; I did not know what to say”.<sup>235</sup>

Baraka’s expression of her inability to articulate her response to revelations made by some of the women about their inner lives recurs repeatedly every time a *ribāṭ* inmate tells her story. For example, having heard the conversation between Baraka and Su‘āda, whose husband and children had died in a road accident, Sabīka speaks these bleak words: “Praise be to God. I was right when I abandoned this world. I have removed from my life everything I love and everyone I loved. I have nothing and no one to fear losing any more”. Upon hearing this Baraka reports: “I looked at her, my mouth wide open with shock ... I did not know what to say!”<sup>236</sup>

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232 Goldmann (1976). pp. 62-63.

233 Goldmann (1976). p. 173., & Webb, p. 81.

234 Shata, pp. 22, 24.

235 Ibid., p. 30.

236 Ibid., p. 80.

It is notable that both novels represent female suffering as physiological illness and disability. According to Hamdar, the representation of the suffering body in the narratives is “employed as organizing metaphors for women’s embodiment, gender, and social identity” in their society.<sup>237</sup>

Dhikrā, the protagonist of Khāshugjī’s novel, loses her hearing and speech as a physical reaction to the stoning of her mother: unable to contemplate “that terrible sight” she falls “unconscious to the ground.”<sup>238</sup> Her father takes her to Riyadh to seek a clinical diagnosis; although she is examined at the hospital and is given medication, her condition does not improve. Her doctor suggests sending her to a residential facility for the deaf, warning her father that although she “is desperate to be cured”,<sup>239</sup> there is little hope of this happening.

Butler asserts that socially and physically vulnerable bodies (including those of women) are constituted like any other social phenomenon in the public sphere of the community. It is this formulation that imagines socially and physically vulnerable people as “living in a world of beings who are, by definition, physically dependent on one another, physically vulnerable to one another”.<sup>240</sup> Butler sees this definition as potentially causing violence against the vulnerable and as constituting an ongoing normative dimension of their social and political lives, which forces them to take stock of their interdependence. She notes the “place of violence in any such relation, for violence is, always, an exploitation of that primary tie, that primary way in which we are, as bodies, outside ourselves and for one another.”<sup>241</sup> Therefore, the vulnerable must in one way or another struggle to challenge and resist the demands imposed upon them as they seek to obtain their autonomy and physical independence.

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237 A. Hamdar, (2014). *The female suffering body: Illness and disability of modern Arabic literature*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, p. 66.

238 Bint al-Jazīra al-‘Arabiyya, p. 59.

239 Ibid., p. 67.

240 J. Butler, (2006). *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*. London, England: Verso, p. 27.

241 Ibid., p. 27.

Dhikrā and the two sisters in *Lā 'āsha Qalbī*, all disabled females, are thus subject to great physical and social restrictions and suffering in a community that perceives them according to the above formulation. For example, 'Āṣim's father violently rejects Dhikrā as a potential daughter-in-law, warning her "to leave his son alone and not to call him",<sup>242</sup> because her disability and lower class status mean that "she will not be the wife that ['Āṣim's] parents have wished for".<sup>243</sup>

In *Lā 'āsha Qalbī*, Baraka recounts her surprise at the sudden and unexplained death of the blind Raḥma and her disabled sister Khadīja: "it amazed me and raised in me a thousand questions... Why? How? And when? [...] I never found the answer!"<sup>244</sup> It seems that both characters were likely to have been born with their disabilities, as the narrator's focus is on their feelings and emotional states, rather than on their physical disability. The sisters had abandoned their family to avoid being a burden to them, which can be seen from a different perspective as a way of striving for autonomy and physical independence. When Baraka asks them to return home to their family, who have repeatedly invited them to do so, they respond thus:

Love does not give us the right to destroy the lives of those whom we love, nor the right to monopolize their emotions, or to burden them [...]. We have to sacrifice ourselves for our loved ones, and spend our lifetime making our love a happiness for them and not a burden on them, for kindness and sacrifice can be as great as love.<sup>245</sup>

This response has echoes in Khāshugjī's novel. When 'Āṣim asks Dhikrā to marry him, she chooses to flee to Mecca to avoid this situation: this decision "was not made accidentally... but as the result of deep thought"<sup>246</sup> and many tears, because "she was living in fierce

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242 Bint al-Jazīra al-'Arabiyya, p. 114.

243 Ibid., p. 114.

244 Shaṭa, p. 33.

245 Ibid., p. 29.

246 Bint al-Jazīra al-'Arabiyya, p. 97.

conflict with herself after receiving Dr 'Āṣim's letter.''<sup>247</sup> She sees marriage to 'Āṣim as bringing him "misery rather than rest... and unhappiness... instead of happiness"; furthermore, "she would be dependent on him."'<sup>248</sup> Inhorn states that in such patriarchal communities, "not only are women typically blamed for the reproductive failing, but they must bear the burden of overcoming it".<sup>249</sup> This is the result of the social and cultural patterns imposed on socially and physically vulnerable females.

All of these examples, beside the care with which the novelists dedicate themselves to writing within the restrictive framework of their society, as will be explained in the next section, lead us to conclude that the embodiment of female suffering does not occur randomly in the texts, but is a deliberate representation, a pathological metaphor for "a peculiarly male or patriarchal set of anxieties about the sickness of the social or political body."<sup>250</sup> Saddeka Arebi asserts that these "women have chosen to wage peace rather than war"<sup>251</sup> in their discourse against patriarchal rules and highly restrictive social norms imposed on them by the religious and tribal structure of their society, as explained in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3).

In an echo of her mother's occupation of preparing the dead for burial, Baraka washes living women in the *ribāṭ*. This problematic heroine is seen to enhance the lives of the *ribāṭ*'s inhabitants, promoting morality and helping to protect them from threats and from becoming victims. Consequently, Baraka becomes a repository for their painful and tragic stories. When a person feels what s/he believes to be the emotions of others by witnessing, hearing or reading of their emotional actions, concerns or conditions, his or her emotional response is then called empathy. Further, although not all emotional states of the fictional characters evoke empathy, it is true, according to Suzanne Keen, that empathetic responses to fictional characters and conditions occur more easily in the case of negative emotions, regardless of

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247 Ibid., p. 91.

248 Ibid., pp. 91-92.

249 M. Inhorn, (1994). *Quest for conception: Gender, infertility, and Egyptian medical Traditions*. Philadelphia: PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 3.

250 Hamdar, p. 71.

251 S. Arebi, (1994). *Women and words in Saudi Arabia: The politics of literary discourse*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, p. 298.

whether there exists a match in points of interest or experience.<sup>252</sup> We can infer that the bleak feelings of the characters in Shaṭa's novel have had a negative psychological impact on the tragic heroine, Baraka, through a spontaneous sharing of emotional affect; therefore, she responds empathetically:

I have always been sad, torn apart, living in an endless cycle of anxiety. I think of Umm 'Āmir, who has chosen for herself a slow death, of Ḥasīna, whose youth is lost day after day in Āl-Wahdān's palace, of Zahra, who was thrown into prison, and of Maḥfouza, who is just a step away from the grave.<sup>253</sup>

Dhikrā and Baraka share a keen awareness of the necessity and existence of absolute authentic values, which are linked with human freedom, safety and comfort, and the prospect of a bright future for their social group/class, but they appear weak because they cannot achieve them in their patriarchal world. Despite their frailty and suffering, however, neither woman abandons hope. In *Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū'*, Dhikrā's struggles against the traditions that oppress women in her society lead her to make comparisons between the ideal life in the institute and life in the wider society outside, which is unfair and cruel to women. She concludes that there is a "necessity for comprehensive change in this great community by means of scientific knowledge".<sup>254</sup>

Further, as the novelist makes 'Āṣim the personification of a happy life for Dhikrā, she returns after his death to the institution, where she dedicates herself to working as a teacher of the deaf and dumb, partly in tribute to 'Āṣim, who was himself a victim of the unjust social system.<sup>255</sup>

Likewise, in *Lā 'āsha Qalbī*, we can see that Baraka is strongly self-motivated to survive the struggle against hard socio-economic conditions and obtain authentic values for her isolated social class. This is clear in almost every storyline, where she strives to spread happiness and

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252 S. Keen, (2006). *A theory of narrative empathy*, published by The Ohio State University. NARRATIVE, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 208.

253 Shaṭa, p. 133.

254 Bint al-Jazīra al-'Arabiyya, p. 77.

255 Ibid., pp. 118-119.

optimism to every woman in the *ribāṭ*. One example is when Umm ‘Āmir describes the *ribāṭ* as a grave while Baraka works to pass on her own self-motivation to her; another is when she tries to avoid speaking about the past so as not to awaken sorrowful memories.<sup>256</sup> Similarly, she endeavours to liberate Ḥasīna from submission and enslavement in the palace of Āl-Wahdān, entreating her several times to cease working as a servant, to give herself more of a chance of freedom and a brighter future.<sup>257</sup>

Both heroines speak explicitly on behalf of their social group/class. In *Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū’*, Dhikrā defends the genuine and immutable humanist values of her oppressed group against the materialistic, unfair and unpredictable values of the upper classes. The novel thus serves as a vehicle to convey the struggle between the genuine values of humanism and the “degraded” values of the society in which it is set.<sup>258</sup> Khāshugī’s heroine’s firm refusal of the money offered by ‘Āṣim’s father to abandon her love and the city of Riyadh in order to protect his son from marrying her illustrates the authentic moral values that she and her class believe in. Dhikrā explicitly and boldly expresses this feeling as follows:

The values of this society are nonsense and the moral standards are mere lies. They like nothing other than the decoration and embellishment of life [...] They are racing against time [...] behind false appearances.<sup>259</sup>

Similarly, in *Lā ‘āsha Qalbī*, we can determine that although Baraka struggles with many obstacles in her search for authentic values, she champions her own class in her conflicts with the rich. In conversation with Umm ‘Āmir, for example, she says:

Many of the poor women here enjoy the calm and spiritual purity desired by many rich people. I am not saying that we do not feel pain or suffering [...]. Yes, I do know, my dear that we endure the utmost pain and suffering. However, it is God’s mercy that this suffering creates a kind of convergence and harmony between our souls, and

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256 Shata, pp. 21-22, 133.

257 Bint al-Jazīra al-‘Arabiyya, pp. 47-48, 55-57, 151.

258 Swingewood, p. 28.

259 Bint al-Jazīra al-‘Arabiyya, p. 120.

that the pain has planted affection and compassion in our hearts and has become a strong link among us.<sup>260</sup>

Hakola and Kivistö claim that in literature, death is understood “as a site of many projections and fantasies and as a metaphor of many social issues.”<sup>261</sup> In both novels discussed here, death is not simply opposed to life, but is endowed with profound meanings consequential on the harsh economic conditions and social issues that the heroines face in a patriarchal society. Their own experience of struggle against overwhelming social forces leads them to understand why whenever one of the main characters fails to achieve success, or when life becomes worthless and meaningless, they resort to death. For Goldmann, in such inevitable positions, the tragic man “can see only one way out: death.”<sup>262</sup> This is seen in every failure depicted in both novels.

In *Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū*, the narrator presents death as the solution to the failures of all characters. Thus, ‘Āmir, Dhikrā’s mother and ‘Āṣim all die as a consequence of failing to obtain victory over the prevailing social patriarchy. Death is also the refuge of Dhikrā when she unsuccessfully seeks to change the harsh reality. For instance, the narrator describes the letter that Dhikrā receives from ‘Āṣim’s father as effectively ending her tragic life by sentencing her to “a rapid and horrible death”.<sup>263</sup>

The narrator also reports the tragic emotional dialogue between Dhikrā’s mother and ‘Āmir after their love reaches an impasse, when Dhikrā secretly overhears her mother crying out for death to release her:

How cruel is fate! .. I would prefer death now to life. What is my life? Misery... unhappiness ... agony ... pain.<sup>264</sup>

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260 Shata, pp. 22-23.

261 O. Hakola, S. Kivistö, & M. Carucci, (2014). *Death in literature*. Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, p. Viii.

262 Goldmann (1976). p. 174.

263 Bint al-Jazīra al-‘Arabiyya, p. 114.

264 Ibid., p. 55.

Similarly, in *Lā 'āsha Qalbī*, Maḥfouza's and Su'āda's stories end in death, portrayed as a blessed relief from their suffering.<sup>265</sup> The inmates of the *ribāṭ* blame the whole of society for causing their confinement, increasing their isolation and exacerbating their psychological problems. Accordingly, Shaṭa's heroine imbues death with profound meaning, seeing misery as inevitable and the struggle against it as futile. Baraka declares that death "has such wisdom that I do not know how or why we ignore its exhortation!"<sup>266</sup>

The tragic deaths of Raḥma and her sister Khadīja once again reveals both their struggle against the reality imposed upon them and the heroine's belief in the restorative properties of death: "Death was a comfort for both of them, a just and decisive solution to their miserable lives".<sup>267</sup>

At this point, we can understand the heroine's claim that death is a just, equitable, decisive and desirable end, compensating for the miserable lives of the women in both novels, as a justification for the fatalism of these characters. This is reflected in the feeling imparted by the novelists to their respective heroines.

The sense of fatalism or inevitability presented in the novels is in fact one of Goldmann's tragic criteria. Both heroines represent the Pascalian philosophy of death. Pascal posits that when a man fails to change the inauthentic values of society or to achieve his target, he becomes tragic and death is the only way out for him.<sup>268</sup>

Before moving on to the significance of the structure, we can conclude from the analysis in this section that both novels have problematic heroines, searching constantly for authentic values linked with individual freedom, comfort, safety and a bright future for themselves and the members of their class. In addition, the harsh socio-economic conditions imposed on Dhikrā and Baraka led them into serious conflict with a society that stands in the way of their

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265 Shaṭa, pp. 75, 78.

266 Shaṭa, p. 38.

267 Ibid., p. 33.

268 Goldmann (1976). pp. 80, 174.

own hopes and aspirations and those of women like them. The analysis reveals a conflict between the “superior morality” of the heroines and main characters, and the “conventional morality” represented by their social reality. Goldmann argues that the values of absolute morality should have priority over materialistic values and that this is one of the main characteristics of tragedy.<sup>269</sup>

### 3.5 The Significant Structure of the Novels

The in-depth investigation of themes and problematic heroines in the two previous sections has cultivated a general understanding of these two early novels. This section, by characterizing the relations among social groups and classes in the novels, seeks to enhance our understanding of their tragic worldview, before the chapter ends with an analysis of the novels aiming to derive a comprehensive vision of the internal structure of the texts.

As has been said earlier, *Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū‘* represents the beginning of this first historical phase, while *Lā ‘āsha Qalbī* marks its end. Despite the sixteen years between their dates of publication, there are some similarities between the two texts, which they share with most Saudi women’s novels of this phase. Unsurprisingly, there are also some differences in the circumstances of those two novelists’ lives and their literary output. Samīra Khāshugī wrote *Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū‘* while outside SA and published it under the pseudonym of *Bint al-Jazīra al-‘Arabiyya*, giving her the freedom to criticize the patriarchal society of her native country. Conversely, Amal Shaṭa published *Lā ‘āsha Qalbī* in SA under her real name; she therefore chose a closed environment, the *ribāṭ*, in which to set its events.

In each book, a group of women is in direct and persistent conflict with another Saudi social group/class; in the case of *Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū‘* this is the patriarchal society with its oppressive traditions and unjust conventions, while in *Lā ‘āsha Qalbī* it is the upper class and

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<sup>269</sup> Goldmann (1976). p. 58.

those in society as a whole who seek only their own self-interest. Both novelists see members of the lower class or the marginalized group as loyal and combative in their struggling to achieve their hopes and aspirations in a cruel world. They use these oppressed minorities to represent all women in Saudi society, particularly those from poor or rural families. Both novels present these marginalized social groups as illiterate, poor and needy.

There is a struggle between Dhikrā and the patriarchal traditions represented mainly by her father. She stands against the forces that oppress all women in her society. This is clear for instance in her anger and rebellious clamour for freedom and justice for her and her mother when her father takes to kicking his wife and insulting her with the strongest language he can muster, to which Dhikrā responds:

Stop defaming my mother [...] you have killed an innocent man who is your nephew [...] and now you dishonour yourself...<sup>270</sup>

Similarly, in *Lā 'āsha Qalbī*, Shaṭa's heroine reveals the contrast between the outworn and inconstant values of the rich and the steadfastness of the poor, exemplified by the dialogue between Ḥasīna and Ḥātīm. When Ḥātīm falls sick, Ḥasīna prevents his partner, 'Āsī, from conspiring with the doctor to steal some important documents from him. She then tells Baraka, who emotionally urges her to return the documents to Ḥātīm, to cease working for him and to “get rid of him”.<sup>271</sup> When Ḥātīm learns of the extent of the conspiracy that Ḥasīna has thwarted, he asks her to marry him, which surprises her, given the difference in social class between them. She refuses him, at which Ḥātīm recognizes the class difference by admitting that “there was always a barrier between me and you”.<sup>272</sup> Ḥasīna then

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<sup>270</sup> Bint al-Jazīra al-'Arabiyya, p. 58.

<sup>271</sup> Shaṭa, p.155.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., p.158.

powerfully explains the reasons of her refusal as she insists: “The barrier between us remains and will remain forever.”<sup>273</sup>

The barrier to which they refer comprises “some obstacles, family, tradition and ancient remnants”<sup>274</sup> that the rich establish between themselves and the marginal class. Ḥātīm later realizes that his admission of the existence of this barrier was a reaction to his own unworthy values:

I lived in conflict with myself, until I was afflicted with boredom. I became tired of life and weary of high profile wealth, so I neglected my work, and myself making me easy prey for this villain ‘Āsī and his ilk.<sup>275</sup>

Khāshujī and Shaṭa both present it as inevitable that suffering will result from the obstacles inherent in this society, so in multiple places in their novels they portray fate and destiny as the only options for the characters’ survival. This fatalism indicates the strong influence of religion on the heroines and their social class. In *Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū*, Dhikrā sees ‘Āṣim’s accidental death as simply the verdict of destiny. There is no more to be said, because the matter has been decided.<sup>276</sup>

In *Lā ‘āsha Qalbī*, in a more directly religious reference, Baraka asks:

Is not faith in itself one of the greatest blessings that God has bestowed on His servants? So how then can I be so unlucky, when I am a Muslim woman worshipping God, fearfully and lovingly, and my heart is filled with faith?<sup>277</sup>

Elsewhere, after shocking Baraka with her admission that it was her who poisoned Hājar, Murḍiya says with pain:

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273 Ibid., p. 158.

274 Ibid., p. 159.

275 Ibid., p. 159.

276 Bint al-Jazīra al-‘Arabiyya, p. 118.

277 Shaṭa, p. 38.

If I had been patient, Baraka, if I had submitted to my fate and allowed myself to be ruled by God and his will, I would not have lost the world. In addition, I lost the Hereafter too.<sup>278</sup>

Both novelists choose the holy mosque of Mecca as the setting for their heroines to recapture the spirituality and safety of which the troubles in their society have deprived them. Indeed, as Eliade and Willard assert, such sacred places are distinguished by their psychological and spiritual influences on the soul:

Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane... as [e]very sacred space implies a hierophany, an eruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different.<sup>279</sup>

Consequently, the selection of this iconic religious site is not random; rather it has a semantic significance in the text and a telling psychological impact on the characters, including both heroines, because of the vital strength of their relationship with the religious environment of Mecca and Medina, which are among the most sacred places of worship for Muslims.<sup>280</sup> For Dhikrā, the mosque is her favorite place to rid herself of anxiety. When she was temporarily transferred to Mina Hospital in Mecca, she felt some relief:

She felt some psychological comfort... because she gained the opportunity to perform Hajj for the first time in her life.<sup>281</sup>

The narrator describes the powerful impact of that holy place on Dhikrā's soul and the depth of feeling underlying its importance to her: "Dhikrā sipped Zamzam water to quench her thirst".<sup>282</sup>

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278 Ibid., p. 140.

279 M. Eliade, (1957). *The sacred and the profane: The nature of religion*. (T. Willard Trans.). New York, NY: A Harvest Book Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., pp 11,26.

280 H. Al-Bulaihid, (2007). *Jamalyāt al-makān fī al-rivāya al-Sa'ūdiyya* [The Aesthetics of the Setting in the Saudi Arabian Novel]. Dammam, KSA: Dār Al-Kifāh Publishing House, p. 165.

281 Bint al-Jazīra al-'Arabiyya, p. 92.

Likewise, Baraka views this religious setting as a source of reassurance for the soul, which she has lost:

My constant presence in the Sacred Mosque and in the holy house restored to me the soul that I had missed for so long [...] and my heart regained its self-denial in this world, the fulfillment of God's will.<sup>283</sup>

In conclusion, we can note that women's social issues and concerns became popular themes in Saudi women's novels of the 1960s, 70s and 80s. A theme common to the two works examined here is that of the conflicts between fairness and injustice, literacy and illiteracy poverty and wealth, as embodied in Saudi women's marginalization vis-à-vis the patriarchy dominating their society.

These conflicts opposing Saudi women to their society may well be seen as caused by the widespread poverty that prevailed during that period and by the underlying socioeconomic conditions. Therefore, the next section seeks to explain the tragic world vision of the novels as seen through a text-immanent analysis of their narrative structures. This interpretation will be illuminated by relevant information from the novelists' biographies and an examination of the socio-economic conditions of Saudi women at the time when the novels were written and published.

### **3.6 Homologous Structures: Texts, Novelists, and Society**

The preceding sections of this chapter have concentrated on the thematic analysis of the two selected novels, moving from inside the text to outside only when required for textual clarification. In this section, by contrast, we attempt to replicate the Goldmannian analysis of the works of Pascal and Racine by investigating the tragic worldview expressed in the texts of this historical phase, placing them under the contextual microscope to determine whether they are structurally homologous with the ideology of a particular group or class in Saudi

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282 Ibid., p. 96.

283 Shata, p. 42.

society. According to Bakhtin and Holquist, literary works should be read in light of their relation with the social and historical forces at work when they were produced.<sup>284</sup> This analysis will involve a discussion of the historical events and social transformations that occurred in SA between 1958 and 1989 and have contributed to changing its social structure. The aim is to establish the relationships of the two novels with Saudi society during this period, then to connect the world visions expressed by the two novelists by explaining the world vision of their shared social group/class. The tragic vision manifested as the world vision expressed in the internal structure of these two texts can thus be linked to tribal and patriarchal traditions and to the poverty suffered by Saudi women in their society during this transitional period.

A general overview of the socio-economic conditions in SA has been given in (Section 3.2) and in Chapter 1 (Section 1.3). For Goldmann, alongside the historical and social facts, the biographical and psychological backgrounds of the novelists also affect their literary production and aid its comprehension. He therefore posits a strong relation between the social group and the literary work, asserting that the world vision expressed in the fiction of a particular historical phase reflects both the world vision of the novelist and that of her social grouping/classing. However, he believes that the ideological world vision must be created by the social group/class and must reflect the ideology of the class to which the creator of the work belongs, as the writer is only a medium.<sup>285</sup>

Consequently, using Goldmann's criteria for tragedy to examine the Saudi women's novel and the reasons for its emergence in a particular form with given content at this time, it appears that the main reasons are socio-economic. To illustrate this, we will use the relevant biographical experiences of the novelists to mediate the explanation of the influence of

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284 M. Holquist, (2002). *Dialogism Bakhtin and his world*. (2nd ed). London, England: Routledge Print, p. 68.

285 Goldmann (1976). p. 19., Goldmann (1981). pp. 23-24, & Goldmann (1975). p. 158.

difficult socio-economic conditions during this historical phase not only on Saudi female writers but also on Saudi females in general.

Samīra Khāshugjī is widely considered a pioneer of the Saudi women's novel, being both the first Saudi female novelist and a prolific writer, having published six novels. Khāshugjī was born in 1937 in the Hejazi city of Mecca. Her family moved to Medina, where she received private primary education. As females were then excluded from formal education in SA, her father sent her in the mid-1950s to study at Alexandria University in Egypt, where she obtained a bachelor's degree in economics. Khāshugjī died in 1986,<sup>286</sup> having set only one of her novels in SA, for reasons discussed in 2.3.

Amal Shaṭa was also born in Mecca, into a well-educated family, her father held many senior administrative positions in SA after completing his higher education in Egypt. This contributed to his supporting her in becoming a physician after graduating from Cairo University. Shaṭa's four novels contrast with those of her predecessors and she represents the artistic development of Saudi women writers.<sup>287</sup>

At this point, it may be argued that as both novelists belong to the middle or upper-middle social classes, the issues and concerns expressed in their writings pertain only to women of the same socio-economic background. In fact, many Saudi women's novels of the time were influenced by the melodrama and romance along with a trend towards realism popular in Egypt, which dominated Saudi literature in general, regardless of the writer's gender. As explained earlier in this chapter, the Saudi women's novel was produced by the elite bourgeois women who had been educated abroad, especially in Egypt. Although these authors were influenced by the melodramatic and romantic tendency popular in Egyptian fiction, their novels address issues that affect Saudi women of all social classes. Nonetheless,

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286 Ḥuḡūl Magazine. (2007, September). *Iṣḍār khāṣ ḥawl Samīra Khāshugjī* [A Special Issue about Samīra Khāshugjī]. Riyadh, KSA: Al-Nādī Al-Adabī, p. 91.

287 Al-Qaḥṭānī, p.10., & see also the Introduction of *Lā 'āsha Qalbī*, pp. 6-7. Shaṭa's four novels are: *Ghadan Ansā* [Tomorrow I Shall Forget] in 1980, *Lā 'āsha Qalbī* [May My Heart No longer Live] in 1989, *Adam Yā Sayidī* [Adam, Sir] in 1997, and *Rajul min al-Zaman al-ākhar* [A Man from the Other Time] in (2006).

as stated previously, Saudi women's novels prior to 1990 were artistically weak and showed lack of conscious awareness of the concept of the novel as a work of fiction. "In fact, [Saudi writers before 1954] knew nothing about "artistic" literature [the novel] and would continue to know nothing about it until the concept was introduced from Europe and Egypt."<sup>288</sup> This is because until the 1980s the reception of fiction in SA society was undoubtedly limited by the dominance of the poetic genre at all levels of literary life and culture.<sup>289</sup> Saudi novelists, especially women, had therefore very limited scope within which to discuss social reality.

However, although these works were strongly influenced by the aforementioned factors and seem unworthy of serious consideration in terms of their artistic and literary merit, they are significant for their popular content and themes, addressing issues of concern to women of all social classes despite the social, religious and patriarchal obstacles then in place, as explained in Chapter 2.

Thus, Khāshugjī and Shaṭa wrote their respective novels about the lives, concerns and experiences of women in the tribal and patriarchal Saudi society as it was then constituted, as did almost all Saudi female novelists of this early transitional phase.

Adopting Goldmann's three essential criteria, the tragic vision in *Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū'* is correlated with the oppressive traditions of the patriarchal society against which the heroine struggles, while that in *Lā 'āsha Qalbī* is linked with poverty and the selfishness of the upper-middle class, as discussed above. The main reasons for the existence of such a vision in these two novels are, first, the lack of absolute morality or values in society. As indicated earlier, both heroines seem weak, struggling ineffectually to establish such authentic values and eliminate or even mitigate poverty and injustice. Second, the harmful and selfish actions of the tribal and patriarchal forces have had traumatic psychological effects on the tragic

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288 Al-Qaḥṭānī, p. 8. This introduction is associated with Ḥāmid Damanhūrī's return from Egypt. To avoid repetition, the first Saudi women's novel appeared in 1958; before this there was a lengthy period during which the thematic and artistic aspects of Saudi men's novels developed considerably.

289 Al-Wahhābī, p. 38.

heroines and their society. These two factors leave insoluble rather than unresolved the struggles between the groups to which the two heroines belong and those opposing them in their patriarchal society.

The effects of these socio-economic conditions on both heroines' lives are evident. The harsh regime of the patriarchal society pursues Dhikrā throughout *Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū*. As was customary in the desert at that time, her parents married when her mother was young<sup>290</sup> and her father tries hard to marry Dhikrā to 'Āmir when she is only 11 years old. Dhikrā's refusal to comply with this tradition is expressed when she interrupts her father to tell her mother: "I do not want to marry my cousin [...] I am happy with you. Besides he scares me because he is old."<sup>291</sup> The words "I do not" and "he is old" typify the socio-ideological communication between the two groups in the heroine's society. Indeed, Khāshugjī repeats this social conflict frequently in the novel in different ways, depicting misery as inevitable and resistance as futile.

The oppressive effects of tribal patriarchy on Dhikrā are not only physical and physiological, but extend to every aspect of her life. For instance, her father's gruesome treatment of her and her mother causes Dhikrā's disability, compounding her lower-class status. Consequently, her love for 'Āṣim is an affront not only to his father, who strongly objects because she is Bedouin and disabled, but also to 'Āṣim's friends and colleagues at the hospital. Thus, Ḥāmid, the hospital director reacts with ironic surprise to the idea that 'Āṣim loves her and tries to make him change his mind:

- Have you heard the vicious rumor that some malicious people in the hospital are spreading about you?
- What rumor do you mean?
- That you are planning to marry the ... nurse, and he swallowed the word that almost escaped his mouth (dumb) ... the nurse Dhikrā.

Then, when 'Āṣim tells Ḥāmid that Dhikrā has rejected his proposal of marriage:

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<sup>290</sup> Bint al-Jazīra al-'Arabiyya, pp. 20-21.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., pp. 31-32.

The Director laughed ironically and said “She may have seen something that she did not like in you”.<sup>292</sup>

The tribal and patriarchal society actually contributes to Dhikrā’s suffering, in the social mockery, the fading of her dreams and the death of the people she loves: her mother and ‘Āṣim.

Similarly, the deaths of the relatives of Shaṭa’s heroine and main characters are major contributory factors in their psychological problems, social isolation, marginal status and consequent surrender to fate. For instance, the effect of Ziyād’s death on Ḥabība’s social life and psychological wellbeing is clear from her words to Baraka:

Oh Baraka, when Ziyād died ... Ḥabība died. I swear to God that I died on that day... My spirit departed my body when he left me.<sup>293</sup>

In fact, it is obvious that Ziyād’s death, Ḥabība’s vagrancy and her need to seek refuge in the *ribāṭ* later in the story result directly from the fact that Ziyād’s family has disowned him, banished him from the palace and humiliated his wife because he has dared to marry outside their social class.

All of these conditions lead to tragedy. These examples illustrate the sense of fatalism and the absence of absolute morality in every aspect of Dhikrā’s, Baraka’s, and Ḥabība’s lives, both of these factors being major criteria for tragedy according to Goldmann.

Rectifying the marginalized socio-economic situation of women during this transitional period of Saudi history can be seen as requiring some form of governmental intervention to establish their essential rights. Conversely, educated urban women perceived the government to be acting too slowly and/or too indecisively, so their own writings became the main vehicle for rebelling against the tribalism, patriarchy and upper-middle class dominance that

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid., p.102.

<sup>293</sup> Shaṭa, p. 103.

divided men from women and rich from poor at all levels of Saudi society. This rebellion is evident not only in the two novels analyzed here, but in other novels of the same time period, such as Hudā al-Rasheed's *Ghadan Sayakūn al-Khamīs* (1976), whose rebellious heroine Nawāl challenges patriarchal forces by promoting education for girls and seeking to protect them from early marriage.

Saudi women were completely absent from the political and economic spheres at this time. Therefore, to show clearly the suffering of her heroine as a poor, weak and marginalized woman representative of her gender, Shaṭa sets her novel in Hejaz, the most multi-ethnic region of SA and more particularly in the closed setting of the *ribāṭ*, whose inmates are marginalized by class, ethnicity, race or origin. The marginal status of the groups to which they belong is clear when they are contrasted with opposing classes in Saudi society.

*Lā 'āsha Qalbī* depicts the social classes who suffer these miserable conditions as helping each other and cooperating to secure a safer and better life. For instance, Baraka, has affinity with Zahra al-Takrūniyya, the woman of African origin, and Su'āda, a foreign woman of Arab origin, and other women in the *ribāṭ* in her quest to achieve her group's hopes and aspirations. Such a correlation among these marginal classes indicates the weaknesses and lack of moral values in the degraded society that oppresses them, which is one of Goldmann's essential criteria for tragedy.

The unity of these marginal classes is exemplified by Baraka's description of the *ribāṭ* as a place where women suffer from depression and wretchedness, yet also they live in harmony among them and hope for a restored life:

Life in the *ribāṭ* is quiet and a strange harmony prevails, a harmony which is heightened by sadness and loneliness, and if it were not for surrender to reality and surrender to destiny and fate, fear could sink and blind their hearts.

She adds:

It is not so strange that anyone feels lonely and depressed in this tomb; otherwise they would be considered angels.<sup>294</sup>

As mentioned earlier, taking account of their biographical backgrounds can help to correlate the tragic vision of Khāshugjī and Shaṭa with the parallel ideological structures in their society, because their experiences relate to their socio-economic status and are shared by most Saudi female novelists of the time. This can be seen, for instance, in their choice of alternative settings, the various levels of discourse and the events of the novels. Discussing their novels in this biographical context will thus afford a better understanding of their work and of their group's vision.

Indeed, both novelists, in common with all Saudi women from every generation, suffered from marginalization caused by oppressive culture and traditions. One shared characteristic is that both were from middle- and upper-class families, which allowed them to complete their education abroad at a time when patriarchal and religious restrictions denied girls a formal education in SA. The marginality experienced by Khāshugjī's and Shaṭa's social group was experienced by all Saudi women, whose exclusion from education had tightly restricted their occupational opportunities. Unlike men, during the early years of the modern Saudi state, young women enjoyed neither continuity of education nor access to training to improve their skills and ready them for paid work, which forced them to stay at home to prepare for life as wives and mothers.

This motivates Khāshugjī to identify the issue of work, albeit implicitly, as one of the main concerns of her social group in *Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū*, whose narrator tells of the productive skills of women in the desert despite their patriarchally limited work opportunities. Khāshugjī also politicizes the monotony of women's work:

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294 Shaṭa, pp. 63, 21.

His wife [Ruqayya] and her daughter Dhikrā wake up to resume their daily work as usual ... the Bedouin life is monotonous, unchanging and unbroken, today ... yesterday and tomorrow ...<sup>295</sup>

Another passage adds detail:

... Dhikrā's mother is very conscientious in performing her duties as a wife and mother ... Like any Bedouin woman, she cleans her tent and prepares food for her husband. And she makes bread ... and milks the goats ... and makes cheese and butter, and spins the wool and makes of it cloaks and carpets, and darns what has been ripped. All this she does despite being veiled in traditional Najdī dress... Long robes and a veil covering her face and head ... so that only her eyes are visible.<sup>296</sup>

Ruqayya is like other women in this community who are forced to accept the self-sacrificial roles assigned to them by men, as faithful wives and devout mothers. They must carry on without complaint in order to avoid punitive patriarchal violence. Amina Wadud observes that many males in Arab and Muslim patriarchal societies hold the false belief that “men are superior [which] reduces women to a subordinate status”.<sup>297</sup> Hence, they resort to violence against women whenever they perceive a threat to their supposed superiority, to their dominance or to what are seen, in the public sphere, as male privileges and rights.<sup>298</sup>

Shaṭa was evidently aware of the difficult socio-economic situations of her social group during this transitional phase. Her literary inclinations and her career as a physician also gave her a clear and detailed view of the lives of many people including the poor and the marginal classes of the Hejazi region. All of this helped her to understand the suffering and obstacles encountered by these excluded social groups.

Furthermore, the tragic vision is prominent in the works of all female novelists of this historical phase, reflecting their feeling of hopelessness regarding the development of their

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295 Bint al-Jazīra al-'Arabiyya, p. 33.

296 Ibid., p. 20.

297 A. Wadud, (2009). *Islam beyond patriarchy through gender inclusive Qur'anic analysis. Equality and Justice in the Family conference*, Malaysia:

Musawah, p. 103.

298 S. Tracy, (2007). *Patriarchy and domestic violence: Challenging common misconceptions. Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 50(3), p. 576.

socio-economic condition in light of the unshakeable dominance of male authority. Their concentration on gender-related issues and their shared tragic world vision are characterized by some literary critics in SA as an unnecessary and unwelcome restriction to subjects of interest only to women, whereas it actually reflects the sufferings and dilemmas arising from the difficult socio-economic conditions faced by Saudi women and men in general in the patriarchal society of the time. Therefore, the marginalization of female novelists in this historical phase is important in exploring the relationship between world vision and social class. Indeed, considering Saudi women as a socially marginal group here echoes Goldmann's analysis of the theatrical and philosophical works of Racine and Pascal in which he addresses the material conditions of the Jansenists, as a marginal religious group.

It may be argued that the tragic vision expressed in these two novels was a feature of all the novels of that period regardless of the gender of their authors. These works reflect the socio-economic conditions experienced by all groups and classes in Saudi society, against the backdrop of the government's series of five-year plans, which were at first solely concerned with the development of the national infrastructure.<sup>299</sup> While this is true, women suffered from being more disadvantaged than their male counterparts from civil rights, and were restricted in every aspect of their lives by oppressive tribal and patriarchal traditions. The fact that Khāshugjī wrote abroad and under a pseudonym, whereas Shaṭa was more careful in her discourse because she wrote from within the country and in her own true name, can be largely explained by these social and cultural restrictions against women. These may also explain the social critical awareness and concern of both Khāshugjī and Shaṭa, despite their socially privileged origins. Indeed, the publisher of *Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū'* writes in its

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299 *Almana*, p. 2.

preface about the social and cultural restrictions in place of Khāshugjī as the author of this novel.<sup>300</sup>

### **3.7 Conclusion**

The difficult socio-economic conditions that Saudi female novelists and other Saudi women experienced during the 1960s, 70s and 80s are central to explaining how both Khāshugjī and Shaṭa attained the virtual consciousness required to express their social group's world vision during this historical phase. Thus, the conditions in patriarchal Saudi society are important mediating factors of the relationship between internal and external structures, as well as the novelists' world vision and the socio-economic situation of their social group at this time. Indeed, both narratives and the historical facts show how Saudi women, as a marginal social group, were treated socially and economically before and during the transitional period in which the novels were written. These mediating factors are particularly significant in deepening our understanding of the Saudi women's novel of the time and the world vision of its authors. Women of all classes in SA became a marginal social group because the tribal and social patriarchy delayed or denied the granting of their basic rights, such as the right to formal education and paid work.

Further, we conclude that both novels fulfill Goldmann's three criteria of tragedy in their heroines: the novel must express a sense of fatalism or inevitability; absolute morality should always have priority over all other values; and there must be an insoluble, rather than merely unresolved, conflict. Hence, the Goldmannian approach helps to explain the existence of a parallel between the ideological structure of their worldviews articulated in their works (the internal structure) and their group's mental structure (the external structure).

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300 *Bint al-Jazīra al-'Arabiyya*, p. 8.

Although Saudi society has developed since the first Saudi women's novel was written, women's social, cultural and economic status has been in need of a major event to change the patriarchal nature of that society. Some change had occurred by 1990, due to the great socio-political events experienced by the Saudi regime and society, but globally little has changed since then. The period since the 1990 has known some stagnation socially and politically in the West, until the events of 9/11 in the USA.<sup>301</sup> This contrasts sharply with the situation in the Arab world, especially SA, which continues to witness many major political events and much unrest. Both Saudi women's social and cultural status and Saudi women writers' novelistic themes have been positively impacted by the enormity of events and developments in the nation. This will be discussed in the analysis of the novels of the next two phases.

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301 J. Baudrillard, (2003). *The spirit of terrorism*. New York, NY: Verso, p. 3.

## Chapter 4

### The Bewildered and Pessimistic Vision: 1990-2004

#### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has shown that the dominant vision in Saudi women's novels between 1958 and 1989 was a tragic one, reflecting the difficult social and economic conditions of that period. The literature published between 1990 and 2004, to which this chapter turns, differs in that it was influenced both by poor socio-economic conditions and by the socio-political upheaval of the Gulf war and its aftermath. Indeed, politics now played a much stronger influence on people's outlooks, beliefs, and lifestyles as well as on literature in the Gulf States. As detailed in Chapter One, the effects of the Gulf War and the events of 11 September 2001 on individuals and governments alike provoked many social, cultural, ideological and political questions and conflicts. As novelists of both genders struggled with these sensitive and complex questions, the domain of the novel and the wider literary scene underwent some major changes and was marked by the appearance of a significant number of important female novelists who lived or studied abroad. Among these new female novelists, Rajā 'Ālim, Layla al-Juhanī, Rajā al-Sani' and Umaima al-Khamīs, traveled widely and experienced life outside SA. Another important development that took place around the turn of the millennium was that poetry lost its dominance as the main national literary genre of SA, and was replaced by the novel as the preferred medium of expression. Between 1990 and 2004, many Saudi writers, male and female, turned for the first time to the novel. Thus, the

poets Nora al- Muḥaimīd, Bashā'ir Muḥammad, and Ghazi al-Qosaibi, the academic and thinker Turkī al-Ḥamad, the short-story writers Umaima al-Khamīs, Nora al-Ghāmidī and Badriyya al-Abdurrahman, and the opinion writer Layla al-Uḥādib were among those who began their journeys as novelists during this period abandoning the literary genre they subscribed to initially.<sup>302</sup> This shift to the novel was not accidental, but arose from its capacity to convey the complex reality of fear, suffering, depression and weakness felt by Saudis, especially the young, who “had never felt as threatened as they did in the morrow of the second Gulf War”,<sup>303</sup> with its grave social, political and economic consequences.<sup>304</sup> The analysis and discussion which follow, especially in Sections 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5, demonstrate how the novels’ characters of this period were subject to such feelings.

Novels written by Saudi women before 1990 tended to share a “tragic” vision and common themes, although a few, such as *Lā ‘āsha Qalbī* by Amal Shaṭa, *Arba ‘a Ṣifr* by Rajā ‘Ālim (1987) and *Ghadan Sayakūn al-Khamīs* (1976) by Hudā al-Rasheed, presaged an evolution in artistic form. Since 1990, both themes and structure have evolved notably as Saudi female novelists have tackled different and more sensitive themes.<sup>305</sup> Some of these new themes simply reflect the changing Saudi environment, whereas in other cases writers appear to have chosen to challenge taboos by addressing topics considered culturally and socially sensitive in conservative Saudi society, leading to a greater adherence to realism, as discussed in Section 4.5.

These developments can be seen in novels such as *Ṭarīq al-Ḥarīr* (1995) and *Khātām* (2001) by Rajā ‘Ālim, *Imra ‘a ‘ala Fawhat Burkān* (1996) by Bahiyya Bū Sbait, *Adam Yā Sīdī* (1997) by Amal Shaṭa, *al-Firdaws al-Yabāb* (1998) by Layla al-Juhanī, *Uyūn ‘ala al-samā’*

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302 For more details, see: K. Al-Yousof, (2018). *The Saudi literary bibliography*. Riyadh, KSA: King Saud University Press.

303 Menoret, p. 195.

304 H. Al-Nu‘amī, (2009). *Al-Riwāya Al-Sa‘ūdiyya: Waqu‘ha wa Taḥlīlatuha* [Saudi Novel: Its Reality and Transformation]. Riyadh, KSA: The Ministry of Cultural and Information, p. 30.

305 Al-Nu‘amī (2004), p. 9., & Al-Manāshira, p. 22.

(1999) and *Unthā al-‘Ankabūt* (2000) by Qumāsha al-‘Ulayyān, and *Mazāmīr min Warāq* (2003) by Nidā Abū ‘Alī. The impact of social, political, and military events can be seen in the pessimistic and bewildered vision dominating most of the novels of this period. This pessimism is reflected in titles such as *‘Uyūn ‘ala al-samā’* (*Eyes on the Sky*), *Untha ‘ala Ashri‘at al-Ghurba* (*A Female on the Sails of Alienation*), *Bukā’an taḥt al-maṭar* (*Crying in the Rain*), *Dumū‘un Musallaḥa* (*Armed Tears*), *Ajnidah Mughtariba* (*An Expatriate Agenda*) and *Mazāmīr min Warāq* (*Paper Flutes*).

Changes in structure, techniques and style can be at least partly explained by technological developments since the 1990s, whereby Saudis have no longer been isolated from interaction with world literature and cultures.<sup>306</sup> Saudi women novelists have been able to make contact with critics and publishers both inside and outside their own society. In addition, they have become more aware of international literature, which has been translated into Arabic and has influenced their writings. From within the Arab world, al-Wahhābī asserts that all genres of Saudi literature have been affected by the techniques and styles of literary cultures such as that of Egypt, which can be considered to be at a more advanced stage of development in interacting with foreign western literature and cultural studies.<sup>307</sup> These external influences on Saudi women novelists of the period are reflected in their adoption of techniques and trends such as surrealism, symbolism, magical-realism, interior-monologue, realism, historicism, feminism and mythology, some of which are evident in the samples selected for examination in this chapter.<sup>308</sup> These experiments in technique, motivated by global intercultural and literary communication, may be considered appropriate for female novelists of this period to express their suffering, political ideas, conflict and tension within society. Thus, according to Salhi, “the 1990s [and early 2000s] generation of Saudi novelists

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306 Menoret, p. 35.

307 Al-Wahhābī, p. 248.

308 Al-Manāṣira, p. 39.

[regardless of gender] are also resolved to use the novel as a political tool to effectuate social and political change”... In a country where “freedom of speech is largely non-existent... [t]hey thus use the novel as a tool to challenge social taboos and unveil the ills in their society”.<sup>309</sup> This argument is supported by *al-Firdaws al-Yabāb* (1998) and *Lam A‘ud Abkī* (2004), in which Layla al-Juhanī and Zaynab Ḥafnī respectively, can be seen to have paved the way for female novelists after 2004 to be bolder in addressing social issues and taboo themes such as sex, illegitimate pregnancy, and emotional relationships between the two genders in Saudi society, as will be discussed in Chapter Five. These taboos are not directly addressed in the novels chosen for analysis in the present chapter, but this is not because the appearance of both aforementioned novels was delayed by cultural and social traditions, as detailed in Chapter One, nor because of the alleged slackness of the Saudi novel from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s.<sup>310</sup> Rather, the likely reason is that all novels written and published between 1990 and 2004 were concerned with socio-political events and conflicts, and were attempting to address the pertinent ideological questions of their time. This is what led Husain al-Manāṣira to consider the 1990s as heralding the renaissance of the Saudi novel as a whole.<sup>311</sup>

The works selected for analysis here are ‘*Uyūn ‘ala al-samā*’ by Qumāsha al-‘Ulayyān and *Mazāmīr min Waraq* by Nidā Abū ‘Alī. The former appears to portray the ideas (i.e. the mental structure) of a particular social class/group in Saudi and Kuwaiti societies (as both share a classic patriarchal culture) more closely. This led scholars to see it as providing a historical record on the impact of the Gulf War on Saudis and Kuwaitis, with a focus on women’s status at times, whereas Abū ‘Alī combines mythical and realistic techniques to explore cultural identity in Saudi society following the events of September 2001. These two

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309 Z. Salhi, (2017). *Withstanding the winds of change? Literary representations of the Gulf war and its impacts on Saudi society*. *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 39(4), p. 973.

310 Al-Nu‘amī (2009). pp. 29-33.

311 Al-Manāṣira, pp. 23-24.

novels are selected here as representative of those appearing between 1990 and 2004, which share a pessimistic and fearful tone as a consequence of the Gulf War and 9/11.

The analysis of these novels in this chapter gives due consideration to political factors having direct and indirect impacts on society, as well as on the novelists and their writings. It thus follows Goldmann's two related methodologies concerning the relationship between novels and their socio-economic and socio-political contexts. As with the analysis in Chapter Three, it first examines the sociological background to the novels, then offers a thematic analysis in order to elucidate the internal structure of the narratives. This is consistent with Goldmann's approach, showing how the narratives are shaped by contemporaneous socio-economic and socio-political forces.

## **4.2 Social Context**

This section examines the prevailing socio-political and socio-economic situation and its effect on Saudi nationals including women and their literature. Chapter One has already offered a general overview of economic and political conditions and their socio-economic and socio-political consequences. Treating these as mediating factors helps to explain the internal structure referred to in Section 4.1. This methodology will help us to determine why the worldview of the Saudi women's novel "should have been expressed in this particular way at this particular time."<sup>312</sup>

Underlying the prevailing socio-political and socio-economic conditions are significant political factors, reflecting the role of politics as the engine of fundamental change in Saudi society at all levels, including the economy, security and social awareness. As discussed in Chapter One (Section 1.4), the Gulf War was a global event which significantly destabilized

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<sup>312</sup> Goldmann (1976), p. 19.

the region, sparking tension between the Saudi government and some religious and intellectual elites over the propriety of American troops defending the Saudi state from Iraqi incursions and working to liberate Kuwait. These tensions allowed the Şahwa religious revivalist movement, which began in the late 1980s, to strengthen its hold over society, as can be seen from its conflicts with the modernists.

The economic effects of the Gulf War are fundamental to the Goldmannian approach. As detailed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.3), the steep increase in oil prices between 1973 and 1982 provided unprecedentedly high revenues, supporting rapid development. The remainder of the 1980s can be seen as a transitional phase culminating in the Gulf War. This war caused an economic crisis because the Saudi government had to greatly strengthen its own armed forces and pay foreign troops to help maintain the security of the kingdom and liberate Kuwait. Aldakheel asserts that despite boosting oil production to increase income from domestic and foreign sales, SA still incurred a budget deficit in order to underwrite its military exploits.<sup>313</sup>

This phase culminated in the impact of the 9/11 attacks on the Saudi regime, because 15 of the 19 perpetrators were Saudis, which directly affected international relations, especially with the USA, as discussed in Chapter One. Saudi society itself began a cycle of social and political transformations prompted by worldwide scrutiny of its religion and culture, with a particular focus on human rights and the status of women, in the discourse of foreign governments, especially that of the USA, and in the mass media. According to al-Khudr, this directly or indirectly led the Saudi government to reconsider the long-dominant Islamic discourse.<sup>314</sup> Since then, Wahhabism has been heavily criticized in Western politics and in the media. As detailed in Chapter One, some of its adherents have used this very criticism to justify religious radicalism and the launching of suicide attacks against the West. Chapter

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313' A. Aldakheel, pp. 331-333., & Haykel, Hegghammer, and Lacroix, (eds.), p. 27, 81.

314 Al-Khudr, p. 602.

Five will examine the government's attempts since 2005 to respond, in part by improving the cultural, social, economic and political status of Saudi women.

During the period 1990-2004, Saudi women were central to all elements of discourse and conflict between modernists and religious extremists and to the *fatwas* that they issued. Al-Rasheed asserts that Wahhabi nationalism has subjected Saudi women to many more restrictions than other Muslim women face in other Muslim countries. It has impeded the development of their social and political participation, their education, their place in the workforce, their ability to drive, their choice of dress, gender equality and many other aspects of their lives. According to al-Rasheed, the *fatwas* of Wahhabi scholars on all aspects of women's lives "from marriage to wearing high heels" has resulted in their exclusion, as the politicized religious tradition of Wahhabi nationalism has sought to establish "a homogeneous nation out of a fragmented, diverse, and plural Arabian society".<sup>315</sup> Thus, the development of Saudi women's status before and during this phase was hindered by extremist Islamic teachings and regulations on one hand and by rigid patriarchal traditions on the other.

Lacey notes the tension between the above political and religious rigidity on one hand and social pressures arising from the events of the 1990s on the other, exemplified by attitudes to restrictions on mobility and dress. During the Gulf War, many young American female soldiers were seen driving military vehicles in the streets and on the motorways of the Eastern Province. At the same time, Kuwaiti women whose families had sought refuge in SA would openly drive cars in the Eastern Province cities.<sup>316</sup> Because of the similarities of tradition between their societies, Saudi women were greatly influenced by the actions and attitudes of their Kuwaiti sisters, as demonstrated by the events of November 1990: While the Saudi government was distracted by the Iraqi invasion in the North East of the country, 45

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315 Al-Rasheed, pp. 15-16.

316 R. Lacey, p. 134.

Saudi women took the opportunity to drive their cars in Riyadh. Despite the fact women not being permitted to drive has always been a matter of social convention and that there is no legal obstacle to it,<sup>317</sup> these women were immediately arrested and some had their employment suspended, as this act of civil disobedience shocked the government, the society, and the *Ṣaḥwīs*.<sup>318</sup>

Saudi women were also influenced by their Kuwaiti sisters' dress code. In public, for example, Kuwaiti women normally wear a *niqāb* that leaves the area around the eyes uncovered, whereas Saudis traditionally cover their whole face. During the 1990s, Saudi women increasingly adopted a more relaxed attitude to veiling, accompanied by changes to the traditional style of the 'Abāya, as the traditional head 'Abāya was gradually replaced in popularity by the shoulder 'Abāya. Other clothing styles changed too, with more women beginning to wear jeans and other western clothes. According to al-Khudr, the *Ṣaḥwīs* felt strongly challenged by these new fashions and tried vigorously to ban them during the 1990s. They issued many *fatwas* on such clothes, but women continued to wear them.<sup>319</sup> As to veiling, although it remains a controversial topic among religious scholars, the Saudi government has given all female citizens the freedom to cover or eschew covering the face.

The above discussion makes it reasonable to believe that the socio-political and socio-economic conditions during the period in question served to generate psychological anxiety with regard to nationalism, security, religion and society among Saudi women. For the female intelligentsia including novelists, these conditions are reflected in the literary expression of hopelessness and bewilderment. This is because according to Badriyya al-Bishr, an intellectual sociologist, novelist, and columnist, while the above seem like welcome changes

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317 The Saudi women's driving ban was officially lifted by the royal decree that was issued on 26 September 2017. Saudi Press Agency. (2017). Retrieved from: <https://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=ar&newsid=1671323>. Accessed, 26 September 2017.

318 Lacroix, p. 163., & Haykel, Hegghammer, and Lacroix, (eds.), p. 19.

319 Al-Khudr, pp. 322-323.

to Saudi women at times, “she remains careful not to express unrealistic enthusiasm [...] there are many changes [...] but practically there are still restrictive rules and laws that inhibit the emancipation of women.”<sup>320</sup> Umaima al-Khamīs, an intellectual, novelist, and columnist, also confirms that her role as a writer during this historical phase is “to deal with women’s absence and their empty seats in society”,<sup>321</sup> which result from the socio-cultural obstacles and challenges that female novelists depict. The following section considers Saudi women’s literature as the vehicle of such feelings, by discussing the main theme of each of the two novels under consideration.

### 4.3 The Themes of the Novels

#### 4.3.1 ‘*Uyūn ‘ala al-samā*’ by al-‘Ulayyān

Published in 1999, ‘*Uyūn ‘ala al-samā*’ was Qumāsha al-‘Ulayyān’s first novel. It is written largely in the form of a historical report of events in Kuwait and Riyadh during the Gulf War. As Kuwait has a similar patriarchal socio-cultural background to that of SA, the novel’s main theme concerns the shattered lives of women suffering under male domination; it focuses on their sacrifices and struggles to change this reality, addressing concerns that are all too familiar to the writer, the narrators, and protagonists in these two societies.

Analysis of the narrative voice and focalization reveals women’s conflict with patriarchal authority to be the main focalized theme. Al-‘Ulayyān chooses an omniscient, heterodiegetic third-person narrator to deliver the main theme to the narratees. The plot revolves around the life of a young, educated Kuwaiti girl, Hudā, who is the problematic heroine. Hudā, along with other female characters such as her mother and her close friend Fatima, suffer as a result

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<sup>320</sup> Interview with the author, Dubai, 5 January 2011 as cited in al-Rasheed, p. 193.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid., p.190.

of the selfishness of the male characters, whether fathers, brothers, husbands or lovers, who abuse their positions of authority to serve their own interests. To reveal the theme of the novel, the narrator takes us first to the conflict between Hudā and her mother, who insists that Hudā should comply with her father's wish that she should marry an older businessman, Abū Khalid, who is already married. She describes him as "an excellent man" and tells Hudā: "You do not know your interest my love... Your father and I know it better than you".<sup>322</sup> Despite knowing that her husband's request is in complete contrast to her own hopes and social aspirations of achieving a safe and bright future, which encompass the authentic values of her social group, the mother fails to stand up to him, as is clear when she keeps persuading her daughter to marry the man of her father's choice.

After becoming engaged to Abū Khalid, Hudā accidentally hears a discussion between her parents revealing that her father's justification was that her fiancé had loaned him half a million dollars that he could not afford to repay. The father is thus portrayed as thinking only of his own interests while ignoring those of Hudā, which causes her to cry silently in her room, seeing herself as having been sold to Abū Khalid. Hudā "did not even imagine that she could be so worthless to her father that he would sell her to a wealthy man".<sup>323</sup> This is the first expression in this text of women's suffering under the patriarchy of their society. Their pessimism and helplessness in face of their restricted decision-making ability is made clear when we are told that Hudā's reaction to the realisation that her father "wants to sell her in such a cheap way" is to resolve "to marry even the devil himself."<sup>324</sup> The omniscient narrator, aware of the character's hidden psychological and emotive desires, comments: "... What a terrible reality... She abandons the future and lives in the past...".<sup>325</sup>

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322 Q. Al-'Ulayyān, (2000). *'Uyūn 'ala al-samā'* [Eyes on the Sky]. Riyadh, KSA: Dār Al-Kifāh, p. 12.

323 Ibid., p. 23.

324 Ibid., p. 23.

325 Ibid., p. 14.

The narrative compresses time, moving swiftly to a later stage in the heroine's life: Hudā marries Abū Khalid and soon becomes pregnant. The pregnancy “passes slowly... and her life goes from bad to worse”.<sup>326</sup> Two weeks before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Hudā delivers her child, Jabir, who suffers from cerebral palsy.

As well as using an omniscient narrator to express the theme of women's suffering under patriarchal selfishness, al-‘Ulayyān uses the technique of metafiction to embed it within the broader historical framework of the Gulf War and its socio-political conditions. The narrative depicts the social and psychological shock for all Kuwaitis and Saudis of the unexpected Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, mirroring the powerlessness felt by women in these two societies at that time. The war displaces many Kuwaitis, including Hudā and her family, who flee to her uncle's house in Riyadh, where they experience unsettled lives, feeling alienation at their sudden displacement from their homeland. Thus, Hudā's mother laments having become “homeless overnight... and threatened also...”<sup>327</sup>

Alongside metafiction, metaphor is one of the first techniques employed in the novels of this time to express and disseminate their discourse in the context of a socially and culturally conservative society over such a long time period. These techniques are used to depict the suffering and discomfort of the heroines, ultimately caused by the dominant social and cultural patriarchy. Al-‘Ulayyān shows its effects on women's lives and hopes by using the child Jabir as a metaphor for Hudā's bewildered present and disturbed future. According to Coveney, through the child, we grasp the writer's awareness of “human innocence against the cumulative pressures of the social experience”.<sup>328</sup> In this text, al-‘Ulayyān seems aware of the tribal and patriarchal pressures against women in her society. Jabir's disability reflects the patriarchal pressures on his mother, symbolizing Hudā's disabled future, complete with

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326 Ibid., p. 39.

327 Ibid., p. 45.

328 P. Coveney, (1957). *Poor monkey: The child in literature*. London, England: Richard Clay, Introduction: xi.

an overwhelming sense of suffering and the discomfort that results from oppressive patriarchy. Each experience that causes Hudā suffering and unhappiness or threatens her future is mirrored by Jabir's fevers and convulsions, which correspondingly subside when his mother begins to overcome her problems and to realize some of her hopes and dreams. For instance, when Hudā obtains a divorce from Abū Khalid at an early age, she struggles with the unfamiliar experience and asks her father sarcastically; "Alright... is this everything?" The omniscient narrative voice recounts that "another drop has fallen into her cup of grief."<sup>329</sup> At this time, a doctor warns that Jabir may never "walk like other children" and may need lifelong specialist care, while another advises that he will need surgery "for him to see properly... from his right eye."<sup>330</sup> The success of this operation then mirrors Hudā's successful resumption of her university studies; she "has not lost... a moment" of her course,<sup>331</sup> picking it up at the end of the temporary wartime closure of the university.

After the liberation of Kuwait and her divorce from Abū Khalid, Hudā marries her cousin Salem and they move to Riyadh. They love each other, so "the happy days pass quickly."<sup>332</sup> However, the reader is reminded of the theme of men's selfishness in this patriarchal society, as her new husband reacts angrily to Hudā's decision to bring Jabir to live with them without consulting him; the narrative voice wonders whether this represents "jealousy or a love of possession".<sup>333</sup> Hudā's life with Salem now worsens as he "has changed a lot".<sup>334</sup> He takes a second wife, and then divorces Hudā. Later, having divorced his new wife, he begs Hudā to

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329 Al-'Ulayyān, p. 61.

330 Ibid., p. 65.

331 Ibid., p. 68.

332 Ibid., p. 78.

333 Ibid., p. 79.

334 Ibid., p. 90.

take him back, stating that he never loved the other wife; marrying her “was just... an act of revenge.”<sup>335</sup> Hudā laughs ironically and refuses to “return to a selfish and arrogant man.”<sup>336</sup>

In this novel, the theme of men’s self-serving dominance applies even to ‘Imād, Hudā’s childhood love, who is depicted as a kind, handsome young man. Having divorced a wife whom he had never loved, he writes to Hudā declaring his love and asking for hers in return. They become engaged, after which Hudā has a strange recurring dream, in which “Jabir... is walking.”<sup>337</sup> She tells Fatima that in the dream, “I see myself and ‘Imād ... Then Jabir... jumps into our midst to make me and ‘Imād fall apart”.<sup>338</sup> Then, during their wedding ceremony, ‘Imād and Hudā hear a deafening scream from somewhere in the hall. Jabir has “suffered a severe spasm” and died, despite “all efforts by doctors.”<sup>339</sup>

Reinhard Kuhn interprets the death of a child in Western narrative fiction as primarily denoting a metaphorical reproach against human society.<sup>340</sup> Notwithstanding the differences between Arabic and Western cultures, the death of Jabir can also be seen as a reproach against his mother’s patriarchal society and its selfish men, who are concerned only with their own self-interest to the detriment of the lives of others. Following her tragic loss, Hudā becomes desperate, broken and hopeless and decides to divorce ‘Imād, despite her love for him, and this desire to isolation is what characterizes Hudā as a problematic hero in her degraded and hostile reality.

The above analysis of actions, narrative voice, and focalization demonstrates that the main theme of the novel is the conflict between women and the patriarchal authority in Saudi and Kuwaiti societies at the time of the Gulf War. It depicts men as caring only for their own

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335 Ibid., p. 123.

336 Ibid., p. 124.

337 Ibid., p. 144.

338 Ibid., p. 146.

339 Ibid., p. 147.

340 R. Kuhn, (1982). *Corruption in paradise: The child in Western literature*. Hanover, London: University Press of New England, p. 183.

interests, beginning with Hudā's father, then Abū Khalid, Salem and 'Imād. The first essentially sold her by forcing her to marry a much older man in order for him to repay his debt, the second divorced her out of selfishness, and the last lost her first by his hesitation, then by his intransigence, which caused her much suffering. In this novel, men are the main cause of the suffering of women in these two societies, while Hudā is portrayed to be struggling alone.

#### **4.3.2 *Mazāmīr min Waraq* by Abū 'Alī**

Nidā Abū 'Alī's third novel, *Mazāmīr min Waraq* (2003), reveals her particular way of dealing with patriarchy by using metafiction and mixing romanticism with realism and myth. Two storylines can be identified in the text. One uses direct speech to convey an abstract view of everyday events, difficulties, and discourses in the "closed" Saudi community, while at another embedded narrative level, metafiction and the other aforementioned techniques intersect and interact, creating a mythological reality to elaborate the main theme of the novel in a more profoundly fictional way.

This theme is rehearsed and a number of wider social issues raised in the novel's twelve sections, which have a transparent common thread: that the contradictions and schisms of Saudi society arise from its patriarchal rules, customs and traditions, which are governed by neither reason nor logic. The story, delivered by a heterodiegetic third-person omniscient narrator, conveys the main theme that the suffering of younger Saudis during the 1990s and the early 2000s resulted from the societal dominance of older males at a time when conflict and technological advance ended the isolation of Saudi society from the rest of the world.

Unlike the novels of the previous phase, *Mazāmīr min Waraq* has several main characters; Mais, Mishārī and al-‘Anoud, who participate in the events, although only Mishārī and Mais are treated here (in Sections 4.4 and 4.5) as problematic heroes.<sup>341</sup> Having multiple main characters is a sign of the evolution of narrative structure in Saudi women’s novels, maintained in later novels. The novelist assigns a particular function to each of these characters, all from one generation and a single social group. While Mishārī reflects the contradictions and sufferings of young males, al-‘Anoud represents the situation of young females in one of the world’s most patriarchal and ultra conservative societies; and the emotional relationship between Mishārī and Mais is a vehicle for discussing the impact of patriarchal rules on women in society.

The real events concern Mishārī, the main protagonist, and his sister, al-‘Anoud, who both complete their higher education in the United States a year after 9/11. On returning home, they suffer cultural and social shocks because of the patriarchal authority enforced on young Saudis, causing feelings of loss, alienation, bewilderment, hopelessness and claustrophobia. Both al-‘Anoud and Mishārī try to find jobs and settle into renewed coexistence with their homeland. This feeling is embodied in the dialogic elements, with several voices, young and old, male and female expressing the core theme and conflict. The omniscient narrator describes the newly returned Mishārī as “still distracted” and wondering if he will “be able to cope with all this as before”,<sup>342</sup> after prolonged absence from his traditional society. This expression depicts Mishārī’s feelings of bewilderment and loss. He observes contradictions in the behavior of his compatriots at Jeddah airport and the narrator states that both siblings feel fear generated by “the reverse social shock”,<sup>343</sup> of their homecoming.

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341 Al-‘Anoud in this novel seems to be a problematic heroine too; however, the novelist focuses more on Mishārī and Mais. Since they are two different problematic heroes, emancipated and Rebellious, we will concentrate the analysis on them only.

342 N. Abū ‘Alī, (2007). *Mazāmīr min waraq* [Paper Flute]. (2nd ed.). Beirut, Lebanon: Al-Mū’ssasa Al’Arabiyya for studies and publication, p. 15.

343 Ibid., p. 35.

Mishārī's strict uncle Ṣāliḥ is a central character, representing the older generation. Having decided to face reality by visiting this uncle, Mishārī wonders whether his conservatism has softened, "Or is he still a stubborn bigot?"<sup>344</sup> His question is partly answered by the appearance of Ṣāliḥ's son 'Abdulrazzāq, who in the focalizer's eyes, dresses identically to his father, "as if the father wanted his son to imitate him in everything... The only difference is the confused features and skeptical face"<sup>345</sup> of 'Abdulrazzāq. 'Abdulrazzāq is hopeless because it is an extreme challenge for the younger generation in Saudi society to disobey the patriarchal traditions and conservatism of their elders. This is because as Deniz Kandiyoti asserts, patriarchy in Islamic and Arab societies is correlated with the extended family or clan, whose senior man becomes dominant over everyone else.<sup>346</sup>

The physical, social and psychological conditions imposed on girls in the patriarchal Saudi society are revealed through al-'Anoud. Waiting for her uncle Ṣāliḥ at his house shortly after her arrival from Dubai, she asks Mishārī in an anxious whisper; "Do I behave like I normally do or should I be much more disciplined in front of my uncle?"<sup>347</sup> Later, in private conversation with her cousin Nuha, she expresses surprise that her youngest cousin, Haya, asked her earlier: "Why do you wear trousers if you are a girl?"<sup>348</sup> Nuha explains that females in her family do not wear jeans at home, because her mother sees those who do so as imitating men, and that "Haya does not often hang out with her friends."<sup>349</sup> This exchange emphasizes the traditional patriarchal stance of uncle Ṣāliḥ.

Also relevant to the theme is al-'Anoud's dialogue with Nuha: "I see that you are veiled... It is a nice thing for the woman to adhere to the teachings of her religion... I do not imagine

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344 Ibid., p. 35.

345 Ibid., pp. 37-38.

346 D. Kandiyoti, (1988). *Bargaining with patriarchy*. *Gender & Society*, 2(3), p. 278.

347 Abū 'Alī, p. 63.

348 Ibid., p. 65.

349 Ibid., p. 67.

myself doing that.’’ In response, Nuha giggles and says; ‘‘But I fear my father... [Unlike me], you are not a hypocrite because everything you do in public is the same as in private... When you and I go out somewhere far away from my father and ‘Abdulrazzāq... the situation will be different.’’<sup>350</sup> This response shocks al-‘Anoud; the narrator explains that she is concerned by ‘‘this duality that her cousin seems to be experiencing’’.<sup>351</sup> The omniscient voice elaborates; the ‘‘suffering of a woman who cannot control her life is deep... Why do agnostic traditions rob her of the right to choose her own path, despite the fact that Islam has strengthened her and her status with all due respect?’’<sup>352</sup> Al-‘Anoud does not see a contradiction between women and Islamic teachings and traditions, and what happens to women in this society has nothing to do with religion. This notion is crucial here because she refers to misreading patriarchal exegesis and readings of the main scripture of Islam ‘‘the Quran’’ and its teachings that cause women’s sufferings in their societies. Asma Barlas asserts that Islam is not a religious patriarchy and Quran’s ‘‘epistemology is inherently antipatriarchal’’, and the confusion in terms of inequality and discrimination is derived from the patriarchal readings ‘‘that are profoundly affecting the lives and future of Muslim women’’ in their societies.<sup>353</sup>

Because Abū ‘Alī sees her society at that time as hopeless due to lack of possibilities in the near future, the theme of contradictions is dominant in her novel and she sheds light on several social issues to highlight the complex suffering of the youth under the rule of patriarchy. Rana is another young character whose story embodies the contradictions engendered by patriarchal traditions. She phones al-‘Anoud to tell her that she has invited her boyfriend to her house: ‘‘‘Anoud, I am in trouble; I cannot get out of it... Manāf has been asleep next to me since last night, and I have closed the door.’’ Al-‘Anoud is extremely

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350 Ibid., p. 68.

351 Ibid., p. 68.

352 Ibid., p. 72.

353 A. Barlas, (2002). ‘‘Believing women’’ in Islam: *Unreading patriarchal interpretations of the Qur’ān* (1st ed.). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, p. 2.

shocked, and jumps out of bed “as if she has been stung. How could Rana be so bold and insane?” “Take him out of your room right now.” Rana responds, “I cannot. He came in last night while everyone was asleep. Oh God... I’ll try to hide him somewhere.”<sup>354</sup> She does manage to smuggle him out safely, but this storyline does not only refer to the negative impacts of social and cultural patriarchy on young Saudis, but it also celebrates the conspiratorial nature of close friendship and therefore points to potential change in this society.

This text also presents the older generation’s beliefs negatively from the perspective of the youth. Mishārī tells his friend, Ḥazm, “You seem annoyed, as if the problems of the world are your responsibility,” to which Ḥazm replies, “Does the individual in this Jāhilī [pre-Islamic] society have the right to choose the course of his life?” Mishārī seems to be recalling how his educated father, a doctor and writer, has refused to allow him to marry his beloved: He “rejects our relationship and threatens to expel and disown me”, because the girl is non-tribal.<sup>355</sup> This episode marks a shift of focus from patriarchy to hegemonic masculinity, not only towards women but also towards younger men. According to the sociologists Connell and Messerschmidt, “[m]asculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting.”<sup>356</sup> As to hegemony, it does not imply violence here, even if supported by force, but means ascendancy obtained through culture, institution and persuasion.<sup>357</sup> Thus, the rules imposed by older males seem to destroy the dreams and aspirations of the young. This is represented in the example of Ḥazm, whose name means “firmness”. When such situations arise in this novel, the narrator always comments on the feelings of characters; thus, “it is hard to look at a strong young man like a lost innocent

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354 Abū ‘Alī, p. 139.

355 Ibid., p. 183.

356 R. Connell, & J. Messerschmidt, (2005). *Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. Gender & Society, 19*(6), pp. 829-859.

357 Ibid., pp. 829-859.

child looking for a way out of a dilemma...’’ in a society which allows no space ‘‘to broach the subject and its discussion’’.<sup>358</sup> This is indeed true for a generation of young men and women questioning the customs and rules that impede their progress.

The structure of twelve related sections allows the novelist to explore the contradictions and disadvantages experienced by Saudi youth as a result of patriarchal traditions. At this point, the fiction embodied in Mishārī’s and Mais’s romantic story begins to enhance the main theme with the use of metafiction. According to Currie, ‘‘metafiction is not definitively a novel whose author is both a writer and a critic, but a novel which dramatizes the boundary between fiction and criticism, and to unify metafiction under this definition requires a rather loose interpretation of criticism.’’<sup>359</sup> Metafiction is thus a borderline discourse between criticism and fiction, and this particular place of the literary text becomes its subject.<sup>360</sup> The novelist adapts metafiction to present critical insights and to raise questions about the reality within its fictional frame. Currie comments that as ‘‘such writings not only explore the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text.’’<sup>361</sup> The novelist thus adapts metafiction to present critical insights, and uses the heterodiegetic third-person omniscient narrator to raise questions about the reality within its fictional frame. This might be because she does not want to comprise a conspicuous and blunt message, not only due to the extreme traditions and restrictions in the patriarchal conservative society, but also lest the novel loses its creativity.

The shift to this story begins with a phone call between Mishārī and Mais, an educated girl who suffers under the patriarchal traditions and norms directed at girls of her generation. Her love for Mishārī begins when she calls Mishārī, wrongly believing that he is Manṣūr, her

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358 Abū ‘Alī, pp, 182, 183.

359 M. Currie, (1995). *Metafiction* (Longman critical readers). Harlow: Longman, p. 3.

360 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

361 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

friend. The narrator presents Mais as a rebellious character, impulsive and angry about the thoughts and superficial interests of girls. She tells Mishārī, before he could explain to her that she was calling the wrong person; “You know nothing of the suffering of an educated girl... I wish I were a man in this Arab society which offers everything to men on a silver platter, while women suffer bitterly from the tyranny [of fathers, brothers, and husbands].”<sup>362</sup>

Mais represents the younger generation’s suffering under Saudi patriarchy, embodied in the story as inanimate or natural creations, such as rocks and trees. From the beginning of the magical journey, the heterodiegetic narrator reports Mais’s interior sense of loss, disappointment, and hopelessness as she is challenged and angered by finding the door to life “locked from the outside” and as immovable as an inert mountain. She feels bewildered, lost and alone in the dark, “as if she is in a glass bottle, colliding with its walls and unaware of the existence of these transparent barriers”.<sup>363</sup>

Sometimes, the narrator reports young people’s thoughts about the patriarchal rule and customs set out against them. For instance, Mais searches for Mishārī in a “primitive barbaric universe”,<sup>364</sup> falling “into a pit that muddies her white dress.”<sup>365</sup> This represents the soiling of “her sound thoughts”<sup>366</sup> “with sludge and mud.”<sup>367</sup> At each attempt to escape, the narrator states that “the globe returns her to the starting point whenever her career ends.”<sup>368</sup>

After Mishārī and Mais have escaped successfully from their reality to non-existence on their magical journey, we are told that Mishārī arrives later than Mais because when he tried to come to her, “the land, the sea and the air all stood against me... I watched you... and waited

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362 Abū ‘Alī, p. 49.

363 Ibid., p. 12.

364 Ibid., p. 20.

365 Ibid., p. 15.

366 Ibid., p. 13.

367 Ibid., p. 15.

368 Ibid., p. 20.

for you to be free of your struggle with the fire.’’<sup>369</sup> The obstacles and sufferings facing the young in such a society are represented by Mishārī’s failure to liberate Mais from a world of contradictions. He ‘‘becomes tired of the march that does not allow him to reach her’’, saying; ‘‘Mais, I am sorry... Search for your own survival alone... Be free from the covenant we have agreed.’’<sup>370</sup> The narrative voice explains that following their tribulations, Mishārī is ‘‘not strong enough to rid her of the vagueness of her world and his world’’.<sup>371</sup> Therefore, he writes a last letter to Mais, before leaving the degraded society in which he has suffered and with which he cannot coexist: ‘‘I have decided to leave.’’<sup>372</sup> Mais receives the message in anger and disgust at seeing him flee from his community for the same ‘‘reasons that caused her nausea’’.<sup>373</sup> In fact, we see that Mishārī’s escape is the result of his suffering under the patriarchal traditions that blight the lives of his generation.

The foregoing analysis of the events, narrative voice and focalization of the two novels identify the effect of traditional patriarchal rules on women and young men in Saudi society. The resulting conflicts between the social groups in both novels are embodied in the core themes of struggles between the tribal patriarchy on one hand, represented by older men, and the young generation of men and women on the other, represented in the novels by the problematic heroes.

#### **4.4 Goldman’s Problematic Hero in the Two Novels**

According to Goldman, the problematic hero is one who searches for authentic values in a degraded society to achieve his/her social group’s hopes and aspirations. As discussed above,

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369 Ibid., p. 22.

370 Ibid., p. 221.

371 Ibid., p. 225.

372 Ibid., p. 228.

373 Ibid., p. 229.

Hudā is the main protagonist in *'Uyūn 'ala al-samā'* and her life is filled with suffering because of patriarchal dominance. This rebellious young heroine fights for the individual's and the group's aspirations acquired by reading, studying and interacting with males. Although when forced to marry she has not yet completed her undergraduate studies, she struggles against the inauthentic values of a patriarchal society. Her anger, rebellion, and aspirations for freedom and justice are expressed in her words and those of the narrator, the parallel characters, and others. For instance, protesting against her parents' intention to make her marry Abū Khalid, she yells at her mother, "I will not let anybody control my future... It belongs to me alone"<sup>374</sup> ... "I will not marry him even if the sky falls..."<sup>375</sup> Hudā's later dialogue with her husband also depicts her struggle: "I will never give up my studies at college... even if the price is divorce."<sup>376</sup> Similarly, after several miserable experiences, she whispers "No, I will never give up" to herself, "to fortify her will"<sup>377</sup> to resist the males in authority who oppose her. Her parents' views contrast strongly with hers. For example, her mother accuses her of irrationality in rejecting Abū Khalid: "Your father and I are getting tired of persuading you that he is an excellent man."<sup>378</sup> The force of the mother's words indicates the author's intention to show how much women can vary in their attitudes to the social and cultural rigidity of patriarchal rules.

Mishārī and Mais are the problematic heroes in *Mazāmīr min Warāq*. Both are educated, but they differ in that Mishārī has been culturally emancipated by his Western education and influenced by direct exposure to humanistic values such as human rights and freedom which seem to be missing in his society. Mais, in contrast, is similar to Hudā and other problematic heroines discussed in this thesis who have acquired such values only through their reading

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374 Al-'Ulayyān, p. 11.

375 Ibid., p. 11.

376 Ibid., p. 34.

377 Ibid., p. 114.

378 Ibid., p. 12.

and studies. Mishārī is thus a young, emancipated problematic hero who seeks authentic values in a society that contrasts with his own and his group's hopes and aspirations, as the cynical writer Abdurrahman makes clear in this sarcastic assessment: "Mishārī returns from the journey of a lifetime in the West, which embraced him throughout his studies... Now, he has to face everything alone... the Arab contradictions... and the naivety of the majority hiding behind the walls of traditions".<sup>379</sup>

Mishārī's problematic nature is manifested as he rails against patriarchal traditions in his dialogue with other characters, even younger men. When his cousin 'Abdulrazzāq comments on the impact of patriarchal authority, Mishārī tries to help liberate him from the patriarchal dominance of uncle Ṣālīḥ by asking sorrowfully: "Why are you silent about such tyranny? You are a man and you must have your own private life and freedom."<sup>380</sup> He is disappointed by 'Abdulrazzāq's response, which limits his ambitions to graduation and marriage, warning him, "You will remain traditional all your life".<sup>381</sup> Mishārī also urges Ḥazm to believe that "struggle is the means to achieve everything we dream of."<sup>382</sup> When al-'Anoud asks her brother about the news today, he responds; "I have not read anything today except my friend Abdurrahman's article"<sup>383</sup>, as he is a cynical and critical columnist writing about his and his generation's "hopeless vision" resulted from the "social restrictions" in their society, and how to "escape" to liberate themselves from them. Al-'Anoud asks rhetorically "what an unfortunate planet" Abdurrahman lives on, and he replies gloomily that it is an "Arab planet",<sup>384</sup> indicating that in his assessment the article accurately depicts a society whose contradictions "disgust" Mishārī. He remarks cynically to his friend Fāiz, that "freedom

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379 Abū 'Alī, p. 51.

380 Ibid., p. 45.

381 Ibid., p. 46.

382 Ibid., p. 183.

383 Ibid., p. 82.

384 Ibid., p. 82.

here is not normal... Traditional closed peoples will not know how to use it.’’<sup>385</sup> In the fictional story, Mais describes Mishārī as a problematic hero. He devotes himself to liberating her from this degraded society. He says, ‘‘To be killed in order to break your chains... is like nectar that drips after the bee’s center on the flower... Mais... I will never leave you in the hands of oppressed time.’’<sup>386</sup> However, as a problematic hero, in the end he cannot be considered a positive or negative hero. He therefore, asks Mais in his farewell letter to not ‘‘be furious or resent what I say... I’ve decided to leave, [but I leave] my heart with you.’’<sup>387</sup>

Mais, on the other hand, is a rebellious heroine, as she confirms by telling Mishārī: ‘‘I am rebellious, but I am cautious’’.<sup>388</sup> She rebels against the oppressive patriarchal traditions that the metafictional story embodies in natural phenomena such as ‘‘barbed trees’’,<sup>389</sup> ‘‘dark clouds’’,<sup>390</sup> ‘‘thorns’’,<sup>391</sup> and ‘‘night monsters’’,<sup>392</sup> which cannot be escaped unless ‘‘she flies... where the meanings of shallow life have evaporated and the deep features are entrenched.’’<sup>393</sup> The narrator describes how she begins her journey in order ‘‘to escape to another world’’,<sup>394</sup> where ‘‘she took the knife and stabbed all the hearts and watched them bleed ... to discover who carries pure blood and is free from hatred and erosion.’’<sup>395</sup> Her rebellious discourse shows just how much she suffers from the patriarchal rules and traditions of her society. The effect of Mais’s actions taking place in this imaginary realm is to be presented within its fictional frame to avoid being in contradiction with the society’s patriarchal traditions.

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385 Ibid., p. 116.

386 Ibid., p. 43.

387 Ibid., pp. 228-229.

388 Ibid., p. 147.

389 Ibid., p. 29.

390 Ibid., p. 61.

391 Ibid., p. 66.

392 Ibid., p. 62.

393 Ibid., p. 21.

394 Ibid., p. 20.

395 Ibid., p. 20.

These dialogues represent the continuous struggles of the characters against the incompatible values and hopes of the dominant social group to ensure peaceful lives and a bright future for their own group. This struggle is one of the characteristics that distinguishes them from characters of their own and other parallel groups.

One can argue that each historical moment or stage may formulate its own ideological discourse according to particular events that are generated by some significant factors. As a consequence of the Gulf War and the 9/11 events, Arabs, especially Gulf Arabs, experienced many socio-political upheavals and ideological conflicts. Regimes became less stable, as detailed in Chapter One, which in our view created feelings of loss, depression, pessimism and alienation, and changed people's worldview, reflected in the themes of these two novels. In this period, Saudi society was split in two by political, religious, social, cultural and ideological sensitivities. Opposing the modernists, the conservatives launched the *Şahwa* movement in the belief that society was not religious enough. Placing Saudi women at the center of this discourse, they sought to isolate them from the public sphere and deny their basic rights, such as education and work.

It was in the ensuing context of alienation, conflict and isolation that the Saudi women's novel of this period emerged and was formulated in terms of discourse, themes and structure. Bakhtin asserts that the diverse social speech types are adopted in the novel for specific socio-political purposes related to that exact historical moment.<sup>396</sup> Thus, it is unsurprising that female novelists used strategies and symbolic techniques such as metaphor, metafiction, a variety of voices and tendentious language as a borderline discourse during this phase. They adopted such techniques because their novels were thematically directed at challenging patriarchy while raising important national, political, social and cultural issues. The structural

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396 Bakhtin (1981). p. 263.

and thematic development of the Saudi women's novel during this period thus coincides with the contemporary socio-political changes.

These novels therefore do not have epic heroes whose characters are based on their heroic histories and whom Lukács and Bostock describe as “the product of estrangement from the outside world.”<sup>397</sup> Rather, their protagonists are shaped by their materiality, manifested in their struggles with the parallel patriarchal group. Hudā, Mishārī and Mais search in vain for their own authentic values and those of their group, struggling against the inauthentic values of a degraded society and becoming problematic heroes by their opposition to religious nationalism and the direction taken by their society at this time.

Both novels thus have problematic heroes who seek authentic values in a degraded world. According to ‘Azzām, the problematic hero aims to help solve the problems and concerns of her/his social group in the face of obstacles erected by the opposing group. ‘Azzām also asserts that depressed by the gulf between his/her own ideal reality and the degraded reality of society, the problematic hero often isolates him/herself from those with different epistemologies.<sup>398</sup> We may argue that the heroes of both novels display all of these characteristics, being problematic, depressed, gloomy, and self-isolating. Hudā is problematic in not accepting the patriarchal rules in the same manner as her mother, her closest friend Fatima or Abū Khalid's first wife. Her concern is always her bright future; she hates backwardness and ignorance, she worries, and she prefers silence and isolation to this degraded and hostile reality. Hudā's “entire life is a constant war, starting with resisting her parents and refusing to marry... ending with her struggle against her husband and his wife and children.”<sup>399</sup> Her hatred of backwardness and ignorance is clear when her mother suggests treating Jabir with traditional medicine, which Hudā dismisses as “myths” and

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397 G. Lukács, (1971). *The theory of the novel: A historico-philosophical essay on the forms of great epic literature*. London, England: Merlin Press, p. 66.

398 ‘Azzām, pp. 12, 17.

399 Al-‘Ulayyān, p. 47.

“conjurations”<sup>400</sup> In each episode, Hudā is portrayed as disappointed, depressed and pessimistic, culminating in a nervous breakdown and isolation from society. She collapses as she begs ‘Imād to divorce her, for the sake of “our great love and... our sweet dreams”<sup>401</sup>

Mishārī and Mais are also depicted as depressed and alienated, from the beginning of the novel, when the sky and their whole universe are described as darkening, “leaving behind fear and insecurity”<sup>402</sup> When Mishārī asks al-‘Anoud when she will return from Dubai, she replies that she fears returning to SA after so long. Mishārī tells her that he feels the same, so “why don’t we face it together?”<sup>403</sup> Later, Mishārī tells Mais that he feels “depressed”<sup>404</sup> and she says that she shares these feelings, ‘swallowing the hopelessness’<sup>405</sup> engendered by patriarchal domination. The narrator adds that “there is no solution to this dilemma... north and south are alike.”<sup>406</sup> When Mishārī finds Mais in a state “of fear and anxiety”, he “brings her closer to him and kisses her forehead”,<sup>407</sup> whispering, “don’t worry... I’m here.”<sup>408</sup> Then Mais holds his hand in the “scary darkness”<sup>409</sup>

This analysis reveals the main problematic heroes, who seek a safe and bright future for themselves, alongside members of their social group, struggling against the patriarchal authority represented by older men in their degraded society.

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400 Ibid., p. 109.

401 Ibid., p. 152.

402 Abū ‘Alī, p. 13.

403 Ibid., p. 31.

404 Ibid., p. 130.

405 Ibid., p. 52.

406 Ibid., p. 33.

407 Ibid., p. 74.

408 Ibid., p. 79.

409 Ibid., p. 92.

#### 4.5 The Significant Structure of the Novels

The above analysis of themes and problematic heroes offers a general understanding of the narratives under study. Consistent with Goldmann's notion of conflict between social groups in a particular society, this section analyzes the relationships between social groups in the two novels, aiming to illuminate the bewildered and pessimistic vision that they share. It provides a comprehensive discussion of the internal structure of the texts, placing the struggle between the social groups in its contemporary context and serving to link the earlier sections with the explanation in the next section of the structural homology among narratives, novelists and society.

An exploration of the internal structure will enhance our understanding of the pessimistic worldview in both novelists' work; the prevailing ideological conflicts between social classes or groups are central to both Goldmann and Bakhtin. According to Bakhtin, the heroes of novels are not only objects of authorial discourse, but also subjects of their own lives and its discourse in their surroundings.<sup>410</sup> He emphasizes that the novelist does not express the life of the hero or his/her objective reality. Rather, the governing idea is the consciousness of the hero. There is an idea for which the hero is responsible and which she/he possesses, or struggles and exerts everything to obtain; thus, he/she becomes a "person of the idea".<sup>411</sup> The work then becomes an "ideological novel" in which we hear various voices presenting the idea that the hero embodies within the literary framework and around which the work revolves. The work is completed when the idea reaches full maturity and growth.

It is thus through the ideological relationships between the social groups that we can understand the internal structure of the two texts. Each portrays two groups of men and

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410 M. Bakhtin, (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics* (Theory and history of literature; 8). (C. Emerson, Trans.) Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 7.

411 Ibid., p. 22.

women, old and new generations, embodying the notion of tradition versus modern ideas in the Saudi and Kuwaiti societies of the 1990s. The conflicts between these groups may also reveal the novelists' visions of the prevailing socio-political conditions, because political factors have a direct impact on novelists and their works, contributing here to the bewildered and pessimistic outlook. Therefore, they are invested in such political events as the Gulf War and the events of 9/11, and seek to discuss the influence of these socio-political conflicts and conditions on the characters and events in their novels. These have much in common with other Saudi novels of this period in raising significant questions concerning the social consequences of such political factors.

There is a conspicuous struggle in '*Uyūn 'ala al-samā*' between Hudā and the male group, represented mainly by her father and her successive husbands. Hudā's role as the only female who stands against the patriarchal rules and male selfishness in society highlights the ideological conflict at play. This is evidenced most clearly in her dialogue with her father when her second husband tries to end their marriage and she refuses to be treated like an unwanted purchase "in the sheep market".<sup>412</sup> The force of these words marks the strength of Hudā's commitment to her group's rejection of the patriarchal customs that govern so many lives around her. Her mother, by contrast, symbolizes a generation of older women who are blindly obedient to their husbands, neither opposing them nor questioning their wishes, even those that promote a selfish interest to the detriment of others. Kandiyoti asserts that young brides entering extended patriarchal families suffer hardship and deprivation, which are reflected in their later treatment of their own daughters or daughters-in-law, enforcing patriarchal values in another form and completing the women's circle of patriarchy.<sup>413</sup> The narrative voice thus reports that Hudā includes her mother in her rebellious discourse; it is

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412 Al-'Ulayyān, p. 126.

413 Kandiyoti, p. 279.

both parents who earlier seek to “marry her against her will”,<sup>414</sup> preventing her from completing her education and from marrying ‘Imād, whom she loves.

The conflict in *Mazāmīr min Waraq* is also manifestly intergenerational, setting the youth against the restrictive rules of patriarchal authority and giving rise to contradictions and schisms in Saudi society. As stated earlier in this chapter, Kandiyoti confirms that patriarchal power and authority in Islamic and Arab societies is assigned to the extended family or clan, whose senior man becomes dominant over everyone else.<sup>415</sup> Here, this is Uncle Ṣāliḥ, who seems proud of the traditions and tribal history, which the young find problematic and complex. He welcomes Mishārī as his “dear brother’s son”, hoping that he has benefitted from his time in “the land of disbelievers” without being “influenced by their poisonous ideas”. He declares that he has spent his life persuading Mishārī’s parents “not to give up their son easily... Look at my son ‘Abdulrazzāq... he never gives up his patriotism”.<sup>416</sup> Uncle Ṣāliḥ’s patriarchal omnipotence is emphasized by his kindness to al-‘Anoud when she returns home. The narrator describes the resentment visible on Mishārī’s face as he wonders why Ṣāliḥ has treated him so harshly “if he had such a kind tongue” for his sister.<sup>417</sup> For us, this discrimination between the siblings is indeed rooted in patriarchal traditions. The events of the novel show that uncle Ṣāliḥ has authority over everyone, regardless of their gender, and they all fear him. He treats Mishārī strictly and abruptly because as a younger man he perceives in him a potential source of danger and rebellion, whereas al-‘Anoud represents no risk; as a girl, she is presumed like all women to have submitted to social and cultural authority.

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414 Al-‘Ulayyān, p. 11.

415 Kandiyoti, p. 278.

416 Abū ‘Alī, p. 37.

417 Ibid., p. 64.

The same conflict is apparent in Mais's rebellious discourse against patriarchal traditions in the magical journey. The narrator states that the discontent of Mais and her social group with these traditions and their concomitant misery causes her to loudly accuse her male contemporaries of being naive in their passivity towards the overwhelming "injustice and obscurity" of "an ignorant era".<sup>418</sup> As to those who create or actively support these rules, they are for Mais wholly uncivilized savages to whom she addresses a dire warning: "Beware of me because I have been afflicted with madness! Madness that cannot be cured except by death, poisonous death... and I realize that you wish this death to be slow, until the poison extends throughout my whole body."<sup>419</sup>

We should bear in mind that both of these novels, being works of relative inexperience, show some evidence of structural and thematic weakness. There are nonetheless some indications in both texts that their authors are focused more on their own "ideas" involving the ideological conflicts of their heroes with other social groups than on other narrative elements. While al-'Ulayyān takes the Gulf War as her main theme, her focus through the heroine, Hudā, is on the idea of the women's conflict with the Saudi and Kuwaiti patriarchy. This focus is made clear by plot elements throughout the novel; consider, for example, Hudā's divorce from her cousin Salem. Wars often establish a consistent relationship between neighboring societies, as was the case of SA and Kuwait. Al-'Ulayyān's novel embodies an aspect of this cohesion among peoples. During the Gulf War, Hudā and her parents take refuge in Riyadh as guests of her uncle's household.<sup>420</sup> However, the novelist does not include this significant event to indicate the bonds of love and cohesion between these two societies. When Hudā and Salem are divorced, she tells him defiantly: "I may possibly marry

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418 Ibid., p. 170.

419 Ibid., p. 196.

420 Al-'Ulayyān, p. 44.

a beggar and [never] return to you. ”<sup>421</sup> Her father then admonishes her: “Do you reject your cousin while I am standing in front of you?”<sup>422</sup> Let us assume that the novelist is sincere in presenting the idea through her heroine within this theme. This idea is seen in the conflict between two social groups, one of which includes Hudā.

Similarly, in *Mazāmīr min Warāq*, although Nidā Abū ‘Alī presents the main theme via several social issues, two main problematic heroes and two stories, her central idea is clearly that of the intergenerational struggle between youth and the elderly Saudi patriarchy. We can see how the novelist concentrates on this idea through the selection of the characters and their roles in the events. These characters include Ḥazm, Fāiz, Salmān, ‘Abdulrazzāq, Rana, Nuha, Manāf, Faisal, Reem and Rahaf. However, there are so many of them that none appears to contribute strongly to the plot and all seem to be from one age group, emphasizing the novelist’s concern with intergenerational conflict.

This analysis of the conflicts in the two texts elucidates the worldview inherent in their internal structure. Thus, the novels of this phase can be seen to present the struggle of Saudi youth against patriarchal authority in a different way from earlier novels, including by the use of narrative techniques such as metafiction and metaphor. The effects on citizens of social, economic and political safety and stability arguably explain the hopeless and bewildered worldview of these two novels. They may also explain the ongoing struggle of Saudi women and young men against patriarchal authority. Therefore, the following section is devoted to explaining this worldview by continuing the analysis of narrative structures, in relation to the socio-economic and socio-political conditions of Saudi women in the period from 1990 to 2004, to determine whether this hopeless and bewildered outlook is structurally homologous with the ideas of the social groups in the novelists’ society.

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421 Ibid., p. 126.

422 Ibid., p. 126.

#### 4.6 Homologous Structures: Texts, Novelists, and Society

Following Goldman's approach, this section explores the relationship of the shared worldview of both texts, established above, with social structure, to determine whether it is structurally homologous to the ideas (i.e. the mental structure) of a certain group in Saudi society. This is accomplished by analyzing the historical situations and social transformations which occurred in the Saudi community during the period in question. It also examines the relationships between the groups concerned and the wider Saudi society, in light of their shared bewilderment and pessimism. As discussed in Chapter One and in Section 4.1 above, all elements of Saudi society were subject to serious socio-political tensions during the period under scrutiny, making discussion and acceptance of alternative opinions difficult and sensitive. Therefore, when discussing social issues, especially those related to the dominant patriarchy and challenges to its authority, both novelists turned to metaphor and metafiction, which they used skillfully to express the popular Saudi worldview of the time.

Earlier in the thesis, we discussed that Goldman considers that in addition to historical facts and moments, relevant biographical and psychological details are significant in producing the literary work. According to him, there 'is a strong relation between the literary work and the social group'.<sup>423</sup> Therefore, we will provide brief relevant biographical experiences of both Qumāsha al-'Ulayyān and Nidā Abū 'Alī. Al-'Ulayyān was born and raised in Riyadh. She holds a bachelor's degree in chemistry from King Saud University in Riyadh, and has held many educational and administrative jobs and positions in the Eastern Province in SA. Al-'Ulayyān began as a short-story writer and has published four collections of stories and four novels. What distinguishes al-'Ulayyān's works from other novelists' early and later fiction is

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423 Goldman (1975), p. 158.

her tendency towards sadness and depression in her novels and collections. Her novel that is analyzed in this chapter won the Abha Prize for literary creativity in 2000.<sup>424</sup> Nidā Abū ‘Alī was born in 1983 in SA; she belongs to the same generation of characters she writes about in her novel. She was awarded a Master’s degree in Strategic Studies on Terrorism and Security in 2009. She works as a political researcher at the Center for Political Violence and Terrorism and the Center of Middle Eastern Studies in Singapore. Nidā is a novelist, a columnist, and a cultural, literary, and film critic who has published five novels.<sup>425</sup> The brief biographies above show how they had experienced difficult socio-political and socio-economic conditions themselves, leading them to share the contemporary concerns of their social group. Thus, both novels clearly depict the fear of an uncertain future resulting from these conditions.

As SA and Kuwait share a patriarchal culture, al-‘Ulayyān writes about the Gulf War and its impact on both societies, with a focus on conditions for women. In *‘Uyūn ‘ala al-samā’*, she depicts the feelings of fear, hopelessness and bewilderment in the lives of Hudā and her Saudi and Kuwaiti relatives. The narrative voice reports their shocked reaction to “atrocious events” “that the mind does not believe.”<sup>426</sup> They experience danger, dislocation and alienation as they are forced to abandon abruptly their beloved homeland. The feeling of national loss of security is conveyed by Hudā’s mother’s reaction to being made “homeless overnight... and threatened too.”<sup>427</sup> The narrative voice repeatedly states that the protagonists’ lives “were in a state of cessation... and constant anxiety and fear”,<sup>428</sup> leading to bewilderment and pessimism. For Hudā, although the Gulf War has a major effect on her life, it is not in fact the main reason for her being a hopeless heroine. It generates feelings of

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424 Katara Novel. (2015). Retrieved from:

<http://www.kataranovels.com/novelist/%D9%82%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%A9%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86/>. Accessed, 27 September 2017.

425 Visit the link for more details: Arabic Fiction. (2016). Retrieved from: <http://www.arabicfiction.org/ar/Nidaa-Abu-Ali-nadwa2016>. Accessed, 27 September 2017.

426 Ibid., p. 43.

427 Ibid., p. 45.

428 Ibid., p. 46.

fear, insecurity and patriotic loss. Everything around Hudā changes suddenly, except her social circumstances. The narrator describes her as being unable to believe “that she has not changed like the changing conditions around her... and what... bloody and terrible conditions.”<sup>429</sup> Hudā is indeed concerned about her bright future in such static patriarchal conditions. When pregnant, “she never asked herself what [the fetus] looked like, or whether it was a boy or a girl,”<sup>430</sup> because “her questions were fateful and inevitable.”<sup>431</sup>

We have seen that the 9/11 atrocities projected onto a global stage questions and discourse about politics, religion, culture, human rights and the status of women in SA. Similarly, Nidā Abū ‘Alī was invested in globalizing the discourse on these topics in her novel, published shortly after these events. Her apparent awareness of the importance of the novelistic discourse at this time can be observed in much of the novel’s content and several of its artistic aspects. For instance, unlike the novels of the previous historical phase, the dedication of *Mazāmīr min Waraq*, one of its main paratexts, is an appeal directed to Arabian audiences in general: “To Arabian society... brain and pulse bleeding and ink spilling... Nidā”. Significantly, the literal meaning of the author’s first name is “call”. In the text itself, in order to clearly present the main theme to foreign audiences, she raises several related social issues that concern the youth in her community, to highlight the contradictions inherent in patriarchal authority. Conscious of the global implications of 9/11, she sets the novel in diverse locations including Jeddah, the most multi-ethnic region of SA, where the story opens. Mishārī and al-‘Anoud are originally from Riyadh, but on their return from the United States, they go to Jeddah, allowing Abū ‘Alī to show that the patriarchal rules and traditions hold sway over all Saudi females and young men even in the only city that is capable of accommodating all of the kingdom’s social, cultural and ethnic differences.

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429 Ibid., p. 44.

430 Ibid., p. 39.

431 Ibid., p. 39.

Another marker of the bewildered hopelessness occasioned by the social, political and economic developments addressed by both novelists is their evocation of Arabism, in which Saudis strongly believed, holding fast to the notion of “one Arab nation” until this belief was crushed by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.<sup>432</sup> In al-‘Ulayyān’s novel, we can see the characters’ shock at the war in their narrated thoughts: “How could an Arab occupy the land of his Arab brother? [...] Kuwait of Arabism, which has never abandoned its pan-Arab duty, today, appeals to Arab consciences everywhere.”<sup>433</sup> This loss of faith in Arabism and Arab unity is also what causes Mais, Abū ‘Alī’s heroine, to rebel not only against Saudi society but against something more universal. Hence her angry tirade: “I wish I did not belong to Arabism in any way... I feel as if anything related to Arabism brings misfortune.”<sup>434</sup>

Thus, the hopeless and bewildered worldview of both novels is structurally homologous with the mental structure of the social group to which both novelists belong. Indeed, they express a worldview common among their social group and reflect its ideological group consciousness.

#### 4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed a struggle and a worldview common to two novels selected to exemplify those published by Saudi women between 1990 and 2004. Their common theme is women versus patriarchal authority, involving conflicts between genders as well as between generations. Both novels operate within a wider thematic framework of social themes and issues. Each features one or two problematic heroes: Mishārī is emancipated, educated in the West, and influenced by its culture and humanistic values, while Hudā and Mais are

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432 Salhi, p. 979.

433 Al-‘Ulayyān, p. 28.

434 Abū ‘Alī, p. 50.

rebellious women who have acquired similar values, absent from their own societies, through their readings and studies.

The period considered lies broadly between the Gulf War and 9/11, both of which have strongly affected Saudis. The difficult socio-economic and socio-political conditions in Saudi patriarchal society are important mediating factors that do more than simply explain the relationship between the internal and external structures. They also illuminate the worldview shared by the novelists and their social group at this time. Both novels and the historical facts show us how women and young people of both generations in SA suffered under a patriarchal authority that may not only have caused serious social contradictions, but may even have destroyed lives during this crucial phase. These mediating factors are important because they provide a better explanation for contemporary Saudi women's novels and the worldview common among their authors. The two major political events and their serious political, intellectual, social and cultural consequences, such as the conflict between the Ṣaḥwīs and the Saudi government, have all prompted women and the younger generation of Saudi males to question the unquestionable and to confront controversial issues of politics, religion and identity. Thus, a hopeless and bewildered worldview became dominant in Saudi women's novels during this period. However, as the tense political climate in SA made it difficult for Saudi female novelists to express their opinions openly, they resorted to the use of symbolic techniques and themes. At this point, we can determine that developments in both thematic aspects of the Saudi women's novel resulted not directly from economic factors, as Goldmann argues in the case of the evolution of the "nouveau roman" in France, but from the social consequences of economic and political factors. Thus, the next chapter will discuss the extent to which economic and political conditions, along with their socio-religious and socio-cultural situation, have affected the themes and worldview of Saudi women novelists in the subsequent period.

## Chapter 5

### Critical Vision of Saudi Women, 2005-2016

#### 5.1 Introduction

Chapter Four showed that the internal coherence of the novels from the period 1990-2004 is structurally homologous with Saudi society, reflecting the existing socio-political and socio-economic circumstances. Consequently, the worldview shared by the two literary works analyzed appeared bewildered and pessimistic, as did the problematic heroes/heroines who sought meaning in their lives through their actions in the narratives. However, since 2004 and particularly in 2005, the SA government has begun a program of reforms to lead the country towards cosmopolitan modernity by promoting the welfare of both genders. Several royal decrees have introduced changes that further Saudi women's social, economic, and political empowerment and participation, as detailed in Section 5.2. These changes have fostered greater freedom of speech, making possible in the novels published since the reforms an explicit critique of Saudi society and its social, cultural, and religious traditions. Such overt criticism was mostly non-existent in the Saudi society depicted during the previous two phases, when the female writers of the Saudi elite made limited attempts in their columns and narrative writings to address the challenges of sensitive socio-cultural issues and patriarchal traditions.<sup>435</sup> However, in the context of rapid socio-political liberalization coupled with continued patriarchal dominance, female authors now express their resentment in the pages of their novels, a fact starkly reflected in the volume of female publications in this current

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<sup>435</sup> For more details, see Chapter Two.

phase. These changes have indeed contributed to reshaping Saudi women's novels in terms of themes and narrative techniques.

This chapter will examine the last historical stage that is considered to span the years from 2005 to 2016. As stated in Chapter Two, a great increase in the number of published novels, began in the 1990s and continued to thrive in the first and second decades of the twenty first century aided by the emergence of a good number of new generation of novelists who ensured the creation of diverse literary styles, techniques, themes and visions. However, not all these new novelists, especially those appeared in the 21<sup>st</sup> decade, met the artistic merits of this genre, nor realized the importance of the novelistic discourse in their works, so their works accordingly did not have serious missions. This chapter thus analyzes extracts from two recent novels, selected to furnish a comprehensive overview of this rich and significant phase and to show how contemporary novelists have approached Saudi society and the elements of patriarchal oppression employed against women in different ways, using strategies not employed in the previous two phases.

Along with the employment of metaphor and metafiction in the narratives of the previous phase (1990-2004), the adoption of stylistic techniques and trends such as surrealism, symbolism, magical-realism, interior monologue, realism, historicism, feminism, and mythology is also largely apparent in this current phase (2005-2016). As to themes, while those of the previous phase cautiously addressed feminism and sensitive social and cultural issues, the Saudi women's novel of this period has chosen to rebel belligerently against patriarchal oppression. Thus, the novelists courageously tackle diverse taboos relating to gender equality and discrimination, sectarianism, sexuality and homosexuality, the marriage of young girls to older men and divorce due to incompatibility of lineages, to name just a few. In this recent phase, the feminine persona is investigated in many different contexts,

such as social class, age, career, tribe, education, and life desires,<sup>436</sup> as will be discussed shortly.

Malti-Douglas is right in asserting that “gender consciousness is hardly new to Middle Eastern society. Social, cultural, historical and legal questions relating to male-female roles, equality of women, and so forth, have been part of Arabo-Islamic discourse for centuries”,<sup>437</sup> so why was it until the 2000s that gender consciousness and feminist discourse and methods began to develop in SA? It is because of the freedom of speech, along with the socio-historical, socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-political factors affecting Saudi women and the production and reception of their writings, which means that what matters is not the issues that the novelist raises, but their presence in writing, as discussed earlier in this thesis. Anastasia Valassopoulos affirms that throughout history, the writings of Arab women in general, and Saudis in this context, as detailed in Chapter Two (Section 2.3), have been received with socio-cultural difficulty. Thus, to grasp the meaning of these pieces of literary prose, we should read them for the authors’ “experiences of location, cultural influence, the expression of national identity, the experience of sexuality, the performance of gender roles...”.<sup>438</sup> This underlines the importance of interrogating such texts in their socio-historical context in order to comprehend their meaning, as has been done with the texts of the previous two chapters.

We may agree with al-Mana’s argument that writers of this phase (2005-2016) “...are not necessarily better than those who preceded them; rather, writers who continue to write improve with practice and experience...”.<sup>439</sup> This is because many novels of this phase proves al-Mana’s argument in terms of their discourse, style, techniques, and worldview. For instance, the worldview in this phase appears variable, ambiguous, and weak as in most debut

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436 Al-Rasheed, p. 179.

437 F. Malti-Douglas, (1995). *Men, women, and God(s): Nawal el Saadawi and Arab feminist poetics*, as cited in A. Valassopoulos, (2007). *Contemporary Arab women writers: Cultural expression in context*. London, England: Routledge, p. 14.

438 Valassopoulos, p.4.

439 Al-Mana, p. 275.

novels by new Saudi female novelists, in contrast to those written by established contemporary female novelists of the intellectual elite (*Muthaqqafāt*). Goldmann claims that highly educated and exceptionally skilled writers are able to reflect the “collective consciousness” of their social group; since their emergence in the 1990s and early 2000s, SA female novelists have been actively aware of the importance of their writing, taking the novel seriously as a vehicle to express that consciousness. This is because, for these novelists, “[f]iction has become a strategic move to cope with authoritarianism and domination that prohibit independent civil society organizations, promote conservatism, apply strict religious teachings and enforce constant surveillance of women in public places.”<sup>440</sup> According to al-Rasheed, Saudi female novelists had begun to engage maturely and reflect feminist themes in their fiction, manifesting their nascent feminist consciousness. The female novelists of this phase have utilized critical discourse to engage with their society, its traditions and radical religious restrictions, which has allowed them to become a fragmented category in which each member approaches the society and its traditions in different ways and with different strategies.<sup>441</sup> Al-Sudairy, in *Modern Woman in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Rights, Challenges and Achievements*, confirms their maturation and development as she explores novels by three such writers, asserting that their worldview is clearer and stronger than in the two earlier phases,<sup>442</sup> all of which will be discussed and verified in this chapter.

This chapter is concerned with the analysis of post-2005 novels, which while they are expected to deal with the issues of their time, most of them, especially those with a problematic hero or heroine, are set in an earlier period, particularly in the 1980s. It is here where we also notice the problematic issue, or the core issues discussed in the novel. To Saudi female novelists, it is indeed not only about the past, it is also about the present and the

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440 Al-Rasheed, p.176.

441 Ibid., p.177.

442 H. Al-Sudairy, (2017). *Modern woman in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Rights, challenges and achievements*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, p. 65.

future. Diana Wallace confirms that writers have significantly adopted historical settings in their works as a medium to write about socially and culturally taboo subjects. This tool also allows them to provide a critique to discuss the current issues and subjects in their society in order to solve them through exposing and dealing with the past.<sup>443</sup> Therefore, escaping to the past as a result of discovering that the present reality is complicated and inconsistent with their ambitions and aspirations is a characteristic of the problematic literary hero. However, what distinguishes these heroes from those of the previous phase (1990-2004) is that they begin with an explicit awareness of the rooted patriarchal oppression of Saudi women, which limits their social empowerment and participation. This results in shock, anger, and disappointment in their search for authentic values, such as the vision of a bright future and claiming their right to be optimistic, as will be explored in the analysis below.

The novels selected for the purpose of analysis in this chapter include *Sitr* [Covering] by Rajā ‘Ālim (2005) and *al-Urjūha* [The Swing] by Badriyya al-Bishr (2010). They are treated as representative of a phase lasting from 2005 to 2016, as women in SA witnessed similar socio-political, socio-religious, socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions throughout this period, before the major reforms that began in 2016, producing changes of many kinds, including women’s empowerment. The five years between the publications of the two chosen novels may seem relatively short. However, in that seemingly short period Saudi women published 116 novels, representing a major proportion of the 341 appearing between 2005 and 2016. They also mark the rooting of a particular ideology that Saudi women sought to convey in their prolific output during this short period.

The analysis of the novels in this chapter gives due consideration to socio-cultural and socio-religious factors directly and indirectly affecting Saudi society, as well as the novelists and their writings. It follows Goldman’s two related methodologies concerning the relationship

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443 D. Wlece, (2005). *The women’s historical novel: British women writers, 1900-2000*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 5-6.

between novels and their socio-cultural contexts. As with the analysis in Chapters Three and Four, we begin by examining the background of these novels, and then offer a thematic analysis in order to elucidate the internal structure of the narratives. This is consistent with Goldmann's approach, showing how narratives are shaped by contemporaneous socio-cultural forces.

## **5.2 Social Context**

The socio-religious and socio-cultural conditions affecting Saudi women are interrelated with various political and economic factors. As discussed in Chapters Two and Four, the Gulf War and the 9/11 events significantly destabilized not only SA, but the Arab and Islamic world as a whole. We have seen that the 9/11 events globalized domestic, religious, and political issues and made SA the focus of world attention, mainly because of the Wahhabi doctrine, strongly followed in SA, which has been criticized for promoting the radical religious dogma which resulted in the 9/11 suicide attacks.

This section thus explores the government's attempts since 2005 to respond to international criticism, in part by improving the cultural, social, economic, and political status of Saudi women. The Saudi government has in fact begun reforms affecting the status of its citizens, including women, at all levels, well before 9/11. It joined the UN Commission on Human Rights, and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), as long as the convention did not conflict with Islamic law.<sup>444</sup> However, the events of 9/11 contributed to the Saudi government accelerating these changes in order to deflect continuous international pressure often voiced through the mass media. The oil price increase since 9/11 has also played a major role in women's empowerment and enhanced their participation in political and economic spheres. These reforms championed by the

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<sup>444</sup> Human Rights Watch: *Perpetual Minors Human Rights Abuses Stemming from Male Guardianship and Sex Segregation in Saudi Arabia*, 2008, New York, p. 34.

rulings of the late King ‘Abdullah, who is considered a supporter of Saudi women’s rights, were in opposition to the radical conservatives and their *fatwas* on women. Such *fatwas* were in effect, the main reason for postponing the royal decree on formal female education until the late 1950s,<sup>445</sup> and for keeping it under their control and supervision by the General Authority for Girls’ Education until 2002, when the government merged it with boys’ education under the Ministry of Education.

This move created some notable debates and clashes between the government and the religious conservatives, who rejected the idea, perceiving education as risky for women and society.<sup>446</sup> King Saud University in Riyadh was the first male-only higher education institution offering irregular part-time classes for women at the Colleges of Arts and Administrative Sciences in 1960/1961.<sup>447</sup> However, in the post-9/11 period Saudi women in all regions have had access to a modern education at secondary and higher levels in a variety of subjects, enabling them to graduate from all SA universities. In addition, in 2008, King ‘Abdullah founded the world’s largest women-only university, Princess Norah bint Abdulrahman University in Riyadh, which offers a wide variety of courses.<sup>448</sup>

These educational developments have opened the door for women to learn, develop their awareness, and prepare for work. Before formal education became available, most women were destined to be homemakers who are unqualified for salaried work. Tribal patriarchy and religious authority were also very restrictive. According to al-Rasheed, Wahhabi religious nationalism imposed many more restrictions on Saudi women than those encountered by women in other Muslim countries, postponing their development in terms of social and political participation, education, work, driving, veil wearing, gender equality, and many other activities. This is simply because of the number of radical Wahhabi scholars who have

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445 Al-Rasheed, p. 78.

446 Al-Khudr, pp. 123, 332.

447 F. Jamjoom, & P. Kelly, (2013). *Higher education for women in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. In Smith, Larry. & Abouammoh, Abdulrahman. (eds.), *Higher education in Saudi Arabia achievements, challenges and opportunities*, (pp.119-120). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.

448 For more details, visit the website of Princess Norah bint Abdulrahman University in the following link: <http://www.pnu.edu.sa/en/pages/default.aspx>.

issued *fatwas* on all aspects of women's lives, "from marriage to wearing high heels",<sup>449</sup> seriously limiting their opportunities in multiple domains including work. After the 9/11 events, particularly since 2005, Saudi women have increasingly gained employment in banks, companies of many kinds, hospitals and educational institutions. In 2015, for example, MODON Oasis began building women-only industrial areas in four Saudi cities, following the establishment in 2012 of the first such zone in al-Aḥsā, in the Eastern Province, an industrial site which is still under construction.<sup>450</sup> Furthermore, the government has expanded the scope of Saudi women's work to enable them to hold higher positions, a positive move to help women to become leaders. In 2009, the government appointed Nora al-Fāyiz (1954- ) as Deputy Education Minister for Girls' Affairs. In 2012 Mouḍī al-Khalaf was appointed assistant attaché for cultural and social affairs at the SA cultural mission in the USA, and just recently, in 2019, princess Reema bint Bandar S. A. Al Saud (1975-) is appointed the SA ambassador to the USA, the first Saudi woman to hold this diplomatic position. With regard to elections of all kinds in SA, candidates had to be male before 9/11. However, in 2007 the government established a women's committee to encourage Saudi business women in all fields, permitting them to join chambers of commerce and industry.<sup>451</sup> In 2011, King 'Abdullah decreed that Saudi women would participate in the consultative council, *Majlis al-Shūra*, adding 30 female participants to the 120 male members.<sup>452</sup> In the same year the King declared that Saudi women could vote and stand as candidates in the 2015 municipal elections, with two-thirds of council members to be elected, rather than half being appointed by the government as before.<sup>453</sup>

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449 Al-Rasheed, pp. 15-16.

450 Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Industry. (2016). Retrieved from: [http://www.modon.gov.sa/en/aboutmodon/Pages/about\\_modon.aspx](http://www.modon.gov.sa/en/aboutmodon/Pages/about_modon.aspx).

451 Council of Saudi Chambers. (2007). Retrieved from: <http://www.csc.org.sa/English/Pages/default.aspx>. Accessed, 13 July 2017.

452 The Saudi Shura Council.

453 New York Times: (Sept 29, 2011). Retrieved from: [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/30/world/middleeast/saudi-men-vote-in-elections-for-local-advisory-councils.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/30/world/middleeast/saudi-men-vote-in-elections-for-local-advisory-councils.html?_r=0), & Almonitor: The Pulse of the Middle East, (2015, December 12). Retrieved from: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/12/saudi-arabia-municipal-elections-women.html>. Accessed, 20 July 2017.

This overview reveals significant government-sponsored progress in Saudi women's social, cultural, economic and political conditions and in their socio-religious and socio-cultural situation as determined by tribal patriarchy and radical religious authority; however, there remain major obstacles to women's empowerment in this phase.

### 5.3 The Themes of the Novels

#### 5.3.1 *Sitr* by 'Ālim

*Sitr*, published in 2005, was Rajā 'Ālim's sixth novel.<sup>454</sup> Compared with her previous and subsequent novels, which are richly experimental in their use of surrealist and symbolist techniques, *Sitr* is rather more realistic in its formulation of events, characters, and settings. The main theme is women's conflict with a Saudi society dominated by patriarchal socio-cultural traditions. The actions take place largely between 2001 and 2005, a period which witnessed devastating terrorist attacks by al-Qaeda in SA. In several places the novel recounts historical events, such as the attack on the American helicopter engineer, Paul Johnson, in June 2004. *Sitr* is mostly set in Jeddah and partly in Najd, London, and Miami.

Analysis of the narrative voice and internal and external focalization reveals women's conflict with patriarchal authority to be the main theme. The representation of male authority is a popular theme in Saudi women's novels, as discussed in the earlier chapters, where I have also established that patriarchy is not limited to a binary pattern of male power over women, but has rather more complexity, being correlated with the authority of age as well as gender, exercised by older or senior men over women, children and younger men, or by older women over younger women. The operations and transformations of power in patriarchy are usually reproduced and enacted unconsciously. Therefore, 'Ālim, as a skilled novelist, treats

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454 Rajā 'Ālim has published several novels in both English and Arabic, such as *Fatma: A novel of Arabia* (2002); *My Thousand & One Nights: A Novel of Mecca* (2007) that she both wrote with Tom McDonough, in English and *Ṭarīq al-ḥarīr* (1995); *Masra yā Raqīb: Sīrat Masra Jawāhir bint al-'ābid al-Nārīyya*; (1997); *Sīdī Waḥdāna* (1998); *Khātam* (2001); *Mawqīd al-Ṭṭair* (2002); *Ṭawq al-Ḥamām* (2010), in Arabic.

this theme differently in *Sitr*. She goes beyond a simple account of male authority and its oppression of Saudi women by harshly criticizing and questioning the underlying patriarchal traditions of the social system, with a deep examination of women's essential rights, demands and desires in contemporary Saudi society. She addresses women's issues and gender roles within a discussion of wider social issues, such as the judiciary, corruption, divorce, marriage, travel, and work. Thus, she appears to criticize not only women's own unconscious reproduction and transformation of the system of patriarchal rules, but also the failure to grant women their rights, desires, and demands on the part of male authority as represented by the father, the tribe and civil institutions. In all of her novels, what distinguishes 'Ālim's discourse from that of other male and female Saudi novelists of all historical phases is the richness of her symbolism. However, *Sitr* is different as it is more balanced and profound, strongly criticizing Saudi society and its patriarchal rules and traditions. However, it is not rebellious, overstated or blindly critical of men in Saudi society with regard to their position vis-à-vis the women's question. For instance, in her harsh critique of religious institutions such as the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (the Hay'a or religious police), and the Civil Rights Court, both of which are symbols of male authority, her discourse is balanced and less sharp than other Saudi female novelists of this contemporary phase, such as Badriyya al-Bishr in her two novels, *Hind wa al-'Askar* (2005) and *The Swing* (2010). Fairclough argues that discourse "as a form of social practice" has a dialectical relationship with social structures, which indicates that it includes the social and cultural ideology of a group in the particular society in which it is produced and received. For him, ideology is a significant medium in which the unequal power relations, between the genders in this context, are indexed and maintained.<sup>455</sup> Accordingly, as ideology directs the discourse, it should not be overstated in order to avoid influencing the language use and the discourse

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455 N. Fairclough, (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. (1st Ed.). U.K: Longman Group Limited, p. 7.

patterns and realities. Thus, 'Ālim's discourse, besides illuminating the development of feminist discourse, it also enables us to see clearly the ideological relations and struggles between the social groups in the narrative, as in *Sitr*.

The main theme of this novel is conveyed clearly by an omniscient, heterodiegetic, third-person narrator. As in all of her novels, this theme is the world of women and all of its concerns; 'Ālim here chooses to reveal it mainly through the stories of the main problematic heroines, Maryam and Ṭufūl, and of 'Afāf, the problematic character. All of them seem aware of the degradation in their society, embodied in the socio-cultural obstacles and patriarchal authority confronting women, and they strive to overcome it, for which we can accept them as problematic main and secondary characters. In each of their stories, we see a struggle between two social groups, namely younger women and the dominant males who uphold and depend on structures, traditions, and customs, as each dialogue revolves on opposition to male authority and patriarchal traditions.

These three young women are from different social groups and cities. Maryam whose mother is originally from the Levant is the only character who belongs to an aristocratic Hejazi family, while Ṭufūl and 'Afāf who belong to the middle-class are originally Bedouins from Najd. It is in Jeddah that the three friends meet and live. Setting the novel here reflects the skill of 'Ālim, as Jeddah is part of the Hejaz, known as the most multicultural region in SA. The friends share a sarcastic and critical appraisal of their deeply patriarchal society, dominated by men who pursue single-mindedly their own rights, interests, and desires.

The novel opens with Maryam, an intellectual divorcee, suffering the strictures of her mother, who appears compliant with traditional patriarchal values. As her father is isolated in a hospital room, Maryam's mother urges her to stay at home to avoid the scandal of her

divorce, which she fears will ruin the family's reputation. She utters the words "You are a divorcee",<sup>456</sup> according to the narrative voice, "as if the divorce were a birthmark..."<sup>457</sup>

Maryam responds by rejecting male authority over her, asserting that "after my father, none of you [including her brothers] has authority over my reputation".<sup>458</sup> The fact that Maryam is described as shocked by her own response to her mother before her words were delivered to her mother which is consistent with her status as an emancipated problematic heroine. The mother too is deeply shocked: "Listen, your father has not died yet. It is not yet time for your independence of reputation and power!" Maryam replies with wonderful irony: "Has not died! What is the difference between a grave and the isolation of the hospital room, where we have all conspired to forget him?" Her mother, fearing social scandal, answers angrily: "You will also stay in this room. This is your prison and you will not leave it except for work and with me".<sup>459</sup> In this instance, the narrative voice seizes the opportunity to express resentment and condemnation, declaring "it is a farce to turn into a prisoner of shame". It adds this comment on the mother's angry response: "The voice of the mother was smothered with the fumes of 'oud [incense] and the power of the brothers, the haunted voice of a male tribe".<sup>460</sup>

This indicates the unconscious and imbedded loyalty of Maryam's mother to these patriarchal values and rules. Several examples are given in the novel to show that women's suffering is almost ubiquitous in Saudi society. The narrator tells us that "Ṭufūl erases her fatigue with cynicism or a laugh that begins with the self and ends with the tribes."<sup>461</sup> Ṭufūl suffers at the hands of her family, who have married her off four times, as she explains to Maryam and 'Afāf: "So far I've divorced four with neither greetings nor talk [meaning without having seen the husbands], ink on paper and my family's fingerprints [...] although none of them

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456 R. 'Ālim, (2005). *Sitr* [Covering]. Morocco: Arab Cultural Center, p. 7.

457 Ibid., p. 7.

458 Ibid., p. 8.

459 Ibid., p. 9.

460 Ibid., p. 9.

461 Ibid., p. 36.

touched me”<sup>462</sup> She describes her family’s fear as “Hitlerian”, pushing for extermination and complains that her seven sisters “have all married and left me oppressed by tribal demons”<sup>463</sup> This depicts ʿUfūl’s suffering under patriarchal authority. Therefore, the narrator states that “the self is her favorite subject for cynicism”<sup>464</sup> At several points in the novel, ʿUfūl sharply criticizes her mother’s acceptance of patriarchal values and shows how these traditions are transferred, exemplified by this mocking comments on her mother’s repeated rejections: “My mother is a sharpshooter with her “no”. The United States has failed to find Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction because the urban Qaḥṭānī women, including my mother, have smuggled them out for future use, hidden them in this “no”, ready in their heads and the heads of their sons to be launched without rocket launchers [...]. If such a “no” were to fall on Israel, it would erase it from the globe”<sup>465</sup>

Kandiyoti explains the dominant roles of mothers with their daughters in their patriarchal environment. According to her, the patriarchal power and authority in Islamic and Arab societies is assigned to the extended family or clan, whose senior men become dominant over everyone else. Therefore, for women, “subordination to men is offset by the control older women implement over younger women”<sup>466</sup> This is why both mothers in this novel remain loyal reproducers and supporters of oppressive patriarchal values and traditions, even against their own gender. This is a result of a lifetime of indoctrination and subjugation which eventually turns them into agents of the patriarchal canon.

The depiction of women’s suffering continues with ‘Afāf, a problematic character in *Sitr*, also suffering under male authority and patriarchal traditions. Having been married for only a week, ‘Afāf discovered that her husband Fāleḥ was suffering from “schizophrenia”. Her suffering is embodied first in the fact that “she had spent a whole year convincing him to

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462 Ibid., pp. 37, 63.

463 Ibid., p. 63.

464 Ibid., p. 62.

465 Ibid., p. 62.

466 Kandiyoti, pp. 278-279.

divorce her” [...] and second that “whenever she thought about marrying another man, he threatened to deprive her of her daughter, trapping her in eternal purgatory”. For Fāleḥ this is not enough, so he “denies his daughter permission to travel with her”,<sup>467</sup> prompting ‘Afāf to comment mockingly: “He does not remember his daughter when it comes to alimony [...] but only when he needs her to be a halter around my neck””.<sup>468</sup> When she refuses to submit to Fāleḥ’s oppressive and selfish dominance, she tells her friends: “I will leave my daughter Rima with my mother and travel with my brother to Hurghada. I will not allow Fāleḥ to use his daughter as a rope to fetter me””.<sup>469</sup>

Despite suffering under male authority, these young women never cease to hope and search for authentic values such as work, freedom, love, and rights, as each seeks a man in this patriarchal society with whom she can feel safe in her continued quest for a changed societal reality. This is reminiscent of Kandiyoti’s concept of the strategies women deploy in bargaining with patriarchy. According to her, in classic patriarchal societies, women adopt “interpersonal strategies that maximize their security” [...] “Even though these individual power tactics do little to the structurally unfavorable terms of the overall patriarchal script, women become experts in maximizing their own life chances””.<sup>470</sup> Thus, these women conform to the demands and traditions of patriarchy while circumventing its rules in order to achieve some of their aspirations. For instance, Maryam realizes the impossibility of marrying her beloved intellectual poet, Bader, whom she met by chance at a poetry event in London. Bader is already married and she tells him that she will marry Muḥsin, a divorced intellectual photographer, which Bader silently accepts. As she is from an upper-middle-class family, Maryam’s marriage to Muḥsin takes place on the Nile in Cairo, before they travel to France for their honeymoon. Ṭufūl, on the other hand, after breaking up with Faisal, whom

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467 ‘Ālim, p. 37.

468 Ibid., p. 37.

469 Ibid., p. 37.

470 Kandiyoti, p. 280.

she loves, marries Fahd, described by her mother as “the son of Sheikhs who in the past had power and authority”,<sup>471</sup> then they move to Miami, where he becomes a bodybuilding champion. However, as both Muḥsin and Fahd are materialistic and selfish, thinking only of their own interests and desires, both Maryam and Ṭufūl are soon divorced. It is these events which cause the young women to feel alienated from the rest of society, as expressed in several places in the text.

The novel concludes by presenting both protagonists as not despairing, despite their powerlessness. They continue their search for work, love, and freedom, their pursuit of their rights and their demands for a brighter life in this patriarchal society. Maryam goes to Egypt and secretly marries Bader, whose relationship with his wife has become complicated, before telling her family and trying to have the marriage authorized in the civil court in SA. Ṭufūl is loved by Salmān, who works in real estate, and having lost her post as a teacher in SA when she traveled to Miami, she struggles to find a new job. She finally finds work as a trainer, helping mothers to guide their children’s behavior and enhance their creativity. Here, the omniscient narrator reports that “the young woman blooms and spreads her enthusiasm over the whole city”,<sup>472</sup> presenting Ṭufūl’s happiness and hopefulness after the pain and shock of being divorced by Fahd without reason, despite her great patience with his selfishness.

Through these dialogues, voices and actions, the novelist depicts the suffering of women in a society where male authority and patriarchal traditions, even those unconsciously reproduced by older women, are among the main concerns facing women. ‘Ālim wants to convey that it is time for Saudi women to break their long silence by mocking, criticizing and raising their voices against male dominance. Indeed, the text is rich in examples of women’s suffering, ideological stances, and feminist messages that reveal the nature of Saudi women’s resistance to their patriarchal society during the period in question.

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471 ‘Ālim, p. 42.

472 Ibid., p. 219.

### 5.3.2 *Al-Urjūha* by al-Bishr

Published in 2010, *Al-Urjūha*<sup>473</sup> is Badriyya al-Bishr's fourth novel. Its main theme is similar to that of *Sitr*; however, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, al-Bishr's novels are characterized by sharp critical discourse and opposition to the patriarchal traditions and radical religious restrictions of Saudi society. In fact, criticism of the radical views and behavior of religious extremists in SA is a recurrent theme in all of her novels.<sup>474</sup> The core theme of *al-Urjūha*, expressed in the novel's fifteen sections, is thus the struggle of young Saudi women against patriarchal rule, traditions and authority and the radical religious restrictions that cause their suffering. As with *Sitr*, this theme is delivered by an omniscient, heterodiegetic, third-person narrator. The novel is set mainly between 2001 and 2010, a period when SA witnessed serious abuse by religious police against violators of these oppressive regulations. Concerned as in all of her novels with the issues of male domination and injustice against women, al-Bishr unfolds her theme mainly through the stories of the central female characters, Maryam, Salwā and 'Unnāb, who are all from Riyadh but from different social classes. Maryam, the problematic heroine, is tribal and middle class, whereas the others belong to marginalized social groups: Salwā is also middle class but of Khaḍīr<sup>475</sup> (non-tribal) origin and 'Unnāb is of black origin.

*Al-Urjūha* as described in the novel represents the search for happiness by women who are forced to leave their society because of its patriarchal traditions. Thus, the three girls seek happiness and liberty in Geneva. Consistent with her theme of women's suffering under oppressive male authority, al-Bishr takes the suffering of Emma in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856) as the frame for her novel; Maryam, Salwā and 'Unnāb have much in common

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473 B. Al-Bishr, (2010). *Al-Urjūha* [The Swing] (3 rd ed.). Beirut, Lebanon: Dār Al- Sāqī.

474 *Hind wa al-'Askar* in 2005, *al-Urjūha* in 2010, *Gharamiyāt Shāri' Al-'a'shā* in 2013, and *Zāi'rat al-khamīs* in 2016.

475 Khaḍīrī is a term used in najd specifically to define people who do not belong to the tribal system.

with Emma Bovary, as will be revealed. It is Flaubert's novel that Maryam reads while flying to Geneva to look for her husband. "She read [the novel] until she reached the scene where the father said goodbye to his daughter Emma while he was standing in front of the open window."<sup>476</sup>

As the novel opens, Maryam is traveling to search for her husband Mishārī, a geologist and poet who has fled to Switzerland to escape the extreme social and religious restrictions in Najd and particularly in Riyadh, which are seen through Mishārī's prism as supremely authoritarian. As the narrator recounts, from the point of view of both Mishārī and Maryam, these are the restrictions that have given the religious police the authority to treat the couple impolitely and inhumanely when they found them together in the family section of a pizza restaurant, believing them not to be married. Mishārī tells Maryam that this treatment had "nothing to do with Islam. Islam had lost its moderation, centuries earlier, when religion became synonymous with power."<sup>477</sup> Mishārī sees this loss of moderation as fostering a religious extremism which corrupts the minds of men and women alike, promoting "all that is masculine and tribal against all that is civilized and humane."<sup>478</sup>

The narrator, aware of the characters' suffering, psychological needs and desires, describes the effects of these extreme social and religious traditions on women in this patriarchal society, especially in Riyadh. We learn that young women coming to Riyadh to study at universities are obliged to live in female-only "gloomy communities enclosed within fortified walls and palely lit at night", which these "life-hungry inmates", having entered, "cannot leave unless they are accompanied by a guardian of the first degree".<sup>479</sup> The narrator takes the opportunity in such contexts to condemn the "extremist restrictions" which "satisfy the conservatives among the parents, especially the Najdīs, none of whom objects to

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476 Al-Bishr, p. 18.

477 Ibid., pp. 22-23.

478 Ibid., pp. 23-24.

479 Ibid., p. 13.

the rigor of the laws, no matter how hard they are’’.<sup>480</sup> These are the main reasons for Maryam feeling that ‘‘Riyadh has turned, with its stones, streets [...], houses and restaurants into a huge family prison’’ whose walls and bars are ‘guardianship and control’’.<sup>481</sup> Elsewhere, she is said to see Riyadh as a ‘‘cemetery’’, unaware that others felt the same about their home towns until she read that Venice, which Maryam imagined as a paradise on earth, had also been described as a cemetery by a woman living there. She now realized that ‘‘dust was not the only thing that turned cities and homes into cemeteries’’,<sup>482</sup> referring here to religious radicalism and social restrictions.

These are the causes of Maryam’s suffering as Mishārī, her symbol of happiness in this extreme patriarchal society, escaped to Geneva a month ago and she has lost contact with him. Mishārī ‘‘is both intellectual and visionary at the same time’’.<sup>483</sup> He speaks about ‘‘the organizations of political Islam’’, ‘‘rejects ideologies’’ and ‘‘accuses revolutions of corruption’’,<sup>484</sup> while also being steeped in the works of Shakespeare, Chekhov and Dostoevsky. However, Maryam learns that ‘‘Mishārī was going to the edge of the abyss’’,<sup>485</sup> becoming ‘‘drunk on wine every day’’,<sup>486</sup> and agreeing ‘‘to sell his poems in return for whisky’’.<sup>487</sup> The narrator describes Maryam as wondering ‘‘what he will sell next’’.<sup>488</sup> In other words, she sees him as abandoning the values that he believed in and fought for until he escaped to the West, no longer able to tolerate the conflicting materialistic ideologies and epistemologies in Saudi society. In this context, the narrator states that ‘‘Maryam was sure that her marriage was going through a dust storm’’,<sup>489</sup> in contrast to the first nine months of

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480 Ibid., p. 14.

481 Ibid., p. 25.

482 Ibid., p. 8.

483 Ibid., p. 16.

484 Ibid., p. 16.

485 Ibid., p. 41.

486 Ibid., pp. 35-36.

487 Ibid., p. 41.

488 Ibid., pp. 41-42.

489 Ibid., p. 8.

their marriage, which were full of love, “just as any girl dreamed of when reading English fiction”<sup>490</sup>.

In her suffering, Maryam can be likened to Madam Bovary, as both imagine marriage to be the gateway to their happiness, realization of desires, demands and freedom in a restricted society, only to later realize that this is not so. Maryam comes to this realization when her family blames her for the pizza restaurant arrest, telling Mishārī: “I thought we were over the age of tutelage and had reached the age of free choice, but I seem to be required to close doors in the face of my dreams”<sup>491</sup>. Now, en route to Geneva, she feels that she no longer knows her husband. All she does know is that he is “no longer her lover, whom she knew and married”<sup>492</sup> and that his escape has caused “the monster of monotony and boredom to become her lifeline”<sup>493</sup>. As she gazes at her own reflection in the plane window, we are told that she wonders what has become of the girl she was in her twenties; “that beautiful, simple, romantic girl”<sup>494</sup> is now, like Madame Bovary, in her mid-30s and suffering deeply because of the conservative patriarchal traditions that have changed Mishārī and caused his absence.

At Geneva airport, Maryam meets with Salwā and ‘Unnāb, her classmates from university in Riyadh, by chance.<sup>495</sup> Both have traveled to Geneva to seek the happiness and freedom denied to them by the social restrictions in their homeland. Most women are marginalized in Arab and Muslim patriarchal societies and this marginalization is more obvious in the case of non-tribal women in a tribal society. Thus, the narrator depicts the pain and suffering of Saudi women in a traditionally patriarchal tribal society from the ethnic and racial perspective of the black and Khaḍīrī groups.

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490 Ibid., p. 32.

491 Ibid., p. 25.

492 Ibid., p. 8.

493 Ibid., p. 9.

494 Ibid., p. 9.

495 As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the plots of most Saudi women’s novels tend to turn on accidental events.

Salwā's suffering starts when she marries Abdurrahman, who is from the same social class. He prevents her from doing many simple things, such as saying "Oh really?" in a joking context.<sup>496</sup> "One day, he hit her so hard that he broke her rib".<sup>497</sup> He even imposes his views on her dreams, which Salwā had believed to be "a domain on which no one could impose his authority".<sup>498</sup> This, however, is not Salwā's real pain, since she has never loved Abdurrahman, who "knows that she does not love him, but his brother".<sup>499</sup> Her real pain begins, as the narrative voice states, after her divorce from Abdurrahman, when she cannot marry her true love, Sulṭān al-Ājī, a wealthy tribal man whose mother "prevented the marriage [...] when she learned about it".<sup>500</sup> This was not only because Salwā was divorced, but also because "society does not allow a man of Sulṭān's class to marry into the Khaḍīrī class".<sup>501</sup> However, they marry in secret and "it was a resounding event that the billionaire Sulṭān [...] had married a Khaḍīrī" divorcee.<sup>502</sup> Salwā does her utmost to stay with Sulṭān and "to cling to the swing's ropes",<sup>503</sup> but after five years, her brothers urge her to end what they see as a scandalous marriage. "The main reason for her divorce"<sup>504</sup> is the disapproval of her brother Bandar, who asks one day:

Do you think so little of yourself, Salwā? Do you think that your family has devalued you to the status of a bitch? Don't you think of your brothers and neighbors, who see a maroon car driven by a black driver to come to collect a woman from her house at dawn?<sup>505</sup>

Salwā's pain is exacerbated by being a non-tribal woman in this patriarchal and tribal society, forced to climb down from her swing of love, dreams and happiness, feeling that "her great

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496 Al-Bishr, p. 101.

497 Ibid., p. 73.

498 Ibid., p. 107.

499 Ibid., p. 74.

500 Ibid., p. 60.

501 Ibid., p. 110.

502 Ibid., p. 63.

503 Ibid., p. 83.

504 Ibid., p. 77.

505 Ibid., pp. 80-81.

castle had crashed down on her head”<sup>506</sup> One day, she asks her mother what it means for a person to be a Khaḍīrī and her mother replies: “God created people from one clay, and men are differentiated by their actions and morals, but it is people who distinguish themselves from others”<sup>507</sup>.

Just as Madame Bovary seeks love and passion through infidelity while living a bourgeois life, Salwā, desperate for happiness and love, attempts to find them by breaking taboos, such as by drinking alcohol, smoking cannabis or enjoying an illicit relationship with her ex-husband in Geneva. Money also now grows in value in her eyes. Although she is from a wealthy family, her father’s household having always been “bursting with money”<sup>508</sup> it is in fact “the loss of Sulṭān that made the value of money grow in her eyes”<sup>509</sup> The narrative voice recounts that Salwā comes close to the edge of the abyss, seeking revenge on “the enemies of the past”, namely the social and patriarchal authorities, by “taking everything from life”<sup>510</sup> Sulṭān warns her not to “get involved in foolishness. Remember, I am a man and you are a woman, and a man is not like a woman in our society”. To which she replies defiantly, “Why? Does a woman not have a soul?” [...] “I am talking in terms of the standard of ethics, conscience and religion, oh people of religion”. “Yes”, says Sulṭān, “but you and I do not create the rules and traditions. They are as we find them. Society does not hold men and women to the same standards”<sup>511</sup>.

The narrator tells us that Salwā later wonders how she has “come to this,”<sup>512</sup> then realizes that her self-destructive acts are in fact a search for alternative routes to love and happiness. In her dialogue with a forest that she sees on her way to a restaurant in Geneva, the forest tells her: “You are free”. Her mocking response is, “Am I free? It is true that I can only go

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506 Ibid., p. 90.

507 Ibid., p. 91.

508 Ibid., p. 67.

509 Ibid., p. 68.

510 Ibid., pp. 59-60.

511 Ibid., p. 65.

512 Ibid., p. 48.

to hell and back [...] No one ever pulls you from your swing and forces you to put your feet on the ground”<sup>513</sup> She consciously refers to the restrictive patriarchal social rules and traditions that have forced her to abandon her swing of love, dreams, desires and happiness because of her inferior social class.

As the novel continues to shed light on women and their suffering, we learn that ‘Unnāb suffers because of the color of her skin. She represents women of black origin, a marginalized social group treated as slaves or inferiors by tribal non-black social classes (the masters or the superior race) in Saudi society. The narrator tells us that ‘Unnāb belongs to the slave breed.

She was born in a back room of her aunt’s [master’s] palace...Her mother was born in the palace of her aunt’s father (master). The parents were liberated during the slave liberation movement in 1962 when Saudi Arabia abolished slavery, but they continued to reproduce in the palace, without much meaningful difference between their bondage and being servants, as long as they had food to eat and clothes to wear.<sup>514</sup>

Her color has been a major issue for ‘Unnāb since she was young, when “her black skin tortured her so much that she tried to scrub it off with a variety of soaps”<sup>515</sup> However, as a child she did not know that her color was “a curse”<sup>516</sup> in this society until when, at the age of ten, she was violently raped in the palace by one of her uncles “masters”. Her ordeal resonates with the stories her grandmother and mother told her about black women who were raped by their uncles, not their husbands, “who did to them what they desired day and night. They would then marry them off to other servants, to breed more servants and slaves”<sup>517</sup> Therefore, “she knew that her black body was weaker than that of the white woman’s [...] and realized that her black color made her worthless”<sup>518</sup> in this society.

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513 Ibid., p. 89.

514 Ibid., p. 121.

515 Ibid., p. 121.

516 Ibid., p. 124.

517 Ibid., p. 124.

518 Ibid., pp. 123, 124.

‘Unnāb conceived as a result of rape, so her mother forced her to marry the poor Yemeni driver in the palace, without even a dowry. She miscarried the baby, then after five years of marriage her husband went home to visit his family in Yemen and never returned.

In the evenings, ‘Unnāb worked with Umm Sulaiyyim’s staff, all black like her, “serving at parties, pouring coffee and preparing banquets”.<sup>519</sup> “She found, in her shared life with black women, no red lines, less pain than in her sad past”.<sup>520</sup> For example, she was happy with her “lesbian friend Mouḍī”, with whom she could freely express forbidden sentiments. Before leaving to complete her higher education, she met the wealthy ‘Abdullah, who was not from her social class. ‘Abdullah was her *urjūha*, as he “was fascinated only by her elegant body”.<sup>521</sup> This life “made her interested in the fact that she was free rather than worthless”.<sup>522</sup> Therefore, in common with Madame Bovary and with her friend Salwā, ‘Unnāb is depicted as searching for happiness and freedom in a restrictive, backward, and patriarchal society. Even if her desires, demands, and hopes are expressed through prohibited practices such as sexual relationships, dancing in nightclubs, drinking alcohol, and smoking cannabis with Salwā and a man whom she knew in Geneva, the narrative voice reports that ‘Unnāb does not feel that her transgressive behavior amounts to sin. This is because since childhood she has known that “her color has taken her out of the cycle of shame to the cycle of neglect, and since comprehending that reality, she has been living in another context, where she understands that she is free and not a worthless object”.<sup>523</sup>

Thus, the core theme of this novel is the conflict and suffering of Saudi women in the context of restrictive, backward social customs and traditions and of radical religious views that typify their patriarchal society, transforming them into multiple versions of Madame Bovary, a figure from the mid-nineteenth century.

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519 Ibid., p. 127.

520 Ibid., p. 128.

521 Ibid., p. 136.

522 Ibid., p. 130.

523 Ibid., p. 120.

#### 5.4 Goldmann's Problematic Hero in the Two Novels

According to Goldmann, the problematic hero is one who searches for authentic values in a degraded society to achieve his or her social group's ambitions and aspirations. Both Lukács and Goldmann affirm that the protagonists of novels become problematic because they are consciously aware of the problems and the difficulties at stake and pursue their quest to overcome them; nonetheless, their opportunities for success are extremely weak.

Maryam and ʿUfūl in *Sitr* and Maryam in *al-Urjūḥa* are all central problematic and critical heroines who pursue their own ambitions and aspirations, and those of their social groups, represented by women's rights, demands and desires in a patriarchal male-dominated society. All of them seem aware of the socio-cultural obstacles, barriers and male authority working to the disadvantage of women in their society, describing their situation as being at "war". Nonetheless, they search for better values, even though their chances seem very limited as women in a highly patriarchal society.

In *Sitr*, Maryam is an aristocratic intellectual woman from Hejaz, while ʿUfūl, her friend and fellow primary school teacher, is a tribal woman originally from Najd. The other Maryam, the problematic heroine of *al-Urjūḥa*, is an intellectual from an aristocratic tribal family in Najd. All of these characters suffer from the restrictions of their patriarchal society and its radical religious traditions, as seen in their conflicts with their surroundings, and they all struggle unsuccessfully to challenge and criticize social degradation and male authority.

In *Sitr*, both Maryam and ʿUfūl are divorced soon after marrying men whose behavior is incompatible with their humanistic values. In Maryam's case, Muḥsin is a photographer who ignores her feelings, caring only about his own interests. Maryam tells her friends that "his best friend is the camera, followed by his female models".<sup>524</sup> Their incompatibility is clear

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<sup>524</sup> ʿĀlim, p. 98.

from his declaration that the emergence of love depends on “a creative equivalence between genius and its human environment”,<sup>525</sup> which he sees as lacking in her. Later, when Maryam suggests having a child, he warns her against “playing at motherhood”, adding: “I cannot believe in women’s sadism. Is this artistic milieu suitable for having a child?”<sup>526</sup> He then claims that they cannot afford to raise a child, as all of his profits need to be spent on photographic equipment. Maryam, “appalled and belittled by his words”,<sup>527</sup> now decides to end the marriage. The narrative voice tells us that she courageously says to him: “You and I are an abortive combination; there is hardly any interaction between us, as if we were both negatively charged.”<sup>528</sup>

Ṭufūl is a problematic and critical heroine whose reaction to male domination and its patriarchal traditions differs from Maryam’s, as she seems less enthusiastic and more ambitious. This is not only because she is from a tribal Najdī family that imposes firm patriarchal rules and restrictions on her, whereas Maryam is from an upper-middle class Hejazi family, but also because Rajā ‘Ālim represents in Ṭufūl the voice of coerced Saudi women who rely on love to escape their degradation. Therefore, unlike Maryam, her struggle with the opposing group appears indirect, as will be seen through her dialogue and criticism. Ṭufūl is also married to Fahd, a champion bodybuilder who cares only about himself and building his body. Early in the marriage, Ṭufūl agrees to his suggestion that she should travel with him to Miami for the bodybuilding championship, thus sacrificing her job to pursue his dream. Once there, Fahd ignores her feelings and threatens her whenever she expresses upset and alienation at his single mindedness: “We could end up begging in rags and still spend what little we had on protein powder and steroid capsules”.<sup>529</sup> Ṭufūl addresses her misery to her dog: “I do not know what binds me and Fahd other than his hungry body [...] Fahd does

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525 Ibid., p. 99.

526 Ibid., pp. 100-101.

527 Ibid., p. 101.

528 Ibid., p. 177.

529 Ibid., p. 88.

not grant me a moment of tenderness, [...] because he is engrossed with his body”<sup>530</sup>. Despite her patience with his persistent selfishness and his betrayal with female fans, Fahd later divorces her without reason. Maryam and Ṭufūl thus embody women’s powerless suffering as a result of men’s selfishness in a patriarchal society.

According to Bell Hooks, “male supremacist ideology encourages women to believe we are valueless and obtain value only by relating to or bonding with men”<sup>531</sup>. This argument is relevant to women in *Sitr*, especially Ṭufūl, whose dream is to love and be loved. She jokingly asks Maryam whether it is possible ‘to feel all this weakness without a man’. Maryam challenges this: “The real weakness is with and without a man.” When Ṭufūl continues, “My body is made for love. How can I leave it like this?” Maryam immediately responds: “Is it really only a man who can make you complete?”<sup>532</sup>

Turning to *al-Urjūḥa*, Maryam is the problematic and critical heroine, who, according to the narrator, is said to have “become simple and good, but she feels weary because she has become good and simple”<sup>533</sup>. Maryam has come to believe that “goodness and simplicity are two signs of people who have emptied themselves of life, of passion, insanity, stubbornness and desires.” The narrative voice reports her as justifying this with the reflection that ‘they become good when nothing tempts them to be evil to defend their desires, and become simple by lack of incitement to a complex life of desires, conflicts and competition’<sup>534</sup>. Maryam emphasizes her social isolation from a world to which she feels that she does not belong, where women like her mother surrender to an unhappy reality. Therefore, “she believes that the loneliness and boredom that devour her days are the result of the path she has chosen.”<sup>535</sup>

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530 Ibid., p. 111.

531 B. Hooks, (1984). *Feminist theory: From margin to center*. Boston: South End Press, p. 43.

532 ʿĀlim, pp. 39-40.

533 Al-Bishr, p. 10.

534 Ibid., p. 10.

535 Ibid., p. 10.

She fights against the values obstructing her social group from claiming their rights, desires and aspirations, embodied crucially in a passage where we learn that Maryam wonders:

What made her so strange and lonely? Was it her fate because she believed that women would someday have equal rights to those of men and that she had the right to think independently? Or was it because she liked the modern urban life, or because of the innate toxic obstinacy which accumulated in her mind until she refused to follow the set path which the women of her family had followed throughout their lives? [...] Was it [...] her stubborn rejection of subordination? Or was it a religious destiny, because she was no longer that obedient girl, reading the Quran and praying fervently, but a spiritually damaged soul?<sup>536</sup>

Maryam follows Mishārī to Geneva not only because he is her source of love and happiness, but because, unlike Ṭufūl, she believes that through her husband, she can continue her struggle against the restrictive traditions and radical religious norms of her degraded patriarchal society to fulfill the aspirations, desires and dreams that she shares with her social group.

Although they suffer greatly from patriarchal oppression, these young women do not rebel against their husbands, because they are emancipated problematic protagonists. As indicated in Chapter Two (Subsection 2.5.6), ‘Azzām and Wādī assert that the problematic heroes of the Arabic novel, who aim to help solve the problems and concerns of their social group in the face of obstacles erected by the opposing group, should be either emancipated or rebellious. Emancipated heroes are generally educated in the West and influenced by its culture and humanistic values, while rebellious heroes acquire similar values, absent from their own society, through reading and studying. According to their terminology, Maryam and Ṭufūl in *Sitr* and Maryam in *al-Urjūḥa* can all be seen as culturally emancipated in their struggle to fulfill their hopes and aspirations and those of their social groups, having traveled to Arab or Western countries and interacted with the cultures and human values of Cairo, London, Geneva, and Miami.

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<sup>536</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

The problematic nature of all of these heroines can be observed in their harsh and mocking criticism of male authority and patriarchal traditions. For example, Maryam's mother criticizes her for going out when "your divorce has not lasted a year",<sup>537</sup> accusing her of being "a walking scandal".<sup>538</sup> When she continues, "You float as if in a sky outside this universe",<sup>539</sup> Maryam, we are told, "admires her mother's use of the word "float" and wonders if she is aware of the vitality that flows from her words on the scandal".<sup>540</sup> Maryam seems to be conscious that her mother has been conditioned by years of patriarchal domination from which she has inherited her fear of female sexuality and subsequently became a diligent agent of male authority. Her awareness manifests itself when she mockingly and painfully confirms to her mother that she is a victim of patriarchy: "What a farce, mother! Do you know what you are? You are the eternal victim in this house and now you want to swap places with me and take the role of executioner!" The narrator states here that "her mother's history of weakness made her avoid this remark".<sup>541</sup> Maryam is conscious of her role as a problematic heroine and her consequent inability to be a positive or negative one. She tells Bader's friend Sāleḥ that she and Virginia Woolf have 'common features', to which Sāleḥ humorously comments, "I hope it will not be the end." Laughingly, she responds: "Probably not. We don't go beyond the pursuit of a lighthouse".<sup>542</sup> This reference to Woolf's 1927 novel also indicates Maryam's role as a problematic heroine, geared towards guiding her social group to the right path in their gender struggle.

Ṭufūl, whose name denotes a compressed yellow clay, tells Maryam and 'Afāf that her father once described her as "a girl of fire more than clay, a proper little imp",<sup>543</sup> because she seemed to him so different from her mother and seven sisters, which indeed expresses her

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537 'Ālim, p. 9.

538 Ibid., pp. 6, 8.

539 Ibid., p. 8.

540 Ibid., p. 8.

541 Ibid., p. 9.

542 Ibid., p. 153.

543 Ibid., p. 63.

problematic nature. Ṭufūl harshly and ironically criticizes her parents' patriarchal rules, especially her mother who, as the narrator reveals, "has fiercely and steadfastly resisted her",<sup>544</sup> demands for her rights:

We are blind nomads. I discovered yesterday that my father was wearing my mother's old glasses, and my mother was using my brother's wife's glasses, my old sisters' glasses and my grandfather's glasses from Hā'il [...]. A festival of spectacles and none of us can see.<sup>545</sup> My father's vision is weak and follows in the footsteps of my mother, who cannot see at all. Yesterday [realizing that her mother had internalized the patriarchal rules and traditions], I was about to confront him with the truth: "Why do you walk like a shadow behind this woman?!" But I pity him. It grieves me to see them grow old like this.<sup>546</sup>

Ṭufūl refers here to her parents perpetuating what she sees as an invalid patriarchal worldview inherited from the Bedouin society of Hā'il in the north of SA. Her harsh and mocking criticism of male authority and patriarchal traditions shows her awareness of the degraded socio-cultural environment and the obstacles in her path.

In *al-Urjūha*, Maryam appears upset by the rigid social and religious traditions of her patriarchal community; hence her likening of Riyadh to a cemetery.<sup>547</sup> The evidence of social backwardness and lack of regard for women's rights, demands and desires in Saudi society is related mainly to male dominance; in *Sitr*, Maryam and Ṭufūl criticize several social injustices afflicting women in their society, such as the need for permission to travel abroad without a male guardian. When Bader asks Maryam how she is able to travel alone to Egypt, she explains that she has agreed to her brothers inheriting everything, in exchange for a formal document allowing her to travel whenever she wishes: the right to come and go at will "is an impossible dream which I am prepared to buy at the highest price."<sup>548</sup>

Ṭufūl also tells her friends that her parents prevented her from traveling to Cairo to attend Maryam's wedding without a male guardian: "I know that it is impossible and such a request

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544 Ibid., p. 61.

545 Ibid., p. 63.

546 Ibid., p. 62.

547 Ibid., p. 8.

548 Ibid., p. 135.

gives them a collective heart attack, but I stand and fight, sharpen my weapons and weaken their resistance to my next request”.<sup>549</sup> As the criticism with regard to women’s right to travel independently evidences the suffering of women in a patriarchal and authoritarian society, it also shows the problematic heroines’ awareness of the obstacles in the path to gaining their rights.

The two novels considered here differ from those of the two earlier phases in that their heroines, notwithstanding the conflict, suffering and absence of happiness resulting from women’s subjection to male authority and patriarchal traditions, maintain an optimism exemplified by their constant search for a man to love and to help them overcome the barriers imposed by their society. This optimism is also embodied in their moving on with their lives or supporting each other by spreading hope. In *Sitr*, for instance, Maryam assures Ṭufūl that “the damage is not irreparable and we can all be restored”.<sup>550</sup> Similarly, in *al-Urjūha*, Maryam remains optimistic in her pursuit of her interests and those of her peers, and in her opposition to the forces of male domination, convinced that her marriage to Mishārī can help her to overcome the obstacles and challenges discussed in the earlier section. However, this does not seem to be the case when, as she waits for the call to board her flight from Geneva to Riyadh, she glimpses a man resembling her beloved Mishārī and is struck by indecision: “Should she run to him and embrace him? Or should she take him by the arm and shake him?” But before she could answer her own question, “Mishārī had disappeared without her knowing whether he was going back to Riyadh or traveling to another country. Maryam stood up and walked towards the gate, carrying her copy of *Madame Bovary*, and did not try to look for him”.<sup>551</sup> This indicates that she is optimistic about her future and that of her social group, confident that she can confront the challenges of her society without Mishārī.

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549 Ibid., p. 62.

550 Ibid., p. 204.

551 Al-Bishr, p. 159.

Throughout the above discussion we see that both heroines are problematic and critical as they search for the establishment of better social values in their degraded society. These novels relate a conflict between two social groups: younger women versus a male-dominant structure with its traditions and customs. Both heroines believe that patriarchal authority is the main reason for social backwardness and the denial of women's essential rights, demands and desires. While suffering greatly in their conflict with this reactionary power, both heroines remain optimistic in their quest for a better future, a characteristic which distinguishes them from the problematic protagonists of the previous two phases.

### **5.5 The Significant Structure of the Novels**

The analysis presented in the two preceding sections provides a general understanding of the themes of this current phase. Consistent with Goldmann's notion of conflicts between social groups in a particular society, this section analyzes the relationships between social groups in 'Ālim's and al-Bishr's novels, aiming to illuminate the critical worldview. It offers a comprehensive discussion of the internal structure of the texts, placing the struggle between the social groups in its contemporary context and serving to link the earlier sections with the explanation in the next section of the structural homology between the narrative, the novelist and the society in question. An exploration of the internal structure will enhance our understanding of the dominant self-critical vision in the novelist's work and the prevailing ideological conflicts between social classes or groups that are central for both Goldmann and Bakhtin. It is thus through the ideological relationships between social groups that we can grasp the internal structure of this text. It portrays two social groups of girls and patriarchal rules that are shaped by male authority and are enacted by males and older women, in which the hierarchal social system is neglected, as has been seen through the analysis in the above sections. Maryam and Ṭufūl are the problematic protagonists of *Sitr*, whose other significant

characters include ‘Afāf, Bader, Maryam’s and Ṭufūl’s parents, Muḥsin and Fahd, among others who play major roles in the events of the novel. Rajā ‘Ālim’s narrative skills allow Saudi women’s voices to be heard as they enter a battlefield and engage in struggle. As to *al-Urjūḥa*, Maryam is the main problematic protagonist, while other major problematic characters including Mishārī, Salwā and ‘Unnāb play key roles. All of these people help to define and constitute the heroines’ thoughts and perceptions concerning the life of women in SA and the obstacles they face in their quest for basic rights and empowerment. The struggles among the different social groups are therefore the subject of this section, as they may reveal the roles of these important characters and the relations between them.

Albert Memmi’s perspective in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* helps to explain the conduct of Maryam’s and Ṭufūl’s fathers. While not addressing women’s issues or gender studies, Memmi provides a profound discussion of the nature of colonization and of the circumstances in which the colonized can become the colonizers. Memmi asserts that the colonizer wants to be superior and needs the colonized to accept being inferior and thus enslaved. Since nobody freely accepts being enslaved, this requires oppression, violence and dehumanization to destroy these subjects, making it easier to spread the ideas and values of the colonizer and thus to mentally colonize the victims. If the colonized people seek to resist the colonizer, they will be harmed. As this relationship is perpetuated, ideologies and values become mentally internalized.<sup>552</sup> Thus, once colonized, the victims begin to be transformed into the colonizer, believing that the colonizing ideologies and values are positive and compatible with their own interests, values, morality and ideologies.<sup>553</sup> They then adjust their lives accordingly. However, as they “endeavor to resemble the colonizer in the frank hope that he may cease to consider them different from him, [...] the colonizer does not always openly discourage these candidates to develop that resemblance, he never permits them to

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552 A. Memmi, (1965). *The colonizer and the colonized*. (2nd.). Boston: Beacon Press, pp. 20, 53.

553 Ibid., p. 60.

attain it either. Thus, they live in painful and constant ambiguity. <sup>554</sup> Through all of this, the colonizer justifies his unjust system, his violence and his illegitimate colonization.

In *Sitr*, Maryam and Ṭufūl struggle relentlessly against the patriarchal system of male authority, which is the main obstacle to women achieving their rights in Saudi society, as seen in their continuous criticism and struggle to ensure a bright future and the betterment of their social group. For example, we read that Maryam inwardly contemplates the reactions of her father as they watch a television report of a Palestinian girl gravely injured as a result of Israeli violence. Her father puffs ironically and comments: “Infanticide has not occupied that extensive space in history in vain”.<sup>555</sup> Maryam does not turn to him and he continues by asserting that females wear “angelic masks” when they are young, then “quietly remove them to reveal demons.” After a period of silence, Maryam tells him of an email she has received, documenting war crimes in Afghanistan: “These human rights violations which seem unavoidable in the twenty-first century take us back to the Dark Ages”. The heterodiegetic narrator recounts that he turns to her with a clenched fist and demands to know if she is “proud of this vacuous nonsense” in her email. Maryam replies, “We are talking about Afghanistan”, then pauses. The narrator comments that it was inevitable that this dialogue of the deaf would end in an explosion, “so it is futile to take it to heart”. Maryam had become accustomed to receiving these explosions dispassionately, “as if she were observing a natural phenomenon”.<sup>556</sup> The narrative of this ideological exchange between Maryam and her father concludes with the observation that her mother “always assured her that his sarcasm was an expression of helplessness”.<sup>557</sup> The oppression and helplessness that the father expresses here are consistent and commensurate with the degree of oppression that men themselves are subjected to in that particular society. According to Ḥejāzī, “the more

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554 Ibid., p. 15.

555 Ḥejāzī, p. 52.

556 Ibid., p. 52.

557 Ibid., p. 52.

defeat the man suffers in his social [political, economic and religious] status, the more coercive he is to women.’’<sup>558</sup> The successive wars and conflicts in the Gulf region since 1939 underline for its people their weakness and their failure to resist successfully. In *Sitr*, the killing of Palestinian children by Israeli forces is presented as a symbol of that failure for Maryam’s father, to which he reacts violently against his daughter, turning to her with a clenched fist. However, Maryam’s position as a problematic heroine shows her awareness of how to resist such manifestations of male-dominant authority over women.

The struggle against male domination, which is the main cause of women’s suffering in this society, continues indirectly in *al-Urjūha*, as seen in Maryam’s dialogues with other characters and in their continuous criticism of social customs and struggle against patriarchal rule. For instance, after observing in Geneva the immoral attitudes and behaviors of her peers when freed from the control of their rigid community, Maryam critically wonders why “the authority of tradition” affects women more than men. “And why does the culture benefit from making iron cages, coffins, rings and ropes for women only, while men fly away” from such cultural restrictions?<sup>559</sup> In addition, unlike Madame Bovary, Salwā and ‘Unnāb, all of whom take revenge on their lovers, husbands or ex-husbands by betraying them in response to the oppressive social traditions and radical religious norms, Maryam continues to search for Mishārī to complete her struggle against these patriarchal forces. She refuses to break taboos, despite the urging of Salwā and ‘Unnāb, who tell her that Mishārī “celebrates freedom alone,”<sup>560</sup> because a man “does not share freedom and joy with his wife”.<sup>561</sup> Maryam’s response indicates her determination to change her society: “I do not think that freedom is just fun and joy”, to which her friends accuse her of “living in a bygone era”.<sup>562</sup>

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558 M. Hejāzī, (2006). *Al-insān al-maqhūr: Dirāsa taḥlīliyya nafsiyya iḡtimā’iyya*. [The Oppressed Man: A Analytical, psychological and Social Study]. Beirut, Lebanon: Arab Cultural Center, p. 202.

559 Al-Bishr, pp. 153-154.

560 Ibid., p. 155.

561 Ibid., p. 155.

562 Ibid., p. 155.

In other words, her intellectual beliefs and humanistic ideals edify her soul and prevent her from breaking prohibitions that she is free to ignore. “Maryam has no life except in the world of books where she grew up and formed her concepts of love, honesty, human values and injustice against women”.<sup>563</sup> These principles make her “feel responsible for what is happening, for the indifference of her two university friends. She yearns to reach out to their minds, to hold them in a reassuring embrace”.<sup>564</sup>

Maryam thus speaks on behalf of her friends when she criticizes the oppressive exercise of patriarchal authority over women in her society, as well as railing against the absence of rights for women and the denial of their demands and desires in her dialogues with other characters. She defends Salwā, ‘Unnāb and Madame Bovary despite disapproving of their indulgence in “hellish pleasure”<sup>565</sup> to take revenge on their unbearable reality, because she sees their main motivation to be not love, which “leads to neither murder nor death,”<sup>566</sup> but the male power that has deprived them of their rights. It is this interpretation which causes her American teacher of English literature in Riyadh to marvel at “this unifying spirit,”<sup>567</sup> when Maryam is the only girl in the class to defend Madame Bovary, blaming her husband and his miserable life for her attempts to find love.

In *Sitr*, Maryam and Ṭufūl also both speak on behalf of their social group as they criticize the oppression of women in their society; they too argue for the rights, demands and desires of women in their exchanges with other characters. For example, when Sāleḥ tells Maryam that “American women in the sixties saw marriage as ending all chance” of an independent existence or of studying, “just as Arab women do today,”<sup>568</sup> she responds directly: “Do you think that this can change in time and place?” In the same conversation, Bader asserts that

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<sup>563</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>564</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>565</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>568</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

“throughout history, humans have endeavored to find the meaning of life” and “they have built nurseries for life from poetry, music, science and composition”.<sup>569</sup> The narrator reports Sāleḥ’s grudging comment saying, “Unlike marriage, which chokes that field of civilization”,<sup>570</sup> to which Maryam objects by assuring “that the field of civilization would be choked only when we make lust and its fulfillment” the goal of marriage, and asserting that she and Bader have realized that “the only road to spiritual growth is desire.”<sup>571</sup>

Maryam makes it clear that women have their own concerns and desires, and that their view of them is not simple or materialistic. This is borne out in both Maryam’s and Ṭufūl’s marriages.

The protagonists’ determined struggle for their rights and those of all women in their social group, especially divorcees, is particularly evident in *Sitr* when Maryam attends the civil court for her marriage to Bader without the male guardian whose assent is required because she has been previously married. She tells the judge (the Sheikh) that there should be “no guardianship over a sane adult woman.”<sup>572</sup> The narrator characterizes the judiciary as typifying “the male gaze from a cave guarded by a lion, so that the presence of [an approaching] female [...] fills them with bewilderment”.<sup>573</sup>

‘Ālim shows Saudi women’s lack of rights in the civil courts by recounting how the Sheikh refuses to proceed in the absence of her male guardian. Maryam challenges him thus: “The issue is that I have been granted the right to marry, so what prevents me from exercising this right?”<sup>574</sup> She argues that the Hanafi school of Islam states that if a woman is a free and sane adult, there is no need for the approval of her guardian, as long as the groom is a legal and

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<sup>569</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>571</sup> Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid., p. 258.

<sup>574</sup> Ibid., p. 261.

suitable match.<sup>575</sup> The Sheikh, shocked by her awareness and confidence, admits that this is true, adding: “May God bless you, do not open the floodgate”.<sup>576</sup>

It is significant that in these two contemporary novels, both Badriyya al-Bishr and Rajā ‘Ālim, while criticizing the patriarchal attitudes and traditions that antipathetic men impose on women in their society, also depict sympathetic male characters. The problematic characters Mishārī in *al-Urjūha* and Bader in *Sitr*, for example, play positive roles in women’s struggle. “Mishārī was no longer just her husband, but became a close friend and companion to her”.<sup>577</sup> He is depicted as “both intellectual and visionary”,<sup>578</sup> recommending “Virginia Woolf’s modernist ideas” to Maryam,<sup>579</sup> who is subsequently influenced by them. Mishārī is a paragon of high ideals and human values, cultivating in Maryam the love of these values. For instance, when she asks him about his love for her, he responds: “A woman is mistaken if she thinks that her body is a man’s first and last desire or that having a child is what keeps her husband. By such thoughts she belittles herself and her husband too.”<sup>580</sup> In *Sitr*, Bader urges his bride-to-be not to “let the judge’s position bother you. We agreed before we came that it was an experiment, no more than an attempt. There are ways to obtain this other than by confrontation.”<sup>581</sup> Maryam confirms his positive influence on her. Two years after their first meeting she says to him, “You have been presented to me in one way or another in my vision of the world and in my reformulation of it”.<sup>582</sup>

The above analysis of conflicts elucidates the worldview inherent in the internal structure of these two novels and demonstrates that the struggle occurring between 2005 and 2016 is between two social groups, young women and the males in authority who perpetuate

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575 Ibid., pp. 260-261.

576 Ibid., p. 261.

577 Ibid., p. 40.

578 Ibid., p. 16.

579 Ibid., p. 33.

580 Ibid., p. 40.

581 Ibid., p. 261.

582 Ibid., p. 144.

patriarchal customs and attitudes against women in Saudi society. Dialogues and conflicts can embody and express a feminist ideological message that Saudi women, even if they fail now, will continue to fight for their fundamental rights, demands, and desires. The prevailing negative socio-cultural effects on Saudi women of radical religious intolerance can arguably explain the predominant critical worldview of these novels. They may also explain the ongoing struggle of Saudi women against patriarchal authority. In the present phase, SA government moves towards empowering women initially allowing them to hope that they would be able to change their reality and achieve their dreams, hopes and aspirations. Therefore, the following section explores relations between the female novelist's worldview and the world created in her literary work. It will help to explain this worldview and determine whether the novelists' critical outlook is structurally homologous with the ideas of the social groups in their society, especially when taking socio-cultural and religious attitudes to women in Saudi society as the main mediating factors.

### **5.6 Homologous Structures: Texts, Novelists, and Society**

Bakhtin uses the term "historic poetics" to refer to the historical influences evident in narrative texts, such as the traditional and customary practices of certain social groups or classes. According to Bakhtin and Littler, to grasp the meaning of a narrative, one should read it within the "social life of discourse outside the artist's study" and explore the relationship between narrative text and the "discourse in the open spaces of public squares, streets, cities and villages, of social groups, generations and epochs".<sup>583</sup> Therefore, following Goldmann's approach, this section explores the relationship of the worldview of these texts, established above, with social structure, to determine whether it is structurally homologous with the ideas (i.e. the mental structure) of a certain group in Saudi society during this time.

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583 M. Bakhtin, (1981). *The Dialogic imagination*. (p. 259-300), *Discourse in the novel*. (C. Littler, Trans.). The USA, TX.: University of Texas Press, p. 259.

This is accomplished by an analysis of the texts within their historical contexts, considering the historical influences and social and cultural transformations which occurred in the Saudi community during the period in question. The section also examines the relationships between the groups concerned and the wider Saudi society, in light of this dominant critical vision.

As discussed in Chapter One and in Section 5.1 above, all elements of Saudi society were subject to serious socio-political tensions and changes during the period under study. The period beginning in 2005 is considered a golden era for Saudi women in terms of their empowerment in the social, cultural, political and economic spheres, supported by several royal decrees. However, patriarchal authority and radical religious views are seen as permanent obstacles to women's advancement. Therefore, the central critical vision of these novels challenges, questions, and criticizes the dominant patriarchy. The novelists, consciously aware of the importance of their discourse, approach it in different ways to express the popular Saudi worldview of the time.

As discussed above, these novels feature one or more problematic heroines from different Saudi social classes with a shared critical vision born of their struggle with the oppressive socio-cultural and religious factors affecting young women in their patriarchal society. These factors have restricted Saudi women in general and the intellectual ones in particular, challenging them to demand their social group's essential rights. Consequently, the prevailing worldview is exposed to harsh criticism in the novels of this phase for its effects on their female personae, curtailing their freedom to think, to work and to belong in a patriarchal society and engendering feelings of alienation and non-affiliation. These feelings are seen more obviously among intellectual protagonists of Saudi women's fiction. Thus, the heterodiegetic narrator in *Sitr*, aware of Maryam's hidden psychological and emotive states,

describes her as feeling “every day ever more alienated”,<sup>584</sup> while her namesake in *al-Urjūha* “lives in spiritual silence, quickly bemused by people and rarely liked by any of them”.<sup>585</sup> According to al-Dāmin, the intellectual heroines of Saudi novels suffer more than their male counterparts from societally induced alienation and separation,<sup>586</sup> associated with their awareness of their weakened opportunities to overcome the difficulties that they face in their society and their failure to change the situation in this current phase.

As have been discussed in the above sections, the problematic heroines and characters in both novels of this contemporary phase appear to be battling to challenge the patriarchy and the unquestionable assumptions related to the patriarchal readings and interpretations of the Qur’an and its teachings. They also struggle to endorse western values rather than challenge them in order to obtain theirs and their social group’s essential rights in their own society.

The heroines’ struggles in these novels for instance are paralleled to those between intellectual Saudi women as a social group and the opposing male authority with its patriarchal traditions. According to al-Nahedh and al-Sheikh,<sup>587</sup> Saudi women who advocate for their rights in this phase have been influenced by the Islamic feminist movement that began in the 1990s and has been developed in this current phase by prominent Islamic feminists in the Arab and Muslim world as a cultural reaction to the international feminist movement. Islamic feminism is indeed compatible with international feminism’s holistic methodologies in its rebellion against patriarchy at all levels, including the political and economic patriarchies. However, what distinguishes it is its fundamental aim of reforming extremist traditions and practices, by providing a gendered interpretation of Islamic laws concerning women or identifying the specific articles of Sharia law or Quranic verses which Islamic feminists believe to have been hijacked by the patriarchy in all contemporary Muslim

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584 Ibid., p. 94.

585 Ibid., p. 9.

586 Al-Dāmin, p. 88.

587 M. Al-Nahedh & H. al-Sheikh, (2017). *Unsilenced: Saudi women advocating their rights, 1990-2017*. The USA, NJ: The State University of New Jersey, Center for Women’s Global Leadership.

societies. In her work *Islam Beyond Patriarchy Through Gender Inclusive Qur'anic Analysis*, Wadud challenges patriarchy as a matter of shirk (polytheism). She argues that the interpretations of the Quran and the fiqh (jurisprudence) are the cause of gender inequality and women's oppression in their societies. Accordingly, men are always viewed as qawwāmūn (responsible) and in some interpretations as "superior" and thus women are always subjected to be "inferior" and thus dependent upon men. Accordingly, patriarchy in this term comprises a kind of shirk as it violates the *tawhīd*. This is because it "places men and women in a relationship that is not capable of reciprocity because one person is always "superior" to the other"<sup>588</sup>, and this must be presented to God almighty solely. Hence, the strength of the Islamic feminist movement is based on its adherents' solid knowledge of the precepts of Muslim jurisprudence, allowing them to revert to true Islam acting as a safeguard against the encroachment of Western values and the displacement of Islamic culture and traditions.<sup>589</sup>

Thus, Saudi women's power is embodied in their new understanding of the religion, which has helped them to challenge the patriarchs, whose ignorance they see as resulting from their false interpretation of the Quran and from the overlapping of their socio-cultural traditions and norms with those of the religion in all matters related to women. This explains how, in each of the novels, Maryam strove to uncover and challenge the oppression of women, falsely claimed by the men in authority to be Islamic, thus ensuring for the two Maryams a bright and hopeful future, in which their aspirations and those of their social group would be met. The female protagonists in these two novels do not in fact stray from the true Islamic path, but follow it as they seek to spread their idealistic and authentic values that are rooted in Islam more deeply than those of the patriarchy.

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588 Wadud, p. 109.

589 Al-Nahedh & al-Sheikh, p. 17.

Al-Rasheed asserts that intellectual Saudi women, including the novelists of this phase under study, are aware of the progress that has been made thanks to government support for change, but also of the socio-cultural obstacles to women's empowerment in this reforming modern state, erected by patriarchal and radical religious forces determined to minimize the concrete effects of these changes.<sup>590</sup> Umaima al-Khamīs affirms in her interview with al-Rasheed that she is optimistic and “aware of the noticeable change since 2005” with regard to the visibility of women in Saudi society. According to her, women's “situation cannot go back to the way it used to be because they are now aware of their rights.”<sup>591</sup> This supports the argument of al-Rasheed and al-Sudairy that during this phase Saudi women have begun to develop a conscious awareness of feminist discourse. Therefore, there is nothing arbitrary about the depiction of alienation, escape and journeying among the problematic heroines and heroes of these novels; on the contrary, it is purposely orchestrated.

Concerning the reasons for endorsing Western values rather than challenging them, all problematic heroines of this contemporary phase are aware of the lack of happiness among women in their society as they search for a means of escape, seeing Western countries simply as open spaces for freedoms and self-fulfillment. This is why al-Rasheed claims that escaping to the West is a recurrent theme in Saudi female novels of this phase.<sup>592</sup> Badriyya al-Bishr explains that “to leave the place is to acquire freedom, to assert the self”.<sup>593</sup> The West is the cradle of human rights and freedom for all social classes, so Saudi female novelists consciously choose it as the destination to which their characters escape, to draw the attention of the reader to the issues facing Saudi women in their society.

Al-Bishr and other intellectual female novelists of this phase reveal and challenge the oppressive mores and practices of male authority and its patriarchal traditions to remind the

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590 Al-Rasheed, pp. 201-202.

591 Interview with the author, Dubai, 5 January 2011 as cited in al-Rasheed, p.190.

592 Ibid., p. 201.

593 Ibid., p. 201

public of women's status. According to al-Bishr, despite their small readership in SA and the Arab world, Saudi novelists believe strongly in the ability of literature to change people's attitudes towards Saudi women.<sup>594</sup> This demonstrates their optimism, reflected in their increasing production of novels in this phase and their shared concerns with some novelists from the previous phase, such as al-'Ulayyān and Abū 'Alī. In the current novels, we can see indications of these indefatigable attempts to change reality. In *Sitr*, for example, Maryam says to Ṭufūl: "We do not have to get rid of the whole of life just because we have some shocks."<sup>595</sup> She also says: "We will not tell about the future, as the future is always subject to change and reformulation".<sup>596</sup> In *al-Urjūḥa*, both Salwā and 'Unnāb assert that marital relationships in Saudi society are not built on love but rather on the body and "in return for paying the price of owning this body".<sup>597</sup> Maryam firmly rejects "this extreme talk"<sup>598</sup>, indicating her optimistic view of the future. She understands her friends' extreme reactions to oppressive social traditions and their uncertain expectations of change. Unlike them, Maryam hopes to return home to resume her struggle to achieve change and to secure a bright future for herself and her social group.

## 5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the representation of a struggle and a worldview depicted in two novels representative of those published by Saudi women between 2005 and 2016.

The main theme of 'Ālim's and al-Bishr's novels is young women versus patriarchal authority with its rigid social customs and radical religious traditions. The two novels treat this theme differently within a wider thematic framework of social issues. *Sitr* features two emancipated problematic heroines, Maryam and Ṭufūl, who have lived and studied in the

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<sup>594</sup> Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>595</sup> 'Ālim, p. 239.

<sup>596</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>597</sup> Al-Bishr, p. 12.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

West and have been influenced by its culture and humanistic values, while *al-Urjūha* has one problematic heroine, Maryam, who is also an emancipated intellectual who has traveled to the West and has undergone the same influences.

The period from 2005 to 2016 saw, for the first time in Saudi women's history, an evolution in their empowerment in every sphere, especially the economic and political spheres. However, the difficult socio-cultural and socio-religious conditions affecting women in the patriarchal society of SA are important mediating factors that do more than simply explain the relationship between the internal and external structures: they also illuminate the worldview of the novelists and their social group at this time. Both the novels and the historical facts show us how women in SA suffer under male authority anchored in its patriarchal traditions, which have continued to deny women many of their essential human rights, demands and desires during this crucial phase. These mediating factors are important because they provide a better explanation for contemporary Saudi women's novels and their worldview. This phase was preceded immediately by the pivotal events of 9/11, which prompted women in SA to question the unquestionable and to confront controversial issues of politics, religion and identity. Furthermore, it is the 9/11 events that compelled the Saudi government to enact rapid changes, not only to avoid the continuous international pressure in the mass media, but also to continue its project of enhancing Saudi women's status and empowerment at all levels, as seen with the ratification of CEDAW in 2000. Thus, a critical worldview became dominant in the Saudi women's novel during this period.

In addition, what differentiates Saudi female novelists in this phase from the preceding phases are their skills and their courage which enabled them to tackle these cultural and social themes, as well as the conscious feminist development that allowed them to approach this dominant theme in variety of informed ways, by criticizing and discussing gender inequality, women's concerns and their experience of these oppressive traditions. It is here

that we can determine that the thematic engagement of the Saudi women's novel with the historical events of this phase resulted not directly from economic factors, as Goldmann argues in the case of the evolution of the 'nouveau roman' in France, but from socio-cultural and socio-religious factors and their consequences.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

The main objective of this thesis is to provide a thematic investigation of Saudi women's fiction, following Goldmann's genetic structuralist approach. In order to ground the study in its historical context, it began with the emergence of the Saudi women's novel in 1958 and ended in 2016. During this extensive period of time, Saudi society has witnessed several historical moments and events which have contributed directly or indirectly to the transformation of the country and its people in all domains, the most significant for the purposes of this study being the growth of the oil industry, the Gulf war, globalization and the events of 11 September 2001. Having situated six representative novels within their socio-political, socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-religious contexts, enabled me to explore these novels' thematic engagement and their thematic development alongside the development of Saudi women's status in all fields throughout the designated timeframe.

As the object of this study is the analysis of a relatively new body of literature that has not yet been exhaustively analyzed, this approach proved useful in expanding our understanding of the thematic investigations. Genetic structuralism is a sociological approach working within a wider Marxist framework on the premise that in order to gain an in-depth understanding of literary texts, they must be read and analyzed within their significant historical, social, cultural, political and economic contexts. The study focuses on the structural relations between the literary text and its global context, in order to clarify such questions as how a social class can be reflected or expressed structurally through the world vision of the literary work.

Goldmann proposes two related methodologies for analyzing literary works. The first, adopted in his analysis of Racine's plays and Pascal's philosophical works in *The Hidden God*, is based on the two Goldmannian intellectual analytical notions of comprehension and explanation. The other closely related method, presented in *Towards a Sociology of the Novel*, focuses on the development of the form of the novel, which Goldmann claims has developed due to changes in Western capitalist economies in general. The present study has adopted the first of these methods, augmented by the second, to determine the thematic development of Saudi women's novels as a result of their engagement with the transformations taking place in Saudi society during the examined periods.

Achieving the aims of this study required a comprehensive review of relevant literature in the domain of critical literary studies relating to sociological conditions and the Saudi novel, in both Arabic and English. This discussion, both in the specified sections of the literature review and in the theoretical framework, concluded that no critical study of the subject of this thesis had been undertaken in English or any other language, as no previous studies of Saudi fiction in general have taken the approach adopted here.

## **6.1 Findings**

The most obvious findings to emerge from this study are of two kinds, the first relates to the Goldmannian approach and the second to the thematic investigation of Saudi women's fiction with reference to certain historical and social facts and contexts.

### **6.1.1 Genetic Structuralism**

Genetic structuralism has been applied here to texts produced in ideological, cultural and social circumstances dissimilar to those in which the theory was originally formulated. Therefore, the study first had to modify and frame the approach to situate it within the

context of Saudi women's fiction. This was on one hand due to the social, political and historical differences between France, a major colonial and capitalist power, and SA. Although the latter is one of the world's foremost oil producers and a regional power, its high-performing economy cannot be classified as a fully developed capitalist one, since it is centrally controlled by a hereditary monarchy. On the other hand, Arabic creative texts in general have always been characterized by their exceptionalism compared to the Western literature with regard to their treated issues, themes concerns and questions, and this is compounded here by gender issues related to Saudi women's novels that add further layers of exceptionalism. Accordingly, the distinct differences between their authors and writers such as André Malraux, Pascal, Racine or Alain Robbe-Grillet made it impossible to apply the theory on Saudi novels in the exact manner as applied by Goldmann to the French novel.

Adjusting and framing the approach thus included adding the characteristics noted by 'Azzām and Wādī, who argue that the problematic heroes of the modern Arabic novel should be either emancipated or rebellious. The analysis observed that either one or both types had appeared in each of the novels selected for this study. The study also adopted a general understanding of tragedy recognizing three of Goldmann's characteristics of tragic man, rather than other characteristics of tragedy that he includes, all of which are tied up with Jansenism in the French context and not with Islam, the dominant religion in the region in question here. Finally, constructing the modified theory also meant adopting Bakhtin's dialogism when analyzing the internal structure of the chosen novels. This was done in response to the criticism that several sociologists and literary critics (Eagleton 1976; Orr 1977; Evans 1981; Laḥmdānī 1990; Cohen 1994) have made of the looseness and ambiguity of the Goldmannian concept of significant structure. They argue that Goldmann's analysis did not deal adequately with the internal structures of the literary work before launching into the homologous process with the external world.

### **6.1.2 Thematic engagement and development**

To examine the thematic engagement of Saudi women's novels and to explore the parallels between the development of their themes and that of Saudi women's status, the six representative novels were read in the context of four historical events which can be seen as having significant effects, direct and indirect, on SA and its people. These are the rapid acquisition of great oil wealth, the intellectual and religious conflicts of the Gulf War, the ideological spread of globalization, and the world-changing events of September 2001.

The analysis has demonstrated that the world visions of these novels varied over time in response to these factors and their social consequences, so that the three historical phases under consideration can be labeled accordingly: tragic vision (1958-1989), bewildered and pessimistic vision (1990-2004) and explicit critical vision (2005-2016). These mediating factors helped to explain the establishment of parallel relationships between the novels and their socio-historical context as well between the development of Saudi women's fiction and that of their social, cultural, economic and political status and conditions.

The analysis has established that the most common general theme in the representative novels was that of young women and men versus patriarchal authority in Saudi society; indeed, each of the novels treats this theme in a different way, such as in relation to generational conflict, the struggle against male selfishness, or against restrictive social and religious traditions, depending on the conventions of social censorship applicable at the time. The remainder of this section details the findings in regard to thematic engagement and development for each of the three phases.

Returning to the main questions posed at the beginning of this thesis it can now be confirmed that the most dominant theme has been that of Saudi women's concerns and issues in the context of patriarchal authority and male selfishness in Saudi society. Accordingly, the

dominant shared worldview in the early historical phase (1958-1989) was tragic, consistent with Goldmann's three criteria of tragedy. Both *Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū'* by Samīra Khāshugī and *Lā 'āsha Qalbī* by Amal Shaṭa fulfill these criteria. The novel must express a sense of fatalism or inevitability. Absolute morality should always have priority over all other values, and the literary work will necessarily feature an insoluble, rather than merely unresolved, conflict. The analysis has determined that the themes and common world vision of both early novels were engaged and consistent with the social status and concerns of Saudi women of all social classes at that time. Consonant with Goldmann's approach, the difficult socio-economic conditions in the patriarchal Saudi society are considered to be mediating factors in the responses of Saudi women novelists of the period to the social restrictions they faced. These obstacles to the direct depiction of sensitive cultural and social themes led them to resort either to writing under a pseudonym, as in the case of Samīra Khāshugī, or to wage peace with their chosen themes as seen in Amal Shaṭa's choice of the *ribāt* as a closed environment in which to depict the suffering of women in SA society. A choice which was consistent with the restrictive social and patriarchal traditions and norms then predominant. The tribal and social patriarchy denied women essential rights such as access to formal education and work, or at least delayed the granting of these rights to women of various social classes, resulting in women of all classes in SA becoming a marginal social group. Nonetheless, this first generation of Saudi women novelists had written about their own concerns, hopes, and aspirations and those of their social groups. Thus, these significant socio-economic difficulties and their consequences have been shown to mediate the establishment of a homologous relationship between, on one hand, the tragic vision of the internal structure of the two novels chosen to represent this historical phase and on the other, the external social structures and the biographical realities of their authors, each of whom reflects the virtual consciousness of her social group. This investigation has also established

that developments in thematic aspects of Saudi women's fiction during this early phase resulted not only from economic factors, as Goldmann argues in the case of the evolution of the "nouveau roman" in France, but rather from both social and economic factors.

The novels selected to represent the period 1990 to 2004 were *Uyūn 'ala al-samā'* by Qumāsha al-'Ulayyān and *Mazāmīr min Waraq* by Nidā Abū 'Alī. The analysis has shown their predominant theme to be the struggle of young women against patriarchal rules and male authority, while their common worldview is one of hopelessness and bewilderment. Both the theme and the world vision were found to be engaged and consistent with the social status and concerns of Saudi women of all social classes in the period broadly spanning two major events and their immediate consequences, namely the Gulf War and the 9/11 events, both of which significantly affected Saudis by the mediation of difficult socio-economic and socio-political conditions in a persistently patriarchal society. The investigation has also revealed that both novels and the historical facts illuminate the suffering of women and young people in SA under a patriarchal authority that may not only have caused serious social contradictions, but may even have destroyed lives during this crucial phase. The two major events and their political, intellectual, social and cultural consequences, such as the conflict between the Ṣaḥwīs and the Saudi government, have all prompted women and the younger generation in SA to question the unquestionable and to confront controversial issues of politics, religion and identity. In this historical phase, Saudi female novelists in this patriarchal society were cautious in dealing with culturally and socially sensitive themes and issues, because the tense political climate and restrictive social norms made it difficult for them to express their opinions openly, so they resorted to symbolic techniques and themes. Thus, both of the featured novelists adopted stylistic techniques such as metafiction to express the collective consciousness of their social group and their concerns, aspirations, and hopes. As with the earlier novels, it has been shown how socio-economic and socio-political

factors and their consequences explain the homologous relationship of the internal structure of the two novels chosen to represent this second phase, marked by hopeless and bewildered vision, with the external social structure and with the facts of their authors' lives. Again, both novelists are seen to reflect the virtual consciousness of their social groups. In addition, the investigation has shown the thematic development of the Saudi women's novel during this phase to reflect the social consequences of economic and political factors.

In the case of the third phase (2005-2016), the thematic investigation has revealed the common main theme of *Sitr* by Rajā 'Ālim and *al-urjūha* by Badriyya al-Bishr to be younger women versus patriarchal authority, traditions and customs, while their shared worldview was harsh and critical. The significant mediating factors at this time are seen once more to be the difficult conditions, in this instance socio-cultural and socio-religious, affecting Saudi women in a patriarchal society which was nevertheless undergoing an evolution in empowering Saudi women in every sphere, particularly the economic and political, for the first time in their history. The analysis of these mediating factors has shown that the themes and the world vision of the two novels were once again engaged and aligned with the social status and concerns of Saudi women of all social classes in this period. The explanation also illuminated the world vision of the novelists and their social groups. Both the novels and the historical facts reveal how women in SA continued to suffer under traditional patriarchal authority, which prevented them still from enjoying their essential rights and from fulfilling their demands and desires. This phase was immediately preceded by the events of September 2001, which made the Saudi authorities engage in empowering women in every sphere, but especially rapidly in the political and economic spheres. This reaction was not only to deflect the relentless international media pressure on the SA government in the aftermath of the 9/11 events but also to continue its project initial to improve the status of Saudi women and to empower them at all levels. This governmental support for women, along with the conscious

development of the feminist agenda, encouraged Saudi female novelists to approach the dominant theme in different ways, by criticizing gender inequality and discussing women's concerns regarding their experience of oppressive social traditions. Thus, the investigation of significant mediating factors, which in this final phase were mostly socio-cultural and socio-religious, once more highlights the parallels between the critical vision of the representative novels, as reflected in their internal structure, and the social structure of the real world, including the experiences of their authors. Finally, it shows the development of their themes to be consequential on socio-cultural and socio-religious factors in Saudi society.

## **6.2 Suggestions for Further Research**

The findings of the present study will be of interest to literary critics and researchers in literary theory and Saudi literature, it being the first to provide a deep and insightful thematic investigation of Saudi women's fiction from 1958 to 2016, adopting Goldman's approach enhanced with Bakhtin's dialogism. The following are suggestions as to how future research might build upon this investigation and its conclusions.

- Goldman's approach as adopted in this thesis may deepen understanding of the thematic engagement, worldviews and development of Saudi male novels and may achieve different results from those reported here.
- The analysis of female problematic protagonists has revealed their strong and recurrent presence in the Saudi women's fiction of all three historical phases. Further research is needed to determine the ideological and epistemological reasons for this.
- Goldman refers to "false consciousness" and the present investigation has determined that some female novelists adopted this device in the last phase, as briefly mentioned in Chapter Two. This topic would seem to be worthy of closer examination.

- Among the stylistic techniques available to them, the authors of the selected novels manifest an obvious preference for metafiction to express the collective consciousness of their social groups and their concerns, hopes, and aspirations. Further independent research might profitably examine the motivations behind this preference.
- The current study has supported al-Rasheed's identification of escape to the West as a recurrent theme in Saudi women's fiction of recent years. Therefore, it may be useful to undertake a comprehensive study that traces the emergence of this theme, identifies the reasons for it and establishes whether it is associated uniquely with women's novels or whether it applies to the Saudi novel in general, regardless of the author's gender.
- The analysis of the novels of the second and third phases has shown the impact of the Islamic feminist movement on Saudi female novelists' awareness, as seen through the struggle of their female heroines to obtain their essential rights in the face of an obstructive patriarchal interpretation of the Quran. There is room for a deeper exploration of this socio-religious phenomenon.

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## Appendix

### List of Novels Written by Saudi Women (1958-2016)

Novel	Author	Publication Date
Wada' tu Āmālī	Samīra Khāshugjī	1958
Dhikrayātn Dāmi' a	Samīra Khāshugjī	1961
Bariqu ' Ainaik	Samīra Khāshugjī	1963
Warā al-Ḍabāb	Samīra Khāshugjī	1965
Al-Barā' a al-Mafqūda	Hind Ba Ghaffār	1972
Ṣaḥwat al' ālām	Nazīha Kutbī	1973
Qaṭarāt min al-Dumū'	Samīra Khāshugjī	1973
Ma'tam al-Ward	Samīra Khāshugjī	1973
Ghadan Sayakūn al-Khamīs	Hudā al-Rasheed	1976
Basma min Buḥayrāt al-Dumū'	'Āiysha Zāhir Aḥmad	1979
'Abath	Hudā al-Rasheed	1980
Ghadan Ansā	Amal Shaṭa	1980
Aḍayā'n wal-Nnūr yubhir	Ṣafiyya Ahmad Baghdādī	1986
'Afwan Yā Ādam	Ṣafiyya 'Anbar	1986
Arba' a Ṣifr	Rajā 'Ālim	1987
Ribāṭ al-Walāyā	Hind Ba Ghaffār	1987
Durra min al-Aḥsā'	Bahiyya Bū Subait	1988
Wahaj min Bayn Ramād al-	Ṣafiyya 'Anbar	1988

## Sinīn

Lā 'āsha Qalbī	Amal Shaṭa	1989
Şirā' 'Aqlī wa 'Āṭifatī	Salwā Damanhūrī	1990
Wa Māt Khawfī	Zāfira al-Maslūl	1990
Al-La'na	Salwā Damanhūrī	1994
Ṭarīq al-ḥarīr	Rajā 'Ālim	1995
Iftaqadtuk Yawm Aḥbabtuk	Şafiyya 'Anbar	1995
Jama'atna al-Şadāqa wa	Şafiyya 'Anbar	1995
Faraqatnā al-Taqālīd		
Imra'a 'alā Fawhat Burkān	Bahiyya Bū Subait	1996
Ādam Yā Sayidī	Şafiyya 'Anbar	1997
Masrā yā Raqīb: Sīrat Masrā	Rajā 'Ālim	1997
Jawāhir bint al-'ābid al-		
Nārīyya		
Unthā Fawq Ashri'at al-	Nora al- Muḥaimeed	1998
Ghurba		
Al-Raqş 'ala al-Dufūf	Zaynab Ḥafnī	1998
Sīdī Waḥdāna	Rajā 'Ālim	1998
al-Firdaws al-Yabāb	Laylā al-Juhanī	1998
Lil-qalb Wujūhn Ukhrā	Nidā Abū 'Alī	1998
Wamarrat al-'Ayyām	Nidā Abū 'Alī	1998
Ant Ḥabībī: Lan Naftariq	Şafiyya 'Anbar	1999
Ma'an Ilā al-Abad		
Ḥikāyat 'Afāf wal-Duktūr	Bahiyya Bū Subait	1999
Şālīḥ		

Al-Rajā İltizām al-Waqār	Fāṭima bint al-Sarāt	1999
Sitat Aqdām Şaghīra	Fāṭima bint al-Sarāt	1999
Şāliḥ al-Najdī wa Zahrā al- Janūbiyya	Fāṭima bint al-Sarāt	1999
‘Uyūn ‘ala Alsamā’	Qumāsha al-‘Ulayyān	1999
Unthā al-‘Ankabūt	Qumāsha al-‘Ulayyān	2000
Bukā’an taḥt al-maṭar	Qumāsha al-‘Ulayyān	2000
Bayt min Zujāj	Qumāsha al-‘Ulayyān	2000
Ḥubbī	Rajā ‘Ālim	2000
Al-Shayāṭīn Taskun al- ‘a‘shāb	Muhra al-‘Uşaimī	2000
Bāsima bayn al-Dumū’	Şafiyya ‘Anbar	2001
Khātām	Rajā ‘Ālim	2001
Al-Maşīr	Lindā al-Wābil	2001
Mawqīd al-Ṭair	Rajā ‘Ālim	2002
Wijhat al-Bawşala	Nora al-Ghāmīdī	2002
Ba’d al-Maṭar Hunāk	Fatima bint al-Sarāt	2003
Dā’iman Rā’iḥa		
Tawba wa Sulayyā	Mahā al-Faişal	2003
Safīna wa Amīrat al-Zilāl	Mahā al-Faişal	2003
‘İndamā Yanṭiq al-Şamt	Ḥanān Kattū‘ah	2003
Mazāmīr min Waraq	Nidā Abū ‘Alī	2003
Yafīrrūn min Rufūf al- Maktaba	Su‘ād Sa‘īd	2003
Ajīndat Mughtariba	Khulūd al-Siyūṭī	2004

Rūḥuha al-Mawshūmatu Bih	Amal al-Fārān	2004
Ghayr wa Ghayr	Hajar Makkī	2004
Al-'Intihār al-Ma'jūr	Ālā al-Hathlūl	2004
Lam A'ud Abkī	Zaynab Ḥafnī	2004
Madā'in al-Ramād	Badriyya al-Abdurrahmān	2004
Banāt al-Riyadh	Rajā al-Ṣāni'	2005
Al-Taḥaddiyāt	'Āliya al-Shāmān	2005
Ḥubb fī Sijn al-Karāma	Al-Muhājira	2005
Dhākira bilā Wishāḥ	Ḥasna al-Qarnī	2005
Sitr	Rajā 'Ālim	2005
'Uyūn Qadhira	Qumāsha al-'Ulayyān	2005
Al-Qirān al-Muqaddas	Ṭaif al-Ḥallāj	2005
Al-Nahr al-Thālith	Nisrīn Ghandūra	2005
Wa Ghābat Shams al-Ḥubb	Amīra al-Muḍḥī	2005
Al-ākharūn	Ṣeba al-Ḥerz	2006
Al-Awba	Warda Abd al-Malik	2006
Al-Baḥriyyāt	Umayma al-Khamīs	2006
Baqāyā Imra'a	Najāṭ al-Shaikh	2006
Bukā' al-Rijāl	Laṭīfa al-Zuhair	2006
Banāt min al-Riyadh	Fāiza Ibrahim	2006
Hind wa al-'Askar	Badriyya al-Bishr	2006
Bayn Maṭārain	Nabīla Mahjūb	2006
Rajul min al-Zaman al-Ākhar	Amal Shaṭa	2006
Su'diyyāt	Sāra al-'Ulaiwī	2006
Shams fī Ḥayātī	Lindā al-Wābil	2006

Shihāb Mazzaqa Ridā' al- Lail	Sanā' Sa'īd	2006
Şamt Yaktubuhu al-Ghiyāb Al-Ḍayā'	Su'ād Jābir Maryam Ḥasan	2006 2006
Fī Ḥiddat al-Ashwāk	Wafā' al-'Umair	2006
Lil-Ḥuzn Baqiyya waAshyā' Ukhrā	Muhra al-'Uşaimī	2006
Miḥwar al-Shar	Nabīla Mahjūb	2006
Al-Mir'ā al-Mun'akisa Malāmiḥ	Sāra al-Zāmil Zaynab Ḥafnī	2006 2006
Waḍḍā'	Mahā Bā-'ishin	2006
Aḥbāt walam ara Ḥabībī	Reem Muḥammad	2007
Bi't al-Jasad	Fiktūriyā al-Ḥakīm	2007
Bayt al-Ṭā'a	Munīra al-Subai'ī	2007
Thaman al-Shikulāta	Bashā'r Muḥammad	2007
Ḥatta lā Yaḍī' al-Ḥijāb	Al-Muhājira	2007
Dimā' Mutanāthira	Butūl Muşţafā	2007
Anta Lī	Mona al-Marshūd	2007
Al-Raqş 'alā al-Jirāḥ	Amal al-Muţair	2007
Shar'uk Allāhumma lā I'tirāḍ	Al-Muhājira	2007
Fatāt al-Qarn	Hatūn Bā-'azīm	2007
Fitna	Amīra al-Qaḥţānī	2007
Kitāb al-Mut'abīn	May al-'Utaibī	2007
Al-Mal'ūna	Amīra al-Muḍḥī	2007
Hurūb al-Za'im	Nabīla Mahjūb	2007

Jāhiliyya	Laylā al-Juhanī	2007
Wa'shraqat al-'Ayyām	Maryam al-Ḥasan	2007
Ḥubb fī al-'āšima	Wafā' Abdurrahman	2008
Sīqān Multawīya	Zaynab Ḥafnī	2008
Al-'Abā'a	Mahā al-Juhanī	2008
Madīnat al-Sa'āda	Fatima Āl-'Amr	2008
Kā'nāt min Ṭarab	Amal al-Fārān	2008
Lu'bat al-Mar'a .. Rajul	Sāra al-'Ulaiwī	2008
Nisā' al-Munkar	Samar al-Muqrin	2008
Al-Wārifa	Umayma al-Khamīs	2008
Saqar	'Āyisha al-Ḥashr	2008
Al-Ḥirmān al-Kabīr	Nūr Abdl-Majīd	2008
Insiyya	Amānī al-Sulaymī	2008
Azmat 'Arūs	Nādia al-Shihrī	2008
Rifqan bil-Rayāḥīn	Amal al-Ibrahīm	2008
Intiqāl al-Qiwā	Hatūn Bā-'azīm	2008
Al-'Atma	Salām 'Abdulazīz	2009
'Uyūn al-Tha'ālib	Layla al-Uḥaidib	2009
Aunthā al-Raghba	Badriyya al-Buṭaiḥ	2009
Khimāruk bi Ḥimārī	Khayriyya al-Saif	2009
Al-Dakhīla	Hanā' Ahmad Yūsuf	2009
Al-Tashaḍḍī	'Āisha al-Ḥashr	2009
Dhkirat Sarīr	Hadīl Muḥammad	2009
Ghurbat Zaman	Fatima al-Marzūq	2009
Nuwāḥ al-Şamt	Ibtisām 'Urfī	2009

Nisā' wa lākin	Nūr Abd al-Majīd	2009
Ya'nī 'Ādī	Maysā' Sa'd	2009
Aḥbabtuk Akthar Mimmā Yanbaghī	Athīr al-Washmī	2009
Mughtaribāt al-Aflāj	Bashā'ir Muḥammad	2010
Qalb Al-Warda	Wafā' al-'Umair	2010
Hams al-Majhūl	Nahla al-Thaqafī	2010
Ṭawq al-Ḥamāma	Rajā' Ālim	2010
Wisāda li-ḥubbik	Zaynab Ḥafnī	2010
Ḍaḥāyā Al-ḥbb	Nādia al-Shihri	2010
Abnā' wa Dimā'	Lamyā' Su 'ūd	2010
'Ayn 'ala al-Mukhayyam	Rubā al-Quāaid	2010
Aqdām wa 'Aqabāt	Nora al-Ghānim	2010
Ragham al-Firāq	Nūr Abd al-Majīd	2010
Ashqar fī Kulliyyat Al-Banāt	Sanā' al-Qaḥṭānī	2010
Unthā Mufakhkhakha	Amīra al-Muḍḥī	2010
Al-Urjūḥa	Badriyya al-Bishr	2010
Mutt Fīk	Hadīl Muḥammad	2010
Rashḥ al-Ḥawāss	Nora al-Muḥaimīd	2010
Ma'a Sabq al-Iṣrār wa al- Taraṣṣud	Sihām Murḍī	2010
Al-Amākin fī 'Uyūn Jumāna	Nadā al-'Arīfī	2010
Zilāl al-Wa'd	Munīra al-Subai'ī	2010
Zill Qamīṣ Abiyaḍ	Sālma al-Ḥuqūl	2010
Samā Thāniya Talfuzunī	Emān Hādī	2010
Al-Ḥubb fī Muthakkira	Butūl Muṣṭafā	2010

'Ināq Al-'Arw āḥ	Al-'Anūd Bunahiyya	2010
'Ishrīnī wa Arba'īnak	Ḥanān al-Ruwaitī	2010
Basha' Ashwāqī	Ḥasna al-Qarnī	2010
Al-Raqṣ 'alā Asinnat al-Rimāḥ	Riḥāb Abū Zayd	2010
Fī December Tantahī Kull al-Aḥlām	Athīr al-Washmī	2010
Al-Dināṣūr al-Akhīr	Saḥar al-Sudairī	2010
Aḥḍān Al-Shawk	'Abīr al-Mī'dāwī	2010
Newfiller Almaḍī Al-Jamīl	Amānī al-Sulaymī	2010
Urīd Rajulan	Nūr Abdl-Majīd	2011
Zāfirā	Ilhām al-Brāhīm	2011
Al-Kābūs al-Mu'lim	Ḥanīn Nājī	2011
Al-Ḥubb fawq Saṭḥ Marmara	Mahā Bā-'ishn	2011
Raghabāt shayṭāniyya	Wafā' Abdurrahman	2011
Taraktuk Lil-Allāh	Shurūq al-Khālid	2011
Zill wa Mir'āt	Nidā Abū Alī	2011
Ḥarīq al-Mamālīk al-Mushtahat	Balqīs al-Mulḥim	2011
Shaghaf Sharqī	Ghaṣbā' al-Ḥarbī	2011
Muṭawwa'a New Look	Aḍwā'	2011
Tawbat Ibn 'Irs	Tahānī al-Ghāmidī	2011
Anīn al-Thikrayāt	Ibtisām 'Urfī	2011
Album Bint Ghabiyya	Maysā' Sa'd	2011
Al-Drūb Al-Salūlī	Al-Jawhara	2011
Ḥikāya Sa'ūdiyya	Fatima al-Marzūq	2011
Ḥajar min Ṣaqar	Ṭaiba al-'Idrīsī	2012
Awwal Al-Ghaith	Ṣaliḥa Bal-Ghaith	2012

Arđ Al-Ghajariyya	Badriyya Al-Bilaitīh	2012
Jamra Taht al-Rimāl	Sāra al-Twaimī	2012
Ln Au'lin Tawbatī	Nawāl al-Jabr	2012
Raḥīl Hişşa	Fiđda al-Raiyyis	2012
L'annkī Ḥabībatī	Amal Shaṭa	2012
Aḥlām Mamnū'a	Nūr Abdl-Majīd	2012
Al-Shuryān	Sharīfa al-'Ubūdī	2012
Jazīrat al-Ru'b	Salwā al-Ghāmidī	2012
Bayn al-Shurfa wa Shajart al-lūdz	Zahrā al-Ghānim	2012
Fatāh Siyy'a	Shahad al-Ghalāwīn	2012
Akthar min Imr'a	Dāniā Fahd	2012
Raşīf Al-Ṭahāra	Amīra Muḥārib	2012
Al-Ḥub fī Maṭār Heathrow	Sāra al-Muḥammad	2012
Ḥarīq Al-Mamālik Al-Mushtahā	Balqīs al-Milḥim	2012
Naḥīb	Zahra al-Nāşir	2012
Al-Ḥub Al-Mafqūd	Munīra al-Nūḥ	2012
Şūlū	Nūr Abdl-Majīd	2013
Al-'Bnūsa	Ṭābā al-'Idrīsī	2013
Al-Kābūs Al-Mu'lim	Ḥanīn Işṭānbūlī	2013
HI Tasmaḥ li an Auḥibuk	Zaynab al-Baḥrānī	2013
Anā al-Khā'in	Nūr Abdl-Majīd	2013
Anā Shahīra	Nūr Abdl-Majīd	2013
Wa Maḍa fī Al-Ṭarīq	Hudā Āl-Badr	2013
Gharāmiyyāt Shāri' Al-a'sha	Badriyya al-Bishr	2013

Hi Atāka Ḥadīthī?	Zaynab Ḥafnī	2013
Khudh bi Yadī	Fatima al-Ḥamdān	2013
Ziyārat Sajā	Umayma al-Khamīs	2013
Māsiḥū Al-‘aḥthiya	‘Āiyash al-Dūsarī	2013
Sab‘a wa ‘Ishrūn Laylah	Fatima bint al-Sarāt	2013
Ḥāfat al-Fiḍḍa	Fatima ‘Abdul-Hamīd	2013
Al-Shayṭān Aḥyānan Imr’a	Hudā al-Rasheed	2013
Madā	Rāniā al-Sa‘d	2013
‘Uthran Saiyydī .. Abḥath ‘an Karāmatī	Emān Sharāb	2013
Lā Aḥad Ufsidu Mut‘atī	Nādia al-Shihrī	2013
Āsiya	Farḥ al-Ṣmānī	2013
Unthā Sakirat min Khamr Al-‘alam	‘Ā’iysha Ādil	2013
Fā‘il Khār	Manāl al-‘Utaibī	2013
Jadīs	Asmā’ al-Rājih	2013
Limāthā Taghīb?	Nadā Abdurrahman	2013
Thuqb Al-Ghiyāb	Ibtisām ‘Urfī	2013
Al-Ḥamāma bi‘abā’ tihā al- Sawdā	Layla ‘Aqīl	2013
Ightiyāl Ṣaḥafīyya	Fatima Āl-‘amr	2013
Amal bi-Y’as	Fatima al-‘Awwād	2013
Al-Ḥaqīqa al-Ḍā’‘a	Salwā al-Ghāmidī	2013
Arwāḥ Al-Ḍalām.. ‘Indamā	Hājar al-Mājid	2013
Tatab‘thar al-Ḥaqīqa		
Al-Jarā’m al-Khafīyya	Sāra Madanī	2013
Ṣaghīrāt ‘ala al-Ḥub	Dāniā al-Marrzūq	2013
Āya	Munīra al-Mushārī	2013

Al-Ḥulm Al- Dā' i'	Ḥanān al-Mangūr	2013
'Şfūra fī Iştānbūlī	Layla al-Mūsa	2013
Fltagħfirī	Athīr al-Nashmī	2013
Kān Şarhn	Laylā al-Aḥmadī	2014
Nisā min Arḍ Madiyan	Fatima al-Balawī	2014
Al- 'Āshra Masā'n	Mahā al-Jrais	2014
Muhājir fī Ghurbat Al- 'Ishq	Nadā al-Ḥā'k	2014
Qaiz: 'Āsha biniyyatin Bayḍā' .. lakin Al-Kafan Abyaḍ	Wijdā al-Ḥāmid	2014
Awrāq Al-Kharīf	Khawla al-Rāshid	2014
Liqā' Al-Mun' taf al-Akhīr	Zaynab Şāliḥ	2014
Nisā Al-Shiṭranj	Riḥāb al- 'Abdullaṭīf	2014
'Azīz	Tahānī al- 'Utaibī	2014
Simāzā	Intişār al- 'Aqīl	2014
'Indamā Ya 'shaq al-Rijāl	Sāra al- 'Ulaiwī	2014
Wa Baynanā 'Unthā	Randā al- 'Umānī	2014
Al-Riḥla al-Mustaḥiyla	Salwā al-Ghāmidī	2014
Jaddatī wa Ana	Fatima al-Ghāmidī	2014
Lissa Fakra	Hayfā Faqīh	2014
Bayn al-Ḥub wa al-Taḍhya	Jumāna Bā-Fail	2014
Aqif		
Jāthūm	Sharīfa Muḥammad	2014
Ḥillat al-Quşmān	Nora al-Muḥaimeed	2014
Raiyyāna	Shimā' Al-Marzūqī	2014
Yarḥalūn Sariy'n	Rimā Al-Muṭwwa'	2014

## Li'annahum Aḥabū Qinā'k lā

Wajhūk		
Qāb Qasain	Marām Makkawī	2014
Unūtha Shāghira	Maryam al-Nūāmī	2014
‘Athrā	Razān Qāsim	2015
Al-Shatāt	Munīra al-‘Inizī	2015
Ayn Al-Khaṭiy’a	Sāra al-Shaikh	2015
‘Aynā Allūz	Rfāh al-Saif	2015
Akhhbirīh an Yaghfir lī	Razān ‘Abdullah	2015
Al-Mughtaṣba	Amīna al-‘Uthmānī	2015
Ghabash	Dhikrā al-Ḥūshān	2015
Nabta Khabītha	‘Abīr Samkarī	2015
Imr’a Bilā Rajul	Ilhām al-Saiyyd	2015
Da‘nā Naltaqī Rūḥan Li-Rūḥ	Munā al-Rashīdī	2015
Kharīf Bi‘iūn Musinna	Lamīs Khūja	2015
Ḥatta Alhawā Rajul	Fatima al-Sharīf	2015
Qāb ‘Aynain Au Adnā	Samar al-Ḥimmād	2015
Mal’ikiyyat Al-Hārib	Su‘ād Thāmir	2015
‘Atmat al-Thākira	Athīr al-Nashmī	2016
Thāt Fuqd	Athīr al-Nashmī	2016
Al-Sāriq al-Fata	Ashwāq al-Mukhtār	2016
I‘dām Zawja	Ranā al-Maddāḥ	2016
Ḥatta Marranī ‘Ābir	Dima al-Whaibī	2016
‘Athrā’ Baghdād	Maryam al-Yāmī	2016
Shahiyyat al-Mawt	Khulūd Yahya	2016

Al-Ḥub lā Yaṣn' al-Sa'āda	Nura al-Mifliḥ	2016
Biyjmān allathī Ra Niṣf	Balqīs al-Milḥim	2016
Wajhihā		
Yahūdiyya Mukhliṣa	Sālma al-Mūshī	2016
Khiṭāb Al-Yadain	Fatima al-Nāṣir	2016
Y'tī fi al-Rabī'	Amīra al-Muḍḥī	2016
Kān al-'Asham Akbar	Emān al-Kālūf	2016
Jidār Lā Yukhfī al-Shams	Fawziyya Mubārak	2016
Anfās: Ta'mmulāt Ḥayātiyya	Ḥanān al-Ghāmidī	2016
Ghawāṣū Al-'aḥkāf	Amal al-Fārān	2016
Al-Iqd Al-Aṣfar	Hayfā al-Fāḍil	2016
Zā'rāt Al-Khamīs	Badriyya al-Bishr	2016
Fatāh Irustuqrāṭiyya	Wafā' Fahd	2016
Lil-Bu's Aūjuh Jamīla	Shathā' Azūz	2016
Istaghfirī Lithanbik	Arīj al-Ṭaiyyb	2016
Ightiyāl Najd	Badriyya al-'Āmir	2016
Al-Wa'd Al-Qadīm	Razān al-'Āmir	2016
Alf Rajul fi Jasadī	Riḥāb al-'Abdullaṭīf	2016
Mn Anā	Nūf' Abdullah Amjād al-Shammarī	2016
Hurūb Ila Ḥaith Kunt		2016
Rubmā Ansāk	Randā al-Shaikh	2016
Halwsa Mal'ūna	Amal Samkarī	2016
Sarīr Shāghir Il-Mūt	Asmā Sulaimān	2016
Al-Kibriyā Al-Qātil	Tahānī Shablī	2016
'Ayn Arḍ Al-Farah	Sāra Āl-Shrām	2016

Unthā Al-'Banūs	Amal Shaṭa	2016
Kaydahun 'Aẓīm	Asmā al-Nahdī	2016
Man Yakūn Ḥabībuk	Munīra bin Sa'īd	2016
Lā Fabait	Hind al-Ziyādī	2016
Kimiyā Al-Khāba	Emān al-Khṭṭāf	2016
Lamma Istayqz Ḥulumī	Marām al-Ḥumaid	2016
Shādin	Wafā' Ḥamza	2016
Shurfa L'imr'a Wāḥda	Maryam al-Ḥasan	2016
Qiṣṣat Ḥub Ilāh	Haya al-Ḥāmid	2016
Ṭuhr Ḥub	Asmā al-Ḥārithī	2016
'Raftuhu Fatā Ftazawjanī	Sāra al-Jābir	2016
Fatāa		
Nāfidhat Dhikrayātī	Lamīs al-Twaijirī & Manār al-Suailimī	2016
Warīth Al-Ḥikāya	Amjād al-Tamīmī	2016
Zi'baq Aḥmar	Najlā al-'Alma'ī	2016